

Colossians 3:13-14

Feb 4, 2024

The 'One Another's' Series: Forgiveness

One Another Series

Main Point: We are in the midst of a series on the “One Another” commands in the New Testament. Today we are focusing on verse 13, “Bear with one another...forgiving each other.” What is forgiveness? Giving up the right to revenge. How can we do this? Start with the hurt, marvel at the beauty, and see Jesus.

‘One Another’s’ series – as a way to help us prepare for our new SS model...
Focusing on v. 13, reading the whole passage.

Read Col 3:1-17

Vs. 13 > “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.”

Intro: Why is this so important?

Fruit of Love one another. (from last week, and from v. 14 -)

If the church is a hospital for sinners, we can expect sinners to hurt each other, and we can expect healing to take place.

So you must forgive.

Tim Keller’s last book published before he died is titled “Forgive: Why Should I and How Can I?” - commend to you – many practicals

What is forgiveness? Giving up the right to revenge. Voluntary suffering.

Why is it so important? Well, the world is on fire, the internet is in love with cancel culture, and the church is God’s hope for the world. B/c it is the very core of Christianity. Jesus says in Matthew 18 that if we cannot forgive one another from the heart, then God cannot forgive us. Forgiveness is the rich, dark soil that makes the Church flourish, grow, removes the impurities and enjoy the clean slate.

How can I forgive? Start with the hurt, marvel at the beauty, and see Jesus.

1 How Could They? Forgiveness Acknowledges the Hurt

v. 13 - I’m focusing in on the ‘if one has a complaint’ b/c this is when something happens that rises above a slight, it’s a hurt, a punch, a wound.

Bearing with one another is the everyday church life of tolerating slights.
Enduring, putting up with

People are quirky and shot through with sinful tendencies that God is refining with fire and pruning away – and it is God who is doing this, not us. So we must bear with each other at all the different levels of maturity in the church.

Forgiveness starts with acknowledgement of the wrong. Beware the danger of excusing, minimizing, trying to convince yourself it didn't actually hurt.

“if” is a conditional statement –

‘complaint’ – grievance, cause for complaint – this is something that rises above a slight - often it is a pattern of irritation – a way of acting, responding, a character trait that is damaging to you and other people.

ILLUS – let the HS bring something to mind... something that bothers you that you can't get over and you are confident it will benefit your relationship to address - The passage doesn't go into how to specifically address the complaint – it is addressing our attitude, our position, how we face the person – our heart towards them –

‘Bearing with’ means no cancel culture in the church.

We can't be Christians and simultaneously ‘be done with’ anyone.

Have you found yourself gossiping negatively about a fellow brother or sister? Then you haven't forgiven them. Have thoughts of pleasure arisen when something bad happens to a fellow brother or sister? Then you haven't forgiven them. Have you caught a glimpse of a fellow brother or sister at church who hurt you in the past and then taken a different path? Then you haven't forgiven them.

Wait a minute, Michael. What about justice? We can't just let this go. Exactly – and that is the headwaters of many problems in churches – they let things go too long and the weeds get really big.

What we are engaging in is the gift of informal church discipline – this is gift – a complaint means that it has risen to the level of grievance and instead of cowardly avoiding the person, out of love, you go to them.

So for the purpose of flourishing the peace and purity of the church, start with acknowledging the hurt.

Trans to 2 – this is what makes forgiveness so attractive -

2 How could you? Forgiveness is Attractive

‘forgiving each other... so you also must forgive’
(Great gentleness & slowness)

Forgiveness is attractive, and one of the ways something becomes attractive is by comparing it with something ugly. So, first, the ugly. Let's first ask, How could you not forgive?

Parable of unmerciful servant - Matt 18:21-35 – Jesus tells this in response to Peter's request of how many times do I forgive my brother who sins against me. As many as 7 times? Jesus says, 70 x 7.

Jesus tells the parable of the unmerciful servant.

This is what the kingdom of heaven may be compared to...
A king wanted to settle accounts with his servants
One of his servants owed him 10,000 talents (about \$6 billion)
Begged for patience – I will pay you everything!
Master out of pity forgave him the entire debt.
Then that same servant left and found a fellow servant who owed him 100 denarii
(\$12,000)
Seized him, even choking him, demanded that he pay.
The king found out – “you wicked servant! I forgave you all that debt b/c you pleaded with me, and should you not have had mercy on your fellow servant, as I had mercy on you?”
The king put him in prison to stay until he pays all his debt.
Jesus ends with, “So also my heavenly Father will do to every one of you, if you do not forgive your brother from your heart.”

