

## SHOULD WE FORGIVE A PERSON BEFORE HE REPENTS?

There are those who contend we should forgive a person who has sinned against us whether or not that individual repents. Those who so contend are confusing holding ill will toward that person with forgiving them. Here is what Jesus said on this matter: "...If thy brother trespass against thee, rebuke him; and if he repent, forgive him. And if he trespass against thee seven times in a day, and seven times in a day turn again to thee, saying, I repent; thou shalt forgive him" (Luke 17:3-4). Notice that the Son of God instructs us to first rebuke a brother who has trespassed against us. Then if he repents we are to forgive him. In that context the Lord emphasized that if a person trespass against us seven time during the same day and then repents each time we are to forgive him. The condition that our Lord sets forth is that the offender is first to repent and then we are to forgive him. Nothing is said in that passage or anywhere else in the New Testament that we are to forgive an offender before he repents.

It is true that all sin must ultimately be forgiven by the Heavenly Father. That is if those who sin meets the conditions set forth by the Lord for forgiveness. Alien sinners (those not in the spiritual family of God) must obey the gospel in order to obtain remission of sins. They are born of the water and the Spirit when baptized for the remission of sins (John 3:5; Eph. 5:25-27; Titus 3:5; Acts 2:38). If the person is an erring brother (one who has already been baptized for the remission of their alien sins) then that individual must repent, confess his sins, and pray unto the Heavenly Father asking for forgiveness (Acts 8:14-24; I John 1:9). A child of God who sins should confess their sins as publicly as he or she has sinned. If the sin was committed privately (for example: sinful thoughts) then that person should go directly unto God through the avenue of prayer penitently confessing their sin and asking God to forgive them (Psalm 19:12). If one sins publicly then it is a reproach first unto God; and secondly upon the church. In that case the sin should be confessed before the church (James 5:16). If, as discussed in the above paragraph, one person sins against another than the transgressor must in penitence seek forgiveness from the person he has offended (Luke 17:3-4).

In dealing further in consideration of one sinning against you or me individually the Son of God provides additional instructions. At Matthew 18:15-17, "Moreover if thy brother shall trespass against thee, go and tell him his fault between thee and him alone: if he shall hear thee, thou hast gained thy brother. But if he will not hear thee, then take with thee one or two more, that in the mouth of two or three witnesses every word may be established. And if he shall neglect to hear them, tell it unto the church: but if he neglect to hear the church, let him be unto thee as an heathen man and a publican." That passage plainly reveals there is more than saying, "I'll forgive him whether he repents or not!" We should long to forgive those who've sinned against us. But if we are going to follow the Word of God in this matter then the person must repent before obtaining forgiveness. There is a great difference in forgiving and not holding any ill will toward a person who has sinned against us.

Some congregations violate the scripture when a brother, who has publicly sinned, is still used in the worship service to take a leading part. There have been brethren who have been out of duty (unfaithful) who suddenly start attending the services again without publicly repenting. Their fellow Christians should not call upon them to lead a prayer, wait upon the Lord's table or otherwise use them until those erring brethren have in penitence confessed their sins and asked the brethren to pray for their forgiveness. The first century church at Corinth was commanded by the Apostle Paul to withdraw from a brother in that congregation who was guilty of incest. This was done to cause him to realize he was condemned because of his sin. The ultimate purpose was hopefully to bring him to repentance and a change of life (I Cor. 5:1-13). In Second Corinthians we learn that the withdrawal by the church accomplished its

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**BELVEDERE BEACON**  
"Ye are the light of the world" (Matthew 5:14)  
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135 Clearwater Road, Belvedere, SC 29811-2374  
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SCHEDULE OF SERVICES

<b>SUNDAY:</b>		<b>WEDNESDAY:</b>	
Bible Classes for all ages	10:00 am.	Bible Classes for all ages	7:00 p.m.
Morning Worship	11:00 am.		
Evening Worship	6:00 p.m.		

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## Eternal Life – A Promise

Scriptures should not be arrayed against each other. One should have insight enough into the Scriptures to know there are no contradictions. If the Lord did not give us a perfect revelation, then we have no guide in religion. Infidels are made by preachers oftentimes. For instance, one preacher will proclaim that the Book teaches we have eternal life right now and can't lose it. The other will stoutly deny this and say we have eternal life in the world to come. Each reads his proof out of the Bible, and the poor listener cannot tell which is right, hence sometimes goes into unbelief. Who can blame him?

