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EDITORIAL

Forgiveness

Someone has said that the greatest word in the English language is the word forgiveness. There is nothing that we need any more. How could we live without it?

Forgiveness is needed because of sin and there is sin because of the transgression of God's law. (1 John 3:4). Many, however, are not aware of their sin because sin itself is very deceitful. (Hebrews 3:13). It often slips into an individual's life unnoticed. Gradually it gains control to the extent that one becomes hardened to it and therefore engages in questionable and ungodly practices without any regret whatsoever. Sin is progressive. The old saying that one lie leads to another is true, and bears out the fact that sin is ever leading one on and on to the point of final destruction. This is not just true with one but with all since all have sinned and come short of the glory of God. (Romans 3:23). Then finally sin brings death. (Romans 6;23).

There is only one way out and that is through Jesus Christ. (John 14:6). He was sent by God for this purpose. (John 3:16). For this reason Christ died for the sins of the world. (Romans 5:8). But this being true then only Christ has legitimate right to issue the terms for forgiveness. Man is the sinner and is in no position to negotiate what he will or what he will not do. All he can do is to submit to the terms of pardon and thank the Lord that there is still time and opportunity to obtain the forgiveness of sins.

The terms for the forgiveness of sins are set forth in the scriptures. The specific commands are spelled out and examples have been given to show how obedience works. Look at these commands: (Hear Christ—Matthew 17:5), (Repent of your sins—Luke 13; 3), (Confess your faith in Christ—

Matthew 10:32), (and be baptized to be saved—Mark 16:16). For the examples, turn to the book of Acts in particular: (Acts 2; Acts 8; Acts 9; Acts 16; etc.). As you do this keep in mind that what man says is not the same as what the Lord says. Christ is the saviour, not the preacher, priest, or any other human being. If you want forgiveness, then you had better comply with what Jesus has asked you to do. Otherwise, you'll be lost. (Matthew 7: 21-23; John 12:48).

The beauty of forgiveness is seen in these ways:

- 1. When we obey the Lord and we are forgiven of our sins then we may think of our sins as having been sent far away. In Leviticus 16 we read where Aaron took two goats. He took one and sacrificed it for the sins of Israel. He took the other and confessed all of their sins over it and then had it sent far away into the wilderness to be left. This goat was called a scapegoat on which symbolically all of Israel's sins were placed and sent away so that Israel might be pure once more. In our obedience to the Lord then our sins are removed from us and sent far away and we are therefore forever rid of them. Isn't that a beautiful thought? Wouldn't you like to rid yourself of all of your sins?
- 2. Our sins have been forgiven in the sense that Christ has taken the weight of our sins from us. Peter says, "Who his own self bare our sins in his own body on the tree, that we, being dead to sins, should live unto righteousness: by whose stripes we are healed." (1 Peter 2:24). I have seen both men and women, as well as children, carry tremendously heavy loads on their head or shoulders. I have often thought that should I have to carry such a load that it would be so wonderful if some one could walk up to me sometime and offer to take the load from me and assume the responsibility for it himself. Well, we are weighted down with sin. It causes pain and heartache. The burden is very heavy. Some are not aware that the Lord can take that load from them, and having no one else to turn to, they have gone mad But it is wonderful that Jesus or have taken their own life. can come to us and lift that heavy weight of sin from us and take it forever away. Do you remember how Jesus said that if we would come to him that he would give us rest for his yoke is easy and his burden is light? (Matthew 11:28-30). Truly, it is.
- 3. Through the forgiveness of our sins, the debts we owe are cancelled out. Jesus, in the prayer of example, taught his disciples to pray, "Forgive us our debts as we forgive our

debtors." (Matthew 6:12). Then in Matthew 18:27-32 we have the story of the servant who had many debts, and on begging for mercy his lord was willing to cancel them, or to forgive him, for that which he owed. But then the story goes on to tell us that he went to a fellow servant who owed him a small amount to demand that he be paid. When the fellow servant could not then he began to beat him. Then when his lord heard about this he sent for him and asked him why he had so dealt with his fellow servant when he had had mercy on him? He therefore cast him into prison to punish him for his wicked deeds. Our Lord has cancelled out all of the debts that were against us and made it possible for us to go free. Isn't that wonderful? That being so, we should also be merciful and forgiving with those around us.

