

When You Are Wronged

Colossians 3:13-14

20 March 2022

11:00 AM (Halifax); 3:00 PM (Glenholme & Livestream)

Introduction:

As most of you know by now, I am currently between two sermon series.

- I wanted to take this time—with the congregational meeting coming up and all—to do a few special messages before we begin our new series in Hebrews.

Two weeks ago, I preached about how the church needs to be sure that we are on the Lord's side. He does not follow us around to do what we want, we follow Him.

- His agenda is to restore sinners to the Father who worship and obey Him.
- We are to come to Him that we may be reconciled to the Father and then we are to labour with Jesus to see His righteous kingdom fully established.

Last week, we looked at church discipline as an ordinance that He has appointed for us.

- The purpose of this ordinance is to preserve the character of the church as a society characterised by reconciliation with God.
- When it is clear that a member is not on board with this, we are to admonish them and rebuke them if necessary, and if they will not repent, we are to suspend them from the Lord's Supper, or, if necessary, put them out of the church.
- We do this for their sake, to wake them up, for the sake of the rest of the church so that their sin will not spread, for the honour of Christ and for the testimony of the church as a society that is about reconciliation with God.

Today, I want to take up a somewhat related subject.

- I want to speak to you about what you ought to do as a Christian when you are wronged—when someone sins against you.
 - It is very harmful to have offenses lodging in your heart that you do not deal with.
 - When we do this, it destroys the sweet savour that the church is meant to have and fills the air with the smoke of resentment, bitterness, and even hostility.
 - Sadly, some of your homes and even your marriages are plagued by these noxious clouds, and it hampers your testimony.
 - Likewise, if these stink clouds are allowed to fester in the church, they will pollute the air and cause many to be defiled.
 - Our goal should be to always do, on our part, what makes for true peace (which is never separated from purity).
 - There is indeed a counterfeit peace that throws purity out in the name of preserving peace, but that is peace that is not rooted in peace with God.
 - Such peace is a grand delusion and will not stand in the day of judgment if it even makes it that far!

For our scripture reading, I have chosen Colossians 3:1-17.

- I will zero in on verse 13, but not without consideration of the context.
- Listen now I read to you from God's holy word, beginning in Colossians 3:1:

Colossians 3:1-17: If then you were raised with Christ, seek those things which are above, where Christ is, sitting at the right hand of God. ² Set your mind on things above, not on things on the earth. ³ For you died, and your life is hidden with Christ in God. ⁴ When Christ *who is* our life appears, then you also will appear with Him in glory. ⁵ Therefore put to death your members which are on the earth: fornication, uncleanness, passion, evil desire, and covetousness, which is idolatry. ⁶ Because of these things the wrath of God is coming upon the sons of disobedience, ⁷ in which you yourselves once walked when you lived in them. ⁸ But now you yourselves are to put off all these: anger, wrath, malice, blasphemy, filthy language out of your mouth. ⁹ Do not lie to one another, since you have put off the old man with his deeds, ¹⁰ and have put on the new *man* who is renewed in knowledge according to the image of Him who created him, ¹¹ where

there is neither Greek nor Jew, circumcised nor uncircumcised, barbarian, Scythian, slave *nor* free, but Christ *is* all and in all. ¹² Therefore, as *the* elect of God, holy and beloved, put on tender mercies, kindness, humility, meekness, longsuffering; ¹³ bearing with one another, and forgiving one another, if anyone has a complaint against another; even as Christ forgave you, so you also *must do*. ¹⁴ But above all these things put on love, which is the bond of perfection. ¹⁵ And let the peace of God rule in your hearts, to which also you were called in one body; and be thankful. ¹⁶ Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly in all wisdom, teaching and admonishing one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing with grace in your hearts to the Lord. ¹⁷ And whatever you do in word or deed, *do* all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through Him.

May the Lord add His blessing to the reading of His holy Word.

