

## Forgiven?...or Free?

Why did Christ die on the cross? Was it to “take our punishment?” If so, who was wanting to “punish us?” Perhaps it was to “take the penalty for our sin?” If so, why did He “rise again” on the third day? Does that mean that the penalty for sin is crucifixion and three days in the grave? Did Christ die to “pay our sin debt?” If so, who demanded a debt to be paid? Centuries ago some theorized that Jesus was offered as a payment demanded by Satan for our freedom. Almost everyone today understands the absurdity of that theory, but is it not even more absurd to say God would not “save us” until His “only begotten Son” suffered to pay our debt? Each of these theories I have mentioned contains one common ingredient. Christ “took our punishment,” “suffered the penalty,” or “paid our sin debt,” whichever we may choose to believe, in order that God could “forgive us” for sinning, while leaving us in sin to continue in sin, and perhaps “learn how to sin less” as we “mature in Christ.” That, in retrospect, is the most ridiculous theory of them all. The reality of the gospel of Christ is far different from any of these theories which have been developed during the twenty centuries since Christ died for us. The “truth,” however, is very simply laid out in the scriptures for anyone who will dare to believe what God has said in His word. I ask you to take a short imaginary trip with me into the truly absurd.

A life guard is sitting at his post at the beach. He hears the cries of one who is drowning, “Save me! Save me!” Now this life guard is trained for the purpose of rescuing those who are drowning, but instead of rescuing, he simply picks up his megaphone and shouts to the victim, “I forgive you.” As the one drowning is going down for the last time, and gives one last gasp for help, the life guard says again, “I forgive you for drowning! You must believe that I have forgiven you,” as the drowning man sinks beneath the waves to rise no more.

You are traveling through a national park, when in the distance you see a family being attacked by a wild lion. They are crying to the game warden who is standing nearby, with everything that is needed to put the lion down. He responds to their cries for help with the same response as the lifeguard, “I forgive you! Just know that you are forgiven,” as he watches the parents and children torn and

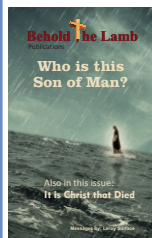
ravaged by the lion. A little further down the trail, you come upon a scene that further horrifies your sensibilities. A child has fallen over a ledge hundreds of feet above the canyon below. He is clinging to the ledge by his fingertips, and slipping while screaming for someone to save him. Again, for the third time in one day, you hear the same answer given to the desperate child who cannot save himself. “Just believe you are forgiven, and when you die, you will ‘go to heaven’.” If there is no “savior” for these in my analogies, they will all die within minutes. Forgiveness is not what they need; they must have “rescue” and “deliverance,” which is what Christian salvation truly is.

The word “saved” as used in the scripture means “to deliver or protect.” A “savior” that offers forgiveness, but leaves the people in bondage to sin is no savior at all. Did not the angel say “He shall save his people from their sins?” Matthew 1:21 Our God has always been “merciful, gracious, and longsuffering” Exodus 34:6. He has always forgiven those who turn away from sin to serve Him Isaiah 55:7. He revealed Himself to Moses as “...merciful and gracious, longsuffering, and abundant in goodness and truth, Keeping mercy for thousands, forgiving iniquity and transgression and sin, and that will by no means clear the guilty” Exodus 34:6-7. If God has always forgiven the sins of those who turn to him, Jesus' death had to be about something more than just forgiveness. According to the message God sent to Daniel by the angel Gabriel, Christ's mission was “...to finish the transgression, and to make an end of sins, and to make reconciliation for iniquity, and to bring in everlasting righteousness...” Daniel 9:24-25.

A translation error of one word used in the scripture has blinded many generations to the simplicity of Christ. Paul wrote “In whom we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins...” Ephesians 1:7 Colossians 1:14. The

English word “forgiveness” was translated from the Greek word “aphesis,” which is defined by Strong's Greek dictionary as “freedom.” The word “aphesis” was translated as “forgiveness,” “remission,” “deliverance,” and “liberty,” but in every place it is used it means “freedom.” Words have meaning, and if we will believe the words spoken by our Lord and His apostles, we will know that Christ came into the world and died on the cross to make us free from sin. Believe the truth of why Christ suffered and died on the cross, and He will take sin out of your heart and nature, and you will serve Him in “righteousness, peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost” Romans 14:17.

### FREE BOOK OFFER!



#### Who is this Son of Man?

Jesus almost always referred to Himself as “the Son of man.” Was He “just a man” when He died on the cross for us, or was He much more? The Jews first asked the question, “Who is this Son of Man?” In this month’s free book offer, we show by the scriptures exactly who “the Son of man” is, and prove by the scriptures that He was much more than a man when He died for us. As the apostle Paul said, “It is Christ that died....”

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