



Dear Friends,

Kathryn and I recently attended a memorial dinner for Uncle Charles at one of my favourite Greek restaurants, Yiamas, at St. Peter's. Uncle Charles died forty years ago. He died at 73, the same age of my cousin who hosted the event. That's why the big occasion.

We were surrounded by family. Two brothers and three cousins. The food was terrific and I enjoy feasting with family. I also appreciated hearing stories of Uncle Charles. Sadly, I never got to meet my uncle because there was a rift between our two families for decades. Charles died before that rift was healed. Happily, there was forgiveness and reconciliation.

Forgiveness. There's a word. If it weren't for forgiveness, I have no idea what my relationships would be like. I cannot conceive of marriage, family, friendships or church without forgiveness.

Forgiveness is the willing act of a wounded party to absorb the injury inflicted so that the relationship may continue and so that the community's wound may heal. Forgiveness involves paying a price. That price is not paid by the offender but by the party offended.

How is true and lasting forgiveness possible? Only through the gospel of Jesus Christ. Forgiveness finds its source in the God who forgives our offences by paying the price himself through his beloved Son.

The gospel is also the motivator and power needed to forgive someone who has significantly wronged us. Christians forgive because God forgives all our transgressions. Power to forgive comes when we personally receive God's forgiveness, which is an undeserved, generous and loving action. When I experience God's love for me in Christ, the Holy Spirit moves me to forgive.

Christian forgiveness involves not only the offender and offended party. It involves God who we offend by our wrongdoing. It may also surprise us that forgiveness involves the community to which we belong, even though most of the time we don't realise it. Sin necessarily impacts others in the community, even if its not obvious. The rift in my extended family affected me, even though I wasn't even alive when it all happened.

For relationships to remain, develop and thrive, forgiveness is absolutely necessary.

Therefore, as God's chosen people, holy and dearly loved, clothe yourselves with compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness and patience. Bear with each other and forgive whatever grievances you may have against one another. Forgive as the Lord forgave you. (Col 3:12-13)

What was the culture and practice of forgiveness like in your family growing up? I ask that because you can be sure that you were shaped by them. Was forgiveness asked for and offered?

When Kathryn and I became parents, I was determined to be a good dad. But I soon found that I made mistakes. Lots of mistakes. I had unreasonable expectations of the kids. I sometimes spoke harshly to them. Putting it bluntly, I sinned.

Initially, I found it hard to say sorry to my kids and ask for their forgiveness. The older they got, the harder I found it. Gradually, I learned to ask for their forgiveness because of God's grace toward me, and because of the culture and practice of forgiveness I had experienced in my marriage to Kathryn and through relationships with brothers and sisters at church.

I pray that the culture and practice of forgiveness at RPC is characterised by us honestly owning up to our sin and a willingness to ask for forgiveness from those we sin against, and to extend forgiveness when we have been wronged.

God Bless,
Mark Adams