

# God is Forgiving

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## INTRODUCTION

- A. A little girl was playing with some very valuable tea cups her mother had. The tea cups themselves weren't that valuable monetarily, but the mother's grandmother had given them to her on her wedding day. Obviously, they had great sentimental value.
1. The little girl came to her mother sobbing, "Oh, mama, I'm so sorry I broke your beautiful cup."
  2. The mother replied, "I know you're sorry, and I forgive you. Now don't cry anymore."
    - a. The mother then swept up the pieces of the broken cup and placed them in the trash can.
    - b. But the little girl enjoyed the guilty feeling. She went to the trash can, picked out the pieces of the cup, brought them to her mother and sobbed, "Mother, I'm so sorry I broke your pretty cup."
  3. This time her mother spoke firmly to her. "Take those pieces and put them back in the trash can and don't be silly enough to take them out again. I told you I forgave you so don't cry anymore, and don't pick up the broken pieces anymore."
- B. How many times do we need to pick up the broken pieces of our lives?
1. I'm afraid that each of us has more broken pieces in our lives than we would ever like to admit.
  2. But, the good news is that regardless of how many broken pieces we need to pick up, our God is a forgiving God, one who will sweep up the broken pieces, forgive us, and tell us to forget about it.
  3. This morning, we wish to explore God's forgiveness to understand more about our sin and the pardon God offers.

## GOD DOES FORGIVE

- A. Throughout Scripture, we are told that God is a forgiving God.
1. "When our transgressions prevail over us, thou dost forgive them" (Ps. 65:3).
  2. "Bless the LORD, O my soul, and forget not all his benefits, who forgives all your iniquity, who heals all your diseases" (Ps. 103:2-3).
  3. "If you forgive men their trespasses, your heavenly Father also will forgive you" (Mt. 6:14).
  4. "God exalted him at his right hand as Leader and Savior, to give repentance to Israel and forgiveness of sins" (Acts 5:31).
  5. "In him we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of our trespasses, according to the riches of his grace" (Eph. 1:7).
  6. "The prayer of faith will save the sick man, and the Lord will raise him up; and if he has committed sins, he will be forgiven" (J s. 5:15).
  7. "If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just, and will forgive our sins and cleanse us from all unrighteousness" (1 Jn. 1:9).
- B. Let us think about the implications of God's forgiveness!

## MAN NEEDS GOD'S FORGIVENESS

- A. Before we are able to go any further, we must come to terms with the necessity of forgiveness.
- B. Everyone is a sinner.
1. "They have all fallen away; they are all alike depraved; there is none that does good, no, not one" (Ps. 53:3).
  2. "Surely there is not a righteous man on earth who does good and never sins" (Eccl. 7:20).
  3. "All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned everyone to his own way" (Is. 53:6).

4. "All have sinned and fall short of the glory of God" (Rom. 3:23).
  5. Each one of us here this morning has sinned. There is no one who does not sin. Granted, we may have struggled with and committed different types of sin, but we've all sinned.
  6. A man was looking for a good church to attend, and he happened into a small one where a man was praying.
    - a. The man who was praying prayed like this: "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."
    - b. The man dropped into a seat and sighed with relief as he said: "Thank goodness, I have found my crowd at last."
    - c. There are people in this world who think that we Christians think we're better than everyone else. You know yourselves how false that is. We sin and we struggle, just like everyone else.
- C. We need forgiveness for those sins we all commit, for the penalty for sin is severe.
1. Scriptures outline several penalties for those who sin.
    - a. Sin brings spiritual death.
      - 1) "The wages of sin is death" (Rom. 6:23).
      - 2) "Sin, finding opportunity in the commandment, deceived me and by it killed me" (Rom. 7: 11).
    - b. Sin enslaves its practitioners — "Jesus answered them, 'Truly, truly, I say to you, everyone who commits sin is a slave to sin'" (Jn. 8:34).
    - c. Sin separates one from God, both in this life and in the life to come.
      - 1) "Your iniquities have made a separation between you and your God, and your sins have hid his face from you so that he does not hear" (Is. 59:2).
      - 2) The sinful "shall suffer the punishment of eternal destruction and exclusion from the presence of the Lord and from the glory of his might" (2 Thess. 1:9).
    - d. Sin shall bring God's wrath upon those who dwell in it.
      - 1) "The wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and wickedness of men who by their wickedness suppress the truth" (Rom. 1:18).
      - 2) "Let no one deceive you with empty words, for it is because of these things [the sins Paul has recounted in vv. 3-5] that the wrath of God comes upon the sons of disobedience" (Eph. 5:6).
  2. Because of the penalties of sin, we better make sure that our sins are forgiven!

## **GOD HAS ACTED FOR MAN'S FORGIVENESS**

- A. When we talked about God's love last week, I made the point that love is action and that God's love demonstrates that. Not only did God show his love through actions, but he demonstrates his forgiveness through actions, too.
- B. As we go back to the OT, we find God making promises (acting) concerning forgiveness.
  1. The prophets often spoke about the coming forgiveness of God.
    - a. "He was wounded for our transgressions; he was bruised for our iniquities; upon him was the chastisement that made us whole, and with his stripes we are healed" (Is. 53:5).
    - b. "'On that day there shall be a fountain opened for the house of David and the inhabitants of Jerusalem to cleanse them from sin and uncleanness" (Zech. 13:1).
  2. The sacrifices under the Mosaic Code testified to the need of Jesus' sacrifice.
    - a. Notice what we read concerning the sin offering — "Then he shall offer the second for a burnt offering according to the ordinance; and the priest shall make atonement for him for the sin which he has committed, and he shall be forgiven" (Lev. 5:10).
    - b. We know, however, that those sacrifices were insufficient to remove the sin of people. "And every priest stands daily at his service, offering repeatedly the same sacrifices, which can never take away sins" (Heb. 10:11).
- C. As we turn to the NT, we find God acting for man's forgiveness.