- 4. We have been forgiven because of the grace of God. That just means that we could never save ourselves. could never be good enough or do enough good deeds to merit salvation. Even after we have done all the Lord requires of us it will still take the grace of God to save us. Listen to Paul: "For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God: Not of works, lest any man should boast." (Ephesians 2: 8,9). Peter said that if the righteous scarcely be saved then wherein shall the sinner and ungodly appear. (1 Peter 4: 18). Again, the Lord is coming again to take vengeance on them that know not God and obey not the gospel. (2 Thessalonians 1:7-9). Thank God for his grace and mercy. Even though we do not deserve to be saved, and even though we could never do enough to be saved on our own, still by the grace of God we are saved and have the hope of eternal life.
- 5. Finally, to have forgiveness means that we are cleansed washed, and that we are new creatures. Through our obedience to the Lord we died to our sins, we were buried with the Lord in baptism, and then we were raised to walk in newness of life. (Romans 6: 3-6). Saul was told to arise and be baptized to wash away his sins. (Acts 22: 16). Christ tells us that we must be born again, or become new creatures, to enter into the Lord's kingdom or the church. (John 3: 3-5). Thus, when one is forgiven, old things have passed away and behold all things are become new. (2 Corinthians 5: 17). Isn't it wonderful that with forgiveness that we can begin our lives over?

Do you have the forgiveness of your sins? Some feel that they are good enough but this could never be. Others feel that their sins are of such a nature that the Lord would never

forgive them, but this is also a mistaken idea. If you want forgiveness you can have it. Yes, you can have all of your sins forgiven and forever taken away from you. How? By simply obeying Christ. Isn't that simple? He asks so little but gives so much in return. Try him and come to know the joys of forgiveness. It will truly give you a new lease on life.

ASSOCIATE EDITORIAL

The Vine &

The Branches

In the fifteenth chapter of the book of John we have Christ speaking to his disciples and telling them of his relation to them, There he described himself as a vine and the disciples as the branches of the vine. He said, "I am the true vine and my Father is the husbandman. Every branch in me that beareth not fruit he taketh away and every branch that beareth fruit, he purgeth it, that it may bring forth more fruit. Now ye are clean through the word which I have spoken unto you. Abide in me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself, except it abide in the vine; no more can ye, except ye abide in me. I am the vine, ye are the branches; He that abideth in me, and I in him, the same bringeth forth much fruit : for without me ye can do nothing. If a man abide not in me, he is cast forth as a branch, and he withered; and men gather them, and cast them into the fire, and they are burned. If ye abide in me, and my words abide in you ye shall ask what ye will, and it shall be done unto you. Herein is my Father glorified, that ye bear much fruit; so shall ye be my disciples". (Vs. 1-8).

Some of the facts that we should note from the above cited passage are: That Christ spoke these words to his disciples individually and not to a group or some groups of people. Listen to him again, he said. "... He (individual person) that abideth in me, and I in him the same bringeth forth much fruit... If a MAN abide not in me, he is cast forth as a branch."

His Father, God, is the Gardner. If there is any branch (disciple), in the vine (Christ), which bears no fruit, to him the Gardner (God) takes away from the vine and throws him out, which later is cast into the fire, as a withered branch, to be burned. But every branch (disciple), in the vine (Christ), which bears fruit, to him the Gardner purgeth so that he may bring forth more fruit.

It should be noted that two kinds of branches (disciples) are shown in this most beautiful and most realistic parable The one who bears fruit and the other who doesn't bear any fruit. The work of the vine, the tree, is to take nourishment and food from the Gardner and supply the branches. It is not the vine that bears fruit but the branches. but not apart from the vine. In fact the vine is the source to make them productive to bear fruit. Therefore it is necessary for the fruit bearing branches to abide in the tree. The gardner is glorified, joyful to see the fruitful branches in the tree which he has planted. However, it is sad for him to see fruitless branches in the vine, which are just a vain load on the tree and harming much of the fruit of the fellow branches in the vine. And therefore the Gardner will cut off those fruitless and way-blocking branches.

