

FORGIVENESS

The first audible word from the mouth of Jesus once He was hung on the cross: “Father, forgive them; for they do not know what they are doing” (Luke 23:34). Just a few hours earlier, He had prayed “Father, if You are willing, remove this cup from Me; yet not My will, but Yours be done” (Luke 22:42). In just a few more hours (maybe six) He would pray His last prayer on earth—from the cross, “Father, into Your hands I commit My Spirit” (Luke 23:46).

Isn't it amazing that Jesus' first thought—His first word—from the cross was that God, His father, would forgive His offenders? It was our sin, our transgressions, our rebellion that nailed Him to the cross. “He Himself bore our sins in His body on the cross...” (I Peter 2:24).

And in a way, this was a prayer for us. Jesus was also thinking about us when He prayed, “Father, forgive them...” Perhaps the Roman soldiers did not know what they were doing, but we know good and well what we've done. “All of us have sinned and come short of the glory of God” (Romans 3:23). Therefore, we have no greater need than to be forgiven of our sins and reconciled to God.

Consider four questions regarding “God's Forgiveness of Our Sin.”

I. WHY DO WE NEED FORGIVENESS? (Rebellion)

(two simple reasons why we need to be forgiven:)

A. We need to be forgiven because WE HAVE ALL SINNED AGAINST GOD.

* Isaiah 64:6 * Romans 3:10 * Romans 3:23

B. We need to be forgiven because WE ALL COME UNDER GOD'S JUDGMENT FOR OUR SIN.

* John 3:18b-19 * Romans 6:23 * II Peter 2:9

II. WHERE DO WE FIND FORGIVENESS? (Redeemer)

(there is only one source of forgiveness...only one!)

A. Forgiveness is EXPLAINED IN THE SCRIPTURES.

* Luke 24:45-49

B. Forgiveness is PROVIDED BY THE SAVIOR.

* Ephesians 1:7 * Colossians 1:13-14

III. HOW DO WE RECEIVE FORGIVENESS? (Repentance)

(there are three simple but very important responses we must make:)

A. We must first ADMIT THAT WE NEED FORGIVENESS.

* Acts 2:37

B. We must then REPENT OF OUR SIN TO BE FORGIVEN.

* Acts 2:38-40 * Acts 3:19

C. We must SURRENDER OUR LIVES TO JESUS AS LORD.

* Romans 10:9 * Philippians 2:11

IV. WHAT DIFFERENCE DOES FORGIVENESS MAKE? (Result)

(forgiveness brings at least two big changes in our lives:)

A. Being forgiven COMPELS US TO FORGIVE OTHERS.

* Matthew 6:14-15 * Ephesians 4:32

B. Being forgiven MOTIVATES US TO LIVE MORE HOLY LIVES.

* Romans 4:7-8

Clearly, we are all in need of God's forgiveness...INITIALLY (as we repent of our sin and receive God's gift of eternal life) and CONTINUALLY (as we confess our sins and receive God's cleansing and renewed fellowship).

We are all also in need of God's strength to forgive others. We have no real basis to forgive others of offending us if we have never been forgiven for our sin (offenses) against God.

A PRAYER OF FORGIVENESS: Dear God, I choose as an act of my will, regardless of my feelings, to forgive the person who has wronged me. I release them and set myself free to Your healing. With Your help, I will no longer dwell on the situation or continue to talk about it. I thank You for forgiving me as I have forgiven them, I thank You for releasing me. I ask this in Jesus' name, amen.