

FORGIVENESS FOR GOD'S ERRING CHILDREN

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I. INTRODUCTION

1. By "God's erring children" we have reference to those who are in covenant relationship with God by virtue of having been born again by means of the "new birth;" to those who by faith have obeyed the gospel of Christ; to those who are children of God by faith in Christ Jesus, that having been baptized into Christ have put on Christ; but who have sinned in violation of the law of faith after becoming children of God; such as: Simon, the Sorcerer, Ac.8:12-24; Cf. Ac.5:1-11.
2. By "forgiveness" for the erring child of God, I have reference to that referred to in Ac.8:22; Jas.5:15; 1Jno.1:9, all referring to erring children of God.
 - a. This forgiveness signifies the remission of their sins, the deliverance of the sinner from the penalty of the sin or sins committed.
 - b. This forgiveness involves the complete removal of the guilty of the offence.
 - c. Such remission is based upon the vicarious and propitiatory (atoning) sacrifice of Jesus Christ. Cf. 1Jno.2:1,2.
3. Once again Rom.3:24-26 reminds us that only through "Christ Jesus: Whom God hath set forth to be a propitiation through faith in his blood, to declare his righteousness for the remission of sins," could God "be just, and the justifier of him which believeth in Jesus."
4. But in this study we are asking what specific steps the erring child of God must take to receive forgiveness for whatever sin, whether it be one or more, he has committed after having obeyed the gospel and become a child of God by faith in Christ Jesus.

II. DISCUSSION

A. THAT HE MUST REPENT IN ORDER TO BE FORGIVEN IS SPECIFICALLY STATED.

1. The case of Simon the sorcerer is a case in point, Ac.8:20-22. Cf. Lk.13:3,5; 15:7,10; 2Tim.2:25.
2. God's erring children have always been required to repent, turn from their sins, and turn back to God, 1Kgs.8:44-50; 1Chr.7:14; Mt.3:1-8.

3. But what is repentance and what is involved in repentance which is required in order to be forgiven.
 - a. Repentance is a change of mind, Mt.21:28,29.
 - (1) To change one's mind or purpose, always, in the N.T., involving a change for the better, an amendment...of repentance from sin.
 - (2) In the N.T. the subject chiefly has reference to repentance from sin, and this change of mind involves both a turning from sin and a turning to God.
 - (3) The parable of the prodigal son is an outstanding illustration of this, Lk.15:11-21.
 - b. Moreover, repentance, according to 2Cor.7:9,10, is something produced by "godly sorrow."
 - (1) It is "godly sorrow" or "grief" (sorrow or grief after a godly sort, not worldly) which, in this case, is something that is experienced (have knowledge of, feel, be affected by) by the sinner because of his sins. Cf. Jno.16:6,20-22; Rom.9:1,2; 2Cor.2:1,7.
 - (2) It is sorrow or grief after a godly sort that works repentance in the sinners life in turning him from the sin of which he is guilty and turning him back to God.
 - c. Therefore, repentance that results in forgiveness, according to Mt.21:28,29 and 2Cor.7:9-11, is a change of the mind or the will of man with reference to his sinful practices, produced by godly sorrow, and resulting in a change or a reformation of life.

B. ALSO, CONFESSION OF ONE'S SINS TO GOD IN ORDER TO BE FORGIVEN AND CLEANSED AS AN ERRING CHILD OF GOD IS SPECIFICALLY STATED, 1Jno.1:9.

1. Remember what repentance means and what is involved in repenting of one's sins in order to be forgiven.
 - a. Repentance is not simply a "penitent attitude".
 - b. Repentance is not simply saying:
 - (1) "I have sinned"
 - (2) "I'm sorry"
 - (3) "I regret"
2. A second specific requirement for forgiveness is "confession"
 - a. That's confession of one's sins as an erring child of God.
 - b. It's "If we confess our sins"

- c. It is not: “If I have sinned”
 - d. Cf. Ac.8: It’s “Repent therefore of this thy wickedness...”
 - (1) Prefixing the demonstrative pronoun “this” to the common term “sin” is equivalent to stating the name of the specific sin, making it a singular term –thus demanding that he repent of and confess his specific sin, which is identified in the context.
 - e. Moreover, here in 1Jno.1:9 it is “confess our sins,” not confess that we are sinners. Cf. Jas.5:16.
3. Furthermore, confess here is the key word and is the word to be defined according to its scriptural use, which means:
- a. To declare, admit.
 - b. To confess by way of admitting oneself guilty of what one knows he is guilty of or is accused of; the result of inward conviction, 1Jno.1:9.
 - c. To declare openly by way of speaking out freely, such confession being the effect of deep conviction of facts, Mt.7:23; 10:32; Jno.9:22; 12:42; Rom.10:9,10; 1Tim.6:12; 1Jno.2:23; 4:2,15; 2Jno.7.

C. APPLICATION:--

In view of the definition and scriptural use of both repentance and confession in seeking forgiveness of sin:--

- 1. How can one think and act in harmony with scriptural concepts and say to God:
 - a. “If I have sinned, Dear Lord, forgive!?” That is, “If I have sinned in this manner or that manner, etc., etc., Dear Lord, forgive”!?
 - b. The key word is “If.” To do so is to say, “I don’t know if I have sinned. But in case I have, Dear Lord, forgive!”
 - c. That is totally out of harmony with the meaning and scriptural use of both repentance and confession of sin.
- 2. How can one think and act in harmony with scriptural concepts and say to God: “Forgive the secret sins I do not see”?
 - a. How do you know you have such sins to confess if they are secret in the sense that they are unknown to you?
 - b. How can you feel “godly sorrow” or sorrow of grief of a godly sort for something you know nothing about?
 - c. How can you know you have changed your mind toward such sin if you don’t even know you have committed such sin? How can

you know you have turned from, repented of, such sin if you don't even know you have committed it in the first place?

3. Where do we read of such praying for forgiveness? If I have sinned? Forgive me of secret sins I don't know I have committed? Book, chapter, and verse?
4. The next time you attempt to sing #35 in our red book or #106 in the blue book, think about this!

III. CONCLUSION

1. We can both preach and sing error.
2. It is not any more acceptable to sing error than it is to preach error!
3. We need to give serious thought to what we both preach and sing!
4. When we sin as God's children, we need forgiveness. To be forgiven, we must both repentance of our sins and confess them to God in order to be forgiven.
5. But in order to do that we must be repenting of sin or sins we know we have committed and confessing them because of godly sorrow producing that repentance and the desire to be forgiven!