

Studies in the Life of Christ

The Amazing Forbearance of Jesus Christ

Intro: In this series we are looking together at some of the amazing things that Jesus did. Our focus however is not so much upon the amazing miracles that He performed or the amazing teaching that He did, but upon the deeds that reflect His character as the Son of God.

In our first lesson we looked at the amazing prayer life of Jesus; in our second lesson the amazing compassion of Jesus. Today let's consider the amazing forbearance of Jesus.

A quick definition: "the quality of someone who is patient and able to deal with a difficult person or situation without becoming angry"

His amazing forbearance with His disciples

To read the story of Jesus is to realize that those who He chose to be his disciples were fraught with many misconceptions and weaknesses.

Sometimes we see them showing a clear misunderstanding of the spiritual nature of Jesus' kingdom.

Thinking that it was a physical earthly kingdom they repeatedly argued about who was the greatest
And they came to Capernaum; and when He was in the house, He began to question them, "What were you discussing on the way?" But they kept silent, for on the way they had discussed with one another which of them was the greatest. (Mark 9:33-34)

They strove with one another for position
*Then the mother of the sons of Zebedee came to Him with her sons, bowing down, and making a request of Him. And He said to her, "What do you wish?" She *said to Him, "Command that in Your kingdom these two sons of mine may sit, one on Your right and one on Your left."*

Sometimes they were slow to grasp the things he taught them.

He taught them parables that would give them simpler and clearer insight into the kingdom, yet they often had difficulty processing the message.

*And He *said to them, "Do you not understand this parable? And how will you understand all the parables? (Mark 4:13)*

On one occasion, He warned them of the dangers of the influence of Pharisees and Sadducees; but they misinterpreted his words.

And Jesus said to them, "Watch out and beware of the leaven of the Pharisees and Sadducees." And they began to discuss among themselves, saying, "It is because we took no bread." But Jesus, aware of this, said, "You men of little faith, why do

you discuss among yourselves that you have no bread? Do you not yet understand or remember the five loaves of the five thousand, and how many baskets you took up? Or the seven loaves of the four thousand, and how many large baskets you took up? How is it that you do not understand that I did not speak to you concerning bread? But beware of the leaven of the Pharisees and Sadducees.” (Matthew 16:6-11)

He tried to make them aware that being the Christ meant that He would have to die on a cross; yet they did not grasp the warning.

Let these words sink into your ears; for the Son of Man is going to be delivered into the hands of men.” But they did not understand this statement, and it was concealed from them so that they might not perceive it; and they were afraid to ask Him about this statement. (Luke 9:44-45)

Peter even rebuked him for saying such things

And Peter took Him aside and began to rebuke Him, saying, “God forbid it, Lord! This shall never happen to You.”²³ But He turned and said to Peter, “Get behind Me, Satan! You are a stumbling block to Me; for you are not setting your mind on God’s interests, but man’s.” (Matthew 16:22-23)

Sometimes they were negligent in doing things Jesus had asked of them.

In the garden in spite of Jesus' urging, they slept instead of keeping watch.

*And He *came and *found them sleeping, and *said to Peter, “Simon, are you asleep? Could you not keep watch for one hour? (Mark 14:37)*

Sometimes their faith was weak when they should have been more confident.

Even though the Lord was in the boat with them during the tempest on Galilee, they awoke him with the insinuation that He did not care that they all were about to drown.

*And immediately Jesus stretched out His hand and took hold of him, and *said to him, “O you of little faith, why did you doubt?” (Matthew 14:31)*

Sometimes they were too confident when they should have been more realistic about their spiritual power.

Jesus sought to prepare them for the fearful thing that were about to come upon them, saying that they would all be scattered like sheep without a shepherd.

But Peter kept saying insistently, “Even if I have to die with You, I will not deny You!” And they all were saying the same thing, too. (Mark 14:31)

Yet in all this Jesus patiently accepted them, prayed for them, taught them, and forgave them.

Instead of getting angry with them Jesus used the occasions of their argument about who was greatest to teach them how they should look at things.

*And sitting down, He called the twelve and *said to them, "If anyone wants to be first, he shall be last of all, and servant of all." (Mark 9:35)*

When they failed to get the message he would simply explain it once more. Jesus numerous times would explain that He would die, be buried, and raised from the dead.

Later when the issue persisted, He gave them an example of his teaching, even stooped to wash their feet.

And so when He had washed their feet, and taken His garments, and reclined at the table again, He said to them, "Do you know what I have done to you? You call Me Teacher and Lord; and you are right, for so I am. If I then, the Lord and the Teacher, washed your feet, you also ought to wash one another's feet. (John 13:12-14)

Even when he knew that they would fail, He prayed for them.

Simon, Simon, behold, Satan has demanded permission to sift you like wheat; but I have prayed for you, that your faith may not fail; and you, when once you have turned again, strengthen your brothers." (Lk 22:31-32)

And even after all the disciples fleeing and Peter's denials, Jesus make clear he had not lost faith in Him. In spite of all Peter's denials, Jesus forgive him and called him again to service.

*So when they had finished breakfast, Jesus *said to Simon Peter, "Simon, son of John, do you love Me more than these?" He *said to Him, "Yes, Lord; You know that I love You." He *said to him, "Tend My lambs." (John 21:15)*

Again and again we can see Jesus' amazing forbearance with His disciples.

His Amazing Forbearance with Us

When we look at the amazing forbearance of Jesus toward His disciples, we surely would find it difficult not to think of ourselves. How often do we do those things that Jesus' disciples did?

Being influenced by our culture, we may miss important concepts that the Scriptures teach that are contrary to our culture and like the disciples may find it hard to "get it."

We may not study carefully and find ourselves misunderstanding things that we should know if we would take the time to think more objectively and spiritually.

We may neglect to do things we know we should be doing in spite of clear commands.

We may show little faith in times of trial and difficulty in spite of His promise to be with us.

We may be too confident and overestimate our spiritual strength.

However, we can be grateful that the forbearing Savior of the disciples is our Savior too. We can be grateful that He has not surrendered His commitment to us any more than he did to the apostles. Instead he works with the weak and the misguided. As our great high priest, he is ready to help in our time of need.

For we do not have a high priest who cannot sympathize with our weaknesses, but One who has been tempted in all things as we are, yet without sin. Let us therefore draw near with confidence to the throne of grace, that we may receive mercy and may find grace to help in time of need. (Heb. 4:15-16)

Finally, the Lord's forbearance should be a motivation to us to be more forbearing with those around us. In fact that is exactly the point the apostle Paul makes to the church at Colossea:

And so, as those who have been chosen of God, holy and beloved, put on a heart of compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness and patience; bearing with one another, and forgiving each other, whoever has a complaint against anyone; just as the Lord forgave you, so also should you. (Col. 3:12-13)

I, therefore, the prisoner of the Lord, entreat you to walk in a manner worthy of the calling with which you have been called, with all humility and gentleness, with patience, showing forbearance to one another in love, (Eph. 4:1-2)

How would the amazingly forbearing Lord look upon our impatience and demanding expectations of others?

Conclusion: And so it is helpful for all of us to think about the amazing forbearance of Jesus. But how important it is for those who have not yet obeyed the gospel or who have continued to live in unfaithfulness as a child of God.

Of course there is a limit to the forbearance of the Lord. And we cannot be disposed to take it for granted. Paul warned the disobedient Jews:

Or do you think lightly of the riches of His kindness and forbearance and patience, not knowing that the kindness of God leads you to repentance? (Romans 2:4)

The Lord's forbearance should be a motivation for us to make the needed changes in our lives.