

The Implication/Application of the Excellencies of God

Lesson 12 – Longsuffering and Forgiveness

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Review

We have been studying the excellencies of God. God has made us true worshipers (John 4:23) for the purpose of declaring His excellencies (1 Peter 2:9). His excellencies perfectly describe His intrinsic eminence. They are what God has stated and/or exhibited in His self-revelation, the Bible. We are studying the excellencies in order to know God better (have correct, true knowledge) and be impacted by that knowing (grow in sanctification).

We started with excellencies that deal with God's transcendency and belong to Him alone – the *absolute* or *incommunicable* or *divine* excellencies.

- **Transcendence** – God is distinct, far above, greater than His creation.
- **Immanence** – God remains in His creation and is intimately involved in it.
- **Perfection** – God lacks nothing in type or quality of excellency.
- **Beauty** – God is the possessor and the sum of all desirable qualities.
- **Blessedness** – God delights fully in himself. He is self-happy, self-content, self-fulfilled.
- **Aseity** – God does not need anything, He is perfectly independent and self-sufficient.
- **Glory** – the composite of His excellencies; He is so magnificent that He shines.
- **Immutability** – God is unchanging in being, excellencies, eternal purposes, and promises.
- **Omniscience** – God perfectly knows all things actual and possible in a simple, eternal act.
- **Omnipresence** – God is present at every point of space at every point of time.
- **Omnipotence** – God is able to effortlessly do all His holy will.
- **Sovereignty** – God's exercise of His rule over His creation using His absolute power.

Now we are studying excellencies that God is working to build to some degree in us through the Spirit's work of sanctification – *relative* or *communicable* or *personal* excellencies.

- **Holiness** – God is pure and separated from sin.
- **Wrath** – God intensely hates all sin.
- **Righteousness** – God always acts rightly and is Himself the final standard of what is right.
- **Truthfulness** – God is the true God; all His words are true and the final standard of truth.
- **Faithfulness** – God will always do what He has said and fulfill what He has promised.
- **Wisdom** – God always acts skillfully, maximizing His glory and our sanctifying good.
- **Goodness** – God is and does wholesome, helpful, beneficial, and worthwhile.
- **Love** – God eternally gives of himself to others.
- **Grace** – God's unmerited favor in salvation and sanctification for His own glory.
- **Mercy** – God's undeserved compassion moving Him to relieve the misery of fallenness.
- **Lovingkindness** – God's devoted love promised within a covenant.

❖ **Are you striving to allow the truth of these excellencies to impact your life?**

Introduction

Let's contemplate a couple of questions that illustrate one of our excellencies today.

First, why did God give 120 years advance notice concerning the judgment of the earth by the Flood (Genesis 6:3)? Clearly, immediate judgment was deserved (Genesis 6:1-2; 6:5-7). Maybe it would take that long for Noah and wife to finish having male children and for his sons to get righteous wives, or his boys to grow enough to help with the construction? Maybe it would take Noah 120 years to build the arc (harvest the trees, make the lumber, fabricate the arc, make the pitch, grow and gather the food, etc.)? Maybe, but most likely, it was to display God's patience, His forbearance, His longsuffering.

¹⁸For Christ also died for sins once for all, *the* just for *the* unjust, so that He might bring us to God, having been put to death in the flesh, but made alive in the spirit; ¹⁹in which also He went and made proclamation to the spirits *now* in prison, ²⁰who once were disobedient, **when the patience of God kept waiting in the days of Noah, during the construction of the ark**, in which a few, that is, eight persons, were brought safely through *the* water. (1 Peter 3:18-20)

⁴For if God did not spare angels when they sinned, but cast them into hell and committed them to pits of darkness, reserved for judgment; ⁵and did not spare the ancient world, but preserved **Noah, a preacher of righteousness**, with seven others, when He brought a flood upon the world of the ungodly; (2 Peter 2:4-5)

Second question, why has over 1985 years passed since the resurrection of Christ (assuming the resurrection occurred in AD 33, see the VBC Bible Chronology notes)? Clearly, the complete gathering of God's elect still needs to occur (Matthew 24:22, 31; 2 Timothy 2:10). But also, as a display of God's patience, forbearance, longsuffering.