- Our focus, again, is on what you should do when you are wronged.
 - I want to begin with:

I. An illustration of what happens when you are wronged and do not deal with it in the Lord.

- A. Sally and Ed are professing Christians—married 20 years.
- Mostly they have learned to stay clear of each other...
 - 1. But on Monday, when the children’s piano teacher called, Sally blew up...
 - “You always forget to pay her!
 - “It is so embarrassing!
 - “Two weeks ago, you forgot to take Ted to his dental appointment...
 - “Won’t you ever learn to care about anybody but yourself?
 - “All you can think about is your coin collection
 - “Last year, you even forgot our anniversary!
 - “I am still waiting for you to install that new cabinet you got me two years ago...
 - “You forgot to tell me when my uncle went to the hospital—can’t you send a text?
 - “And last week, you never told me that the pastor’s wife called...she thought I ignored her because I didn’t want to help the Tomkins family...
 - “When will you ever change?”

2. “Well what about you?” Ed thinks (he rarely says anything) as she goes on, “Here you are blowing up again.
 - “I always have to come along behind and pick up the pieces when you lose it with the children.”
 - “What happened to the book you read about anger?”
 - “Even your own mother is concerned...
 - “I can’t believe that you blew up at her... all she did was forget to meet the plumber... you should have stayed home that day anyway.”
 - Though Ed keeps it all inside, his thoughts are actually worse than Sally’s...
 - Yes, there is cursing in his heart.
 - And thoughts such as, “If I could go back, I would have married Suzie or Cindy... now I am stuck with you.”
- B. Sally and Ed both need to deal with their sins.
1. Sally is not grieved and disgusted with her anger.
 - If you could see in her heart, you’d find that she thinks it is justified.
 - She has good reasons to be angry, and she has never struck Ed...
 - She restrains herself all the time... but after a while, it is just too much.
 2. And Ed needs to get serious about his sin of irresponsibility.
 - He thinks it is a very trivial thing.
 - He means well, he’s a nice guy, helps people, he never gets angry like Sally.
 - He isn’t so uptight like she is.
 - The piano teacher still gets paid. What’s the big deal if she has to remind him every now and then?
 3. I could preach sermons on both anger and irresponsibility.
 - Actually, it was not that long ago that I did—
 - Anger—with the sermons on the sixth commandment and one of the ones on the tenth commandment...
 - And irresponsibility—with the fifth commandment and the eighth...
- C. But today, I want to address the problem of letting sin build up between you and other people—of not living in reconciliation with your brother or sister.
1. Both Sally and Ed have long lists.
 - Their quarrels are never simple—for one reason:
 - Whenever conflict arises, both of them have a long list of grievances against the other—
 - Sally blurts them all out and Ed meditates on them for hours and even days.
 - A single issue is loaded up with all the resentment from twenty years of unresolved issues.
 - Love cannot co-exists with resentment.
 2. The lists they have are not merely wrongs that were done to them...
 - They are wrongs that have never been dealt with!
 - They are like a family that never takes out the garbage...
 - All through the house, there are old tuna fish cans, watermelon rinds, broken toys, burned out light bulbs, even an old refrigerator and mattress.
 - All these things remain to irritate and annoy, day after day, week after week... and the smell—oh the smell of the place!

3. That's what Ed and Sally's relationship is like—a garbage dump...
 - There are a few pleasant things among the rubble.
 - They enjoy good meals and a day at the park.
 - but the garbage is always there to irritate and annoy and stink.
 - That's what your relationships are like when you don't ever take out the garbage.

II. Colossians 3:13 speaks of two ways to take out the garbage.

- If you look at verse 12, it tells us to put on what we might call “virtues for relationships...”
 - It says to put on **tender mercies, kindness, humility, meekness, longsuffering** (or patience),
 - And then verse 13 gives two things that we are to do to maintain healthy relationships... **bearing with one another and forgiving one another**
 - These are both participial phrases—phrases that begin with an -i-n-g word.
 - **bearing with one another and forgiving one another...**
 - This is how we take out the garbage in our relationships.
- Let's look at them.

