

Forgiveness is Conditional

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The steadfast love of the LORD never ceases, his mercies never come to an end; they are new every morning; great is your faithfulness. (Lamentations 3: 22-23)

As we come to a New Year is important to reaffirm the goodness of God, His faithfulness and His love. The passage from Lamentations affirms the freshness of the Lord's mercy and kindness EACH DAY! Every day is an adventure with Him.

The Gospel also affirms that God's forgiveness and cleansing. 1 John 1: 7 is an invitation to walk with Jesus "in the light.

"...if we walk in the light as he himself is in the light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus his Son cleanses us from all sin.

The Greek tense in the scripture speaks of "ongoing cleansing" from all unrighteousness and sin. This is accomplished through Jesus' self-sacrifice where He has taken the sin of the whole world upon Him – yours and mine – when He died on the cross.

Yet, so many people live with shame and guilt. Why? Because this blessing needs to be appropriated. It is not automatic! 1 John 1: 9 states: If we confess our sins, he who is faithful and just will forgive us our sins and cleanse us from all unrighteousness.

St. John affirms that forgiveness is conditional – we must acknowledge and confess our sins to the Lord. He is trustworthy and just. He WILL forgive our sin and cleanse us from all unrighteousness. This cleansing I call "Holy Drains." The Lord cleanses us and refreshes us, removing all shame and guilt – like a refreshing shower!

This is Good News! In fact, Jesus himself affirmed at the end of St. Luke's Gospel He (Jesus) said to them,

"Thus it is written, that the Messiah is to suffer and to rise from the dead on the third day, and that repentance and forgiveness of sins is to be proclaimed in his name to all nations... (Luke 24: 46-47)

So many people are burdened with shame, guilt and condemnation in the Church. The Lord wants us free! He desires to see us declare the Good News of His love and forgiveness to a world that is deeply burdened with sin. Our Prayer Book helps us

- ALMIGHTY and most merciful Father, We have erred and strayed from thy ways like lost sheep, We have followed too much the devices and desires of our own hearts, We have offended against thy holy laws, We have left undone those things which we ought to have done, And we have done those things which we ought not to have done; And there is no health in us. But thou, O Lord, have mercy upon us, miserable offenders. Spare thou them, O God, which confess their faults. Restore thou them that are penitent; According to thy promises declared unto mankind in Christ Jesu our Lord. And grant, O most merciful Father, for his sake, That we may hereafter live a godly, righteous, and sober life, To the glory of thy holy Name. Amen. (Book of Common Prayer – Pp. 4-5)

What a great way to start the New Year... with a fresh beginning in the Lord!