

The following Scripture passages are offered to aid beginning fellowships. The readings and commentary for this week are more in line with what has become usual; for the following will most likely be familiar observations. The concept behind this Sabbath's selection is the authority to forgive sins.

Weekly Readings

For the Sabbath of October 22, 2011

The person conducting the Sabbath service should open services with two or three hymns, or psalms, followed by an opening prayer acknowledging that two or three (or more) are gathered together in Christ Jesus' name, and inviting the Lord to be with them.

One of the Pharisees asked Him to eat with him, and He [Jesus] went into the Pharisee's house and took His place at the table. And behold, a woman of the city, who was a sinner, when she learned that He was reclining at table in the Pharisee's house, brought an alabaster flask of ointment, and standing behind Him at His feet, weeping, she began to wet His feet with her tears and wiped them with the hair of her head and kissed His feet and anointed them with the ointment. Now when the Pharisee who had invited Him saw this, he said to himself, "If this man were a prophet, He would have known who and what sort of woman this is who is touching him, for she is a sinner." And Jesus answering said to him, "Simon, I have something to say to you." And he answered, "Say it, Teacher."

"A certain moneylender had two debtors. One owed five hundred denarii, and the other fifty. When they could not pay, he cancelled the debt of both. Now which of them will love him more?"

Simon answered, "The one, I suppose, for whom he cancelled the larger debt." And He said to him, "You have judged rightly." Then turning toward the woman He said to Simon, "Do you see this woman? I entered your house; you gave me no water for my feet, but she has wet my feet with her tears and wiped them with

her hair. You gave me no kiss, but from the time I came in she has not ceased to kiss my feet. You did not anoint my head with oil, but she has anointed my feet with ointment. Therefore I tell you, her sins, which are many, are forgiven—for she loved much. But he who is forgiven little, loves little." And He said to her, "Your sins are forgiven."
Then those who were at table with him began to say among themselves, "Who is this, who even forgives sins?" And He said to the woman, "Your faith has saved you; go in peace." (Luke 7:36–50)

1.

The Pharisee who had invited Jesus to dine with him questioned the ability of a human person to forgive sin; yet when the glorified Jesus gave to His disciples a second breath of life, the divine breath of God [πνεῦμα Θεοῦ] in His breath, the breath of Christ [πνεῦμα Χριστοῦ], by breathing on the ten (John 20:22), Jesus told the ten, "If you forgive the sins of any, they are forgiven them; if you withhold forgiveness from any, it is withheld" (v. 23). So not only could Jesus forgive sins, but His disciples possessing heavenly life received via receipt of His breath could also forgive sins.

There is, however, more to forgiving sins than *forgiving* them: Jesus told the woman, *Your faith has saved you*. Thus, forgiving sins and being saved are linked, with the woman's faith manifested in how she had received and honored Jesus, washing His feet with her tears, drying them with her hair, anointing His feet with oil, kissing His feet, humbling herself for she knew she was a sinner. The woman's faith—her belief—that Jesus was the Christ was great enough to cause her to risk her own well-being by publicly entering the Pharisee's house.

The woman's faith was manifested in her works before Jesus said that her sins were forgiven—her works preceded the forgiveness of her sins. And her works were greater than the sacrifice of doves and lambs: the woman willingly sacrificed herself, her dignity however little or great that dignity was, and the financial expense of the ointment with which she anointed His feet. She knew that she was a sinner and had no social justification for publicly entering the Pharisee's house, that she could be beaten for entering. Yet when she learned where Jesus was staying, she went into her social enemy's camp and there served Jesus in a way that the Pharisee named Simon had not ...

Why is the Pharisee named in this narrative and other Pharisees are not named?

Simon was apparently known to Jesus, and knew Jesus well enough to invite Jesus into his home—and Jesus knew Simon well enough to speak frankly to him, telling him that the sinful woman had done more for Him than had Simon.

In speaking frankly to Simon the Pharisee, Jesus establishes a criteria that His disciples can use for forgiving sins while they remain in this world as the earthly representatives of His Body: the sinner who would be forgiven will do in the sinner's era the cultural equivalent to what the woman did.

