

**FORBEARANCE: THE CHRISTIAN RESPONSE TO OFFENSES**

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Human beings depend on each other for a meaningful life. Even a recluse must have some interaction with others. This fact provides a context to understand the reason the Holy Spirit tells us in **1 Corinthians 5:9-10** that if Christians have no dealings with unbelievers, they would need to leave this world; however, while God's word recognizes the interconnectedness of life, it is evident that the relationships Christians sustain with one another and unbelievers are often sources of friction that leave grudges and animosity in their wake.



It is God's will that, as much as it depends on them, Christians should live at peace with all men (**Romans 12:18**). It would have been great to say that Christians live in perfect harmony at least among themselves, but the reality is that misunderstandings occur among Christians as well as between them and unbelievers. For instance, Paul and Barnabas had such a sharp contention over whether to take John Mark along on their second missionary journey that they parted from one another (**Acts 15:36-40**).

Again, **Acts 6:1** reveals that in the Jerusalem congregation, some Greek-speaking Christians complained against the Hebrew Christians because their widows were neglected in the daily distribution. Even among those who preach the gospel, there are some who are motivated not by love of God, but by envy and strife (**Philippians 1:15-16**).

How should Christians react when they are wronged? God clearly commands us to meet offenses with forbearance. According to *Vine's Expository Dictionary of Old and New Testament Words*, forbearance is from the Greek word *anochē* (noun), and it means "a holding back," a delay of punishment (**Romans 2:4; 3:25**).

The verb form of the word (*anechō*), according to Vine, signifies "to bear with, endure" (**Ephesians 4:2; Colossians 3:13**). Vine lists the cognate words as *makrothumia* (longsuffering) and *hupomonē* (patience) (**Colossians 1:11**). He adds that longsuffering is that quality of self-restraint in the face of provocation that does not hastily retaliate or promptly punish and that patience is the quality that does not surrender to circumstances or succumb under trial.

In light of the foregoing, Paul instructs Christians in **Colossians 3:12-13** to "put on tender mercies, kindness, humility, meekness, longsuffering; bearing with one another, if anyone has a complaint against another, even as Christ forgave you, so you also must do" (**Ephesians 4:2**).

Forbearance may be easy to preach in sermons, but it is often difficult to practice. We know how hurt we feel when those we trust become sources of trouble. Our spouses and children may become sources of pain to us when they take away our peace at home and cause us embarrassment in the public.

Friends may stab us in the back and try to ruin our reputation. They push us to the point that every sinew in our body yearns for us to hit back at them. But God says, "Beloved, do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good" (**Romans 12:19**). Do not say: I will do to him as he did to me (**Proverbs 24:29**).

Those who offend us sometimes may be the same people who share the Lord's Table with us. Some Christians have experienced unkindness from fellow Christians. It hurts when we try to do our best in the church; and, instead of receiving encouragement, we are discouraged and judged unfairly. We can be emotionally traumatized when our own brothers in the Lord wrong and cheat us (**1 Corinthians 6:8**). Even at that, God still urges patience as we humbly correct those who oppose us (**2 Timothy 2:24-26**).

Being willing to forgive those who trespass against us even up to seventy times seven (**Matthew 18:21-22**) is to our eternal benefit.

Sundays at 6:30 AM



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**2/21 Sermon #1288**  
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**2/28 Sermon #1289**  
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that Hunger...

## FEBRUARY 2021 NEWSLETTER

A congregation of believers cannot hope to make progress when it turns into a community of bitter people, nor can they expect God to hear their prayers and forgive their sins (**Matthew 6:14-15**).

We must not even allow grudges to fester. In fact, God commands that we not allow our anger to linger until sundown (**Ephesians 4:26**). It is lack of forgiveness that leads Christians to vengeance that God condemns (**Romans 12:19-21**).

For as long as man remains in his imperfect state, offenses are inevitable in our homes, society and the church. It is our ability to love and forbear with one another that brings healing, mends broken relationships, and enables the church to focus on her mission. Forbearance is a natural progression from genuine love (**1 Corinthians 13:4-8**).

### RELIABILITY IN TRANSMISSION

A.K. Richardson | Cave City, AR

The Bible teaches that not only is all scripture inspired by God (**2 Timothy 3:16**) but also that God's Word will endure through time (**Matthew 24:35; 1 Peter 1:24-25**).

Throughout the ages, the Bible has come down to us by means of manuscripts; that is, hand-written copies of the Scriptures. These manuscripts are the means God chose to preserve His Word; and these, along with early translations of the Scriptures and New Testament quotations found within the writings of early church writers, are overwhelming testimony to the reliability of the Bible's transmission through time.



There are 5,856 manuscripts known to date. Dr. James R. White noted that we have approximately 1,300,000 handwritten pages of the New Testament (as of 2008). This fact is unique among all the ancient literature that has come down to us. We have far more manuscripts for the New Testament than for any other ancient work. For example, there are approximately 1,000 extant manuscripts of Homer, seven of Plato, eight of Herodotus, twenty of Tacitus, and seven of Pliny the Younger. Professor Daniel B. Wallace of the Dallas Theological Seminary and Executive Director of the Center for the Study of New Testament Manuscripts says that if the average number of manuscripts of ancient Greek writers were stacked on top of each other, the stack would be four feet high; but if the New Testament manuscripts were all stacked one on another, the stack would be one mile high!

It doesn't stop there. Not only do the New Testament manuscripts outnumber any other ancient work, the earliest in our possession appear much closer to the time of the authors than any other ancient work. In other words, the gap of time between the autographs (original writings of the authors) and the earliest extant copies is much smaller than that of other ancient literature. Ultimately, as even New Testament manuscript scholar and Bible skeptic Dr. Bart Ehrman has affirmed, the Bible is the best-attested book from the ancient world.

