

Stearns Grove

8/8/62

"The Forgiveness of Sins"

10/4/59

Warrington
6/2/60

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Scripture Lesson:- Acts 13: 32 - 41.

Text:- Acts 13: 38. "Understand, therefore, brethren, that through this Jesus forgiveness of sins is announced to you; and in him every believer is absolved from all offences, from which you could not be absolved under the law of Moses"

. II

Introduction:- This is the closing declaration of Paul's sermon in the synagogue at Antioch in Pisidia. To Paul the promises and hopes of the revelation had been fulfilled in Christ who died and rose again from the dead. That was the perfect sacrifice. It was a gospel of a full forgiveness of sins. The forgiveness of sins is not the first article of the Christian creed, but it is the first message of the Christian evangelist.

What then is the forgiveness of sins? What experience do we enter into when we are forgiven? The necessity for the forgiveness is not often denied: BUT THE NECESSITY OF IT is too seldom felt. If it be the first line in a distinctively Christian experience, we should know what is implied in it. Let us examine our own experience of God's forgiveness of our sins.

To begin with, forgiveness is a real experience. Without the forgiveness of sins a man is not a

Christian at all. It is the one experience of which the millions who have believed in Christ speak in almost identical terms. The vividness of the experience depends on our temperament, our knowledge and our past. In every case forgiveness is peace with God, the purging of the conscience from its stain, the taking of the fear out of the heart. Forgiveness is as real as sin, and sin is as real as the bricks in the pavement down the road.

II.

Then, forgiveness is a personal experience. Forgiveness is possible only from person to person. Has anyone ever forgiven another wholly and entirely except God? "Who can forgive sins but God only?" asked the Pharisees, and they put a deep and moving question. Seldom, if ever, has a man forgiven a fellow-man unreservedly and from the bottom of his heart. He may number the offender again among our friends. But do we believe that a man whom we have wronged can be quite the same to us? Be that as it may, there is none but God, and God alone, who forgives sin. Let us turn to the word of God and see. "He casts our sin behind his back", that is to say, he puts them out of his sight. He removes our sins from us, "as far as the east is from the west", that is to say, he casts our sins out of our neighbors ^{his} sight. He blots out, "as a thick cloud, our transgressions"; that is to say, he obliterates our sin altogether. He leaves nothing but blue sky over our heads. A forgiven man is face to face with a forgiving God.

III..VI

Forgiveness is also a reconciling experience. When we are forgiven of God he is reconciled to us. He

as remitted our sin. Let us illustrate. A man who was an employer discovered that one of his employes was embezzling small sums of money. He was handed over to the law and imprisoned for one year. He came out of prison with the criminal brand upon him and an intense hatred of the man who had been responsible for his imprisonment. That is one way of dealing with sin. Another man, who was also an employer, found that one of his clerks had been putting the firms discounts into his own pocket. The clerk was called in, sternly admonished, and dismissed, with an assurance that he would be helped. That is another way of dealing with sin, but it is not forgiveness. The youth walked out with grudge in his heart. A third man, detected a young man, just beginning life, in an act of fraud. He was called into the office and his temptation was inquired into. His employer found out what led him to the forgery. He, the young man, spoke of his breach of trust, with words that were tense with grief. He promised, and did, pay up the amount of his forgery; his employer forgave him and sent his back to his desk. Years after, he found Christ, and then he recalled with grateful words, the man who had saved him from from prosecution. That is God's way of dealing with sin. For-^{giveness} is not merely letting you off. Forgiveness is God being reconciled to you.

IV. . . III

Forgiveness is also a fruitful experience. It not only reconciles, but it cleanses, and unburdens, and unbinds, and renews. The joy and peace, the sense of freedom, the eager leap forward to selfless service arise from the sense of forgiveness in the soul. "Purge me with hissope and I shall be clean; wash me and I shall be whiter than snow", writes one penitent, revealing the thirst after holiness which forgiveness creates. "If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness", writes another apostle, knowing that forgiveness sweeps like a cleansing fire through the contrite heart. You may sometimes doubt whether you have been forgiven. You have offered your entreating prayers. You have the mood of hope and calm, and yet you are not quite sure that the experience is the experience of forgiveness. But, listen, a true forgiveness works miracles in the life. Have miracles been wrought in your life? Have love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faithfulness, meekness and temperance, quickened you and inspired you on to a new life. Forgiveness is a fruitful thing.

V.

And last of all, forgiveness is a repeated experience. There is, of course, one first experience which stands out from every other. Some men have a very clear recollection of that first forgiveness. It was the forgiveness, not merely

of evil words and deeds which tormented them, but an alien life and a rebel heart. It was the hour of their justification before God.

We can never enter God's presence without praying, "Forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors." We can never come up to the temple of God to pray without uttering the cry, "God be merciful to me a sinner." Each night as we lay down to sleep and rest we must plead, "Forgive us for any wrong attitude or deed we have done today!"

VI.

And, last of all, forgiveness in its fulness, is an experience at the foot of the cross. In all that has been said, we have really been standing at the Cross. There is no forgiveness in this world, or that which is to come, except at the Cross of Christ. "Through this man is preached unto you the forgiveness of sins." The great faith of Buddha and Mohammed give no place for need or the grace of being reconciled to God. Their prayers are, at the highest, prayers of submission and of request. They seldom reach the gladder note of thanksgiving. They are never jubilant with the song of the forgiven. Even the O.T. saints do not walk on the high level of the N.T. believer. We who can sing the "Old Rugged Cross" and the song "In the Cross of Christ I Glory", and "Rock of Ages" must realize that the forgiveness of sins is attained only at the Cross.

Conclusion:- Have you been forgiven. Have you

and you been washed in the blood of the Lamb? Does his spirit this morning, bear witness with your spirit, that all is well between you and THE Lord. We are coming to the table of the Lord to together eat the bread and drink the cup. We want to examine ourselves. "For anyone who eats this bread and drinks this cup unworthily, eats and drinks to his own condemnation."

Is there any sin between you
5 & god this morning? If you
have any sin big or small
you will not feel his
presence you cannot expect
a blessing. Ask for His
forgiveness before you come
to the Lords table. People all
over the world today are
seeking His forgiveness
remembering His sacrifice
on the cross for us.

Conclusion: - Have you been forgiven. Have you