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"Bear with each other and forgive one another if any of you has a grievance against someone. Forgive as the Lord forgave you." Colossians 3:13

Forgiveness

Sometimes a particular phrase from a sermon can stay with us for years. I wonder if you have any such phrases? One for me is "Forgiveness is the oil that keeps the church running well", or words to that effect. We heard them in an evening sermon in around 2010 from Richard Burfoot, who was later to become our Moderator in the previous Pastoral Vacancy. In the same way that a car engine, or in my case, a bicycle chain, will not run well without oil, without forgiveness the church will not run well.

So I thought that I would look at forgiveness in this article, to see what we can learn about it, and, hopefully, apply what we learn to our own lives.

The first thing to note is that forgiveness of sin, leading to salvation when we repent and believe and trust in Jesus, is God's business. We cannot gain salvation for another person by forgiving them: it is God's forgiveness that matters. This is illustrated at the end of Luke chapter 7 where the dinner guests are amazed that Jesus forgives sin: the implication is that Jesus is divine.

However, we are instructed to forgive one another and this is a vital part of our discipleship. Jesus states this explicitly in the Sermon on the Mount (Matthew chapter 6) where He says that if we don't forgive then we won't be forgiven. He included it in the Lord's prayer. And we also see it in the epistles, for example in Ephesians chapter 4 and Colossians chapter 3.

But what does forgiving one another look like in practice? Because God has forgiven us we should forgive others, without waiting for them to repent. The goal of forgiveness, a restored relationship, of course does depend on the response of the forgiven one. Forgiving someone means accepting them as Christ accepts us (Romans chapter 15). It means being prepared to work with them again: we can't truly forgive someone but then have nothing to

do with them. That is not how God forgives us! We should want the best for them.

One part of the Sermon on the Mount which we are perhaps not good at putting into practice is where Jesus says if we come to the altar and remember that a brother or sister has something against us then we should sort that out before giving our offering. I think that principle can be reasonably applied to coming to communion – we should be right with each other as we come.

What happens if we don't forgive one another? Well, that will result in a loss of peace – so we are hurting ourselves if we don't forgive. It will also mean, as our original phrase implies, that the church won't work as well as it should. Apart from affecting the church this may result in us being inward looking and that means fewer people will hear the gospel – so those outside the church may suffer too if we don't forgive one another.

So, just a few thoughts on forgiveness: let's ask God to help us to be the people He wants us to be and to be obedient to His Word.

George Wright

What's on in June

On Sunday 5th June we will be holding the second of our Prayer Sunday Services and this will be led by Stephen Chaloner. It will take place in the Church Hall and refreshments will be served before the service begins at 11am. We will also be celebrating communion during that service.

For the other three Sundays in June, our preacher will be Rev John Good, the Baptist Pioneer Minister in Hamworthy. This will be a great time for us to get to know John better, so do come along and hear what he has to share with us.

On Sunday 12th June, after the morning service, we will be holding our Church Members' Meeting. Bring your own lunch along and drinks will be provided. Then when we've all finished our lunch, we'll move into the Church for our Members' Meeting. Church Members' please make a special effort to stay for that, as it's really important for us to try and 'discern the mind of Christ' together at these meetings. The agenda will be sent out by Sunday 5th June. The deacons really want to hear what you think, even if you don't agree with everything we suggest. If you are someone who finds it difficult to speak up publicly in meetings, you can always come and talk to one of us privately and we will share your views anonymously during the meetings.

Other Notices

The Baptist Assembly at the BIC in Bournemouth was both thought provoking and encouraging. All the sessions, including the Sunday morning worship service were 'live streamed' on YouTube. This means that you can now watch what happened there. Go into YouTube and search for Baptist Assembly 2022 and choose which session to watch. Janet's recommendation is the Sunday morning worship where European Baptist Fellowship President Alan Donaldson gave a very good message.