

## FORGIVENESS.

There are three words which pertain to the subject of forgiveness and they are as follows:

**Charizomai:** to bestow a favour on unconditionally; used in the act of forgiveness both Divine (Ephesians 4:32; Colossians 2:13, 3:13). And human (Luke 7:42, 43 [debt]; II Corinthians 2:7, 10; 12:13; Ephesians 4:32).

**Aphiemi:** remit, forgive; sins Matthew 9:2,5,6; 12:31,32; Acts 8:22 [thoughts]; Romans 4:7; James 5:15; I John 1:9; 2:12. It signifies the remission of the *punishment* due to sinful conduct. The deliverance of the sinner from the Divine penalty righteously imposed. Secondly it is the complete removal of the cause of the offence.

**Aphesis:** dismissal, release (remission of) sins. Mark 3:29; Ephesians 1:7; Colossians 1:14; Acts 5:31, 13:38, 26:15 (A.V.) The R.V. Has remission.

**NOTE** Human forgiveness is to copy strictly Divine forgiveness e.g., Matthew 6:12 when the conditions of pardon have been met (I John 1:7-9; Acts 2:38). There are no limits to Christ's law of forgiveness (Matthew 18:21-22).

Hebrews 8:12 and 10:17 explicitly point out that once sins have been forgiven they are "remembered no more." That is they are not to be recalled or brought back on the person who has been forgiven by God since the sins *no longer exist*, therefore the forgiven sinner is *clean* and under **no condemnation** (Romans 8:1). Then in (Romans 8:33-34) we read this:

*"Who will bring a charge against God's elect?  
God is the one who justifies.  
Who is the one who condemns?  
Christ Jesus is He who died, yes rather who  
was raised, who is at the right hand of God  
who also interceeds for us."*

Then in Colossians 3:12-13 we have:

*"And so as those who have been chosen by God, holy and beloved, put on a heart of compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness, and patience. Bearing with one another and forgiving one another, whoever has a complaint against anyone just as the Lord forgave you so also should you."*

I Corinthians 13: 5 (Love) does not take into account a wrong suffered. Galatians 6:1, we are to deal gently with any sin. Luke 17:3, "Be on your guard, if your brother sins rebuke him, and if he repents forgive him." Then in Luke 7:40-50 the parable of the two debtors.

Forgiveness is a settled account from which the sinner is released. It has the words "paid in full" on the receipt.

Forgiveness is the fundamental reason why Christ came, to release those held captive in their sins by Satan (Luke 4:18).

From these things we should be able to see that forgiveness is the ground on which the whole of Christianity rests. It is here that we can see the whole purpose and reason for which Christ came into the world. If forgiveness is not the prime motive for Christianity then it falls dead in the water.

No one can be called a Christian who has not received the forgiveness of their sins through baptism into Christ. This highlights the supreme importance baptism plays in the role of forgiveness, no baptism, no forgiveness and how the denominational world needs to learn that fact. It is baptism that sets up the bond between forgiveness and justification as well as between the Christian and God through Christ and the fellowship between other Christians in the church. All forgiven Christians can claim the right of acceptance by God and therefore must accept each other as clean, pure, and pardoned by the blood of Christ, no exceptions.

In (II Corinthians 2:7) the incestuous fornicator of I Corinthians 5 was to be forgiven and comforted lest he be overwhelmed by excessive sorrow. Then in verse 8 they were urged to reaffirm their love for him. Surely that sin was never mentioned again or brought up in any way. This was done so that Satan could not get an advantage. Verse 11.

Forgiveness, justification and reconciliation are the core doctrines of the New Testament (II Corinthians 5:18-20). And why is this so? It is simply because that it is the doctrine of redemption and Christ came for that very purpose (John 3:17). The epistle of Barnabas (a Gnostic text) is right though when it states, "To this end the Lord endured to deliver His flesh unto corruption that by remission of sins we might be cleansed." Luther put it this way, "Where forgiveness of sins is there is life and blessedness."

