

# The Summation of All Things in Christ

Studies in Ephesians with a Local Church Emphasis

LESSON CIII : PRACTICAL INJUNCTIONS ABOUT THE OLD AND NEW LIFE (4:25-5:2)

## **Ephesians 4:30, 31** —

*Let all bitterness fearsnes and wrath rorynge and cursyd speakyng be put awaye from you with all maliciousnes. Be ye courteouse one to another and mercifull forgevynge one another even as god for Christes sake forgave you. (Tyndale's New Testament, 1534)*

*Let all bitternesse, and anger, and wrath, crying, and euill speaking be put away from you, with all maliciousnesse. Be ye courteous one to another, and tender hearted, freely forgiuing one another, euen as God for Christes sake, freely forgaue you. (Geneva Bible, 1599)*

*Let all bitterness, and wrath, and anger, and clamour, and evil speaking, be put away from you, with all malice: And be ye kind one to another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, even as God for Christ's sake hath forgiven you. (King James Version, 1769)*

*Let all bitterness, and wrath, and anger, and clamour, and evil-speaking, be put away from you, with all malice, and become one to another kind, tender-hearted, forgiving one another, according as also God in Christ did forgive you. (Young's Literal Translation, 1898)*

*Let all bitterness, and wrath, and anger, and clamour, and railing, be put away from you, with all malice: and be ye kind one to another, tenderhearted, forgiving each other, even as God also in Christ forgave you. (Revised Version, 1885)*

*Let all bitterness, and wrath, and anger, and clamor, and railing, be put away from you, with all malice: and be ye kind one to another, tenderhearted, forgiving each other, even as God also in Christ forgave you. (American Standard Version, 1901)*

*Let all bitterness and wrath and anger and clamor and slander be put away from you, with all malice, and be kind to one another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, as God in Christ forgave you. (Revised Standard Version, 1952)*

*All manner of harshness and violent outbreaks of wrath and anger and brawling and slanderous speech, let it be put away from you together with all manner of malice. And be becoming kind to one another, tenderhearted, forgiving each other even as and just as also God in Christ forgave you. (Kenneth Wuest's Expanded Translation, 1961)*

*Let all bitterness, wrath, anger, clamor, and evil speaking be put away from you, with all malice. And be kind to one another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, just as God in Christ forgave you. (New King James Version, 1982)*

*Let all bitterness and wrath and anger and clamor and slander be put away from you, along with all malice. Be kind to one another, tender-hearted, forgiving each other, just as God in Christ also has forgiven you. (New American Standard Version, 1995)*

*Get rid of all bitterness, rage and anger, brawling and slander, along with every form of malice. Be kind and compassionate to one another, forgiving each other, just as in Christ God forgave you. (New International Version, 2011)*

*Let all bitterness and wrath and anger and clamor and slander be put away from you, along with all malice. Be kind to one another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, as God in Christ forgave you. (English Standard Version, 2016)*

*πάσα πικρία καὶ θυμὸς καὶ ὀργὴ καὶ κραυγὴ καὶ βλασφημία ἀρθήτω ἀφ' ὑμῶν σὺν πάσῃ κακίᾳ γίνεσθε δὲ εἰς ἀλλήλους χρηστοὶ εὖσπλαγχνοὶ χαριζόμενοι ἑαυτοῖς καθὼς καὶ ὁ θεὸς ἐν Χριστῷ ἐχαρίσατο ὑμῖν (Stephanus Greek NT, 1550)*

*πάσα πικρία καὶ θυμὸς καὶ ὀργὴ καὶ κραυγὴ καὶ βλασφημία ἀρθήτω ἀφ' ὑμῶν σὺν πάσῃ κακίᾳ. γίνεσθε [δὲ] εἰς ἀλλήλους χρηστοί, εὖσπλαγχνοὶ, χαριζόμενοι ἑαυτοῖς, καθὼς καὶ ὁ θεὸς ἐν Χριστῷ ἐχαρίσατο ὑμῖν. (NA28 Greek New Testament)*