The woman did not go to Simon or to the Pharisees and wash their feet with her tears ... likewise, a person who would be forgiven of his or her sins because of the person's faith would not go to the Roman Church or to the Greek or Russian or Coptic Church and repent bitterly before a priest from any of these schisms. The sinner would not repent before a Methodist or a Southern Baptist or a Seventh Day Adventist or a minister of any of the various Sabbatarian Churches of God [COGs]; for none of these sects and denomination have understanding of the mysteries, the sacraments of God, the foremost of which is that a second birth of life received through receipt of the breath of God in the breath of Christ causes the formerly dead inner self to be resurrected to life, thereby causing the fleshly body of the person to be as the whale was to Jonah, or as the woman is to her husband in marriage. None of these sects and denominations understands that circumcision makes naked the *head* of a man, that the woman's physiology excludes her from being circumcised until she receives a second breath of life and becomes a son of God that can be circumcised of heart after a journey of faith that cleanses the heart. A few of these sects and denominations understand that the woman's head is her husband, not some other man such as her brother or a friend; that the woman is in subjection to her head, not to a fellowship or schism of the visible Christian Church; that if the woman is born of God as a son of God her spiritual Head is Christ Jesus but her earthly lord remains her husband. Therefore, within and among the various visible sects of the greater *Christian Church*, there are none who can forgive sin; for all sects, denominations, schisms and heresies are presently without spiritual understanding that comes through spiritual birth ...

Until the Second Passover liberation of Israel from indwelling sin and death, the visible Christian Church with its innumerable divisions is spiritually dead. The divisions within the visible Christian Church might provide the Christian convert the fellowship he or she seeks, and might provide the *old* Christian with the social and business contacts through which this *old* Christian can prosper in this world, but none of these divisions have authority to forgive sins—and except for the Scarlet Schism, none pretend that the division can forgive sins. They wisely defer to Christ Jesus, who again, gave to His disciples His breath [πνεῦμα Χριστοῦ] when He breathed on them and said, *Receive the Holy Spirit* [πνεῦμα ἅγιον — *breath holy*] (John 20:22), then told the ten, *If you forgive the sins of any, they are forgiven them; if you withhold forgiveness from any, it is withheld* (v. 23).

Forgiving sins by a synagogue [a fellowship of like-minded believers] would have the synagogue [ten disciples or more] being born of God through possessing the spirit/breath/*pneuma* of God in the spirit/breath/*pneuma* of Christ, with these three linguistic icons (spirit/breath/*pneuma*) all representing the same linguistic object, indwelling eternal life received from the Father through Christ Jesus. Therefore, the forgiveness of sin and salvation are linked through the breath of Christ [again, πνεῦμα Χριστοῦ], with the words Jesus spoke to the woman coming through modulations of His breath in a manner similar to how Simon the Pharisee's words were heard through modulations of Simon's breath.

But when Jesus forgave the woman's sins, He alone was truly born of God through receipt of the divine breath of the Father [πνεῦμα Θεοῦ] (see Matt 3:16).

Jesus alone represented the temple that would be rebuilt after the third day. He didn't need to seek a quorum of the Body, or of the synagogue. He alone possessed the authority of God so He alone could forgive sin.

Now, how does Jesus alone being born of God pertain to the visible Christian Church in this era? ... The Apostle John wrote,

That which was from the beginning, which we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes, which we looked upon and have touched with our hands, concerning the word of life—the life was made manifest, and we have seen it, and testify to it and proclaim to you the eternal life, which was with the Father and was made manifest to us—that which we have seen and heard we proclaim also to you, so that you too may have fellowship with us; and indeed our fellowship is with the Father and with his Son Jesus Christ. (1 John 1:1–3)

The message delivered in the gospels, in the epistles was so that those who came later—those who would be born of God in future eras—could have fellowship with the first apostles and disciples, and with the Father and the Son. But the gospels and epistles were not written for those who were not called by Christ and drawn by the Father from this world before it was time for the spirit of God to be poured out on all flesh (see Joel 2:28; Matt 3:11), with the world being baptized [washed] in the divine breath of God and into life as the world was baptized in water and into death in the days of Noah.

