

7-27-1952

Churches of Christ Salute You with a Herald of Truth

James Willeford

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Forgiveness Of Sins

James D. Williford

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James D. Williford July 27, 1952

Gibbon, the great historian who wrote, "The Rise and Fall of the Roman Empire," gave five reasons for the fall of the Roman nation, and those five reasons may be summed up in one word, Sin. Centuries before its fall, a colony of people settled at the mouth of the Tiber river, and their industry and faith enabled them to build one of the mightiest empires that ever graced the earth. But as time passed these people drifted into the most horrible sins ever committed by a people, and after this their downfall was but a matter of time.

And what is true of a nation is true of an individual. The Bible says the way of the transgressor is hard. In Isaiah 57:20 the Lord says "the wicked are like the troubled sea, when it cannot rest, whose waters cast up mire and dirt." In the book of Job we are told that "Terrors shall make the wicked afraid on every side, and shall drive him to his feet. His strength shall be hungerbitten, and destruction shall be ready at his side." There can never be peace or quiet in the soul of the wicked but the Lord says, "he that hath clean hands shall be stronger and stronger."

Sins have separated us from God. In Isa. 59:1,2 the Bible says, "Behold, the Lord's hand is not shortened, that it cannot save; neither his ear heavy, that it cannot hear; but, your iniquities have separated between you and your God, and your sins have hid his face from you, that he will not hear." The Lord wants to be near us all, but in sinning we erect a barrier and separate ourselves from Him. God will not dwell with sin any more than we will dwell with a dangerous criminal. We put such characters behind prison walls for safe keeping and for the protection of others and Christ says in Matthew 25 that God made hell for the devil, and his angels. The Lord separates the wicked from the righteous and some charge Him with being unjust and unkind. We do the same thing in this life, and yet feel we are acting honorably toward all.

God is righteous, and He cannot tolerate sin in His presence. For that reason, our sins separate us from Him. But the Lord loves us, and He provided a way whereby the barrier that separates us from Him can be broken down. In Eph. 1:7, Paul says we have redemption through the blood of Christ, even the forgiveness of sins. We are redeemed through the blood of Christ. The word "redeem" means "to buy back." After we have sold ourselves into sinful slavery and spiritual poverty, the Lord bought us back, or redeemed us. The price He paid was His own blood. The price indicates the evil of sin and the preciousness of redemption.

When we realize what a penalty God exacts for sin, we come to see its enormity. The penalty for sin is eternal punishment. And since this is the penalty, the great question is, "How can we escape it?" As sins are acts committed in the past, they cannot be undone. A man may as well attempt to snatch the sun out of the sky, as to undo a single act, good or bad, that he has ever done. Men commit crimes against human law, and escape the punishment by outrunning the sheriff, by bribing the jury or by breaking jail--there is no similar way of escaping the penalties assessed against our sins by the Lord. The Lord earnestly desires to cancel these penalties. The Bible says He is longsuffering to us-ward; not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance. Though the spring of life has come and summer has gone, His hand is stretched out still. We do not have to persuade God to save us, for He stands at the door of our heart and knocks for an opportunity to help us. He will cancel the penalty for sin, but not in the way that some people think.

Some speak flippantly of our being educated out of sin. This is not possible; but even if we were educated out of the practice of sin, the sins of our past would still be written against us. The stain is still upon our soul. The guilt is still with us. If a man who has been a thief for ten years has good influence brought to bear upon him, and he quits stealing, will the grand jury spare him because he has quit stealing? Will he not be punished for the thefts of which he is guilty? The same principle is true of sin. Even if we should quit stealing, the sins of the past will be punished unless the penalty is cancelled by the Lord. I want to tell you of the Lord's way by which sins can be cancelled later in this lesson.

Some men of our day minimize sin and refer to it as they would a mere scratch upon the hand. When a terrible wrong has been committed, they refer to it as a mistake. All of this is an effort to whitewash sin and to remove its ugliness. But the Lord is unsparing in his description of it, and He says those who commit it shall never enter the kingdom of heaven. The Lord says that those who commit it shall dwell in outer darkness where there is weeping and gnashing of teeth. Another figure used is that of a lake of fire which is the second death.

