

# *Always Love and Always Forgive*

From Every Deed: Created in Christ Jesus for Good Works

By C. D. Hildebrand

**T**here are two commandments under the New Covenant: to believe in Jesus and to love one another as Jesus loved us. Each instruction in the New Testament can be traced back to these.

## **Believe in Him and love each other.**

Quite supernaturally, when someone becomes a Christian, he will love the family of God. Faith and love are two of the fruits of the Spirit, and if not hindered, will grow. However, when believing and loving become laws, the joy of doing them is dulled. When this happens, we begin to see divisions, quarrels, and strife. Thankfully, when we return to loving each other by grace through faith, those barriers start to fade away.

## **Fulfilling of the Law**

### ***Romans 13:8-10***

*Owe no one anything except to love one another, for he who loves another has fulfilled the law.<sup>9</sup> For the commandments, “You shall not commit adultery,” “You shall not murder,” “You shall not steal,” “You shall not bear false witness,” “You shall not covet,” and if there is any other commandment, are all summed up in this saying, namely, “You shall love your neighbor as yourself.”<sup>10</sup> Love does no harm to a neighbor; therefore love is the fulfillment of the law.*

This passage is not a reversal of Paul’s teaching on the law, which he called “the ministry of death and condemnation.”<sup>1</sup> Notice that at the beginning of this passage, he refers to loving “one another”—the New Covenant command of Jesus. Then toward the end, he quotes the summation of the Old Covenant, which is to “love your neighbor as yourself.” The early church preachers often used Old Covenant Scripture to illustrate New Covenant Truths. This method of teaching was never used to endorse keeping the law as a means of righteousness because righteousness comes only as a gift by faith. Paul uses these five commandments to show that love is the point of them. If you love someone, you will not seduce his wife, you will not plot to murder him, you will not

---

<sup>1</sup> 2 Cor. 3:7-9

swindle him out of his money, you will not tell lies about him, you will not covet his belongings. God forbid that within the body of Christ this type of behavior would take place.

**Galatians 5:13**

*For you, brethren, have been called to liberty; only do not use liberty as an opportunity for the flesh, but through love serve one another.*

We have been given enormous liberty in Christ. We are forgiven, righteous, and holy. We are free from sin and free from the law. Even though we are free from law, let us not use that freedom to take advantage of each other, but rather, let us use our freedom to serve each other.

**Always Love. Always Forgive.**

Marriage surprised me, to be honest. Even though my mother was deeply hurt by two divorces, I still had an image of what marriage could be. Perhaps it is fair to say that I was naive about it. I pictured my husband and I deeply in love and living happily together in peace and harmony for the rest of our lives. (Cue in the song, “Happy Together.”)<sup>2</sup> We would grow old together, serve the Lord together, and raise our children to know the Lord. We would never let the word “divorce” cross our lips. We would keep our vows to be faithful and to love, honor, and cherish each other.

Screeching brake sounds! Our honeymoon was great except for the fact we argued almost every day. This is not what I imagined at all. This bickering became almost a daily grief.

Add to that the exaggerated teachings we were receiving about what marriage was supposed to look like (subservient wife and domineering husband), and honestly, it is amazing we made it one year.

To get through it, I came up with a saying that helped me survive. It became so powerful in my life that I began to write it on every wedding card I sent, knowing how it might help them.

**Always love.  
Always forgive.**

Would I love my new husband even though he made my life miserable sometimes? Would I forgive him? Would I fully love him again and then forgive him again for the same offense? Or would I build up a long list of wrongs and become bitter? My decision was firm but not always easy. I

---

<sup>2</sup> “Happy Together” Written by Alan Gordon and Garry Bonner, 1967

chose to love him and forgive him from my heart, and this saved our marriage. This year, we will celebrate our 46<sup>th</sup> anniversary.

People look at our marriage now and admire it. "Aren't they a sweet couple?" Well, yes, we are. David is still my best friend, and I am his. We really would rather spend time with each other than anyone else. Sometimes, however, we fall short. When that happens, I return to these words.

**Always love.  
Always forgive.**

All relationships are complicated. Some of them are difficult. Why? It is because none of us are perfect, some of us are less so than others, and our imperfections can cause frustration for others.

