GOD FORGIVES

Can a person really know that God forgives him or her? A person cannot know everything, but a person can **believe** everything that God has revealed in His book, the Bible. The Bible teaches that God Forgives! God, the great governor of His Word and the great Lord of the harvest of souls, sends out a believable message that says that God forgives. God extends His forgiveness of sin to all who will receive it in obedient faith. Will you believe and receive God's forgiveness?

Hello I'm Larry Murdock. I preach for the Gandy church of Christ. Good morning and welcome to this program.

Jesus' apostle Paul wrote, "For I am not ashamed of the gospel, for it is the power of God for salvation to everyone who believes, to the Jew first and also to the Greek. For therein is revealed the righteousness of God from faith to faith, even as it is written, 'The just shall live by faith.'" (Romans 1:16, 17 ESV)

God's righteousness is God's justice, and God is Just when He saves people! That's right! God is Just, and being Just it means that God is evenhanded; God is fair; God makes decisions that no one can show is wrong. The Judge of all earth will do what is right! (Genesis 18:25.) But it would be wrong of a "just" judge like God to allow sin to go unpunished! It would be "right" for the greatest Judge of all to find people guilty of sin and to punish them accordingly. It would be "right" for the Judge of the universe to condemn the whole world to hell. That would be a just punishment!

However, the Gospel (good news) is that God has made arrangements to *forgive* the human race of its sin and still be JUST. The basis of the judge's *forgiveness* is NOT the fact that God is God and is powerful enough to ignore His own Law and forgive if He wants to. That is *forgiveness* by fiat, by power, and by favoritism. God does NOT forgive by an arbitrary decision. God's power to forgive lies in the good news of Jesus Christ! That's right! But the good news is that God is *just* when He forgives sin (1 John 1:9). You see, the Gospel is rooted in God's justice, and this is called "the righteousness of God."

God has been forgiving people (forbearing them, putting up with) their sins since Adam and Eve. However, God justified His forgiveness by the blood of His sinless son Jesus "at the end of the age" (Hebrews 9:26). Because Jesus was sinless he did not go to the cross for his own sins. Jesus did not offer himself for <u>himself</u> **and** the people, the way the Old Testament priests had to do (cf. Hebrews 5:1-4). By Christ's crucifixion (which is called "the faith of Christ") God justified His forgiveness of human sin past, present, and future (Romans 3:21-26). How marvelous is the grace of our God that it could extend to the past, to the present, and to the future!

Some people think that forgiveness is a sign of weakness. In other words, a person may forgive because he is not big enough to demand justice! Well, God is big enough to demand justice! God does and will condemn the wicked, even though His desire is that no one perishes. (2 Peter 3:9.) But how can God, who is big enough to demand justice, how can he forgive when He knows the whole world lies in wickedness? (1 John 5:19)

The Bible says that "The wages of sin is death" (Romans 6:23). Therefore God would have been **just** in excusing Jesus from death because Jesus had no sin. Jesus did not earn death, physical or spiritual (1 Peter 2:22, 1 John 3:5). "Death" literally means "separation." Death entered the world by one couple's sin. Physical death is the separation of the human spirit from the human body. The penalty of physical death was passed to every human being. However, spiritual death is the separation of the human spirit from the "Father of spirits", God. Christ did not die for our physical death, but for our spiritual death. Yes, God would have been "just" to excuse Jesus from both physical and spiritual death.

