

Our Need of Forgiveness

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No person of responsible mind is without sin. The inspired Scriptures say that God has made no distinction: "for all have sinned, and fall short of the glory of God." (Romans 3:23).

He declares, furthermore, that he concludes all guilty and responsible for sin, and that all are needful of and included under the provision at mercy; "For God hath shut up all unto disobedience, that he might have mercy upon all" (Romans 11:32)

CHILDREN OF GOD SIN

Children of God are Included in the statements in the above paragraph. Some have a mistaken notion that the true child of God does not commit sin. Some have the doctrine that when a child of God receives what they call a second working of grace, that this keeps that person from sinning or makes it Impossible for him to sin. The apostle Peter sinned in an act of hypocrisy or dissimulation and was held responsible for his sin (Galatians 2:11,12). The apostle Paul had to keep himself under control, buffeting his body; "But I buffet my body, and bring it into bondage; lest by any means, after that I have preached to others, I myself should be rejected. (1 Cor. 9:27)

Men are deceived, and do not have the truth when they think that they do not have sin. John was writing to Christians when he declared; If we say we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us." (1 John 1: 8) He further declares that: "If we say that we have not sinned, we make him a liar, and his word is not in us." (1 John 1:10). No man is perfect, no man is sinless, not even the most sincere child of God.

DEATH IS THE RESULT OF SIN

No distinction is made between the sins of a heathen or alien to Christ's kingdom and the Christian when the pronouncement is made of the consequences of sin, "For the wages of sin is death" (Romans 6:23), Death is used in three senses in the Bible. There is physical death, whether we are godless or whether are forgiven; "it is appointed unto men once to die, and after that cometh judgment. (Hebrews 9:28). The figurative or spiritual sense is used in describing our being devoid of God's influence in our lives; "when ye were dead through your trespasses and sins" (Eph. 2:1) Another symbolic or figurative use of the word describes the final retribution following the judgment of God against those who are guilty of sins; "their part shall be in the lake that burneth with fire and brimstone; which is the second death" (Revelation 21:8)..

- Whether one of these last two figurative senses or both be involved in the wages of sin, it is due, and we must be saved from it. This considers God's child as well as the heathen. The child is under consideration in the following; "My brethren, if any among you err from the truth, and one convert him; let him know, that he who converteth a sinner from the error of his way shall save a soul from death, and shall cover a multitude of sins." (James 5:19,20). :

RIGHTEOUSNESS NO SUBSTITUTE FOR SIN

Our good motives and deeds are not weighed against our sins, so that if they outnumber or out-class the sins we win, It is not such a hook keeping profit and loss record; Some like to reason that since they are generally and sincerely trying to live right this will cause God to overlook or negate their sins which they occasionally commit. Such a plan is one of meritorious works. (God plainly says that we cannot merit salvation by meritorious works (Ephesians 2:9 et al). We cannot pay for our sins. The sins must be forgiven or blotted out (Acts 3:19), The sin which Is forgiven by God will nevermore be remembered against us; "And their sins and their iniquities will I remember no more. (Hebrews 10:17), Do not, then, be looking for a balance sheet with righteous deeds on one side and sins on the other. One side of the sheet must be clean and can only be so by God's forgiveness. If we have not procured that forgiveness we are held guilty of all. Under God's law of liberty, "For whosoever shall keep the whole law, and yet stumble in one. point, he is become guilty of all. " (James 2:10-12)

MEDIATOR, PROPITIATION, ADVOCATE

Since man has sinned against God and cannot pay for his crime or merit his way back into God's favor, some other means must be utilized for being reconciled to God. We could not provide it, we can only accept the reconciliation to God through the death of his Son." (Romans 5:10) The alien sinner needs a mediator between him and God and the child who sins also needs a mediator; "For there is one God, one mediator also between God and men, himself man, Christ Jesus." (1 Timothy 2:5) God demands satisfaction for these sins, in order to forgive. He names the price, it is his Son. That is the significance of the word "propitiation" in this clause; "and he is the propitiation for our sins; and not; and not for ours only, but also for the whole world." (1 John 2:2) From this we observe that this satisfaction is for the whole world as well as for the child of God who sins. If we can see that conditions exist for the alien to meet in order for Christ to be satisfaction, then we should have no difficulty seeing that the child has some also.

Jesus is also our Advocate. When we need someone to speak for us and plead our case for us to God for forgiveness, to whom can we turn? The Jew had his high priest as intercessor to make atonement offering. None of our fellowmen can be that intercessor which is adequate. But God has provided us with the perfect one; "My little children, these things write I unto you that ye may not sin. And if any man sin, we have an Advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous" (1 John 2:1) We must avail ourselves of his office.