Jesus said, "Love one another as I have loved you." Does He stop loving us? No. Paul wrote, "Just as Christ forgave you, forgive each other." Does Jesus stop forgiving us? No.

**He always loves.  
He always forgives.**

Friends, if Jesus is not holding our sins against us, we should not be holding the sins of others against them.

## **Among the Saints**

Conflicts among brethren were commonplace in the early church. We read in Philippians 4 that two sisters in the Lord were not "of the same mind." No details are given, but apparently, there was such a great division between them that news of it had reached Paul. Sometimes, we need to lovingly step in and help resolve conflicts like this.

### ***Philippians 4:2-3***

*I implore Euodia and I implore Syntyche to be of the same mind in the Lord. <sup>3</sup> And I urge you also, true companion, help these women who labored with me in the gospel, with Clement also, and the rest of my fellow workers, whose names are in the Book of Life.*

Paul cared about these two women who had labored with him in sharing the gospel. He considered them his "fellow workers." He affirms that their names were written in the Book of Life. But there was some rift between them. Yes, friends, even in the wonderful body of Christ, there will be times of tension between each other. May it never be for something as

ridiculous as arguing about carpet or paint colors for the new church sanctuary, but this does happen.

Another problem arises when we fail to realize that we are not of the world's system. We are now part of the body of Christ. We should resolve our conflicts among ourselves.

### **1 Corinthians 6:1-8**

*Dare any of you, having a matter against another, go to law before the unrighteous, and not before the saints? <sup>2</sup> Do you not know that the saints will judge the world? And if the world will be judged by you, are you unworthy to judge the smallest matters? <sup>3</sup> Do you not know that we shall judge angels? How much more, things that pertain to this life? <sup>4</sup> If then you have judgments concerning things pertaining to this life, do you appoint those who are least esteemed by the church to judge? <sup>5</sup> I say this to your shame. Is it so, that there is not a wise man among you, not even one, who will be able to judge between his brethren? <sup>6</sup> But brother goes to law against brother, and that before unbelievers!*

*<sup>7</sup> Now therefore, 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?*

*<sup>8</sup> No, you yourselves do wrong and cheat, and you do these things to your brethren!*

Paul is astonished at the behavior of some of the Corinthians toward each other. In chapter 3, he corrected them for being divisive. He was amazed that they were acting as “mere men.” Think about that statement. We are not mere human beings. We are children of the living God. We are new creations. We are cleansed, holy, and righteous. Believers in Jesus Christ should be living in a way that is *unlike* the world—not like mere humans.

### **Absent Apologies**

The ideal situation when someone offends us is that they see the wrong they have done and sincerely apologize. I regret to inform you that this does not always happen. You will find that even in the most basic of relationships, if the person who offended you thinks they did nothing wrong, there may never be an apology.

Paul asks a question in verse seven. “Why do you not rather accept wrong?”

“Oh, Paul, now you are asking too much,” we think.

People should not be doing wrong to their brothers and sisters in Christ, but sadly, it happens.

We see offenses every day in the world. People take revenge or drag their families into the courts because they have been wronged and they either cannot or will not work it out among themselves. This should not characterize the body of Christ. Even so, most of us have learned this: you cannot *force* people to be sorry or to apologize. If they went through the motions, you would not be satisfied anyway, doubting their sincerity. In cases like this, **someone needs to step up to the Jesus Plate and behave like a new creation in Christ.**

Walk in love toward that person. Forgive them EVEN THOUGH THEY REFUSE TO BE SORRY OR APOLOGIZE. This is a very difficult thing to do, especially in our closest relationships, but it is also very powerful. Children of God, we are to love one another even to the point of accepting wrong to keep the peace.

In saying this, I am not including mental and physical abuse. God does not expect you to accept these. If you are in such a relationship, as safely as possible, be freed.

## **Offenses in Ministry**

If you are new to ministry, please do not be surprised when offenses come. They will. This is because you will be working with people like yourself who are still being transformed by the renewing of their minds. May it never be, but if you speak to any experienced minister, he will tell you that you will be offended while in ministry. People may have loved you all of your life and still think you are the greatest person on earth, but someone will come along who misinterprets your every action. Some people will even seek to undermine your work in the church. Seek peace with them, but trust me, even if you seek peace, you might still encounter those who seek strife continually.