Baptism is always the full submersion or full immersion of a person in water, or in the breath of God, or in heavenly fire. Sprinkling with so-called holy water from a font of dead water [still water] is not a baptism: a person would be better washed of the person's sins if the person stood outside while it was raining. But baptism doesn't wash away sins, but washes away the protective covering of death ... as the physically dead know nothing (Eccl 9:5), the spiritually dead know no spiritual thing; i.e., have no understanding of God or of the sacraments of God.

Forgiveness of sin is a sacrament, a mystery of the sect of the Nazarenes, a 1st-Century sect of Judaism that will be resurrected to life at the Second Passover liberation of Israel. Until then, the forgiveness of sin rests with the glorified Christ Jesus who hears the prayers of those few human persons that have actually been born of God as younger siblings of Jesus (see Rom 8:29). Therefore, through double-voice discourse, what genuinely born-of-spirit sons of God bind or loose here on earth is bound or loosed in heaven: "I [Jesus] will give you the keys of the kingdom of heaven, and whatever you bind on earth shall be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven" (Matt 16:19).

If a Christian must actually be born of God before the Christian can bind or loose a thing in heaven, then understanding spiritual birth is of great importance.

John records,

"Truly, truly, I say to you, he who does not enter the sheepfold by the door but climbs in by another way, that man is a thief and a robber. But he who enters by the door is the shepherd of the sheep. To him the gatekeeper opens. The sheep hear his voice, and he calls his own sheep by name and leads them out. When he has brought

out all his own, he goes before them, and the sheep follow him, for they know his voice. A stranger they will not follow, but they will flee from him, for they do not know the voice of strangers.”

This figure of speech Jesus used with them, but they did not understand what he was saying to them. So Jesus again said to them, “Truly, truly, I say to you, I am the door of the sheep. All who came before me are thieves and robbers, but the sheep did not listen to them. I am the door. If anyone enters by me, he will be saved and will go in and out and find pasture. The thief comes only to steal and kill and destroy. I came that they may have life and have it abundantly. I am the good shepherd. The good shepherd lays down his life for the sheep. He who is a hired hand and not a shepherd, who does not own the sheep, sees the wolf coming and leaves the sheep and flees, and the wolf snatches them and scatters them. He flees because he is a hired hand and cares nothing for the sheep. I am the good shepherd. I know my own and my own know me, just as the Father knows me and I know the Father; and I lay down my life for the sheep.” (John 10:1–15 color emphasis added)

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At that time the Feast of Dedication took place at Jerusalem. It was winter, and Jesus was walking in the temple, in the colonnade of Solomon. So the Jews gathered around him and said to him, "How long will you keep us in suspense? If you are the Christ, tell us plainly." Jesus answered them, "I told you, and you do not believe. The works that I do in my Father's name bear witness about me, but you do not believe because you are not part of my flock. *My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me. I give them eternal life, and they will never perish, and no one will snatch them out of my hand. My Father, who has given them to me, is greater than all, and no one is able to snatch them out of the Father's hand. I and the Father are one.*" (John 10:22–30 color emphasis added)

Elsewhere, John writes,

Whoever makes a practice of sinning is of the devil, for the devil has been sinning from the beginning. The reason the Son of God appeared was to destroy the works of the devil. No one born of God makes a practice of sinning, for God's seed abides in him, and he cannot keep on sinning because he has been born of God. By this it is evident who are the children of God, and who are the children of the devil: whoever does not practice righteousness is not of God, nor is the one who does not love his brother. For this is the message that you have heard from the beginning, that we should love one another. We should not be like Cain, who was of the evil one and murdered his brother. And why did he murder him? Because his own deeds were evil and his brother's righteous. Do not be surprised, brothers, that the world hates you. We know that we have passed out of death into life, because we love the brothers.