³Know this first of all, that in the last days mockers will come with *their* mocking, following after their own lusts, ⁴and saying, "Where is the promise of His coming? For *ever* since the fathers fell asleep, all continues just as it was from the beginning of creation." ⁵For when they maintain this, it escapes their notice that by the word of God *the* heavens existed long ago and *the* earth was formed out of water and by water, ⁶through which the world at that time was destroyed, being flooded with water. ⁷But by His word the present heavens and earth are being reserved for fire, kept for the day of judgment and destruction of ungodly men. ⁸But do not let this one *fact* escape your notice, beloved, that with the Lord one day is like a thousand years, and a thousand years like one day. ⁹**The Lord is not slow about His promise, as some count slowness, but is patient toward you, not wishing for any to perish but for all to come to repentance.** (2 Peter 3:3-9)

⁴Or do you think lightly of the riches of His kindness and tolerance and **patience, not knowing that the kindness of God leads you to repentance?** (Romans 2:4)

Today, we will look at the excellencies of longsuffering and forgiveness. Again, like last week, these excellencies are so deep, so amazing and displayed in such splendor to the wretched and miserable that we cannot do them justice today. We can only pray that God will impress them on our heart by His Spirit as we dig into His word.

Longsuffering

Longsuffering means that God withholds deserved judgement for sin so grace and mercy might be offered to sinners and progressive sanctification might occur in His redeemed.

God's longsuffering (patience) magnifies our understanding of grace, but also magnifies our understanding of ensuing judgement and proves He is just in the judgement sinners.

⁶Then the Lord passed by in front of him and proclaimed, "The Lord, the Lord God, compassionate and gracious, **slow to anger**, and abounding in lovingkindness and truth; (Exodus 34:6)

¹⁸**The LORD is slow to anger** and abundant in lovingkindness, forgiving iniquity and transgression; but **He will by no means clear *the guilty***, visiting the iniquity of the fathers on the children to the third and the fourth *generations*.' (Numbers 14:18)

¹⁶"But they, our fathers, acted arrogantly; They became stubborn and would not listen to Your commandments. ¹⁷"They refused to listen, And did not remember Your wondrous deeds which You had performed among them; So they became stubborn and appointed a leader to return to their slavery in Egypt. But You are a God of forgiveness, Gracious and compassionate, **Slow to anger** and abounding in lovingkindness; And You did not forsake them. (Nehemiah 9:16-17)

¹⁵But You, O Lord, are a God merciful and gracious, **Slow to anger** and abundant in lovingkindness and truth. (Psalm 86:15)

²A jealous and avenging God is the Lord; The Lord is avenging and wrathful. The Lord takes vengeance on His adversaries, And He reserves wrath for His enemies. ³**The Lord is slow to anger and great in power, And the Lord will by no means leave *the guilty* unpunished.** In whirlwind and storm is His way, And clouds are the dust beneath His feet. (Nahum 1:2-3)

God is demonstrating His patience for His glory

¹⁶Yet for this reason I found mercy, so that in me as the foremost, **Jesus Christ might demonstrate His perfect patience** as an example for those who would believe in Him for eternal life. (1 Timothy 1:16)

²²What if God, although willing to demonstrate His wrath and to make His power known, endured with much patience vessels of wrath prepared for destruction? ²³**And He did so to make known the riches of His glory upon vessels of mercy, which He prepared beforehand for glory,** ²⁴*even* us, whom He also called, not from among Jews only, but also from among Gentiles. (Romans 9:22-24)

In the NT, "patience" means literally long-temper, a long holding out of the mind before it gives room to action or passion; a state of emotional calm or quietness and forbearance in the face of provocation, misfortune, or unfavorable circumstances. Because God is patient, He enables (and commands) His children to be patient with people and circumstances.