And some men even deny the existence of sin! But the Lord says that all have sinned and come short of the glory of God. We are too short-sighted to properly assess the dreadfulness of sin. We cannot fully see the consequences, but God can. God knows man and He knows the effect of sin upon us. He knows what it does to our soul, and He knows the punishment it deserves. Who will say that the greatest minds among men may pass judgment upon what the Lord says shall be done with the sinner? Since all men are sinners,

YOU MAY HEAR THE HERALD OF TRUTH OVER THESE STATIONS

Alabama, Anniston	WHMA	1450	1:00 p.m.
Auburn	WAUD	1230	1:00 p.m.
Birmingham	WSGN	610	10:30 p.m.
Florence	WJOI	1340	9:30 a.m.
Gadsden	WGAD	1350	1:00 p.m.
Huntsville	WHBS	1490	1:00 p.m.
Marion	WJAM	1310	9:30 a.m.
Mobile	WABB	1480	6:30 a.m.
Montgomery	WAPX	1600	1:00 p.m.
Selma	WGWC	1340	1:30 p.m.
Tuscaloosa	WJRD	1150	9:00 p.m.
Arizona, Phoenix	KOY	550	7:00 a.m.
Tucson	KCNA	1340	3:00 p.m.
Arkansas, Eldorado	KSDM	1290	1:00 p.m.
Ft. Smith	KFSA	950	1:00 p.m.
Hot Springs	KTHS	1090	1:00 p.m.
Little Rock	KGHI	1250	1:00 p.m.
Springdale	KBRS	1340	6:00 p.m.
Calif., Bakersfield	KPMC	1560	10:00 a.m.
Blythe	KYOR	1450	3:30 p.m.
Brawley	KROP	1300	3:30 p.m.
Eureka	KIEM	1480	7:15 a.m.
Fresno	KARM	1430	3:30 p.m.
Indio	KREO	1400	3:30 p.m.
Los Angeles	KECA	790	3:30 p.m.
San Francisco	KGO	810	3:30 p.m.
San Luis Obispo	KATY	1340	3:30 p.m.
Colorado, Craig	KRAI	1230	5:30 p.m.
Denver	KVOD	630	5:00 p.m.
Conn., Bridgeport	WNAB	1450	2:00 p.m.
Hartford	WTHT	1230	2:30 p.m.
Delaware, Wilmington	WILM	1450	2:00 p.m.
Florida, Gainesville	WGGG	1230	1:00 p.m.
Jacksonville	WPDQ	600	8:30 a.m.
Miami	WQAM	560	1:00 p.m.
Pensacola	WEAR	1230	11:30 p.m.
Tallahassee	WTNT	1450	5:00 p.m.
Tampa, St. Pete	WSUN	620	1:00 p.m.
Georgia, Atlanta	WGST	920	1:00 p.m.
Augusta	WGAC	580	2:00 p.m.
Brunswick	WGIG	1440	1:00 p.m.
Columbus	WGBA	1460	7:30 a.m.
Macon	WNEX	1400	1:00 p.m.
Rome	WLAQ	670	1:00 p.m.
Savannah	WDAR	1400	1:00 p.m.
Valdosta	WGAF	910	1:00 p.m.
Idaho, Boise	KGEM	1140	3:00 p.m.
Pocatello	KELO	1440	9:30 a.m.
Illinois, Chicago	WENR-WLS	890	2:30 p.m.
Quincy	WGEM	1440	8:00 a.m.
Indiana, Anderson	WHBU	1240	1:30 p.m.
Bloomington	WTTS	1370	1:00 p.m.
Evansville	WJPS	1330	1:30 p.m.
Ft. Wayne	WGL	1250	1:00 p.m.
Iowa, Cedar Rapids	WMT	600	7:30 a.m.
Des Moines	KSO	1460	1:00 p.m.
Sioux City	KSCJ	1360	10:30 p.m.
Waterloo	KXEL	1540	5:30 p.m.
Kansas, Coffeyville	KGGF	690	2:00 p.m.
Topeka	WREN	1250	1:00 p.m.
Wichita	KWBB	1410	3:30 p.m.
Ken., Bowling Green	WKCT	930	1:00 p.m.
Harlan	WHLN	1230	3:00 p.m.
Louisville	WKLO	1080	1:00 p.m.
Mayfield	WKTM	1050	check sta.
Newport	WNOP	740	2:00 p.m.
Louisiana, Baton Rouge	WLCS	910	1:00 p.m.
Monroe	KMLB	1440	2:00 p.m.

