

Forgiveness: Essential for Community

Review: Living Stones fit together into a Spiritual House (1Pe 2:4-5)

What is the “mortar” between us?

(Col 2:19) and not holding fast to the Head, from whom all the body, nourished and knit together by joints and ligaments, grows with the increase that is from God.

Ligaments = “bond” in two other verses

(Ep 4:2-3) with all lowliness and gentleness, with longsuffering, bearing with one another in love, endeavoring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the **bond** of peace.

(Col 3:12-14) Therefore, as the elect of God, holy and beloved, put on tender mercies, kindness, humility, meekness, longsuffering; bearing with one another, and forgiving one another, if anyone has a complaint against another; even as Christ forgave you, so you also must do. But above all these things put on love, which is the **bond** of perfection.

We are bound by the love and peace between us. (protect it)

Because there will be conflict in community, this takes work/commitment to forgiveness.

The accuser of the brethren (Rev 12:10) labors to divide and conquer.

Every conflict is an opportunity. (choice)

Forgiveness is a non-optional requirement

(Mt 6:14-15) For if you forgive men their trespasses, your heavenly Father will also forgive you. But if you do not forgive men their trespasses, neither will your Father forgive your trespasses.

Jesus, context: Lord’s prayer

(Mk 11:25-26) And whenever you stand praying, if you have anything against anyone, forgive him, that your Father in heaven may also forgive you your trespasses. But if you do not forgive, neither will your Father in heaven forgive your trespasses.”

Jesus, context: prayer/relationship

We set our own standard of judgement (Jam 2:13)

Forgiveness is in our own self interest.

Matthew 18:15-17

Goal: restored peace through honorable process (Prov 17:9)

applies to sin against you, not in general

taking up an offence (Ps 15:3) – you don’t have grace for another’s offence

Matthew 18:21-35

Unlimited Forgiveness

millions/billions vs few thousand at most

when you realize you are wealthy in love/forgiveness, you can afford to be extravagant

Slavery to Freedom to Slavery

tormentors = demonic opportunity (ex: wrist healing)

we hurt ourselves while our offender is unaffected

(Heb 12:14-15) Pursue peace with all people, and holiness, without which no one will see the Lord: looking carefully lest anyone fall short of the grace of God; lest any root of bitterness springing up cause trouble, and by this many become defiled;

unforgiveness can defile those around us

Unforgiveness is misplaced identity – “you don’t know...”

moving on requires letting go, can feel like being diminished

not saying offence isn’t big, saying identity in Someone bigger

(Ro 12:19) Beloved, do not avenge yourselves, but rather give place to wrath; for it is written, “Vengeance is Mine, I will repay,” says the Lord.

we aren’t qualified to meet out vengeance – trust the just and merciful One

Rachel: story of overweight woman (“have to pay”)

We can’t ask Him to give us mercy and others judgement (Jam 2:13)

Practical:

1. Forgiveness is a Decision, not a Feeling

deal with feelings by taking thoughts captive to truth

like a court decision – at the final judgement evaluation stops

2. Forgiveness doesn’t require trust or even relationship

Embrace a Culture of Forgiveness

Guard the Bond of Peace and Love

Benjamin Franklin - Constitutional Convention June 28, 1787 Philadelphia, PA

Mr. President:

The small progress we have made after 4 or five weeks close attendance & continual reasonings with each other -- our different sentiments on almost every question, several of the last producing as many noes as ayes, methinks a melancholy proof of the imperfection of the Human Understanding. We indeed seem to **feel** our own want of political wisdom, since we have been running about in search of it. We have gone back to ancient history for models of government, and examined the different forms of those Republics which having been formed with the seeds of their own dissolution now no longer exist. And we have viewed Modern States all round Europe, but find none of their Constitutions suitable to our circumstances. In this situation of this Assembly groping as it were in the dark to find political truth, and scarce able to distinguish it when to us, how has it happened, Sir, that we have not hitherto once thought of humbly applying to the Father of lights to illuminate our understandings? In the beginning of the contest with G. Britain, when we were sensible of danger we had daily prayer in this room for the Divine Protection. -- Our prayers, Sir, were heard, and they were graciously answered. All of us who were engaged in the struggle must have observed frequent instances of a Superintending providence in our favor. To that kind providence we owe this happy opportunity of consulting in peace on the means of establishing our future national felicity. And have we now forgotten that powerful friend? Or do we imagine that we no longer need His assistance.

I have lived, Sir, a long time and the longer I live, the more convincing proofs I see of this truth -- that **God** governs in the affairs of men. And if a sparrow cannot fall to the ground without his notice, is it probable that an empire can rise without his aid? We have been assured, Sir, in the sacred writings that "except the Lord build they labor in vain that build it." I firmly believe this; and I also believe that without his concurring aid we shall succeed in this political building no better than the Builders of Babel: We shall be divided by our little partial local interests; our projects will be confounded, and we ourselves shall become a reproach and a by word down to future age. And what is worse, mankind may hereafter this unfortunate instance, despair of establishing Governments by Human Wisdom, and leave it to chance, war, and conquest. I therefore beg leave to move -- that henceforth prayers imploring the assistance of Heaven, and its blessings on our deliberations, be held in this Assembly every morning before we proceed to business, and that one or more of the Clergy of this City be requested to officiate in that service.