1. God acted for man's forgiveness in the coming of John the Baptizer.
  - a. John's ministry is described as preparation for the coming Messiah.
    - 1) "The voice of one crying in the wilderness: Prepare the way of the Lord, make his paths straight" (Mt. 3:3).
    - 2) The preparation of John included the simple message: "Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand" (Mt. 3:2).
  - b. In fact, John's baptism was in order to have sins removed: "John the baptizer appeared in the wilderness, preaching a baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sins" (Mk. 1:4).
2. God acted for man's forgiveness through the death of Jesus.
  - a. The blood of Jesus, shed in his death, makes man's forgiveness possible.
    - 1) "This is my blood of the covenant, which is poured out for many for the forgiveness of sins" (Mt. 26:28).
    - 2) "In him we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of our trespasses, according to the riches of his grace" (Eph. 1:7).
  - b. Jesus understood his work to be to give his life for the forgiveness of our sins: "The Son of man came not to be served but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many" (Mt. 20:28).
3. God also acted for man's forgiveness by sending the apostles into the world to proclaim that forgiveness.
  - a. The message of the apostles was to be one of forgiveness: Jesus told the apostles, "Repentance and forgiveness of sins" should be preached in his name to all the nations (Lk. 24:47).
  - b. The apostles faithfully proclaimed that message.
    - 1) Remember the words of Peter at Pentecost: "Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins" (Acts 2:38).
    - 2) Notice also what Peter said at Solomon's Portico: "Repent therefore, and turn again, that your sins may be blotted out, that times of refreshing may come from the presence of the Lord" (Acts 3:19).

## **WHAT DOES GOD'S FORGIVENESS MEAN FOR ME?**

- A. There is no sin that God cannot forgive.
  1. Aristotle wrote a few hundred years before Jesus, "Even God cannot change the past."
    - a. There may be consequences of sin we must bear all of our lives, whether we are forgiven or not.
    - b. But, in a real sense God can change the past. He — and only he — can wipe our slate clean so that we can start all over.
  2. The ministry of Jesus demonstrates that God can forgive any sin.
    - a. When the accusers of the woman caught in adultery left, Jesus looked at her and said, "Neither do I condemn you" (Jn. 8:11).
    - b. The woman who anointed Jesus' feet — and she, in all likelihood, was a prostitute — found forgiveness. Jesus said, "Her sins, which are many, are forgiven" (Lk. 7:47).
    - c. Think also of the compassion that Jesus showed Peter — that Jesus allowed Peter, after his betrayal, to be something of a spokesman for the apostles and to proclaim his message.
  3. The most amazing demonstration of God's forgiveness occurs in Acts 2.
    - a. Peter had condemned that crowd for killing the Messiah: "This Jesus, delivered up according to the definite plan and foreknowledge of God, you crucified and killed by the hands of lawless men" (v. 23).
    - b. When they cried out in despair "What shall we do?" Peter didn't say, "Wait a minute, you killed the Messiah, there ain't no hope for you." He gave them hope and told them how to have their sins — even the sin of killing the Son of God — removed.

4. "I wish there was some wonderful place called the Land of Beginning Again, Where all our mistakes and all our heartaches And all of our poor, selfish grief Could be dropped like a shabby old coat At the door and never put on again." God basically offers that to us in his forgiveness.
- B. God's forgiveness also means that I need to abandon sin.
1. If God is gracious and forgives our sin, we dare not live in sin.
    - a. "What shall we say then? Are we to continue in sin that grace may abound? By no means!" (Rom. 6:1-2).
      - 1) Paul seems to have been concerned that some Christians might say, "Well, if God is so forgiving and he likes to forgive so much, we ought to sin so that God will have more to forgive."
      - 2) Paul says, "No, wait a minute. God does love to forgive, but we dare not use that as a pretext to sin."
    - b. "You also must consider yourselves dead to sin and alive to God in Christ Jesus" (Rom. 6:11).
    - c. "Those who belong to Christ Jesus have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires" (Gal. 5:24).
  2. Let us put away our sin, and live appropriately in light of God's forgiveness!
- C. Because God is so forgiving, man has an obligation to forgive others.
1. We are taught in Scripture that we Christians ought to be forgiving in light of God's forgiveness.
    - a. "If you forgive men their trespasses, your heavenly Father also will forgive you" (Mt. 6:14).
    - b. "Be kind to one another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, as God in Christ forgave you" (Eph. 4:32).
  2. Since God has been so very good to us and forgive us of so much, can we do anything but forgive those who do wrong against us?
  3. A man stopped, leaned on a rail fence, and watched an old farmer plowing with a mule.
    - a. The visitor said, "I don't like to butt in, but you could save yourself a lot of work by saying 'gee' and 'haw' to that mule instead of just tuggin' on them lines."
    - b. The old timer pulled a big handkerchief from his pocket and mopped his brow. "Yep, I know that," he agreed, "but this mule kicked me six years ago, and I ain't spoke to him since."
  4. It's easy to see the absurdity in that tale, but isn't it just as absurd to keep a grudge against one made in the image of God when God has forgiven us of so much?

## CONCLUSION

- A. You know how you can have God's forgiveness.
1. Some of you need to be baptized into Christ in order to have access to that forgiveness: "Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of sins; and you shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit" (Acts 2:38).
  2. Some of you need to come back to the Lord: "Repent therefore of this wickedness of yours, and pray to the Lord that, if possible, the intent of your heart may be forgiven you" (Acts 8:22).
- B. Do you need to come and accept God's forgiveness this morning? Will you do so?