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PRECIOUS FORGIVENESS

We all know the feeling. You've said or done something hurtful to someone you love dearly. The words echo in your mind; you would do almost anything to be able to reach back and snatch them from the air. The image of the deed haunts your every waking moment; you see yourself committing the act again every time you close your eyes, and nothing you do will erase the picture. Finally, you go to that loved one and speak those words that come sometimes so hard: *"I was wrong. I'm sorry."*

And then you hear that precious reply: *"I forgive you."* What joy! What a

burden lifted! To be forgiven means to be made whole and right again in the sight of the one we have offended. We no longer need fear their anger, their rejection. The relationship that had been broken is restored; two parties that had been separated by a wrong done are reunited. Until we have been forgiven, we simply cannot rest.

A loving God created us with this deep-rooted desire to be forgiven when we do wrong. Without such a desire, we would not seek out God's forgiveness, which He has made freely available in His Son. Without this need to rectify our situation, we

could not have a relationship with God, for all have sinned (Romans 3:23). Nor could we have any form of relationship with one another, for we would routinely injure and shame each other with impunity.

This eager craving for redemption from wrong is what we sometimes call “conscience.” It was that portion of the character of Adam and Eve that awakened in the garden when *“the eyes of both of them were opened, and they knew that they were naked”* (Genesis 3:7). It was not their physical nakedness of which they were ashamed, but rather their nakedness in sin, being exposed in their transgression before the all-seeing eye of the Creator. Their consciences were offended by their violation of God’s command, and they sought to hide themselves behind aprons of leaves.

The wail of a shattered conscience can be bitter indeed. Think, for

example, of Esau who, having foolishly sold his birthright for a bowl of soup, realized only afterward the shamefulfulness of what he had done: *“He found no place for repentance, though he sought it diligently with tears”* (Hebrews 12:16-17). Esau’s conscience cried out to be restored to his position as the firstborn of his father. How miserable he must have been to come to recognize at last that the deed could not be undone!

We might also call to mind Judas Iscariot, who betrayed the Son of God into the hands of lawless men for thirty pieces of silver. Judas, upon seeing that Jesus had been condemned to death, cast the wretched ransom at the feet of the chief priests, saying, *“I have sinned by betraying innocent blood.”* After this, he went out and hanged himself (Matthew 27:3-5). Judas could find no way to remedy his crime, no means for rejoining himself with the One with whom he had

often shared bread.

And consider Simon Peter, who boldly scoffed at Jesus' prophecy that he would deny his Master, yet did indeed deny Him even with cursing. When the rooster crowed and *"the Lord turned and looked at Peter"* (Luke 22:61), how Peter's conscience must have howled in anguish within him at the knowledge that he had indeed denied Christ! How tormented his soul must have been when he wandered off by himself, weeping bitterly!

Oh, but how sweet for Peter to know at last that his sin had been forgiven him! Doubtless these things were in his heart when he wrote by inspiration: *"And above all things have fervent love for one another, for love will cover a multitude of sins"* (1 Peter 4:8). Once separated from his Lord and Savior, Peter found forgiveness. His conscience was at peace.

Peter stated, *"There is also*

an antitype which now saves us — baptism (not the removal of the filth of the flesh, but the answer of a good conscience toward God), through the resurrection of Jesus Christ" (1 Peter 3:21). If you are not a child of God, surely you recognize that you stand condemned to death because of sin (Romans 5:12). Won't you consider accepting his forgiveness, humbly obeying His Son's command to believe and be baptized for the salvation of your soul (Mark 16:16; Acts 2:38)?
— Michael D. Rankins



Stephanas and his family were addicted to serving Christians. "I beseech you, brethren, (ye know the house of Stephanas, that it is the firstfruits of Achaia, and that they have addicted themselves to the ministry of the sains),"

1 Cor. 16:15

People, Places, and Things of the **BIBLE**



City of Dalmanutha

An ancient town dated to the first century C.E. has been discovered during archaeological work conducted on the northwest coast of the Sea of Galilee, according to a report by LiveScience. The University of Reading's Ken Dark, who led the field survey, believes the town might be identified as Dalmanutha, which is known only from the New Testament. According to the Gospel of Mark, after Jesus miraculously multiplied seven loaves of bread and a few fish to feed a crowd of 4,000, "immediately he got into the boat with his disciples and went to the district of Dalmanutha" (Mark 8:10). The 2,000 year-old Galilee Boat discovered in 1986 was determined to have been found on the shoreline of a newly discovered town by the Sea of Galilee. *Courtesy Berthold Werner.*

Evidence indicates that this newly discovered coastal site was a thriving fishing town in the first century. Writing in the most recent issue of the journal *Palestine Exploration Quarterly*, Dark reports that the archaeological team found weights and stone anchors, while the presence of vessel glass and amphorae suggest some residents were prosperous. The researchers additionally determined that the so-called Galilee Boat, the famous 2,000 year-old boat discovered in a drought-stricken Sea of Galilee in 1986, was found on the shoreline of this fishing town. The southern side of the town lies only 500 feet away from the ancient town of Magdala, which may have been Mary Magdalene's hometown. While the Identification of Dalmanutha remains tentative, the name has yet to be associated with any known archaeological site around the Sea of Galilee.

