

FORGIVENESS

IS IN CHRIST

Ephesians 4:32

For He delivered 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.*
(Colossians 1:13, 14)

I am writing to you, little children, because *your sins are forgiven you* for His name's sake.
(1 John 2:12)

Beloved, if you are born again—born of the Spirit, if you have received the life of Christ Jesus, then you are forgiven. *You don't get forgiven; you are forgiven!*

God dealt with the sin issue on the cross. Sins were judged, we were found guilty, and punishment for sin—death—was executed. Jesus died on behalf of us all. In the book of Hebrews we read:

Without shedding of blood there is no forgiveness.
(Hebrews 9:22)

Jesus said,

“Drink from it, all of you;
for this is My blood of the covenant, which is poured out
for many for forgiveness of sins.”
(Matthew 26:27, 28)

The forgiveness is in Christ Jesus. If you have Him, you are forgiven. If you don't have Jesus, if you don't believe in Him, you will die in your sins (John 8:24). Until we understand this truth to the fullest, we cannot concentrate on the life of Christ.

It took me seven years as a Christian before realizing the total forgiveness I received in Jesus. Why? I read the Bible for at least two hours a day, all that time. Why didn't I see it? It is all there. Could it be because wherever I turned, it was all the same, “Confess your sins and ask God for forgiveness.” Pastors in the churches say one minute that God forgave our sins, and the next minute, before drinking wine or grape juice and eating bread or wafers, they tell us to bow our heads and confess to God our sins and ask Him for forgiveness. There is always a warning that if we take the “Lord's Supper” in an unworthy manner, we shall be guilty of the body and the blood of the Lord. We have no clue what it all means but we rack our brains, trying to remember all our sins (keep in mind that whatever is not from faith is sin), and pray that God will forgive us. We are advised to “keep short accounts with God,” confess our sins, and ask for forgiveness, and we are also warned that if we don't do that, God will not listen to us. That is what I found being taught in most churches. Have you found the same?

“So am I forgiven or not,” I asked one pastor. His answer, I am sure, was straight from his seminary teaching: “Positionally yes, but progressively no.” Then he quoted 1 John 1:9, sadly, one of the most misunderstood verses in the Bible. I will address this verse at the end of this chapter. So I used to go to church every Sunday, Wednesday, and some other times as well, to hear that I was a sinner in need of forgiveness.

Yet that is a message for unbelievers, isn’t it? You could say that I was a bit confused. All along, deep inside, I knew that something was not right. I just couldn’t put my finger on it. I believed on one hand that God forgave all my sins, and on the other hand, I believed that if I confessed my sins that God was faithful and just to forgive my sins. Yes, we can believe both of these statements, but since they are contradictory, we can put faith only in one or the other. For seven years I put my faith in the latter. But God was at work in me. I had never personally asked Him to reveal the truth about this matter and never questioned it either. The tradition is to ask for the forgiveness of our sins and keep short accounts with God. That is what churches teach. I figured it must be so. That kind of teaching preoccupies us with sins, instead of the life of Christ.

The turning point, in my case, came after I read a well-accepted Christian book. I was advised by the author to confess and confess, and ask God to forgive my sins, and not just my sins, but also the sins of my ancestors, and God forbid if I forgot one. She also teaches in her book to cast out demons. So I was busy confessing sins and casting out demons. At this point, I knew I was definitely following men’s teaching, and not God’s. What a dangerous book!

I thank God that He stepped in at that moment. I really loved God and wanted to do all the right things to please Him. I was reaching up to God, not realizing that He has already reached down to me.

“Jesus, it is all Him; He has done it all!” Someone I have just met spoke these words, and it was just like a “light” came on in my head. She also shared a couple of tapes dealing with God’s total forgiveness, which I readily listened to, and the truth changed the course of my Christian walk. I had all the pieces of the “puzzle,” and now they came together. I began to see the whole picture. What a revelation! We read in the Word of God that it is the truth, which makes us free (John 8:32). Beloved, understanding that you don’t need to ask God for forgiveness, that in Jesus you are already forgiven, will revolutionize your life. I guarantee you that!

We must know who we are in Jesus, and what we have already received in Him. We are a new creation, and our identity is in Jesus. We are children of God; we are saints. God loves us unconditionally; we are His treasured ones. He accepted us in His Beloved Son; He has forgiven us. In Jesus we are complete. Brothers and sisters, see yourselves through God’s eyes. From now on thank God for His forgiveness instead of asking for it. (Read chapter “Christians.”)

I appeal to all faithful Christians to ask God for His truth. Read God’s Word and He will reveal all this to you. Asking God for forgiveness, for something He said He has already done, is definitely not walking by faith! God said that in Christ Jesus we are forgiven, and by faith we believe it and act upon it. Grasping this fundamental truth will change not only your relationship with God; all your relationships will improve.

