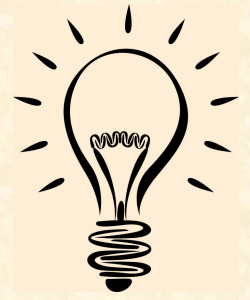


The Christian Light

Editor - Mitch Sparks



“Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in heaven” (Matt. 5:16).

Vol. 1 No.5

September 2021

“THE BLESSING OF FORGIVENESS”

*Caleb Aldridge – Sylvan Springs church of Christ –
Sylvan Springs, AL*

It seems that one of the hardest things for a man to learn to do is forgive. When someone has done wrong to us or has hurt us in some way, most times we do not desire to forgive as much as we desire to take some sort of vengeance. For man, forgiveness is learned, but for God, forgiveness comes natural. This should make us feel very grateful, for we have a God who is willing and looking to forgive, providing man with one of his greatest needs (1 John 1:9). Ponder with me for just a few minutes on the magnitude of this great blessing provided by God.

We desire forgiveness. This is not true for everyone, but for one who is searching for the truth and who has been taught the severity of sin, it is in many cases. Sin causes shame over our past lives and the way we have chosen to live them (1 Cor. 7:10). Remember the publican in Luke 18. He desired forgiveness and was so ashamed of the things that he had done that he would not even lift his eyes to heaven. Even more, as Christians we understand the severity of living a life of sin and how one sin can separate us from God. We desire forgiveness as well when we make mistakes and fall back into the world. Remember Peter in his denial of Christ and how sorrowful he was when he realized what he had done (Matt. 26:75). 1 John 1:5 tells us that God is light and that there is no darkness in Him, so for one who realizes the magnitude of sin and sees that they have sin that needs forgiven, that sin will eat away until one receives that forgiveness.

While we desire forgiveness, we do not deserve it. We have spoken of the magnitude of sin, but what does it really mean for one to sin? The Bible classifies all unrighteousness as sin, that sin is a transgression of the law, and that sin is when someone knows to do good but chooses not to do so (1 John 5:17, 3:4, James 4:17).

Clearly, this is not the way that God would have us to live our lives. So, what is the result of this sin? To put it simply, nothing more than death is what we deserve. Rom. 6:23 and James 1:15 both speak of sin only bringing death and destruction. The Bible tells us that all have sinned and fallen short of what God would have us to be (Rom. 3:23). So, we desire forgiveness, but we deserve the opposite, death for our actions.

However, we will see that God demands forgiveness. We cannot enter into heaven with Him without it. He does not demand it because of some ill will towards us, but rather because He loves us. We serve a loving God that does not want to see eternal punishment and death upon His children. 1 Tim. 2:4 tells us that there is a desire there for all to be save and to come to what is true and just. 2 Peter 3:9 says that he is not willing that any should perish. Finally, Ezek. 18:23 mentions that He does not take any delight in the wicked dying in wickedness. If he demands it then it is something that we must obtain if we desire to be with Him. We cannot be right with God without it. So, if we desire it, but we don't deserve it, and God demands it, what can we do? It could end here. We could (if we did not serve a loving God) stop here with no hope, no way out, and nothing to look forward to. It would be our fault for sinning and making the decisions we have made. But it doesn't end here.

Because God demands it, He chooses to dispense it. This is not something that He has to do but is something that he chooses to do because of His love for us. It seems that sometimes we get the idea that God owes us something for trying to follow Him. This could not be further from the truth. He will never owe us forgiveness, but He has been good enough to us to provide a way for us to be able to receive it.

We mentioned Rom. 6:23 a moment ago that speaks of the wages of sin being death. However, there is more to this verse. It also tells us that the gift of God is eternal life in His Son.

Notice this is a gift. It is not something that we have earned or somehow merited, but rather it is given despite all of the wrong and sinful choices that we have made. One of the greatest verses to describe this gift is found in John 3:16. This passage is one that many know well, but it cannot be laid out any clearer. God loved us enough to give us His son to provide a way of forgiveness for us. We could not provide it for ourselves, but we should indeed be very grateful for the love He had for us in giving us the opportunity we now have at forgiveness.

Jesus says in Matt. 11:28 that he can provide rest for the tired and weary soul seeking a way out of sin and a way back to God. Rom. 5:1 tells us that we can have peace because of our obedient faith in Christ. John 16:33 speaks of peace because though we face trials and temptations in the world, Christ has overcome the world. Forgiveness can be had, but only through Christ Jesus. I encourage you to look at your life today. Do you desire forgiveness? Have you sought to obtain it? God desires you to follow Him. He desires to forgive. Let Him do so by being obedient to His word today. Find that peace that you have been searching for.

“WHAT WOULD JESUS DO?”

Mitch Sparks – Bay church of Christ – Bay, AR

Growing up we all remember the famous bracelets with the inscription W.W.J.D. – which stood for “What Would Jesus Do.” We wear things like this to help us throughout the day and when issues arise, we should ponder “What Would Jesus Do in this situation?” Ask yourself “What would Jesus do if He were here on earth today? You may have already answered the question with this answer, “Jesus would do exactly what He told us to do from His Word.” (Matt. 28:18-20; Mark 16:15-16). As Children of God, we must all have a burning passion for soul winning and leading individuals to Christ. Ask yourself this question, “When was the last time I taught someone the gospel?”

Jesus said, “I am the bread of life” (John 6:35), “I am the light of the world” (John 8:12), “I am the door” (John 10:7-10), “I am the good shepherd” (John 10:11-16), “I am the Son of God” (John 10:36), “I am the resurrection and the life” (John 12:25), “I am the way, the truth, and the life” (John 14:6), “I am the true vine” (John 15:1-17). Jesus said, “And I, if I be lifted up from the earth, will draw all men unto me” (John 12:32).

As Children of God, we all are to be “the salt of the earth” (Matt. 5:13). It should bring out the best in us all, consider the benefits of salt. We use salt on our food and in preserving meat, why? because it brings out the best flavor of the food. The preserving power of the gospel sanctifies and saves through the blood of Jesus Christ (Rom. 1:16,17, 6:1-12; Rev. 1:5; Acts 22:16; 1 Pet. 3:21). I am to walk faithfully in the fellowship of God’s Son (1 John 1:5-10), and then comes the God-centered life that we all should be living. We must “Submit yourselves therefore to God. Resist the devil, and he will flee from you. Draw nigh to God, and he will draw nigh to you. Cleanse your hands, ye sinners; and purify your hearts” (James 4:7,8).

If we are not teaching the gospel to a lost and dying world. Then Christians, we must ask ourselves, do we really know Jesus? You can’t say much about Jesus or for Jesus until you do! You cannot teach what you do not know, and you cannot lead where you do not go. You cannot lead individuals to Christ if you do not know where He is, and you cannot tell others much about God unless you yourself know Him.

That is why Jesus said, “Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you, and learn of me; for I am meek and lowly in heart: and ye shall find rest unto your souls. For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light” (Matt. 11:28-30).

W.W.J.D – He would teach lost souls; therefore, we must do the same. Christians, we all have a job to do, so let’s get busy for the Kingdom of God (Col. 3:17).

From The Editor ... Hello to all, if you or the congregation you attend would like to receive this monthly email publication, please send your name and email to mspark0384@gmail.com and in the subject line of the email type “**Sign Up for The Christian Light.**” Thanks, Mitch Sparks