

THE SIMPLE BIBLICAL MESSAGE OF FORGIVENESS AND JUSTIFICATION: -

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NOTE: - All Bible texts are taken from the King James Version; and the compiler has supplied all emphasis throughout this Study Document.

- “Thou [art] a God ready to pardon, gracious and merciful, slow to anger, and of great kindness” (Nehemiah 9:17).

The Lord is “ready to forgive; and plenteous in mercy unto all them that call upon thee” (Psalms 86:5).

“But thou, O Lord, [art] a God full of compassion, and gracious, longsuffering, and plenteous in mercy and truth.” (Psalms 86:15.)

“The LORD [is] merciful and gracious, slow to anger, and plenteous in mercy.” (Psalms 103:8.)

“Who [is] a God like unto thee, that pardoneth iniquity, and passeth by the transgression of the remnant of his heritage? he retaineth not his anger for ever, because he delighteth [in] mercy.” (Micah 7:18.)

HOW TO OBTAIN MERCY AND FORGIVENESS: -

- The wise man Solomon has left on record a very simple message concerning what we must do to receive mercy from the Lord.

“He that covereth his sins shall not prosper: but whoso confesseth and forsaketh [them] shall have mercy.” (Proverbs 28:13).

The prophet Isaiah has also a very similar message concerning what we must do to be forgiven, and God’s willingness to forgive our sins in the following verse.

“Let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts: and let him return unto the LORD, and he will have mercy upon him; and to our God, for he will abundantly pardon.” (Isaiah 55:7).

- The apostle John has encouraged us with this simple gospel message.
“If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us [our] sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.” (1 John 1:9).
- The apostle Paul has summed up the simple truth of the message of justification in the following words,
“Therefore we conclude that a man is justified by faith without the deeds of the law.” (Romans 3:28.)
- We find in the promises that God has made under the New Covenant, that the Lord will not only “forgive their iniquity”, he also promises to “remember their sin no more” (Jeremiah 31:34).

When the Lord does not remember our sins any more he is the One who “blotteth out thy transgressions for mine own sake, and will not remember thy sins” (Isaiah 43:25.)

☞ We notice from the above texts concerning the New Covenant that the Lord promises to do two things concerning our sins.

1. **To forgive them; and,**
2. **To remember them no more – that is, he blots out the record of our sins.**

OUR STANDING BEFORE GOD AFTER EXPERIENCING JUSTIFICATION: -

- When a person has experienced justification by faith, they “have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ” (Romans 5:1); and they can then “rejoice in hope of the glory of God” (Romans 5:2).

When we have been “justified by his grace” we have also been “made heirs according to the hope of eternal life” (Titus 3:7).

- The Psalmist David wrote a simple but yet wonderfully reassuring truth when he stated the following, “Blessed [is he whose] transgression [is] forgiven, [whose] sin [is] covered. Blessed [is] the man unto whom the LORD imputeth not iniquity, and in whose spirit [there is] no guile.” (Psalms 32:1 & 2).

That the above passage from Psalms 32:1 & 2 is indeed referring to a person who has experienced justification by faith, we are left in no doubt by the apostle Paul.

“But to him that worketh not, but believeth on him that justifieth the ungodly, his faith is counted for righteousness. Even as David also describeth the blessedness of the man, unto whom God imputeth righteousness without works, [saying], Blessed [are] they whose iniquities are forgiven, and whose sins are covered. Blessed [is] the man to whom the Lord will not impute sin.” (Romans 4:5 - 8).

WE CAN KNOW THAT OUR SINS ARE FORGIVEN: -

- The Psalmist stated concerning the sins of the children of Israel, “Thou hast forgiven the iniquity of thy people, thou hast covered all their sin. Selah.” (Psalms 85:2).
- Our Lord Jesus Christ repeatedly exercised his Divine prerogative in forgiving people their sins throughout his public ministry. We have several very clear examples of Jesus having the power upon earth to declare that people sins had been forgiven them.

Jesus stated concerning the sins of Mary (See John 12:3) who anointed his feet with ointment and who is described by the gospel writer Luke as being a woman who “was a sinner” (Luke 7:37), that although “her sins, which are many”, they “are forgiven” (Luke 7:47). He repeated this simple message of peace directly to Mary when he told her, “Thy sins are forgiven” (Luke 7:48).

To the paralytic Jesus gave him the following message of peace before he healed him, “Son, be of good cheer; thy sins be forgiven thee” (Matthew 9:2). In this incident as recorded in the gospels, Jesus openly claimed for himself that, “the Son of man hath power on earth to forgive sins” (Matthew 9:6).

- The New Testament writers repeat the teaching of the prophet David found in Psalms 32 in their epistles. We can truly believe that our sins have been forgiven us for Christ’s sake when we have experienced justification. We have several inspired witnesses who testify to this truth.

The apostle Paul exhorts believers to be “forgiving one another,” because “God for Christ’s sake hath forgiven you” (Ephesians 4:32).

He also wrote in his epistle to the Colossians that God had “forgiven you all trespasses” (Colossians 2:13).

The apostle John has left us in no doubt that “your sins are forgiven you for his name’s sake” (1 John 2:12).

The apostle James in his instruction to the church concerning praying for believers who are sick, stated that “the prayer of faith shall save the sick”, “and if he have committed sins, they shall be forgiven him” (James 5:15).