FORGIVENESS ON GOD'S TERMS

Since we cannot merit our forgiveness, we must rely upon God to determine whom he will forgive and when he will do It. Some have set themselves as judges and lawmakers to tell people, both aliens and children, that God forgives them on terms and conditions not found in his revealed word; yet, that written word completely equips the man of God for all he should teach (2 Timothy 3:16, 17; 1 Peter 4:11) Some say the alien is to do, and can do, nothing. Some say the child is kept by the power of God so that he need not do anything. Some say that his generally good life, is all that the Christian needs for God to forgive him. God has said none of those things, any one or all of those may sound good, but no man

has the right to say what God has not said, he is seeking to establish his own way of righteousness, leaving himself outside the blessing and salvation of God. (Romans 10:1-3)

God Is not slack to fulfill his promises, and he wants all to be saved (2 Peter 3:9). But we are not to infer from that that he will save everybody. Among other conditions he made it basically essential that the person to be saved must believe: "Whoever believeth on him (the Son) should not perish, but have eternal life." (John 3:16)

He would have all men to be saved (1 Timothy 2:4). But he has given us the gospel, by which we are saved, and that salvation depends upon a condition contained in the gospel. "Not I make known unto you, brethren, the gospel...by which also ye are saved, if ye hold fast the word which I preached unto you." (1 Corinthians 15:1, 2). This is one of God's terms.

GOD'S CONDITIONS FOR FORGIVENESS

God has not left us to doubt or guess as to what he has required in order for him to forgive. Had he made it obscure, we might go into despair, wondering whether or not we met his requirements. Some aliens have gone that path because they had been taught that only the elect would be saved regardless of the heart and life of the person, and they had no way of determining where they stood. But God has plainly told all men how they can be forgiven and become his children; He has been just as plain and clear about how his child who has sinned will be forgiven; There is, therefore, no reason for the child of God to despair, who avails himself of forgiveness according to God's terms.

God wants all to repent (2 Peter 3:8). It does not suggest that all sinful children will repent. But he wants them to know that forgiveness is there for the one who will repent. Not only does he want them to, but he appeals to them to repent: "The goodness of God leadeth thee to repentance" (Romans 2:4) When Jesus commissioned his apostles to preach "repentance and remission of sins" (Luke 24: 47), that included both alien and Christian who has sinned.

Repentance is brought about through godly sorrow (2 Corinthians 7:10) And It results in a change in life. For one thing, he no longer commits that sin. John the Baptist called it "fruits worthy of repentance" (Matt. 3:8).

Confession of that sin is a fruit of repentance which God requires in order to forgiveness of his child. As he wrote to children of God about this matter, John said, "If we confess our sins, he is faithful and righteous to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness, (1 John 1:9). Sometimes this confession may be proper and desirable to other Christians, as when we need their supplications in our behalf (James 5:16), but essentially it is to God in order to his forgiveness. Note that such confession of sins is not addressed to the alien for him to gain entrance Into Jesus Christ.

Another of the fruits of repentance is petition to God for that forgiveness. Our pleas or prayers are through the Lord Jesus, (Col. 3:17) This is what is involved when John goes from verse 9 into the second chapter and says that if we sin we have an Advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ (1 John 2:2)

All three of these; repentance, confession and prayer; are summed up in an example of a child of God who sinned. He was told of his sin; of the consequences of his sin, 'perish' or death; of what he was to do that his sin be forgiven, "Repent...pray the Lord, if perhaps the thought of thy heart shall be forgiven thee" (Acts 8:22 cf. context). The child who sinned asked Peter to pray in his behalf.

GRACE AND ASSURANCE

God's forgiveness is of his grace and mercy. We have not earned it; we have only met his conditions, obeyed him, in order for him to forgive. His grace has appeared, bringing salvation or forgiveness, but it tutors us to turn away from sin and do his will. (Titus 2:11, 12) We are not despising grace when we do this, and when we teach that men are to do it. We are thereby accepting his grace. It is by the longsuffering of God that we are given opportunity to obey and appropriate his grace in forgiveness. (2 Peter 3:15)

Instead of this being a discouragement and deterrent to Christians, it offers assurance and hope. "In hope we were saved" Paul said. (Romans 8:24) God fulfills his promises, he has promised to forgive the child of his who repents, confesses in prayer the sins which he commits. Blessed be the God and Father of grace and mercy who gives us this assurance.

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