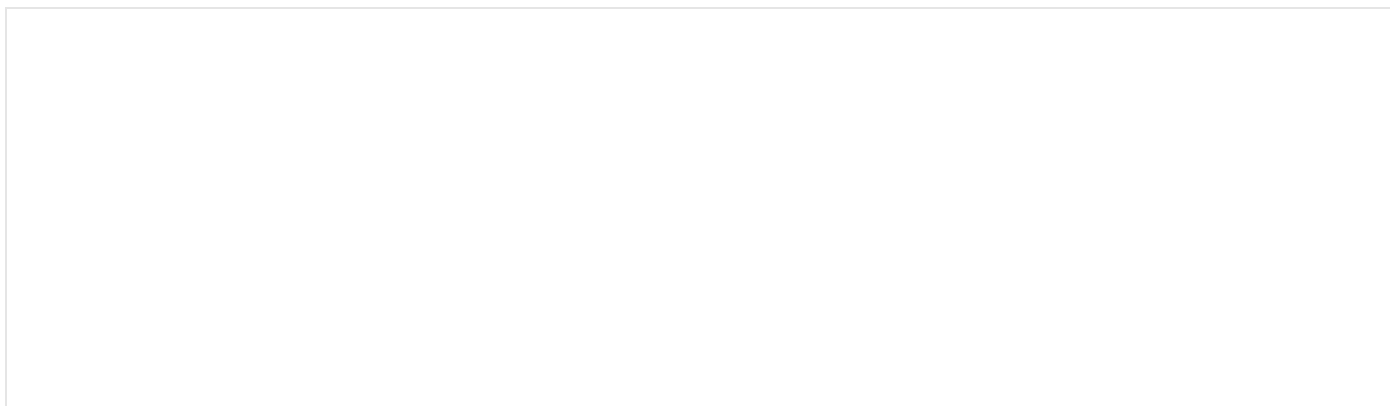


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The Forgiveness of Sins

05/20/2012

1 John 2:12

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1 John 2:12

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I have a brother in law who participates in races from time to time. He has participated in a number of triathlons and marathons and other athletic contests. The last race though was a particular challenge. He entered a mud run. The race took him through some pretty rough terrain, chief of which were sections of thick mud. Wanting to do well in the race he purchased some new shoes. It was a special kind of shoe that was designed to be more advantageous for running. And when the gun sounded, he took off in his new shoes.

At one point in the race though, he felt a throbbing in his foot. He pressed on, but he found that the pain seemed to increase. He then came to realize that the pain was due to the fact that he was missing a shoe! Somewhere along the line the mud sucked it right off of his foot.

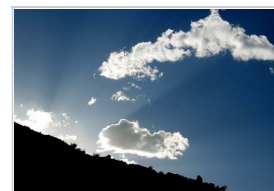
You can imagine the way he felt. He was pretty bummed. Obviously there was no going back. Retrieving the shoe would be impossible. Who knows where it could have been. So he did the only thing he could, he plugged on and finished the race the best he could with only one shoe.

I wonder if you have similar sentiments today. Sometimes our walk with the Lord can feel like we're trudging through a mud run. We've been trudging through this epistle for the last several weeks, and it's getting to you. There might be someone here who is getting bogged down a bit. Mark and I have been calling you to do some lofty things. And I'll let you know that it isn't going to get any easier. Last week Mark said that it is your duty before God to love the brethren. As a matter of fact, if you don't love your brothers in Christ, then you are showing that you are not a Christian. You may remember that a few weeks before I said that it is our duty to keep the commandments. I was putting before you a high and holy calling.

What's more, in the upcoming section you are going to be told that you must love not the world or the things of the world. We are going to talk about the lust of the flesh the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life.

Put all this together and you have one big mud run that you have to slog through. And in times like these where you may be feeling a bit overwhelmed, you need some encouragement. And that is what this section of the epistle is all about.

The section that we are dealing with today and perhaps next week is an interesting one. It seems like such an odd break in the text. As a matter of fact, some Bible scholars don't even think it should be



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How Shall We Escape If We Neglect So Great a Salvation?

here. But other Scholars, who actually believe the Bible, understand why John inserts it. John knows that you need encouragement. He knows that the Christian life can be like a mud run that bogs you down. It can be rough, and you can become discouraged—perhaps even to the point of wanting to give up.

So John writes to offer some encouragement to keep pressing on. The passage that we are looking at today is designed for that purpose. John leads off with it because it is the greatest encouragement that we can have for our walk with the Lord. It is the encouragement that comes from reflecting on the forgiveness of our sins.

