

## Clothed With Christ – Put on Forgiveness

1. Remember the passages read to us today by Paul Hartmann – **Ephesians 4:31-5:2** and **Colossians 3:12-14**. What the Apostle Paul is saying here is important...and it isn't optional. So...what do we do about forgiveness?
2. Forgiveness is baked into our faith. It is not added in later, it is not a part of our faith; it permeates our faith. It is found in every single part of our faith: our belief that there is a God, that He loves us, that His Son loves us, that His Spirit guides us, that forgiveness was given to us through Christ, that Christ walked among us and forgave up to and including the point of death.
3. It is in our Lord's Prayer – asking God to forgive us and asking God to forgive others as He has forgiven us. Take a moment with that one for awhile. He made it very plain, very early on that forgiveness is woven through everything he was bringing us.
4. We spent two weeks talking about being clothed with peace and last week talking about freedom from and freedom to. If we come at forgiveness this week in the way we normally approach the subject, I think there would be significant overlap since it is, as we've stressed in these opening minutes, such an integral part of our faith.
5. So let's do this: we all know that we are forgiven and that we will need forgiveness throughout our lives. Agreed? We also know that we are to forgive others. We know we are to love others, even our enemies. Agreed?
6. All right. Since we know that, let's not spend the bulk of our time on that. Instead, let's talk about what forgiveness is not and then come back and look at what it is.
7. I used to be taught that we were to "forgive and forget." That is not in the Bible, not in those words and not in any commands or examples we have other than that of God "wiping out" our sins...and that is an illustration of what He does that we cannot do. (the pan of wax)

8. In some sense, to forgive and forget is to set yourself up for pain. It also ignores the fact that sin changes things and we can't act like it doesn't. Let's say someone tried to destroy your reputation. They later repent. Is everything back to where it was before their sin? No. Can it get back there? No. (the pillowcase of feathers)
9. Despite our best efforts, we cannot make something that happened not happen. It's too late. It is released into the universe. What now?
10. We live in a real universe and serve a real God while living among real people so...let's be real. Forgiveness isn't saying that what happened to you didn't matter. Of course it did. You are a child of God, an intentional creation of the Father of the Universe, God Almighty and someone harmed you intentionally. That matters.
11. When you forgive that someone, you are not saying it didn't matter then and it doesn't matter now; you are releasing them from their guilt as far as it pertains to you. You are giving God a clear path to blessing them (and you). You are saying, like Stephen at his death, "lay not this sin to their charge."
12. You are ceasing to wish them harm. You are stepping back and dropping your desire for revenge.
13. Forgiveness does not require you to reestablish a relationship with the one who hurt you. (babysitter/molester... business associate who defrauded you... abusive husband/wife). In short, forgiveness does not require you to be stupid. People can change, but it is all right to ask for "fruits worthy of repentance" as John the Baptist required of the Pharisees in [Matthew 3:8](#).
14. Forgiveness is not sending the message that what happened was no big deal. If it was, it was. Evil, pain or injustice was loosed into the world. That matters.
15. Forgiveness does not send the message that "I'm okay now." When the families of those dear people shot and killed in a South Carolina church a few years ago came together and forgave the shooter, that in no way meant that they were okay. They weren't okay. They were just releasing him from their lives and letting God

and the justice system do what they do. They weren't going to carry him, hate, and the need for vengeance.

16. Forgiveness is a deliberate decision to not carry around the one who hurt you. You are absolutely wise to set up defenses to make sure you are not going to be hurt again. If you see that they have changed, you can lower those defenses but...carefully.
17. Forgiveness is allowing God a clear lane to forgive them and to heal you for God cannot take your hand if it is full of rocks.
18. By forgiving and removing them from your backpack, you give God room to work in you and move you forward from your place of hurt. Your scars will still be there. Jesus's scars were there even after he forgave those who crucified him so expect yours to hang around as well.
19. But scars can be roadmaps of where God has taken you. Scars are a reminder that something tried to kill you and failed. Scars can be the marks of the Lord Jesus in you...or they can be waved about for all to see as you bask in revenge and victim mode. But if you make sure people see your scars, they may miss Jesus. Show them Jesus instead.
20. Walk away. Walk away with God. Let Him deal with what is now behind you. He's good at that. And if He chooses to forgive them, what is that to you? You are now free and gone, saved by the same one who may very well save your enemies. That's only fair, for he forgave your enemy's enemy...