These are a few of the passages referred to as teaching one has eternal life now: "He that believeth on me hath everlasting life" (John 6:47); "He that heareth my word, and believeth on him that sent me hath everlasting life" (John 5:24); "He that believeth in me, though he were dead, yet shall he live; And whosoever liveth and believeth in me shall never die" (John 11:25-26). There are many more such passages. These all seem to teach that actual possession of eternal life comes here and now.

But there is another set of Scriptures that seem to teach right the opposite. Here are some of them: "But he shall receive an hundredfold now in this time... and in the world to come eternal life" (Matt. 10:30). Paul, in writing to Titus, said, "In hope of eternal life" (Titus 1:2). One is taught by the Bible that he cannot hope for that which he hath in actuality.

What kind of explanation shall we make of these seeming contradictions? Is it the proper procedure to continue to array these statements against each other? The plan more reasonable to pursue is to find a solution which is reasonable and true. This may be done, for John himself, the one who wrote the former passages, makes the matter plain in his last writings. I have often wondered if he did not read his gospel in later life and decide that some preachers in later centuries would misinterpret those statements, so he made one more which would forever settle the case with those who would desire a harmony of all Scriptures. He may have done this, but we know the Holy Spirit guided his writing and made his meaning clear. Here is a Scripture which makes both sets of statements relative to eternal life easily understood: "And this is the promise that he hath promised us, even eternal life" (1 John 2:25).

There are two ways of having anything — one by promise, and the other in actuality. We first have our wives by promise, then by actuality. We have eternal life by promise. That is the way John said we have it. Paul had it "in hope," and when we get to the city of God we will have it in actuality. This makes all seemingly contradictory passages clear and plain. All discrepancies disappear.

When John says, "he that believeth hath everlasting life," that is, of course, nothing but the truth. We do have it, but in which way? We have it in promise. When Paul said he had eternal life in hope, he stated the truth. When Jesus said, "and in the world to come, eternal life," He spoke of the actual possession of eternal life.

One additional thought is sufficient for this lesson. If one has eternal life in promise, then there is a possibility of being cut off from that promise by unrighteous living. Let us, then, "take heed lest we fall."

W. Claude Hall  
deceased

## SNOW!!!!

Yes, it snowed in North Augusta on Friday evening and it settled! In fact we had between five and seven inches on the ground and it was still in place Saturday morning and road conditions were not good. This area isn't used to much, if any, snow, in a typical winter so many are not prepared and many are not used to driving in snowy and icy conditions. Advisories were out for people not to travel.

This got my mind to thinking about snow and the Bible. Did you know that there are altogether 24 references to snow found in both the Old and New Testaments. I would like to take the opportunity to look at some of these references for lessons that we can learn from snow, as found in the Word of God.

Job tells us: *"Hast thou entered into the treasures of the snow? or hast thou seen the treasures of the hail" (38:22)*. Did you know there were *"treasures"* in the snow? It is a treasure because God is the provider. The Psalmist tells us: *"Fire, and hail; snow, and vapor; stormy wind fulfilling his word" (Psa. 148:8)*. The word *"treasures"* can be translated *"storehouses."* The idea being that God stores the snow and dispenses it at His choosing. Scientists tell us that snowflakes are actually born in clouds containing moisture. The conditions must be just right for this to take place. The temperature must be well below the freezing point of water. Tiny snow crystals are formed, and as they get heavier they begin to fall, and as they fall they get larger because they pick up more moisture in the atmosphere. Who controls the conditions in the atmosphere. Who created the clouds that act as the storehouse. Who dispenses the snow at His choosing? If God is in control of the snow, and if God can dispense the snow upon the earth cannot He dispense all the things in life that we need? *"Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above, and cometh down from the Father of lights, with whom is no variableness, neither shadow of turning" (Jam. 1:17)*.

