

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

And be ye kind one to another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, even as God for Christ's sake hath forgiven you.

Ephesians 4:32

A thief may steal something from another man and do so without any qualm of conscience, but even a thief (without exception) will be angry if someone else steals something from him. This illustrates quite clearly that he knows it is wrong to steal even though in his corrupt and selfish nature he can excuse his own wrongdoing. An adulterer may excuse his own actions while condemning the same transgression in his own spouse.

Paul states that even the Gentiles, who were not given the Law, written in tablets of stone, nonetheless, have the principle of the law ingrained in them. *"For when the Gentiles, which have not the law, do by nature the things contained in the law, these, having not the law, are a law unto themselves: Which shew the work of the law written in their hearts, their conscience also bearing witness, and their thoughts the mean while accusing or else excusing one another;"* (Rom 2:14-15) This is demonstrated quite clearly by the fact that every man (in the flesh) believes in "an eye for an eye, and a tooth for a tooth." Even young children manifest this very principle when they are struck by another child or a toy is taken from them.

The most difficult action for any human being to take towards another is to demonstrate a spirit of true forgiveness. In fact it is actually impossible to perform acts of true forgiveness apart from the work of the SPIRIT of GOD. True forgiveness as shall be demonstrated by the sons of GOD is not just an action taken now and then, but rather a state of mind which has regard towards the mercy of GOD which has been demonstrated towards them. The fruit of the SPIRIT in the child of GOD causes him to delight in forgiveness. The legalistic mind of the flesh is that which demands satisfaction or at least a credible apology before granting its own version of forgiveness.

It is this legalistic mindset which holds the notion that one should not grant forgiveness unless he sees fruits of repentance in the offending party. The fruit of the SPIRIT produces a mind which is not concerned with apologies but rather is impossible to offend. *"Charity suffereth long, and is kind; charity envieth not; charity vaunteth not itself, is not puffed up, Doth not behave itself unseemly, seeketh not her own, is not easily provoked, thinketh no evil."* (1Cor 13:4-5)

True forgiveness is a product of the SPIRIT of GOD who causes the people of GOD to love their neighbor as themselves. That man who is led by the SPIRIT of GOD hopes to be found with the same mind which was in CHRIST JESUS as HE prayed for HIS tormentors. *"Then said Jesus, Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do. And they parted his raiment, and cast lots."* (Luke 23:34) No one apologized to HIM nor asked for forgiveness. HE prayed in this fashion because that was HIS nature as a perfect MAN who had the SPIRIT without measure.

One of the fruits of the SPIRIT is *"longsuffering"*. (see Gal 5:22) It is impossible to be *"longsuffering"* without manifesting a forgiving spirit and vice versa. This is also closely akin to the work of *"forbearing"* with one another. *"With all lowliness and meekness, with longsuffering,*

forbearing one another in love.” (Eph 4:2) Patience, tenderness, and kindness are necessary parts of forgiveness and where you find one you must find the other. It is the evident work of the SPIRIT when these attitudes are found and the obvious work of the flesh when they are disregarded and set aside in favor of “justice”. Has not CHRIST taught us to walk in HIS steps. “For what glory is it, if, when ye be buffeted for your faults, ye shall take it patiently? but if, when ye do well, and suffer for it, ye take it patiently, this is acceptable with God. For even hereunto were ye called: because Christ also suffered for us, leaving us an example, that ye should follow his steps: Who did no sin, neither was guile found in his mouth: Who, when he was reviled, reviled not again; when he suffered, he threatened not; but committed himself to him that judgeth righteously.” (1Pet 2:20-23)

The flesh promises us a feeling of satisfaction when we demand an apology from another person, who it tells us we have a right to be offended by. It promises an even greater enjoyment if such apology is not forthcoming and we can hold a grudge against them until they come around. Yet such a spirit of unforgiveness is like a cancer that eats at our very vitals and only serves to bring us into a place of bitterness and quenching of the SPIRIT. Those who walk in such an attitude cannot walk in peace since the scripture clearly says, *“But if ye forgive not men their trespasses, neither will your Father forgive your trespasses.” (Mat 6:15)* A man cannot have the enjoyment of sins forgiven if he is unforgiving.

We are sure that JESUS CHRIST has paid the complete price of Redemption for HIS Elect Bride. *“In whom we have redemption through his blood, even the forgiveness of sins.” (Col 1:14)* Now while there is a certain aspect of “forgiveness” which relates to the legal remission of sin which CHRIST did undertake in HIS own body on Calvary’s tree, the primary meaning of “forgiveness” as it is set forth throughout the scriptures is not a legal satisfaction itself, but rather the result of the “legal action” (as HE made HIMSELF an offering for sin) which the LORD is pleased to apply to the conscience of those for whom CHRIST died.

We see this set forth in the First Epistle of John, where he says, *“If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.” (1John 1:9)* John is not saying that the legal standing of the sons of GOD is dependent on them confessing their sins. No part of the legal standing of the sons of GOD is in anywise dependent on their own actions, but rather, completely rests in that work which CHRIST undertook, performed, and finished in their behalf.

Yet it is true that the application of “forgiveness” is brought to them through the work of repentance which is wrought in them by the SPIRIT of GOD, causing them to confess their sins and thus enter into the joy of the LORD in their own conscience. That man who is without repentance has no enjoyment of the blessings of redemption in his own soul. Yet as a man is humbled by the SPIRIT to see CHRIST as that PERFECT SUBSTITUTE, he can then taste and see the “forgiveness” of GOD in a manifest sense.

This is not something that only happens once in the believer’s life, but is an ongoing work of the SPIRIT in them, causing them to confess their sins while being reminded of HIS blessed work as their ADVOCATE both in the past and at the present moment. *“God is our refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble.” (Psa 46:1)* Is this not at the very heart of the Psalmist’s declaration? *“If thou, LORD, shouldest mark iniquities, O Lord, who shall stand? But there is forgiveness with thee, that thou mayest be feared. I wait for the LORD, my soul doth wait, and in his word do I hope.” (Psa 130:3-5)*

Thus it is impossible for a man who blasphemes the SPIRIT to have “forgiveness”, even as it is impossible for a hard hearted, unforgiving man, to have his own sins “forgiven”. *“Put on therefore, as the elect of God, holy and beloved, bowels of mercies, kindness, humbleness of mind, meekness, longsuffering; Forbearing one another, and forgiving one another, if any man have a quarrel against any: even as Christ forgave you, so also do ye. And above all these things put on charity, which is the bond of perfectness. And let the peace of God rule in your hearts, to the which also ye are called in one body; and be ye thankful.” (Col 3:12-15)*

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