

“Love keeps no record of wrongs” 1 Corinthians chapter 13 verse 5

Perhaps the things we remember most are the times when people hurt us. Hurtful words and actions stick in our mind and come back to haunt us even many years later. The way we relate to people may be influenced by something they said or did long ago. The worst thing is when we resurrect the wrong that we have suffered, or the mistake that they made, or the thing they failed in to punish or control them.

That is not a loving thing to do, because it keeps others constantly under threat of having the past brought up as a weapon against them. Never allowed to forget the thing that they did (or supposedly did) wrong, they can never really move on. We hold them on the hook of our unforgiveness.

God has a record of the wrong things that people do. A day will come when it will be brought out for judgement. But if we were able to examine this record for ourselves, we would find something quite strange. Some of the entries would appear blotted out, the sinful things that were written there completely obscured. Who could have done that?

It turns out that God has done it himself. The Old Testament prophet Isaiah quotes him saying “I, even I am he who blots out your transgressions, for my own sake, and remembers your sins no more.” We know, of course, that God is able to do this because the price of our sins was paid by Jesus in his death on the cross, and that death was the definitive expression of God's love and grace towards us. The sins of those who put their faith and trust in the crucified, risen and ascended Jesus are blotted out and will never be charged against them.

But I'd suggest that there's a difference between forgetting and not remembering. I suspect that God doesn't forget our sins. He simply does not bring the record of them back and use them to condemn us. As far as the record is concerned, they are gone, rendered unreadable by the blood of Jesus which blots them out.

So if our lives as Christians are to reflect the love and grace of God in our treatment of others, one of the most powerful ways in which we can do this is in refraining from using past hurts to condemn them. That won't stop the memory of their wrongs against us continuing to sting, of course. We cannot erase them from our memories, but just as there was a price to pay for God to blot out our sins, so we also pay something of a price when we willingly resist our impulse to visit the wrongs that people have done us back on their heads.

Prayer.

Father, most of us live with the memories of real or perceived hurts inflicted on us by others. We don't ask that our memories of these things be wiped clean, but that we might have the strength from your Holy Spirit to resist the temptation to use them against the people who have hurt us. May we reflect your forgiving love and grace in our own lives and in the way we relate to others. In Jesus' name, amen.

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