²²But **the fruit of the Spirit is** love, joy, peace, **patience**, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, ²³gentleness, self-control; against such things there is no law. (Galatians 5:22-23)

¹⁹*This* you know, my beloved brethren. But everyone must be quick to hear, slow to speak **and slow to anger**; (James 1:19)

¹²So, as those who have been chosen of God, holy and beloved, put on a heart of compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness and **patience**; ¹³bearing with one another, and forgiving each other, whoever has a complaint against anyone; just as the Lord forgave you, so also should you. (Colossians 3:12-13)

¹⁴We urge you, brethren, admonish the unruly, encourage the fainthearted, help the weak, **be patient with everyone.** (1 Thessalonians 5:14)

²⁴**The Lord's bond-servant must** not be quarrelsome, but be kind to all, able to teach, **patient when wronged**, ²⁵with gentleness correcting those who are in opposition, if perhaps God may grant them repentance leading to the knowledge of the truth, ²⁶and they may come to their senses *and escape* from the snare of the devil, having been held captive by him to do his will. (2 Timothy 2:24-26)

¹⁰Now **you followed my teaching**, conduct, purpose, faith, **patience**, love, perseverance, ¹¹persecutions, *and* sufferings, such as happened to me at Antioch, at Iconium *and* at Lystra; what persecutions I endured, and out of them all the Lord rescued me! (2 Timothy 3:10-11)

²⁰For what credit is there if, when you sin and are harshly treated, you endure it with patience? But **if when you do what is right and suffer for it you patiently endure it, this finds favor with God.** (1 Peter 2:20)

⁷Therefore be patient, brethren, until the coming of the Lord. The farmer waits for the precious produce of the soil, being patient about it, until it gets the early and late rains.

⁸**You too be patient; strengthen your hearts, for the coming of the Lord is near.** (James 5:7-8)

❖ **Are you striving, in the Spirit, to be patient with people and circumstances?**

Implications of longsuffering

- Because God is longsuffering, God's glory is maximized.
- Because God is longsuffering, you are not obliterated for your sin.
- Because God is longsuffering, He continues His work of sanctification.
- Because God is longsuffering, you have access to the power to be patient.
- Others?

Forgiveness

Forgiveness means that God unconditionally, permanently pardons sin.

¹⁷The troubles of my heart are enlarged; Bring me out of my distresses. ¹⁸**Look upon my affliction and my trouble, And forgive all my sins.** (Psalm 25:17-19)

⁴Make glad the soul of Your servant, For to You, O Lord, I lift up my soul. ⁵**For You, Lord, are good, and ready to forgive,** And abundant in lovingkindness to all who call upon You. (Psalm 86:4-5)

³If You, LORD, should mark iniquities, O Lord, who could stand? ⁴**But there is forgiveness with You, That You may be feared.** (Psalm 130:3-4)

¹⁸Who is a God like You, who pardons iniquity And passes over the rebellious act of the remnant of His possession? He does not retain His anger forever, Because He delights in unchanging love. ¹⁹He will again have compassion on us; He will tread our iniquities under foot. Yes, You will cast all their sins Into the depths of the sea. (Micah 7:18-19)

Defining forgiveness

Because God forgives, He enables (and commands) His children to forgive. Let's spend some time honing in on a biblical definition of forgiveness that the believer is called to exercise.

Greek words

There are primarily two Greek words that are translated "forgive" in the NT. The gospel writers most often use the Greek word "aphiemi" (Matthew 6:12, 14-15; 9:6; 12:31-32; 18:21-35; Mark 2:5-10; 3:28; 4:12; 11:25-26; Luke 5:20-24; 7:47-49; 11:4; 12:10; 17:3-4; 23:34; John 20:23; Acts 8:22; Romans 4:7; James 5:15; 1 John 1:9; 2:12).

