

Do You Take God's Forgiveness For Granted? Continued from page one.

While some mistakenly believe they have sinned so severely that God could never possibly forgive them (contrast with Ezekiel 33:14-16; 1 Timothy 1:15), others live under the false notion that God owes them forgiveness. They say such things as, "I've never killed anybody or anything like that. I try to be a good spouse, a good parent, and a good citizen. If God cannot see fit to forgive me of whatever sins I have committed, I'm not going to bother myself with Him." However, God owes no one forgiveness. Indeed, He paid the greatest price ever paid by offering His perfect Son, but it was not a price He owed: "For when we were yet without strength, in due time Christ died for the ungodly. For scarcely for a righteous man will one die: yet peradventure for a good man some would even dare to die. But God commendeth his love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us" (Romans 5:6-8; compare with Isaiah 53:4-12; 2 Corinthians 5:21).

Again, when we sin, it is a choice we make for which we are responsible. That price God paid through Christ was not His debt, but ours. How small a token it is that we have merely to obey the Gospel to receive the great gift of forgiveness! (Romans 6:16-18; Hebrews 5:9).

Sometimes children of God, those who have obeyed the Gospel of Christ by submitting in faith to baptism (Romans 6:3-4; Galatians 3:26-27), take God's forgiveness for granted. They are aware that "If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness" (1 John 1:9). But instead of allowing God's faithfulness and forgiveness to motivate them to overcome temptation, they use it to rationalize succumbing to temptation. One might rationalize, "I'll just go ahead and commit this sin-I can repent and confess later, and God will forgive me." But did that person truly ever repent of anything? It seems that he had the same attitude as he committed the sin as he did confessing it. Repentance can be defined as "a change of mind that leads to a change in life;" but if the one "repenting" is merely doing what he planned to do when he entered into sin, there is no change of mind and there will likely be no change of life.

For some, it may be the case that they give no thought to forgiveness whatsoever. Life seems to be moving along just fine, thank you, and they see no need to receive forgiveness from God. They may even reason that God demonstrates His pleasure in them by blessing them so abundantly. Indeed, God is the Source of every blessing they receive (Psalm 65:9-13; Philippians 4:19; James 1:17; et al.). But God's blessings may not be a demonstration of His pleasure, but a testimony designed to call man to Him: "[God] in times past suffered all nations to walk in their own ways. Nevertheless he left not himself without witness, in that he did good, and gave us rain from heaven, and fruitful seasons, filling our hearts with food and gladness" (Acts 14:16-17).

Generally, the temptation is greater for one to forget God when he is being blessed than when he is not. God warned the Israelites of the inherent dangers in the prosperity He would grant them, urging them in particularly in such times to remember Him, lest they forgot the Source of their blessings "And thou say in thine heart, My power and the might of mine hand hath gotten me this wealth" (Deuteronomy 8:17). This is why those who live in prosperous nations should especially guard themselves against a callousness against gratitude.

That God does not smite sinners on the spot does not show that He has forgiven them. It merely shows that He has forbearance. But the Scriptures ask the question, "And thinkest thou . . . that thou shalt escape the judgment of God? Or despisest thou the riches of his goodness and forbearance and longsuffering; not knowing that the goodness of God leadeth thee to repentance?" (Romans 2:3-4).

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BELVEDERE BEACON

"Ye are the light of the world" (Matthew 5:14)

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Do You Take God's Forgiveness For Granted?

No greater gift has ever been bestowed upon man than the forgiveness of God. Man of his own free will chooses to sin. When man sins, he violates the very nature of God; thus necessitating man's punishment and eternal separation from the presence of God. God is rightfully displeased when man makes this choice that compels God to do what His holiness and justice demand. Yet, regardless of how horribly man may sin against and repulse God-He extends forgiveness! The God of the universe who is perfectly holy and just is also "Merciful and gracious, longsuffering, and abundant in goodness and truth, Keeping mercy for thousands, forgiving iniquity and transgression and sin" (Exodus 34:6-7). Such forgiveness as He extends is unequalled and incomparable: "Thy mercy, O LORD, is in the heavens; and thy faithfulness reacheth unto the clouds" (Psalm 36:5).

Unfortunately, far too often people take God's forgiveness for granted. For whatever reason, they neglect and spurn the greatest gift they have ever been offered. There are various ways in which this occurs.

Some simply refuse to acknowledge the existence of God and the blessings He bestows (compare with Psalm 14:1). Others realize God exists, but are misled into believing that God's forgiveness is received by grace only. They think that God universally or randomly bestows forgiveness, regardless of whether or not a person has obedient faith. They fail to acknowledge that there is personal responsibility in receiving God's forgiveness. They remember "For God so loved the world" and "should not perish but have everlasting life," but seem to forget "that whosoever believeth should not perish" (John 3:16, emphasis LM). They remember "For by grace are ye saved through faith" (Ephesians 2:8), but conveniently forget that "faith without works is dead" (James 2:20, 26). May we never forget our personal responsibility to respond to God's offer of forgiveness; may we never hear wisdom's voice say of us, "I have called, and ye refused; I have stretched out my hand, and no man regarded" (Proverbs 1:24).

