

The Remission of Sins

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"Who can forgive sins but God alone?" It was a reasonable question so far; but Jesus, by healing the man sick of the palsy, gave proof of the power of the Son of Man on earth to forgive sins (Luke 5:18-26).

When Christ thus forgave sins he took away the evil from the flesh; but the priests of Christendom cannot do so, though they claim "power and commandment ... to pronounce ... Absolution" (see the Prayer Book). The Church of England ritual prescribes "a general confessions", but the Roman Catholic Church favors "the Confessional", an institution which has led to great abuses. It is now introduced into the Church of England by the Anglo-Catholics.

Let us see what the Bible tells us concerning God's provision for the remission of sins.

BAPTISM

Remission is through Christ, to whom God gave power to forgive sins. After his resurrection, Christ said to his disciples, "Thus it is written, and thus it behoved Christ to suffer, and to rise from the dead the third day: and that repentance and remission of sins should be preached in his name among all nations, beginning at Jerusalem. And ye are witnesses of these things" (Luke 24:46-48).

In the Acts of the Apostles we see the witnesses at work. Peter, having preached Christ on the day of Pentecost, concluded by saying, "Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins" (Acts 2:38). And some three thousand souls responded to the appeal. So again, in the temple when the lame man was healed, Peter said, "Repent, and be converted, that your sins may be blotted out, when the times of refreshing shall come from the presence of the Lord, and he shall send Jesus Christ" (Acts 3:19). Then will come the time of saving health to those whom Christ finally forgives.

"Remission of sins" is also spoken of in Acts 5:31 and 10:43. The latter passage concerns the household of Cornelius when God bore testimony to Peter's preaching by pouring out the Holy Spirit on the Gentiles who heard the Word, and who were thereupon "baptized in the name of the Lord".

Paul at Antioch preached Christ to the Jews, saying, "Through this man is preached unto you the forgiveness of sins" (Acts 13:38). Paul himself was admonished by Ananias, saying, "Arise, and be baptized, and wash away thy sins, calling upon the name of the Lord" (Acts

22:16); and he tells Agrippa that Christ commanded him to preach the forgiveness of sins in His name (26:18).

GOD FORGIVES

men for Christ's sake when they believe the Gospel and repent and are baptized (Rom. 4:7, 8; 6:1-4; 2 Cor. 5:19; Eph. 1:7; Col. 1:12-14; Heb. 9:14). Thus believers purify their souls in obeying the truth (1 Pet. 1:22). Thus they are "purged from their old sins" (2 Pet. 1:9), having been made the subjects of "the washing of water by the Word" (Eph. 5:26). Baptism is a burial in water, and a resurrection therefrom, as is evident from Rom. 6, and it is enjoined only upon believers of the Gospel who have repented.

CONFESS YOUR FAULTS

"But", it is said, "you don't object to confession, surely. Does it not say 'Confess your faults one to another'?" Yes, James says (ch. 5:16), "Confess your faults one to another, and pray one for another, that ye may be healed." But that is a very different thing from "the Confessional". Christ is the High Priest over God's house or church (Heb. 3:6; 1 Tim. 3:15; Heb. 4:14-16; 7:24-26). "If we walk in the light ... and confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness" (1 John 1:7, 9).

Baptism is God's appointment for the remission of the sins of Jews and Gentiles who come unto Him in Christ; and the Priesthood of Christ is for those in Christ who thus have "an Advocate with the Father" (1 John 2:1). "If any man see his brother sin a sin which is not unto death, he shall ask, and he shall give him life for them that sin not unto death. There is a sin unto death. I do not say that he shall pray for it. All unrighteousness is sin: and there is a sin not unto death" (1 John 5:16, 17). "Pray not thou for this people ... I will not hear thee" (Jer. 7:16, 11:14; 14:11).

From the passages quoted it is evident that there is a connection between healing of the body and remission of sins. It is also clear that sinners are forgiven when they believe the Gospel, repent and are baptized; that saints who sin not unto death are forgiven when they confess and forsake their sins and walk in the light; and that the final proof of it all is coming with the "times of refreshing" when Christ returns from Heaven.