New Orleans	WDSU	1280	1:00 p.m.
Shreveport	KRMD	1340	1:00 p.m.
Maine, Bangor	WABI	910	1:00 p.m.
Portland	WPOR	1450	9:00 a.m.
Maryland, Baltimore	WFBR	1300	3:00 p.m.
Cumberland	WDYK	1230	8:00 a.m.
Mass., Gardner	WHOB	1490	1:00 p.m.
Lawrence	WLAW	680	1:00 p.m.
Springfield	WSPR	1270	5:00 p.m.
Worcester	WAAB	1440	3:00 p.m.
Michigan, Battle Creek	WELL	1400	1:00 p.m.
Bay City	WBCM	1440	1:00 p.m.
Detroit	WXYZ	1270	1:00 p.m.
Flint	WFOF	910	10:00 p.m.
Lansing	WILS	1320	1:00 p.m.
Ludington	WCLA	1450	1:00 p.m.
Muskegon	WKBZ	850	2:00 p.m.
Minn., Minn.-St. Paul	WTCN	1280	7:30 a.m.
Miss., Aberdeen	WNPA	1240	3:00 p.m.
Centerville	WGLC	1580	8:00 a.m.
Columbus	WCBI	1340	6:00 p.m.
Jackson	WSLI	930	2:00 p.m.
Laurel	WLAW	1490	1:00 p.m.
Missouri, Kansas City	KCMO	810	12:30 p.m.
Rolla	KTRR	1490	8:45 a.m.
St. Louis	KXOK	630	9:15 p.m.
Springfield	KWTO	560	1:00 p.m.
Montana, Butte	KOPR	580	9:15 a.m.
Great Falls	KMON	560	7:30 a.m.
Nebraska, Lincoln	KFOR	1240	10:30 a.m.
Omaha	KOIL	1290	5:30 p.m.
Sidney	KSID	1540	12 noon
N. Hamp., Claremont	WTSV	1230	1:00 p.m.
Lebanon	WTSI	1400	1:00 p.m.
Manchester	WMUR	610	5:00 p.m.
N. Mexico, Albuquerque	KOAT	1450	3:00 p.m.
Carlsbad	KPMB	740	check sta.
Clovis	KCLV	1240	1:00 p.m.
Los Alamos	KRSN	1490	3:00 p.m.
Santa Fe	KTRC	1400	3:00 p.m.
New York, Albany	WXKX	850	2:00 p.m.
New York	WJZ	770	12:30 p.m.
Olean	WHDL	1450	1:00 p.m.
Rochester	WARC	950	3:00 p.m.
Saranac Lake	WEAV	960	2:00 p.m.
Syracuse	WAGE	620	12:00 n.
N. Carolina, Asheville	WLDS	1380	1:00 p.m.
Charlotte	WAYS	610	1:00 p.m.
Durham	WTIK	1310	2:00 p.m.
Fayetteville(Sat.)	WFLB	1490	1:00 p.m.
Salisbury	WSAT	1280	1:00 p.m.
Wilmington	WGNI	1340	8:30 a.m.
Winston-Salem	WAIR	1340	1:00 p.m.
N. Dakota, Fargo	KFGO	790	1:00 p.m.
Ohio, Cleveland	WJWC	850	1:00 p.m.
Columbus	WHKC	610	1:00 p.m.
Lima	WIMA	1150	9:00 a.m.
Youngstown	WBBW	1240	8:30 a.m.
Oklahoma, Ada	KADA	1230	1:00 p.m.
Enid	KCRC	1390	1:00 p.m.
McAlester	KTMC	1400	1:00 p.m.
Muskogee	KBIX	1490	2:00 p.m.
Oklahoma City	KTOK	1000	9:30 a.m.
Tulsa	KFMG	740	2:00 p.m.
Oregon, Eugene	KASH	590	1:00 p.m.
Klamath Falls	KMLW	1450	4:30 p.m.
Medford	KMED	1440	7:30 a.m.

All times are Sunday unless otherwise indicated.