However, there are many persons who profess to be the disciples of Christ, but in fact they do not abide with Christ in his word. They often misapply and misinterpret both of the greatest teachings of the Lord as mentioned in the passage under consideration. First of all, according to them, here Christ was not speaking about his disciples individually but about various modern day denominations, which were, in fact, unheard of in those days and came into existence many centuries later. Second, they teach that a disciple, a follower of Christ, regardless of his Christian life, cannot be cast away or separated from Christ. How sad! They themselves are like withered branches, because they do not abide in Christ's words.

Space does not permit me to show you in detail those errors which are being taught on this particular teaching of the Lord. But I beg you to please take your Bible and study the foresaid verses in the light of the scriptures. But if you are one of those who believes and teaches some dangerous man-made doctrine on these verses, then I plead with you in the words of the Apostle Peter to: "Repent, and be baptized... in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of your sins..." (Acts 2:38).

Let the Bible Speak

By
W.C. "Bill" Johnson

Much confusion exists in the religious world today relative to what the Bible teaches about the miraculous gifts of the early church. These gifts are found recorded in 1 Corinthians 12:4-12 and Romans 12:6-8. Concerning the various gifts of the Holy Spirit mentioned in the Bible perhaps the greatest controversy rests in the subject SPEAKING IN TONGUES. I have had the opportunity of discussing this particular gift with people from nearly every walk of life. Thus, it is my desire to set forth in the most simple manner possible the Bible's teaching on this subject. It is very difficult to remove from our minds emotional arguments, but I ask that you let the Word of God be the final authority for any conclusion that we may draw. With this in mind, sincere reader:

"LET THE BIBLE SPEAK ABOUT SPEAKING IN TONGUES"

STATEMENT ONE

The Bible Defines Speaking in Tongues.

This is the first time we read about the gift of tongues. We can conclude from these passages that when the Bible speaks of speaking in tongues it is making reference to languages not ecstatic utterances. Observation proves that the "tongue speaking" of today is not even closely related

to that miraculous gift of the first century. (1 Corinthians 14:1-33; Acts 19:1-3: Acts 10:44-48).

STATEMENT TWO

The Bible Teaches what the Purposes of Speaking in Tongues were:

"Wherefore tongues are for a sign, not to them that believe, but to them that believe not: but prophesying serveth not for them that believe not, but for them which believe" (1 Corinthians 14:22).

"And these signs shall follow them that believe; In my name shall they cast out devils; they shall speak with new tongues; They shall take up serpents: and if they drink any deadly thing, it shall not hurt them; they shall lay hands on the sick, and they shall recover. So then after the Lord had spoken unto them, he was received up into heaven, and sat on the right hand of God. And they went forth, and preached everywhere, the Lord working with them, and confirming the word with signs following" (Mark 16:17-20).

"How shall we escape, if we neglect so great salvation; which at the first began to be spoken by the Lord, and was confirmed unto us by them that heard him; God also bearing them witness, both with signs and wonders, and with divers miracles, and gifts of the Holy Ghost, according to his own will?" (Hebrews 2:3-4).

We can conclude from these passages what God intended to accomplish with the gift of speaking in tongues. It was to be used as a sign to the unbeliever, to magnify God and to be used as an instrument to CONFIRM THE WORD. The people in Acts 2 were not believers in Christ (Acts 2:36-41), so the tongues were a sign to them. In Acts 10, we must consider the background and conclude that these were the first uncircumcised Gentiles to be brought to Christ. Thus, the six Jewish brethren accompanying Peter were

unbelievers in the sense of Gentile salvation (Acts 15:7-11; Acts 11:12; Acts 10:44-48). The Bible tells us that Cornelius, his household, near friends, Peter and the six brethren were present. Peter addresses the six Jewish brethren in verse 47.

The Bible nowhere teaches that the gift of speaking in tongues was to signify salvation, and it is unscriptural to so state. In 1 Corinthians 12:29-31, Paul states that some at Corinth could not speak in tongues, yet he writes the letter to the church of God at Corinth to them that are sanctified (1 Corinthians 1:1,2). So this false doctrine has been found wanting in light of the teachings of the Bible. Note verse 31 states that he will show a more excellent way. He does so in chapter 13.