WE CAN HAVE A CLEAN RECORD WITH GOD: -

- The gospel prophet Isaiah recorded the truth that no matter “though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they be red like crimson, they shall be as wool” (Isaiah 1:18).
- God promises, “as far as the east is from the west, [so] far hath he removed our transgressions from us.” (Psalms 103:12.)
- The prophet Ezekiel has recorded the words of the Lord concerning the repentant sinner, who after having turned from his sins, is exhorted to “keep all my statutes, and do that which is lawful and right, he shall surely live, he shall not die”, and if he does this then “all his transgressions that he hath committed, they shall not be mentioned unto him” (Ezekiel 18:21 & 22).
- The prophet Micah referring to the mercy of the Lord that he will “cast all their sins into the depths of the sea” (Micah 7:19).

WE HAVE TO FORGIVE OTHERS IF WE ARE TO BE FORGIVEN BY GOD: -

- Jesus has made it abundantly clear that if we do not forgive other people who have sinned against us, God will not forgive us. This teaching is repeated several times in the gospels.

“And forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors.” (Matthew 6:12.)

“For if ye forgive men their trespasses, your heavenly Father will also forgive you: But if ye forgive not men their trespasses, neither will your Father forgive your trespasses.” (Matthew 6:14 & 15.)

“And when ye stand praying, forgive, if ye have ought against any: that your Father also which is in heaven may forgive you your trespasses. But if ye do not forgive, neither will your Father which is in heaven forgive your trespasses.” (Mark 11:25 & 26.)

- A very important truth concerning God’s forgiveness is revealed in Jesus’ parable concerning the unmerciful debtor. After the lord of the unmerciful debtor had forgiven him completely all the debt that he could not repay, he in turn would not forgive and show mercy to a debtor who owed him a small sum of

money. When his lord found this out, he cancelled his forgiveness of the debt, and required him to repay all the original debt.

“Then his lord, after that he had called him, said unto him, O thou wicked servant, I forgave thee all that debt, because thou desiredst me: Shouldst not thou also have had compassion on thy fellowservant, even as I had pity on thee? And his lord was wroth, and delivered him to the tormentors, till he should pay all that was due unto him. So likewise shall my heavenly Father do also unto you, if ye from your hearts forgive not every one his brother their trespasses.” (Matthew 18:32 - 35.)

☞ This parable brings out the very important principle that teaches us that God’s granting of forgiveness for our sins is not an irrevocable one, but he can indeed reverse his gracious forgiveness depending on our future course of action.

HOW ARE WE TO WALK AFTER WE HAVE EXPERIENCED JUSTIFICATION?

- The following warning from the prophet Ezekiel exhorts us to continue in the path of righteous living after we have been justified (that is, after being made righteous before God), otherwise we shall die in our sins, and ultimately suffer the 2nd Death. This passage clearly exposes the “Once Saved Always Saved” and “I Am Saved” teachings as being unbiblical.
“When a righteous man turneth away from his righteousness, and committeth iniquity, and dieth in them; for his iniquity that he hath done shall he die.” (Ezekiel 18:26.)
- After the apostle Paul concluded, “that a man is justified by faith without the deeds of the law” (Romans 3:28), he stated a simple warning a few verses later, so that his above words would not be taken as a license or as an excuse to transgress God’s Law.
“Do we then make void the law through faith? God forbid: yea, we establish the law.” (Romans 3:31.)
- Paul asked a very relevant question concerning the way we should live after experiencing justification by faith through grace, “Shall we continue in sin, that grace may abound?” (Romans 6:1.)

His answer is given in an emphatic style: - “God forbid. How shall we, that are dead to sin, live any longer therein?” (Romans 6:2.)

That he is indeed referring to an individual who has experienced justification in the above question and answer, is supported plainly a few verses later, “For he that is dead is *freed from sin.” (Romans 6:7.)

NOTE: - * The margin has for the word “freed” “**Gr. justified**”. Thus this verse reads, “For he that is dead is justified from sin.”

And what is a justified person “dead” to? According to verse 2 dead to sin, that is, dead to live any longer in sin.

Paul writes a little further on in this same chapter where he brings out clearly the change that has taken place **within** the repentant sinner who has experienced justification when he writes,
“Being then made free from sin, ye became the servants of righteousness.” (Romans 6:18.)

“But now being made free from sin, and become servants to God, ye have your fruit unto holiness, and the end everlasting life.” (Romans 6:22.)

- The apostle Peter echoes this teaching of the apostle Paul, when he writes, “being dead to sins, should live unto righteousness” (1 Peter 2:24).
- Paul warned the Galatians “But if, while we seek to be justified by Christ, we ourselves also are found sinners, [is] therefore Christ the minister of sin? God forbid.” (Galatians 2:17.)
- Paul also wrote “they which have believed in God might be careful to maintain good works” (Titus 3:8).
- The apostle John has written that if a person claims to be abiding in Christ, he “ought himself also so to walk, even as he walked” (1 John 2:6).

How did Jesus walk or live? He himself stated, “I have kept my Father's commandments” (John 15:10).

- ☞ Perhaps Jesus' own message of mercy to the woman who was caught in adultery sums up this whole issue, “Neither do I condemn thee: go, and sin no more” (John 8:11).