Recently, I encountered something someone wrote on social media. She was a Christian leader in her community. She took it upon herself to shame another local minister. Why? Had he sinned against her? No. Had he been involved in secret sin? No. His offense was that *she* did not like his point of view. So, instead of arranging to meet with him and talk about it and perhaps understand him better, she solicited letters from people she knew agreed with her to speak up against him for the purpose of shaming him and pressuring him into agreeing with her viewpoints. Then she publicized these letters on social media. All of her followers were cheering her on as she sought to publicly destroy a *brother in Christ*, all because she did not like his opinions.

From my perspective, she was making a mockery of Christian love and doing so before unbelievers to elevate her popularity with her followers. Since she was doing this publicly, I rebuked her publicly on social media, and I wrote her private messages pleading with her that what she was doing

was ungodly. She only fought back, and her followers insulted me and supported her in her folly.

I repeat myself: if she had a difference with this brother, it was her responsibility to talk with him privately. Since he is one of the most tenderhearted brothers I know, he would have listened to her and tried to understand. If he had offended anyone, he would have humbly apologized. This is what Jesus taught us to do. Instead, she pridefully sought to shame him for holding different viewpoints than her own, making false accusations against him.

While her friends cheered her on, I cringed. I began to look into her social media posts. Apparently, she had done this many times before and sought to “expose” and humiliate others. She measured her worth by how many Likes she got and how many lives she destroyed. She believed she was being a social warrior for Jesus, but it was entirely not like Jesus.

### **1 Peter 4:8**

*And above all things have fervent love for one another, for “love will cover a multitude of sins.”*

When Noah got drunk and uncovered himself in his tent, Ham exposed this to his brothers, Shem and Japhet. His brothers did not run to take a look but rather took a garment and walked backward into Noah’s tent and covered his nakedness. God cursed Ham for what he did.

God wants us to have “fervent” love for each other. Love does no ill toward a brother in Christ. Love covers a multitude of sins. In this case, the brother’s only “sin” was holding different opinions than hers.<sup>3</sup>

## **Keep Your Eyes on Jesus**

This brother is not alone. Many are the offenses toward those in ministry, and yes, the opposite is also true. Again, we are all growing, but let us seek peace and love among each other.

As my mother often said to me and what I have quoted in my books before, “Cathy, people will fail you, but Jesus never will. Keep your eyes on Him.” Whether you are a Christian leader or planning to be one, please do not allow the immaturity or evil intent of others to deter you from pursuing your calling. In some situations, you will be able to work things out with these people, and everyone will grow as a result of it. Other times, you will encounter people who seem to thrive on conflict. Forsake seeking revenge or returning the “favor.”

**Always love.  
Always forgive.**

---

<sup>3</sup> Shared with permission of the offended brother

In our ministries, we have been manipulated, taken advantage of, falsely accused, publicly humiliated, and received what my husband calls “the left foot of fellowship.”

In one place, we were actively involved in a church where we thought we would probably spend the rest of our lives ministering. We loved the people who attended there and were asked by the pastor to oversee the church while he pursued other endeavors. We went in with all of our hearts, serving in every way we could under his leadership and without any compensation.

However, after a couple of years of doing what he asked, we began to feel uneasy there. Certain persons of influence within the church began to resist the message of grace we were teaching. There might have been other ungodly motivations, but we could never nail them down. We tried to work out the tension we sensed between ourselves and the pastor, but our efforts were rebuffed.

We could have made a big deal about it, complaining about the wrong that was happening to us to the different people in the church with whom we became close, but we decided to leave quietly instead. We did not want others to be hurt, and we had no desire to harm this pastor whom we considered a dear friend nor damage the lifetime work he had there.

We decided to leave gradually so as not to cause strife. We finished up our responsibilities and left gracefully. Only those very close to the situation knew what the real reasons were for our departure. We naively thought that would be the end of it, but even after our departure, some took it upon themselves to undermine the teaching of the gospel of grace to indirectly defame us. People were warned to “be careful” whom they associated with if they mentioned our names.

