

God's Wonderful Forgiveness

“The wicked will not inherit the kingdom of heaven. The immoral / idol worshippers / adulterers / homosexuals / thieves / drunkards, and slanderers. And **some of you were like that!** But--You were washed, you were sanctified, you were justified, in the name of the Lord.”
1 Corinthians 6:11

When Jesus first comes to us He does not just talk about the nice things we have done, but also about the mean and selfish things we have done; not the good books we have read, but about the dirty books; not the people we have helped but the people we have hurt or failed to help.

The Need of Forgiveness

The question is; does it matter? Does God take our wrongdoing seriously? If He is like *Hugh Hefner*, He says, “Party on!” If He is like *grandparents*, He says, “That’s OK, you didn’t mean to do it.” But God, from day one in the Bible, is a God who requires obedience to His laws and a moral, loving lifestyle. The need of forgiveness is found in *the moral nature* of a God who promises to punish wrongdoing. Belief in a coming Day of Judgment is a part of our makeup as human beings. “Pay Day Someday” is written into the constitution of the universe. In Acts 24 Paul is taken into custody before the governor Felix. The Bible says, “When Paul talked about living right, self control and the judgment to come, *Felix trembled.*” (24:25) When sin came into the world, God sent suffering and death as His judgment (Genesis 3). Every time we pass a hospital or a grave yard we know God takes wrongdoing seriously. The Bible says:

“God will reward each of us for what we have done. He will give eternal life to everyone who has patiently done what is good ...But His wrath will be with every selfish person who rejects the truth to do evil.” (Romans 2:6-9)

<p>Hell is not the invention of priests and preachers to scare you out of your money. It is a horrible reality that Jesus preached on more than anyone else in the Bible. He went to the cross to save us from it.</p>
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Our desperate need of forgiveness is seen in the torture and **murder of Jesus Christ** by the human race, people just like you and me. Jesus Christ was the only truly good and loving human being who ever lived and people just like us butchered Him. He was a human being, and this is how we treat each other. He

was God (John 1:1/14) and this is how we treated God when we got our hands on Him.

Our sin was there. Are you ever *proud*? The pride of the Pharisees caused His death. Have you ever *lied*? It was false witnesses at His trial that helped convict Him. Have you ever been *cruel*? So were the soldiers who beat him. Have you ever stood by and *done nothing*, while someone was being hurt? That was the sin of Pilate who didn't want to hurt his reputation; of the disciples who ran away in fear; and of the spectators who didn't want to get involved. The old spiritual asks, "Were you there when they crucified my Lord?" We were not only there, we were INVOLVED.

Awhile back I saw Calvary repeated. A video on a school bus showed a bus driver doing nothing and the whole bus laughing, as a boy was being hit and kicked by other children. That is human nature without God.

Two months after the cross Peter told Pilgrims from all over the world, "**With the help of wicked men you crucified Him.**" (Acts 2) The majority of them had never even seen Jesus. (Read Hebrews. 6:5-6) We all stand with raised hammers guilty of the murder of God's beautiful Son. God gave Him to us and we stripped Him naked, and gave Him back like a piece of butchered meat on the point of a cross.

The Fact of Forgiveness

At the cross we also see the wonderful FACT of God's forgiveness. Jesus, hanging on the cross, kept saying over and over, "**Father forgive them.**" (Luke 23) Jesus was God and man (John 1:1,14), and everything He did, He did as both. As God, Jesus had the power to destroy His murderers. He said He could call ten thousand angels to rescue Him (Matthew 26:53); but He didn't. He let us throw all the evil and hatred of human nature at Him, and He responded with love and forgiveness. He forgave those who lied about him; who beat Him; who nailed Him; who mocked Him; and who spit on Him. When I was 22 I claimed this verse and, as best as I knew how, I gave Jesus all my sins to forgive and my life to change and control. I was instantly forgiven, changed on the inside, and my name was written down in the record book of heaven.

