

FORGIVENESS

What does forgiveness mean to you? Have you been forgiven of your sins? Is there someone you have not forgiven that will keep you from being forgiven by God? Now, let's look to see what the Bible has to say about forgiveness.

All sin deserves punishment. Adam and Eve were told in the garden of Eden that if they ate of the tree of knowledge they would die. (Genesis 2:17) Paul writes in Romans 6:23 that the wages of sin is death; therefore, everyone needs forgiveness. Paul tells us in Romans 3:23 that all have sinned and come short of the glory of God. Also, David writes *"If thou, Lord, shouldest mark iniquities, O Lord, who shall stand?"* (Psalms 130:3) On our own none of us stand a chance to be forgiven.

The pardon of sin by God is most gracious. In Matthew 9:13, Jesus tells us that He will have mercy and not sacrifice. In Romans 5:6-8, Paul tells us that while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us. There are not many people in the world today that give their life for another person especially not for an evil person. But none of us parents would be willing to let our child die for anyone, yet God did.

Blood is required for the atonement of sin. *"...it is the blood that makes an atonement for the soul."* (Leviticus 17:11) *"...without shedding of blood is no remission."* (Hebrews 9:22) There is a cost for the remission of sin: innocent blood.

The old law was imperfect concerning the forgiveness of sins. *"For what the law could not do, in that it was weak through the flesh, God sent his Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, and for sin, condemned sin in the flesh."* (Romans 8:3) Under the old law, sins could not be forgiven only rolled forward to the next year. (Hebrews 10:1-6) We can have forgiveness today through the blood of Jesus Christ. *"In whom we have redemption through his blood, even the forgiveness of sins."* (Colossians 1:13-14) Jesus by his own blood entered in once into the holy place, having obtained eternal redemption for us. (Hebrews 9:11-15)

Jesus teaches us in Luke 7:39-50 the concept of: the more forgiveness, the more thankfulness. Jesus told that there were two men who owed money to a creditor, one owed 500 pence, the other 50 pence. When neither could pay, the creditor forgave both their debts. Jesus then asked *"who will love him most?"*. A

very evil person who turns his life around and has been forgiven of many sins would be more likely to better appreciate the value of his forgiveness.

In evaluating the need for forgiveness in our lives, we must measure our life against God's word not in relation to the deeds of others. In Luke 18:9-14, we read of the parable of the Pharisee and the publican praying. The Pharisee prayed that he was thankful that he was not sinful as the other men are, but the publican prayed asking God to be merciful to him since he was a sinner. With so much evil in the world today, we must be careful not to justify ourselves as being better than many in the world yet not be in obedience to God's commandments.

Will we let our lack of forgiveness of others keep us from being forgiven? Mark 11:25-26 tells us if we do not forgive others, God will not forgive us. Peter asked Jesus, "*How many times are we to forgive others, seven times?*" Jesus answered seventy times seven. However, we know Jesus did not mean just 490 times, but as often as a person repents and asks for our forgiveness. (Matthew 18:21-22)

Jesus gives us a wonderful example of our need to forgive others in Matthew 18:23-35. A certain king took account of his servants and one was brought forth that owed 10,000 talents (\$52,800,000). But since the servant could not pay, the king ordered the servant, his wife, his children, and all that he had to be sold. (This is justice.) The servant fell down and worshiped the king and asked for patience until he could pay the debt. (Note action on the part of the servant.) Then, the king had compassion on the servant and forgave the debt. (Mercy and forgiveness are shown in the place of justice.) Then, the same servant went out and found a fellow servant that owed him 100 pence (\$44) and took him by the throat and said pay what is owed to me. And the fellow servant fell down and asked for patience until he could pay the debt. But the servant had his fellow servant cast into prison until he should pay. When the king found out what had happened, he commanded the servant to be delivered to the tormentors until he could pay all due him. This parable shows us the gratitude we should have for God forgiving our past sins which are represented by a \$52.8 million debt by forgiving others which have sinned against us represented by a mere \$44 debt. Also, note in verse 35 that it says we are to forgive from the heart, not just the lips. Is there anyone you need to forgive?

Can a person be beyond forgiveness? In Mark 3:28-29, we are told all sins may be forgiven but blaspheme against the Holy Ghost shall not be forgiven. I believe this passage to mean a person who turns his back on God and denies the power of God hardens his heart beyond the possibility of repentance. So, it is the sinner, not God, who places themselves in a situation beyond forgiveness. From Hebrews 10:26-27, we see we must not sin willfully after receiving the knowledge of the truth. We need to keep in mind that we can not be forgiven for future sins, only past sins.

