

AUTHORITY TO FORGIVE SINS

There are certain great basic principles relating to God's dealings with humanity which should be recognized. Jehovah's Government is based, not upon mercy, but upon Justice; as we read, "Justice is the foundation of Thy Throne." In one sense of the word Divine Justice never forgives and never can do so, as we will explain. We read, "All His work is perfect." It is the Divine method that every creature of God shall be so perfect as to need no forgiveness, no allowance. The angels were created perfect, hence there was no need to provide forgiveness for them, because there would be no excuse for their sinning. Likewise man was thus created perfect, in the image and likeness of the Creator, and was without excuse, and therefore needed no provision for mercy so long as he was in relation with his God.

When temptation came, man fell from obedience into sin, and from Divine favour and life into disfavour and under the death sentence. He was without excuse and Justice made no provision. But another feature of the Divine character, Love, while not in control, was brought into exercise for man's relief. But Divine Love or Mercy could not override or interfere with Divine Justice. In other words, God could not forgive a sinner whom He had sentenced to death. What He could do, and did do, was to provide in due time for man's redemption. All of Divine Mercy, therefore, flows through the channel of Redemption.

Applying this principle to our Saviour and to His teachings, we ask, How could He forgive sins when Divine Justice could not forgive sins, nor set aside the penalty of sin? The answer is, Jesus was the representative of Divine Mercy, and was at that time amongst men for the purpose of giving His life as a sacrifice on man's account, and therefore to Him belonged the distinctive honour of forgiving sins. But someone answers that Jesus had not yet died for man's sins, that He had not yet risen for man's justification, that He had not even appeared in the presence of God for the "household of faith."

We answer that while it is true that he had not accomplished this work, and indeed has not yet fully accomplished His work (as the Redeemer and Restorer of men), nevertheless, He had begun the work, He had presented Himself as man's Atonement price at Jordan, at the time of His baptism. According to the Scriptures and the type, He at that moment surrendered His earthly *all* on man's behalf.

However, His surrender of His all did not give Him the authority to forgive sins. It was the heavenly Father's acceptance of His consecration—Divine acceptance of Jesus' sacrifice that counted. God's acceptance of Jesus' sacrifice was manifested in His impartation of the Holy Spirit, which lighted upon Jesus like a dove, as was testified by John the Baptist, and also testified by Divine power which thereafter operated in and through Jesus for the healing of diseases. We see, then, that our Lord's words to the palsied man, "Thy sins be forgiven thee," were justified by the fact that He was in the position of making satisfaction for the sins of the whole world, and that the Father had already indicated the acceptance of the sacrifice which was then in process.



Curacion del Paralitico Murillo, by Bartolomé Esteban Murillo, 1670.

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