

How to Know Your Sins are Forgiven

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How do I know that God has forgiven my sins? One of things that Satan wants us to believe and to feel is that God cannot forgive us. He wants us to be in doubt that God will forgive us so that he can hold us in the bondage of fear and in the bondage of sin.

Let's look at the nature of man. Some of this is going to be very basic as we go through this, but this is the time and season that we should go through all of this so that we understand:

- what God is doing
- what we need to do
- what God is doing for us

What we know as history is very little of what actual history really is. There are many parts of the world that we have really very little accurate history at all. Here was a point that the earth came to, and we know that Jesus said that 'as it was in the days of Noah, so shall it be in the days of the coming of the Son of man.'

There is a deceptiveness to all of this, because Jesus said that they were 'marrying and giving in marriage, eating and drinking until the day that Noah entered the ark.' So, there is a certain development of sin that takes place to where that when it really becomes really corrupt they don't recognize it, so they don't think they are. Look at the world today.

I was given a report about what they're doing with the food, plants and animals. They think that they are doing great things, but they're actually laying the groundwork for the destruction of the human race. For example, they ran a test on mice using this engineered corn, and they thought that they wouldn't find any problems with it, but when they examined the intestines and the stomachs of the mice, they were thickened greatly, meaning that none of the nutrients could be taken out of it so that the animal would be properly nourished.

What are we doing? *We're setting up a whole generation of malnourished people who don't even know it!* They've discovered something else. They can take a gene from a flounder, insert into the tomato gene so it can survive frosts.

God had a reason for 'kind after its kind' and species after species. They have just discovered this: I forget the fish that it came from, but they took a gene from a very fast-growing fish and put it into a salmon. Now the farmed salmon are going to be gigantic. In the same length of time it requires to

grow a normal salmon, this one will be three times as big. What is that going to do to us? *We don't know!* But do people really think that all of this is wrong? *No!* They say, 'We're going to have double the population, so we're going to have to feed everybody.'

Same way with morals, same way with everything that man does. People don't see anything wrong with the morality that is in the world. Homosexuality is not a sin to them. Yet, they're dying with AIDS! Forty percent of Africa has HIV or AIDS! They don't see anything wrong. They have corrupted everything:

- the way that business is done
- the way that people work
- the education
- the government

People moan and groan and scream, but they don't know what is wrong and they don't understand it because of the very nature of human beings. That's why:

Genesis 6:5: "And the LORD saw that the wickedness of man *was* great on the earth..." *It's going to get even greater in the future!* What we find is that the weird and the perverse become 'normal.'

Look at some of the ads on television now. They're just mind-altering ads; just turn off the sound and watch them. They are insanity, idiocy! They are designed to make you a 'dingbat!' That's what it is.

"...and **every imagination of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually**" (v 5). *That's what the human condition really is:*

- especially if it's fed on evil
- especially when it thinks that it's right
- especially when it thinks that it is of God

Verse 6: "And the LORD repented that He had made man on the earth, and He *was* grieved in His heart. And the LORD said, 'I will destroy man whom I have created from the face of the earth, both man and beast, and the crawling thing, and the fowl of the air; for I repent that I have made them'" (vs 6-7).

I truly believe that they had a lot of genetic engineering back there, and that's why God had to kill all the living things. There's a reason why He killed them, destroyed them. God does not do things for no reason. Look at how long God lets sinners go

before He intervenes. He told Abraham that the sin of the Amorites had not yet come to the full, and he gave them another 400 years; actually 470! It was 430 before they came out of Egypt, and then they wandered for 40 years; that's 470 years! When it says this, I think there's no way that we can see the degree of how bad it really was.

Verse 8: "But Noah found grace in the eyes of the LORD."

How many survived that whole first civilization? I know sometimes people who are alone and discouraged, they say, 'There's nobody but me.' Then they check around and they find about the others, and it's strange that they really don't believe what God says. Or they go to this church or that church. I got a letter from a man who said that he's been searching for years. *There were only eight in the whole world!* That's why there are few today, because the earth is getting corrupt.

Verse 11: "Now the earth also was corrupt before God, and the earth was filled with violence." We have that today in spite of the fact that they were marrying and giving in marriage, and eating and drinking. Isn't that what we have today? Violence happens, and people say, 'Oh well, the plane crashed, 10,000 died; it doesn't affect me.' You go on eating, drinking, and go on with your plans.

