

BELIEVING IN FORGIVENESS

Dr. Fred Fourie ~Sunday, January 22, 2006

Hebrews 10: 11 – 17

"And every priest stands day after day at his service, offering again and again the same sacrifices that can never take away sins. But, when Christ had offered for all time a single sacrifice for sins, he sat down at the right hand of God, and since then has been waiting until his enemies would be made a footstool for his feet. For by a single offering he has perfected for all time those who are sanctified. And the Holy Spirit also testifies to us, for after saying, "This is the covenant that I will make with them after those days, says the Lord: I will put my laws in their hearts, and I will write them on their minds," he also adds, "I will remember their sins and their lawless deeds no more."

Have you ever done something wrong and felt guilty and miserable about it afterwards? A feeling of guilt can lead to all sorts of interesting situations. For instance, when a certain wife asked her husband, "John, do you know what day this is?" he did not, but to play it safe, on the way home from the office he bought her a dozen of roses. His wife said with surprise, "Why dear, you shouldn't have. But this will be the best Groundhog Day I've ever had!" They say that anybody who does not cut his speed at the sight of a police car is probably parked!

There was a roadside sign that stood on 1-95 as you approach De Land, Florida. The yellow diamond-shaped sign warned travelers: NARCOTICS INSPECTION AHEAD. There was no inspection, but many drivers who saw the sign panicked and made an immediate illegal U-turn. The police then stopped and searched them. The American Civil Liberties Union objected and it was removed! The road sign was a cagy idea based on the understanding of human nature! That is exactly what a guilty conscience do to a person. It causes us to see and believe in things that are not even there.

Guiltful consciences cause people to do destructive things. One can only wonder how many people became helpless alcoholics, or tried to fix themselves with drugs, simply because they did not know what to do with a guilty conscience. Guilt takes a toll on mind and body. It causes us to imagine problems that we may not even have. It shatters our sense of self-esteem. Those in its grip live in the service of a cruel, sadistic master. Have you ever experienced the agony that guilt can cause? How do we rid ourselves of this monster?

To be forgiven and to forgive are basic teachings of our Christian faith. One cannot pretend to be a follower of Jesus Christ without facing and dealing with the realities of the brokenness of so many human relationships in our own lives. One cannot avoid the reality of the brokenness of our own personal relationship with God. The Lord's Prayer defines God's terms in this regard. You, yourself has some sincere forgiving to do before you can truly expect forgiveness and the restoration of your relationship with God.

The author of the book of Hebrews in the New Testament puts it this way: "And every priest stands day after day at his service, offering repeatedly the same sacrifices that



can never take away sins. **Christ had offered for all time a single sacrifice for sins.**" "This is the covenant that I will make with them after those days," says the Lord, "I will put my laws in their hearts, and I will write them on their minds. I will remember their sins and their lawless deeds no more,"

Forgiveness begins at the foot of the cross of Jesus! In Christ, we believe that this is the one place where complete forgiveness takes place. This is the address where we go for atonement. When we have the assurance of forgiveness, we also want people whom we might have wronged to forgive us. Wonderful healing and restoration of precious relationships can take place if we are only willing to reach out to others in the spirit of Christ. But what about those situations where it is impossible to seek out the victims of our wrongdoing? What if other people will be hurt if we confess to our wrong behavior? What then? Then we have a challenge. Tranquilizers will not help! Many people on tranquilizers are there because of a guilty conscience. Positive thinking is not the answer. The brain knows when the nose is leading it. Not all the good thoughts in the world will take away the stain of guilt from the human soul. Forgiveness and restoration take place at the foot of the cross.

There is something about the cross of Jesus that forever changed the relationship between God and humankind. The power of the forces of darkness to wreck our lives was destroyed when the Lord of Life died on a cross, long ago. Since the tremendous beginnings of the Christian faith theologians and students have tried to explain how the Jewish Carpenter of Nazareth, so long ago, in such a backward land, changed our experience and understanding of guilt forever. It happened on Calvary. In Jesus God established a link with you and me! An early Christian said, "I am not afraid of the cross. I know that men used to come there to die, but since Jesus died, they come there to live. "

True forgiveness is rooted in the grace of God. I cherish the illustration about an accident between two cars. The young woman driver of one of the cars was in tears. She admitted that it was all her fault. Besides, she was driving a brand new car, less than two days from the showroom. How was she ever going to face her husband? The other driver was sympathetic but explained that they must note each other's license number and automobile registration. The woman reached into the glove compartment of her car to retrieve the documents in an envelope. On the first paper, she found, in her husband's handwriting, **"In case of accident, remember, darling, it's you I love, not the car!"**

Those could be God's words to us. "It is you I love; I want you to be free of guilt." Because God loves us, Because God knows how miserable we are about our guilt; God showed us the way to get rid of guilt forever!

A man owned a Rolls Royce. While traveling on vacation, there was a mechanical failure. The man called the company from which he had bought the car, and they flew in a mechanic from England to repair it. After waiting a number of weeks for a bill for the repair job, the man wrote to the company in England and asked for a bill. He received a telex. It read, "We have no record of a Rolls Royce with a mechanical failure."

The Apostle John writes, "If we confess our sins, he who is faithful and just will forgive us our sins and cleanse us from all unrighteousness." "I don't have any record of your ever having done wrong."

Do you believe that? Do you believe that God has taken away your sin forever? **Then why not leave your guilt, your shame, and your constant feelings of guilt right here in this Sanctuary today?** You can rid yourself of it through the power and the grace that only God can give. You can experience that forgiveness today!

Let us conclude by singing a beautiful hymn of restoration and wholeness. For me, it is one of the most beautiful hymns ever written. It rejoices in God's forgiveness offered to each one of us, again or for the first time this very day.

[There is a balm in Gilead, to make the wounded whole;](#)

There is a balm in Gilead to heal the sin-sick soul.
Sometimes I feel discouraged, and think my work is in vain,
But then the Holy Spirit revives my soul again.
Do not ever feel discouraged, for Jesus is your friend, who,
If you ask [forgiveness] for knowledge, will never fail to lend.
There is a balm in Gilead, to make the wounded whole;
There is a balm in Gilead to heal the sin-sick soul.

AMEN

*For if you forgive
others their trespasses,
your heavenly Father will
also forgive you...*

Matthew 6:14

