

“Father Forgive Them”

Luke 23:34- “Then Jesus said, “Father, forgive them, for they do not know what they are doing.” And as they divided His garments, they cast lots.”

I often think on these words, especially when I watch an old movie like “Ben-Hur”, “The Robe” or “Demetrius and the Gladiators.” There’s a scene in all three where one of the stars witnesses Jesus Christ’s crucifixion and Him hanging on the cross. As they look up into His face, they display pain, disbelief, and sorrow. The camera angle changes to looking down from behind the cross toward the actors (you don’t see Jesus in any of the movies), Christ looks down from the cross and utters the words, “Father forgive them, for they know not what they do.”

To me it is a gut punch every time I hear those words spoken. I can only imagine staring into the Eyes of the One Who spoke all things into existence and is now hanging there, bloodied, beaten, spat upon, humiliated, and dying in my place and still have enough love and compassion to ask the Father to forgive US. To forgive not just the sins of those who crucified and tortured Him but for the sins of all those who had lived, were living and for all the sins of us in the future as well. At that time, the Pharisees as well as the executioners did not know they were murdering the Messiah. As they did not know Jesus or God, they were clueless.

John 8:19- “Then they said to Him, “Where is Your Father?” Jesus answered,

“You know neither Me nor My Father. If you had known Me, you would also have known My Father.”

Their own puffed-up pride and religion had them blinded. We can fall into the same trap today. **Luke 21:33-36**- “Heaven and earth shall pass away, but My words shall never pass away. Watch yourselves, lest your hearts be preoccupied with high living and drinking and the cares of this life, and that day come upon you suddenly. For as a snare it shall come upon all those who dwell on the face of the earth. Watch therefore, and pray at all times that you may be accounted worthy to escape all these things that shall come to pass, and to stand before the Son of man.”

Would we have looked upon Him on the Cross in the same manner as portrayed by the actors in the movies? With the same compassion, pain, disbelief, and sorrow they felt for Him? Or would we have turned away ashamed of ourselves and not allow His eyes to penetrate into our hearts? Well, we will see those Eyes someday and what a day that will be!

After Satan was bounced out of Heaven and Adam and Eve evicted from the Garden of Eden, rebellion against God and His Commandments was nothing new. **Genesis 6:5-7**- “And the LORD saw that the wickedness of man *was* great on the earth, and every imagination of the thoughts of his heart *was* only evil continually.

And the LORD repented that He had made man on the earth, and He *was* grieved in His heart. And the LORD said, “I will destroy man whom I have created from the face of the earth, both man and beast, and the crawling thing, and the fowl of the air; for I repent that I have made them.”

Is it in our nature to be so rebellious or is mankind just plain stupid? With the current mindset in our nation, I am believing mankind is just plain stupid. If you need proof, just watch the evening news, or scroll through the menu of TV programs offered these days. Defiance, disobedience, lies, and ungodly conduct are the modern-day norms. Isaiah 5:20 has come to fruition. Sinning appears to be a virtue. It seems it is nothing new to mankind. Why?

Jeremiah 17:9- “The heart *is* deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked; who can know it?”

From the sin of Adam and Eve in the Garden of Eden forward, have we chosen *not to know* what we are doing? Granted we can make blind mistakes occasionally but when temptation comes, is there a gun pointed at our heads to sin? God continues to give us free will, but... it falls upon **us** to make the right choice. He loves us that much.

Romans 8:7- “Because the carnal mind *is* enmity against God, for it is not subject to the law of God; neither indeed can it *be*.” Is it truly our hearts or are we so focused on ourselves we choose to ignore God and His Ways? How blind could

anyone be who witnessed the plagues on Egypt? The parting of the Red Sea? Manna from Heaven? All these things and they still needed a Golden Calf to satisfy their flesh. Doubt and rebellion filled their hearts. God dealt with the entire nation as a whole.

Joshua 5:6- “For the children of Israel walked forty years in the wilderness until all the people, the men of war who came out of Egypt, were destroyed because they *did not obey* the voice of the LORD. To them the LORD swore that He would not show them the land which the LORD swore to their fathers that He would give us, a land that flows with milk and honey.”