But sinless Jesus volunteered to take mankind's death penalty upon Himself. That is, Jesus volunteered to be separated from His heavenly Father for the sin of the world. Jesus "died for our sins" (1 Corinthians 15:3), "gave himself for our sins" (Galatians 1:4), "is the propitiation for our sins" (1 John 2:2), and "laid down his life for us" (1 John 3:16). No man took Jesus' life from him (John 10:18). Jesus volunteered. In dying on the cross, Jesus "died for all" (2 Corinthians 5:14, 15). Therefore, because of the faithfulness of Christ in going to the cross, God is justified in *forgiving* sin in

all ages to come. In addition, by the voluntary action of His Son, God was also justified in granting the "remission of sins that are past through the forbearance of God." (Romans 3:25.) You see, sin was in the world a long time before Jesus died on the cross. But God forbear the sins of as many of those people as were believers and followers of God. When those faithful people died, God did not exact eternal punishment upon those people. God restrained himself from judgment. God forbear from punishing them. Who were those people? Many of them are listed in Hebrews 11 as people of obedient faith.   They were people who obeyed God by faith.

The "Father of spirits", out of His great love, has extended *forgiveness* to every human spirit who has ever lived or who will ever live. God did this because of the faithfulness of His Son in going to the cross.

Some people teach that God can forgive because Jesus' sinlessness is "imputed" to believers. That is, Jesus gives me His perfection. These people think they see that teaching in Romans 4:22-25 where the apostle Paul wrote about "imputed righteousness." However, sinners do not share in Jesus' perfection; sinners share in Jesus' punishment. Therefore it is **incorrect** to think that Jesus' perfection or sinlessness can somehow be infused into humans, and by that infusion humans are saved.   Actually, Jesus' sinlessness **qualified** Him to bear our death penalty; it enabled Jesus to be our perfect substitute! He who knew no sin died for our sin. (2 Corinthians 5:21.)

Since no mature human being is sinless, a mature human being can be saved from sin **only** by God's gracious *forgiveness*. And since no person can justify God for forgiving his sin, God justified Himself through the sacrifice of His only begotten Son. And what was God's motivation? His Great Love! (John 3:16) When a sinful human humbly and obediently **receives** God's justified forgiveness, that person is said to be *righteous*. God has accounted the saved person as *righteous*. Because of the cross, no one can say that the Judge of all the earth is unjust in forgiving sin.

Consider this: when a judge finds a defendant "not guilty", the accused person is said to be acquitted. The judge has found enough evidence to *justify* the defendant's acquittal; then the defendant is said to be *justified*,

exonerated. Justice has been served. A just judge can only acquit a person if the evidence suggests that the person is innocent.   Never could a just judge say to the guilty, "I forgive you, I acquit you because I love you." You can imagine the uproar in a courtroom over such a verdict!

But what if the judge should say to this guilty person, "Because of my love and mercy, I will pay your penalty and take upon myself your punishment"? The courtroom would then become as quiet as a tomb and then erupt in a standing ovation, standing in admiration of such love, such suffering, and such righteousness on the part of the Judge.

In that case, the judge has inserted justice and mercy into a hopeless situation. The judge is just in finding the defendant guilty (according to the law); but the merciful Judge Himself takes the penalty upon himself so that the guilty can go free. The guilty person can be acquitted; he can go free, accounted as if he were innocent, IF he will receive it. But many sinners reject the offer of forgiveness because they do not believe it! Some sinners may believe it but they do NOT want to turn from their sinful life. What must the sinner do to receive this forgiveness?

Forgiveness is granted when a sinner believes the Gospel, repents of his sins, boldly confesses his faith and is baptized into Jesus Christ the Savior. Peter put it this way to some people who became believers, "Repent and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of your sins." (Acts 2:38) Jesus put it this way, "He that believes and is baptized shall be saved." (Mark 16:16).   Jesus then adds the saved to the church (Acts 2:47).

How marvelous is God's plan for human forgiveness! It is true! God forgives! It is no wonder that Jesus commanded his disciples to, "Go ye therefore and preach the gospel to every creature, he that believes and is baptized shall be saved. He that believes not shall be condemned." Friend, do you believe the gospel; have you repented and been baptized? Will you believe? Will you repent? Will you be baptized into Jesus Christ so you can be saved? Will you receive God's forgiveness? Find a church of Christ near you; they can assist you in your reception of God's forgiveness.