

and also some pages of a book called *New Age Bible Versions* by Gail Riplinger (AV Publications, Ohio, 1993). I also looked at what a book called *Which Bible?* had to say about Westcott and Hort. This is a compilation of studies defending the AV, edited by David Fuller (Grand Rapids International Publications, Michigan, 1984). As a result I am satisfied that allegations, based on copious quotations from Westcott and Hort's writings, are correct, namely that they were not fully committed to supporting the inspiration of the Bible but were attracted to Darwinism, that they were attracted by Roman Catholicism and that they were attracted by the occult. On the other hand, it should also be said that the defenders of the AV appear to be Protestant fundamentalists who would have no time for us Christadelphians because we do not believe in the Trinity.

The case for supporting the AV does not depend on what Westcott and Hort believed on matters other than the question of which ancient texts should be preferred. There are, I believe, other good arguments for saying that the texts followed by the AV are preferable to the two texts favoured by Westcott and Hort. Our book *Which Translation?* deals with this and other matters (see rear cover for [details of availability](#)). It should also be noted that modern versions do not slavishly follow these two texts, and generally, but not always, give in the margin the words missed out. However, the question posed by Brother Purkis in his two-part article remains: "Is your Bible complete?". In my view, as well as his, the answer is, "Not if you rely wholly on a modern version that does not use the texts used by the AV".

Tony Benson

Forgiveness

2. Forgiveness must be sought

Geoff Henstock

In the [first article](#) we considered the willingness of God to forgive. In this article we consider the fact that this is conditional on us seeking forgiveness of God, repenting of our sins, as illustrated by the psalmist, by the prophet Jonah in the whale's belly, and by the prophet Isaiah.

GOD'S FORGIVENESS is not unconditional. It might be unwarranted, it might be unearned, it might even be undeserved as men would judge such matters, but it is never unconditional. Grace means it is unmerited; grace does not mean it is unconditional.

Psalm 86

In Psalm 86 the psalmist speaks about God's willingness to forgive. In doing so he sets out a precondition for the exercise of Divine forgiveness: that forgiveness is available only to those who approach God on His terms: "Bow down thine ear, O LORD, hear me: for I am poor and needy. Preserve my soul; for I am holy: O Thou my God, save Thy servant that trusteth in Thee" (vv. 1,2).

Poverty is no barrier to accessing the mercy of God, but verse 2 implies that holiness, or

separation, and trust in God are prerequisites. In verse 3 we learn that we must seek forgiveness; it is not extended automatically: "Be merciful unto me, O Lord: for I cry unto Thee daily". Those who approach God appropriately are assured that He will hear and answer:

"Rejoice the soul of Thy servant: for unto Thee, O Lord, do I lift up my soul. For Thou, Lord, art good, and ready to forgive; and plenteous in mercy unto all them that call upon Thee. Give ear, O LORD, unto my prayer; and attend to the voice of my supplications. In the day of my trouble I will call upon Thee: for Thou wilt answer me" (vv. 4-7).

The Creator hears prayer when offered in sincerity and faith. When we call upon Him He is willing to respond and willing to forgive.

But the psalmist goes on to show that we cannot presume upon God's mercy, abundant though it is. Our plea for forgiveness must be accompanied by action:

"Teach me Thy way, O LORD; I will walk in Thy truth: unite my heart to fear Thy name. I will praise Thee, O Lord my God, with all my heart: and I will glorify Thy name for evermore" (vv. 11,12).

Repentance is necessary if God is to forgive. Repentance involves a change of direction; turning around and going in another direction. That is the concept implicit in verses 11 and 12. We

sin when we follow our own promptings and desires. If we are sincere about seeking forgiveness we must be willing to change our ways and go in another direction. Instead of following our own desires and the ways of man we must walk in God's way and in His paths. We must praise God in our lives rather than serving our own ends.

“Out of the depths”

The teaching of Psalm 86 is complemented by that of Psalm 130, where we have another important principle about the forgiveness God offers. In Psalm 130 we are introduced very explicitly to the concept of forgiveness as unmerited Divine favour. God graciously forgives sinners, not because they deserve forgiveness but because He is merciful to those who confess their sins, who approach Him in the way appointed and confess their need for forgiveness:

“Out of the depths have I cried unto Thee, O LORD. Lord, hear my voice: let Thine ears be attentive to the voice of my supplications. If Thou, LORD, shouldest mark iniquities, O Lord, who shall stand? But there is forgiveness with Thee, that Thou mayest be feared” (vv. 1-4).

What an expressive opening! “Out of the depths”. Who cannot relate to this? All of us find ourselves in the depths of sin from time to time. Although deeply conscious of his iniquities, in verse 3 the psalmist nevertheless called to God from the depths.

Jonah too cried unto the Lord out of the depths. He was doubly in the depths: the depths of the sea and the belly of the fish. Psalm 130 speaks of the fact that God will hear us in spite of our iniquities, and this was seen in the case of Jonah. Jonah was acutely aware of his failings before God, and yet he cried out in his despair:

“Then Jonah prayed unto the LORD his God out of the fish's belly, and said, I cried by reason of mine affliction unto the LORD, and He heard me; out of the belly of hell cried I, and Thou heardest my voice. For Thou hadst cast me into the deep, in the midst of the seas; and the floods compassed me about: all Thy billows and Thy waves passed over me. Then I said, I am cast out of Thy sight; yet I will look again toward Thy holy temple. The waters compassed me about, even to the soul: the depth closed me round about, the weeds were wrapped about my head. I went down to the bottoms of the mountains; the earth with

her bars was about me for ever: yet hast Thou brought up my life from corruption, O LORD my God. When my soul fainted within me I remembered the LORD: and my prayer came in unto Thee, into Thine holy temple. They that observe lying vanities forsake their own mercy. But I will sacrifice unto Thee with the voice of thanksgiving; I will pay that that I have vowed. Salvation is of the LORD” (Jonah 2:1-9).

