

Glad Tidings

“And we bring you good tidings of the promise made unto the fathers...” (Acts 13:32)

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Forgiving Others

(Jerry Fite)

Jesus said, “Take heed to yourselves: if thy brother sin, rebuke him; and if he repent, forgive him” (Luke 17:3). In our relationship with one another as brethren, sin is not ignored, nor is it allowed to be a permanent fixation. If one sins against us, we are to rebuke that brother of the wrong done to us. When the brother acknowledges the wrong, and turns away from it in repentance, we are to forgive. We are not to hold that wrong against them any longer. In rebuke, hurtful sin is acknowledged; in forgiveness, destructive sin is disarmed.

How the personal sin is addressed is critical in reestablishing harmony. We should first address the sin privately with the one we think sinned against us. Jesus said, “And if thy brother sin against thee, go, show him his fault between thee and him alone; if he hear thee, thou hast gained thy brother” (Matthew 18:15). When God’s wisdom is followed, two people are made whole again through forgiveness. We move on.

But how should we react if the person who has wronged us does not feel they have sinned at all? Do we forgive? Paul helps us with this exhortative blueprint: “and be ye kind one to another, tenderhearted, forgiving each other, even as God also in Christ forgave you” (Ephesians 4:32). Seasons of refreshing from the presence of the Lord come to us when we “repent”, and God in turn “blots out our sins” (Acts 3:19). God does not forgive us apart from repentance; neither should we forgive others when repentance is absent.

The steps of restoring personal harmony are now sidetracked. Sin, rebuke, forgiveness and consequent harmony are not allowed to complete their cycle. We have now an adversary. How should we react? First, we should not “...render unto any one evil for evil; but always follow after that which is good, one toward another, and toward all” (I Thessalonians 4:15). We should pray for those who persecute us, instead of cursing them. We should seek God’s blessings for

them (Romans 12:14). This is the way of following after good toward another instead of evil. Christians overcome evil with good, instead of being overcome by it (Romans 12:20-21).

Did you know God is pleased with you when you react this way toward injustice done to you? Peter says, “For this is acceptable, for conscience toward God a man endureth griefs, suffering wrongfully” (I Peter 2:19). We always have an open invitation to take our need for understanding to God’s throne of grace. His grace is always available for our “time of need” (Hebrews 4:16).

Is this not enough consolation? This should help us fight the tendency to tell the world about the wrong, instead of first going privately to the one who has wronged us. Let us mature and be like Christ: “who when he was reviled, reviled not again when he suffered, threatened not; but committed himself to him that judgeth righteously” (I Peter 2:22).