STATEMENT THREE

The Bible Teaches about the Conduct of the one who Possessed the Gift of Speaking in Tongues.

"If any man speak in an unknown tongue, let it be by two, or at the most by three, and that by course; and let one interpret. But if there be no interpreter, let him keep silence in the church; and let him speak to himself, and to God" (1 Corinthians 14:27, 28).

Paul stated that those who possessed the gift of speaking in tongues were to control it. They were to exercise the gift in the assembly only if there was an interpreter. All things were to be done decently and in order for God is not the author of confussion (1 Corinthians 14:33 and 40). The Bible teaching on the subject of speaking in tongues is so opposite of what we hear today it is pitiful. (Men today have changed God's desire, design, and intent concerning this gift and are leading some astray with their teaching.)

When one says, "I couldn't help myself; I just had to speak." You can conclude from the Bible that they do not have the Bible gift of speaking in tongues but in fact are

promoting something foreign to the Bible. Please keep your heart open to what the BIBLE TEACHES ON THIS SUBJECT.

STATEMENT FOUR

The Bible Teaches about women and this Gift.

"Let your women keep silence in the churches: for it is not permitted unto them to speak; but they are commanded to be under obedience, as also saith the law. And if they will learn anything, let them ask their husbands at home; for it is a shame for women to speak in the church" (1 Corinthians 14:34,35).

"Let the women learn in silence with all subjection. But I suffer not a woman to teach; nor to usurp authority over the man, but to be in silence" (1 Timothy 2: 11, 12).

We can conclude from these passages that women in the first century were commanded to be silent in the assembly. Of course, we must interpret this in light of other plain passages. She was commanded to sing (Ephesians 5:19; Colossians 3:16) and she could confess Jesus Christ as her Lord and as the Son of God in her response to the first principles of the faith (Romans 10: 9, 10). These are plain passages that cannot be misunderstood. Nevertheless, she was commanded to remain silent indicating she could not use this gift in the assembly. Today's so-called use of this gift is directly opposed to what the Bible teaches it should be. For a woman to speak out in the assembly today or have authority over the man is in complete disagreement with the Bible In spite of this, it has been my experience and observation that women are the main leaders in this modern day tongue movement.

STATEMENT FIVE

The Bible teaches that this gift ceased.

"Charity never faileth: but whether there be prophecies, they shall fail; whether there be tongues, they shall cease; whether there be knowledge, it shall vanish away" (1 Corinthians 13: 8).

"But whoso looketh into the perfect law of liberty, and continueth therein, he being not a forgetful hearer, but a doer of the work, this man shall be blessed in his deed" (James 1:25).

"All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness: That the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works" (2 Timothy 3: 16, 17).

"I marvel that ye are so soon removed from him that called you into the grace of Christ unto another gospel: Which is not another; but there be some that trouble you, and would pervert the gospel of Christ. But though we, or an angel from heaven, preach any other gospel unto you than that which we have preached unto you, let him be accursed. As we said before, so say I now again, If any man preach any other gospel unto you than that ye have received, let him be accursed" (Galatians 1: 6-9).

These passages plainly teach that the gift of speaking in tongues was to cease when that which is perfect came. We can conclude since the purpose of the gifts was to confirm the WORD then that must teach that when the WORD was confirmed the need for the gifts ceased. The above passages plainly teach that we now have this confirmed WORD (Hebrews 2: 1-4). Please search God's word and note that it was completely given to man in the first century. Modern day use of the miraculous gifts must be rejected as false. TONGUES HAVING SERVED THEIR PURPOSE IN CONFIRMING THE WORD WE NEED NOTHING OTHER THAN THAT CONFIRMED WORD TODAY.

When we preach the gospel of Christ today, God is calling people to Him that they might be His worshippers (Mark 16:15, 16; 2 Thessalonians 2:14). Anyone who hears the gospel (Romans 10:17), believes the facts of the gospel—the death, burial and resurrection of Jesus (Mark 16:15-16; 1 Corinthians 15:1-4), repents of sins (Acts 17:30, 31), confesses Jesus Christ as Lord and the Son of God (Romans 10:9, 10) and is baptized in water for the remission of sins (Acts 2:38; Acts 8:36) is a son of God (Galatians 3:26, 27) and thus seeks to worship God in spirit and truth (John 4:23, 24). When we obey Christ we are added to the church (Acts 2:47). We must then continue to walk by faith (2 Corinthians 5:7).

