

Faith of the Covenant Fellowship

Points of discussion: 1) Sin, forgiveness, punishment 2) Initial commentary on baptism

Sins: Are we totally forgiven? or do we still get punished?

Consider these two seemingly contradictory Scriptural positions about sin:

1) *"As far as the east is from the west, so far hath He (Yahweh) removed our transgressions from us." Psalm 103:12. "And ye know that He (Jesus) was manifested to take away our sins; and in Him is no sin." 1 John 3:5*

2) *"But your iniquities have separated between you and your God, and your sins have hid His face from you, that He will not hear." Isaiah 59:2. "If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us." 1 John 1:8*

There are more Scripture verses which support each of the above positions on how Yahweh God views our sins. Which position is correct? Has the sacrifice of Jesus Christ on the cross done away with our sins so that we are now forgiven and free from condemnation? Or do our sins anger our Heavenly Father to the point that He deals with us as according to our obedience or disobedience to His will? Do we still receive punishment and chastisement from God if we sin, or did the shed blood of Christ cover all of our sins so that The Almighty doesn't count them against us anymore? This sounds perplexing on the surface, but the Scriptures explain that it really is not. To have peace of mind and heart, Yahweh tells us in His written Word that He wants all of His children to understand just how He views our sinful mortal state.

First, let's obtain a Scriptural definition of exactly what sin is. Sin is not what we may perceive right and wrong to be from our own ethical standards. The New Testament book of 1st John clearly tells us what sin is. *"Whosoever committeth sin transgresseth also the law: for sin is the transgression of the law."* 1 John 3:4

It is the duty of the clergy to instruct the people in God's Laws so that the people may know if they have committed sins or not. (Mat.5:19; Mal.2:7) The vast majority of the Divine Law for the individual, the family, and the nation is to be found in the Old Testament Scriptures, with a few clarifications and additions to that same Law located in the New Testament writings. If a person has not read and studied the Laws of *the whole Bible*, he/she can not know if they are sinning, or exactly what it is that God has forgiven them of. It is a sad state of spiritual affairs that today the clergy won't teach God's Laws anymore.

From what is revealed to us in His Word, the entire understanding of how Yahweh God deals with our sins can be summed up in one word --- FORGIVENESS. If we understand how forgiveness is applied to our sins, then we will understand whether or not

we are still presently punished by God for our "transgressions of the law"(sin) or if we have been totally forgiven our sins since the crucifixion of Jesus Christ. Since the topic of forgiveness has not sunk in deep enough, or possibly not accurately enough, for many Christians seeking answers, it has led to much inner frustration in the hearts of those wanting to be closer to The Almighty. Certainly such a state is not what God intends for those whom He loves enough to have arrived in the person of His Son to endure the cross in order that our salvation may be secured.

What Yahweh Almighty has unequivocally declared in His written Word is that, with respect to our eternal life of the "next age", He has already erased all of our sins from His mind and we, His Adamic family in the Faith, are forgiven and accounted guiltless before Him. (Rom.5:11-18; Ps.103:12; John 12:32) This doesn't mean that God isn't capable of knowing what those sins of ours were and are, but rather he is not any longer going to bring them up to us any more. There is nothing we did to earn this complete forgiveness of our sins for eternal life in the next age at our resurrection from the dead, as it is God's gift to us by the atoning sacrifice of His Only Begotten Son on the bloody cross of Calvary. *"For the wages of sin is death; but the gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Master."* (Rom.6:23) Furthermore, we had no choice in this matter. *"But we are bound to give thanks alway to God for you, brethren beloved of the Master, because God hath from the beginning chosen you to salvation through sanctification of the Spirit and belief of the truth."* (2 Thessalonians 2:13)

However, in our present time the Scriptures teach that concerning "this age" we are only forgiven of our sins *IF* 1) we confess them to our Heavenly Father, 2) have faith in the shed blood (Rom.3:25;5:1,2) of Jesus Christ for present forgiveness , 3) AND FORGIVE OTHERS OF THEIR TRESPASSES AGAINST US!