²¹Then Peter came and said to Him, "Lord, how often shall my brother sin against me and I **forgive** him? Up to seven times?" (Matthew 18:21)

"Aphiemi" means literally to "hurl away" or "let go" or "give up a debt." This paints a vivid picture of forgiveness as sending the offense/sin away. This word was also used in secular Greek to mean "canceling a debt". This is sending or hurling away a debt of sin.

The other Greek word, "charizomai," is used primarily in Paul's epistles (Luke 7:42-43; 2 Corinthians 2:7-10; 12:13; Ephesians 4:32; Colossians 2:13; 3:13). "Charizomai" comes from the word for "grace" meaning "unmerited favor" and means "to give freely and unconditionally" or "to bestow as a gift of grace and then to pay for or cancel a debt". The idea of unconditionally and completely are conveyed.

Other nuances

When God forgives sin, He does not deal with you according to your sin (i.e. the way you deserve) and He removes the sin far from you.

¹⁰**He has not dealt with us according to our sins**, Nor rewarded us according to our iniquities. ¹¹For as high as the heavens are above the earth, So great is His lovingkindness toward those who fear Him. ¹²**As far as the east is from the west, So far has He removed our transgressions from us.** (Psalm 103:10-12)

Forgiveness is for God's sake, not yours; for His own glory. God is God and he cannot "forget" sin. In forgiveness, God makes a conscious choice to not bring your sin to memory or judgment.

²⁵"I, even I, am the one who **wipes out your transgressions for My own sake**, And I **will not remember your sins.** (Isaiah 43:25; see also Jeremiah 31:33-34)

In forgiveness, God chooses to not count your sins against you.

¹⁸Now all *these* things are from God, who reconciled us to Himself through Christ and gave us the ministry of reconciliation, ¹⁹namely, that God was in Christ reconciling the world to Himself, **not counting their trespasses against them**, and He has committed to us the word of reconciliation. (2 Corinthians 5:18-20)

Greek usage applied to believers

Two passages form the foundation for interpersonal forgiveness – Ephesians 4:30-32 and Colossians 3:12-14. Both passages describe forgiveness in a similar way.

³⁰Do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God, by whom you were sealed for the day of redemption. ³¹Let all bitterness and wrath and anger and clamor and slander be put away from you, along with all malice. ³²Be kind to one another, tender-hearted, **forgiving each other, just as God in Christ also has forgiven you.** (Ephesians 4:30-32)

¹²So, as those who have been chosen of God, holy and beloved, put on a heart of compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness and patience; ¹³bearing with one another, and **forgiving each other, whoever has a complaint against anyone; just as the Lord forgave you, so also should you.** ¹⁴Beyond all these things *put on* love, which is the perfect bond of unity. (Colossians 3:12-14)

The word for “forgiving” in “forgiving each other” is “charizomai”. It is in the present tense which calls for forgiveness to be the believer's continual practice; it is to be unceasing. The grammar usage also pictures believers as those who are to initiate the action of forgiving.

The word for forgive in the Ephesians 4:32 phrase “Just as God in Christ also has forgiven you” and in the Colossians 3:13 phrase “just as the Lord forgave you” is also from “charizomai”, but the verb indicates a past completed action. This indicates that you are to forgive in the same way that God forgave you at salvation.

The phrase, “just as,” conveys the sense of “in the same way as” or “just like” and designates the model for forgiveness. The phrases, “just as God in Christ also has forgiven you” and “just as the Lord forgave you”, indicate that there is a perspective from which to look at God’s forgiveness to be the example of your forgiveness. That perspective is from God’s viewpoint. So, if you are commanded to “forgive each other, just as God in Christ has forgiven you”, the question is, “How has God in Christ forgiven you?”