The part in the Bible *we call* the “Lord’s Prayer” (Matthew 6:9–13) is a picture of forgiveness under the Law—the Old Testament attitude. Jesus spent His entire life under the law and the Old Testament. His death ushered in the New Testament (New Covenant).

And forgive us our debts, as we also have forgiven our debtors.

(Matthew 6:12)

For if you forgive men for their transgressions, your heavenly Father will also forgive you.

But if you do not forgive men, then your Father will not forgive your transgressions.

(Matthew 6:14, 15)

These verses were an expression of God’s plan that had not yet been completed. Our sins were not yet forgiven. Jesus was heading for the Cross where that would be accomplished. Now let us look at forgiveness under the New Testament.

In Him *we have* redemption through His blood, the *forgiveness* of our trespasses, according to the riches of His grace.

(Ephesians 1:7)

And when you were dead in your transgressions and the uncircumcision of your flesh, He made you alive together with Him, *having forgiven us all our transgressions,*

having canceled out the certificate of debt consisting of degrees against us and which was hostile to us; and *He has taken it out of the way,* having nailed it to the cross.

(Colossians 2:13, 14)

Only if we understand God’s total forgiveness, can we go on and pass the same forgiveness to others.

And be kind to one another, tender-hearted, forgiving each other, just as *God in Christ also has forgiven you.*

(Ephesians 4:32)

. . . bearing with one another, and forgiving each other, whoever has a complaint against anyone; just as *the Lord forgave you,* so also should you.

(Colossians 3:13)

To understand God's love and forgiveness will free us from guilt, so we can approach God without fear and with confidence of His total acceptance of us. He is not dealing with us on the basis of sins, but on the basis of a new life.

YOU ARE A NEW CREATION—LIVE LIKE ONE!

The following verse is often misunderstood:

If we confess our sins, He is faithful and righteous to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.

(1 John 1:9)

In the light of all the verses in this chapter, in which we clearly see that in Christ Jesus we are forgiven, how does this verse fit in?

Let us look at this verse in the context of the letter. In the first chapter, John is presenting Jesus—the Word of Life. Any time a person speaks to a group of people, there are some who believe and some who don't. Only God knows who is saved and who is not. The group that John was speaking to was no different than groups today. I believe that John was just speaking in the hopes of reaching those who did not believe. Note verse 3 and 8 to see that he is speaking to unbelievers in the congregation.

What we have seen and heard we proclaim to you also, *that you also may have fellowship with us*; and indeed our fellowship is with the Father, and with His Son Jesus Christ.

(1 John 1:3)

If we say that we have no sin, we are deceiving ourselves, and *the truth is not in us*.

(1 John 1:8)

It is unbelievers who don't have fellowship with John, God—the Father, and with His Son Jesus Christ, and the truth is not in them. The believers have the truth in them and it will be with them forever (2 John 1:2). Don't let the usage of the words "we" and "us" in the verses quoted above confuse you. Writers commonly identify themselves with their readers.

In verse 9, John is saying, in other words, "If you realize that you are a sinner in need of a Savior, and receive the truth—Jesus—this is what applies to you: "He is faithful and righteous to have forgiven our sins and to have cleansed us from all unrighteousness"—this is the literal Greek translation. It is done!

Then John turns to the believers, expressing his desire for them not to sin, but assuring them that if anyone sins, Jesus is the propitiation for their sins. The word propitiation means that God, the Father was fully satisfied with the sacrifice of His Son.

Beloved, the next time you confess (acknowledge) any sin in your life, thank God for His forgiveness, and for showing you what you are still lacking, then put that sin away. All unrighteousness is sin—sin not leading to death. There is a sin leading to death (1 John 5:16, 17). That sin is unbelief in Jesus. We have to learn to walk in total dependency upon God and His sufficiency, for only then we will experience the abundant life Jesus promised, only then we will see in our lives the amazing results of “Christ in you, the hope of glory”! *Beloved, we have to place our focus on Christ’s acceptance and life, instead of a work that is no longer ours.*

Don’t ever put people on a pedestal. People’s traditions and teachings, as well as our preconceived ideas, may be our biggest hindrance to comprehending the truth. Only those who have a love for the truth will not be deceived.

Of Him all the prophets bear witness that through His name everyone who believes in Him receives forgiveness of sins.

(Acts 10:43)

Jesus Christ . . . who loves us, and released us from our sins by His blood,

and He has made us to be a kingdom, priests to His God and Father; to Him be the glory and the dominion forever and ever. Amen.

(Revelation 1:5, 6)