Jesus' prayer opened the door of forgiveness *to everyone*. If ever any crowd did not deserve forgiveness it was the howling, hissing crowd around the cross. And the worst of these were the two criminals who died with Him. Matthew says both joined in the mockery of Jesus. At least they should have had some sympathy, some sense of comradeship. Of all the people, they deserved most to go to hell. But one of them didn't. After hearing Jesus' prayer he called out for mercy; and right on the spot, Jesus promised him that very day he would be with Him in heaven (Luke 23:42). When the sun came up that morning he was a child of the devil. When it set that night he was a child of God.

The Blessings of Forgiveness

The instant we give Jesus our sins to forgive and our lives to change and control, like the criminal beside Jesus, we are instantly forgiven. He prayed and was promised heaven on the spot (Luke 24). He didn't have to walk a church aisle, say twenty "Hail Mary's" or have water dropped on his head. God's wonderful forgiveness is almost indescribable. God seems to empty the dictionary and pull out all the stops to show us, as far as He is concerned; at the moment of our forgiveness, our sins are gone. It is as though we never committed one evil act. The Bible terms are:

Forgiveness - Fellowship is established (Mark 3:28)

Sanctified - (Holy, Saints)-God calls us His own (Philippians 1:1)

Reconciliation - God calls us His friends. The war is over.
(2 Corinthians 5)

God's wrath is removed (Romans 5:9)

Adoption- He chooses us as His children even
though we are ungodly (Galatians 4:5-6)

Terms aren't enough, so God gives us beautiful word pictures. He **remembers our sins no more** (Hebrews 10:17) / **Covers** them (Psalm 32:1) / **Blots them out** (Isaiah 44:22) / **Never mentions them again** (Ezekiel 33:16) / **puts them behind His back** (Isaiah 38:34) / **throws them to the bottom of the sea**, where no man could go (Micah 7:19) / and **erases** them (Acts 3:19). The term **justification (declared innocent)** (Romans 3:21-27, etc.) means God, the moral ruler of the universe, looks at us as though we never did one thing wrong.

As God's forgiven children we will still do wrong, but when we ask for and receive forgiveness, as the Lord's Prayer teaches us; it for restored fellowship and joy. That is why **David** after committing adultery and murder (2 Samuel 11-12) did not pray for his salvation to be restored but the *joy* of it (Psalm 51:12). This is why Jesus tells us to say, "*Our father*" before we say, "*Forgive us of our sins.*" Before salvation we are condemned rebels, and after it we are disobedient children, whom God will discipline but never disown.

We accept all this **by faith**. When a private saved Napoleon's life in battle, he made him a Lieutenant. The man walked over to the fire where other officers were and warmed his hands. When they grabbed him he said he was now a lieutenant. They laughed and said, "What makes you think that Private?" He pointed to Napoleon standing in the distance and said, "He told me I was." They saluted and let him in.

When people ask us how we know we are right with God and going to heaven, we point to the Word of God and say it tells us so. The *greatest* song we Christians ever learn is the *first* song we ever learned, "Jesus loves me this I know / For the Bible tells me so."

The Rejection of Forgiveness

“One of the criminals hanging there, was hurling abuses at Him, and said, ‘Are you not the Messiah? Then save Yourself and save us.’ But the other criminal said, ‘Don’t you fear God?’”

(Luke 23)

The three men on those three crosses represent the whole human race. Jesus died **for** sinners as our Savior. One criminal died **to** sin as a way of life and was saved. The other criminal, unbelieving, unrepentant, and rebellious to the end, died **in** sin and went into eternity unchanged and unforgiven.

The tragedy is that Jesus loved that man as much as He loves anybody. He offered that man forgiveness. I said in my first sermon ever preached, that Judas did not go to hell because he betrayed Jesus. He went there because He went to the wrong tree. Instead of going out and hanging himself, he should have gone to the foot of the cross for forgiveness. Jesus would have welcomed him with open arms.

Where is Hell?

God loves people in hell. I know where hell is; it is on the wrong side of the cross. In heaven we will look to the cross and sing,

Jesus paid it all, all to Him I owe / Sin had left a crimson stain,
He washed it white as snow /

And when in scenes of Glory / We sing a new, new song
‘Twill be the old, old story / That we have loved so long

That is the song of heaven. Looking at the cross and saying, “Thank you.” The sounds that come from hell are not songs, but if words of despair could be set to the music they would be:

Of all sad words of tongue or pen / The saddest are these/It might have been.

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