

Sin and Forgiveness

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Though I will seem, in the first part of this article, to be teaching on a subject quite removed from what the title indicates, please bear with me as I set the issue of sins and forgiveness against a needed backdrop. In his letter to the Philippians, Paul sounds, in a sense, a somewhat different note than he does in his Ephesian and Colossian letters. To the Philippians, he acknowledges that the reality of the completeness in Christ of God's purpose for humanity---so magnificently presented in Ephesians and Colossians--- presses upon him so as to cause him to "*....press on toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus.*" (**Chapter 3, verse 14 NAS**)

God has, in Christ, brought to completeness the New Man of His passionate purpose, and that New Man is INCLUSIVE OF EVERY MAN. In Christ, that True Humanity, that True Humanness; yes, that supremely glorious Mankind is the completed wonder of God's workmanship in Christ. That, or better, He, is the Truth, the Reality of all men.

But, having accomplished this, God then subjects His divine workmanship to the great lie, the insistent and persistent lie---that presses its insistence in the form of accusation---that, in fact, God has not finished, and never will be able to finish that which He purposed from eternity. By this divine Way, our eternal hidden-in-Christ corporate life fully emerges and unfolds on an eionion time-line with that greater glory that is revealed in the face of hostile contrarianism.

By the inner working of God in us, we work out what God has completed for us in Christ as Paul explains in verses twelve and thirteen of the second chapter. In terms of the eionion, corporate, universal unfolding of the singularly displayed, all-inclusive Manhood of Jesus Christ, Paul, and we, press toward that mark according to "His mighty working in us" as He "works in us to will and perform His good pleasure." Our pressing, ultimately understood, is His pressing within us.

The Spirit's pressing of the Reality upon us, in us, becomes our pressing toward the goal and I'm bold to say that we need not entertain any anxiety as to whether or not we are progressing in a way pleasing to Father for He sees in us the unfolding perfection of His Son all the way.

In Adam we have "*sinned and fall short of the glory of God*" (**Rom. 3:23**). In a recent discussion with Ed Browne, a brother of Greek and Hebrew scholarship, Ed proposed a better translation than "*fall short.*" Instead, the thought in the Greek seems to be that of "*lagging behind.*" That gave me pause for renewed reflection, and it seemed to me that a picture emerges of mankind trying to catch up, as it were, to the always emerging, non-static, dynamic more of glory that proceeds out from the depths of God, and of mankind's

futile attempt by anxious self-righteousness to catch up to the glory of God.

The prize of the goal of our upward call is nothing less than complete sharing in the glory of God. This is what we lag behind according to the great lie that, in opposition to the Truth, presses on us in the flesh, that is, in the sensory realm of our existence in this world. It is an ultimately futile attempt to deny Christ. We have missed the mark of the Glory of God. It is mankind's ultimate destiny, not simply to be delivered from the consequence of our sin, but to share fully, by grace, in the very Glory of God.

We, in Adam, have been weighed in the balances and found wanting (**Dan. 5:27**). In that passage, **Rom. 3:23**, we find all mankind in pathetic want in contrast to "*His riches in glory by Christ Jesus*" (**Phil. 4:19**). The gospel is literally "*the good news of the glory of Jesus Christ*" given to man in Him. So that when we get to the end of the Book of Revelation we find in the description of the city of God these wonderful words, "*having the glory of God*" (**Rev. 21:11**).

That city (us) is a light set on a hill (**Matt. 5:14**), to beam forth the glory to all nations that they too might share in the only real riches, which is all of God in all His excellence put on display and thereby imparted finally to all humanity. We have been brought from the lack that came from Adam's lagging behind to having and having plenty to share.

It is human nature to aim for something, but left to ourselves we are distracted by the evil one, aim at a delusion and miss the true mark. In His humanity, being perfected by the things that He suffered, Jesus revealed to us in His passion in Gethsemene, His heart and the very heart of God. It was the return to the glory which He had with the Father before the world began that was His goal and He would not be satisfied without bringing us along with Him, in Himself, into that glory.

Paul, with theological brilliance, describes God as hitting the mark for us in that "*...whom He foreknew, He also predestined to become conformed to the image of His Son (Who is the radiance of God's Glory, insert mine), that He might be the first-born among many brethren; and whom He predestined, these He also called; and whom He called, these He also justified; and whom He justified, these He also GLORIFIED*" (**emphasis mine**) (**Rom. 8:29-30**). It's a done deal and God did it (notice all in the past tense).

