

GRACE GAZETTE

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Wherefore lift up the hands which hang down, and the feeble knees. And make straight paths for your feet, lest that which is lame be turned out of the way; but let it rather be healed.

Hebrews 12:12-13

FORGIVENESS

But there is forgiveness with thee, that thou mayest be feared. (Psalms 130:4)

The doctrine of forgiveness is at the heart of our hope of eternal life. If there is no such thing then we will surely perish. The Psalmist asked the question, "*If thou, LORD, shouldest mark iniquities, O LORD, who shall stand?*" (Psalms 130:3) The literal meaning of the word mark here is, to save or keep; meaning if the LORD should choose not to do away with our sins then we would be destroyed. Sin is an awful affront against GOD and is not taken lightly by HIM nor should it be by us. In fact HE said that "*the soul that sinneth, it shall die*"(Ezek.18:20).

Forgiveness and mercy are not the same thing. The wicked who perish have at times been the recipients of HIS mercy but not HIS forgiveness. HIS forgiveness though prompted by mercy is based on HIM satisfying HIS own law which demands satisfaction or payment for sin. When GOD forgives sin HE does not do it by decree but by the cancellation of the sin debt. The only effectual payment for sin that has ever been made was the shedding of the blood of the spotless LAMB of GOD, the LORD JESUS CHRIST. (see Heb.9:12) All of GOD's forgiveness is done on the basis of what CHRIST has done for us. "*In whom we have redemption through his blood, even the forgiveness of sins.*" (Col 1:14)

The Psalmist said, "*there is forgiveness with thee that thou mayest be feared*". When we consider the awesome display that HE has made in the unfolding of redemption we are made to fall upon our faces and worship HIM whose ways are above our ways and whose thoughts are above our thoughts. We, having been made the recipients of HIS forgiveness, now are compelled to forgive those who have transgressed against us. HE forgave us, who being creatures have disrespected the CREATOR, how much more ought we to forgive those who are our equals in the flesh who have despitefully used us, abused us, or offended us. By looking at HIS example of forgiveness to us, we learn how we ought to forgive others.

We are forgiven completely. There is no such thing as partial forgiveness. Any sin that is unforgiven by the ALMIGHTY would condemn us completely. When we forgive others we must do so in the spirit of forgiveness and not in its letter. The flesh would have us to make a big deal out of making a show of forgiveness when perhaps we have not done it with our heart. The colloquial expression for that is "to forgive but not forget" which in reality is hypocrisy. To speak face to face with those who have offended us as though we forgive them when in our hearts we still hold a grudge or ill feeling is the same as no forgiveness at all. In fact such action as this brings great sorrow and eats as a cancer at the very heart of the one who will not forgive.

We are forgiven continually. Jeremiah said, "*It is of the LORD'S mercies that we are not consumed, because his compassions fail not. They are new every morning: great is thy faithfulness*" (Lam 3:22-23) One of the LORD's disciples asked HIM how many times we should forgive, HIS answer was "seventy times seven" which would literally be 490 times. Of course HE literally meant that there is no end to the number of times we are to forgive those who offend us nor any cessation in our resolve to be forgiving people.

We are forgiven even though we were the enemies of GOD. (see Rom.5:10; Col.1:21) We have been taught to love our enemies and to pray for those who despitefully use us.

We are forgiven though we have done nothing to deserve it. Repentance is the result of forgiveness and not its cause. (see Luke 7:36-47) "*And you, being dead in your sins and the uncircumcision of your flesh, hath HE quickened together with HIM, having forgiven you all trespasses.*" (Col 2:13) How often has our flesh told us not to forgive someone until they act like they are sorry. The flesh demands some sacrifice or requires some payment. Grace produces the fruit of repentance by forgiving the offender. (read Romans 12:20) Forgiveness is not a payment to the deserving but is the pouring out of mercy upon the guilty.

We are forgiven for CHRIST's sake. The basis upon which our sins are forgiven is the blood of CHRIST. The basis upon which we forgive others is HIS life in us. (see II Cor.2:10). If we have been forgiven for HIS sake ought we not to forgive others for the same. We ought to have an attitude of forgiveness which in most cases will prevent our being offended in the first place. When we are aware of the great mercy which the LORD has extended to us, it will be but a light thing for us to extend that same mercy to those who are against us.

We are forgiven from a position of strength. GOD had the power to condemn us, yet HE chose to forgive us. A forgiving spirit and a loving heart is not an exhibition of weakness but rather of strength. "*For if, when we were enemies, we were reconciled to God by the death of his Son, much more, being reconciled, we shall be saved by his life*" (Romans 5:10)

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