A group email was sent out comparing the teaching of grace to a “cancer” growing in the church. The sender failed to notice that our names were still among that group. We wanted to defend ourselves and defend the gospel, but we refused to hurt anyone who attended this congregation we had grown to love and chose not to respond. It was our way of covering the multitude of sins against us. We still loved the pastor and did not want to harm him or his ministry. This is a perfect example of suffering wrong to keep the peace, and I should add, it was extremely difficult and stressful.

Even about a year later, rumors emerged in our pastoral community that we were teaching “strange doctrine.” Eventually, we were brought before our District executives to face the circulating rumors. These officials could have sanctioned us or stripped us of our ordinations for teaching unsound doctrine.

After they shared their concerns about what was being said about our teaching, David said, “We firmly believe the Fundamental Truths of our denomination. We cherish them. We teach them. The only difference is, we teach them through the eyes of God’s grace.” All three of them nodded their heads and smiled approvingly.

Even after lying about us and slandering us within the community of faith, the people who offended us never made any overture or hinted that they regretted what they did. We lamented the lost friendships and wished all could be restored but had to accept that we cannot control what others do. However, we can control what we do.

**Always love.  
Always forgive.**

## **Root of Bitterness**

In almost every relationship we face, there will be times we are offended. We need to decide how we will respond. Will we become bitter or better? If we choose to forgive and love, we will be healed of the pain the offense caused and grow in Christ, but if we harbor unforgiveness and resentment, a root of bitterness will grow.

### **Hebrews 12:14-15**

*Pursue peace with all people, and holiness, without which no one will see the Lord: <sup>15</sup> looking carefully lest anyone fall short of the grace of God; lest any root of bitterness springing up cause trouble, and by this many become defiled.*

Let us not fall short of the grace of God. Unforgiveness and bitterness will eat you alive. While it is true that if you choose the path of love, there is a high possibility that you will be hurt again, choose love anyway. Unforgiveness is a closed door. Forgiveness keeps the doors open for the possibility of reconciliation.

Many years ago, my mother shared with me a mistake she made. She wanted me to understand why she no longer attended church. As a pastor's daughter, she was always involved in ministry. Even when she grew up, she continued to serve in the church in any way that was open to her. When I was a little girl, she was the piano player for the church. When we moved to a new town, she became the head of Women's Ministries in her church and taught Sunday School. Ministry was in her heart, and she loved doing it.

There was one problem in the new church. Before we started attending there, my father divorced my mother because he despised her relationship with Jesus; at least this is what he told her.

### **1 Corinthians 7:13, 15**

*And a woman who has a husband who does not believe, if he is willing to live with her, let her not divorce him. <sup>15</sup> But if the unbeliever departs, let him depart; a brother or a sister*

*is not under bondage in such cases. But God has called us to peace.*

How my mother prayed for my father to become a believer in Jesus, but he chose to “depart.” Later, she remarried. When the pastor’s wife heard that my mother remarried, she was disturbed. She had my mother removed from heading up the Women’s Ministries and even worse, one Sunday as my mother taught her second-grade class, the pastor’s wife walked into the classroom where my mother was teaching, took the teacher’s manual out of my mother’s hands, and said in front of the class, “You are not worthy to teach Sunday School.” My mother stepped out of the room and sat on one of the children’s church pews, stunned by what had just happened.

She waited to tell me this story until I was an adult because she did not want this conflict to negatively affect me, but she was so humiliated and offended that she left that church and never went back, not just back to that church, but she never regularly attended church again.

While telling me this story, she said to me that she remained hurt, angry, and resentful for all those years, and she confessed to me that even many years after this woman passed away, she was still bitter. She explained that she should have forgiven this woman, held her head up high, and kept attending the church. Then she shared with me the freedom she felt now that she had forgiven her. This is a poem she later wrote.

### ***My Drawer***

*by Enid Bennett Whitt<sup>4</sup>*

*I once had a drawer of bygone times  
That slid in and out of my conscious mind.  
It was full of my hurts, rejections, and pride  
And people I blamed, neatly gagged and tied.*

*I opened it up again and again,  
And every time, I relived the pain.*

*Then one day in my mental game,  
I pulled the drawer out, but it wasn’t the same;  
I couldn’t believe it! My mind’s eyes could see  
For the very first time, the people were like me.*

*How could I have been so blatantly blind  
When there it was all the time?*

---

<sup>4</sup> My mother

*I still have a drawer of bygone times,  
That slides in and out of my conscious mind.  
But I cleaned out the hurt, rejection, and pride  
And freed the people imprisoned inside.*

*By forgiving the past, I can face what will be.  
I found my peace, and now I am free.*

## **Humility Toward Each Other**

Just as we should not have a superior attitude when sinners sin, neither should we look down on a brother who is struggling.