A. First, **bearing with one another.**

1. This refers to wrongs that you ought to simply overlook.
 - We live in a sinful world, and people will do you wrong.
 - They will be negligent, they will promise things and not follow through, they will make a nasty comment, they will exaggerate or misrepresent you, they will fail to keep confidences, they will nag you, they will lose their temper or be short with you, they will take advantage of you or use you, they will not do their share of the work, they will annoy you, they will be careless with your things, they will boast while putting you down, they won't listen, or they will go on and on talking...
 - The list could go on forever...
 - We live in a fallen world.
2. But most of the time, you ought to bear with these things.
 - Just put up with them.
 - You become a pill yourself when you harp on every little thing.
 - Some of you are perfectionists.
 - We laugh at being perfectionists and often take a bit of pride in it.
 - True, it is good to do things well, but in love—because you want to bless people—not because you have an idol of never being frustrated or failing—about always having to have things the way you want them.
 - Parents often indulge their children—always giving them whatever they want when they are little, never letting them know what it is be frustrated.
 - When they grow up, they either become fornicators, drunkards, drug addicts, suicidal, or perfectionists that destroy every relationship.

- Jay Adams says probably 85 to 90 percent of the counseling situations that counselors have to deal with are due to a person's failure to put up with things.
 - When someone comes complaining about how badly they have been treated, often it's not really that bad.
 - The problem is that they have been harbouring every little thing instead of letting things go or dealing with the ones that need to be dealt.
 - I was around when Jay published that book in 1994.
 - He gave me a copy—and I have seen this problem get a lot more prevalent than ever—it seems that people all think about their personal rights.
 - It destroys them and it destroys their relationships.
 - They go around feeling sorry for themselves and feel that they have a right to be hurt and angry about every little thing.
 - Even if they bite their tongue, it is obvious that they are displeased.
 - In First Corinthians 6, Paul went so far as to tell the Corinthians that they should be willing to be defrauded.
 - They had been taking each other to court before unbelievers.
 - He tells them that this needs to stop and then he adds in 6:7:
 - **it is already an utter failure for you that you go to law against one another. Why do you not rather accept wrong? Why do you not rather *let yourselves* be cheated?**
 - Peter tells us that **love will cover a multitude of sins** (1 Peter 4:8).
 - Prov 10 12 says: **Hatred stirs up strife, but love covers all sins.**
 - Prov 17:9: **He who covers a transgression seeks love, but he who repeats a matter separates friends.**
3. Jesus is a master at bearing with His people.
- a. We read of Him with His disciples.
 - He certainly did rebuke them when they stepped out of line—sometimes quite sharply—such as the time that He said to Peter, “Get behind me Satan, for you are not savouring the things of God...”
 - But He certainly did not get on their case about every little thing.
 - He rather led them from glory to glory—little by little.
 - b. Think of how graciously He deals with us.
 - He delights in our progress.
 - He is so tender and patient with us.
 - What if He hammered on us about every little infraction—even about many that are not all that little?
 - I have found that even after years of happily walking with Him, there are times when He exposes something that has been there all along.
 - When He exposes it to me by His Spirit, I see how utterly disgusting it was—but for all those years He bore patiently with me..
 - I have told you before about how He exposed the whining that I was doing—when I saw how disgusting it was, I took it seriously and stopped.

