

"Being Forgiven"

Forgiveness is a great blessing from God, and we all need it. Hello, I'm Phil Sanders, and this is a Bible study "In Search of the Lord's Way." And today we're exploring what it means to be forgiven.

Welcome to In SEARCH of the Lord's Way! We're here to search the Scriptures for God's will. God's word is indeed good news for those who are willing to listen to it, grow in love for God, and obey the Lord Jesus. The Scriptures teach us of God's grace and compassion, and we never think that it's cheap or frivolous. Thanks for taking time to study with us today. We'd love to hear from you and want to be a part of your life each week.

The one thing that stands between man and God, the one thing that can keep a person out of heaven, is sin. There's only one way, as we attempted to show this morning, by which we can get rid of sin, and that is by the forgiveness of it. When Israel worshiped the gold calf while Moses was getting the Ten Commandments, Moses interceded. Exodus 32:33 says: Then Moses returned to the LORD, and said, "Alas, this people has committed a great sin, and they have made a god of gold for themselves. But now, if You will, forgive their sin—and if not, please blot me out from Your book which You have written!" The LORD said to Moses, "Whoever has sinned against Me, I will blot him out of My book." Unresolved sin will still cause people to lose eternal life.

Forgiveness is the release, on the part of the creditor or offended party, of any expectation that a debt will be repaid or that an offender will receive punishment for a sin. Removal of an offensive sin doesn't condone the behavior or suggest approval for sin. Habbakuk 1:13 says that God's eyes are too pure to approve of sin. Forgiveness without a change of heart or repentance cannot happen. Forgiveness cannot happen apart from the obedience of faith in response to the gospel.

Now we offer this study, Being Forgiven, free! If you'd like a printed copy and live in the United States, mail your request to In Search of the Lord's Way, P.O. Box 371, Edmond, OK 73083 or send an e-mail to searchtv@searchtv.org. Or, you can call our toll-free telephone number. That number is 1-800-321-8633. Now for our viewers outside the United States, we have programs and free materials on our website, www.searchtv.org. You can also see us on YouTube.

We'll now worship in song, read from Hebrews 8:10 to 12, and consider what being forgiven means.

Our reading today comes from Hebrews chapter 8 verses 10 to 12 and described the new covenant that we brought to us by the blood of Jesus Christ and is found in the New Testament.

"FOR THIS IS THE COVENANT THAT I WILL MAKE WITH THE HOUSE OF ISRAEL

AFTER THOSE DAYS, SAYS THE LORD:

I WILL PUT MY LAWS INTO THEIR MINDS,

AND I WILL WRITE THEM ON THEIR HEARTS.

AND I WILL BE THEIR GOD,

AND THEY SHALL BE MY PEOPLE.

"AND THEY SHALL NOT TEACH EVERYONE HIS FELLOW CITIZEN,

AND EVERYONE HIS BROTHER, SAYING, 'KNOW THE LORD,'

FOR ALL WILL KNOW ME,

FROM THE LEAST TO THE GREATEST OF THEM.

"FOR I WILL BE MERCIFUL TO THEIR INIQUITIES,

AND I WILL REMEMBER THEIR SINS NO MORE."

What a great, great promise that God will not remember our sins. Let's pray together. Heavenly Father we're thankful for all Your love all Your compassion, for Your willingness to receive us to Yourself and to forgive our sins. Help us Heavenly Father to devote ourselves to You and to give glory to Your name by the way that we live and by how we treat others. This is our prayer in the name of Jesus, Amen.

There are several words used by God to describe what He does with our sins when He forgives us. In Mark 1:4 and Luke 3 and verse 3 John the Baptizer proclaimed a "baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sins." Well, the word often translated here as forgiveness describes the act of freeing or liberating one from guilt or punishment of sin; it pardons or cancels the guilt or punishment for sin. Romans 6:23 reminds us that the "wages of sin is death, but the free gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord." Forgiveness releases one from eternal death and provides eternal life.

When Jesus was laying the foundation for the Lord's Supper, He spoke of the importance of the fruit of the vine. Matthew 26:27 to 28 says: And when He had taken a cup and given thanks, He gave it to them, saying, "Drink from it, all of you; for this is My blood of the covenant, which is poured out for many for forgiveness of sins." The Lord Jesus suffered torture and death, shedding His blood so that we might be forgiven.

Now the forgiveness that we have through the blood of Jesus gave us a new life in Christ's kingdom and liberated us from a domain of darkness. Colossians 1:13 to 14 says, "For He rescued us from the domain of darkness, and transferred us to the kingdom of His beloved Son, in whom we have redemption, the forgiveness of sins." Now being in the kingdom of Christ, the church, and being redeemed and forgiven take place at the same time. Rescuing us, redeeming us, and forgiving us came from God as a gift and on His terms. Now thinking that we should be redeemed and forgiven on our terms or the terms we develop reveals an arrogant and ungrateful attitude for what the Lord Jesus did for us. We can't be saved our own way; we must let Jesus be both Lord and Savior.