In His infinite grace and mercy, through the sacrifice of our Savior Jesus Christ, God continues to forgive us of our sins we willfully persist in committing. Sadly, the greatest sinners are not entirely the lost but those who claim to be “Christians.” Judgment will fall harder on those who profess to follow Jesus Christ and fail to keep God’s Word, not just to the letter but in the spirit as well.

2 Peter 2:20-21- “For if, after escaping the moral defilements of the world through the knowledge of the Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, they again become entangled in them, and are overcome, the final end is worse than the beginning. For it would have been better for them not to have known the way of righteousness than, after knowing it, to turn back from the holy commandment *that was* delivered to them.”

And Judgment will begin in God's House.

1 Peter 4:17- "For the time *has come for* judgment to begin with the household of God; and if it first *begins* with us, what *will be* the end of those who do not obey the gospel of God?"

We *dilute* His Word, watering it down to fit church doctrine. We *pollute* His Sabbaths and Holy Days with our own man-made traditions and "holidays." We even *convolute* His Way by blending and twisting His diluted truth and polluted Sabbaths into a combination of religions to satisfy anyone seeking a god.

"Chrislam" and "Bapticostals" come readily to mind. Anything goes to fill the offering baskets.

Isaiah 29:13- "And the LORD said, "Because this people draws near *Me* with their mouth, and with their lips honor Me, but their worship of Me is made up of the traditions of men learned by rote, and their fear toward Me is *taught* by the commandments of men;"

Matthew confirmed this scripture. "Hypocrites! Isaiah has prophesied well concerning you, saying, 'These people have drawn near to Me with their mouths, and with their lips they honor Me; but their hearts are far away from Me. For they worship Me in vain, teaching *for* doctrine *the* commandments of men.'" - **Matthew 15:7-9.**

We are mere humans tossed to and fro by our carnal minds and the hopeless thinking of this world, this can lead to death. Unless we change our focus within our own hearts to the holiness and way of God, desiring to truly know Him, we too can remain on a path to destruction. We can read and recite scripture verbatim but unless we seek the One Who wrote it and truly bond with Him in our hearts and minds, we are just reciting words from a book.

We are approaching Passover (April 5th) and we have been using this time to read and study God's Word and preparing for self-reflection. We have discussed "watch" numerous times. "Watching" is keeping our spiritual condition in "vertical alignment" with the will and word of God. It is crucial to our Passover preparation.

Psalm 95:6-8- "O come, let us worship and bow down; let us kneel before the LORD our maker, For He is our God, and we are the people of His pasture, and the sheep of His hand. Today, if you would but hearken to His voice: "Harden not your heart as in the rebellion, as in the day of temptation in the wilderness,"

John 4:24- "God is Spirit, and those who worship Him must worship in spirit and in truth."

Passover is the time of year we take account of ourselves, our lives and our relationship with God the Father and Jesus Christ. This is not something that

should occur just once a year but continually. We pay closer attention to it in renewing our Covenant with God Almighty at Passover.

Our journey to one of holiness is a life-long process and it does not stop for Passover or any of the Holy Days. It will end when we are called to our rest or our Savior returns and we are still here. We have the time now to become more like Him in every aspect of our lives. We need to carefully examine our actions, our conduct and our faith and devotion to living by every word that proceeds out of the mouth of God. It is not easy and the choice is a difficult one. We all know that when we choose to do so, we are being guided by His Holy Spirit and we will have the peace of God leading us. He will never leave nor forsake us (**Deuteronomy 31:6,8, Hebrews 13:5**).

Matthew 28:18- “And Jesus came and spoke to them, saying, “All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to Me.”

Jesus is no longer on the cross, He is no longer in the tomb. He sits on His throne in Heaven at the Right Hand of God the Father (**1 Peter 3:22**). We can truly appreciate the sacrifice of Jesus Christ if we first *submit* to Him and remember what He did for us, what He gave up for all mankind and let His words echo in our hearts and minds always, “Father forgive them, for they know not what they do.”

Amen.