

NEWS

Relda Marshall had the laproscopic procedure done Thursday and no cancer in other areas of her body. She is a candidate for surgery which is scheduled for April 5. They planned to come home this past Friday—**Buford Guthrie** is scheduled for surgery tomorrow about 8:30 at the local hospital—**Danna Welch** was still in ICU at last word and improving—**Melita Rivers** was sick Wednesday and not in our service—**Shirley Bell** was in much pain with her knee last Sunday and Wednesday and was not in our services—**Zach** (continued on page 3)

ELDERS:
Bob Arnold 572-1219
Leon Goff 572-6809
Kendall Johnson 572-9306

DEACONS:
Ron Burns 577-9978
Ricky Davis 572-9428
Ken Ferguson 572-4135
Pat Marshall 572-9347

SERVICES:
Sunday
Bible Study 9:45 AM
Worship 10:30 AM
Worship 6:00 PM

Wednesday
Ladies Class 10:00 AM
Bible Study 7:00 PM

PREACHERS:
Ronald Stringer 717-8603
Leon Goff 572-6809

**ASSIGNMENTS FOR:
March 18, 2012**

**Serving The Lord's Supper
Sunday Morning**

Scripture: Luke Arnold
Ken Ferguson **Ken Johnson**
Robby Gipson **Richard Tapparo**

Sunday Evening
Ken Ferguson **Ken Johnson**

PRAYERS
Sun. AM—Zach Willeford (Opening)
 —**Charles Davis (Closing)**
PM—Buford Guthrie (Opening)
 —**Ricky Davis (Closing)**

ANNOUNCEMENTS
A.M.—Bob Arnold
P.M.—Leon Goff

(call Pat Marshall if unable to serve)

Think It Over—If you were to die today...Where would you spend eternity? To all who love God, and to those who do not, but should, to all who are weary and heavy laden; to all who are lonely and sad; to all who sin and need a Savior, and to whosoever will come a hearty welcome is extended.

Southside
Church of Christ
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Southside Church of Christ

Bulletin

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I Choose God's Forgiveness

By L.A. Stauffer

THE GRACE OF GOD THAT OFFERS and provides forgiveness to sinful man is far too grand for finite man to grasp and appreciate fully. Divine love, the source of that grace, is itself so profound and infinite that man the creature, though made in God's image, staggers in disbelief before the grandeur of a gift that frees him from the guilt and consequences of sin.

Sin is not as simple as "Oops, I made a mistake" and forgiveness from God does not come with the ease of "Oh, that's all right, I got you covered." Yes, through the new covenant, God is merciful to forgive and remember man's transgressions no more. That was His promise that is now real in Christ Jesus (Jer. 31:34; Heb. 8:12; Eph. 1:7). Forgiveness is "remission"—the sending of man's sins away (Matt. 26:28); it is grace—the gift of pardon in Christ Jesus (Eph. 4:32); it is canceling a debt accrued by transgression of God's sacred law (Matt. 18:21-35). Though the offer and promise are the free gift of God provided through Jesus and His blood for every man (Rom. 5:15; Heb. 2:9), it is not without cost.

The Cost

Think, first, of its cost to God. The seed of woman, God's only begotten Son, could not escape injury in defeating the one whose goal is to destroy every man by the power of sin (1 Cor. 15:55; 1 Pet. 5:8). To crush the power of Satan, the seed had to bruise His own heel in the offer of Himself in a brutal humiliating death on a cross (Gen. 3:14-15; 1 Pet. 2:24). In bearing the penalty for man's sin, the Son frees the just and righteous God to forgive all transgressions of His sacred law. And to think: this love and grace extends to all men, including the very ones who pierced the Savior's side and drove the nails into His hands and feet.

The beauty of God's grace is that He provides this freely—at no cost to man. None of us could earn this precious gift and promise. It flows freely from the God of all grace and goodness and kindness. But, as some would say, there is a catch. Sinful man must choose to accept this offer. Paul wrote of righteousness in the Romans epistle, where he so graphically depicts grace and forgiveness that comes by the “obedience of faith”—a choice man must make (Rom. 1:5; 16:26).

Neither this epistle nor any other biblical writing offers forgiveness by “grace alone,” “faith alone,” or “baptism alone.” Grace is free, but, as Dietrich Bonhoeffer said, it is not cheap. God's gift of His Son is free. Man did nothing to earn it. But it costs man everything he has to receive it (Matt. 13:44-45). Jesus stated it plainly: “So therefore whosoever he be among you that renounces not all that he has, he cannot be my disciple” (Luke 14:33). He also said: “If any man would come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross daily, and follow me” (Luke 9:23). Note the choices. Man must “will,” must “deny,” must “take up,” must “follow.”