## **Bitterness and Forgiveness**

**negatively ...**

**positively ...**

**motivational clause**

**negative features associated with anger** <sup>31</sup> *Let all bitterness and wrath and anger and clamor and slander be put away from you, along with all malice...*

<sup>32</sup> *... Be kind to one another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, ...*

*... as God in Christ forgave you.*

**THESE VERSES FOLLOW THE PREVIOUS PATTERN: NEGATIVE, POSITIVE, MOTIVATION** — These verses follows Paul's general pattern throughout the exhortations found in vv. 25-28: a negative command (v. 31) and a positive command (v. 32a) followed with a motivation (v. 32b). **The difference in these verses however is that each of the preceding admonitions focused on individual vices whereas several vices and virtues are treated within these verses.**

**GENERAL SYNOPSIS OF LIST** — Verse 31 starts with a list of five vices, all related to the theme of anger, then ends with a more generalized word. Only the fourth word (*clamor*) may be used in a neutral sense; all the other words express contempt or disapproval. They have been considered as a developing sequence at least as far back as Chrysostom (c. 349-407 AD); **only the elimination of bitterness can ensure the absence of the other vices:**

*It begins with anger's inner center* (pikria, 'inner resentful attitude')

*through its initial eruption* (thumos, 'indignant outburst') **and steady festering** (orgē, 'seething rage')

*to its external expression* (kraugē, 'public shouting') **and the damaging of others** (blasphēmia, 'abusive language or cursing'). [Best, 464; Lincoln, 309; O'Brien, 349; Hoehner, 636; et. al.]

**THE DANGER OF ANGER, EVEN LEGITIMATE ANGER** — “Although v. 26 recognizes that in exceptional circumstances one may be angry without sinning, so great are the dangers of this passion that on all other occasions it is to be rooted out comprehensively.” [O'Brien, 349f] “Paul's admonition here picks up the theme of anger that he introduced in 4:26 and now further develops it. Whereas he concedes and even encourages a righteous anger in that passage as long as it is kept under control and subsides in a short amount of time, here he sternly warns against the danger of unrighteous anger. His appeal that it 'should be removed' is the semantic equivalent of his earlier enjoinder that they should 'take off' (4:22a, 25a) the old self. The five terms he chooses show a progression from an inner disposition of bitterness to a display of uncontrolled and hurtful speech.” [Arnold, 307] “This mention of anger as something that is bad without qualification, so soon after v. 26, suggests that to be angry without sinning is as rare as it is difficult.” [Bruce, 364] “All feelings inconsistent with love — all emotions opposed to the benign influence and presence of the Divine Spirit — were to be abandoned.” [Eadie, 357] “Man's natural tendency is to sin, and the natural tendency of sin is to grow into greater sin. And a Christian's sin will grow just like that of an unbeliever. If not checked, our inner sins of bitterness and wrath and anger will inevitably lead to the outward sins of clamor, slander, and other such manifestations of malice.” [MacArthur, 190]

**THOUGHTS FROM COLOSSIANS AND OTHER CONTEMPORARY LITERATURE** — “[T]he danger of anger was a common theme addressed in the OT, Judaism, Stoicism (e.g., Arius Didymus; Chrysippus; Seneca), and elsewhere in the NT (e.g., Jas 1:19 - 20)... **Instead of a bitter, angry heart that spews hurtful comments, Paul commends a tender heart that is not only kind to one's brothers and sisters, but is also forgiving when they offend. Believers should always look to the cross and emulate the way that God has bestowed his forgiveness on us.** Paul's appeal here closely resembles what he said to the Colossians: 'clothe yourselves with compassion (splanchna oiktirmou), kindness (chrestoteta) ... and forgive ... one another (charizomenoi heautois) ... as the Lord forgave you (kathos kai ho kurios echarisato humin)' (Col 3:12 -13). This suggests that Paul is not addressing a specific situation in the community, but is rather giving foundational teaching for life together as believers.” [Arnold, 307f]

**v. 31** — **Let all bitterness (YLT), All manner of harshness (Wuest)** — πᾶσα πικρία [pasa pikria] — **'ALL, ALL MANNER, EVERY FORM OF ANGER'** — The 'all' applies to all five nouns and acts in a generalizing function, 'all kinds of, all manner of, every form of.' [Best, 460; O'Brien, 350; Hoehner, 633f]

