

## When Porcupines Collide

*Colossians 3:12-15*

*Brothers and sisters, clothe yourselves with humility toward one another, because, 'God opposes the proud but shows favor to the humble.' Humble yourselves, therefore, under God's mighty hand, that he may lift you up in due time. Cast all your anxiety on him because he cares for you. Be alert and of sober mind. Your enemy the devil prowls around like a roaring lion looking for someone to devour.*

This afternoon, if your Miami Dolphins are getting beat like a tied-up goat or if you simply want to get the most bang for your entertainment buck, I invite you to head up north on I-95 for about 45 minutes and until you come to Exit 191. Then take a right onto Wickham Road for about a half mile. Then take another right into the Brevard Zoo parking lot. Pay your 13.99, cash or credit card – whichever you prefer – and then make your way to the petting section of the zoo. There in that glorious place, you can have no fear of the lions, tigers and bears (oh my) because you won't find them. But what you will find is a sheep, a goat, a llama, and a donkey. None of them accept tips; only love.....There is, however, one animal on the planet who wishes he could work in that section of the zoo. But, unfortunately, the way he's put together physically, psychologically, and spiritually lends him to believe he's better off by himself. It's not the Australian Bearded Dragon, the Mexican Chupacabra, or the Floridian Sasquatch. It's that large rodent with a coat of sharp spines you know as the porcupine....You see, these rodents have an innate desire to be relational. As a matter of fact, on cold nights, they all gather together in a huddle to keep warm. And the closer they get to each other, the warmer they become. However, the closer they come to each other, the more their quills collide; causing each individual porcupine to slowly begin the move away from the warm huddle. They carry on in this manner for hours, sometimes even days. They need each other so they draw close. Then they poke each other and draw away....Look no further than the Book of Colossians to see what happens when Porcupine Syndrome makes its way into the church. The Jews needed the Gentiles; so they drew close until their quills collided. The Barbarian needed the Scythian; so they drew close until their quills collided. The slave and freeman needed each other; so they drew close until their quills collided. Flawed people with sharp quills in desperate need of a redemption community were common in Colossae. What was non-existent, however, was the ability to resolve porcupine collisions and conflict in a Christlike manner. Consequently, they needed a standard for resolving conflict that was more productive than drawing close and poking each other. And that standard for resolving conflict was simply the personal qualities and characteristics of the One who never back away from us when our quills are too sharp for His liking. His name is Jesus. I want you to turn to Colossians 3:12-15. As we read together, I want you to ask yourself one question: "do I go about solving personal conflict in my life as prescribed by Jesus in this passage of Scripture?"

<sup>12</sup>Therefore, as God's chosen people, holy and dearly loved, clothe yourselves with compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness and patience.<sup>13</sup>Bear with each other and forgive one another if any of you has a grievance against someone. Forgive as the Lord forgave you. <sup>14</sup>And over all these virtues put on love, which binds them all together in perfect unity. <sup>15</sup>Let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts, since as members of one body you were called to peace. And be thankful.

Jesus' Standards for Resolving Conflict:

### 1. Proper Attire (12)

- **Not a Sharped Dressed Man:** (1) I've been accused of many things many times in my life. But being the poster child for what a sharp dressed preacher looks like has never been one of them. (2) Black tie affair doesn't mean tee shirt and flip flops. (3) Business casual doesn't mean blue jeans and a Hawaiian shirt. It means khakis and an open collar. (4) Coat and tie required isn't referring a sports team windbreaker with a tie in your pocket so you don't get in trouble. It means coat and tie.
- **Main Idea:** Resolving conflict in a way that's pleasing to Jesus starts with the proper attire for going into the conflict.
- **Clothe Yourselfes** – A military phrase referring to the attire of a soldier; It's a present command denoting continuous action; Daily put on the proper attire.
- **What To Take Off (8)** – Attire that leads to conflict: anger, rage, malice, slander, filthy language.
- **What to Put On (12)** – Attire that leads to resolution: compassion (empathy for others, not self); kindness (arises from compassion); humility (the exact opposite of the worst sin in the Bible: pride) gentleness (not weakness, but strength under control); patience (enduring of another's exasperating behavior without flying into a rage).

