

# Starting Over: The Forgiveness of Sins

“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. For my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways, saith the LORD.”

Isaiah 55:7-8

## Introduction:

1. Last Sunday we studied Jeremiah’s warning to thoroughly amend our ways and doings (Jer 7).
2. When by God’s grace we are convicted of sin in our lives, how do we start over in righteousness?
3. As proud, depraved men, we make it difficult for ourselves and others to start over after failures.
4. We may feel discouraged, defeated, overwhelmed, and destroyed; but we must reject these lies!
5. If we want to walk before the Lord with perfect hearts, then we must trust His great forgiveness.
6. His forgiveness exceeds our concept of it, as the heavens are higher than the earth (Isaiah 55:6-9).
7. How can we be blameless before Him to secure His greatest favor and give the greatest service?
8. I have good news for you – the good news of mercy, forgiveness, and hope by the blood of Jesus.

## I. LEGAL FORGIVENESS

- A. Jesus Christ paid the legal penalty for our sins by His substitutionary death on the cross, so we could be forgiven all sins forever by the Holy and Just, eternal God.
  1. He was born and named Jesus for this end (Isaiah 53:5-6,10-11; Mat 1:21).
  2. 2000 years ago He made peace with God (Jn 19:30; Ro 5:1; Col 1:20-22).
  3. This single event legally ended the sin problem forever (Heb 10:10-18).
  4. It is called the forgiveness of sins (Eph 1:7; Col 1:14; 2:13; Rom 4:6-8).
  5. There is nothing to be laid against the child of God at all (Rom 8:33-34).
  6. We shall be presented holy, without spot to God (Jude 1:24-25; Rev 19:8).
  7. The apostle Paul boldly proclaims Jesus came to save sinners (I Tim 1:15).
  8. “Five bleeding wounds He bears, received on Calvary; they pour effectual prayers, they strongly plead for me; ‘Forgive him, O forgive,’ they cry, ‘Nor let that ransomed sinner die.’”
- B. We call this legal or positional forgiveness to divide it from practical forgiveness.
  1. God deals legally or positionally with men before birth (Heb 7:9-10), or He can deal with them by an event after their death (Rom 3:25; Heb 9:15).
  2. We were legally sinners and condemned to death in Eden (Rom 5:12-19).
  3. Our position before God was as condemned rebels, even before our birth.
  4. Jesus Christ, the Second Adam, cleared this sin problem before our birth.
  5. It is unconditional to God’s elect (Rom 3:23-26; 5:15-19; I Peter 1:2).
  6. It is final without variation; and it covers past, present, and future sins.
- C. Without it, we die eternally in hell; with it, we live in heaven as God’s holy sons.
- D. We know we were forgiven legally by good works (II Pet 1:8-11; James 2:14-26).
- E. There is no starting over legally, for Jesus put sins away legally once and forever.
- F. Therefore, as the sons of God, proven such by good works, we have full and final forgiveness of all our sins through Jesus Christ; Who made peace with God, so that we are now positionally, and then formally, without sin and fit for heaven.
- G. However, we still sin by a corrupt nature, which steals our consciousness of this peace and breaks the spiritual fellowship we have by the Spirit with our Father.