By this method we are still accountable for our wrong doings and still pay the price in the "here and now" for any unconfessed sin not repented of in this age. This is only fair and just. Yahweh in His love for us has secured our eternal salvation because He knows we are too weak to do so. On the other hand, He's not about to be mocked in the present age by those who would assume that they can now violate God's laws and use the cross of Jesus as the excuse for not obeying those Laws. *"Be not deceived; God is not mocked: for whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap."* Galatians 6:7

God's Word tells us that divine forgiveness must be viewed only as it is uniquely applied in different ages according to this statement of Christ in Matthew 12:32, *"And whosoever speaketh a word against the Son of man, it shall be forgiven him: but whosoever speaketh against the Holy Spirit, it shall not be forgiven him, neither in this world (Grk. aeon-'age') neither in the world (aeon-'age') to come."* It is The Holy Spirit who speaks to a person's heart that man became separated from God because of sin, and is in need of God's salvation (Jn.16:8; Isa.44:3-6); and that there is nobody but the Redeemer Jesus Christ who is able to provide that salvation (Isa.44:6; Isa.43:11, Mat.26:28). Where our sins are concerned, those violations of God's law are already forgiven for life in the eternal realm as the believer is freely given immortality (I Cor.15:53-57); yet our sins must be confessed for this age because we still must contend

against the mortal body (Rom.7:14,15; Gal.5:17) until our resurrection from death. This is how the Scriptures present God's divine rule on sin, forgiveness, and accountability.

*“Much more then, being **now justified** by His (Jesus’) blood, we **shall be saved** from wrath through Him. For if, when we were enemies, we **were reconciled to God** by the death of His Son, we **shall be saved** by His life.”*

*“For if by one man's (Adam's) offence death reigned by one; much more **they which receive** abundance of grace and of the gift of righteousness **shall reign in life** by one, Jesus Christ.*

Therefore as by the offence of one judgment came upon all men to condemnation; even so by the righteousness of one the free gift came upon all men unto justification of life.

*For as by one man's disobedience many were made sinners (in this life), so by the obedience of one (Christ) **shall many** (His chosen elect) **be made righteous.**” Romans 5:9,10,17,18,19*

Therefore, "eternal salvation" must be distinguished **from** "being saved" (made safe) in the here and now (Strong's Dictionary, Greek # 4982 saved or "sode-zo", that is "made safe" according to one's relationship with God in this age.

Let's say that a person who is a convicted thief is led to Christ, repents, and comes into the Faith. His sins, as far as eternal life after resurrection are concerned, had already been absolved and dealt with because of Jesus Christ's sacrifice on the cross. But that person will have to presently pay the price for his thieving deeds under Yahweh's social laws and restore the damage to the injured parties here and now. (Ex.22:1,4; Lev.6:4) Paul says, *"Do we then make void the law through faith? yea, God forbid, we establish the law."* (Rom.3:31)

This means that we do have accountability in the "here and now" for our sins, and that we can not use the cross of Jesus as an excuse to sin with impunity. Our sins in this age must be confessed to Yahweh Almighty or He will not forgive us as concerning the impact those sins have on our lives now. If we each want to escape the punishment of sins into which we presently fall, the sins must be confessed to The Almighty. If we have wronged our neighbor in a sin not unto death, but let's say stealing for example, we still have to make right the wrong even though we have confessed to God and received His forgiveness. When God forgives us it doesn't mean we are absolved from compensating whom we have wronged, but it means that if we are really sincere in our sorrow, that Yahweh Almighty will help clean that sin lust out of us so we don't repeat our wrong actions again. God's cleaning sin out of our life is part of His forgiveness toward us, but our heart must be right toward Him in a contrite confession.

"If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness. If we say that we have not sinned, we make Him a liar, and His word is not in us." (I John 1:9,10)

Some mistakenly take the position that this verse is speaking of a person first coming into conversion from being an unbeliever, but this stipulation is clearly directed to those

already in the body of Christ. Verse 1 states, *"My little children, these things write I unto you, that ye sin not. And if any man sin, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous:"* John is speaking to those who are already children of Christ through John's Gospel message, and explains that we are indeed accountable for our sins in the here and now.