The answer is clear; God has forgiven you **unconditionally**. Before Christ, you were dead in your trespasses and sins (Ephesians 2:1). In eternity past, God chose you for His own glory and according to His own purpose to be His (Ephesians 1). At some point in time, God called (Romans 8:30) and drew you to Himself, brought the gospel to you (Acts 10; Romans 10:8-17), and gave you the gift of grace and faith. In fact, the true saving faith that you exercise, which includes repenting (Mark 1:14-15; Acts 20:20-21) and surrendering your life to Christ (Luke 9:23-26), is a gift from God (Ephesians 2:8-9). You did nothing to deserve, earn, merit, or obtain forgiveness. It is completely **unconditional**.

Connection of love and forgiveness

Love is the basis for forgiveness. Someone who is loved by God in a saving relationship through Jesus Christ is able to love other people. This love “covers” a multitude of sins because it forgives.

¹⁹We love, because He first loved us. (1 John 4:19)

⁸Above all, keep fervent in your love for one another, because **love covers a multitude of sins.** (1 Peter 4:8)

The great passage in 1 Corinthians 13 that describes the believer's outworking of God's agape love makes it clear that "love does not take into account a wrong suffered".

⁴Love is patient, love is kind and is not jealous; love does not brag and is not arrogant, ⁵does not act unbecomingly; it does not seek its own, is not provoked, **does not take into account a wrong suffered**, ⁶does not rejoice in unrighteousness, but rejoices with the truth; ⁷bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things. ^{8a}Love never fails; (1 Corinthians 13:4-8a)

The one who loves does not hold on to a sin committed against them. Since love is a choice, you can choose to love even when you do not "feel" like. In the same way, you can choose to forgive even when you do not feel like it.

❖ **Do you love? Note, that if you love, you will forgive.**

Bringing it all together

Let's bring the parts of the definition for forgiveness all together:

Forgiveness is the unconditional, gracious act of not holding personal sins (relationship breaking acts) against a person. It freely and unconditionally cancels a debt of sin, sending it away. It must be unceasingly initiated by the one sinned against. It is a conscious choice to not bring a sin to memory or judgment or to not take into account a wrong suffered.

❖ **Does your definition of forgiveness differ from the Bible's definition?**

Unforgiveness

Forgiveness is often viewed as part of what heals relationships between people. However, forgiveness is really centered around the relationship between the offended person and God. Withholding forgiveness is a sin which interrupts your intimate fellowship with God. Holding on to any sin in your heart causes a break in your fellowship with God (Psalm 66:18; Ephesians 4:30).

When we look at the passages on forgiveness, primarily in the gospels, we see something interesting. You are called to forgive "anyone" and "everyone" who has sinned against you (Matthew 6:9-15; 18:21-35; Mark 11:24-26; Luke 11:2-4; 17:3-4); regardless if they have repented or not. The reason is clear, unforgiveness is a sin which breaks your fellowship with God. You are called to put off sin and put on righteousness (Ephesians 4:22-24), therefore, you must put off unforgiveness and put on forgiveness.

❖ **Do you forgive unconditionally?**

Implications of forgiveness

- Because God is forgiving, upon surrendering to Christ, all your sins (past, present, and future) are forgiven.
- Because God is forgiving, there is no such thing as "forgiving yourself" since all your sin is already forgiven. When you sin as a believer, there must be true repentance. Without true repentance, there is false guilt of sin which people view as not having "forgiven self".
- Because God is forgiving, you must forgive others (forgiveness does not mean that the one forgiven does not experience the consequences of their sin).
- Others?

Conclusion

We have studied God's excellencies in order to know Him better and be impacted by that knowing. I pray that each of us have been so impacted by this series in God's word.

Additional Study

- Each day this week, reread the passages that we looked at today.
- After reading the passages, spend time in prayer adoring God. Ask Him to build godly responses to His excellencies in your life.
- Memorize Psalm 103:11-12.

¹¹For as high as the heavens are above the earth, So great is His lovingkindness toward those who fear Him. ¹²As far as the east is from the west, So far has He removed our transgressions from us. (Psalm 103:11-12)