

A Christadelphian's Faith - 38

Forgiveness

A key aspect of coming to God is forgiveness, having recognised that we need it. God is our Creator, so He understands us. In Psalm 103, God compares Himself to a good human father who of course wants all that is best for His children. We are assured that:

He does not deal with us according to our sins, nor repay us according to our iniquities. For as high as the heavens are above the earth, so great is His steadfast love toward those who fear Him; as far as the east is from the west, so far does He remove our transgressions from us. As a father shows compassion to his children, so the LORD shows compassion to those who fear Him. For He knows our frame; He remembers that we are dust (Psalm 103:10-14).

Asking to be Forgiven

A good father does not want to be hard on his children but when they do wrong (or neglect to do what is right) he does want them to realise their failure, to 'own up to it', and to try not to make the same mistake again. When they do that, he is ready to forgive. It is exactly like that between God and us.

If we say we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us. If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness (1 John 1:8-9).

This brings us back to the importance of prayer. Many of the Psalms in

the Bible were prayers of confession and pleas for forgiveness. These Psalms can teach us how to speak to God in a way that He will accept. See for example Psalms 32, 38, 39 and 51.

From experiences in our own families we can understand what an insult it is to God if we refuse to admit when we are wrong.



If we say we have not sinned, we make Him a liar, and His word is not in us (1 John 1:10).

We must understand that our sins will only be forgiven if we regret them and are willing to confess them to God. He helps us by giving the wonderful blessing of a living Saviour: Jesus himself experienced all the trials and difficulties that we go through. Although he overcame them all, he knows how difficult it can be, and he sympathises with our weaknesses. How wonderful it is, therefore, to know that Jesus is our High Priest in the presence of God. Paul says:

Christ Jesus... is at the right hand of God, who indeed is interceding for us (Romans 8:34).

There is one God, and there is one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus, who gave himself as a ransom for all (1 Timothy 2:5–6).

When it is Our Fault

We must confess our sins to God because it is His law that we have broken. Sometimes our sins also affect or even injure other people, and when that happens we have a duty to them as well as to God. We should show that we are really sorry by doing our very best to repair any damage that we have done. This may mean repaying something we owe, or apologizing and explaining why we did whatever it was that upset them. Jesus tells us this:

If you are offering your gift at the altar [which for us means when we pray or worship] and there remember that your brother has something against you, leave your gift there before the altar and go. First be reconciled to your brother, and then come and offer your gift (Matthew 5:23–24).

When Someone Else is at Fault

When the situation is the other way round and someone has sinned against us, Jesus also tells us what to do. He says we should go to them and explain what has upset us. The reason



is that otherwise they may not realize that they have done wrong:

If your brother sins against you, go and tell him his fault, between you and him alone. If he listens to you, you have gained your brother (Matthew 18:15).

The Way of Christ

It is important to read the whole of Matthew 18. Jesus describes an attitude and way of life that is very different from how we naturally think and behave.

It is Christ's way, the way that he showed us. It led him to the cross, and even then he managed to gasp a prayer for the men who were driving the nails through his hands and feet (Luke 23:34).

Think what happened three days later! He was raised back to life, no longer to be suffering or mortal but now with the God-given blessing of eternal life

The immortal Lord Jesus promises to return in power and glory to raise the faithful dead and save all who are watching for him. Shall we be among them?

Our Father in heaven, hallowed be Your name. Your kingdom come, Your will be done, on earth as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread, and forgive us our debts, as we also have forgiven our debtors. And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil (Matthew 6:9-13).

John Woodall

Bible Quotations from the English Standard Version

Concluded