I have gone to great lengths to present the proper backdrop against which we must come to understand the issues of sin and forgiveness. There is some confusion about the fact that there are two aspects of forgiveness. The first being forgiveness as it exists in God as a steady-state quality eternally. It is that quality of God's perfect love that refuses to disqualify us from His eternal purpose though (as He designed for a season), left to ourselves, we have rebelled against Him.

It is that quality in Him that bears our sin and still moves forward in inexorable love toward His goal for us. As it exists in God, forgiveness is not only a divine act or decision, it is His nature. In Him we are eternally qualified for glory, and that eternal reality was demonstrated with finality on the cross, as the cross in the heart of God became the historical cross on the hill called Golgotha. That is the first and primary aspect of forgiveness. It has to do with forgiveness subjectively in God.

The second aspect is that of God's forgiveness subjectively at work in us as it washes away our shame and self-condemnation. Conventional conservative theology, by and large, teaches that forgiveness does not occur in God until we respond to the gospel. This is not so. Not so, not so, NOT SO! It does not occur IN US until God brings us to see the forgiveness that is already in His heart toward us.

Our hearts must be opened to what is in His heart, and then the first aspect of forgiveness completes itself in the second aspect. Our hearts become rightly aligned with God's heart, which is fundamental to experiencing the righteousness, that is, the "rightness" of God. God is right in not reckoning sin against us. Not only is God's posture towards us, of course, totally a matter within His own nature, but getting our hearts rightly aligned to His, is wholly the work of God.

As an example; I may be brought to the place by God to forgive someone in my heart who has injured me. At that point he or she is forgiven in my heart but it is another matter of that forgiveness being accepted in his or her heart. There may be a period in between where that person refuses to acknowledge that they even need forgiveness and looks on what I'm offering as an act of arrogance on my part. So in interpreting passages of scripture that deal with forgiveness, these two aspects must always be kept in mind.

This helps explain why scripture sometimes seems to present forgiveness as being conditioned on something we must do, such as forgive others in order to be forgiven ourselves. Jesus, knowing what is in man, knows that one cannot refuse to forgive another while hoping to experience forgiveness themselves. The two are interlaced. The person who has been brought to the place of being ready to forgive has also been brought to the place of being ready to receive forgiveness.

An unwillingness to forgive reveals a resistance to forgiveness per se. But all forgiveness originates in God where, to repeat, it is a steady-state quality of His unconditional love. That explains why some of Jesus' statements about forgiveness seem to present it as something we get by doing something, whereas Paul---through whom the Spirit of Christ continued speaking with further clarification---tells us to forgive others as Christ HAS forgiven us.

At the heart of the difference between what institutional Christianity teaches about forgiveness, and what is really taught in scripture is that the Babylon church system pits God's holiness against any propensity they think He has to forgive, saying that His holiness is a quality that will not allow Him to forgive, in His own heart, until He can vent His holy rage.

It is in the gospel that we see that His forgiveness springs forth out of His love and it is the perfection of His love that constitutes His holiness. What makes Him holy is not His refusal to have anything to do with sinners, what makes Him holy is that He won't let our sins keep Him from us. Glory, Glory, Glory!!!

As a final note; a further insight from a little word study on forgiveness: Our English word "forgive" comes from the Old English word "forgifan" which is composed of two parts, the first is the prefix, "for" which, in this case in Old English is intensive, meaning it intensifies

what follows. The second part of the word is "[gifan](#)" which means simply "to give."

The thought that has been preserved by God for us in that original form is that God's "giveness" or "givingness," when faced with our sins, is intensified, that is, it becomes fired up and more intensely insistent that we come to know how blameless He holds us in His heart. God's "givingness" is passionate in the face of contrariness.

This stands in direct contrast to what the conventional religious mind is convinced is true; that, when faced with our sin, God, in anger, withholds His "giveness." I hasten to say that the love which accepts us as we are in our sins and continues in a giving mode is the love that will not permit us to forever continue in that sin.

That intensifying of His giving has the quality, not only of accepting us as we are, but also of delivering us from what we should not be, or more accurately, what we Really are Not. It delivers us---as we saw in the opening section of this article---from the lie that lays upon us a false persona. God's insistent "givingness" delivers us from that alien persona that dogs us. His goodness contains an inherent "giveness" which will not allow anything to separate Him from us and will destroy finally anything that hides His face from us.

Stay tuned for future serious, seminal samplings.

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