Verse 12: "And God looked upon the earth, and behold, it was corrupt—for all flesh had corrupted its way upon the earth. And God said to Noah, 'The end of all flesh has come before Me, for the earth is filled with violence through them. And, behold, I will destroy them *with* the earth'" (vs 12-13).

I don't know if they had television before the Flood, but I tell you what the tool of television, movies, CDs, MTV, MTV-type of music and things like this, you put them all together and ask: What does it do to program the mind even of righteous people to not be upset concerning evil? And to accept the perverse as normal?

I think Rush Limbaugh said that it's defining deviancy downward! When you do that, pretty soon even the most devious act is no longer devious. Even the most perverted is no longer perverted. We're living in that society again. Even after the Flood it didn't change the nature of man.

Genesis 8:21: "...the imagination of man's heart is evil from his youth; and I will not again smite every living thing as I have done." God said He wouldn't curse the ground as He did with Adam.

As soon as they got going again, what happened? *Human perversity took over* in the case of Canaan, the grandson of Noah.

This is the whole story of the Bible. People who do not want to believe the Bible, do not understand human nature, because human nature is perverse in thinking that is right regardless of how evil it may be thinking, and especially when they come to the point that they have no conscience left.

All of that comes over a period of time of succeeding generations to train and retrain and to get rid of consciousness of God, the knowledge of God, the Truth of God and to substitute all of Satan's ways in there. Yet, man is living in sin and doesn't know it and doesn't understand it!

So, the place to begin to understand whether your sins are forgiven or not is to understand that man of his own way thinks he is right. The Proverb says that 'there's a way that seems right to a man, but the ends thereof are the ways of death!' The first thing to acknowledge so that you can see sin, that you can repent of it so that you can have it forgiven, is to understand:

Jeremiah 10:23: "O LORD, I know that the way of man is not in himself; *it is* not in man who walks to direct his steps." *Yet, it seems right!*

What is so deceiving is that it seems so right because so many good things—supposedly—can be done. The tree that man eats of is the Tree of Good and Evil! Don't be fooled about your nature by the good things that you can do.

These Scriptures are all basic, and this is why we have the Passover and the Feast of Unleavened Bread every year; and these things are to be preached in season so that we ourselves never lose the knowledge and understanding of what we really are, so that:

- we do not get exalted in vanity
- we do not get lifted up in self
- we do not set ourselves before God in the place of God

Jeremiah 17:9: "The heart *is* deceitful above all things..." *The first thing the heart will do in thinking it's right is lie to itself!* 'Look at all the good we can do with this evil!'

"...and **desperately wicked**; who can know it?" (v 9).

Who is going to understand the wiles of the carnal mind? Law enforcement agencies know this, because as soon as they figure out a way of—say, with the Internet bandits—catching them, they've already devised a way to get around the system. "...desperately wicked, who can know it?" But there is a God and He is going to hold everyone accountable.

Verse 10: “I the LORD search the heart, I try the reins, even to give to each man according to his ways, according to the fruit of his doings.” ***Judgment day comes!***

Romans 8:7: “Because the carnal mind is enmity against God... [that’s an enemy of God!] ...for it is not subject to the Law of God; **neither indeed can it be.**”

What has to happen? *There has to come a point of repentance!* God is the One Who leads us to repentance. Sometimes the circumstances around us force these things upon us. That’s why the Tribulation is going to come. There’s no way of getting around the Tribulation; it is going to come! What is sin? *The transgression of the Law!*

1-John 5:19^[transcriber’s correction]: “...the whole world lies in *the power of the wicked one.*” *But the world doesn’t believe that!* Even the good that they do is so tainted with sin that it cannot be acceptable to God. That’s why no one can save themselves. ***That’s why it has to be by grace!*** Let’s see that **God** has to give repentance!

There is initial repentance that comes when God is calling you. What are you to do then? *Of course, God leads you to that!*

Romans 2:4: “Or do you despise the riches of His kindness and forbearance and long-suffering... [God is] ...not knowing that the graciousness of God leads you to repentance?”

What you have to do first, in order to understand about your sins, is you’ve got to understand the goodness of God.