Now Paul describes how God works in our lives when we are baptized in Colossians 2:12 to 13. It says: "having been buried with him in baptism, in which you were also raised with him through faith in the powerful working of God, who raised him from the dead. And you, who were dead in your trespasses and the uncircumcision of your flesh, God made alive together with him, having forgiven us all our trespasses."

Another valuable term is the term "blot out." Peter said in Acts 3:19, "Repent therefore, and turn back, that your sins may be blotted out." Now the idea is that sins will be wiped away or erased. The Lord God said in Isaiah 43:25, "I, even I, am the one who wipes out your transgressions for My own sake, And I will not remember your sins." Now when God forgives sins, they're not only removed, they are blotted out. The last trace of them is gone forever.

David facing his guilt over the adultery with Bathsheba in Psalm 51:1 to 3 says, "Have mercy on me, O God, according to your steadfast love; according to your abundant mercy blot out my transgressions. Wash me thoroughly from my iniquity, and cleanse me from my sin! For I know my transgressions, and my sin is ever before me." David wanted freedom from his sins, for which he was deeply ashamed. And God's steadfast love has abundant mercy.

The Lord God told Israel in Isaiah 44:22, "I have wiped out your transgressions like a thick cloud And your sins like a heavy mist." The fog may be heavy in the morning, but it doesn't last. When God forgives, the record of our transgressions they don't last, that record. When Judah returned from exile in Babylon, the Lord God promised in Jeremiah 33:8, "I will cleanse them from all their iniquity by which they have sinned against Me, and I will pardon all their iniquities by which they have sinned

against Me and by which they have transgressed against Me.” Jeremiah 50 verse 20 gives more promises: “In those days and at that time,” declares the LORD, “search will be made for the iniquity of Israel, but there will be none; and for the sins of Judah, but they will not be found; for I will pardon those whom I leave as a remnant.”

The people sang in Psalm 85:1 to 3, “O LORD, You showed favor to Your land; You restored the captivity of Jacob. You forgave the iniquity of Your people; You covered all their sin. You withdrew all Your fury; You turned away from Your burning anger.” God’s forgiveness means He’s no longer angry at us or wanting to punish us for our transgressions. God is interested in our reconciliation, in befriending us once again.

The Scriptures also speak of washing away sin. David cried to God in Psalm 51:1 and 2, “Have mercy on me, O God, according to your steadfast love; according to your abundant mercy blot out my transgressions. (and then) Wash me thoroughly from my iniquity, and cleanse me from my sin!” Repentance is a washing of the heart from evil thoughts. Repentance is necessary for anyone who desires salvation. Jeremiah 4:14 warned Jerusalem, “Wash your heart from evil, O Jerusalem, That you may be saved. How long will your wicked thoughts Lodge within you?” The grace of God never works apart from repentance.

True repentance, the washing of the heart, leads to a change of life. Isaiah 55:6 to 7 says, “Seek the LORD while He may be found; Call upon Him while He is near. Let the wicked forsake his way And the unrighteous man his thoughts; And let him return to the LORD, And He will have compassion on him, And to our God, For He will abundantly pardon.” Time doesn’t matter. We must forsake our evil thoughts and evil ways. And thankfully, we can say with David in Psalm 51:17 that, “The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit; a broken and contrite heart, O God, you will not despise.”

Sent by God, Ananias told Saul of Tarsus in Acts 22:16, “And now why do you wait? Rise and be baptized and wash away your sins, calling on his name.” Now washing is essential to enter heaven. Revelation 22:14 says, “Blessed are those who wash their robes, so that they may have the right to the tree of life and that they may enter the city by the gates.” How are our robes washed? Well Revelation 7:14 says, “They have washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb.” Yes, we are washed by the blood of the Lamb. When does that happen? Well it happens when we come into contact with Jesus who shed His blood.

Romans 6:3 to 4 says, “Do you not know that all of us who have been baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into his death? We were buried therefore with him by baptism into death, in order that, just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, we too might walk in newness of life.” Now baptism in water is baptism into Christ; baptism into Christ is baptism into His blood. And Romans 6:6 explains that, “We know that our old self was crucified with him in order that the body of sin might be brought to nothing, so that we would no longer be enslaved to sin.” Baptism is when God remits, removes, erases, and washes away our sins. Baptism is when He rescues us, redeems us and sets us free from the guilt and punishment of sin.

Baptism is the time when God saves us, but baptism is also a way of calling on the name of the Lord according to Acts 22:16. Well, how does that happen? Well 1 Peter 3:21 explains, “Baptism, which corresponds to this, now saves you, not as a removal of dirt from the body but as an appeal to God for a good conscience, through the resurrection of Jesus Christ.” Baptism appeals from a corrupt conscience to gain a good conscience. And God causes the old man of sin to be crucified with Christ, buried with Christ, and raised with Christ so that one can walk in newness of life, freed from sin. Saved.

David cried out in Psalm 51:7, “Purge me with hyssop, and I shall be clean; wash me, and I shall be whiter than snow. Let me hear joy and gladness; let the bones that you have broken rejoice.”

