



**A BIBLICAL APPROACH TO COMPLAINING: GRACE & FORGIVENESS**



## **WHEN I HAVE A COMPLAINT, HOW DO I PROCEED IN A WAY THAT PLEASES GOD?**

(Colossians 3:12-13 ESV)

**Put on then, as God's chosen ones, holy and beloved, compassionate hearts, kindness, humility, meekness, and patience, bearing with one another and, if one has a complaint against another, forgiving each other; as the Lord has forgiven you, so you also must forgive.**

- 1. FIRST:** When I have a complaint, in order to OBEY SCRIPTURE and behave in a way that honors and pleases my Lord, I must understand and/or be reminded as to who I am, 3:12a, 3:1-4.

- (Colossians 3:12 ESV) Put on then, as God's chosen ones, holy and beloved, compassionate hearts, kindness, humility, meekness, and patience.

**REVIEW ... (COLOSSIANS 3:1-4 ESV)** If then you have been raised with Christ, seek the things that are above, where Christ is, seated at the right hand of God. 2 Set your minds on things that are above, not on things that are on earth. 3 For you have died, and your life is hidden with Christ in God. 4 When Christ who is your life appears, then you also will appear with him in glory.

- 2. SECOND:** Then based on my awareness of who I am and in order to OBEY SCRIPTURE and behave in a way that honors and pleases

my Lord, I must be who I am, 3:12b.

- (Colossians 3:12 ESV) Put on then, as God's chosen ones, holy and beloved, compassionate hearts, kindness, humility, meekness, and patience.

### **REVIEW ... (COLOSSIANS 3:5-11 ESV) Put to death therefore what is earthly in you:**

sexual immorality, impurity, passion, evil desire, and covetousness, which is idolatry. 6 On account of these the wrath of God is coming. 7 In these you too once walked, when you were living in them. 8 **But now you must put them all away:** anger, wrath, malice, slander, and obscene talk from your mouth. 9 Do not lie to one another, seeing that you have put off the old self with its practices 10 and have put on the new self, which is being renewed in knowledge after the image of its creator. 11 Here there is not Greek and Jew, circumcised and uncircumcised, barbarian, Scythian, slave, free; but Christ is all, and in all.

- 3. THIRD:** If I truly check the first two boxes—understanding who I am and being who I am—authentically and sincerely, then I will approach the one against whom I have the complaint with grace and forgiveness, 3:13.

**GRACE, GRACE, GRACE ...** In this we do also OBEY SCRIPTURE, but now God's work of grace has "caught up to us." This is more than mere obedience. This is now not only about what we do but also who we are. This is how we—God's chosen ones, holy and beloved—now live.

- (Colossians 3:13 ESV) Bearing with one another and, if one has a complaint against another, forgiving each other; as the Lord has forgiven you, so you also must forgive.

**Scot McKnight ... \*\*\*\*3:13** This verse now clarifies and supplements the list by shifting toward bearing with or, better yet, devotedly caring for and forgiving one another (or showing grace to one another). Again, the priority and circularity of the Lord's own love and grace come to the fore: as the Lord bears with humans (Romans 3:25) and shows grace (Ephesians 4:32), so the Colossians are to do the same with one another. **The**

term Paul uses is distinct to him and is not often used of forgiveness: charizomai, which describes an act of grace (charis) shown to another. A remarkable feature of the earliest Christian movement was its commitment to graciousness prompted by God's grace. I am content to argue that the word charizomai in the Pauline letters is short-circuited when it is translated as "forgive." Rather, the term means "show grace" or "be gracious" to someone else, even to those who have offended. The typical words for "forgive" are not used in this verse, and so I suggest charizomai is used intentionally to evoke being gracious to another person, which naturally enough will be displayed in forgiveness but is wider than that term. [McKnight, S. (2018). *The Letter to the Colossians*. (N. B. Stonehouse, F. F. Bruce, G. D. Fee, & J. B. Green, Eds.) (pp. 323–324). Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company.]



### GRUMBLING AND OTHER SINS OF THE HEART ...

- (1 Corinthians 10:9–12 ESV) We must not put Christ to the test, as some of them did and were destroyed by serpents, 10 nor **grumble**, as some of them did and were destroyed by the Destroyer. 11 Now these things happened to them as an example, but they were written down for our instruction, on whom the end of the ages has come. 12 Therefore let anyone who thinks that he stands take heed lest he fall.
- (1 Timothy 5:19 NASB95) Do not receive an **accusation** against an elder except on the basis of two or three witnesses.
- (1 Peter 3:8–12 ESV) Finally, all of you, have unity of mind, sympathy, brotherly love, a tender heart, and a humble mind. 9 **Do not repay evil for evil or reviling for reviling**, but on the contrary, bless, for to this you

were called, that you may obtain a blessing. 10 For "Whoever desires to love life and see good days, **let him keep his tongue from evil and his lips from speaking deceit**; 11 let him turn away from evil and do good; let him seek peace and pursue it. 12 For the eyes of the Lord are on the righteous, and his ears are open to their prayer. But the face of the Lord is against those who do evil."

- (Romans 12:17–21 ESV) **Repay no one evil for evil**, but give thought to do what is honorable in the sight of all. 18 If possible, so far as it depends on you, live peaceably with all. 19 Beloved, **never avenge yourselves**, but leave it to the wrath of God, for it is written, "Vengeance is mine, I will repay," says the Lord. 20 To the contrary, "if your enemy is hungry, feed him; if he is thirsty, give him something to drink; for by so doing you will heap burning coals on his head." 21 Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good.
- Euodia and Syntechē ... (Philippians 4:1–7 ESV) Therefore, my brothers, whom I love and long for, my joy and crown, stand firm thus in the Lord, my beloved. 2 I entreat Euodia and I entreat Syntechē to agree in the Lord. 3 Yes, I ask you also, true companion, **help these women**, who have labored side by side with me in the gospel together with Clement and the rest of my fellow workers, whose names are in the book of life. 4 **Rejoice** in the Lord always; again I will say, **rejoice**. 5 Let your **reasonableness** be known to everyone. The Lord is at hand; 6 **do not be anxious about anything, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God**. 7 And the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.
- (Proverbs 12:17–20 ESV) Whoever speaks the truth gives honest evidence, but a false witness utters deceit. 18 **There is one whose rash words are like sword thrusts, but the tongue of the wise brings healing**. 19 Truthful lips endure forever, but a lying tongue is but for a moment. 20 Deceit is in the heart of those who devise evil, but those who plan peace have joy.



In these you too once walked, when you were living in them. But now you must **put them all away**: anger, wrath, malice, slander, and obscene talk from your mouth  
(Colossians 3:7–8 ESV).



Therefore, having **put away falsehood**, let each one of you speak the truth with his neighbor, for we are members one of another. Be angry and do not sin; do not let the sun go down on your anger, and give no opportunity to the devil  
(Ephesians 4:25–27 ESV).

Let no corrupting talk come out of your mouths, but only such as is good for building up, as fits the occasion, that it may give grace to those who hear. And do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God, by whom you were sealed for the day of redemption. 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  
(Ephesians 4:29–32 ESV).



Do not lie to one another, seeing that you have **put off the old self** with its practices and have **put on the new self**, which is being renewed in knowledge after the image of its creator  
(Colossians 3:9–10 ESV).

