

TRUE FORGIVENESS

PART 2

CHRIST'S DEATH FORGIVES OUR FUTURE SINS

“ *And you, being dead in your trespasses and the uncircumcision of your flesh, He has made alive together with Him, having forgiven you all trespasses,*”
Col. 2:13 NKJV



Review of Study 14

The sins of all believers from Adam until the death of Christ were covered by animal sacrifices. The OT sacrificial system made no payment for sin, so the payment kept accumulating year after year. Over thousands of years, millions of animals were sacrificed to cover the sins of believers; but how many sins were truly forgiven with all this blood? *Not one, not a single sin!* No sin was truly forgiven, a huge debt was building and building; how could God allow this to continue?

We now know sins cannot be truly forgiven (taken away) by any animal sacrifice, **"For it is not possible that the blood of bulls and goats could take away sins"** (Heb. 10:4). True forgiveness means to take away sin (to purge it); but animal sacrifices only covered them, and the scapegoat only removed them from sight. Over the millennia, hundreds of thousands of people offered sacrifices, God refrained (called forbearance) from judging those sins. Eventually, the matter of God's forbearance came into question. How could a righteous God go on and on covering sin and not really getting rid of it (true forgiveness)? *Something* more than the OT sacrificial system was needed to truly deal with the penalty of sin. God was passing over sin, covering it up, and driving it out of sight; but, this practice could not go on forever.

INTRODUCTION

In Study 14, the following three goals for these studies on forgiveness were given:

1. to understand the biblical concepts of forgiveness, atonement, and justification,
2. to determine how God dealt with the sins of those living before Christ, and
3. to know if our future sins are already forgiven.

The first goal was considered in Study 14, and now we turn our attention to goals 2 and 3. Study 15 will attempt to bring all we have learned into a coherent and understandable form.

An atoning sacrifice allowed God to pardon the sinner. A pardon is the act of releasing a person from the consequences of his or her actions, but pardoning does

not clear the offender of guilt. The pardoned Old Testament believers were still guilty, and the penalty for their sin had to be paid sometime. Sin cannot just be overlooked or forgiven because the righteousness and holiness of God demanded it be dealt with in a righteous and just manner; that manner, according to God, is by death/blood, "...and without shedding of blood there is no remission" (Heb. 9:22).

At first glance, there would seem to be four options for taking away sin (paying the debt):

1. **An animal blood sacrifice.** Not acceptable, according to Heb. 10:4
2. **Each person could pay for her or his own sins.** This is exactly what happens to the non-believers. They

can never pay for their sins, so they suffer the consequences in Hell.

3. **One person could pay for another.** The payer would have to be sinless, otherwise the payer must pay for his or her own sins. Since all have sinned, this solution will not work.

4. **Christ the perfect Lamb could pay for us all.** He certainly was perfect, accepted by God, and a willing substitute. Since He is the Son of God, He can pay for everyone.

Options 1 and 3 will not work. Option 2 will be chosen by most people; they will end up eternally separated from God as a result. **Option 4, God's way, is the only way of forgiveness!**

EXPLORING THE WORD

We saw in the last study that the blood of bulls and goats could not remit sins. Thus, the righteousness of God was in question by the time of Christ, that is, how could a righteous God atone for sin for thousands of years if the penalty for those sins were not really paid? It is clearly wrong for a judge to acquit, justify, or give freedom to the wrong-doer or to punish the innocent. Knowing this, we are immediately confronted with a problem in the Biblical doctrine of salvation, for we read that God does justify the ungodly (Romans 4:15). Furthermore, God punished the Innocent instead of the guilty. We must dig deeper.

Sins of the Past

Probably the most misunderstood verse in connection with forgiveness is Roman 3:25: "**whom (Christ) God set forth as a propitiation by His blood, through faith, to demonstrate His righteousness, because in His forbearance God had passed over the sins that were previously committed**" (Rom. 3:25, parenthesis added). The complexity of the verse makes it hard to understand. By way of definitions, the word *propitiation* means *something that allows God to act mercifully*. The OT animal sacrifices did allow for mercy, but God could not

truly forgive anyone's sins without the penalty being paid. The initial part of this verse is saying the blood of Jesus Christ (His death) was used by God as a propitiation, meaning God used Christ's death as the basis for acting mercifully. When Christ paid the debt, God was vindicated for having passed over the sins of the past. God demonstrated His righteousness in passing over those past sins because, in His foreknowledge, He knew that Christ would die for that purpose.

Where the misunderstanding occurs is in believing this verse is talking about today. Some people interpret this verse as saying God forbear (refrained) judging their past sins (those committed before they were saved). Upon belief, they believe that Christ's blood was applied retroactively to forgive their past sins. Going further, they believe Christ's blood/death forgives their past sins, but not any future sins. From this misunderstanding comes the errant doctrine that God only forgives past sins and any future sins have to somehow be paid by the sinner (good works, purgatory, etc.). However, if we cannot pay for our past sin, how can we possibly pay for our future sins?