- God is Holy
- God is righteous
- God is perfect
- God is love
- He is Lawgiver
- He is the One Who is Creator
- He is the One Who gives you life
- He is the One Who is responsible for everything

That’s the starting point! Then the next point is you have to understand the Laws of God so that you have conviction of sin.

- you have no conviction of sin if you don’t know what right and wrong is
- you have not conviction of sin if you think that evil is *good* and good is *evil*

Which is what the world is today! What we’re doing and saying here today is considered by the world to be *evil*, because:

- we’re pointing out sin
- we’re talking about Law
- we’re talking about God
- we’re talking about the things of the Bible

They don’t want to do that! Sooner or later they’re going to have to face God! He leads you to repentance!

Verse 5: “But you, according to your own hardness and unrepentant heart, are storing up wrath for yourself against *the* day of wrath and revelation of God’s righteous judgment, who will render to each one according to his own works” (vs 5-6).

That’s what we need to do, ***compare our actions with the Scriptures!*** That’s why there are the Ten Commandments. That is the basic thing that God has given so that we can understand what sin is.

When you are pricked in the heart—which repentance leads you to do—you ask yourself, what should I do? You understand that **you** cannot handle your sins.

Acts 2:38: “Then Peter said to them, ‘Repent and be baptized each one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for *the* remission of sins, and you yourselves shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit.’” ***That is the initial repentance that comes, that God’s leads us to!***

Rom. 3—here Paul begins to show us how our sins are forgiven. Human beings are made to need forgiveness, because they’re incomplete. Having a nature like this—which you are born with—God has to provide a way, and He does:

Romans 3:23: “For all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God... [that’s where we all are] ...*but* are being justified freely by His grace...” (vs 23-24).

In other words, God’s goodness and grace leads you to repentance, and when you repent then all of your sins have been blotted out.

That’s what Peter said, ‘Repent, that your sins may be blotted out.’ ***They are blotted out!*** Now you are under the grace of God. But remember that ***God does not save you in your sins! He saves you from your sins!*** Grace is not given so that you can continue living in sin, that ‘grace may abound,’ Paul said, ‘God forbid!’ ***Grace is given so that you’re put in right standing with God to receive His Holy Spirit,*** that you can love and obey Him, and you can live a life where you are overcoming sin; *not that you continue in it!*

“...through the redemption that *is* in Christ Jesus” (v 24). That’s why Christ came! That’s why He died! As Creator and giving this nature to human

beings and turning them over to sin, Christ came to redeem them from those sins—as many as He would call—and He took upon Himself the penalty of that sin. He will lift that penalty of the sin from you provided that you repent and begin to obey God.

Verse 25: “Whom God has openly manifested *to be* a propitiation...” Because of human weaknesses and things that we have, and because we have the *law of sin and death* in us, Christ is the propitiation; ***we can continually come back to Him!***

We sin, but we’re ***not living in sin!*** Do you know what the difference is? *You keep the commandments of God!* The sins that you commit are more in the mind, because you’re fighting sin, which is a condition that cannot happen unless you have the Spirit of God. You will sin in certain acts because of weakness, but you are not *living in sin*. Living in sin means:

- to be totally out in the world
- no thought of God
- no consciousness of sin
- no understanding of true right and wrong according to the Bible
- you just go merrily your own way
- you do some things right
- you do some things wrong

but you’re living in sin:

- you don’t keep the Sabbath
- you don’t keep the Holy Days
- you know nothing about God

You’re just out there in the wicked world, and you are living in sin! If you are in a ‘religion’ you may understand some things about God, but unless you keep the commandments of God—if you keep Sunday, Easter, Christmas, New Years—you ***are living in sin!***

But since we’ve been called and put under God’s grace, we no longer live in sin, ***but there must be repentance!*** Let’s focus in on this initial repentance even more, and also repentance after we have been baptized.

Joel 2—this is during the time of the Great Tribulation that’s going to come. God is going to get the attention of people. There will be many who will repent. There will be many who will not repent. But here’s the message that God has:

Joel 2:12: “Therefore, even now,’ says the LORD, ‘turn to Me with ***all your heart...***” *That’s what God wants!* The opposite of that is the attitude of Simon Magus, which is that he said, ‘Pray these things don’t come upon me.’ *No repentance at all!*

Or like Jesus said in Luke 13, ‘I want to ask you, the 18 that died when the Tower of Shalom fell, do you think they were sinners above all people? *He says, ‘I tell you, no, unless you repent, you shall all likewise perish.’* Or ‘the ones that Pilate slaughtered and mingled their blood with the sacrifices on the altar, do you think they were sinners above all men? *NO! Except you repent you shall all likewise perish!*’ That’s why God wants repentance *from the heart!*

“...and with fasting, and with weeping, and with mourning.’ Yes, rend your heart and not your garments...” (vs 12-13). *That’s what it has to be!* That’s how you come back to God! That’s why we have the Passover and Unleavened Bread every year, so that we can do that.

