



# Forgiveness

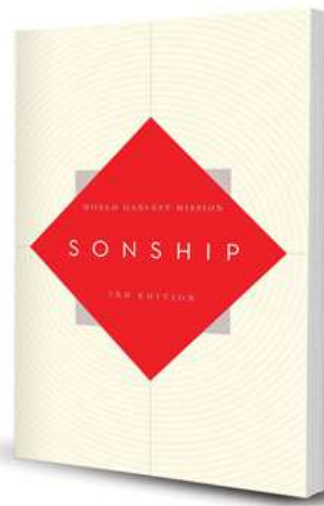
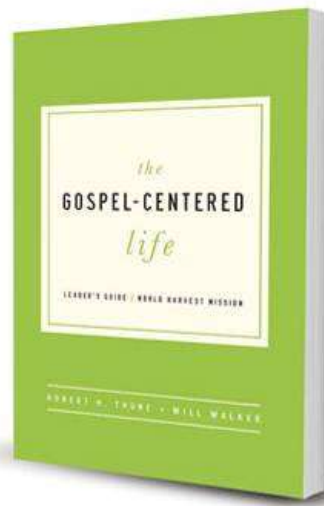
Gospel- Centered Living

## Corrie Ten Boom's predicament



You may have heard the story of Corrie Ten Boom, the Dutch woman who survived years of torture in German prison camps for hiding Jews in her home. At the end of her biography she said that after escaping the horrors of the Ravensbruck camp where the Nazis brutalized women in the cruelest ways before executing them, she began going on speaking tours around the world speaking of the power of God to forgive. She said that if God could enable her to forgive the Nazi's, then there is no pit too deep for God's love, no sin too great to be forgiven. Then, at the end of one of these speeches, a man came up to shake her hand. As he approached, her heart turned to ice. This man was one of the prison guards who had imprisoned her for no just cause, killed her sister, stripped her naked and beat her and treated her worse than an animal. And here he was wanting to shake her hand like it was nothing.

As we consider what is involved in growing as a Christian and how God's grace can transform us and empower us to share His grace with others, we come to the topic of forgiveness.



Based on *Sonship*, chapter 14, and  
*The Gospel-Centered Life*, chapter 8

What does God's word say about this?

## “Forgive AS...”

“Start clothing yourselves therefore like God-chosen holy and beloved ones with heartfelt compassion, kindness, humility, meekness, [and] patience, upholding each other and being gracious to (χαριζόμενοι) one another. If someone happens to have an issue with someone, then just as Christ was gracious to y’all, even so should y’all be.”

Colossians 3:12-13 (NAW)

- It’s a Process,
- It’s for God’s loved ones,
- It’s put on by means of “upholding” and “graciously forgiving,”
- It’s according to God’s standard, not ours,
- It’s impossibly extensive and comprehensive.

- First of all, note that forgiveness is a process. The Aorist tense of the Greek Imperative “clothe yourselves” points to the start of this process. It is not something that you will complete in this life. But we can start putting on wonderful new attitudes towards others like we would a beautiful dress or a fine suit.
- Just like clothes tell us something about who a person is and what that person does, this amazing attire is appropriate for people chosen by God to be holy and loved by him. If you are trusting in Jesus to make you right with God, you are in a special, holy relationship with Him, and you are dearly loved by Him. These clothes are for you.
- The two participles tell us how to go about clothing ourselves like people that have been chosen by God to be holy and loved by Him: We are 1) to Bear with/put up with/support/uphold each other and 2) we are to forgive/be gracious with one another.
  1. The opposite of forgiving is holding someone guilty, putting them down, looking for your opportunity to get even or for them to get the punishment they deserve. When you “bear with” someone, you’re not merely tolerating their obnoxious behavior, you are actually carrying at least part of their weight. When you “bear” them, you are supporting them by holding them up. It’s hard to uphold someone you are bitter toward, so I think these two underlined words go hand-in-hand, approaching the same problem from a positive and negative perspective.
  2. The second participle describing how to clothe ourselves like God’s people is a word translated “forgive” in most versions. There are two different Greek words translated into English as “forgive.” 80% of the time, it is the word “*aphiemi*” which has to do with “releasing/letting go.” However, the word here in Colossians 3 is the lesser-used word “*charizomai*” which has to do with “giving something away for free/unearned.” I don’t have a problem with translating it “Forgive,” but I translated it “be gracious,” just to bring out this little bit of distinction in the wording.
- So, how gracious do we need to be? God didn’t leave it up to you to decide how much patience and forgiveness to extend. It’s not up to your judgment as to how much others deserve, and it’s not even up to your ability – how much graciousness you are ABLE to extend. God has given us a standard by which to measure how much patience and forbearance He expects from us, and that standard is God’s own example: However much God does it is how much you should do it. No less.
- Note that the demand for free forgiveness is also comprehensive “WHATEVER grievances” *How can anyone ever be up to this?*