- Not that I am free of it, but free of the indulging in it as I had done for so long.
- c. My brothers and sisters, you need to learn to live in Christ.
- By that I mean that you need to see that in coming to Him for salvation, you died with Him and were raised to live a new life in Him.
 - The way of His lovely house is to bear with one another like He does.
 - I am going to develop this more later, so I will just mention it now.
4. Before we move to forgiveness, I want to encourage you to be sure that you don't apply this backwards.
- What does that mean?
 - It means that you turn it on the people around you as another thing to hold against them!
 - You think, "That's right. Sally needs to get off my case and stop being a perfectionist."
 - No, you need to say rather, "I need to learn to bear with Sally and not have these hard thoughts about her."
 - I bet I caught a lot of you when I said that.
 - I bet a lot of you were doing this very sin at church—thinking about the people in your life that don't bear with you and not even considering the fact that in thinking that, you were not bearing with them.
 - Even if you say nothing to them, is there bitterness and resentment in your heart?
 - That is the sin we are talking about.
 - You need to take the garbage out.
 - Right now, I am telling you to do it. After we look at forgiveness, I am going to get into how to do it...
 - Let's move now to forgiveness.
- B. The second way to take out the garbage of past offences is by, as verse 13 says, **“forgiving one another, if anyone has a complaint against another, even as Christ forgave you, so you also must do.”**
1. Some of you might be wondering, “But what's the difference? Weren't we just talking about letting things go? bearing with each other? Isn't that forgiveness?”
- a. The answer is, “No.” Bearing with one another is not the same as forgiveness.
- When you bear with someone, you don't confront them with sin.
 - Often you don't say anything at all. You just let it go.
 - And let me add that you need to be sure that you really do let it go.
 - Don't allow yourself to hold it against them.
 - You are not bearing with them if you do.
- But forgiving is quite different—at least biblical forgiveness is.
- b. Forgiveness always involves going to the person who has sinned against you.

- You go because you need to be reconciled to them and they need to be reconciled to you.
 - In other words, the relationship is broken by their sin against you.
 - Perhaps they have lied to you or gossiped about you, or lost their temper and yelled at you.
 - Maybe they said something to you that was very offensive—or maybe it was something like forgetting to pay the piano teacher.
 - There is a breach in your relationship and that breach needs to be closed.
 - In the Bible, no such thing as forgiveness happens when the other person does not admit their sin and ask for forgiveness.
 - You can tell someone that you still love them and that you aren't going to hold what they did against them even when they don't repent,
 - but you should tell them they need to repent because they have sinned and that until they repent, your relationship with them cannot be restored—and that you want it to be restored.
2. Be sure that you think about forgiveness in a Biblical way.
- a. In our text, Col 3:13, it says that we are to forgive the one who sinned if we have a complaint against them in the way Christ forgave us.
 - How did He forgive us?
 - He came to us and told us that we had sinned against Him and His Father and that He had come to restore our relationship.
 - He promised that we would be forgiven and restored if we would confess our sin, repent, and come to Him believing and following.
 - He promised to cover for our sins by His own suffering and death.
 - But He doesn't forgive us until we repent and come to Him to be reconciled.
 - He does not come just to get us off—He comes to be reconciled with us. To restore our relationship with Him and His Father.
 - b. Here is the key to it all—forgiveness is for the purpose of restoring broken relationships, and that involves both parties.
 - One party forgives and the other party repents of their sin.
 - If I am your enemy, you should want to see me restored to you.
 - As one sinning against you, I am against you—and your goal is to turn me from opposing to being for you and loving you...
 - You tell me that you want to restore the relationship—that my sin has come between us and you show me how I have sinned and tell me that you are ready to forgive me if I will acknowledge that I have wronged you and repent.
 - c. If it is a brother in Christ who has sinned against you, you are to keep pursuing restoration.

- You are to follow what it says in Matthew 18.
 - I hope you know what Jesus says there. We looked at it last week—Matthew 18:15:
 - **15 Moreover if your brother sins against you, go and tell him his fault between you and him alone. If he hears you, you have gained your brother.**
 - You forgive him and the relationship is restored.
 - **16 But if he will not hear, take with you one or two more, that ‘by the mouth of two or three witnesses every word may be established.’**
 - See—you are not to stop. You are to get other people to help you because you want your relationship to be restored.
 - The others go to affirm that he actually did do something for which he needs to repent—and if they agree, they try to convince him how important it is to deal with his sin.
 - **17 And if he refuses to hear them, tell *it* to the church.**
 - Even after all that, you don’t stop.
 - You are to bring it before the church—the ecclesia—the elders of the church.
 - If they can’t convince him to repent, then you are to take the next step (or the elders are)
 - **But if he refuses even to hear the church, let him be to you like a heathen and a tax collector.**
 - That’s right. A person should not suppose that they are a true believer if they won’t confess their sin against their brother and repent of it.
 - No, that person can longer be regarded as a Christian and they must be put out of the church.
- But your aim is to restore your relationship.
 - You are to do everything that Jesus tells you to do so that you can reconcile with them—so that you can forgive them and they can stop sinning against you.
3. In the Bible, forgiveness is a promise that you make that you will not hold the sin against the person who wronged you.
 - a. That is what God’s forgiveness is.
 - His covenant promise is, “I will forgive your iniquities and remember your sin no more.”
 - It is a promise from God that He will not hold our sin against us.
 - b. That is exactly what you do. You make a promise
 - Like the Lord, you need to say the words, “I forgive you.”
 - Not, “It’s okay,” because sin is not okay—they sinned against you—but rather, “I forgive you.”
 - You sinned against me, but I promise that I will not hold this against you.
 - I will not bring it up against you to other people.

