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FORGIVING AND FORGETTING

EDWARD O. BRAGWELL, JR.

The Bible has much to say about how we are to forgive others. Peter once asked Jesus how often one should forgive another. Jesus said that one should forgive another as often as he asked – “to seventy times seven”. (Matt. 18:21,22) Here, Jesus was teaching complete forgiveness. We owe it to those who have wronged us to forgive them completely, not in any way holding a grudge or seeking vengeance upon them. In answer to Peter’s question, Jesus went on further to give a parable concerning forgiveness. The point which He made at the conclusion of this parable was that if we are unwilling to forgive another of a wrong that has been done to us, that God will not forgive us of the wrong we have done Him. So, Jesus taught here and on other occasions that if we expect God to forgive us we must be willing to forgive others. (Matt. 6:14,15; Mark 11:25,26) I am afraid that the reason that many fail to forgive others as they ought is because they have forgotten that God has forgiven them. (Eph. 4:32; Col. 3:13)

As we have seen, whether or not we are able to forgive others is very important to our spiritual lives. Our ability to stand before God, with our sins forgiven,

depends upon our ability to forgive others. Therefore, let us truly understand what is involved in forgiving others. Obviously, there is more involved than my just saying that I forgive one who has wronged me. Many will claim to forgive another, but their actions betray them. Forgiveness, first of all, must come from the heart. (Matt. 18:35) If I have truly forgiven from the heart, I will not hold the thing against the one that I have forgiven. I will forget the matter. It will be as if the thing that caused the problem between us had never happened. How many times do you see someone claim to forgive another and constantly talk about the wrong that was done him? Or through his actions and treatments of the one who had offended him, you can see that this person continues to hold a grudge against the one that he claims to have forgiven? That is not forgiveness. True forgiveness involves a forgetting of the matter.

One thing that seems to bother people is the fact that although they believe that they have forgiven another of some wrong, they have a hard time forgetting about the matter. Sometimes, we become troubled with ourselves be-

cause even after some time we still can remember the wrong that was done us. Does this mean that we haven't really forgiven as we should have? I think sometimes, we needlessly torture ourselves because of our inability to wipe a wrong done us from our memory. I do not believe that the forgetting involved in forgiving another necessarily involves an erasing of our memories. It would be nice if that could be done. Because of the way our human minds are made, we will always have some recollection of things that happen to us good or bad. What is involved when we forget is that we treat the matter as if it never happened. The matter may still be in our memories, but we act as if it isn't. As far as we are concerned, in our treatment of the person that we have forgiven, the thing forgiven never happened. Therefore, it is forgotten. I think this is illustrated in the way that God forgives us. When we are forgiven by God, it is said that our sins are "remembered no more". (Heb. 8:12) Does this mean that our sins and lawless deeds are no longer in the memory of God? I don't think so. I think it means that He no longer holds those things against us. It is as if we never committed those sins when we stand before God to be judged. To illustrate what I mean, look at I Corinthians 6:9-11. Here, God, speaking through the apostle Paul, reminds the Corinthian brethren of the sins of which they had been guilty. He listed several sinners and tells them, "such were some of you." Because God still had these sins in His memory, does that mean that He had not forgiven them. Certainly not! He goes on to say that they had been "washed", "sanctified", and "justified". They were now forgiven and these sins forgotten in that the sins were no longer held against them. So forgiveness does not necessitate an erasure of memory. What it does necessitate is that we treat the one that we have forgiven in every way possible as if the wrong done us had never occurred.

RECENT DEATHS

Since our last bulletin, Sister Myrtle Odom and Mr. Troy Armstong (husband of Sis. Gertie Armstrong) have passed away. We extend our sympathy to both these families.

THE LORD'S MONEY

Donnie V. Rader

We live in a land of prosperity and abundance. The people of God in our nation have been well blessed. Many of them give freely of what they have been prospered. It is nothing unusual to find a church that has built up a sizeable bank account. There is certainly nothing wrong with a church having a lot of money in the bank. However, a few questions would be in order when churches keep a large sum on hand.

THE MONEY IS TO BE SPENT AND USED

The very reason that money is given into the treasury in the first place is for it to be *used* to do the work of the Lord. When the members of the church at Jerusalem "sold their possessions and goods" and contributed into a common fund, they "*parted them* to all men, as every man had need" (Acts 2:44-45). Again in Acts 4 we see that they sold their lands and houses "and brought the prices of the things that were sold, and laid them down at the apostles' feet and *distribution* was made unto every man according as he had need" (vs. 32-35). I notice that they didn't give so that the Jerusalem church could have a lot of money on hand. These passages say that they *spent* it!

Luke tells us that when Agabus came to Antioch telling of the great dearth that would come upon all the world that "the disciples, every man according to his ability, determined to send relief unto the brethren which dwelt in Judea: *which also they did*, and sent it to the elders..." (Acts 11:27-30). The brethren gave as they could and planned to use the funds to relieve needy saints. Take note that they not only planned, but *did* it.

Paul instructed the church at Corinth to "lay by him in store" upon the first day of the week (I Cor. 16:1-2). But why? So that they could have plenty in the treasury in case of some emergency? No, it was to be spent in caring for saints in need in Jerusalem (vs. 1,3; II Cor. 8,9).