**BITTER, HARD-HEARTED ABIDING RESENTMENT** — This word is not used often in the NT (Acts 8:23 'bitter gall'; Rom 3:14 'bitter words'; Heb 12:15 'a bitter root'). The root is sometimes a reference to something physical (James 3:11; Rev 8:11; 10:9,10) but sometimes metaphorically in relation to vice (James 3:14; Col 3:19). It was used to describe Peter 'weeping bitterly' after denying Jesus (Matt 26:75; Luke 22:62). Paul uses it here to indicate that 'underlying feeling of bitterness and smoldering resentment from which anger springs; the hard-heartedness that harbors resentment about the past; a brooding grudge-filled attitude; a spirit of irritability that keeps a person in perpetual animosity, making him sour and venomous, leading to harsh and uncharitable opinions of men and things.' Aristotle described it as 'the attitude that creates a lasting wrath, hard to reconcile, and sustaining anger for a long time.' Paul uses this word in Col 3:19 to describe the hardness and bitter attitude which is forbidden of husbands to adopt to their wives. [Best, 460f; Lincoln, 308; Hoehner, 634; O'Brien, 350; Bruce, 364; Eadie, 357f; Hodge, 200; MacArthur, 190] “'Bitterness' (pikria) is a metaphor derived from the description of something that had a bitter taste, such as a plant or water (e.g., the water at Marah; Exod 15:23). The psalmist claims that the wicked person has a mouth that is 'full of curses and lies (pikrias) and threats' (Ps 10:7), a passage that Paul cites in his litany of characteristics of Gentiles as he demonstrates that there are none who are righteous (Rom 3:14).” [Arnold, 307]

**and wrath, and anger, (YLT), and violent outbreaks of wrath and anger (Wuest)** — καὶ θυμὸς καὶ ὀργή [kai thumos kai orgē] — The second and third nouns are often considered together and quite frequently used as synonyms (Rom 2:8; Rev 14:10). Both terms are applied to divine anger (John 3:36; Rom 1:18; Eph 5:6; Rev 19:5; Rev 14:10, 19; 15:1, 7) and to human anger (Mark 3:5; 1 Tim 2:8; James 1:19f; Lk 4:28; Acts 19:28; 2 Cor 12:20; Gal 5:20). In the LXX many of the same Hebrew words are translated by both of these words. **If it was necessary to distinguish between these words, 'thumos' would be the short-lived but more passionate outburst of anger, anger that boils up, the initial explosion of wild rage while 'orgē' would be the inward seething anger, a more settled, gnawing and abiding state of anger.**

'Thumos' is defined by Bauer-Danker as (1) the intense expression of the inner self, frequently expressed as strong desire, *passion, passionate longing*; (2) a state of intense displeasure, *anger, wrath, rage, indignation*. [BDAG]

“[thumos] in classical times had the idea of the spirit or passion of a person. Aristotle classifies it as passion and it could

also refer to spirit or courage and the passion to do right. Further, it was known to be the seat of anger or anger itself. Plato regarded it as the passion to do right but in the same passage refers to it as that which causes murder for which discipline is necessary.” [Hoehner, 634]

‘*Orgē*’ is defined by Bauer-Danker as (1) state of relatively strong displeasure, with focus on the emotional aspect, *anger*; (2) strong indignation directed at wrongdoing, with focus on retribution, *wrath*. [BDAG] Eadie says it is resentment, a settled and dark hostility. It is used of both human and divine anger. In the NT it is used thirty-six times, twenty-one times by Paul, three times in Ephesians (2:3; 4:31; 5:6). ‘*Orgē*’ is a more internal smoldering, a subtle and deep feeling.