Craig Blomberg: “Frighteningly, many in Christian circles today seem in danger of this judgment because they refuse to forgive fellow believers, speak kindly to them, cooperate with them, or accept their apologies.” (from *Forgive*, T. Keller, p. 235, n. 9)

Forgiveness is derided and increasingly mocked in our culture – I read an editorial column this past week that was titled, “The United States of Nullification.” It seems easier and faster to get over my problems with someone by just erasing them, cancelling them, nullifying them.
Therefore it is attractive to the world when Christians forgive each other. If we can't forgive each other, how can we be expected to forgive hardened sinners?

How could you Forgive?

This is the hopefulness of forgiveness.

The whole point of forgiveness is that the other person doesn't deserve it. And so it makes sense not to forgive people if we are talking about whether they deserve it or not. If forgiveness is a measure of it being earned, then no, I'm not going to forgive you until you come admitting and begging and promising not to do that again.

This is shocking – 70 x 7 shocking – let it be shocking. Let it make you angry even.
Then you know you're starting to understand grace and applying it to yourself.

And so we see a glimpse of the wisdom of God in allowing evil: God prepares us, sets us up for redemption, for seeing our own need and helping others to see their need. Someone sinning against us is not only to harm us but to show us our own ongoing need for forgiveness.

Luke 13:1-5 – Jesus uses a current event – “Do you think that those 18 people on whom the tower in Siloam fell and killed them: do you think that they were worse offenders than all the others who lived in Jerusalem? No I tell you; but unless you repent, you will all likewise perish.”

Jesus is teaching that when there is a disruption of peace in the created order that this is ordained by God to remind us that all is not right with the world. To awaken us of our own need for repentance.

Again, the hopefulness of forgiveness:

Because forgiveness is a longing for justice. But what kind? Retribution? That they get what is coming to them? Or that they truly repent? That your brother or sister truly repents is the longing for all true Christians – that they receive what you have received. That they keep receiving what you keep receiving – forgiveness from the Judge of all Mankind. Repentance is a party for everyone involved. Repentance is filled with joy b/c it is the foundation for reconciliation.

Cullman – Hosp. Admin and main surgeon – both members of the church
During the serving of communion
Sitting near the front
Forgiveness happened and the beginnings of reconciliation

To forgive does NOT mean instant reconciliation of the relationship, but it does mean that you are willing.

Be like Frodo – always holding out hope that Smeagol would repent and turn away from his love of evil.

When you forgive, how is this attractive? B/c everyone needs forgiveness, everyone needs compassion, but when evil is done to you, you want justice, you want someone to pay. (see 3)

And now we are getting to the core of forgiveness and why it is so powerfully attractive. To forgive is to forsake revenge or retribution.
To forgive is to voluntarily suffer.

Why is it attractive? Bc it is undeserved. The word in v. 13 “forgiving” is from the word charizomai from the root word charis – grace – As we are forgiving one another – ongoing, continual – we are gracing one another. Giving our brothers and sisters something that they do not deserve. This is expensive stuff. Costly. And so anytime sin invades – which is often – forgiveness acknowledges the hurt, but then it does all it can to restore, heal, wipe it clean, and it celebrates! As I’ve said many times – Christians should have the very best parties b/c if there is anything to celebrate, it is that we have been forgiven!

And so when we forgive each other in the church, we are letting air back in. We are creating space for the flourishing of growth to happen. That’s why when you have a spirit of unforgiveness there is anxiety, tightness, nervousness, desire to flee. And so

the presence of the kind of conflicts that I hear about just in the everyday work of serving here, they bring a smile to my face. Because you are staying in them. You're not denying them, you're not running from them, you're not covering them over with southern niceties, you're clothing yourselves with compassion, kindness, humility, meekness, and patience.