It is God's desire that you be saved (1 Timothy 2:4). You have read what the Bible teaches concerning "speaking in tongues". Please consider the previously mentioned statements on this subject.

Churches of Christ are humbly seeking to restore the teaching of God's Word and serve Him as He would have us in this day and age.

"And now why tarriest thou? arise, and be baptized and wash away thy sins, calling on the name of the Lord" (Acts 22:16).

Good News!

By

Wayne Emmons

Tired of bad news? I don't blame you! Every day the radio, television, and newspapers bring bushels of it.....wars and rumors of wars, murder, arson, vice, juvenile delinquency, slaughter on the highways, etc. No wonder people are yearning for good news.

Well here it is! Did you know that the word gospel literally means good news? Thus, the gospel of Christ is the good news of Christ. Do you know what the gospel of Christ is? Do you share the joy of others who have discovered the blessings and the beauty of the good news of Christ?

All men need the gospel. Sin has separated all men from God, (Isa. 59:2)............this is bad news, But through the gospel of Christ all men can be reconciled to God, (2 Cor. 5:18, 19)...........this is good news! All men have need of the gospel because all have been separated by sin. Man is not a perfect being (Rom. 3:23). Could any person doubt for a moment that the greatest news man has ever received is that separation from God need not be a permanent condition! Man can be reconciled to God through the gospel of Christ (1 Cor. 15:1, 2).

The gospel is the good news of the death, burial, and resurrection of Christ (1 Cor. 15:1,4). Without the blood shed in the death of Christ there would be no hope of salvation (1 John 1:7; Heb. 9:22; 1 Pet. 1:18,19; Eph. 1:7; Mt. 26:28). The penalty of sin is death.......we could not pay it ourselves and live so a substitute had to be found for us. Jesus Christ took our place, became our sin-offering, offering himself without spot unto God. He was the one who bore our sins in his own body on the cross (Heb. 9:14; 1 Pet. 2:24; 2 Cor. 5:21; Rom. 5:6-11).

The gospel is thus the good news of salvation offered to all men (1 Tim. 2:3,4; 2 Pet. 3:9; Acts 10:34,35). But not all men accept God's grace. The fact that a gift is offered is no assurance that all are willing to accept it rhrough obedience to the one offering it. Paul teaches positively that not all will obey the gospel (Rom. 10:16), and just as plainly teaches that to reject the gospel and obedience to it is to assure one of "everlasting destruction" (2 Theses. 1:7-9). Thus, the grace of God is extended to all men (Titus

2:11), but not all will be saved (Matt. 7:13,14) because many will refuse to obey the gospel and salvation is only to the obedient. (Heb. 5:9).

The Book of Acts shows the application of this principle. Before Christ ascended into heaven he commissioned his apostles to "Go ye into all the world and preach the gospel to every creature; he that believeth and is baptized shall be saved, he that believeth not shall be damned." (MK. 16:16). They went, they preached. Some obeyed the gospel and were saved such as the murderers of Christ (Acts 2), Simon the Sorcerer (Acts 8:9,13), the blasphemous Saul of Tarsus (Acts 22:1-16). the devout Ethiopian nobleman (Acts 8:26,40), the morally upright Roman centurion (Acts 10). Others such as Agrippa (Acts 26) were "almost persuaded" but because of disobedience to the gospel message will be lost. (2 Thess. 1:7,9).

Those who accepted the gospel were converted, or changed, from the kingdom of Satan to the Kingdom of God. If you will study each case carefully you will notice that the same changes took place. (1) A change of heart through faith in Jesus Christ (Acts 15:9; John 3:16; Heb. 11:6). (2) A change of life through repentence (Acts 17: 30.31; LK. 13:3). (3) A change of relationship through immersion. In every example in the book of Acts baptism precedes salvation. Christ taught it was necessary (MK. 16:16). So did the inspired apostles, (Acts 2:38; 1 Pet. 3:21). It is baptism that puts one into Christ, thus changing his relationship to Christ. (Gal. 3:26, 27; Rom. 6:3,4).