- I will not bring it up to you to use it against you—we might talk about it, but I won't bring it up as something standing between us.
 - And if it arises in my thoughts, I will refuse to allow myself to hold it against you.
- c. This is a promise that must be kept!
- You must not let the matter come between you.

TRANS> And now I want to turn to our third point—as promised,

III. I want to show you how you can live this way.

A. It's not easy when we are wronged.

1. It's not easy to bear with our brothers and sisters and it is not always easy to go them about their wrong when we need to, and reconcile with them.
 - It can be hard to call them out and it can be hard to forgive them.
2. And when we do and we forgive them, it is not always easy to keep the promise.
 - We can take the garbage out, but this garbage has feet and legs.
 - It is like rats and mice.
 - We drive them out and they come back in.
 - They come back in and try to get between us and our brothers and sisters.
3. You are responsible for your inmost thoughts.
 - People deny that in our day, but Jesus says it is true.

➤ But there is good counsel for us in the context of this passage.

B. What we see overall here is that Christ is our habitation—the Lord Jesus Himself is our dwelling place.

1. As believers, we are in Him.
 - The first two chapters of Colossians teach us of His surpassing excellence.
 - Chapter 3 opens with the words, “If then you are raised with Christ, seek those things which are above where Christ is, sitting at the right hand of God.”
 - It goes on to explain that we need to die to our old self because now we live a new life in Him!
 - The climax is reached in 3:11 with the words, “Christ is all and in all.”
 - We have everything we need in Him!
 2. Chapter 3, verse 12, explains the effect of being alive in Jesus Christ.
 - It begins like this: “**Therefore, as the elect of God, holy and beloved, put on tender mercies...** and on it goes.
 - Three things here—we are elect, we are holy, and we are beloved.
- a. He has chosen us to be in Him, to be His people!
- What a privilege!
 - We are sinners, yet He has redeemed us and taken us in.
 - He went to the cross to secure our full pardon.
 - He bears with us and forgives us our sins.

- We are here for Him now.
- b. He has made us holy.
 - When He brought us in, He gave us His Spirit.
 - Now we have the grace we need to live like Him—to bear with others and to forgive them the way He bears with us and forgives us.
 - We have no reason to live in the old way, for we have been raised with Christ and all His resources are ours—He is at work in us.
- c. And we are beloved.
 - How we are loved!
 - How dearly He loves us!
 - Love permeates His whole house—it always has.
 - He has brought us into the circle of His love to be loved by Him, His Father, and His Spirit, and to see their love for each other, and to love one another.
 - We have the blessing of living in His love.
 - Embrace the culture of this house. Love is what is done here.
 - There is no place for keeping lists in this house.
 - This is a house where we bear with one another and forgive one another.

Conclusion:

So what about you?

- Do you have lists against other believers that you need to deal with?
- Why would you leave all that garbage in your life? in your relationships?

You belong to Jesus now.

- You are raised with Him.
- Embrace the life that He has given you.
- Let His love melt all the bitterness away and embrace the culture of His house.
 - **Above all these things, put on love which is the bond of perfection. And let the peace of God rule in your hearts, to which also you were called in one body, and be thankful.**