**THESE THREE WORDS APPEAR TOGETHER IN OTHER ANCIENT WRITINGS** — “The three terms ‘bitterness’ (pikria), ‘rage’ (thumos), and ‘anger’ (orge) appear together in a number of ancient writers in contexts of moral exhortation. They can be found, for instance, in a passage in the Stoic writer Arius Didymus.... Likewise, Philo includes all three terms in a passage where he describes the character and behavior of a wicked man who is like a vine ‘which proves to be the bearer of bitterness (pikrias) and wickedness and villainy and wrath (thumos) and anger (orge)’ (Philo, *Drunkness* 223).” [Arnold, 307]

**and clamour, and evil-speaking, (YLT), and brawling and slanderous speech, (Wuest)** — **καὶ κραυγὴ καὶ βλασφημία** [kai kraugē kai blasphēmia] — Angry people often shout loudly and revile the objects of their wrath, thus there is a steady movement from the inner bitter disposition to denunciatory speech.

‘*Kraugē*’ is defined by Bauer-Danker as (1) *a loud cry or call, shout*; used of *people shouting back and forth in a quarrel* (Acts 23:9); *a loud articulate cry* (Matt 25:6); (2) *an outcry in grief or anxiety, wailing, crying* (Ex 3:7; 11:6; Esth 4:3; Isa 65:19; Rev 21:4). [BDAG] Since this word could be *a shout of victory, shouting in anger* or even *a cry for help*, this is the only noun in the list that is not necessarily pejorative but the context does demand this be understood in a negative sense. It reveals the lack of restraint and loss of self control. Isaiah says the ‘Suffering Servant’ will not ‘*strive or shout*’ (Isa 42:1-4; cp. Matt 12:19). This noun is only used six times in the NT and only here by Paul.

‘*Blasphēmia*’ is defined by Bauer-Danker as *speech that denigrates or defames, reviling, denigration, disrespect, slander*; it is used generally of any kind of speech that is defamatory or abusive, with other vices (Matt 12:31; 15:19; Lk 5:21; Eph 4:31; Col 3:8) or specifically against both humans (Mk 7:22; 1 Cor 10:30; 1 Tim 6:4; Titus 3:2) and the Lord (Ezek 35:12; Matt 12:31; 26:65; Mk 2:7; 3:28; 14:64; Lk 5:21; John 10:33; Acts 6:11; Rev 13:1, 5, 6; 17:3). [BDAG] Although this is most frequently used of speech against the Lord, Paul here primarily has in mind sins against church members. Blasphemy of others is *any speech that is defamatory, slandering, cursing, that which is hurtful to the reputation of others, being abusive or the vilifying of others, either in lies or gossip*. Jesus said this kind of denigrating speech has its roots in a heart that is corrupt (Matt 15:19; Mark 7:21, 22). Paul told Timothy that this is a characteristic way that a false teacher speaks (1 Tim 6:4).

**be put away from you, (YLT), let it be put away from you (Wuest)** — **ἀρθήτω ἀφ ὑμῶν** [arthētō aph humōn] — The verb ‘*be put away from you*’ is an aorist imperative; we are commanded once and for all to put these out of our lives. Perhaps the change from the present imperatives to the aorist imperative is used to heighten the expectancy of a change of behavior or to heighten the sense of urgency. [Hoehner, 636] The verb is also passive, possibly emphasizing the need of reliance upon the Holy Spirit to remove these traits from our lives.

**with all malice, (YLT), together with all manner of malice. (Wuest)** — **σὺν πάσῃ κακίᾳ** [sun pasē kakia] — This final phrase summarizes, broadens and concludes the discussion on anger. It is a generic term but in its present context ‘*kakia*’ should be taken as continuing the theme of the destructive power originating in bitterness and developing into anger; all of this is malicious, mean-spirited, or vicious; in takes in any attitude or action which intends harm to one’s neighbor. ‘*Kakia*’ is defined by Bauer-Danker as (1) *the quality or state of wickedness, baseness, depravity, wickedness, vice; the opposite of all virtue*; (2) *a mean-spirited or vicious attitude or disposition, malice, ill-will, malignity*; (3) *a state involving difficult circumstances, trouble, misfortune*. [BDAG] “*Believers need to give focused attention to eliminating these ugly attitudes and behaviors from their lives. They are exceedingly destructive to community life.*” [Arnold, 308] “*Anger sets the house on fire, and all the spirits are busy upon trouble, and intend propulsion, defence, displeasure, or revenge; it is a short madness, and an eternal enemy to discourse, and sober counsels, and fair conversation ; it intends its own object with all the earnestness of perception, or activity of design, and a quicker motion of a too warm and distempered blood; it is a fever in the heart, and a calenture in the head, and a fire in the face, and a sword in the hand, and a fury all over; and therefore can never suffer a man to be in a disposition to pray.... Anger is a perfect alienation of the mind from prayer, and therefore is contrary to that attention which presents our prayers in a right line to God.*” [Jeremy Taylor, ‘*Works - The Return of Prayers*’; q.v. Eadie, 359]