Additionally, it is important to realize that the confession of our sins for God's forgiveness during this age is based on the prerequisite that we are also forgiving others who sin against us. If we do not forgive from our heart, those who have hurt, harmed, and ill treated us ... Yahweh says that neither will He forgive us of our sins, whether confessed or not. It is that simple and there are no exceptions. *We must forgive others.* Folks, this is huge, and we as brothers really need to get a handle on this.

This does not mean to become doormats for people to wipe their feet on. You certainly should protect your rights, and learn to say "No" when another attempts to abusively take advantage of your Christian kindness. Protecting one's self from personal abuse is only common sense and is to be expected. However, what God beseeches us to do is to forgive, forget, and cast off our internal bitterness that will rot a person away from the inside out, and thus destroy the joy of life that Christ wants us to have. Paul tells us in Hebrews 12:14,15, *"Follow peace with all men, and holiness, without which no man shall see Yahweh. Looking diligently lest any man fail of the grace of God; lest any root of bitterness springing up trouble you, and thereby many be defiled"*.

Bitterness is caused by not forgiving, and the Bible says it grows like a root ... the longer you don't remove it, the more entrenched it burrows and harder it becomes to get rid of. In Matthew chapter six, our Master has this to say in the "Our Father Prayer" about forgiveness:

"And (God) forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors. And (you would not) lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil: For thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory, for ever. Amen."
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." (Mat.6:12-15)

Christ explained this fundamental principle again in the parable of the unmerciful servant. In light of each of our own spiritual dispositions and our growth in Christian maturity, this parable is worth slowly reading and seriously contemplating. (below)

Mt.18: *"21 Then came Peter to Him, and said, Master, how oft shall my brother sin against me, and I forgive him? till seven times?
22 Jesus saith unto him, I say not unto thee, Until seven times: but, Until seventy times seven.
23 Therefore is the kingdom of heaven likened unto a certain king, which would take account of his servants.*

24 And when he had begun to reckon, one was brought unto him, which owed him ten thousand talents.

25 But forasmuch as he had not to pay, his master commanded him to be sold, and his wife, and children, and all that he had, and payment to be made.

26 The servant therefore fell down, and worshipped him, saying, Master, have patience with me, and I will pay thee all.

27 Then the master of that servant was moved with compassion, and loosed him, and forgave him the debt.

28 But the same servant went out, and found one of his fellowservants, which owed him an hundred pence: and he laid hands on him, and took him by the throat, saying, Pay me that thou owest.

29 And his fellowservant fell down at his feet, and besought him, saying, Have patience with me, and I will pay thee all.

30 And he would not: but went and cast him into prison, till he should pay the debt.

31 So when his fellowservants saw what was done, they were very sorry, and came and told unto their master all that was done.

32 Then his master, after that he had called him, said unto him, O thou wicked servant, I forgave thee all that debt, because thou desiredst me:

33 Shouldest not thou also have had compassion on thy fellowservant, even as I had pity on thee?

34 And his master was wroth, and delivered him to the tormentors, till he should pay all that was due unto him.

35 So likewise shall my heavenly Father do also unto you, if ye from your hearts forgive not every one his brother their trespasses." (Mat.18:21-35 "Trespasses" here is the Greek word *Paraptoma* meaning any manner of offenses or faults, not merely debts)

This parable teaching of Christ stresses the divine concept about forgiveness where our sins and repentance of them come up before Yahweh Almighty. The blood of Christ on the cross for our sins during this age works for our personal forgiveness by our Father, **when** we confess our sins to The Almighty **and** forgive our brothers of their sins against us. When we have included these two standards within our actions, then Our Father will apply the miracle power of the shed blood of Christ to our own personal sins, washing them away from our lives presently. If any one of the three (confession, forgiveness of others, the blood of Christ) is missing from our sincerity ... we are still in our sins now and will receive the divine penalty according to God's justice. Please note that Yahweh is so insistent about our learning this heart felt understanding that the parable shows us that the man seeking forgiveness was forgiven at first, and then he lost that forgiveness after he would not forgive his servant! This means that Yahweh is emphatically serious about not being mocked concerning sin and forgiveness. Where this present age is concerned we are each in danger of losing favor of God from any past forgiveness we have received from on high, if we are not diligent to consistently forgive our brothers/sisters of their trespasses against us.