## II. PRACTICAL FORGIVENESS

- A. The death and life of Jesus Christ also provides the means for us to confess our sins to God on an ongoing basis for restored fellowship with Him as our Father.
- B. Though positionally and legally perfect, righteous, and holy forever, with nothing to ever be laid to our charge, our sins interrupt practical and personal fellowship.
  - 1. Adoption makes a child a son; but it does not guarantee steady fellowship.
  - 2. The prodigal was dead for fellowship, but still a living son (Luk 15:24,32).
  - 3. A Christian widow who gets her priorities confused is dead (I Tim 5:6).
  - 4. It is this serious consequence of sin we end in conversion (James 5:19-20).
  - 5. He is a personal God, and dwells with us and in us by His Holy Spirit (John 14:16-18), Who reveals God's love to us (Rom 5:5; 8:15; Gal 4:6).
  - 6. Our sins grieve and quench the Spirit Personally (Eph 4:30; I Thes 5:19), which robs us of the love, joy, peace, faith, comfort, and strength we need.
  - 7. Eternal life is for us to know God (John 17:3; I John 5:20); but fellowship, friendship, and communion are interrupted by our sins (I John 1:1-7).
    - a. Observe the emphasis on fellowship and full joy in Jesus Christ.
    - b. Since He is light, or holiness, we must walk in light without sin.
    - c. The present tense "cleanseth" sanctifies all we do by His blood.
    - d. And the complete walking in light includes our confession (v.9).
  - 8. He will not hear children with unconfessed sins (Ps 66:18; Isaiah 59:1-2).
  - 9. Read David's description of this condition (Ps 51:8-12; 32:3-4; 88:1-18).
  - 10. He sends leanness – no prosperity – into your soul (Psalm 106:15; 78:33).
  - 11. Unconfessed sins bring judgment even on saints (Is 63:10; I Co 11:28-32).
- C. Practical forgiveness is conditional upon repentance, confession, and reformation.
  - 1. We either choose to cover sins or confess and forsake them (Prov 28:13).
  - 2. We still sin, but He is faithful and just to forgive such sins (I John 1:8-10).
  - 3. The conditions are admission, repudiation, and submission (Job 33:27-28).
  - 4. Consider David's focus on his guilt and offence against God (Ps 51:1-17).
  - 5. The confession of sin is an act of worship, glorifying God (Joshua 7:19).
  - 6. Even imperfect confession may obtain God's forgiveness (Ps 78:34-39).
  - 7. True confession is coming with words to the Lord for mercy (Hos 14:1-3).
- D. Restoration is gloriously complete based on Christ's work and God's faithfulness.
  - 1. See God's graciousness in forgiving Israel their backsliding (Hos 14:4-7).
  - 2. Hosea described it as a healing revival with exaltation (Hosea 6:1-2).
  - 3. Consider David's anticipation of restored joy and service (Ps 51:12-19).
  - 4. Job called it deliverance from the pit and seeing the light (Job 33:28).
  - 5. The Lord promised communion together for repentance (Rev 3:19-20).
- E. Because of the blood of Christ, we may approach God boldly (Heb 10:19-22).
- F. He ever lives to be our effectual High Priest (Hebrews 7:25; 9:24; Romans 5:10).
- G. This confession and forgiveness cycle is how saints live in the world (Matt 6:12).
- H. Jesus came to call sinners rather than the righteous to repentance (Luke 5:31-32).
- I. The forgiveness of sin does not lead to license, but rather the opposite (Ps 130:4).
- J. There may be practical consequences and chastening for sin, but the soul is free.
- K. The two phases or aspects of the forgiveness of sins are seen clearly (Ps 32:1-6).
- L. We sing, "Prone to wander, Lord, I feel it. Prone to leave the God I love. Here's my heart, O take and seal it; seal it for thy courts above."

### III. STARTING OVER

- A. The process of examination, confession, and reformation is our continual duty, for while we are in the world we will sin. We should not sin, but we will (I John 2:1).
- B. If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness (I John 1:9). We should claim this promise strongly.
  - 1. Confession is admitting we are wrong in some specific matter i.e. sins.
  - 2. He is faithful, for He has promised to forgive those who repent (Pr 28:13).
  - 3. He is just, for He cannot punish His Son and ignore the benefits (Ro 3:26).
  - 4. Whatever unrighteousness we have done, He will cleanse it all away.
- C. Compare with the same lesson taught in the Old Testament (Proverbs 28:13).
  - 1. Covering your sins is continuing sinfully and attempting to hide your guilt.
  - 2. It is impossible to prosper while covering sin, regardless of your thoughts.
  - 3. Confession is only sincere when forsaking is part of the godly repentance.
  - 4. Mercy is as close as humbling ourselves and asking for His forgiveness.
- D. Repentance and confession include repudiation and full disclosure (Job 33:27-28).
- E. Consider how thoroughly God will recover a repenting sinner (Ezekiel 18:21-23).
- F. Godly men should rejoice at such promised blessings and start over (Ps 32:5-6).
- G. Satan will tempt us with doubts, but we must believe God's character and promises; it is our responsibility to take the shield of faith and believe (Eph 6:16)!
  - 1. He will lie to you that you are not truly forgiven until you are righteous.
  - 2. He will lie to you that so many failures end forgiveness, so you are ruined.
  - 3. He will lie to you that you may not be even be saved, because you so sin.
  - 4. He will lie to you that you can never be much in the kingdom of God.
  - 5. He will lie to you that God will not forgive the same sin so many times.
  - 6. He will lie to you that God will not forgive such and such sins.
- H. We must remember from where we fell, repent, and do the first works (Rev 2:5).
- I. Even a wicked nation can be forgiven and healed by the Lord God (II Chr 7:14).
- J. He abundantly pardons (Is 55:7; Rom 5:20)! This is simple – just believe it!
- K. He pities our frame and remembers our inability (Psalm 103:12; 78:38-39).
- L. Of course, we still know we are sinners, but we are forgiven sinners (Ps 25:7,11).
- M. How can we forget the adulteress (John 8:10-11) and a sinful woman (Luke 7:48)!
- N. He says to us, Be of good cheer, your sins are forgiven (Mark 9:2)! Rejoice!
- O. When David finishes his glorious psalm about forgiveness, see the joy (Ps 32:11)!
- P. The angels rejoice more over one sinner than ninety-nine just persons (Luk 15:7).
- Q. He didn't come to steal, kill, and destroy; He came with abundant life (Jn 10:10).
- R. Can you enjoy the spiritual song, "Because He lives, I can face tomorrow"?