Portland	KEX	1190	3:30 p.m.
Penn., Johnstown	WCRO	1230	7:00 p.m.
Philadelphia	WFIL	560	2:00 p.m.
Pittsburg	WCAE	1250	3:00 p.m.
Wilkes-Barre	WILK	980	5:00 p.m.
R. Island, Providence	WPJB	1420	1:00 p.m.
S. Carolina, Florence	WJMX	970	10:30 a.m.
S. Dakota, Aberdeen	KSDN	930	10:30 a.m.
Tenn., Chattanooga	WDEF	1870	1:00 p.m.
Jackson	WTJS	1390	1:00 p.m.
Johnson City	WJHL	910	11:30 p.m.
Knoxville	WBIR	1240	1:30 p.m.
Memphis	WMPN	680	9:30 p.m.
Morristown	WCRK	1450	check sta.
Nashville	WSIX	980	4:00 p.m.
Texas, Abilene	KRBC	1470	1:00 p.m.
Amarillo	KFDA	1440	1:00 p.m.
Austin	KNOW	1490	2:00 p.m.
Beaumont	KFDM	560	1:00 p.m.
Big Spring	KBST	1490	1:00 p.m.
Brownfield	KTFY	1050	4:30 p.m.
Brownsville	KVAL	1490	1:00 p.m.
Corpus Christi	KEYS	1440	9:00 a.m.
El Paso	KEPO	690	3:00 p.m.
Ft. Worth	WBAP	570	1:00 p.m.
Graham	KSWA	1330	4:30 p.m.
Houston	KXYZ	1320	8:00 a.m.
Longview	KFRO	1370	1:00 p.m.
Lubbock	KFYO	1340	4:00 p.m.
Midland	KCRS	550	1:30 p.m.
Paris	KPLT	1490	9:00 p.m.
San Angelo	KGKL	960	1:00 p.m.
San Antonio	KMAC	630	9:00 p.m.
Texarkana	KCMC	1230	1:00 p.m.
Wichita Falls	KFDX	990	2:00 p.m.
Utah, Provo	KCSU	1490	3:00 p.m.
Salt Lake City	KUTA	570	7:30 a.m.
Vermont, Brattleboro	WTSA	1450	1:00 p.m.
Burlington	WJOY	1230	1:00 p.m.
Montpelier-Barre	WSKI	1240	1:00 p.m.
Virginia, Charlottesville	WINA	1280	9:15 a.m.
Fredericksburg	WFVA	1230	check sta.
Norfolk	WGH	1310	5:00 p.m.
Richmond	WRNL	910	1:30 p.m.
Washington, Aberdeen	KBKW	1450	9:00 p.m.
Pasco	KPKW	1340	3:30 p.m.
Seattle	KJR	950	3:30 p.m.
Spokane	KGA	1510	3:30 p.m.
Washington, D. C.	WMAL	630	1:00 p.m.
W. Virginia, Beckley	WVNR	620	1:30 p.m.
Huntington	WHTN	800	check sta.
Parkersburg, Sat.	WCOM	1230	5:30 p.m.
Wheeling	WKWK	1400	1:00 p.m.
Wisconsin, Green Bay	WDBU	1400	5:30 p.m.
LaCrosse	WKTY	580	4:00 p.m.
Madison	WIBA	1320	8:00 a.m.
Milwaukee	WCAN	1250	2:00 p.m.
Neenah	WNAM	1280	8:00 a.m.
Wyoming, Casper	KSPR	1470	9:15 p.m.
Cheyenne	KFBC	710	12:00 p.m.
Cody	KODI	1400	12:00 p.m.
Rawlins	KRAL	1240	12:00 p.m.
Riverton	KWRL	1450	12:00 p.m.
Torrington	KGOS	1490	12:00 p.m.
Worland	KWOR	1490	12:00 p.m.
Canada, Trail, B.C.	CJAT	610	9:30 a.m.
Toronto, Ont.	CKEY	580	9:15 a.m.

they do not approve of the punishment which God has decreed for sin. "No rogue e'er felt the halter draw, With good opinion of the law." But denying sin does not prove its non-existence and denying it does not free us from the penalty God will exact for it.

