

Forgive and Forget? “It All Depends”

Written by K B Napier

Sunday, 12 December 2021 09:47

Do we claim to ‘forgive and forget’? If we do, it has to be a false claim, because human beings are not created to be that way. And what is meant by ‘forget’? God says He forgets a sin when a person repents. To be consistent with His character, this cannot mean He literally forgets, because if He did forget it would compromise His claim to being all-powerful. It means He will not hold the sinner to account for sins that have been repented of. And we humans must follow in the same fashion.

This paper is general and only looks at a small selection of issues, but we can give a quick summary (a later detailed paper can provide texts: the arguments here are based on such texts):

1. Those who commit sin must repent to the Lord AND change their ways.
2. The sin repented of must not be repeated, otherwise any repentance will appear to be a sham.
3. On the other hand, we are taught that the same sin/s might be repeated, and if the repentance is sincere in each case, it is treated as a separate activity. Thus, someone might sin on 7 times 70 occasions and if the repentance is itself sincere and at least a move is made to change, the repentance is accepted by the Lord.
4. The one who is hurt by a sin of another must receive an apology, after the repentance has been made. Such apology cannot be ‘conditional’.
5. When both these actions have been taken, the one who has been affected or hurt by the sin MUST accept the repentance to be real, and MUST allow the apology at face value... unless there is evidence that shows the repentance is not true or is manufactured just to get back into the hurt person’s ‘good books’.
6. In other words, simply saying one repents is not good enough to convince the person who has been hurt by the sin. What if the sinner says they will change in future? That is fine, but it must be a CONTINUOUS change and not just a one-off claim. My PhD topic was about disfellowship of those who do not repent or change. In my thesis I gave the example of John Knox’s church and their attitude towards sin and repentance.
7. It maintained that a person must repent unconditionally to God and must apologise unconditionally to the person who has been hurt by the sin. When these two elements are met, the one who was hurt MUST accept the repentance and apology to be true and MUST return the repentant sinner back into friendship.
8. HOWEVER... there will be a trial period when what was claimed to be a true repentance and apology is continued for a number of months before the ‘case is closed’. Thus, the repentant sinner MUST show a total return to God’s ways and a total return to living righteously, without stint of any kind. Indeed, the face itself will show the ‘glow’ of holiness that a lie cannot

Forgive and Forget? “It All Depends”

Written by K B Napier

Sunday, 12 December 2021 09:47

manufacture! At this stage everyone in the local congregation will watch the person to see if he or she actually changes and shows a true godly character and ways. And they must encourage that person with genuine friendship.

9. There are some things I do not agree with in Knox’s remedy for sin and accepting someone back into the congregation, **HOWEVER**, his remedy was on the right track and was honourable.

10. All the above means is that both persons (the person who committed the sin/s **AND** the one sinned against) must view the other as a child of God, where both have been saved by grace. And **BOTH** *must* show the other that reasonable changes have been made, so both can move forward in grace, truth, and continuous righteous living. In other words, simply repenting and *not* showing continuous change and continuous righteousness, proves the repentance to be false.

There is a lot more to this, but the above is sufficient to enable people to move forward in love and forgiveness. Note that the one who is sinned against must ask for forgiveness. This must be unconditional – sin is sin and wrong is wrong. The person must just accept they have sinned and has hurt someone. If this is not shown, then any request for forgiveness is a sham. Those with a mature Christian faith will recognize when someone has changed and is living righteously... it can be seen in a new attitude and openness There can sometimes be ‘slip-ups’ at times – we are all prone to do this, and fall back into sin. **BUT**, when this happens the sinner must repent and get right with God, before apologizing to anyone they have hurt. Unconditionally!

From that point onwards, life resumes in grace and love. If it does not, then one of the parties is not keeping to godly intent and God’s demands. It is a very simple activity – both parties must live in God’s grace and mercy, and make sure their individual lives are godly. With one who has sinned and repented/apologized, there must be 100% intention to do what is right, regardless of personal hidden intentions. Otherwise, any future life will be dishonourable and not to be trusted.

There can be a lot more to this topic, but I am sure the above is sufficient to start with. We do not have much time on this earth, so make the time count! And those who pretend to be repentant and apologetic will discover God’s wrath at some time, as well as being held responsible by God for the suffering of fellow believers. We can only ‘forget’ when the sins are not repeated over time.

An Important Addition – Putting things right

Forgive and Forget? “It All Depends”

Written by K B Napier

Sunday, 12 December 2021 09:47

All the above is necessary to help return a wayward Christian to the arms of Christ. However, there is another vital step to take once the repentant sinner seeks God’s face and forgiveness. It must be done before the persons who have been wronged can properly think of forgiving and trusting their accuser. You might think that if God has heard the repentance that He forgives immediately. This is not so. Firstly, He must see the repentance as genuine. But, what can prevent God giving forgiveness to one who thinks they sincerely repent? One thing more must be added to the above...

The one seeking to repent **MUST** put things right. I am not adding this step because I think it is right by my own mind. No, it is a requirement that proves beyond doubt that the repentant man or women means what they say. Without this final step, there can be no true forgiveness by man or God.

This step is humbling to the one who repents, but it also lifts them up in the eyes of the Lord, and finally puts things right with anyone who was harmed by the sins of the one now repenting. By seeking humility the sinner increases in spiritual stature. (See my recent Outline, “my yoke is light”). This step is not a way to make a person look bad – it makes them right with God!

If someone has been hurt or otherwise harmed by the person, no amount of repentance will put things right. That person, if truly repentant, **MUST** put things right – by reversing the effect of whatever sins they have committed, thus returning any relationships back to the starting line, so everyone can go forward with a ‘clean slate’. Thus, a person who has said wrong things about a fellow believer must go back to those they have communed with and say that what was said was wrong, and that any accusations are removed as lies or ‘mistaken’ views. Take a simple example – accusing a Christian of theft, just to ‘get even’. This must be put right – otherwise a cloud of suspicion will always be above the head of the one who has been wronged. His or her good name has been badly sullied, so this **MUST** be rectified immediately and unconditionally. Without this even a fellow human being cannot accept an apology, and the perceived ‘repentance’ is left hanging in the air, unfulfilled.

Without this step, repentance will be viewed as a mere excuse, and people cannot reconcile. If things have been invented for whatever reason, they must be put right. Otherwise, where is the real proof of repentance? There must be a ‘clean slate’, free of all former sins, before reconciliation can even begin. Only then can God accept repentance as real, and only then can a wronged party begin to accept the apology and repentance as genuine. With this final step comes a new life and love, true freedom in Christ.

Forgive and Forget? “It All Depends”

Written by K B Napier

Sunday, 12 December 2021 09:47

“And Zacchaeus stood, and said unto the Lord; Behold, Lord, the half of my goods I give to the poor; and if I have taken any thing from any man by false accusation, I restore [him] fourfold.

And Jesus said unto him, This day is salvation come to this house, forsomuch as he also is a son of Abraham.”

(Luke 19:9)

©November 2021r

---oOo---

{loadposition btm_address}