**calenture** – noun; feverish delirium supposedly caused by the heat in the tropics

**V. 32** — **and become one to another kind (YLT), And be becoming kind to one another, (Wuest)** — **γίνεσθε δὲ εἰς ἀλλήλους χρηστοί** [ginesthe de eis allēlous chrēstoi] — The earlier metaphor of ‘*putting off/ on*’ is now abandoned for the straightforward present tense command (imperative), ‘*be, become, be becoming, begin and continue to become kind to one another.*’ Being in the present tense Paul wants them to continually strive for the acquisition and display of these virtues. As bitterness and anger is destructive to the Christian community life (v. 31), Paul continues with some of the virtues necessary to



make it flourish. *“In place of those vices we are rather to be kind to one another, tenderhearted, forgiving each other, just as God in Christ also has forgiven us. These are graces God has shown to us and they are the gracious virtues we are to show to others. God did not love us, choose us, and redeem us because we were deserving, but purely because He is gracious. ‘God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us.... While we were enemies, we were reconciled to God through the death of His Son’ (Rom. 5:8, 10). If God is so gracious to us, how much more, then, should we be kind, ... tender-hearted, and forgiving to fellow sinners, especially to one another.”* [MacArthur, 190]

**FOCUS AGAIN UPON OUR CHURCHES** — The reciprocal *‘and be kind one another’* (plural) once again places Paul’s emphasis upon our churches. This of course does not limit Paul’s exhortations to fellow believers only but it does remind us of the importance of these commands within our own body of believers. This also brings reality to the commands; as Markus Barth (Swiss theologian and son of Karl Barth) puts it, *‘it is easier to pardon the far-off villain like Genghis Khan than the brother who lives close at hand.’* [q.v. Best, 464]

*‘A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another; as I have loved you, that you also love one another. By this all will know that you are My disciples, if you have love for one another.’* (John 13:34,35 NKJV)

*“These particular sins involve conflict between person and person – believer and unbeliever and, worse still, between believer and believer. These are the sins that break fellowship and destroy relationships, that weaken the church and mar its testimony before the world. When an unbeliever sees Christians acting just like the rest of society, the church is blemished in his eyes and he is confirmed still further in resisting the claims of the gospel.”* [MacArthur, 190]

**‘KINDNESS’** — The word translated *‘kind’* was in common usage in the secular world to describe *a good person, useful, serviceable*. It is a term of relationship and involves being sympathetic to others’ needs, the essence of compassion. It is an attribute of God Himself, *‘Taste and see that the LORD is good (chrestos)’* (Ps 34:8 [33:9 LXX]); *‘Good (chrestos) and upright is the Lord’* (Ps 25:8 [24:8 LXX]); *‘I will wait on Your name, for it is good’ (chreston)* (Ps 52:9 [51:11 LXX]). God is not only morally good but He actively does good, displaying His love to people, *‘The LORD is good (chrestos) to all’* (Ps 145:9), not just to His chosen people but to all men and women. It is this kindness (chrestos) of God that leads people to repentance (Rom 2:4). It is used in the LXX and NT to describe (1) God’s goodness to humans (Luke 6:35; Rom 2:4; 1 Pet 2:3). Kindness was attributed to the Lord in Eph 2:7 (cf. Rom 11:22; Titus 3:4), and the consideration of the needs and interests of others is now required of His children. This word was hardly used in this sense in non-Jewish Greek. (2) the goodness of people one to another (Col 3:12; 2 Cor 6:6; Gal 5:22). It is this important virtue of God that Paul wants believers to imitate in living a life of love (5:1). It does not come naturally and cannot be produced from one’s innate resources; it is a fruit of the Spirit and can therefore only become a reality as one relies on the Holy Spirit (Gal. 5:22). Kindness is utterly inconsistent with abusive talk or rudeness. [Best, 462f; Lincoln, 309; Arnold, 308; O’Brien, 351; Hoehner, 637f; MacArthur, 190; Hodge, 200f]