Fellowship with God and each other as well as our spiritual unity is predicated on the forgiveness of sins in the finished work of Christ. That is one point that really does need to be clearly understood. It is not total unity of doctrine that binds us

together, rather it is forgiveness of sins that puts one in fellowship with God; that IS Christ's reconciling work. Forgiveness in Christ is the sum of true Christianity, it is the cornerstone of the reconciled relationship between us and God through Jesus Christ. A guilty soul will not be cleansed by reasoning it will be cleansed only through forgiveness.

It is NOT sinning that ultimately ruins us but it is sinning and NOT REPENTING which does that. Look into Isaiah 44:22-23:

*"I have wiped out your transgressions like a thick cloud and your sins like a heavenly mist. Return to Me for I have redeemed you. Shout for joy O heavens for the Lord has done it. Shout joyfully you lower parts of the earth. Break forth into a shout of joy you mountains, O forest, and every tree in it. For the Lord has redeemed Jacob and in Israel He shows forth His glory."*

In the parable of the Prodigal Son Christ intended the hearers to see that the chief character was the father and not the younger son. The father was the one who ran to his son when he came home in repentance. The elder brother was the one who did not want to forgive his brother at all and seethed in surly anger because the father had forgiven his brother. But the father lived, loved and waited for his son to return.

Yet sadly is it not true that we often find many "elder brothers" within the church? But think on this; those "elder brothers" who are in the church are the ones guilty of hindering the reconciliation process Christ died to institute and of disrupting the unity and fellowship of the congregations they reside in.

I am convinced that many seem to think that forgiveness is almost immoral, that it means that one "gets away with things." Consider John 8 where Christ did not condemn the woman caught in the act of adultery, how incredible is that really? But what many do not see is the fact that Christ heard the payment for that sin in the sound of hammer upon nails in His mind.

Consider this too, what is it that each one of us has "got away with" by being forgiven by the Lord? The same price was paid for all of us so who are we to bring up and judge old sins?

We are all dependent on God for our forgiveness and since this is so it follows that we are all equal before Him. Thus the doctrine of forgiveness asserts our dependence on God rather than our freedom. The faith by which forgiveness is received makes us one with Christ it attaches us to Him, thus God does not accept us because we are

“good” but rather He affirms us because of the terms on which He accepts us through Christ's gospel.

Forgiveness does not demoralise a person. To do that would be to deny the doctrine of forgiveness.

This was the problem the Pharisees had, they could not understand how anyone could be in fellowship with God whose moral life had a glaring deficit in it. “Culpable leniency” of that kind was contrary to the view they had of God. Yet Jesus loved and He consorted with these very kind of people.

Celsus said this: “Every other religion invites only the blameless, the educated, the respectable, but Christianity seems to put a premium on wrong doing so cordially does it welcome the evil and debased. Deity of the right kind can have no dealings with impure men.”

Christianity conquered through its message that in Jesus Christ there is a God who receives sinners and forgives them. The most severe penalty for sin is the forfeiting of fellowship with God forever in an eternal hell this is a consequential punishment. It is this that forgiveness removes.

A judge can refrain from imposing a legal penalty or the crown can remit punishment by granting clemency but neither of them can forgive wrong only the injured party can do that. Since all sin is against God He then is the injured party and therefore only He can forgive the wrong done against Him and He alone can set the terms of forgiveness.

Where the injured party is a brother or sister sinned against then that brother or sister can choose whether or not to forgive. However, their forgiveness must mirror God's forgiveness and to choose not to forgive is to ask God not to forgive their sins either. In that we are all to be warned that we can lose our souls by being unforgiving toward each other.

So then we must be careful how we treat each other in the matter of forgiveness and we must not be of them who love to bring up past sins against the one forgiven of them so as to demoralise and keep one from moving forward. Christ gave His life to forgive each one of us thus we can do no less than to fully and freely forgive each other for His sake and the sake of reconciliation and unity.