

5. Forgiveness: Receiving and Extending

5.1 Living in the good of the Gospel

Psalm 103:1-5

The first benefit David focuses on is the benefit of forgiveness (Ps 32). Without this, all the other “benefits” of God are impossible to truly enjoy because without forgiveness we cannot enjoy fellowship with God and without fellowship with God we cannot enjoy His benefits for His sake.

5.2 The Seriousness of Sin

“He that hath slight thoughts of sin, never had great thoughts of God.” - John Owen

“Those who feel sin most deeply are those who feel most forgiven.” - Donald Whitney

“We may justly condemn ourselves as the greatest sinners we know, because we know more of the folly of our own heart than we do of other people’s...Therefore every sinner knows more of the aggravations of his own guilt than he does of other people’s, and consequently may justly look upon himself to be the greatest sinner that he knows.” - William Law

Forgiveness vs therapy

It is, I believe, this loss of connectedness to family, community and craft that is driving the anxious search for the self, for self-fulfillment, in our society. Given the loss of outward connections—and perhaps most important that to God himself—all of reality must now be relocated from the exterior world to the internal. Ours, in consequence, is a therapeutic society where all of life’s problems are submitted to psychological understanding on the assumption that what were once sins needing forgiveness are now problems needing management, where victimhood is ubiquitous, and moral culture is vanishing.

Example of radio ad: “I realized I wasn’t a bad person, I was a sick person.”

Karl Menninger, Whatever Became of Sin (1973)

5.3 The surpassing sufficiency of the Gospel

Rom 5:15-21

Where sin abounded, Grace abounded much more

Heb. 7:23-28; 9:11-28- finality and sufficiency of Christ's mediation -

it absolutely secured forgiveness

no need to doubt reality of forgiveness

no possibility of supplementing his work with our own works of penance

Heb 10:1-14 - finality and sufficiency of Christ's mediation (contrasted with Aaron's)

He sat down - His sacrifice is finished!

should not doubt the sufficiency of Christ's forgiveness for our own personal sins

Luke 23:34

Jesus prays for the forgiveness of those who crucified Him

Exo 34:6 -

Character of God to be gracious and forgive (with justice)

Jer. 31:31-34

New Covenant b/c humans couldn't keep old covenant, new covenant promises forgiveness of sins

"For every one look at your sin, take ten looks at Christ!" - Robert Murray McCheyne

5.4 Receiving Forgiveness

Psalm 32 -

blessedness of being forgiven

Psalm 51 -

Biblical repentance connected with offense against God, not just consequences

Joy in receiving forgiveness

Psalm 130:4

With You there is forgiveness, therefore you are feared

Rom 5

We have been justified - we are reconciled, have peace with God

Rom 8

No condemnation

God is for us - nothing against us

Eph 1:7

In Him we have redemption, the forgiveness of sins, by riches of God's grace

I John 1:9

He is faithful and just to forgive our sins

"He may look on death with joy, who can look on forgiveness with faith." —Thomas Watson

Frankly, I like what secular writers Stan Katz and Aimee Kiu say about analyzing the past: "It's a bit like trying to drive a car while looking only in the rear view mirror. You don't get very far that way, and you run the risk of a crack-up. I prefer to check the rearview from time to time, making sure that the reflection is accurate, but concentrate most of my attention on the road ahead. Only if I see something gaining on me from behind do I stop to deal with it."

"Thomas Watson once penned a sentence that virtually knocked the wind out of me regarding this topic, he said, "Jesus Christ went more willingly to the cross than we do to the throne of grace." Even in our worship we can be great sinners.

The good news about the command to *draw near with true hearts*, is the context in which it is found. As the author of Hebrews is telling us to draw near to God in truth, he is telling us to do so because there is forgiveness of sin in Christ. In approaching God with true hearts, we do not merit our forgiveness. It is by understanding our forgiveness that our hearts are moved to draw near to Him in worship. This is why the verse continues by saying that we are to *draw near with a true heart in full assurance of faith, with our hearts sprinkled clean from an evil conscience*. Let the knowledge of forgiveness in Christ's blood stir your heart with joy. May it pull your attention away from all the fleeting shadows of this world and draw you near to your Savior's side today. Even if your conscience has been troubled by your many shortcomings this week, do not let it keep you from approaching the throne of grace. An evil conscience is not the reason to stay away from the Savior, it is the very reason we need to draw near to Him with a true heart." - Doug Wilson