## Observations on Forgiveness

- Bitterness is disobedience which disconnects you from Jesus and cripples your love for others.
- Crucial issue: Unforgiveness makes a hole in your heart. Forgiveness “blows a hole in the gates of hell”
- Grudge-keeping calculates what the offender must pay you to make it right.
- “The gospel means closing the bookkeeping department of your heart.”  
~Jack Miller
- “Forgiveness is costly and requires death.”

HOW is forgiveness possible?



## “... and put on love.”

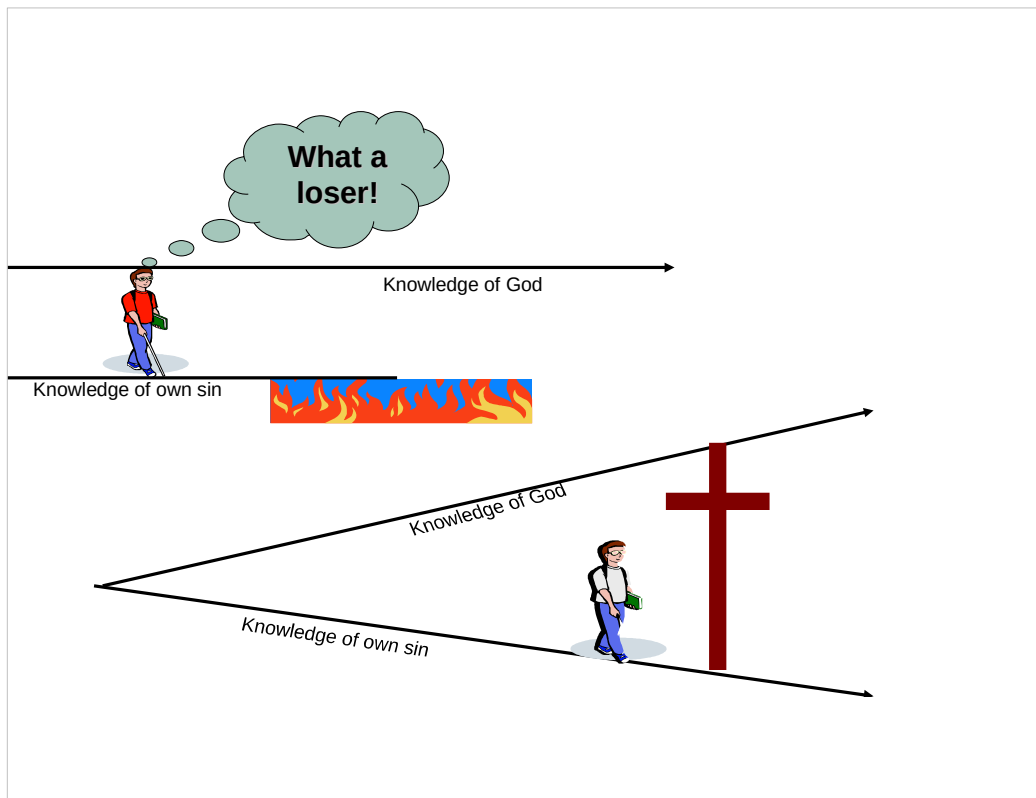
“Start clothing yourselves therefore like God-chosen holy and **beloved** ones ... being gracious to one another... just as Christ was gracious to y’all, even so should y’all be. On top of all these things [clothe yourselves with] **love** which is the tie-together of completion.