**tenderhearted,** — *εὐσπλαγχνοὶ [eusplagchnoi]* — We say in our American culture that we may love someone *‘with all our heart.’* We all have said that but have we ever asked what our physical hearts have to do with love? In the cultures of the New Testament similar emotions would have been attributed to the intestines. Go figure.

The word used by Paul here is an adjective, *εὐσπλαγχνοὶ [eusplagchnoi]* which as this compound form is a rare word (only here and 1 Pet 3:8 in this exact form). It is defined by BDAG as *‘having tender feelings for someone, tenderhearted, compassionate.’* It was used by Hippocrates to be literally *‘with healthy intestines.’* [BDAG] The root of this word [splugchna] is what came bursting out of Judas’s abdomen after he fell from the tree where he hung himself (Acts 1:18). The root was originally used mostly in the plural to refer to the inward parts (heart, lungs, liver, kidneys) that was reserved in the sacrifices to be eaten by the devotees. *‘Tender mercy’* is attributed to God (Luke 1:78) and of Jesus Christ (Phil 1:8). This word is regularly used in the NT to speak of God’s unbounded mercy to sinners (Matt. 9:36; 14:14; 18:27; Luke 7:13; 10:33; 15:20). The verb form is used to demonstrate Jesus’ compassion on the crowd who were like sheep without a shepherd (Matt 9:36; cf. 14:14), for the leper who wanted to be healed (Mark 1:41) and for the widow at Nain (Luke 7:13). Peter encouraged all believers to show this virtue: *‘Finally, all of you be of one mind, having compassion for one another; love as brothers, be tenderhearted [eusplagchnoi], be courteous’* (1 Pet 3:8 NKJV). We as believers are to be tenderhearted, meaning we will be sympathetic to the needs of our brothers and sisters in Christ. Feelings of bitterness, resentment, and a desire for retaliation must give way to a warm and tender heart. [Best, 463; Arnold, 308f; O’Brien, 351; Hoehner, 638f; Eadie, 359f; MacArthur, 190; Hodge, 201]

**forgiving one another, forgiving each other** — *χαριζόμενοι ἑαυτοῖς [charizomenoi heautois]* — According to Vine’s Expository Dictionary of the NT there are two main words translated *‘forgive, forgave, forgiveness.’* One of the words used has the sense of *‘to send forth, send away’* and denotes *‘to remit or forgive debts (Matt 6:12; 18:27, 32) or sins (Matt 9:2, 5, 6; 12:31, 32; Acts 8:22; Rom 4:7; James 5:15; 1 John 1:9; 2:12).* In this sense we think of the scapegoat sent away bearing sins in the OT. The other word is the one used here and (with one exception) the word by Paul for forgiveness. This word has the sense of *‘to bestow favor unconditionally, forgive’* (within this word *‘charizomenoi’* we see the root *‘charis’* meaning *‘grace’*). All the major versions translates this word as *‘forgiving.’* BDAG defines this word as (1) *to give freely as a favor, give graciously;* (2) *to cancel a sum of money that is owed;* (3) *to show oneself gracious by forgiving wrongdoing, forgive, pardon.* Note how forms of this word is used throughout the NT:

*‘And that very hour He cured many of infirmities, afflictions, and evil spirits; and to many blind He gave [‘freely gave’] sight.’* (Luke 7:21 NKJV)

'He who did not spare His own Son, but delivered Him up for us all, how shall He not with Him also freely give us all things?' (Rom 8:32 NKJV)

'Therefore God also has highly exalted Him and given [ 'freely given' ] Him the name which is above every name' (Phil 2:9 NKJV)