Discuss: If our future sins are not already paid by Christ and we have to do something to take care of them (even as simple as confessing them), then our salvation rests upon our performance. This puts a person right back under the Law. (Thought: in the AOG, we are sealed until God takes us home, which means forgiveness is not conditional or related to our performance.)

Romans 3:25 is not talking about any individual or anytime in the Age of Grace. It is specifically addressing the issue of all the sins from the time of Adam until Christ's death—those were the sins that were *previously committed*, which God forbear to judge. He had to forbear during the time of animal sacrifices, waiting until He could justly forgive those believers. This verse is directly addressing the very question that arose, that is, how could a righteous God pass over so much sin for so long? God demonstrated His righteousness by truly forgiving those sins of the past once it was possible to do so. It only became possible when Christ died, for then the penalty was honestly paid and the sins of the past could be wiped out, purged, and finally forgiven. Yes, God passed over those sins in His mercy, until such time that He could forgive them by the blood of the real sacrificial Lamb.

The KJV perhaps creates some confusion. Charles Baker says, "It should be noted that the word translated *remission* in Romans 3:25 is *paresis* and means 'a passing over or suspension of judgment.' It is used of sins committed in past dispensations before the death of Christ. God passed over these sins, not as a matter of disregard or indifference, but of forbearance."⁴

Having forgiven the sins of the past (Adam to Christ) the very next verse says, **"to demonstrate at the present time His righteousness, that He might be just and the justifier of the one who has faith in Jesus"** (Rom. 3:26). We can now see God was righteous in passing over the sins of the past. He knew there would be a time when He would be the One who justified (declared righteous and reconciled to God) the believer. Because

Christ paid the price in full, God was able to proclaim rightfully that all believers (past and future) to be free from the penalty of sin. Christ was the justifier because **"Not with the blood of goats and calves, but with His own blood He entered the Most Holy Place once for all, having obtained eternal redemption"** (Heb. 9:12).

Paying the Penalty of Sin

Forgiveness and *justification* are two related, but separate, issues. These two issues are often seen as the negative and positive aspects of one operation of God in clearing the sinner of sins. Forgiveness is the remission or the taking away of the legal penalty for sins, and justification is the judicial declaration of a righteous standing before God.

When Paul, the apostle of grace, speaks of forgiveness (except for one case) he uses the word *charizomai*, which is derived from the word grace itself. *Charizomai* reveals the Divine grace through the death of Christ that made it possible for God to clear the sinner from the guilt and penalty of sins and to restore a person to a position of perfect standing before God.⁵ Sin destroyed our relationship with God; forgiveness and justification restore it.

God, personally, did something to satisfy all of the claims of justice, so He is now free to clear the guilty ones who accept the provision that He has made. God could not sacrifice any victim; the person being sacrificed had to be without spot and approved by God. **"...how much more shall the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered Himself without spot to God, cleanse your conscience from dead works to serve the living God"** (Heb. 9:14)? The Lord Jesus took on the form of a man and bore our sins on the Cross. **"But in those sacrifices there is a reminder of sins every year. For it is not possible that the blood of bulls and goats could take away sins. Therefore, when He came into the world, He said: 'Sacrifice and offering You did not desire, but a body You have prepared for Me. In burnt offerings and sacrifices for**

⁴ Baker, Charles; *A Dispensational Theology*; Grace Bible College Publication; Grand Rapids, MI; 2nd Ed., 1972.

⁵ Ibid.

sin You had no pleasure. Then I said, 'Behold, I have come...To do Your will, O God' " (Heb. 10:3-7). He was the only one who could have taken the sinner's place, and He did.

While animal sacrifices carried on year after year, Christ had to die only once. **"For Christ has not entered the holy places made with hands, which are copies of the true, but into heaven itself, now to appear in the presence of God for us; not that he should offer Himself often, as the high priest enters the Most Holy Place every year with blood of another--He then would have had to suffer often since the foundation of the world; but now, once at the end of the ages, He has appeared to put away sin by the sacrifice of Himself"** (Heb 9:24-26).

Forgiving Future Sin

In the Age of Grace, the forgiveness of sins is often confused with what transpired in other ages. In the AOG, *all* of our sins are forgiven the moment we believe, even the sins we will commit in the future (Col. 2:13). This truth is hard to grasp, but remember God knew about our future sins and still saved us. The verse people get confused about is 1 John 1:9, thinking it is a command for Christians today. However, that verse's primary application is in the future (after the Age of Grace). After the Age of Grace, when Israel is finally awakening to her need for a Savior, the people will need the instruction of this verse. At that time, 1 John 1:9 will be precious for it teaches if anyone confesses his or her sins, God will be faithful and just to forgive that person. First John 1:9 is a *salvation passage*, not a command for right-living today. This verse is not teaching that believers should confess their sins to show a *kindred spirit* with the Lord; it is explaining salvation.

We must ask ourselves, "Do we need to ask the Lord daily to forgive our sins if they are already forgiven?" If our future sins are not forgiven, right now, and their forgiveness depends upon confessing them, then God's grace is based upon our performance. If the forgiveness of future sins depended upon our actions, those actions

would violate what God's grace is about. You did not merit your salvation in the first place, and your future lack of merit cannot take it away. Salvation is based entirely upon God's faithfulness and Christ's merit, not anything you do. Consider this: what would happen if a person were in an accident and had not confessed all his or her sins before death; would some sins be unforgiven and would the person be unsaved?

