

HAVE YOU RECEIVED GOD'S FORGIVENESS?

God's forgiveness is something every living person desperately needs and yet, countless millions step into eternity without giving it much thought.

Many feel they don't really need forgiveness from a God they choose to believe doesn't even exist, and yet others feel they are unworthy of deserving forgiveness, and therefore ignore the possibility altogether.

It does seem that a larger percentage today doubt God's existence than perhaps ever before. This cannot be due to the lack of facts pointing to an Intelligent Designer, for the facts about our universe shout that there must be one! The odds that the order in our universe just occurred by chance are incomprehensible. The odds that a group of animals could run across a keyboard numerous times and thereby reproduce our English dictionary are no greater!

The Bible describes those who are *willingly ignorant* and that term seems to define so many. The fact that man has become separated from God and needs to be reconciled should be and are obvious, except to those who choose to ignore this.

Yet, there are millions upon millions who seek to establish a relationship with God and they do this by becoming religious! Religion is defined as being a man-made attempt to draw close to God. All religions have this in common—to restore a relationship with God by performing religious activities that will hopefully please God and ultimately gain us an entrance into heaven. Yet, the Bible teaches clearly that salvation is not of works, lest any man should boast (Ephesians 2:8-9).

There are actually two kinds of forgiveness we need from God and both are extremely important. Those are Eternal Forgiveness (a forgiveness that provides an entrance into heaven at death) and Temporal Forgiveness (a forgiveness that allows us to walk in fellowship with God while we are yet here).

Let's examine these in detail:

ETERNAL FORGIVENESS

Though we might live to be a hundred or slightly older here on earth, eternity is forever and we will continue to exist somewhere after our soul and spirit leave our body. The Bible teaches us that we will be either in heaven (a place of bliss) or hell (a place of torment). To ignore this truth is to make the biggest mistake any person can ever make!

The Bible makes it clear that we have all sinned and are thereby undeserving of heaven. In fact, because no sin can enter heaven, no amount of good works or religious activities can pay the penalty of our sin. Without a Savior, we are doomed!

Jesus, God in human flesh, is that Savior! He is the only One who is righteous enough to make the payment for our sin and this is exactly what He did when He sacrificed Himself by dying on the cross to pay for the sins of the whole world. (Hebrews 2:9; 12:1-3; 1 John 2:1-2.)

The condition for receiving the gift of God, eternal life, is clearly spelled out in more than 160 passages. Eternal life is given to "[the one] who believes," which means "trusts" in Jesus and the payment He made on the cross for their sins.

The person who is trusting in his religion is not trusting in Jesus. It is so important that he realizes this before it is too late. So many sit weekly in comfortable pews, hoping that their

weekly attendance helps to qualify them for heaven. Nothing could be further from the truth!

Two of my favorite passages on this topic are:

*And He commanded us to preach to the people, and to testify that it is He who was ordained by God to be Judge of the living and the dead. To Him all the prophets witness that, through His name, **whoever believes in Him** will receive remission of sins.*" (Acts 10:42-43)

*Therefore let it be known to you, brethren, that through this Man is preached to you the **forgiveness of sins**; and by Him **everyone who believes** is justified from all things from which you could not be justified by the law of Moses.* (Acts 13:38-39)

The GOOD NEWS is that Jesus Christ paid for this sin in full when He sacrificially gave His life on the cross. **He died, was buried and then resurrected as God's proof that His payment was a satisfactory one.** He now offers the Free Gift of Eternal Life to all who BELIEVE in Him. Examine these Bible passages:

*Most assuredly, I say to you, he who hears My word and **believes in Him who sent Me** has everlasting life, and shall not come into judgment, but has passed from death into life.* (John 5:24)

*Most assuredly, I say to you, **he who believes in Me has everlasting life.*** (John 6:47)

*For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that **whoever believes in Him should not perish** but have everlasting life. For God did not send His Son into the world to condemn the world, but that the world through Him might be saved. **He who believes in Him is not condemned; but he who does not believe is condemned already, because he has not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God.*** (John 3:16-18)

Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and you will be saved, you and your household. (Acts 16:31)

These things I have written to you who believe in the name of the Son of God, that you may know that you have eternal life, and that you may continue to believe in the name of the Son of God. (1 John 5:13)

Did you notice the wording stating that the believer already possesses eternal life, is not condemned, but is already passed from death to life? He has been eternally forgiven!

TEMPORAL FORGIVENESS

The fact that believers who possess eternal life as a gift still sin cannot be denied. 1 John 1:8-9 makes this abundantly clear, (as does the rest of the New Testament, I might add). That passage says:

If we say that 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.

The context of the first chapter of 1 John makes it clear that this forgiveness is for walking in fellowship with God. (see verses 3-7)

*That which we have seen and heard we declare to you, that you also may have fellowship with us; and truly our fellowship is with the Father and with His Son Jesus Christ. And these things we write to you that your joy may be full. This is the message which we have heard from Him and declare to you, that God is light and in Him is no darkness at all. If we say that we **have fellowship with Him**, and walk in darkness, we lie and do not practice the truth. But **if we walk in the light as He is in the light**, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus Christ His Son cleanses us from all sin.*

Please note that verse 9 did not say that we needed to ask forgiveness but that God is just to forgive us when we confess our sin to Him.

Many confuse this forgiveness, and the following passages as having to do with “eternal forgiveness.” I sincerely doubt that any of us can even count our sins, let alone name them all individually. Notice these next passages dealing with temporal forgiveness as well.

“For if you forgive men their trespasses, your heavenly Father will also forgive you. But if you do not forgive men their trespasses, neither will your Father forgive your trespasses.

(Matthew 6:14-15) (See also Mark 11:25-26)

So speak and so do as those who will be judged by the law of liberty. For judgment is without mercy to the one who has shown no mercy. Mercy triumphs over judgment. (James 2:12-13)

These passages are clearly not referring to eternal forgiveness as believers are already forgiven and have received eternal life. They refer to our walk here on earth and serve notice to us that God wants us to be a forgiving people, thereby following His example.

Let all bitterness, wrath, anger, clamor, and evil speaking be put away from you, with all malice. And be kind to one another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, even as God in Christ forgave you. (Ephesians 4:31-32)

*(NOTE: All quoted scripture is from the New King James Version of the Bible, published by Thomas Nelson Publishers) (Scripture emphases mine.)

FOR MORE INFORMATION, CONTACT:
GENE GREESON
Suncoast Community Church
12855 110th Avenue North
Largo, FL 33774 Phone: 727-595-1739
Email: genegreeson@gmail.com

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Written by Gene Greeson
7-1-2017

IMPORTANT NOTE:

“Forgiveness from God is something we all desperately need and yet many ignore this until it is too late!”