

LEARNING FORBEARANCE



Let all men know your forbearance.

Philippians 4:5

Did the Lord tell me it was time to leave, or was it my wounded ego throwing in the towel? If I leave a fellowship without the clear confirmation of God's peace, wherever I go I will be like a mother who flees the country, leaving her child behind. How can I expect to find God's peace in another church if I abandoned it in my departure from this one?

Our search for our place in the Body of Christ cannot proceed with God's blessing until his Spirit of Forbearance has come to rest in our hearts: forbearance toward all—forbearance especially toward those who have caused us grief and pain. It is highly unlikely that the Spirit will ever tell us it's time to move on before we have learned to generously absorb insults and injuries in the name of the Lord Jesus.

Instead of allowing the evil one to stir us to bitterness, we are called to put on the new nature

"which is renewed in knowledge after the image of its creator....."

Put on then, as God's chosen ones, holy and beloved, compassion, kindness, lowliness, meekness and patience, forbearing one another, and if one has a complaint against another, forgiving each other; as the Lord has forgiven you, so you also must forgive."

Colossians 3:10, 12-13

Even if we are convinced that the atmosphere of the fellowship in which we have been functioning is far from loving, we have no choice before the Lord but to respond to this atmosphere with forbearance. It may be that this is the precise reason why we find ourselves in this place: to learn forbearance.

Without it we become slaves of our own bitter thoughts, and our relationship with the people around us slowly hardens.

What better place to learn forbearance than among people who give us ample opportunities to practice it?

Seeing the need

"And whenever you stand praying, forgive, if you have anything against any one...."

Mark 11:25

If we expect the Lord Jesus to guide us in our search for our place in his Body, we have no choice but to follow his directions when it comes to our relationship with the people around us at the present moment. When he says, "Forgive, if you have anything against any one," he leaves no room for negotiation. "But Lord, how can you expect me to forgive, after what they did to me? I'm only human!" Jesus isn't trying to make life difficult for us, he is showing us the only way to freedom and peace in God. And he promises to send us help from above to do the things we could never do in our own strength.

Forgiveness and forbearance are not "extra credit" assignments, they are essential commands coming from the incarnate Word of God. Our present situation in whatever part of the professing church we may be, is the School of Forbearance assigned to us by the Lord Jesus himself.

Bring it to the Cross



We are not called upon to condone hypocrisy, or compromise, or shoddy handling of truth. But we are called upon to bring our resentments and attitudes and wounded feelings to the cross of Jesus, asking him to cleanse our hearts. We do not answer for the sins which others commit, but we are responsible for the way we handle the disappointment, and the shock, and the injuries which come to us as a result of the sins of others. How often our response to the sins of others becomes more sinful than their sins! Before we can begin to show forbearance, we need to clear away the impatience, cynicism and bitterness which have accumulated within us.

Sometimes in his mercy, the Lord Jesus begins to convict us as we sit among these men and women with whom we have lost patience. He shows us the difference between "Beware of false prophets," and "Judge not." And we discover that we indeed have a load within us which needs to be confessed to him and washed away in his blood.

Buy some Eye Salve

***"...And salve to anoint your eyes, that you may see."
Revelation 3:18***

If we could see these people with whom we have lost patience the way God sees them, if we could grasp how unsure of himself that pompous man is, how that majestic lady suffers in her own home, what fears are driving Elder Smith to clamp down on every sign of fresh life in the fellowship, we would find it much easier to take them as they are and to pray for them.

Jesus looked into the heart of the rich young ruler and loved him.

He saw the woman at the well as no one in the town of Sychar had ever perceived her.

And if we ask him for eye salve, he will surely "anoint our eyes that we may see" in ways we never saw before.



Forbearance is a matter of the heart. But it is also a matter of the eyes.

What do we see when we look into the man's face? He looks hard and angry. But there's more. *"Lord, help me to see this man in some small measure as you see him!"*

What do we see in this woman's behavior? Is she as thoughtless and insensitive, and cruel as she appears to be, or is there something here that I'm missing? *"Never let me forget that you love her as if she were the only child you have."*

Trust the Spirit for Help

More than that, we rejoice in our sufferings, knowing that suffering produces endurance, and endurance produces character, and character produces hope, and hope does not disappoint us, because God's love has been poured into our hearts through the Holy Spirit which has been given to us. (Romans 5:3-5)

Who of us is naturally forbearing?

Who of us does not find it hard to deal with certain people?

The power to show forbearance—the kind of forbearance the Lord Jesus calls for—comes from above. It has to. We do not have it in us. The same wonderful Spirit of God who helps us in our weakness to pray, also helps us in our weakness to forbear.

We look to him and we receive help.

We cry out in our need and something supernatural begins stirring in our heart.

This has to be God. I could never do this on my own. My heart is beginning to melt toward people who were once a thorn in my side. I came to the meeting fully planning to straighten him out, to make sure he did not ram his plan down our throats, and now I find myself stepping back, watching, waiting. I could not open my mouth. All I could do was pray for this man and trust that the fathomless mercy of God will meet his every need. What is happening here?



Each opportunity to show forbearance is a gift from God.

We do not learn forbearance by reading about it. Or by talking about it.

The only way we learn forbearance is through practice: doing it.

So in his mercy the Lord sends opportunities our way.

People who try our patience.

People who misconstrue our motives.

People who weary us with their complaints.

People who seem to wear their hypocrisy as a badge of honor.

Blame, false accusations, insults.... We know that our Lord Jesus had to endure these things. We understand that the apostle Paul was often belittled and mistreated. But we seem to have difficulty believing that we, too, are to walk in the Master's footsteps, when it comes to forbearance.

For what credit is it, if when you do wrong and are beaten for it, you take it patiently? But if when you do right and suffer for it you take it patiently, you have God's approval. For to this you have been called, because Christ also suffered for you, leaving you an example, that you should follow in his steps. He committed no sin; no guile was found on his lips. When he was reviled, he did not revile in return; when he suffered, he did not threaten; but he trusted to him who judges justly. He himself bore our sins in his body on the tree, that we might die to sin and live to righteousness. By his wounds we have been healed. For you were straying like sheep, but have now returned to the Shepherd and Guardian of your souls.

Peter 2:20-25



Message: Richard Bieber Excerpted from *Where to Lord? The Silent Migration Chapter 16*
Featured Art: Ramone Romero at weeping-jeremiahs.blogspot.com

Prayer: Lord, lord how we so need to learn forbearance. Without it how can we be one with you, our master, our perfect teacher? So help us, help us to learn this lesson well, to practice it and keep doing it until it comes easily to us. Help us to put on your nature of compassion, kindness, patience, meekness and lowliness. Help us to let go of the cynicism, the bitterness, the impatience, the disappointment, and the hurt that keeps us from forbearing difficult people. Melt our hearts. ... Anoint our eyes so we may see them as you do... in their vulnerability... in their broken humanity. Help us to lift thanks to you for bringing difficult people to us... who test us, who try us because they are a precious gift from you to prepare us to draw into your beloved, wonderful forbearing nature. Amen. Maranatha Mirror

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