### **Galatians 6:1-4**

*Brethren, if a man is overtaken in any trespass, you who are spiritual restore such a one in a spirit of gentleness, considering yourself lest you also be tempted. <sup>2</sup> Bear one another's burdens, and so fulfill the law of Christ. <sup>3</sup> For if anyone thinks himself to be something, when he is nothing, he deceives himself. <sup>4</sup> But let each one examine his own work, and then he will have rejoicing in himself alone, and not in another. <sup>5</sup> For each one shall bear his own load.*

All human beings, even Christians, are tempted. Unfortunately, law gives strength to sin, and unwitting believers fall into the trap. Other times, we simply make wrong choices.

We who understand these things, those of us who are mature, let us seek to restore our brothers and sisters to health, not by mounting a public shame campaign as if we are superior to them, but humbly realizing that we are all tempted. We only open the door to falling ourselves when we fail to do this.

### **Proverbs 16:18**

*Pride goes before destruction,  
And a haughty spirit before a fall.*

If we begin to think that in our own self-effort, we are free from sin, we are deceived. We are free from sin because we are not under law but under grace.<sup>5</sup> Rather, let love cover a multitude of sins. Extend mercy and seek to gently restore our brother or sister in Christ.

In Colossians, Paul expresses His hopes for how the body of Christ would relate to each other. Notice, as you read, the volition of this passage.

---

<sup>5</sup> Rom 6:14

We are told to do these things, which implies that in Jesus, we are able to do them

**Colossians 3:12-13**

*Therefore, as the elect of God, holy and beloved, **put on** tender mercies, kindness, humility, meekness, longsuffering; <sup>13</sup> **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.*

We are the elect of God, which means we have been chosen. We were chosen because we believed in Jesus. We are holy. We are beloved. Therefore, we are able to **put on** tender mercies, which is to say, we are compassionate. We **put on** kindness, which includes moral excellence. We **put on** a humble opinion about ourselves. Meekness implies gentleness. Longsuffering is patience. Forbearance today would be closer to “putting up” with someone. Forgiveness includes graciously giving—to those who do not deserve it. Is this not a reflection of what is spoken about His ministry?

**Matthew 12:18-21**

*“Behold! My Servant whom I have chosen,  
My Beloved in whom My soul is well pleased!  
I will put My Spirit upon Him,  
And He will declare justice to the Gentiles.  
<sup>19</sup> He will not quarrel nor cry out,  
Nor will anyone hear His voice in the streets.  
<sup>20</sup> A bruised reed He will not break,  
And smoking flax He will not quench,  
Till He sends forth justice to victory;  
<sup>21</sup> And in His name Gentiles will trust.”*

There will be complaints in the body of Christ because there will always be varying levels of maturity among us. Let us remember that Jesus forgave us of all of our offenses against Him and received us as friends. Let us extend this same grace to each other lovingly and patiently seeking to restore that which is broken.

**Colossians 3:14**

*But above all these things **put on** love, which is the bond of perfection.*

**Put on** love—brotherly love, affection, goodwill, love, benevolence.<sup>6</sup> Can you imagine how wonderful it would be if most of us wore this kind of love?

**Colossians 3:15**

And **let** the peace of God rule in your hearts, to which also you were called in one body; and **be** thankful.

Picture this. Peace reigns among us because the Prince of Peace is in our hearts. **Let** it. We are one body. **Be** thankful (instead of complaining).

**Colossians 3:16**

**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.

**Let** the word of Christ, the good news about good things from our good God, richly live in our hearts with all wisdom. (Be mature.) Share this good news with **each other** in Psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs. Sing together with grace in your hearts to the Lord!

In all of our interactions within the body of Christ, whether in teaching or in helping each other, do it all in Jesus' name.

**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.**

**Colossians 3:17**



---

<sup>6</sup> Thayer