

# Forgiveness, the Core of Living Faith

As a pre-teenager, I tried smoking cigarettes for the first time. I was aware that it was wrong; it was against temporal law and a good conscience. It was disobedience, the same sin that Adam and Eve fell into. It became a habit and I didn't have the strength to give it up, because all of my friends were doing it too. I was afraid that I would be caught. I felt uncomfortable and distressed, and I avoided my parents.

## **We Are All Sinners**

The days passed, and I felt that it was becoming more and more inevitable that it would come into the light, that my parents would find out. Finally, the fearful moment came. I was afraid of my parents' reaction, as I knew it would bring grief to them. I feared the consequences and a judgmental, strong reaction. My father's first words were: "We are all sinful and unsuccessful. No one has the strength to battle sin and temptations on their own; we all need the gospel."

There was no judgment, no need to fear. Sin was sin and grace was grace, and grace overpowered sin. Although I had heard the preaching of forgiveness many times, this was the first time I truly felt the actual power of the gospel, the immeasurable grace and mere love of God—mercy alone toward a fallen child. I felt I was believing unto true peace, true freedom, and true joy. It was literally the power to salvation to a believer.

## **Forgiveness Is God's Gift**

Forgiveness is from God, given as a gift and by grace alone. It is received unexpectedly, neither is it merited by any good deeds. God's children, owning the Holy Spirit, are called to preach this forgiveness. Jesus himself sent His disciples, saying: "Receive ye the Holy Ghost: Whosoever sins ye remit, they are remitted unto them; and whosoever sins ye retain, they are retained" (John 20:22,23).

Forgiveness is the office of the Holy Spirit, not the office of words. It is not enough to just preach using the words of God's children, for words in themselves do not save. The power of the Holy Spirit is needed, the gospel from heaven that frees us from sin. The gospel radiates the light of Christ. Forgiven sins have been drowned in the bottomless sea of grace, and as far as the east is from the west. In this we feel God's immeasurable grace toward His weak and failing children.

A child of God's heart is humble and the conscience tender. If we grow in understanding, above others, and become knowledgeable and wise, the grace instructions of God's kingdom may feel too simple to us. Love begins to dwindle and God's kingdom does not appear as the golden candlestick. "And because iniquity shall abound, the love of many shall wax cold" (Matt. 24.12). A staple of God's kingdom is the love that unites us, and if this love becomes cold, a healthy need arises to go to the warming grace fires. God's forgiveness unites us as one family with the bond of love, and the children of God enjoy each other's fellowship on the Mount of Zion.

## **The Gospel Frees, Gives Strength**

Jesus spoke to His disciples of forgiveness in the example of washing feet. He exhorted His disciples to wash each other's feet. In this we should endeavor, both at home and in God's kingdom. The gospel has always flowed freely on the slopes of the Mount of Zion. Since childhood, I remember how comforting it was to hear the

forgiveness of sins preached. God's children have hungered to personally hear that their sins are forgiven at the services of God's children. May this continue so we can freely raise our hand to ask for the cleansing gospel. The enemy wants us to give up this precious Word of comfort and make us feel ashamed to ask for forgiveness. In God's kingdom, we can freely come as we are to the comforting grace fountains, hungry and thirsty, allowing God to nourish us by lifting, carrying, and comforting. God's children can believe their sins forgiven unto peace, freedom and joy.

God's kingdom is a safe place to be. The core of our faith is in the forgiveness of sins, in the redemption work which our Savior in His love did for us in His sacrificial death. Through believing the gospel we can dwell in this kingdom to the end of our lives. The Victor of Golgotha does not require any special deeds or wisdom. It is sufficient to simply believe our sins forgiven in His name and blood. Forgiveness is simple. Childlike faith is not a complex way of thinking or a demanding train of thought.

### **The Greatest Power**

May God protect even the servants of the Word so that the teaching is always secure, simple and pure, keeping to Christ's doctrine. Only through His blood can we reach our destination. The power of the forgiveness of sins will carry us until the crown of glory is pressed on our head in heaven. "His Lord said unto him, well done, good and faithful servant; thou hast been faithful over a few things, I will make thee ruler over many things: enter thou into the joy of thy Lord" (Matt. 25:23).

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#### **Discussion Ideas:**

1. Relate of a personal experience when you have felt the power of the grace of forgiveness.
2. Why did God leave the gospel on earth with us in His kingdom?
3. Discuss the relationship between faith, forgiveness, and the grace gift of confession.
4. How does a defiled conscience or pride deem one's view of God's kingdom as a golden candlestick?
5. What does childlike faith mean?