

Forgiveness

When it comes to contradictions in Scripture there seems to be many unanswerable conflicts. However, these seeming impossibilities all disappear when you apply the Biblical solution of “right division” based on II Timothy 2:15: **“Study to shew thyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth.”**

One area of doctrine that can demonstrate this idea is *forgiveness*. Consider the first passage from Matthew:

14 “For if ye forgive men their trespasses, your heavenly Father will also forgive you: 15 But if ye forgive not men their trespasses, neither will your Father forgive your trespasses.” (Matthew 6:14,15)

Under the kingdom program, before the cross, one requirement for forgiveness was that you must forgive others to be forgiven yourself. But, as we will see, after the cross forgiveness is always expressed in the past tense. The forgiveness provided by the cross was instantaneous at the death of Christ, but wasn't made known until the dispensational change that occurred after Israel rejected the offer of the kingdom in Acts 3:19-21 and the resultant stoning of Stephen in Acts 7. It was at that time, when the world was ripe for the undiluted wrath of God, that He reached down in matchless grace and saved the chief persecutor of Jesus Christ, Saul of Tarsus (also known as Paul), and offered salvation to Jews and Gentiles alike through their belief that Christ had died for their sins, was buried, and rose again the third day. As we know from Scripture and history the majority of Jews and Gentiles rejected this new Gospel of the Grace of God during this present dispensation of the grace of God.

Luke quoted Paul in Acts 20:24: **“But none of these things move me, neither count I my life dear unto myself, so that I might finish my course with joy, and the ministry, which I have received of the Lord Jesus, to testify the gospel of the grace of God.”**

2 “If ye have heard of the dispensation of the grace of God which is given me to you-ward: 3 How that by revelation he made known unto me the mystery; (as I wrote afore in few words, 4 Whereby, when ye read, ye may understand my knowledge in the mystery of Christ) 5 Which in other ages was not made known unto the sons of men, as it is now revealed unto his holy apostles and prophets by the Spirit; 6 That the Gentiles should be fellowheirs, and of the same body, and partakers of his promise in Christ by the gospel:” (Ephesians 3:2-6)

In fact it is still true today that the majority of believers and non-believers reject that the gospel and dispensation changed about one year after the death of Christ and this explains why we can observe over 400 denominational differences in our churches.

Let's look to Scripture for the treatment of forgiveness after the change:

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“And be ye kind one to another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, even as God for Christ’s sake hath forgiven you.” (Ephesians 4:32)

“Forbearing one another, and forgiving one another, if any man have a quarrel against any: even as Christ forgave you, so also *do ye*.” (Colossians 3:13)

You will notice that forgiveness is always in the past tense, during the current program, and this is verified by all available Greek texts. Now we are admonished to forgive others because we have been forgiven all. What is it for us to forgive comparatively small things of others when we were forgiven all trespasses through simply believing the gospel of the grace of God?

“and you, being dead in your sins and the uncircumcision of your flesh, hath he made alive together with him, having forgiven you all trespasses;” (Colossians 2:14)

In the following passages the requirement that you first forgive before you are forgiven was taken away by the cross:

“Be it known unto you therefore, men and brethren, that through this man is preached unto you the forgiveness of sins:” (Acts 13:38)

“To open their eyes, and to turn them from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan unto God, that they may receive forgiveness of sins, and inheritance among them which are sanctified by faith that is in me.” (Acts 26:18)

“In whom we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of his grace;” (Ephesians 1:7)

“In whom we have redemption through his blood, even the forgiveness of sins:” (Colossians 1:14)

Lest anyone should get the idea that under grace our ability to sin is unlimited and there are no consequences let’s consider the Judgment Seat of Christ. Many of our works including unforgiveness are sin. Once you believe the gospel that Christ died for your sins, was buried, and rose again the third day you are baptized (this should not be confused with the water ceremony under the Kingdom Program) by the Holy Spirit with a Spiritual baptism (identification) into the Body of Christ (among the other believers) and there you are sealed by the Holy Spirit until the Day of Redemption (Ephesians 4:30). This means that your salvation is secure in Christ, but your rewards can be affected by your conduct. The following verses will outline this process.

1 “Moreover, brethren, I declare to you the gospel which I preached to you, which also ye have received, and in which ye stand; 2 by which also ye are saved, if ye keep in memory what I preached to you, unless ye have believed in vain. 3 for I delivered to you first of all, that which I also received, that Christ died for our sins,

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according to the scriptures; 4 and that he was buried, and that he rose again the third day according to the scriptures:” (I Corinthians 15:1-4)

8 “For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God: 9 Not of works, lest any man should boast.” (Ephesians 2:8,9)

“In whom ye also *trusted*, after that ye heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation: in whom also after that ye believed, ye were sealed with that Holy Spirit of promise,” (Ephesians 1:13)

“For by one Spirit are we all baptized into one body, whether we *be* Jews or Gentiles, whether we *be* bond or free; and have been all made to drink into one Spirit.” (I Corinthians 12:13)

4 “*There is* one body, and one Spirit, even as ye are called in one hope of your calling; 5 One Lord, one faith, one baptism, 6 One God and Father of all, who *is* above all, and through all, and in you all.” (Ephesians 4:4-6)

“For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ; that every one may receive the things *done* in *his* body, according to that he hath done, whether *it be* good or bad.” (II Corinthians 5:10)

6 “I have planted, Apollos watered; but God gave the increase. 7 So then neither is he that planteth any thing, neither he that watereth; but God that giveth the increase. 8 Now he that planteth and he that watereth are one: and every man shall receive his own reward according to his own labour. 9 For we are labourers together with God: ye are God’s husbandry, ye are God’s building. 10 According to the grace of God which is given unto me, as a wise masterbuilder, I have laid the foundation, and another buildeth thereon. But let every man take heed how he buildeth thereupon. 11 For other foundation can no man lay than that is laid, which is Jesus Christ. 12 Now if any man build upon this foundation gold, silver, precious stones, wood, hay, stubble; 13 Every man’s work shall be made manifest: for the day shall declare it, because it shall be revealed by fire; and the fire shall try every man’s work of what sort it is. 14 If any man’s work abide which he hath built thereupon, he shall receive a reward. 15 If any man’s work shall be burned, he shall suffer loss: but he himself shall be saved; yet so as by fire.” (I Corinthians 3:6-15) (works burned but still saved)

So, under grace we don’t lose our salvation if we don’t forgive but we will lose rewards which means that we have an incentive to forgive and avoid all other sins as well. Simply put, our conduct as Christians will have eternal consequences concerning rewards and loss of rewards. This one recovered truth alone has the potential to remove many barriers to an understanding of how a correct application of Scripture could and would eliminate much of the bitterness among people of faith that could and would spread to the entire world.

Frederick E. Lewis – www.biblicaladvancedbasics.com – May 12, 2013 – Mother’s Day