'For to you it has been granted [ 'freely granted, freely given' ] behalf of Christ, not only to believe in Him, but also to suffer for His sake' (Phil 1:29 NKJV)

'And when they had nothing with which to repay, he freely forgave them both. Tell Me, therefore, which of them will love him more?' (Luke 7:42 NKJV)

'And you, being dead in your trespasses and the uncircumcision of your flesh, He has made alive together with Him, having forgiven you all trespasses' (Col 2:13 NKJV)

'so that, on the contrary, you ought rather to forgive and comfort him, lest perhaps such a one be swallowed up with too much sorrow.... Now whom you forgive anything, I also forgive. For if indeed I have forgiven anything, I have forgiven that one for your sakes in the presence of Christ' (2 Cor 2:7, 10 NKJV)

'For what is it in which you were inferior to other churches, except that I myself was not burdensome to you? Forgive me this wrong!' (2 Cor 12:13 NKJV)

**UNLIMITED SUCCESSION OF ACTS OF FORGIVENESS** — *The commentators note this is a present participle suggesting an unlimited succession of acts of forgiveness. "Perhaps most difficult of all, Paul appeals to them to be forgiving to one another. The present tense of the participle combined with the present tense of the main verb stresses that this is to be a regular practice in the Christian community. Jesus himself strongly emphasized this to Peter when he said that the brother who continually sins against him should be forgiven as much as 'seventy-seven times' (Matt 18:22)." [Arnold, 309] "Good and compassionate people will forgive others and so the vices like anger which would destroy the community (v. 31) are themselves destroyed." [Best, 463] "Instead of resentment and retaliation, railing and vindictive objurgation, Christians are to pardon offences — to forgive one another in reciprocal generosity. Faults will be committed and offences must come, but believers are to forgive them, are not to exaggerate them, but to cover them up from view, by throwing over them the mantle of universal charity." [Eadie, 360]*

**according as also God in Christ did forgive you. (YLT), even as and just as also God in Christ forgave you. (Wuest)** — *καθὼς καὶ ὁ θεὸς ἐν Χριστῷ ἐχαρίσατο ὑμῖν [kathōs kai ho theos en Christō echarisato humin] — The motive is now given: God has forgiven believers. This verb is in the aorist tense suggesting the inference is to the moment of our salvation, not our daily forgiveness in sanctification; although it could possibly be a reference to the death of Jesus Christ. "The aorist tense combined with 'in Christ' refers to God's act of redemption through the cross (1:7; 5:2). There is no greater example of forgiveness that can be adduced." [Arnold, 309] [Note some manuscripts have 'forgive us' in the place of 'forgive you.' All the major versions I surveyed has the second person plural, 'forgive you.']*

**'BECAUSE GOD HAS FORGIVEN US' OR 'LIKE GOD HAS FORGIVEN US'?**

— The 'just as, even as' could be understood in a causal sense ('forgive others because God has forgiven you,' making God's action in Christ the basis of Christian behavior) or a comparative sense ('forgive in the way God forgives,' which Paul will continue in 5:1, 'therefore be imitators of God as dear children'). Both senses are true and undoubtedly part of Paul's point. "The parable of the unforgiving servant (Mt 18.23-35) teaches that those who have experienced forgiveness should themselves forgive; equally in

Jn 13.34; 1 Jn 4.11, 19 to be loved by God should lead the one loved to love. *The basis of Christian action lies in what God has done for Christians.... Goodness, compassion and a forgiving spirit are essential for those living in community.*" [Best, 464] *"What God has done in Christ for believers, which has been the theme of the first half of the letter, now provides both the norm and the grounds for believers' own behavior. God's forgiveness of them becomes the paradigm for their mutual forgiveness."* [Lincoln, 310] "The model for Christians forgiving one another is God's own forgiveness of his people. The conjunction is probably best taken as expressing both cause and manner, and thereby establishes God's act of forgiveness as both the motivation and the pattern for forgiving others." [Arnold, 309]

"An unforgiving Christian is a contradiction in terms. When you see a professing Christian who stubbornly refuses to relinquish a grudge, there's good reason to question the genuineness of that person's faith."

John MacArthur