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SCHEDULE OF SERVICES

SUNDAY:

Bible Classes for all ages 10.00 am.
Morning Worship 11.00 am.
Evening Worship 6.00 p.m.

WEDNESDAY:

Bible Classes for all ages 7.00 p.m.

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A HOUSE OR A HOME?

In the June 2008 issue of the *Reader's Digest* that I received this week in the section entitled "Off Base, Humor In Uniform" is an item that, although indeed humorous has a serious side to it. It tells the story of an air force family that was transferred to a new base. A local TV station was doing a human interest story. The interviewer asked the five year old daughter how she felt about settling into a new home. Her calm reply was, "Oh, we carry our home with us – we just have to find a house to put it in."

Clearly that young lady knew something that even a lot of adults do not know. She knew there was a distinction between a house and a home. A "house" is defined as a building that serves as living quarters for one or a few families" and a "home" is defined as while defined as "one's residence" also is given the additional definition: "the social unit formed by a family living together" (See Merriam Webster's Online Dictionary). A house always refers to the structure in which people live whether it is a fancy brick house or a mud hut. Whereas the term "home" more specifically refers to those who reside together and make up a family. It is amazing that realtors sometimes get it wrong when they advertise "homes for sale" when they really mean "houses for sale." The structure can be sold but the social unit that composes the family cannot be sold for monetary value. Sadly, there are those that do sell the home – for other things especially as a result of divorce when the family unit is divided and often for reasons far different to the one reason for divorce and remarriage that is approved by God's Word – adultery (Matthew 19:9).

One passage of scripture that clearly draws the distinction between a house and a home is Luke 9:61 where we read concerning one who was called to follow Jesus but made excuse when he said: "*And another also said, Lord, I will follow thee; but let me first go bid them farewell, which are at home at my house.*" He wanted first to go home to his family that lived in his house.

We may not always be able to choose the ideal house in which to live simply because the costs of purchasing that house might be prohibitive. Sadly in recent years some have, with the aid of lending institutions allowing them mortgage loans that they could not afford to repay, are finding themselves in a situation whereby they might lose their house. However, the home is what we make it by the way that we live our lives. Sometimes we might have to change out houses but should not have to change homes. We might not always be able to upgrade the house to make it more comfortable to live in. However, we can always work at upgrading our home to make it more like the kind of home the Lord would have us to maintain.

Whether we are parents or children we can all do our part to make our home the best that it can be. The best home is one that is dedicated to the Lord Jesus Christ and to serving Him through His church.

Ken Chumbley

NEWS AND NOTES

Keep in your prayers the following: Helen Culpepper, Pam Gossett and mother, Kathy Treadway's mother, Lavonne McClish, Linda Chumbley, and Rachel Fitzpatrick's aunt (Eula Baker) who has cancer, Maomi Aaron' sister who has having health problems, and Tim Smith. Graham Moulton was taken to a hospice facility near his home on Wednesday as his condition has deteriorated. Please keep him and his family in your prayers.

Noah Arnold was unable to be out Sunday as he had strep throat. Also, Ethan and Aiden Arnold along with Kathy Treadway were sick with a virus on Wednesday night.

Sister Grimsley was still sick and unable to be out Sunday.

Rachel Fitzpatrick was sick Sunday but was able to be out Wednesday. Her nephew Rowdy has been diagnosed with a "sleeping stomach" disorder.

Congratulations to Jennifer Wilson. She will graduate from John L. Davidson Fine Arts School on Wednesday.

A soup and finger food pot-luck is planned after evening worship May 25. Plan to stay and eat together.

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"Forbearance refers to a temporary cessation or pause before something disagreeable takes place." "It points to a truce, not a peace" God's forbearance is wonderful, and eloquent of his deep concern for people. But it is not forgiveness. "The Lord is not slack concerning his promise (to come again in final judgment, LM), as some men count slackness; but is longsuffering to us-ward, not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance" (2 Peter 3:9, emphasis LM).

Indeed, God is a wonderfully forgiving God; but this does not mean that every person is guaranteed God's forgiveness: "Keeping mercy for thousands, forgiving iniquity and transgression and sin, and that will by no means clear the guilty" (Exodus 34:7). Instead of taking God's forgiveness for granted, let us ever crave and be appreciative of God's forgiveness, living lives to His glory (1 Corinthians 10:31). God will pardon abundantly, but there will come a time when it is too late for pardon:

"Seek ye the LORD while he may be found, call ye upon him while he is near: Let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts: and let him return unto the LORD, and he will have mercy upon him; and to our God, for he will abundantly pardon" (Isaiah 55:6-7).

*Lee Moses
Mammoth Spring, AR
From Fulton County Gospel News*

1 "Anochee," in Bauer, Danker, Arndt, and Gingrich, A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature, 3rd ed. (Chicago: Univ. Of Chicago Press, 2000), p. 86.

2 Leon Morris, The Epistle to the Romans (Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1988), pp. 112- 113.