Snow is also a treasure because of its peculiarity. Did you know that there are many different shapes of snowflakes? Scientists tell us there are 10 general categories that snowflakes fall into. Under a microscope you could see some that are like needles, some like stars, some like trees, some like fish bones, some like bullet yet here is the amazing thing about them, no two snowflakes are exactly the same. Snowflakes have their own shape, their own identity. They each are unique. This gives evidence of design and therefore a designer. It is the same with humans, each is different, again evidence of design and a designer not just random chance without a creator.

The Bible also references snow when it comes to the matter of purity: *"Purge me with hyssop, and I shall be clean: wash me, and I shall be whiter than snow" (Psa. 51:7)*. Snow has a powerful cleansing effect on the atmosphere, sometimes called "wash-out or snow-out." Snow is actually formed around some matter already existing in the atmosphere, a piece of dirt etc. We see the snow when it first falls and it is beautiful and white until man begins to pollute it by going into it – walking, skiing, driving – whatever. The Bible uses this to describe sin and being cleansed of sin. *"Come now, and let us reason together, saith the LORD: though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they be red like crimson, they shall be as wool" (Isa. 1:18)*. All have been corrupted by sin for *"all have sinned" (Rom. 3:23)*. We cannot conceal sin (Num. 32:23). We can be clean, *"white as snow"* but only through Christ (Jhn. 4:6). He is the only way to God. He shed His blood on Calvary's cross that we might be cleaned. However, to be cleaned from sin we must obey His will, we must obey the Gospel of Christ. Then, and only then will we be as *"white as snow"* and we must continue in Christ, repenting of sin that we might continue to be *"white as snow"*.

By the time this article is read, the snow will probably all be gone, or almost gone. In most parts of the world, it does not stay forever, although in some places it stays longer than others, depending on the amount of snow that falls and continuing weather conditions. This reminds us of life. James tells us: *"Whereas ye know not what shall be on the morrow. For what is your life? It is even a vapour, that appeareth for a little time, and then vanisheth away" (4:14)*. Yes, this life does not last forever and we must be prepared for that life which is to come. However, we can only be prepared if we have obeyed the Gospel of Christ and are living our lives faithful to Him.

*Ken Chumbley*

## NEWS AND NOTES

Keep in your prayers the following: Helen Culpepper, Pam Gossett, Lavonne McClish, Linda Chumbley, Maomi Aaron's sister, Leann Rogers, who is having health problems, and Lanny Niver together with his daughter and son, and Tim Smith.

Lanny Niver continues to recuperate at home following his neck surgery. He saw the doctor last week and is now allowed to drive for short distances but still has a lot of pain.

Helen Culpepper had tests run on Thursday. They will get the results this week. She is having a hard time as a result of the tests they had to do. Keep her and Les in your prayers. They were also without power a couple of times as a result of the snowstorm.

Jean Peebles, Charles and Donna Wilkes were all sick last Sunday and not able to be out.

Our next potluck will be on February 21 following the morning services. Plan to stay and eat together.

### **Should We Forgive A Person Before He Repents? Continued from page 1.**

intended purpose. That brother repented. The Apostle Paul stated that the punishment was sufficient and that they were to forgive him and show their love unto him (II Cor. 2:5-11). Now if they had not withdrawn from the one guilty of incest there is no indication that he would have repented.

We are taught in the scripture to: "Love the brotherhood" (II Pet. 2:17). Brethren who uphold a "thus saith the Lord" are deeply appreciated and loved for their works' sake. But when those same brethren commence to teach and/or practice error it grieves our heart. Often faithful brethren attempt to reach out to them in showing their teaching and/or practice to be contrary to the scripture. If the brotherhood at large would shun those who will not repent of their error then they would more likely be brought to repentance. Many neglect to do so because they consider that a particular individual is involved in a good work that far outweighs their false teaching. In other words, misguided brethren refuse to take action. When false teachers went forth from the Jerusalem congregation teaching Gentile Christians that they had to be circumcised and keep the Mosaic Law this was brought before the apostles and elders at Jerusalem. The Apostle Peter refuted such as binding upon Gentile Christians. A letter was sent out to Gentile congregations emphasizing that the apostles "gave no such commandment" (Acts 15:1-35). No work in the brotherhood, congregation, or individual is more important than the truth of God's Holy Word.

*Dub Mowery  
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