"It is always the Holy Spirit's work to turn our eyes away from self to Jesus. But satan's work is just the opposite. He is constantly trying to make us look at ourselves instead of Christ. He

insinuates, 'Your sins are too great for pardon. You have no faith. You do not repent enough. You will never be able to continue to the end. You do not have the joy of His children. You have such a wavering hold on Jesus.' All these are thoughts about self, and we will never find comfort or assurance by looking within. But the Holy Spirit turns our eyes entirely away from self. He tells us that we are nothing, but that Christ is everything. Remember therefore, it is not your hold of Christ that saves you, it is Christ. It is not your joy in Christ that saves you, it is Christ's blood and merits. Therefore, do not look so much to your hand with which you are grasping Christ, as to Christ. Do not look to your hope, but to Jesus, the source of your hope. Do not look to your faith, but to Jesus, the founder and perfecter of your faith. We will never find happiness by looking at our prayers, our deeds or our feelings. It is what Jesus is, not what we are that gives rest to the soul. If we are to overcome satan and have peace with God, it must be by looking to Jesus. Keep your eyes simply on Him. Let His death, His sufferings, His merits, His glories, His intercession be fresh upon your mind. When you waken in the morning, look to Him. When you lie down at night, look to Him. Let not your hopes or fears come between you and Jesus. Follow hard after Him, and He will never fail you." - Charles Spurgeon, Morning & Evening - Day 28

"Consequently, when I accept Christ as my Savior, my guilt is gone, I am indwelt by the Holy Spirit, and I am in communication with the Father and the Son, as well as the Holy Spirit - the entire Trinity. Thus now, in the present life, if I am justified, I am in a personal relationship with each of the members of the Trinity. Thus now, in the present life, if I am justified, I am in a personal relationship with each of the members of the Trinity. God the Father is my Father; I am in union with the Son; and I am indwelt by the Holy Spirit. This is not just meant to be doctrinal; it is what I have now." - Francis Schaeffer, True Spirituality, p. 77

"The disciples' mission is centred on the proclamation of forgiveness, the provision of which was the focus of Jesus' mission. "The mission of the Messianic community is that of extending to unbelievers the forgiveness of sins made possible through Jesus' completed work." - Andreas Kostenberger

5.4a Repentance

Luther's first theses of the 95 Theses

godly vs worldly sorrow (2 Corinthians 7:10)

Repentance is flip side of coin - turning toward Christ in faith involves turning away from those things that are contrary/substitute for Christ - no faith without repentance

Repentance is not the Price for forgiveness, but it is the way in which we receive forgiveness.

Repentance is not something we must do before we can turn to Christ, it is what turning to Christ looks like –

This process of surrender – this movement full speed astern – is what Christians call repentance. Now repentance is no fun at all. It is something much harder than merely eating humble pie. It means unlearning all the self-conceit and self-will that we have been training ourselves into for thousands of years. It means killing part of yourself, undergoing a kind of death.... Remember, this repentance, this willing submission to humiliation and a kind of death, is not something God demands of you before He will take you back and which He could let you off if He chose: it is simply a description of what going back to Him is like. If you ask God to take you back without it, you are really asking Him to let you go back without going back. It cannot happen. – C.S. Lewis, *Mere Christianity* pp. 59-60

The glory and goodness of the gospel needs to thaw the deep permafrost of our heart so that deep repentance and faith can lay hold of the transforming power of the gospel.

Confession and repentance is often an expression of worldly sorrow because it focuses on the symptoms (getting angry, speaking harshly, etc) and/or the trouble these symptoms bring into our lives (damaged relationship with a friend, etc.). When we continue to focus on the symptoms, repentance and faith don't get deep enough to bring about true transformation. This is why we keep falling back into the sin pattern over and over again. We need to identify the heart sin under the symptom sin. We need to see the real unbelief or idolatry that brings the speech or behaviour to the surface of our life (symptoms). If we don't get to the heart, it is like take Tylenol to treat the pain that cancer is causing.

5.5 Giving Forgiveness as we have been forgiven

“Life is relationships. In a fallen world, relationships get damaged and broken. What we believe about forgiveness will determine whether or not we can move forward for God’s glory and our own joy.” - Chris Brauns, Unpacking Forgiveness, 73

Forgiving others - Mt 6:12,14; 11:25; 18:15-35

Eph 4:32, Col. 3:13 - forgiving others - JUST AS God forgave you in Christ
Loving enemies and praying for those who persecute you - character of Father in Heaven

I Pet. 3:8-12 - not repaying evil for evil, because God will repay and vindicate

Holding a grudge hurts the grudger, not the grudge -

- holding a grudge is like drinking poison and hoping the other person dies.

“To forgive is to set a prisoner free, and discover that the prisoner was you.” - Lewis Smedes

“To be a Christian means to forgive the inexcusable because God has forgiven the inexcusable in you” - C. S. Lewis

5.6 Forgiveness leads to love

Lk 7:36-50; 19:1-10

Greatness of the forgiveness we receive leads to the greatness of our love for God