As a side topic, but an important one in regard to sins, let's take careful note that Christ Himself did not include water baptism as a ritualistic method that washes away our sins. Jesus Christ never water baptized anybody. There are a few denominations that misquote

Acts 2:38 to cite water baptism as a sacramental rite required for remission of sins. “*Then Peter said unto them, Repent, and be baptized every one of you in (‘on/unto’ in Greek) the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit*”. This portion of the verse does not refer to water baptism, although a “play on words” is simultaneously used. But rather it is referring to a new infusion “on” “onto” “unto” the glorious name of Jesus Christ and all that name holds for salvation. The word for “in” here is the Greek “epi” at Strong’s #1909, meaning “superimposed on/upon”. It means that the new believer is to be absorbed of all that is in the name of Jesus and that he now relies on/upon/unto that name for a new life. This is a change in the position of a person’s life from relying “on” and resting “upon” the world, to now relying “on” Jesus’ name for all things of a spiritually refreshed life. How many people have we known that have been water baptized “in the name of Jesus Christ” only to continue right on with a worldly lifestyle that reflects no Christian life of a changed position relying “onto” Christ? Nobody is fooling God by a ritual of any sort. But doesn’t water baptize mean “to put on Christ? No. Paul is careful to differentiate between being baptized/immersed into a faith that absorbs the convert into a new life, as opposed to attempting to wash sins away by a water ritual. “*For ye are all the children of God by faith in Christ Jesus, For as many of you as have been baptized (immersed) into Christ have put on Christ.*” (Gal.3:26,27). Paul did not say “*For as many of you as have been baptized in water have put on Christ.*” Those who say that water baptism saves are in Scriptural error when they assume that water baptism is for “putting on Christ”. Water baptism is for those who already have Christ – who have already initially put Him on by faith and saved thereby. You cannot put on a coat that you do not have. You can only put on a coat that you already possess. “To put on Christ” means that you totally trust Him by faith (i.e. – being immersed into Him whom you have and trust, not water baptism).

Furthermore, when a controversy arose concerning water baptism, Paul was compelled to advise the people with a reminder that it is only the bloody cross that secures our salvation, “*For Christ sent me not to baptize, but to preach the Gospel: not with wisdom of words (great oratory), lest the cross of Christ should be made of none effect.*” (I Cor.1:17) Paul was referring to his commission given to him by Christ in Acts 26:15 – 18 where Jesus Himself orders Paul to preach repentance yet **does not** include water baptism as a supplemental requisite for the remission of sins. This is what Paul tells us it means to be immersed as to rely upon Christ by faith, that is the putting on of Christ in the gospel of the Cross. Paul obviously did not deny the directive to baptize, but set it forth in its proper place by Paul either baptizing later or by having some other disciples administer water baptism with another travel to the area. The immersion must be into the cross of Christ, not the cross and water baptism as to do so would make the “cross of none effect”. There is not a sacrament for remission of sins to be made out of water baptism, but rather a symbolic profession of faith. The same had been told of the Israelites being “*baptized unto Moses*”(I Cor.10:2), that is they completely followed Moses through the sea to salvation, yet no water at all touched them in their “baptism” as they crossed the Red Sea on dry land! Baptism unto Moses (being completely with him) saved the Israelites, and baptism unto Christ (being completely with Him) saves us today. It is the “repentance” in Acts 2:38 that is for the remission of sins, with water baptism

following, thus Acts 2:38 must be viewed in light of Paul's commission by Jesus Christ in Acts 26:15-18 and the many like related Scriptures that explain it.

Only by a Romish interpretation of Acts 2:38 can an assumption be made that a ritual of water can wash away sins for remission. Rather, Acts 2:38 itself refers to receiving the word that the Messiah has come in the name of Jesus Christ, that He has shed His blood, and thus immersion (baptism) into this truth quickens the heart to our salvation. The water baptism later follows in verse 41 upon a profession of faith in repentance. *"Then they that gladly received his word --- were baptized"*. Acts 2:38 is an immersion into the received word of truth onto the name Jesus Christ (i.e. relying on), and then verse 41 is an immersion in water done because one is now a Christian, not to become a Christian or to receive the Holy Spirit because of water dipping. The Holy Spirit is given by belief in the Word, not by water washing. *"To Him (Jesus) give all the witness, that through His name whosoever believeth in Him shall receive remission of sins. While Peter yet spoke these words, the Holy Spirit fell on all them which heard the word --- then answered Peter, Can any man forbid water, that these should not be baptized, which have received the Holy Spirit as well as we?"* (Acts 10:43,44,47) **This could not be more plainly understood**, but water sacramentalists will fight tooth and nail intentionally clouding verses and actually withholding many verses from their teaching in order to maintain a clerical church control over the people by water ritual. Let not the elect be so deceived.