How can you forgive? Practicals - By vs. 5-9 by putting to death (burn the clothes, don't just put them in the bottom of the closet) – anger, wrath, malice, slander, obscene talk, lying

Training aspect to forgiveness – repeated practice – do this at home in your closest relationships

Vs. 12 – by putting on like you put on clothing – compassion, kindness, humility, meekness, patience - these are soft things, not armor. Beginning to see what forgiveness costs – it allows the pain in, it absorbs it, like a big soft belly absorbs a blow.

ILLUS – imagine a boxer in the ring with another boxer and he has a big soft belly and the other boxer just keeps punching him in the belly over and over. It's not really gonna hurt him! He can take those kinds of blows, until the other boxer wears out, and then instead of fighting, they're hugging. Isn't this parenting? Don't your kids throw a lot of punches? God is developing in us parents the softer belly so we can absorb the blows and hug our kids.

This is what Jesus gives you. If He has taken the blows, the worst of all the blows for you, instead of you, then He grows in you a big soft belly as far as forgiveness is concerned. You can take the punches, 70 x 7 of them. (Trans to 3.)

Trans to 3 How could they? – acknowledge the hurt

How could you forgive me? - How attractive forgiveness is!

3 -

3 How Could He? Forgiveness is Supernaturally Accomplished

'as the Lord has forgiven you'

How could He do that? Only God – Substitutionary Atonement

See Colossians 1:13-14 "He has delivered us from the domain of darkness and transferred us to the kingdom of His beloved Son, in whom we have redemption, the forgiveness of sins."

Forgiveness is a longing for justice – for someone to pay. For someone to suffer for these wrongs, for pain to be inflicted so that they know what they have done is wrong. Punishment.

How – how could God, the Judge, the wrathful avenger of all wrong, the holy God who cannot look upon sin, who is sinless and untainted, how?

Could – A God of wrath, punishment, judgement is hard for many people. A place of eternal fiery judgment – hell – is not something that is talked about. Jesus talked more about hell than He did Heaven – why? Out of love. He describes it vividly and terrifyingly. And in the Matthew 18 parable of the unmerciful servant. So that we could see what it cost God to love us. This is the power – the only power – that enables you to forgive someone, truly forgive them – by seeing, receiving, and going ever deeper into the costliness of Jesus’ cross.

Justice and grace. Wrath and Love.

He – only He, only Jesus, only someone who is fully Man could pay the penalty for mankind’s transgressions – humans messed it up, the Savior has to be fully man. But only God can forgive the punishment that has been earned. Only God can judge as to whether forgiveness can be given. And so we are at the very core of the meaning of the word – in order to forgive, something must be absorbed, something must be given for, given in place of what is deserved. In order for something to be given, something must be taken, received. And God receives it. God takes it. He takes the pain, the wrath, the penalty. He takes it Himself. See the pain that He took, that you and I caused. Hear your own mocking voice standing there calling out among the scoffers. How could He? Out of sacrificial love He brought you from hell to heaven.

And so, you must also forgive, in order to bring heaven where there is a taste of hell. Where there is poison, you are the antidote. The poison of unforgiveness, the Satanic Hell of shaming one another for doing that – he did THAT to you?? – it must be forgiven by you or it will grow thorns in your soul and you will become mean and angry – of course you will!

But if you see the forgiveness that Christ has purchased for you, then you can forgive anything, b/c your greatest goal is that the person who sinned might receive the same ridiculously good gift that you have received – forgiveness.

Communion

Bene: Jude 24-25

Small Group Questions:

1. Think of a time when you thought, “how could they do that?” What leads us to often judge one another instead of forgive one another?
2. What do you think makes forgiving one another so difficult for many Christians?
3. How can Christians lose the ‘bloody religion’ aspect of Christ’s atoning sacrifice if we don’t acknowledge the pain of being sinned against?

4. How can approaching our fellow Christians when something rises to the level of a grievance help us to keep the 'weeds' down within the church?
5. Think of an example when someone in the church forgave you and you had your relationship restored. Share with one another if you can.
6. Does Jesus really mean for us to forgive one another 70X7 or is this hyperbole?
7. How can true forgiveness of one another be attractive to the watching world? Can you think of a story of someone who was impacted by Christians forgiving each other? How can this level of forgiveness bring light and salt to the non-Christian world?
8. Have a party in your group over Jesus' forgiveness of you and invite one another to party with each other together. Why is this hard for us? How can we fight cynicism by rejoicing more?