It is much more in accordance with Scriptural teaching for our Age to thank Him for already forgiving us. Clearly, we should acknowledge our sins many times a day, and thank Him for already forgiving us; doing so helps maintain a close relationship with Him. Knowing our future sins are already removed by the blood of Christ gives us a sense of freedom and a deeper appreciation for the Lord. However, to ask Him to forgive us, when He says He already has, is to not believe God and to live as though our performance has some impact upon our salvation.

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We do not have to ask Christ to die for us, He already has; similarly, believers do not have to ask for forgiveness, He already has forgiven them. We should thank Him for both.

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Being already forgiven is what compels us to live and think as He desires. However, living in fear we have not confessed every sin brings us into captivity, again. Consider this, if our future sins are forgiven based upon confession, then how can we be saved and have eternal security right now? *If, at any time in our life, we have unforgiven sins, then we cannot possibly be reconciled to God; thus, we are unsaved!* Clearly, the Bible teaches our future sins are every bit as forgiven as are the sins of our past. The *benefits of Christ's death go backward and forward in time* (from the time we first believed). Thus, the benefits of Christ are retroactive (taking care of past sins) and proactive (taking care of future sins). Under the OT system, animal blood could only cover the past sins of a person, which allowed God to pass over them.

Today, based upon His finished work on the Cross, we have total forgiveness of all our sins (Col. 2:13). Remember, when we first believe, we are presented *as perfect* to God (Col. 1:21-22); we would not be perfect or *in Christ* if we were not forgiven, justified, and reconciled, and that being for all time.

Comparison of Ways of Dealing with Sin

<u>OT System</u>	<u>Age of Grace</u>
sacrifices year after year	one-time Sacrifice
animal blood	Christ's blood
temporary	permanent
incomplete	complete
atonement (covering)	total forgiveness
addressed only past sins	addresses all sin (including future)
performance-based	Christ-based
ever-accumulating debt	penalty paid in full

Q and A

1. How did God deal with the sins of those who lived before Christ? [He atoned for them until Christ died, at which time the price was paid and He could justly forgive them.](#)

2. Did God forgive the sins of those who lived before Christ based upon the fact Christ would die later in time (a proactive forgiveness)? [No, Romans 3:25 shows those sins were not judged; due to God's forbearance they were passed over but not truly forgiven at that time.](#)

3. Did God atone (cover) the sins of those who lived before Christ until such time that Christ died and those sins could be retroactively forgiven? [Yes, this is exactly what happened.](#)

4. Does Romans 3:25 teach our past sins are forgiven by Christ, or does it teach about all the believers who lived before Christ? [It is addressing all those living before Christ. Yes, all our sins \(past, present, and future\) are forgiven, but Romans 3:25 is not discussing us, or today.](#)

5. Does 1 Jn. 1:9 teach that we today must confess our sins in order for them to be forgiven? [No, this verse gives instruction for how to be saved \(primarily looking to the future, when Israel is finally awakened to her need for a Savior\).](#)

TAKE TO HEART

Summary

Prior to Christ's death, God passed over the sins of the past until such time as He could truly forgive them by the blood of the Lamb. When Christ paid the debt for sin, God was vindicated for having passed over the sins of the past. God demonstrated His righteousness in passing over those past sins, for He knew that Christ would die for that purpose. Today, based upon His finished work on the Cross, we have total forgiveness of all our sins (Col. 2:13), and we are justified. Forgiveness means the taking away of the legal penalty for sins, and justification is the judicial declaration of a righteous standing with God. When we first believe, we are presented as perfect to God (Col. 1:21-22); we would not be *perfect* or *in Christ* if we were not completely forgiven, justified, and reconciled to God. If our future sins are not forgiven, right now, and their forgiveness depends upon confessing them, then God's grace is based upon our performance. We can be thankful that the benefits of Christ's death go backward and forward in time, forgiving our past and future sins.

Gospel

We humans are spiritually dead because of our trespasses (known sins) and breaking of God's righteous

demands: "**And you, being dead in your trespasses and the uncircumcision of your flesh, He has made alive together with Him, having forgiven you all trespasses**" (Col. 2:13). However, upon faith in Christ, we are made alive because all our sins are forgiven and we are declared righteous. The Gospel of Jesus Christ is based upon His dealing with our sins, so that He can bless us.

Encouragement

Our sins are a load upon our back, more than we can bear. That load will break anyone and bring them to despair. God's forgiveness completely removes the load, creating a freedom and joy we could never otherwise know. We should acknowledge our sins to Him daily, thanking the Lord for the forgiveness He has provided. May the Lord enable you to see yourself as God does, completely forgiven and covered with the righteousness of Christ. You will still sin in this life, but that sin is already forgiven. God views you as already seated in Heaven with Christ, a position no one can take from you. May each day be filled with new understandings of God's love for you.