

## "The Beauty of Forgiveness"

When we realize that we're lost spiritually, we seek for mercy. Hello, I'm Phil Sanders, and this is a Bible study "In Search of the Lord's Way." God's gracious mercy helps us understand the beauty of forgiveness. Stay tuned.

Welcome to In SEARCH of the Lord's Way! We're here to search the Scriptures for God's will. We search God's word, because it gives us a glimpse into the heart of the One who can save us and give us eternal life. We want to please Him and follow His instructions out of love for Him. We're not interested in pursuing our own agenda but in pursuing God's will. Thanks for taking time with us today. We want to be a part of your life each week.

Seeing the beauty of forgiveness, David said in Psalm 32, verses 1 and 2, "How blessed is he whose transgression is forgiven, whose sin is covered! How blessed is the man to whom the Lord does not impute iniquity, and in whose spirit there is no deceit!"

Someone has well noted that the beauty of grace and forgiveness is greatest when we realize the bitter misery and consequences of our sin. We love God most for His great sacrifice in the giving of Jesus upon the cross for our sins. "For Christ also died for sins once for all, the just for the unjust, so that He might bring us to God, having been put to death in the flesh, but made alive in the spirit" (1 Peter 3, verse 18).

Forgiveness is not forgetting but "forgetting against." When God forgives us, He no longer counts our sins against us (2 Corinthians 5 and verse 19). He no longer holds sin against us so that we might be reconciled to Him (2 Corinthians 5 and verse 20). Humans can't undo their past sins, but God can forget them against us so that we're no longer guilty or in sin. Psalm 85, verses 2 to 3 says of God: "You forgave the iniquity of your people and covered all their sins. You set aside all your wrath and turned from your fierce anger." Because Jesus bore the punishment for our sins, God no longer counts them against us.

We offer this study on the beauty of God's forgiveness free. And it's part of a collection of lessons entitled, "Hungering for Righteousness." If you'd like have 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](mailto:searchtv@searchtv.org). Or, call our toll-free telephone number. That number is 1-800-321-8633. We also have materials free on our website at [www.searchtv.org](http://www.searchtv.org).

The Edmond church will now worship in song, we'll read from 1 Timothy 1:12 to 16, and explore the beauty of forgiveness.

Our reading today comes from 1 Timothy, chapter 1, verses 12 to 16. Where Paul is talking about what Christ Jesus had done for Him and his conversion and salvation. "I thank Christ Jesus our Lord, who has strengthened me, because He considered me faithful, putting me into service, even though I was formerly a blasphemer and a persecutor and a violent aggressor. Yet I was shown mercy because I acted ignorantly in unbelief; and the grace of our Lord was more than abundant, with the faith and love which are found in Christ Jesus. It's a trustworthy statement, deserving full acceptance, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners, among whom I am foremost of all. Yet for this reason I found mercy, so that in me as the foremost, Jesus Christ might demonstrate His perfect patience as an example for those who would believe in Him for eternal life." Oh what a wonderful example of the great gracious wonderful love of God and His mercy.

Let's pray together. "Father we're thankful that through Your love and Your grace and mercy, You can save each of us even though we too have been sinners. We're thankful for Your love and for all of the promises we have through Jesus. Father help us always to do Your will. In Jesus name, Amen."

Ecclesiastes 7, verse 20 says, "Indeed, there is not a righteous man on earth who continually does good and who never sins." For that reason Psalm 130, verses 3 and 4 says, "If You, LORD, should mark iniquities, O Lord, who could stand? But there is forgiveness with You, That You may be feared." Without the grace and forgiveness of God, we would all be lost and doomed for eternal punishment. Without God's grace we have no hope.

But Micah 7, verses 18 and 19 reveals the nature of God: "Who is a God like You, who pardons our iniquity, And passes over the rebellious act of the remnant of His possession? He doesn't retain His anger forever, Because He delights in unchanging love. He will again have compassion on us; He will tread our iniquities under foot. Yes, You will cast all their sins Into the depths of the sea." Because of His great love and grace, God has compassion on us and disposes of our iniquities and sins, so they are no longer on His mind.

Forgiveness is indeed a beautiful gesture on God's part. David wrote in Psalm 103, verses 8 to 13, "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. 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." I'm deeply grateful for the God of all grace (1 Peter 5, verse 10) who can help us in times of temptation and can forgive us when we sin against Him. What does forgiveness do?

Well first, forgiveness frees one from the bondage of sin. John 8:34 says that "everyone who sins is a slave to sin"; but verse 36 says, "if the Son makes you free, you will be free indeed." Romans 6:17 to 18 reminds us, "But thanks be to God that though you were slaves of sin, you became obedient from the heart to that form of teaching to which you were committed, and having been freed from sin, you became the slaves of righteousness." God's word gives us the way to freedom from sin. Now earlier in the chapter we learn about that form of teaching that frees. Romans 6:3 to 7 says that our baptism into Christ means that "our old self was crucified with him, that our body of sin might be done away with, that we should no longer be slaves to sin; for he who died is freed from sin."