Repentance comes from godly sorrow, but salvation leads one to rejoice in God’s grace and mercy. One of the best things you can do today is to give thanks for God’s compassionate mercy that forgives sin and leads to eternal life. David sang in Psalm 103:1 to 5, “Bless the LORD, O my soul, (Bless the Lord and) and all that is within me, bless his holy name! Bless the LORD, O my soul, and forget not all his benefits, who forgives all your iniquity, who heals all your diseases, who redeems your life from the pit, who crowns you with steadfast love and mercy, who satisfies you with good so that your youth is renewed like the eagle’s.”

In this psalm David especially speaks of our forgiveness. Psalm 103:8 to 13 says: The LORD is compassionate and gracious, Slow to anger and abounding in lovingkindness. He will not always strive with us, Nor will He keep His anger forever. He has not dealt with us according to our sins, Nor rewarded us according to our iniquities. For as high as the heavens are above the earth, So great is His lovingkindness toward those who fear Him. (and) As far as the east is from the west, So far has He removed our transgressions from us. Just as a father has compassion on his children, So the LORD has compassion on those who fear Him. For He Himself knows our frame; He is mindful that we are but dust.

J. W McGarvey, a great Bible scholar, many years ago wrote about the remission or forgiveness of sins as part of the new covenant that we have with Christ. And he said: One of the terms of the new covenant that God makes with Israel in these days under Christ, is this, “their sins and their iniquities, I will remember no more” (Heb. 8 verse 12). (Now that’s a very surprising thing he says), an astonishing statement. (He says) I do not know how God makes out to forget them. We can’t forget them: I don’t know how He does. I don’t know exactly what He means when He says, “their sins and their iniquities I will remember no more;” unless it means, I will never bring them up against you anymore. They are gone. I have thrown them away; they are blotted out.

Brethren, after having lived and groaned under sin, with a conscience that has ground us and tormented us for a long time, how blessed the relief—how unspeakably blissful the state, to know that they are blotted out—that they are thrown away—that they will never be brought up by the great God against us in all eternity—that in the day of judgment no mention will be made of them! That is the happy condition of the man who is redeemed by the blood of Christ, and has obtained the remission of sins.” McGarvey’s right. I don’t know about you, but I feel very much like brother McGarvey in gratitude for the forgiveness of sins.

I have a couple of scars on my chin and another on my side. I received both scars from my brother more than 60 years ago. Today they make no difference to me, because I love my brother. Loving my brother is more important than counting scars. Forgiveness is an act of God. He blots the record of our sins out of the book that He keeps. God throws them away. God is merciful to our iniquities and remembers our sins no more forever. 2 Corinthians 5:19 says that, “in Christ God was reconciling the world to himself, not counting their trespasses against them.” He forgives so that He can still be close to us and reconcile.

Let’s pray together. Oh Father we’re thankful for Your great wisdom. For Your great compassion and love which gives us hope and the forgiveness of sins. And Father we pray that as we are forgiven that we’ll live a life that honors and glorifies You with our love for You and for others. And by our changing our ways to please You. This is our prayer in the name of Jesus, Amen.

Peter concluded his sermon in Acts 2:36, "Therefore let all the house of Israel know for certain that God has made Him both Lord and Christ—this Jesus whom you crucified." Now in verse 37, the people reacted to discovering their great sin of crucifying Jesus. Verse 37 says, "Now when they heard this, they were pierced to the heart, and said to Peter and the rest of the apostles, 'Brethren, what shall we do?'" Peter said to them in verse 38, "Repent, and each of you be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins; and you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit." That was God's answer in the first gospel sermon. And it's still God's answer for us today.

In Acts 2:38 both repentance and being baptized take place before one receives the forgiveness of sins. A recent paraphrase explains, "Repent and return to God, and each one of you must be baptized in the name of Jesus, the Anointed One, to have your sins removed." We are not baptized because our sins are already removed; we are baptized to have our sins removed. That is forgiveness.

God wants to redeem and reconcile you to Himself so that you can live with Him forever and ever. One day you will either say, "I loved the Lord and followed Him" or, "I waited too long and missed my opportunity." Hebrews 9:27 says, "it is appointed for man to die once, and after that comes judgment." God wants every person to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth (1 Timothy 2 and verse 4). What do you want? If you ignore God or don't care about God, God notices with a broken heart. And if you humbly and lovingly obey Him, He will not refuse you.

We hope our study, Being Forgiven, has caused you to turn to God for freedom from sin. If you live in the United States and want a free printed copy, send your request to In Search of the Lord's Way, P.O. Box 371, Edmond, OK 73083 or send an e-mail to searchtv@searchtv.org. Or, you can call the Search office toll-free 1-800-321-8633. For all our viewers outside the United States, we have free programs and biblical materials on our website, www.searchtv.org. So please subscribe to our channel, "SearchTVMinistry" and like the programs. We also offer free Bible Correspondences. Now don't worry, we're not asking for money. We're here to help you draw close to God.

We hope that you'll attend a church of Christ somewhere near you. And you need a church family and we hope that you'll go. As always we say to you, God bless you and we love you from all of us at In Search of the Lord's Way.