And I want to spend a few moments reflecting on this verse and what it says about the forgiveness of our sins. I want you to renew yourself in the glory of this central tenet of our faith.

As Christians we have the unique privilege of enjoying the remission of sins. God has forgiven us! That should be a boost to anyone here today who is down. But if you understand the nature of this forgiveness, you'll be even more encouraged.

I. Its nature

The word here for forgiveness is *apheontai*. This word, *apheontai* is a very interesting word. It's a word that has had a lot of different things happen to it.

It's like the fellow that just started working with me at work. He used to be a professional chef. And as a chef he takes a piece of fish and he starts adding all sorts of things to it. Then, wala, he's got a delicacy that will knock your socks off.

Our word here is like that. The root word from which this word comes is "eimi", which means "go." But the word we have here is not eimi, it is a construct of eimi. Our word is an intensive form of eimi, hiemi. If you add that little h sound on the front you make the word stronger. So it's not just go (eimi). What we have here is hiemi, "GO, GO!" You understand why it came to mean "to send." You are sending them away, almost as if you are chasing them out the door. It is a lot like what you moms do to the kids here during the summer time. You get so fed up with them bouncing off the walls, you send them outside.

But we are not done yet. Our word is not eimi, and neither is it hiemi. It is aphemi. There is a prefix on it, "apo," which means away. So our word means to send away. Literally, it means "GO, GO, GO AWAY!"

Now isn't that a beautiful word? Isn't that a wonderful picture of what forgiveness of sin really looks like? God says to our sin, "apheontai." He says, "Sin, GO, GO, GO AWAY!" In the strongest he terms tells it to get right out of the house.

That's exactly what the book of Psalms means when it says that God casts our sin as far as the east is from the west. How far away is that? It is a distance that is infinite. So when it comes to your sin God says, "GO, GO, GO, GO, GO AWAY!" so that he cannot see it anymore.

That's not typically how we think of someone's offenses, is it? When we forgive someone, we don't typically send it away like that. When we send someone's sins away, it usually acts like a boomerang. We throw it out, but it comes right back to us and sticks right in the back of our heads. It is always in the back of our minds. We are still bitter about it and it is still making us sizzle.

But God's forgiveness doesn't boomerang. He sends it out and it never comes back to mind.

The nature of our forgiveness should encourage you as a Christian. But so should the totality of this forgiveness.

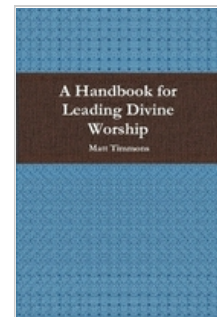
II. Its totality

You'll notice that this is an all encompassing forgiveness. He doesn't say that just a few of your sins are forgiven. Neither does he say that some of your sins are forgiven. He doesn't even say that most of your sins are forgiven. He says your sins are forgiven—as in all your sins!

As a matter of fact, the verb that we were just looking at. It is in the perfect tense, and it might be better translated, "your sins have been forgiven." If it is in the perfect tense it means that it is something that occurred in the past but continues to have effect up to this moment. So if I say, "he has been slapped" it means that this girl just put a welt on his cheek and it's still stinging. It happened in the



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past, but its effects are still being felt.

That's what is being said here. Once you came to Christ, at the very moment you first trusted him, all your sins were forgiven. Every offense you had ever committed up to that moment was wiped away. And every sin ever since has been treated in the same manner.

A story is told of a woman who came to a minister, carrying in her hands a mass of wet sand. "Do you see what this is?" she asked him. "Why, yes," he replied. "It is a pile of wet sand." "But do you know what it means?" "No, I cannot say that I do. What does it mean?" In great distress she answered, "It is the multitude of my sins, which cannot be numbered."

The minister spoke calmly to her, and asked where she had obtained the sand. She said, "down upon the beach." "Go back there," he said, "And take a spade with you. Heap up a big mound of sand; pile it as high as you can." The woman's heart sunk even further, understanding him to say, "your sins are more than you think!" But he continued, "Once you have done this, stand back upon the shore and watch what happens when the tide comes in."

Of course, when the waves begin to break upon the sand, the heap will be swept away. Even if you try to throw more sand upon it, it will be of no use. It will continue to be reduced to nothing.

That is the way the Lord treats your sins. The Lord forgives them in their totality and not one of them is left on the books.

You have experienced this flood of forgiveness. You have seen a tide wave come in and wash all your sins away. Not one of them is remaining. But why? How is it that you can have the forgiveness of sins? What is the basis for this forgiveness? Well, you find the answer to that question right here.