Schedule of Services

Sundays:

Bible Classes.9:45 a.m.

Worship.10:45 a.m.

Worship.6:00 p.m.

Wednesdays:

Bible Classes.7:30 p.m.

One very obvious use of the money is to spread the gospel. The church is the pillar and ground of the truth (1 Tim. 3:15). Each local congregation has a responsibility to *do all it can* in carrying the message to a lost and dying world. The Lord commands us to give so that the church can do its work. And may I say that a church that is doing its work *spends money*! It cost something to support preaching locally and elsewhere. There is never a time that some faithful men are not in need of support. Literature, tracts, a bulletin, announcements and other printed matter cost. Radio time is expensive. Equipment such as typewriters, recorders, PA systems, printing presses and copying machines are costly. However, money has been put into the treasury in order to buy the goods and services needed to preach the gospel.

So often brethren back off of anything that cost money. Complaints like "it cost too much" or "it's not worth it" are heard when wome of the money is spent.

Certainly good judgment should be used and money should never be wasted. Let no one think that I'm suggesting that we spend money for the sake of spending it. We are stewards of the Lord's money. But, lets suppose that some program or effort costs \$10,000 and just converts one person - it's worth it! Shall we try to put a value on the soul?

THE MONEY ACCUMULATES

We wouldn't have to look long to find a few churches that keep \$20,000 or \$30,000 or more on hand. While that many seem small compared to some personal accounts of those who have done well, that is a large amount for a church to have just setting in the bank.

What a shame and disgrace it is for dollars to accumulate while buildings and other facillities need repair, paint peels,

doors and windows are cracked, equipment needs fixing or replacing, Christians remain in need, preachers need support and the gospel goes unpreached!

We wouldn't dare let our own houses look the way some church buildings do. We expect the Lord's work to get by with the things that are inferior, the least and cheapest. Friends, the Lord's work deserves a little more respect than that. Why is it that when we are buying something for ourselves we think we have to have the best money can buy, but when we buy something for the work of the Lord we think we have to do it the cheapest way?

Handling the Lord's money is different than our own or that of some business. We must commend one who keeps a large sum of money in his personal or business account. And there, the less he spent the better he would be. But, that is not true when dealing with the Lord's money. To let it accumulate and not be used is nothing to commend.

I wonder what we are saving it for? When brethren decide against certain efforts or cut others out in order to save some money, I wonder why we are saving it? If it is to spend it in a more profitable area, well and good. But too many times it is just to save it. I'm sure that someone is thinking "we don't need spend it all. We need a little on hand in case the furnace goes out or we have some emergency." While that is true, it is often times uttered just as an excuse for not properly using the Lord's money. What need does the Lord have for some congregation to keep a large sum in the bank? What good is that money doing for the cause of the Lord?

I just do not believe that the Lord commanded us to give into a treasury just to store it up in a bank.

PLANNING DOESN'T GET THE JOB DONE

While planning is necessary to do a job properly, planning alone doesn't accomplish much. It's easy to set money aside and plan on certain things, but it is a little harder to spend what has been planned. Saying "We have money in the budget" is not all that it takes. "Money in the budget" is still unspent and unused

money. And as long as it stays in the budget, it as well have not been put "in the budget". Nothing has been accomplished but shifting some figures around on a piece of paper.

Don't misunderstand. Budgets are needed. Planning must be done. Yet, we must do what we have planned. Paul reminded the Corinthians that they had planned to send money to the poor saints at Jerusalem. He wrote, "and herein I give my advice: for this is expedient for you, who have begun before, not only to do, but also to be forward a year ago" (II Cor. 8:10). Not only had they planned, but were willing a year ago. Then Paul firmly says, "Now therefore perform the doing of it; that as there was a readiness to will, so there may be a performance also out of that which ye have" (Emphasis mine, DVR, v.11). It wasn't enough to plan. So, Paul said do what you have planned to do.

Oh, we're good at planning. But, doing is a different matter. Planning doesn't cost anything, doing does. Planning doesn't take a lot of time, doing does. Yes, let's plan, but let's also do! Mere planning doesn't get the job done. Putting money in the budget does not preach the gospel, replace equipment, keep the building and property up or relieve those in need.

Brethren, let's take heed. This is a serious matter. May we use wisdom and sound judgment in spending the Lord's money to further his cause. May God be glorified in all.

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STYLISH SAINTS

Once a man attended a fair and saw another man leading a fine, well-groomed horse. He inquired, "Is that a saddle horse?" The other replied, "No sir. This horse will buck off a saddle. Nothing can stay on his back."

"Is he a driving horse, then?" the man asked. "No, he was hitched up once and made kindling wood of the vehicle he should have pulled."

"Well, what is he good for? Why is he here?" the man asked. The answer was, "Style, man, style. Just look at the picture he makes."

Once I was in a church building and saw people clad in fine clothes coming into the morning service. I asked the preacher, "Are those people workers in the church?" "No," he answered sadly. "Do they visit the sick and minister to the poor? Do they attend other services of the church?" "Never," said the preacher.

"There's that horse," I said to myself. "Nothing but style."

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