Second, forgiveness releases one from the debt or penalty that's incurred by sin. Romans 6:23 says, "For the wages of sin is death, but the free gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord." Sin separates us from God, yes, and without forgiveness we'll remain separated from God eternally. Forgiveness releases one from the guilt in spite of what one may deserve. Forgiveness shouldn't be confused with injustice, as when a guilty person escapes punishment through lies or bribes, no. Forgiveness is a pardon; the sin was real but now no longer matters because Jesus bore the punishment for our sins on the cross.

Third, forgiveness creates the opportunity for a new beginning. 2 Corinthians 5:17 says "Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation (a new creature); the old has (passed away, it's) gone, and the new has come!" Forgiveness means God has cleared out the old record of sin, and God looked upon us as if we had never sinned. His past, you're past, my past, no longer matters to God, for we have died to sin and have undergone a new birth in Christ. With the past buried by the love of God, God and man can now start a new covenant relationship, brought about by the blood of Jesus. This

new birth (John 3:3 to 7) allows a person to start over with God. One can think, and act and speak like Christ.

Fourth, forgiveness is the means by which God reconciles the world to Himself. Reconciliation involves repairing a division caused by conflict between two parties. Sin causes hostility, anger between God and man. But reconciliation restores the favor, and a loving relationship, between God and us. 2 Corinthians 5 and verse 19 says "that God was reconciling the world to himself in Christ, not counting men's sins against them." Reconciliation is the bringing back into friendship a world that was alienated by sin.

Now sin completely separates us from God (Isaiah 59, verse 2), so that God no longer even hears our prayers. Forgiveness restores the relationship by removing the sin that causes the separation. When God forgives our sins, we can once again approach God through Christ. Forgiveness is really better than merely forgetting, for by forgiving us God demonstrates His love to us (Romans 5:6 to 8) by sending Jesus to die for us. And we at that time were powerless, ungodly, and sinful. But His love for us calls us to love Him as well. What this does is it heals the broken relationship and causes it to be one of love and stronger than ever. The cross reaches out to us in love and "compels us" to love Him and to serve Him. "And he died for all that those who live should no longer live for themselves, but for him who died for them and was raised again" (2 Corinthians 5, verses 14 and 15).

Forgiveness is not an approval of the sin that people commit. Forgiveness implies a wrong has been done, and God never approves of sin. Forgiveness does not excuse what people do. Sin is not a trivial thing, but cost the Lord Jesus His life. Forgiveness is not justifying what they did. Forgiveness doesn't turn a sinful act into a righteous one. Forgiveness is not denying what they did; forgiveness honestly exposes and recognizes sin for what it is. Forgiveness is not turning a blind eye or acting like something never happened; nor is it merely forgetting about something so serious, no. Forgiveness doesn't refuse to take what is immoral and what is wrong, to take it seriously. Forgiveness doesn't pretend sin is harmless; sin is wrong because of its destructive and harmful nature. And sin always causes somebody to get hurt, and every sin is an offense to God.

God's forgiveness of our sins is a great gift of love and grace. God is not naïve but fully aware of the evil that has been done; nothing escapes His notice. And because He's aware of the harmful nature of our sins, we marvel at His gracious love to be willing to forgive. When God forgives, He chooses to keep no record of wrongs. He removes our sins and releases us from the guilt. When He forgives, He refuses to punish us for those forgiven sins. And once forgiven, God doesn't endlessly remind us of what we did. He doesn't any longer count those forgiven sins against us. Since God is merciful, He doesn't give us what we deserve. He sees us for what we have become, and not for what we did in the past.

Forgiveness is an act of the heart and will. Just as God chose to give up Jesus to the cross because He loved us, God chooses to accept the atoning sacrifice of Jesus for our sins because He loves us. Jesus willingly and lovingly chose the path to the cross to bear our sins in His body, so that we might die to sin and live to righteousness. By His wounds we are healed of sin (1 Peter 2:24). And even though we had grievously sinned against God, God has had compassion on those who fear Him in Christ. He knows we are weak and helpless and in need of saving. Forgiveness opens the door to our salvation.

God is also forgiving for His own sake. Think about this, 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." You see, sin creates a separation and hostility between the sinner and God. Well forgiveness ends that bitterness, and anger, and hatred over some past offense. Psalm 103, verse 9 says that God "will not

always strive (or fight) with us, nor will He keep His anger forever." God would rather forgive those who come to Him humbly, lovingly, and penitently than remain angry forever.