Jesus died and shed His blood to save us from our sins not in our sins. Matthew 1:21 tells us Jesus shall save his people from their sin. Also, I John 1:6-10 tells us the blood of Jesus cleanseth us from all sin and from all unrighteousness. After forgiveness of past sins we must repent and lead a new life.

God's forgiveness is forever. In Hebrews 8:12-13 and Hebrews 10:16-18, we are told forgiven sins and iniquities will be "*remembered no more*". Yet II Corinthians 5:10 tells us all must appear before the judgment seat of Christ and be judged according to that he has done: good and bad. Since one scripture tells us sin forgiven will be remembered no more and the other tells us at judgment both good and bad will be judged, is there a contradiction? I say no in that forgiven sins will not be remembered on judgment day; however, any unforgiven sins as well as our goods will be remembered thus explaining both scriptures. Forgiveness by God is the bankruptcy of sin; the bad never to be remembered against us anymore but the good remains, how wonderful.

Forgiveness is only through obedience to the gospel. Acts 2:38 reveals to us that one must repent and be baptized for the remission (forgiveness) of sins. If you have never obeyed the gospel including being baptized, it is time to stop praying for forgiveness and take action.

Also as Christians and members of the body of Christ, we can find renewed strength in forgiveness. In James 5:16, we read to confess your faults one to another that you may be healed; the effectual fervent prayer of a righteous man availeth much. God is there willing and ready to forgive if we will only confess ours faults and repent.

Forgiveness is one of the most precious gifts ever given by God to man because it was paid for by the price of the blood of His dear Son Jesus. Will you take advantage of forgiveness and a

hope of eternal life in Heaven or will you let the great opportunity slip away?

MARK CARPENTER
Woodland, AL

CHOOSE THE GOOD PART

"Now it came to pass, as they went, that he entered into a certain village: and a certain woman named Martha received him into her house. And she had a sister called Mary, which also sat at Jesus' feet and heard his word. But Martha was cumbered about much serving, and came to him, and said, Lord, dost thou not care that my sister hath left me to serve alone? Bid her therefore that she help me. And Jesus answered and said unto her, Martha, Martha, thou art careful and troubled about many things: But one thing is needful: and Mary hath chosen that good part, which shall not be taken away from her." (Luke 10:38-40)

I often felt like Martha. My husband, Ray, always provided for his family but he never cared if the house was clean, lawn was well kept, or there was an elaborate home cooked meal. Therefore, he did not tend to help me with those things. He often neglected what I wanted him to do to spend time playing with our children or in Bible study. Sometimes when I nagged him to help he would say to me, "Martha, Martha." On October 6, 2004, I suddenly understood what Jesus and my husband meant. It was an ordinary morning when the hospital called to say Ray had been in a terrible car accident. He died six days later. Without Ray a clean house, well kept lawn and elaborate meal are nothing to me. I regret every minute I spent cumbered about much serving therefore neglecting my God and my family. From now on, I will choose the good part like Mary and Ray. I urge each of you to do the same.

DEBORAH McMANUS

GOSPEL MEETINGS

<u>DATES</u>	<u>PLACE</u>	<u>SPEAKER</u>
Dec. 3 – 5	Napoleon Church Woodland, AL	Brad Prince (Wedowee, AL) & Chad Prince (Oxford, AL)

SEARCH THE SCRIPTURES

1. According to Exodus 24, what position did Joshua hold with Moses?
2. What nation does Hosea predict will rule over Israel?
3. To whom did the Lord show a basket of ripe fruit?
4. What should be one's attitude towards regulations of the government?
5. In Zechariah, what does the Lord call Jerusalem?

ANSWERS NEXT MONTH . . .

and remember last month's questions?

1. Who was Cush's famous son? ZEPHANIAH (Zeph. 1:1)
2. Where did the angel in chapter 10 of Revelation place his right foot? ON THE SEA (Rev. 10:2)
3. When God told Abraham that Sarah would have a son, and they questioned it because of their age, what did God say in response? "IS ANY THING TOO HARD FOR THE LORD?" (Gen. 18:14)
4. To whom does 1 Peter 3 say women who trust in God are subject? THEIR OWN HUSBANDS (1 Pet. 3:5)
5. Where does he who ignores correction lead others? ASTRAY (Prov. 10:17)

**It matters not how long you live,
It's the quality of your time,
It's the friends you make,
The lives your touch,
And the love you show mankind.**

OPELIKA CONGREGATION NOW MEETING IN AUBURN

The congregation that has been meeting in Opelika, AL since 1981 has sold their building there and purchased one in Auburn, AL. It is on Highway 14, 1.3 miles west of Highway 267 (also called the bypass)

The church building is in Willow Creek Subdivision and the congregation is now named Church of Christ at Willow Creek. For further information call Wilbur Bass (334-887-6212) or Tony Segrest (334-887-8888).