“...and return to the LORD your God: for He is gracious and merciful, slow to anger, and of great kindness, and He repents of the evil” (v 13). ***That’s the kind of repentance that it needs to be!***

Let’s see the terms that God gives. This is both Old Testament and New Testament. What happens when there’s repentance? Even the world understands repeated crime. That’s why they’ve cracked down so much on drunk driving because they had repeated offenders. They kept killing people. So, when God deals with people, He brings out the same thing. Let’s see what the nation is going to become, and we will see that this nation is advancing very, very rapidly.

Isaiah 1:2: “Hear, O heavens, and give ear, O earth...” *Look up all the places where God refers to heaven and earth when He says something!* He said, ‘Heaven and earth will pass, but My words will not pass’

“...for the LORD has spoken, ‘I have reared and brought up children, but they have rebelled against Me. The ox knows his owner... [even the animals don’t do that] ...and the donkey his master’s crib; ***but Israel does not know Me; My people do not understand.***’ Ah, sinful nation, a people burdened with iniquity, a seed of evildoers, children who deal corruptly! They have forsaken the LORD; they have provoked the Holy One of Israel to anger; they have gone away backward” (vs 2-4).

I tell you, in a generation that is so callous as it is today, it’s going to take some things to turn them back to God. Most of them are going to say, ‘I’ve heard this religious stuff before.’ So, they go on their way.

Verse 5: “Why should you be stricken any more? You will revolt more and more; the whole head is sick, and the whole heart faint. From the sole of the foot even to the *top of the head there is no soundness in it; only wounds and bruises and*

putrefying sores; they have not been closed, nor bound up, nor soothed with ointment” (vs 5-6). Sooner or later it is going to come to this, v 7: “Your country *is* a desolation, your cities *are* burned with fire. Strangers devour your land right in your *very* presence... [we’re seeing that happen right now] ...and *it is* wasted, as overthrown by strangers. And the daughter of Zion is left as a booth in a vineyard, like a hut in a garden of cucumbers, like a besieged city” (vs 7-8). *In other words, all those things are going to come upon it and they don’t even know it!*

Verse 9: “Except the LORD of hosts had left us a very small remnant, we would have been as Sodom; we would have become like Gomorrah.”

Brethren, the small remnant that we are, it is something! Yet, in it they were ‘religious.’ They were bringing their sacrifices. God said, ‘Away with it, it is iniquity, I cannot stand it!’

Verse 15: “And when you spread forth your hands, I will hide My eyes from you; yea, when you make many prayers, I will not hear; your hands are full of blood.”

Then He gives the terms of repentance. Not only does God lead us to repentance, but we have the things that we need to do.

Verse 16: “Wash yourselves, make yourselves clean; put away the evil of your doings from before My eyes; cease to do evil; learn to do good...” (vs 16-17).

Those are the terms that God gives. That’s why we are to repent and be baptized and keep the commandments of God. That’s learning to do well; ceasing to do evil.

“...seek judgment, reprove the oppressor. Judge the orphan; plead for the widow. Come now, and let us reason together,’ says the LORD...” (vs 17-18).

The way you reason with god is this: *I am a sinner!* Just like Job. Job was perhaps the most perfect man that was, *in the letter of the Law*. He had to repent. Why? *Because his righteousness became sin!* How could righteousness become sin? *Because he didn’t give the glory to God!* It was all *his own* righteousness.

- Where did he learn to take care of the widows?
- Where did he learn to help the down and out?
- Why was it that he was perfect in the letter of the Law? *Because God gave him the Law!*

You reason together by admitting your sins. Job had

to, ‘Wherefore, I abhor myself and repent in sackcloth and ashes.’