Furthermore, one of the greatest discoveries of the 20th century was the Dead Sea Scrolls found in Qumran of the Judean Desert. Among these scrolls were many manuscripts of the Old Testament that are dated before even the time of Christ! These dates are far earlier than even the Masoretic texts.

Though there are variants (differences) among the manuscripts, more than ninety-nine percent of them are instances of alternate word spelling, word order, and such that do not actually change the meaning of the text. Much of them cannot even be brought over into translation. These variants have been over-hyped by Bible skeptics.

Besides biblical manuscripts, early ancient translations are available. The farther one goes back into the 1st century, the fewer biblical manuscripts there are (though several exist); but the early translations provide a secondary witness to what the New Testament looked like in the earliest times, a time during which few actual manuscripts survived.

These early translations were made from the manuscripts that either existed during those times or from manuscripts that existed even earlier. Three important early translations are the Latin, Syriac, and Coptic. We have more than 10,000 Latin manuscripts and 5,000 to 10,000 other ancient manuscripts.

Another line of witness is found in the early church writings. From the earliest periods since Christ, Christians wrote literature discussing their faith and religion, and they wrote voluminously! Dr. Wallace has said there are more than a million scripture quotations in their writings. It has been said that if we lost the actual NT, it could be almost entirely reconstructed several times over from these quotations.

Yes, our Bibles are reliable! In His providence, the Lord has carried His word from generation to generation to enlighten the path of man (**Psalms 19:8; 43:3; 119:105**) and to empower him to salvation (**Romans 1:16**). Let God be thanked!



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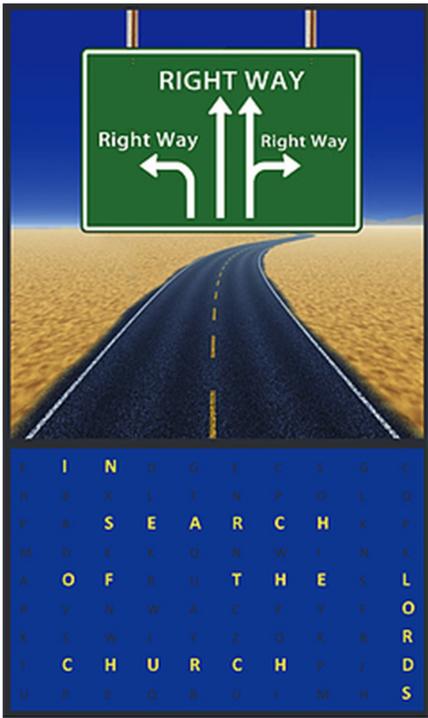
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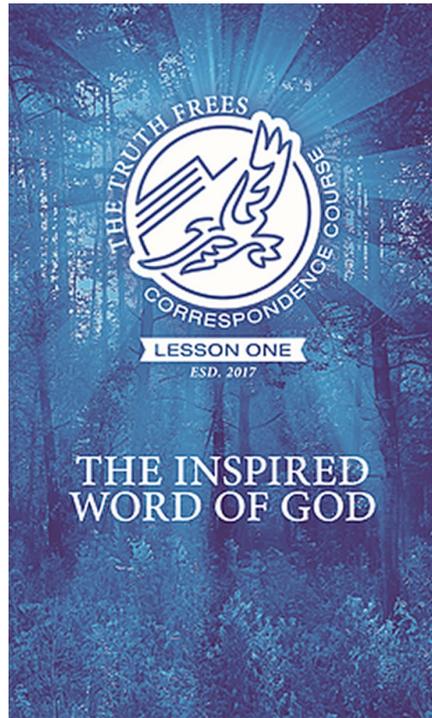
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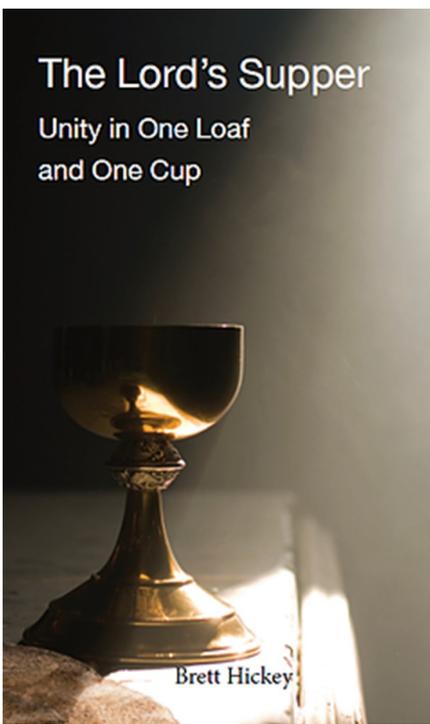
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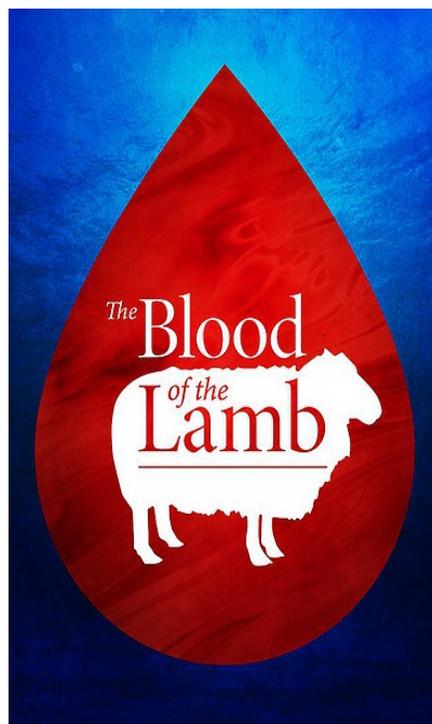
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