~ Colossians 3:12-14 (NAW)

Jesus to Simon the Pharisee after the sinful woman washed Jesus’ feet:

“... Her sins (which are many) have been forgiven such that she loved much, but **he loves little to whom little is forgiven.**” Luke 7:47 (NAW)





The guy on top is like Simon the Pharisee. He is not in over his head. God's holiness is in comfortable range and He thinks he's rocking along in life pretty well. He's looking down at the other guy (like the sinful woman) who is way over his head in sin and saying, "What a loser!" But the guy on top is blind. He doesn't realize that he is about to pitch deep into the flames of hell. It is the one who sees the depth of his sin and the unattainable height of God's holiness and who nevertheless trusts that Jesus died on the cross to make him right with God, that is the one whose sins will be forgiven

## “... and put on love.”

“Start clothing yourselves therefore like God-chosen holy and **beloved** ones ... being gracious to one another... just as Christ\* was gracious to y’all, even so should y’all be. On top of all these things [clothe yourselves with] **love** which is the tie-together of completion.

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- “[When] you’re having trouble forgiving... [p]ray that [God] would show you the size of your debt, how much He loves you, and how much he’s forgiven you.” ~Jack Miller





## Dan Allender “Feeding Your Enemy”

**“God’s forgiveness of us is a passionate movement of strength and mercy toward us, the offenders. His bold strength is the force of His holiness, which will not rest until all sin is destroyed and His glory shines as the sun. His bold mercy constantly beckons us to return to His embrace, a place of rest and joy. He forgives our sin, but strongly moves to destroy the cancer within us that limits our joy and vitality ... He fully faces the damage we have done while offering us a taste of kindness intended to lead us to repentance and reconciliation... To forgive another means to cancel a debt in order to provide a door of opportunity for (1) repentance and (2) restoration of the broken relationship... A forgiving heart offers to others a glimpse of the mysterious wonder of God’s character.”**



## Matthew 18:21-35 (NAW)

Then, Peter, having approached Him, said, “Lord, how many times is my brother going to sin against me and will I forgive him? Up to seven?”

Jesus says to him, “To you I’m not saying up to seven times, but rather up to seventy times seven. As a result, the kingdom of the heavens is similar to a man – a king – who wanted to settle accounting with his servants... one owing 10,000 year’s-wages was brought up to him...”

v.32 ‘You wicked servant, I forgave you all that obligation since you called me off; wasn’t it proper for you to have mercy on your fellow-servant, like I myself also had mercy on you?’ And his master, since he was enraged, delivered him to the tormentors... Thus also my Father ... will do to y’all, unless each one of you forgive your brother, from your hearts.”

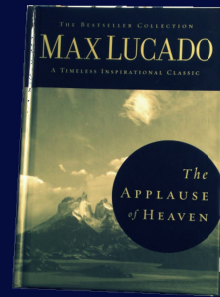
– **Forgiveness is crucial!**

– **To forgive, we must believe we’ve been forgiven.**

- Forgiveness is crucial. Jesus threatens eternal torment to those who refuse to forgive.
- And how do we see our way clear to forgive? The parable illustrates the same principle that it is in knowing that you are forgiven much that you can be able to forgive others.
- This is Jesus’ answer to Peter’s question, “How often must I forgive my brother?”

## The Process of Forgiveness

- God makes the first move, although He is the offended party: Rom. 5:8-10
- Our first move is to repent of our own sin rather than to condemn other people's sin against us. Hosea 14:2 Take words with you, And return to the LORD. Say to Him, "Take away all iniquity; Receive us graciously, For we will offer the sacrifices of our lips. (NKJ)
- We taste God's forgiveness: "The energy to serve others a taste of God will be no greater than our own taste of God's forgiveness." ~Dan Allender
- We forgive others: "When I saw the image of my father in his face, my enemy became my brother" ~Max Lucado, *T.A.O.H.*, p. 107



4 In his book, *The Applause of Heaven*, Max Lucado tells the following story of a friend named Daniel in Brazil:

Daniel worked at a gym and he had the muscles to show it. He was a big guy. But he wanted to start his own gym, so he went to the bank got his brother to co-sign a loan for him to buy a gymnasium to start his own business. The bank called to tell him the loan was all ready, but when he went to pick up the loan check, the bank informed him that his brother had come by earlier that day and had restructured the loan such that it would not be given to Daniel but would instead pay off his own house mortgage leaving Daniel still responsible to pay off the loan.

You can imagine the sense of betrayal Daniel experienced. For two years he and his brother avoided each other while Daniel's anger seethed. In the meantime, Daniel met a missionary who told him about Jesus and Daniel became a Christian. One day, Daniel noticed his brother on a crowded street. Before his brother could run away, he grabbed him. He said, "My initial impulse was to grab him around the throat and choke the life out of him. But as I looked into his face, my anger began to melt. For as I saw him, I saw the image of my father. I saw my father's eyes. I saw my father's look. I saw my father's expression. And as I saw my father in his face, my enemy once again became my brother." They embraced and wept.

