

# PathLights

*"Your word is a lamp to my feet  
and a light to my path"  
Psalm 119:104*

January 21, 2018

## Forgiveness of Sins

by Frank Himmel

Sin is a violation of God's law. It may be doing what He prohibits or not doing what He requires. It may be in word, thought, or deed. It may openly show itself in some outward expression, or it may be something hidden in one's heart.

Sin has consequences. Among them, sin separates us from God, it creates friction in human relations, and it brings guilt to the one who has committed the wrong. These consequences can only be removed by forgiveness. That forgiveness must take place on three levels.

### Divine

First and foremost, we must have God's forgiveness. Without that we will suffer sin's worst effect: eternal punishment. God has graciously offered to forgive our sins—all of them! He sent His Son to die for us (Romans 5:8). We are reconciled to God through His blood (Colossians 1:30). The Bible often emphasizes the essentiality of faith in Jesus as a condition of divine forgiveness: "everyone who believes in Him receives forgiveness of sins" (Acts 10:43). It also says both repentance (Luke 24:47) and baptism (Acts 2:38) are for forgiveness of sins.



### Human

When one sins against another, human forgiveness is also essential to righting the relationship. The Bible stresses the importance of willingness to forgive, perhaps because at times we may be slow to do so. Jesus taught, "For if you forgive others for their transgressions, your heavenly Father will also forgive you. But if you do not forgive others, then your Father will not forgive your transgressions" (Matthew 6:14-15). Paul urged, "Be kind to one another, tender-hearted, forgiving each other, just as God in Christ also has forgiven you" (Ephesians 4:32).

### Personal

The third level on which forgiveness must take place is what I am calling the personal level; by that I mean we must be willing to forgive ourselves. Feelings of guilt are understandable, and they are valuable for bringing us to repentance. They can become a problem, however, if we never get past them. We may get so down on ourselves that we give up trying to do better. Surely Peter found it hard to forgive himself of denying the Lord; or Paul, for persecuting Christians. While there are indications these men never forgot what they had done, they moved on. They learned, they did better, and they even used their experience to encourage others. We can, too.

Have you sought God's forgiveness in Christ, the forgiveness of others whom you have wronged, and also your own forgiveness? ■

# What Should the Sign Say?

by Frank Himmel

*Note: Changing our assembly times necessitates changing the sign. When the elders asked me what I thought the sign should say, it reminded me of this article I wrote a number of years ago.*



Every few years, a movement makes the rounds in which some brethren get all excited about what we put on the sign in front of the meetinghouse.

Most of us use the

designation *Church of Christ*. It is a descriptive one, denoting Jesus' headship or ownership (Matthew 16:18; Romans 16:16). We recognize that it is not the exclusive Bible name for the church; nevertheless, it does accurately depict who we are.

For a while, the "in" thing was to replace *Church of Christ* with *Christians meet here*. We were told that would be more accurate, that people would not confuse the church with the building. To be sure,

people often refer to a building as a church. Yet despite sloppy terminology, who does not understand that it is people's beliefs and practices, not their buildings, that make churches Lutheran, Methodist, Catholic, etc.? The difference is not so much in the structures, it is in what goes on inside them.

The latest fad is to drop the *of Christ* description and just call it the [local name] Church. This is following a trend in human churches, where groups are shedding their denominational designation in order to avoid prejudice one might have toward their particular group. It is also reflective of a greater trend: to de-emphasize doctrine and focus on services offered. Why would a group boldly proclaiming Baptist doctrine object to folks knowing they are Baptists? Likewise, if we are unreservedly teaching the doctrine of Christ, why would we not want to be called a church of Christ? This, I suspect, is the heart of the matter.

To my simple way of thinking, we are either a church of Christ or we are not. If we are, we should not be ashamed to put it on the sign. If we are not, why not say so? Why not make the sign say *Not a Church of Christ* or *A Church Not of Christ*? Doubtless that would be far more accurate in some cases! The truth is, those who have departed from the faith do us all a favor by removing *Church of Christ* from their name.

Have you considered the irony of this concept, that we can improve the church by removing Christ's name from it?! Hmm. ■

## Service Leaders for the Week

	Sunday	Wednesday
GREETER	Chris Brooks	Adam Gibson
SONG LEADER	Bruce Williams	Albert Lee Harrison
OPENING PRAYER	Bruce Hollander	
LORD'S SUPPER		
BREAD	Brian Wilson	
CUP	Josh Baucom	
CONTRIBUTION PRAYER	Daven Daniel	
SERMON/INVITATION	Frank Himmel	Bruce Williams
CLOSING PRAYER	Steven Turner	Albert Harrison Sr