The Demands

The demands of discipleship highlight the chief reason so few choose forgiveness. Choosing forgiveness means choosing God. Righteousness, the acquittal of sinners by God's forgiveness, is revealed in the gospel and promised to every one who believes, including male

and female, bond and free, Jew and Gentile. But the “obedience of faith,” of which Paul writes, includes the rejection and repudiation of sin. The obedience of faith through baptism puts one into Christ and into His death, where His atoning blood cleanses (Gal. 3:26-27; Rom. 6:3-4; Eph. 1:7). But baptism into Christ provides “remission of sins,” as Peter proclaims, only when it is preceded by repentance (Acts 2:38; Luke 24:47).

Jesus himself said, “except you repent, ye shall all in like manner perish” (Luke 13:3). He also said in Luke's account of the Great Commission that “repentance and remission of sins should be preached in his name unto all nations, beginning at Jerusalem” (Luke 24:47). This began at Pentecost when Peter said to the Jewish crowd: “Repent ye, and be baptized everyone of you in the name of Jesus Christ unto the remission of sins (Acts 2:38).

Continuing in sin is not an option for those who choose God's forgiveness. Fornicators, adulterers, and homosexuals may no longer practice sexual immorality; liars must speak the truth; drunkards have to turn from mind altering drugs; thieves may steal no longer but labor to supply their needs; extortioners must deal with men honestly; revilers may speak evil of no man, etc., (1 Cor. 6:9-10; Eph. 4:25-30). These things—and more—characterized the Corinthians, but they were washed and cleansed and justified. “Such were some of you,” Paul said of them before forgiveness. But now, he says that

you have been bought with a price and have been washed and sanctified and justified, you must cease the practice of sin and “glorify God therefore in your body” (1 Cor. 6:19-20).

Forgiveness or Vengeance

The love and grace of God in its offer of forgiveness, however, does not supplant His vengeance and wrath. “Our God is a consuming fire” and it is a “fearful thing to fall” into His hands (Heb. 12:29; 10:31). In both the first and second covenants, God has said: “Vengeance belongs to me, I will recompense” (Deut. 32:36; Heb. 10:30; Rom. 12:19). The recompense—wages of sin—is more than physical death. The apostle of love writes of the “second death” and describes it as “the lake that burns with fire and brimstone” (Rom. 6:23; Rev. 21:8).

This is a biblical truth that every sinner needs to hear, but one that many in our enlightened age are too polite to proclaim. “Fear” is a noble motive for choosing God's forgiveness and many sinners have been moved by it. The apostle Paul, “knowing therefore the fear of the Lord,” went to the ends of the earth speaking of God's vengeance to “persuade men” (2 Cor. 5:11); Acts 24:24-25). He also warned them that all men must appear before the judgment seat of God and Christ to give an account of their lives and to receive the deeds done in the body (Rom 14:12; 2 Cor. 5:10).

It is Jesus Himself who introduced the word “hell” to describe the eternal

dwelling place of sinners—those who refuse God's forgiveness. He describes hell as “the unquenchable fire”—the place “where the worm dies not” (Mark 9:43-48). And John who wrote of the “lake that burns with fire and brimstone” says that sinners “shall be tormented day and night forever and ever (Rev. 21:8; 19:10).

Apart from God's gracious offer in Christ Jesus, man cannot find forgiveness—not by moral goodness in keeping God's command (Eph. 2:9), by devotion to one's family and to God in prayer (Acts 10:1-2), or by worshipping God in reverence and awe (Acts 8:27-28; 16:13-15).

It comes only to those who choose God's forgiveness by “obedience of faith,” by humble repentance and baptism into Christ Jesus and His death, by walking in the light and in daily fellowship with God (Gal. 3:26-27; Rom. 6:3-4; 2 Pet. 3:9; 1 John 1:5-10. It's available to all.

Every man has this choice.

—*Biblical Insights*, Jan. 2011

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NEWS (continued from back page)

Willeford is scheduled for surgery on his arm March 22 at the local hospital—**R.J. Stevens** has been moved from ICU to a Room 207 in Presbyterian Hospital in Dallas. He is improving and will be taking therapy, but so far he has been left mute by the stroke—Continue to remember **Pat and Deborah Brown** and **Tammy Willeford**—Remember our **Shut-ins: Clayton Bellamy, Loyd Clark, Irma May, Lelda Thompson** and **Joan Tosh**.