In contrast to Acts 2:38 (i.e.- being immersed *on/unto an inner reliance of Jesus' name* by faith), the command for water baptism that follows is clearly given by Jesus in Matthew 28:19 **to be performed in witness to the triune nature of God**, as our Savior orders this to only be done *"in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit"*. Why? Because it was the whole triune nature of God that was involved in resurrecting Christ from the grave. (see Gal.1:1; Jn.10:17,18; Rom.8:9,11) More precisely this may be grasped in clarity as, *"Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, [here we see the immersion unto/on/into the Messiah]; baptizing them in the name of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit"* [here we see the immersion formula given to be used at water baptism which symbolically professes the faith]. In Acts 2:38 it is the repentance of belief in Christ's name that causes the remission of sins, with water baptism following after the sinner's heart is changed (Acts 2:41). After baptism into Jesus Christ's name (all His authority and power) is made by the believer for salvation, then Christ says that they are to be water baptized in the triune name of God Almighty, the outward profession of faith. Sacramentalists who water baptize "in the name of Jesus Christ" citing Acts 2:38 attempting to wash away sins have missed the point and have stepped outside the command of our King and Savior.

The above all being Scripturally noted, we must herald the message that water baptism is indeed an important New Testament commandment that a Christian should obey by conviction in the heart, but it is not for remission of sins, as such mistaken belief makes a false sacrament ritual out of a purely symbolic act of faith, and is straying from the simple faith that is in Christ. Remission of our sins is by the blood of Christ --- not the blood of Christ plus anything else, including water baptism. *"(Jesus) whom God has set forth to be a propitiation through faith in His blood, to declare His righteousness for the*

remission of sins -- " (Rom. 3:25) Yet most certainly, a Christian is indeed to be water baptized as an outward profession, but never viewing it as a part of remission of sins. The difference in understanding is the difference between true faith and sacramental heresies of religion. [More later on this in a separate baptism study as not to digress from the essay topic]

Finally, the Scriptures tell us that the spiritual law of forgiveness applies to "our brothers" and not to Yahweh's enemies. Nowhere in the Scriptures are we instructed to either love God's enemies or forgive God's enemies who are actively and knowingly working to undermine His Kingdom. Christ said to "*love your enemies*"(Mat.5:44), not God's enemies! Our personal enemies can even be family members who would cheat us, lie about us, or steal from us. If we have developed enmity and bitterness toward our Christian Israel brothers and sisters we must be opened to forgiving. In contrast to this, Yahweh Himself testified that King David was a man after His own heart (Acts 13:22), and David said that he hated Yahweh's enemies "*with a perfect hatred*". (Psalm 139:21,22) "*Shouldst thou help the ungodly, and love them that hate Yahweh? therefore is wrath upon thee from before Yahweh.*" (2 Chronicles 19:2). But we are to love the brethren as Christ commands, "*A new commandment I give unto you, That ye love one another; as I have loved you, that ye also love one another*". (John 13:34) This commandment, given to us by our beloved King, shows forth its fruit by forgiveness of our brothers and sisters, and being forgiven by them. It is a condition necessary *in this age* for receiving forgiveness from our Heavenly Father for our sins committed in our weaknesses.

As the Remnant in Christ remaining in a hostile world, it would do well for all of us together to eagerly share God's wonderful Scriptural family guidance in which Yahweh desires to bless us His children with victory by faith moved with love. Praise be to God Almighty! He knows exactly what to do with our sins – in the “here and now” and for eternity.

God bless the Remnant!

--- from the flock at Faith of the Covenant Fellowship

**Gift of faith into the Kingdom, Confession of sins with repentance ,
Forgiveness in the Spirit, Water baptism in obedience.**