Jonah speaks in verse 3 of “the deep”. In verse 5 “the depth” enveloped him. In verse 6 he found himself at “the bottoms of the mountains”. All of this imagery is encapsulated in verse 2 when he speaks of the fish's belly as “hell” (sheol), or the grave, and in verse 6 when he refers to his life being brought up from “corruption” (or “the pit”, as its says in the margin).

The grave is the ultimate depth; man can go no lower than the grave. Jonah knew his tribulations had come upon him because of his own iniquity. We are mortal, and death is the wages of sin. Our iniquities separate us from God, just as they did for Jonah. Yet, in spite of his sin, God heard Jonah's plea when it was made in faith. We too may be confident God will hear us when we cry from the depths.

The psalmist in Psalm 130 reminds us that our cry must not be presumptuous. Often we bring ourselves into the depths through our own folly. Like Jonah, and like the psalmist, we must acknowledge our failing and our need for forgiveness. Jonah repented and recommitted himself to God's service. So in Psalm 130:3,4 the psalmist acknowledges that he is a sinner, and yet also recognises the wonder of God's grace in extending forgiveness to those who fear Him. On the basis of our iniquity we have no right to presume on forgiveness, but our God is abundant in mercy and willing to forgive. On that basis, Psalm 130:4 says, we ought to fear or reverence God for His grace.

God's ways

In Isaiah 55 the prophet discusses the wonder of grace. He tells us that God's gracious ways are far above ours and we cannot fathom them. The chapter commences with a contrast between the ways of man and the ways of God. Man's way is barren and unsustaining, but God's way gives life:

“Ho, every one that thirsteth, come ye to the waters, and he that hath no money; come ye, buy, and eat; yea, come, buy wine and milk without money and without price. Wherefore

do ye spend money for that which is not bread? and your labour for that which satisfieth not? hearken diligently unto Me, and eat ye that which is good, and let your soul delight itself in fatness. Incline your ear, and come unto Me: hear, and your soul shall live; and I will make an everlasting covenant with you, even the sure mercies of David" (vv. 1-3).

What causes death? It is sin, or man following his own ways rather than conforming himself to the ways of God. By nature we are inclined to follow our own desires. How can we overcome this? How can we become aware of God's ways? We see in verse 1 that we cannot purchase this knowledge, but it is freely offered in the Word of God. Verse 2 says we must "hearken diligently", or listen carefully. In verse 3 the prophet extends this; we must listen to God. We do that by reading His Word, where He speaks to us of His ways.

In verses 6 and 7 Isaiah appeals to us to seek God. Forgiveness is only offered to those who seek it:

"Seek ye the LORD while He may be found, call ye upon Him while He is near: let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts: and let him return unto the LORD, and He will have mercy upon him; and to our God, for He will abundantly pardon".

There is a day of opportunity, and we must act if we wish to take advantage of the mercy of God. Life is the time to serve the Lord. We should seek Him today, for tomorrow might be too late.

Verse 7 takes up the concept of repentance. The wicked and the unrighteous can be forgiven, but only if they forsake their ways and thoughts. Sin may be by deed or thought, but whatever form it takes we must turn around and go in another direction if we are to be forgiven by God. We must forsake the ways of sin and return to the ways of God if we expect God to forgive us. If we do, we may be confident He will forgive.

God's ways higher than ours

Why is our God willing to forgive those who transgress? Because He is "merciful and gracious, longsuffering, and abundant in goodness and truth" (Ex. 34:6). And why is God like this? The truth is, we cannot answer that question, or at least we can only answer it in the terms of the verses that follow in Isaiah 55:

"For My thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways My ways, saith the LORD. For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are My ways higher than your ways, and My thoughts than your thoughts" (vv. 8,9).

We made the point previously that God wants us to manifest His character in our lives. He calls us as His children and He desires that we should manifest the family traits. In that regard these verses are very challenging. They suggest that it will be very difficult for us to reproduce the ways of God in our mortal life. Difficult though it undoubtedly is, we must nevertheless strive to manifest the Divine character in all aspects of life.

We may take comfort, however, from the fact that it is not through our own unaided efforts that this process of developing God's character is effected. It is the work of God:

"For as the rain cometh down, and the snow from heaven, and returneth not thither, but watereth the earth, and maketh it bring forth and bud, that it may give seed to the sower, and bread to the eater: so shall My word be that goeth forth out of My mouth: it shall not return unto Me void, but it shall accomplish that which I please, and it shall prosper in the thing whereto I sent it" (vv. 10,11).

Here we are dealing with concepts that test the very limit of our ability to comprehend. We are dealing with how God operates, and we have just read that His ways are high above our ways. Nevertheless, these verses reveal to us a truth about one of the ways God operates. God's Word is a powerful force. It emanates from the Deity Who is the source and origin of all power.

In the case of the natural creation God spoke and it was done. So it is in the case of the spiritual creation. God speaks through His Word and it accomplishes that which He pleases. The gospel message goes forth to convict men of sin and to introduce them to the wonder of God's grace.

And it accomplishes this task in those who respond to the call, who repent of their wicked ways and thoughts, turn to God and seek forgiveness. The Word empowers them to live lives that reflect the ways of God rather than the ways of perishing man. The Word transforms their thinking and character as it moulds them to become more like God. Isaiah 55 tells us the wonder of what happens, but it is beyond us to define how and why.

[\(To be concluded\)](#)