Lucado comments: "Seeing the father's image in the face of the enemy. Try that. The next time you see or think of the one who broke your heart, look twice. As you look at his face, look also for his face-the face of the One who forgave you. Look into the face of the Father who gave you grace when no one else gave you a chance. Find the face of the God who forgives in the face of your enemy. And then, because God has forgiven you more than you'll ever be called on to forgive in another, set your enemy-and yourself-free. And allow the hole in your heart to heal."

## Ephesians 4:22-32 (NKJ)

... put off... the old man ... and be renewed in the spirit of your mind... put on the new man which was created according to God, in true righteousness and holiness. Therefore, putting away lying, "LET EACH ONE OF YOU SPEAK TRUTH ... do not let the sun go down on your wrath... Let him who stole steal no longer, but rather let him labor, working with *his* hands what is good, that he may have something to give him who has need. Let no corrupt word proceed out of your mouth, but what is good for necessary edification, that it may impart grace to the hearers... Let all bitterness, wrath, anger, clamor, and evil speaking be put away from you, with all malice. And be kind to one another, tender-hearted, **forgiving one another, even as God in Christ forgave you.**

Our anchor passage in Colossians 3:12 talks about clothing yourselves. A parallel passage in the neighboring epistle to the Ephesians talks about putting off the “old self” and putting on the “new self.”

- We see once again it is about the attitude of our mind.
- We also see again that forgiveness and love come from outside of us by God’s sovereign choice: The new man is “created by God” and that is what we “put on”
- Just as Colossians says we are “holy and beloved,” Ephesians says that our new person is “holy” and “truly righteous”
- The result is love not only toward God but also toward our fellow human beings.
  - We will no longer defraud them with lies.
  - We will no longer hate them.
  - We will no longer steal from them but rather will work so that we have something to give to them.
  - We will not speak meanly but rather speak words that build up and impart grace to them.
  - And we will forgive them.
- And once again, what is the standard of forgiveness? The offender’s merit? Your ability to extend goodwill? No. The standard is God’s own example: “just as God for Christ’s sake has forgiven you.” In the same way and to the same extent that God forgave you; your holy and righteous self will forgive others.

## The next step after forgiveness:

- A desire for reconciliation on the part of the offended party.
- Repentance on the part of the offending party.
- Will not always happen, but must be hoped for.

“Forgiveness is costly. It means canceling a debt when we feel we have every right to demand payment. It means absorbing the pain, hurt, shame, and grief of someone’s sin against us. It means longing for repentance and restoration. But this is exactly how God has acted toward us in Jesus Christ. And through the gospel, the Holy Spirit empowers us to do the same toward others.”

~GCL p.53



Now, after you have forgiven someone in your heart, there is another step to take, and that is to bring the reality of God’s love out of your heart and into the open with the person whom you have just forgiven.

- This may need to take the form of words of forgiveness spoken to them.
- It should include an expression of love toward them; something you can do to give of yourself to benefit them. You may have to think carefully so that it is indeed interpreted as lovingkindness by them.
- And it should open the door of friendship toward them, welcoming them back into fellowship with you. (There may be exceptions to this, such as people God says not to be in fellowship with, but such exceptions are rare.)
- (\*) Now, they may not respond. Actual fellowship and trust may never result. All we can do is open the door and invite them back in to your life. It is between them and God how they respond to that.
- As **2Corinthians 5:18** says, “...all things *are* of God, who has reconciled us to Himself through Jesus Christ, and has given us the ministry of reconciliation” (NKJ)
- (\*) Quote from the Gospel-Centered Life book



## Rubber, Meet Road!

- Who has been offensive toward you?
- Why do they bother you so much? How have they wronged you?
- What would they need to do to make it right with you?
- What has God forgiven you of? How have you minimized your sin and minimized your view of God's love toward you?
- Will you absorb the offender's sin against you and hope for reconciliation?
- What can you do to take the initiative to offer reconciliation with that person like God did with you?

“Start clothing yourselves therefore like God-chosen holy and beloved ones with heartfelt compassion, kindness, humility, meekness, [and] patience, upholding each other and being gracious to one another. If someone happens to have an issue with someone, then just as Christ was gracious to y'all, even so should y'all be. On top of all these things [clothe yourselves with] **love** which is the tie-together of completion.”

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