There is a way by which we may be released from the penalty of our sins, and that is through the forgiveness of God. If our sins are forgiven, they will not be punished. If they are unforgiven, there is no escape from the punishment. The Lord promises to redeem us, to remit our sins, and to forgive us freely. To redeem is to buy back; to remit is to throw our sins away; and to forgive is to hold no resentment toward us. All this the Lord is anxious to do. But He will not save us unconditionally. To forgive without man having anything to do is but to encourage sin. A sinner would say, "I'll sin as I please because God will forgive me without any effort on my part, and so I have nothing to lose." Some abuse the word "redeem" because it means to "buy back," and they think Christ paid it all and we are relieved of any obligation. But when we remember that the penalty for sin is everlasting punishment, we know Christ did not pay it all. Did Christ suffer everlasting punishment for us?

Another element in the punishment of sin is remorse of conscience. Did Christ suffer torture within His conscience? If Christ paid it all, what becomes of the mercy of God of which we read so much in the Bible? If you owed a man a debt and a friend of yours paid it, could it be said the creditor showed mercy to you? Certainly not, because the debt was paid in full. Now--if man owed God a debt because of his sin and Christ paid it, where did God show any mercy whatsoever? Christ did not suffer the penalty due to our sins, but through His blood He provided a way of redemption and forgiveness. In Romans 3:25,26 Paul says Christ died that the Father might be just in justifying the sinner. God found no way to be just toward sin, and at the same time to save the sinner except through the death of His own Son. In other words, God could not be just and merciful except through the sacrifice of Christ.

What effect did God's plan of forgiveness have upon men? It inspired the sweetest song the angels ever sang. John heard that song in Rev. 5 and said, "I heard a voice of many angels round about the throne and the living creatures and the elders; and the number of them was ten thousand times ten thousand, and thousands of thousands, saying with a great voice, 'Worthy is the Lamb that hath been slain to receive the power, and riches, and wisdom, and might, and glory, and blessing.'" This is the view the angels took of God's plan of redemption. And when one looks at men they have accepted with profoundest faith that their redemption is through the blood of Christ, he sees the men who are the

farthest removed from sin of all that dwell upon the earth. God's plan does not encourage sin, neither does it dishearten men. It is the greatest power to turn sinners away from sin, and bring them to righteousness. So when men speak flippantly of the necessity of Christ's death, they are criticizing something that is practical and that really works.

The Bible says all spiritual blessings are in Christ, Eph. 1:3. This includes forgiveness. The Lord says we are new creatures in Christ. To the man who believes the Bible, the only question that remains is how to get into Him. And that question is answered clearly in Gal. 3:27. There the Bible says we are baptized into Christ. In Rom. 6:4 Paul reminded the Roman Christians that they had come into Christ by baptism. This was the baptism Christ commanded the apostles to teach and practice in every nation till the end of the world, Matt. 28:18-20. In Eph. 4, Paul said there was one baptism, and since this was the one performed by the apostles, we know it was water baptism, for they could perform no other. Preceding scriptural baptism, we must believe in Christ and repent of our sins. These are all conditions of pardon, and God will not pardon us without them. If we are saved by the blood of Christ apart from anything that we must do, all men are saved, for He died for all. But the Bible says clearly that all will not be saved. It then follows that we must obey the gospel to be saved.

The Lord's invitation is extended to men of all races and colors. We might well imagine the surprise of the Apostle Peter when Christ commanded that the gospel be preached to every creature under heaven. Perhaps Peter asked, "To the men who crucified you?", to which Jesus may have replied, "Yes, Peter - to everybody. Proclaim salvation even to the men who crucified me. Peter, I'd like to find that man who put the crown of thorns on my head. Tell him he may have a crown of glory from me, and there shall not be a thorn in it. Look up that Roman soldier who thrust that spear into my side, to my very heart, and tell him there's a nearer way to my heart than that. My heart is full of love for his soul. Proclaim salvation to him. Go to the whole world and say, 'The spirit and the bride say Come. And let him that is athirst come. And whosoever will, let him take the waters of life freely.'"

Today as you hear the voice of the Lord, accept and obey His will, and be assured

"There is a fountain filled with blood,
Drawn from Immanuel's veins;
And sinners plunged beneath that flood
Lose all their guilty stains."