III. Its basis

He says your sins are forgiven "for his name's sake." The basis for the remission of sins is found in Jesus Christ alone. To say that it is "for his name's sake" means that it is on account of Christ. It is by virtue of his name and the merit associated with his name that you enjoy what you have.

Let's say that you are completely bankrupt. There is not a dollar to your name. But one day you start working John D. Rockefeller. Mr. Rockefeller needs some things from the store downtown. So he sends you on an errand to get those things. When you get to the checkout counter the lady rings up your order. When she's finished the amount that is due is \$100,000! How in the world will you pay for all that? You can offer to do some chores around the shop. You can say, "I'll be happy to sweep the floors and tidy things up for you a couple days a week." But that's never going to cover it. The only thing you can do is pull out the credit card that Mr. Rockefeller gave you. You see the name on that card makes all the difference. Only the merit associated with that name can clear the debt and make full payment for the amount due.

That's what John's talking about when he says that you are forgiven "for his name's sake." John is simply giving you a quick reminder that your forgiveness isn't due to anything you have done. It isn't because you were willing to have your sins forgiven. It isn't because you were able to make it up to the Lord. It isn't because of anything you did. It's all of it is because of the riches of atoning mercy that is associated with the name of Christ.

You men know that when you get in the dog house with your wife, you know you got to make it up to her, don't you? When she gets mad at you, you make a run to the flower shop. You know that an apology isn't going to be enough to cut it. You know you have to make a peace offering of some kind. So you try to muster up the old charm and you pick out a nice bouquet of flowers. And maybe you even take her out to a nice restaurant in order to appease her and get her to forgive you.

That might be what you have to do in order to get right with your wife. But that's not what happens when it comes to the forgiveness God gives. It isn't based in anything you do. It's only because Jesus Christ stands before the throne of God saying, "I have died for this poor wretched soul."

This was the experience of Charlotte Elliott. She wrote the hymn, "Just As I Am." You know why she wrote that song? For some time Ms. Elliot seemed to have everything going for her. She was a gifted artist and writer. However, in her early thirties she suffered a serious illness that left her weak and depressed. During her illness a minister came to visit her. He asked her if she had peace with God. She resented the question and said she didn't want to talk about it.

A few days later though, she went to apologize to that minister. She then confessed that she wanted to clean up a few things in her life before becoming a Christian. The pastor looked at her and answered, "Come just as you are." He was telling her to direct her attention to Christ. Remember that his satisfaction for her sins was enough. She couldn't do anything to improve it or make it up to Christ.

Well, that was enough for Charlotte Elliot. She yielded herself to the Lord that day. Later on in her life she remembered that event. And in commemoration she penned the words to the hymn, "Just as I am".

*Just as I am, without one plea,
But that Thy blood was shed for me,
And that Thou biddest me come to Thee,
O Lamb of God, I come! I come!*

Maybe you are here today and you've never known this. Maybe you've always thought that you needed to spruce up a bit in order to be a Christian. I hope you see that that's not true. I hope you see that the only thing you need to do is cling solely to Jesus.

IV. Its result

It is my conviction that when John says, "Little children" he is not simply referring to children or people who are young in the faith. I believe that he is speaking to every Christian person. There are a number of times in this epistle that he does this. He does it at the beginning of this chapter ([John 2:1](#)), and again in verse 18 ([John 2:18](#)).

There is some debate about this. Commentators like to opine on to whom he is directing his attention. I don't think it is of great significance. Even if he is directing these words to the babes in the faith, the words are heard by us all and apply just as much.

A long time ago the church I attended had what they called "children's sermons." It was a part of the service where the little kids came forward and gathered around the pastor. He would then talk to them and give them a little Bible lesson. He would put it in the simplest terms he could for the kids. But everyone else in the congregation was listening. And sometimes I thought that the children's message was more for the adults than for the children.

Perhaps that's what is going on here. Whatever the case may be, what is said is worth notice. We are called, "little children." I believe that John is trying to remind us of what we are in relation to the Lord. We've not only had our sins forgiven, but because our sins have been forgiven we have been adopted. We've become part of the family of God.

We have a lot of kids from the neighborhood over to our house. During the summer our house is usually where they congregate. But of all the kids that come there, there are only three that are mine. And there is something unique about that. I have a relationship with them that is different from the relationship I have with the other kids. It is more personal and entails many other things.

And that is the way it is with us. We have become children of God. We are under his Fatherly care. We are able to relate to him in a personal way. God has told our sins to "Go, go, go away." And as a result we have the unique privilege of belonging to the household of heaven.

Conclusion:

So as you contemplate the things that you are called to do. When you are having trouble loving your brothers or feel like you just want to give yourself over to the world, remember this. Remember how you have been forgiven. For that changes everything.

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