“...‘Though your sins are as scarlet... [regardless of what they are] ...they shall be as white as snow; though they are red like crimson, they shall be like wool. **If you are willing and obedient**, ...’” (vs 18-19). *That’s the whole key, you have to be willing and obedient to God!*

Then “...you shall eat the good of the land... [that is for us to obtain eternal life] ...but if you refuse and rebel, you shall be devoured *with* the sword”; for the mouth of the LORD has spoken *it*” (vs 19-20). *Ultimately, the only way out of sin is through repentance!* That’s why Christ came!

Let’s see some other things concerning the nature of God and confessing our sins, and this ties right in with Joel 2. Finally you’re overwhelmed with your sins, you feel like you’re in a great hole, and that’s what’s brought out here:

Psalms 130:1: “Out of the depths I have cried unto You, O LORD. LORD, hearken unto my voice, and let Your ears be attentive to the voice of my supplications. If You, LORD, should mark iniquities, O LORD, who shall stand?” (vs 1-3). *The very nature of human beings in sin!*

Verse 4: “But **there is forgiveness with You**, that You may be feared. I wait for the LORD, my soul does wait, and in His word do I hope” (vs 4-5). *There is forgiveness of sin with God!* Even for carnal people in the world, if they quite sinning. Not unto salvation, necessarily.

- Could Israel repent? *Yes!*
- Did they receive the Holy Spirit? *No!*
- Did God forgive them in their status that they were in? *Yes!*

The whole goal that God has for us is even greater now!

Psalms 85:1: “O LORD, You have shown favor to Your land; You have brought back Jacob from exile. You have forgiven the iniquity of Your people; You have covered all their sins. Selah. You have taken away all Your wrath; You have turned from the fierceness of Your anger. Restore us, O God of our salvation, and cause Your anger toward us to cease” (vs 1-4). *God is the One Who has to turn us!*

Let’s see how that happened. We’re going back and examine the situation with David. Many of us are very familiar with that, but let’s look at it in 2-Sam. 12. There was forgiveness of sin! We will see that God is ready to forgive sin. David was already under God’s grace. David was already called unto salvation. This is the encounter that he had with

Nathan the Prophet when Nathan brought David to understand that he had sinned greatly!

David deceived himself for quite a while. We don't know how long this whole affair went on. But the child was born right about this time, right after David's repentance, and the child died! So, we can say that it lasted 10 months, 12 months, maybe a little over a year.

2-Samual 12:7: "And Nathan said to David, 'You are the man!'...." *Sometimes it takes another individual to come along and point out your sins to you!*

"...Thus says the LORD God of Israel, 'I anointed you king over Israel, and I delivered you out of the hand of Saul. And I gave you your master's house and your master's wives into your bosom, and gave you the house of Israel and of Judah. And if that *was* too little, I would have given to you such and such *things* besides'" (vs 7-9). *God says he would have given him even more!*

Verse 9: "**Why have you despised the Word of the LORD to do evil in His sight?....**" (v 9).

This is a deliberate thing that he did. This is the overt sin, outside; let alone all the deception and conniving that went on inside. I imagine that during the year that this was going on, I don't think he was before the sanctuary singing psalms to God. *NO!* The evil had gotten hold of him, just like you when you sin and don't go to God. What happens? *You avoid it and avoid it!* Finally one day it has to come to your attention and that's what Nathan did here with David, brought it to his attention.

"...You have stricken Uriah the Hittite with the sword and have taken his wife *to be* your wife, and have killed him with the sword of the children of Ammon. Now, therefore... [sometimes there comes a punishment and correction that stays]: ...the sword shall never depart from your house because you have despised Me..." (vs 9-10). *You never want to let your sins get to the point of despising God!*

"...and have taken the wife of Uriah the Hittite to be your wife.' Thus says the LORD, 'Behold, I will raise up evil against you out of your own house, and I will take your wives before your eyes and give *them* to your neighbor. And he shall lie with your wives in the sight of this sun, for you did *it* secretly, but I will do this thing before all Israel and before the sun'" vs 10-12). ***There was a real judgment!*** No one is going to mock God, not even David!

Verse 13: "And David said to Nathan, 'I have sinned against the LORD.'.... [this shows that David repented] ...And Nathan said to David, 'The

LORD also has put away your sin; you shall not die'" ***God did forgive him!*** Was that not instant forgiveness? ***God is instant, and God is ready to forgive sin!***

Verse 14: "'Only, because by this deed you have given great occasion to the enemies of the LORD to blaspheme, this child born to you shall surely die.'" This was right after the child was born, apparently. And it did die!