- **The Standard Bearer** – (1) These are qualities of Jesus that make our physical and spiritual life possible. (2) He empathizes, is kind, humble in heart, demonstrates gentleness and patience with us every day without flying into a rage. (3) Therefore, so must you also.

## 2. Proper Ammunition

- **Spare the Rod Spoil the Child (Prov. 13:24):** (1) Means different things to moms, dads and kids. (2) For a dad: belt or a paddle in a particular location on the backside. Kid doesn't mind that because he/she knows what's coming and where it's landing; (3) For a mom: anything within an arm length counts as a rod. Kid fears it tremendously because anything weapon formed against that shall prosper because it's in play. And it's in play anywhere.
- **Main Idea:** The proper ammunition for resolving conflict from Jesus' perspective is (1) bearing and (2) forgiving
- **The Ammunition of Bearing** – (1) Patience has the negative connotation of putting up with another's behavior without flying into a rage; (2) Bearing, however, is the same thing, but in a positive connotation; (3) It means to "uphold and support" someone; (4) It's the idea of instead of doing what is natural and fly into a rage...you not only restrain yourself but hold them up to prevent them from falling over.
- **Why We Bear** – The ancients believed that external behavior corresponds to hidden wounds. We believe similarly when we say "hurting people hurt people." The only thing that heals is the exact opposite approach; just like Jesus.
- **The Ammunition of Forgiving** – Here, Paul has in mind how the process of forgiveness works in grievances. It's not a repression of injustice or unfairness. It's the opposite – expressing that to that person and only that person. And then, having gotten it out, put it away.
- **Why We Forgive** – Jesus has cast our transgressions into the depth of the sea. And then he put up a sign that says no fishing.

## 3. Proper Armament

- **The Right to Bear Arms Includes Bearing Arms Against Flies In Your Home:** (1) Fly Paper to (2) Fly Swatter; (3) to the Bug-A-Salt; (4) A \$40 shotgun that uses salt as buckshot to stun and kill flies; (5) Glory to God for this wonderful invention.
- **Main Idea:** The main Bug-A-Salt in our arsenal in the Porcupine conflict is love for the other soul on the other side of the conflict.
- **The Church of Colossae Stood at the Foot of Mountains:** (1) In Turkey; (2) Mountains of Turkey were some of the highest regions in Asia Minor; (3) Overcoat of wool required to journey to the highest of heights
- **Journeying to the Top of the Mountain in Colossae:** (1) A rare feat; (2) a chance to commune with God Almighty himself; (3) And absolutely impossible to do without a coat of wool.
- **The Overcoat of Love** – (1) The highest virtue that allows us to climb to the highest peak to commune with the highest being: Jesus; (2) Love is the highest, center of the mark; (3) It was yesterday. It is today. It will be tomorrow. Now and forevermore.

## 4. Proper Aim

- **The Whelk** – (1) Small ocean creature that can ruin an oyster's day; (2) Has an appendage that works like an auger; (3) Bores hole in oyster's shell and by oyster.
- **Main Idea** – The ultimate aim of conflict resolution is peace inside the shell; a type that's protected from the whelk's drilling bore.
- **But the Type of Peace God Desires Is What's Important:** (1) World wants lack of conflict between nations; (2) Parents want lack of conflict between siblings; (3) you might want lack of conflict within yourself; (4) But the Peace of Christ is different. It implies that we are at war with God until we lay down our arms and submit to his Lordship
- **So Impossible to Be at War** – (1) With God and not be with other people; (2) Equally impossible to resolve any type of conflict.
- **But the Ideal Here** – (1) Laying down of arms towards Jesus first; (2) Will extend to others.