

Forgiveness

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Exactly what is forgiveness? What happens when God forgives a sinner? What happens when you or I forgive one who has sinned against us?

New Testament writers used two different words meaning forgive. The first expresses the idea of sending away. In fact that is its literal meaning in Matthew 13:36 – “Then Jesus *sent* the multitude *away* and went into the house.” When God forgives, He sends our sins away. Matthew 9:2 uses this word as Jesus tells a paralyzed man, “Be of good cheer; your sins are forgiven you.” Jesus sent his sins away.

The Old Testament foreshadowed sending sins away. Each year on the Day of Atonement, Israel’s High Priest put his hands on a goat’s head, confessed the sins of Israel, and sent the goat into the wilderness (Leviticus 16:5-10). As the goat symbolically carried Israel’s sins away, Jesus literally took our sins upon Himself and carried them away. He “*bore* (took away) *our sins in His own body on the tree*” (1 Peter 2:24).

The second word translated “forgive” is the verb form of the noun “grace.” It means to bestow a favor, especially an undeserved favor. To forgive, then, is to favor the sinner by pardoning him and freeing him from the guilt and penalty of his sins. God did this for us, and we, likewise, are to forgive each other (Ephesians 4:32).

Biblical forgiveness is not unconditional. God forgives those who repent and obey Him. Jesus taught that we are to rebuke those who sin against us, and if they repent, forgive them (Luke 17:3-4). He did not say to forgive even if there is no repentance. God isn’t spiteful to those who haven’t repented, nor should we be. But forgiveness produces the restoration of a broken relationship, which is impossible unless the offender repents.

A Flash Of Insight

“Open my eyes that I may see wonderful things in your law” (Psalm 119:18).

An “epiphany” is a sudden flash of insight, recognition, or manifestation. It comes from a Greek word which means “to appear” or “to show forth.” We have all experienced moments when those hard to grasp thoughts or ideas suddenly come into full view. The light comes on and we see things from a new perspective and understanding. It usually comes when we least expect it.

Paul experienced his “epiphany” on the road to Damascus when the Lord Jesus suddenly appeared to him. His life and mission changed from that day forward.

On the road to Emmaus, the two disciples who walked with Jesus were darkened from seeing Him. It wasn’t until Jesus broke the bread that their eyes were opened. Before that time, their hearts were burning within them, but they just couldn’t see. They wanted to.

Thomas’ life was changed when he saw the crucifixion marks on Jesus (John 20:25, 26-28).

To gain new insight into an old situation or passage of scripture can be life changing, transforming and liberating. As we grow in the grace and knowledge of the Lord, we begin to connect the dots and more of the truth is revealed to us, often when we least expect it.

--Roger Holm (Tijeras, NM)

Does This Describe You?

We worship our work.

We work at our play.

We play at our worship.

Is This Progress?

The New York Gazette contained some interesting information in its June 3, 1752 edition. It was in an advertisement for an educational institution. Here is what this institution hoped would encourage students to enroll: *The chief thing aimed at in this college is to teach and engage young people to know God in Jesus Christ, and to love and serve Him in all sobriety, godliness and righteous life, with a perfect heart, and a willing mind.*

The institution placing this ad was King’s College. It is now Columbia University.

To say that Columbia University has travelled far from the stated aim of King’s college would be a huge understatement. It may be that God would be the last thing people of my generation and younger generations would think about in connection with this institution.

We might think of stories we’ve read or heard about concerning riots, drugs, protests, “sexual freedom,” and other things such as this. We would probably not think of Columbia as a good place for a young person to go to learn more about God, His Son, and how to love and serve Him.

When we trace the history of some of the oldest institutions of higher learning in our country, we discover that a great many of them were founded to uphold, teach, and defend the Bible. Sadly, most of them are now known for strong opposition to anything resembling Christian teaching and/or morality.

Twenty-four years before some brave people declared their independence from England, educators were using whatever freedom they had for religion. Now, almost two-and-a-half centuries later, educators in most of those same institutions are telling us that we need to be free from religion. Is this progress?

--Jim Faughn (via Bulletin Gold)