The point of God's forgiveness is reconciliation. He wants to have a loving relationship with you and me. Through Christ He is reconciling the world to Himself (2 Corinthians 5:19 to 20). And this gracious forgiveness leads us to change our ways. We love because He first loved us (1 John 4:19). And Ephesians 4, verses 30 to 31 says to us, "Let all bitterness and wrath and anger and clamor and slander be put away from you, along with all malice. Be kind to one another, tender-hearted, forgiving each other, just as God in Christ also has forgiven you." Because we are forgiven by God's grace, we don't let sin reign in our lives. Because we are forgiven, we replace the old ways of sin with a life of good deeds that honors the Lord. Because we are forgiven, we aren't afraid to lead other people to God's forgiveness.

With confidence Christians can rejoice in the grace and the forgiveness of God. They can say, "By God's grace I'm washed, sanctified, and justified in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ and by the Spirit of our God. I'm forgiven and can have a clear conscience. I'm once again a friend with God. The old man of sin has died. And I'm born again into God's family with newness of life. I pray to my Father with confidence, knowing that He will do more than I ask or think. I'm blessed with the will of God, that which is good and acceptable and perfect. I'm a fellow citizen with the saints in the kingdom of heaven. I'm a member of the body of Christ with a purpose and function. I have all spiritual blessings in the heavenly places in Christ. Jesus has prepared for me a permanent dwelling place in Heaven with my Father, where He will show me the immeasurable riches of his grace in kindness towards us in Christ Jesus."

Occasionally someone asks, "Well, did God really forgive my sins?" I answer yes. You can find His promise in the word of God, and God keeps His promises. God said in Hebrews 8, verse 12, "For I will be merciful toward their iniquities, and I will remember their sins no more." You can count on the promises of God, because God is faithful. God was able to forgive those who crucified Christ on the day of Pentecost when they repented and were baptized (Acts 2 and verse 38); God was able to show grace and wash the sinners of the church at Corinth in 1 Corinthians 6:9 to 11; and God was able to wash away the sins of the apostle Paul who was at one time the foremost of sinners, the chief of sinners, but he was baptized and his sins were washed away (Acts 22:16). And, so we can have confidence that He's able to save us as well.

As we recall 1 Timothy 1:15 to 16, "I thank him who's given me strength, Christ Jesus our Lord, because he judged me faithful, appointing me to his service, though I formerly was a blasphemer, a persecutor, and an insolent opponent. But I received mercy because I acted ignorantly and in unbelief, and the grace of our Lord overflowed for me with the faith and love that are in Christ Jesus. (And then he says in verse 15) The saying is trustworthy and deserving of full acceptance, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners, of whom I am foremost. But I received mercy for this reason, that in me, as the foremost (the chief), Jesus Christ might display his perfect patience as an example to those who were to believe in him for eternal life." God can forgive you too, if you will humbly obey Him.

Let's pray. "Father we're thankful that Your grace is greater than our sins as we approach You humbly and lovingly, and are willing to be obedient to Your will. Father help us always and give us strength. In Jesus name, Amen"

David said in Psalm 86:5, "For You, Lord, are good, and ready to forgive, And abundant in lovingkindness to all who call upon You." God will forgive if we turn our hearts to Him. Isaiah 55:7 says,

“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.”

We can call upon God like David did in Psalm 51:2, “Be gracious to me, O God, according to Your lovingkindness; According to the greatness of Your compassion, blot out my transgressions. Wash me thoroughly from my iniquity, And cleanse me from my sin.” God is gracious and wants all people to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth. God doesn’t want anybody to be lost. Sadly, some won’t accept God’s provision to save us and instead choose to remain accountable for their sin.

God has called us through the gospel, which has God’s power to save (Romans 1:16). God calls us to respond to His message. The gospel is the good news of Christ’s death, burial, and resurrection. And when we place our faith in Christ, turn from evil to good, confess Jesus Christ as the Son of God, and are baptized into Christ, God Himself washes away our sins and forgives us. When by faith we’re clothed with Christ in baptism, we become children of God (Galatians 3:26 to 27) and we’re born again (John 3, verse 5). In baptism God redeems us and reconciles us to Himself. When we’re baptized, God adds us to His kingdom, the church. Oh, I hope and pray that you aren’t saying no to God. I hope you’re saying yes to Him, that you want and need to become a Christian.

We hope today’s study about the beauty of forgiveness has made you want to be forgiven. The lesson is collected in a booklet titled, “Hungering for Righteousness” and we’d like you to have one, and you can have it free. And if you live in the United States and would like a copy, then 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](mailto:searchtv@searchtv.org). Or you can call the Search office toll-free at 1-800-321-8633. There’s also a schedule of our programs and a map with the location of churches in your area on [www.searchtv.org](http://www.searchtv.org). Well we hope that you’ll tell a friend about this program, and let them know that you’re watching. And 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.