

SIN-FORGIVENESS AND HEALING

– MARCH 17. – MARK 2:1-12. –

*Text: – "Bless the Lord, O my soul, and forget not all His benefits:
who forgiveth all thine iniquities; who healeth all thy diseases."*

– Psalm 103:2,3.

It was while He was thus preaching that some deeply earnest ones brought to Him a palsied man for healing. Unable to come into the house or its court because of the throng, they removed some of the tiling stones of the roof, and lowered the sick man into the presence of the preaching Savior. Such implicit faith, manifested by such heroic effort, could not fail to be appreciated by the Redeemer.

But the unexpected happened. Instead of healing the man of his disease, Jesus exclaimed, "Thy sins are forgiven thee." Under God's arrangement with the Jews, under their special Law Covenant, original sin was typically atoned for by the typical sacrifices, and the people were held to account for their own transgressions of the Law. Hence, amongst the Jews, serious sickness implied serious sins. Thus Jesus on another occasion said to one of those whom He healed, "Thy sins, which are many, are forgiven thee. Go and sin no more lest a worse thing come upon thee."

We are not to forget that such special dealings were with the Jews only – that they never applied to Gentiles nor to Christians, although it is quite true that certain ailments, such as syphilis, appear very generally to follow the transgressors of Nature's laws, whether they be Jews or Gentiles. The point we make is that God has no such Covenant with the Church, nor with the world in general today. Hence, the righteous are often sick, and the sinners healthy.

"WHO CAN FORGIVE SINS?"

When Jesus declared the sins of the palsied Jew forgiven, some of the audience declared that such language was blasphemy – that Jesus was arrogating to Himself a power which belonged to God alone. They did not stop to consider that if He were indeed the Messiah, the Redeemer, it would imply that He would possess the authority to cancel the sins from which He was redeeming men. Perceiving their thoughts, and knowing that thus they might stumble over a great truth to their injury, Jesus in a few words clarified the matter, saying to them, Which do you consider the easier, to tell a man that his sins are forgiven, or to heal him? He well knew that they would say that the healing was the more difficult, and, therefore, if Jesus were able to heal the man, there would be no reason why He should say, "Thy sins be forgiven thee," if He had not the power to forgive sins. In proof of this, He said to the palsied man whose sins he had forgiven, "Arise, take up thy bed, and go unto thine house." Immediately the man was healed, and departed carrying his bedding. The people made way for him, and with amazement glorified God, saying, Who ever saw the like!

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 [R4981 : page 71] sin, and from Divine favor and life into disfavor 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 Savior 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 honor 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.

"BLESS THE LORD, O MY SOUL"

The text for this study comes from the Psalms, and is most interesting. The Prophet David may have appropriated the words to himself as a Jew, and may have thought of his own physical healing and blessing as evidences of the Lord's favor under the Law Covenant. But the prophetic application of this Psalm to spiritual Israel is still more interesting. The spiritual Israelites are New Creatures, and have this treasure in earthen vessels.

With these it is the New Creature that recognizes his healing, his forgiveness, his reconciliation to God; and, according to God's promise, all things are working together for good to him, because he loves God and has been called according to the Divine purpose. Continually the New Creature has cause to exclaim, "Bless the Lord, O my soul, and forget not all His benefits, who forgiveth all thine iniquities, who healeth all thy diseases!" St. Paul, carrying out this same thought, declared that the great Redeemer will ultimately present His Church before the Father faultless and perfect in love – "sown in weakness, raised in power; sown in dishonor, raised in glory; sown an animal body, raised a spirit body." We shall be like Him and see Him as He is and share His glory.