We must all give an account unto God. (Rom. 14:12). Have you obeyed the gospel of Christ? Study carefully the scriptures listed in this tract and learn about the good news of Christ. Perhaps we can help you. If so we are willing.

Unearthing the church

Ву

Eugene Winter

The following story is told by A. M. Morris in his book "EVOLUTION AND PROGRESSION:" In Soulac, Gascony, many years ago someone stumbled over a stake in the ground. The people tried to dig it out, but found that it was a steeple of a church building and the steeple was attached to a chapel that was buried in the earth. This chapel was finally unearthed and was used again as a place of worship.

This story of the restoration of a church building is quite illustrative of the restoration of the New Testament church. Of course, the New Testament church is not a material building—it is the spiritual body of Christ, of which He is the head and saviour (Eph. 1: 22-23; 4:4; 5:23). Christ built His church (Matt. 16:18), having purchased it with His own blood (Acts 20:28). He gave Himself for the church (Eph. 5:25), that it might be a glorious church, not having spot or wrinkle or any such thing, but that it should be holy and without blemish" (Eph. 5:27).

As long as men respected Christ's authority and heeded the standards of the New testament, the church remained without spot or blemish, conforming to the divine pattern for its organization, government, doctrine and worship. But soon the time came when men would not endure sound doctrine (2 Tim. 4:3-4). The glorious church became buried, just as truly as did the chapel at Soulac. But Christ's church was not destroyed—it was merely buried beneath the mass of human tradition, sectarian creeds, and man-made doctrines. Truth was obscured and ignored—but it was not destroyed.

For centuries during the Dark Ages the Bible was kept from the hands of the people. Instead of continuing stead-fastly in the Apostles' doctrine, as did the New Testament church (Acts 2:42), the church of the Dark Ages was

controlled by papal authority and by creeds formulated through human legislation. No wonder the true church was buried!

In the Sixteenth and Seventeenth Centuries came the "Protestant" Reformation movement. Men wanted the freedom to study the Bible for themselves. Many groups broke away from the Roman church, establishing new churches and formulating new creeds. Improvements were made, but the real cause of the trouble was not corrected. These reformatory movements became hopelessly confused and divided. Those who had "protested" against papal authority then proceeded to set up their own ecclesiastical councils and religious authorities, which only added to the confusion and further obscured the purity and simplicity of the Apostles' doctrine. The true gospel and true church were still buried beneath the rubble of human creeds and man-made churches.

In the Eighteenth and Nineteenth Centuries men began to realize that the answer lay not in PROTESTING or REFORM-ING, but rather in RETURNING and RESTORING! Thousands of individuals in different parts of the world rejected all party names, creeds and organizations and returned to the simple New Testament pattern as it was taught by the Apostles, thus restoring the practice of pure New Testament Christianity.

They did not establish a new denomination, but by casting aside human authority and obeying only the commands of the Gospel of Christ, they were added to the true church of Christ as was first done on Pentecost after Jesus had returned to heaven. They realized that when Peter preached the pure Gospel on Pentecost, those believers who repented and were baptized for remission of sins were added by the Lord to His church (Acts 2: 38, 41, 47). This was no temporary measure, but it is Christ's plan for all people of all ages.

The true church of Christ had not been destroyed, only buried beneath the doctrines and creeds of men. When people

returned to the truth of the New Testament, they returned to Christ and to His church.

Today there are hundreds of thousands who have dug beneath the rubble and confusion of human doctrines, names and organizations—to once again find the true church of christ, as it is revealed only in His word. They refuse to be divided by conflicting creeds and catechisms, but unite in the one faith of the Gospel. They wear no name but that of Christ, as did the disciples in New Testament days. It is their belief that Christ expects the church today to follow the same pattern as did the church of the First Century.

Their earnest plea to the world today is to "unearth" Christ's true church and again unite upon the simple New Testament pattern of one Lord, one faith, one body, and one baptism (Ephesians 4: 4-6).

AN OFFER

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