### IV. EXAMPLES

- A. Even wicked Ahab obtained some mercy for some repentance (I Kings 21:17-29).
- B. David committed adultery, murder, and extended deceit (II Samuel 11:1 – 12:14).
  - 1. These sins are horrible and presumptuous by a man knowing much better.
  - 2. How easily Satan could have tempted David that God could not forgive it.
  - 3. Consider how quickly David said, "I have sinned against the Lord."
  - 4. And the Lord quickly answered, "The LORD also hath put away thy sin."
  - 5. And David remained the king by which all were compared (I Kgs 15:3-5).
- C. Peter denied Jesus Christ three times with oaths and cursing (Matthew 26:69-75).
  - 1. Jesus warned Peter of this event just a few hours earlier (Luke 22:31-34).
  - 2. Peter knew the horrible evil of this lying deed and wept bitterly over it.

3. Jesus confronted him with three questions in chastening (John 21:15-19), but this was after He first appeared to him (I Corinthians 15:5).
4. But He led the apostles, preached at Pentecost, converted Cornelius, etc.
- D. If your soul has “terminal” leanness, God can still forgive easily (Isaiah 38:1-5).
- E. If you rebel wickedly and flee to Tarshish, God can still forgive (Jonah 2:10).
- F. Josiah repented when he heard God’s word and obtained mercy (II Kgs 22:15-20).
- G. Read how the Lord made starting over easy even for the whole nation of Israel.
  1. When they cried to the Lord, He raised up Othniel for them (Judges 3:9).
  2. Though they sinned again, He answered their cry with Ehud (Judges 3:15).
  3. Though they sinned again, He answered their cry with Deborah (Jdgs 4:3).
  4. Though they sinned again, He answered their cry with Gideon (Jdgs 6:7).
  5. Even when it seemed hopeless, He still sent Jephthah (Judges 10:10-16).
  6. Solomon sought and God promised to heal the whole nation (II Chr 7:14).
  7. Asa led the whole nation to a revival by starting over again (II Chr 15:4).
  8. Even if Israel were captive far away, He would forgive (Deut 4:29-31).
  9. Though they sinned horribly to provoke Him, He forgave (Ps 106:39-48).
- H. Read how the Lord made starting over easy even for whole churches (Rev 2-3).
  1. Ephesus was about to lose their candlestick, but they could win (2:4-5).
  2. Pergamos had the doctrine of Balaam and the Nicolaitans (2:14-16).
  3. Sardis was not perfect, but they only needed to repent and watch (2:2-3).
  4. Laodicea was lukewarm for spewing, but they could win easily (3:19-20).
- I. How can saints in the world live perfect lives (Job 1:1; Luke 1:6)? I John 1:7-9!

#### V. WHAT DOTH HINDER THEE?

- A. God will not despise a broken and contrite heart; what encouragement (Ps 51:17)!
  1. Regardless of Satan’s lies, He will not despise or reject your confession.
  2. Broken and contrite is to be humble, crushed, full of sorrow and remorse.
- B. God will look to a man who is poor, contrite, and trembles at His Word (Is 66:2).
- C. When revealed to Moses, He was a God forgiving sins and iniquity (Ex 34:7).
- D. Melancholies have the hardest time believing – God forgives easily, forgets completely, forgives without payment, doesn’t scrutinize your motives, etc.
- E. Don’t try to take good works with you for forgiveness, just believe His promise!
- F. Of course we fail! We are sinners, and He is the holy God! But He has forgiven!
- G. His forgiveness is different from any we have ever known (Isaiah 55:7-9).
- H. There are only two things keeping you from starting over – the sin of rebellion, which is as witchcraft, or the sin of unbelief in the glorious work of Christ.
  1. Rebellion, no matter what lie you trust, will cost you everything (Jer 7).
  2. Unbelief in the glorious work of Christ offers no comfort (Rev 21:8).
- I. Don’t let anything hinder you from obeying! Run to Christ for peace and pardon!
- J. We don’t know what tomorrow will bring forth, so we must use His grace today!
- K. As the song declares, “If you wait until you’re better, you will never come at all.”

#### Conclusion:

1. Repent now while there is hope, for He will not always be waiting (Isaiah 55:6; Revelation 2:5).
2. God has not promised to always forgive and forget (Pr 29:1; Ps 95:7-11), as Israel found out when they tried to take Canaan after rebelling; for God had sworn against them (Num 14:40-45).
3. Bless the Lord with your soul and start over today (Ps 103:3; 32:11). Don’t presume tomorrow!
4. Do not forget the words of “Just as I Am,” which are addressed to sinners for restored fellowship.