Psa. 51 brings out, sums up, the whole nature of repentance and human nature. If you've had sins and you've had a hard time overcoming them, ask God to bring you repentance. That's where to start. Ask God to help you with that, then you go ahead. After the encounter with Nathan and David came to himself, he could see and understand what he had done:

Psalm 51:1: "Have mercy upon me, O God, according to Your loving kindness; according to the greatness of Your compassion, blot out my transgressions. Wash me thoroughly from my iniquity, and cleanse me from my sin" (vs 1-2).

Now he could begin to see even more than just the acts and the deed that he had done, and all of the deception and wretchedness that went with it.

Verse 4: "Against You, You only, have I sinned, and done evil in Your sight..." *David couldn't blame anybody else; he was the king!* Today, too many times we blame other people.

But "...that You might be justified when You speak and be in the right when You judge" (v 4). ***God is perfect and God is always right!*** That's the first place to being in understanding about God, and understanding about the nature of God. God is always right. God is there and ready to forgive, and He is there to help. Here's when he began to see and understand that this nature was a very part of him:

Verse 5: "Behold, I was brought forth in iniquity, and in sin did my mother conceive me." This does not mean that he was born of adultery. *This means that the human nature and the law of sin and death comes with conception!* That's what Rom. 5 is talking about.

Verse 6: "Behold, You desire Truth in the inward parts..." ***That's why prayer is secret! That's why you are to pray in private!***

If you have to confess to a man, or you have to tell on yourself the things that you have done, which are not right, what happens? *You never truly give all the facts! You never truly give all the motivations! Why? Because you don't want to look so bad in the eyes of that person!*

So, when you pray and confess your sins,

you do it in secret. **God alone knows**, which then is the greatest justification for not having confession to a priest. **God alone knows! He understands it!** But for our edification this was put in the Psalms so that we could go to God in the same manner.

Verse 7: “Purge me with hyssop, and I shall be clean...” It’s just like anything else, you let it get dirty, you neglect different things, and what happens? *Then you have to go back and do a real scrub job!* That’s what this is, a spiritual scrub job.

“...wash me, and I shall be whiter than snow. Make me to hear joy and gladness that the bones which You have broken may rejoice. Hide Your face from my sins, and blot out all my iniquities. Create in me a clean heart, O God, and renew a steadfast spirit within me” (vs 7-10).

There are times if you sin and you do a sin that is profound, you really have to have a *right spirit* created in you again, and *that can only come from God to be renewed!*

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Verse 11: “Cast me not away from Your presence...”—*because there will be a time if you sin and don’t repent that you cannot come before the presence of God!*

“...and take not Your Holy Spirit from me” (v 11). *We are dealing with David, who was converted, who sinned to the point that he was afraid of losing the Holy Spirit of God*, which shows that had he not repented he could have committed the unpardonable in.

We need to remember that even if you come to the point that you think God can’t forgive you, then what you need to do is to ask God to lead you to repentance, *and He will!* Here’s part of the way that David reminded God:

Psalms 86:1: “Bow down Your ear, O LORD, answer me, for I am poor and needy. Preserve my soul, for I am Holy... [he was already set aside for conversion] ...O You my God, save Your servant who trusts in You. Be merciful to me, O LORD, for I cry unto You all day long. Rejoice the soul of Your servant, for to You, O LORD, do I lift up my soul, for **You, LORD, are good and ready to forgive...**” (vs 1-5). *Look how quickly God forgave David when he said, ‘I’ve sinned!’*

- God is *ready* to forgive!
- He is *willing* to forgive!
- He *wants* to forgive!

But that has to be upon repentance!

“...and rich in mercy to all those who call upon You. Give ear, O LORD, to my prayer, and

attend to the voice of my supplications” (vs 5-6). *When there is the kind of repentance that there needs to be, then we have:*

Psalms 103:1: “Bless the LORD, O my soul; and all that is within me, bless His Holy name.” *Again, we’re dealing with the heart, with the full expression of yourself to God!*

Verse 2: “Bless the LORD, O my soul, and forget not all His benefits; Who forgives all your iniquities, Who heals all your diseases, Who redeems your life from destruction, Who crowns you with loving kindness and tender mercies” (vs 2-3). *God does that through Christ!* That is how this is accomplished.