Whoever does not love abides in death. Everyone who hates his brother is a murderer, and you know that no murderer has eternal life abiding in him. By this we know love, that he laid down his life for us, and we ought to lay down our lives for the brothers.

But if anyone has the world's goods and sees his brother in need, yet closes his heart against him, how does God's love abide in him? Little children, *let us not love in word or talk but in deed and in truth*. By this we shall know that we are of the truth and reassure our heart before him; for whenever our heart condemns us, God is greater than our heart, and he knows everything.

Beloved, if our heart does not condemn us, we have confidence before God; and whatever we ask we receive from him, because we keep his commandments and do what pleases him. And this is his commandment, that we believe in the name of his Son Jesus Christ and love one another, just as he has commanded us. Whoever keeps his commandments abides in God, and God in him. And by this we know that he abides in us, by the Spirit whom he has given us. (1 John 3:8–24 emphasis added)

If we hear Jesus' voice we are His disciples, His sheep. This means that we believe the writings of Moses (John 5:46–47) and keep the commandments that the Lord spoke from atop Mount Sinai and reaffirmed in the Moab covenant. This also means that we have love for God, brother, and neighbor, not withholding from one another those things over which we have authority or control, with knowledge of Christ Jesus being foremost of those things which as born-of-spirit sons of God and younger siblings to Christ Jesus we give to our brother and neighbors though our deeds and not through mere words that anyone can utter, words that sound *so spiritual* but that are without accompanying action.

The Pharisees and Sadducees were not of God because they kept the commandments without love for neighbor and brother. The visible Christian Church is not today of God because in its many sects and denominations, it has love for neighbor but not enough love for the Father and the Son to keep the commandments. The Sabbatarian churches of God have no love for their brothers in Christ, even to the point of denying that Christians within the more visible Church are their spiritually lifeless brothers.

The Christian who loves God will keep the commandments not because the Christian feels obligated to keep them but will keep them out of love for God; for keeping the commandments is a thing pleasing to God ... actually, all of humanity is under obligation to keep the commandments for according to Paul's gospel, "For all who have sinned without the law will also perish without the law, and all who have sinned under the law will be judged by the law. For it is not the hearers of the law who are righteous before God, but the doers of the law who will be justified" (Rom 2:12–13), with *sin* being manifested unbelief that results in the transgression of the Law.

- A human person who has received a second breath of life, the breath of God [πνεῦμα Θεοῦ], will keep the commandments of God as a *sign* of having received the indwelling of eternal life;

- In addition, the person born of God will love neighbor and brother to the extent that he or she will lay down the person's life for his or her neighbor and brother.
- The Christian who is not willing to give all he or she has for the support of neighbor and brother does not love as the Christian should.

But who, as the lawyer asked (see Luke 10:29), is the Christian's neighbor and brother? And the lawyer answered Jesus, *The one who showed mercy* (v. 37).

How does the genuine Christian show *mercy* to another human person? By forgiving the sinner who will wash the Christian's feet with his or her tears.

The demonstration of genuine repentance compels the Christian to show the sinner mercy by forgiving the sinner, asking that the death penalty for the sinner's transgressions be absolved, washed away by those tears of repentance. However, without the demonstration of repentance, the sinner remains as the Pharisees were, as Simon the Pharisee was ... Jesus did not tell Simon that he was saved, that Simon's sins were forgiven.

What sort of love did Jesus show Simon? ... *Simon, I have something to say to you.*

Sabbatarians—Sabbath observing Christians—*Philadelphia* has something to say to you: those Christians who worship on Sunday have far more love for neighbor and brother than you have, and how can you claim to love God, which your keeping of the commandments says, when you do not show love to your spiritually lifeless brothers in Christ? Do you not realize that you, too, are not yet truly born of God as evidenced by your lack of love?

Today, forgiving sins [having mercy on brothers and neighbors] is a rare thing, not a common thing. And this should not be.

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*The person conducting the Sabbath service should
close services with two hymns, or psalms,
followed by a prayer asking God's dismissal.*

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