Verse 8: “The LORD is merciful and gracious, slow to anger, and abundant in mercy.” ***God is there!*** In examining ourselves before the Passover, this is all part of what we need to do.

Verse 9: “He will not always chasten, nor will He keep His anger forever. He has not dealt with us according to our sins... [If God should mark sin, who shall stand?] ...nor rewarded us according to our iniquities, for as the heavens are high above the earth, so is His mercy toward those who fear Him. As far as the east is from the west, so far has He removed our transgressions from us” (vs 9-12). *They are removed!*

Let’s see in the New Testament the operation of how that is done. Then we will see some other things that go along with this. *We have the assurance of God that upon repentance all sin can be forgiven! All sin, upon repentance!* The unpardonable sin is there is no repentance; it’s simple. So, there must be repentance.

1-John 1:6: “If we proclaim that we have fellowship with Him... [that’s the whole purpose of all of this] ...but we are walking in the darkness... [out in the world in Satan’s way] ...we are lying to ourselves, and we are not practicing the Truth.” *So, if you’re walking in the Light you have to practicing the Truth!*

Verse 7: “However, if we walk in the light, as He is in the light, *then* we have fellowship with one another, and **the blood of Jesus Christ, His own Son, cleanses us from all sin**”—*from every sin!*

Verse 8: “If we say that we do not have sin, we are deceiving ourselves, and the Truth is not in us. If we confess our own sins... [to God] ...He is faithful and righteous, to forgive us our sins, and to **cleanse us from all unrighteousness**” (vs 8-9). *That’s how the operation is done!*

Once we have our sins forgiven, then there

are other things that take place. Let's look at some of the attitudes that we have to look at, which then inspires God to forgive our sins.

Luke 7:36: "Now, one of the Pharisees invited Him to eat with him. And after going into the Pharisee's house, He sat down *at the table*. And behold, a woman in the city who was a sinner, when she knew that He was sitting in the Pharisee's house, took an alabaster flask of ointment; and she stood weeping behind Him, *and knelt* at His feet... [here she is repenting] ...*and* began to wash His feet with *her* tears and to wipe *them* with the hairs of her head; and she was ardently kissing His feet and anointing *them* with the ointment. But when he saw *this*, the Pharisee who had invited Him spoke within himself, saying, 'This *Man*, if He were a prophet, would have known who and what the woman *is* who is touching Him because she is a sinner.' Then Jesus answered *and* said to him, 'Simon, I have something to say to you.' And he said, 'Teacher, say *on*.'" (vs 36-40). *He did know that Jesus understood his thoughts!*

Verse 41: "There were two debtors of a certain creditor..." *Our sins are debts*; that's why we ask God to forgive us our debts. And the note of debt that was nailed to the cross is the listing of our sins.

"...one owed five hundred silver coins, and the other fifty. But when they did not have *anything with which* to pay *him*, he forgave *them* both. Tell *Me* then, which of them will love him most?' And Simon answered *and* said, 'I suppose *the one* whom he forgave the most.' And He said to him, 'You have judged rightly.' And after turning to the woman, He said to Simon, 'Do you see this woman? I came into your house, and you did not provide *any* water to wash My feet; but she has washed My feet with *her* tears and wiped *them* with the hairs of her head. You did not give Me a kiss; but she, from the *time* I came in, has not ceased to ardently kiss My feet. You did not anoint My head with oil; but she has anointed My feet with ointment. For this cause, I tell you, **her many sins have been forgiven**..." (vs 41-47).

This shows that there's an act of worship that is involved, the act of desiring forgiveness is involved, and also that it comes through the person of Jesus Christ.

"...because she loved much. But to whom little is forgiven, he loves little" (v 47). That's where a lot of people get in trouble today. They come to the point of forgetting about what their nature is.

Verse 48: "And He said to her, 'Your sins have been forgiven.' Then those who were sitting with *Him* began to say within themselves, 'Who is this, Who even forgives sins?' But He said to the

woman, 'Your faith has saved you. Go in peace'" (vs 48-50). What do we have all combined here?

- repentance
- worship
- love
- faith

All of them together!

This is why it says a little later that 'love covers a multitude of sins.' Did her act of love toward Christ and the desire to be forgiven cover the multitude of her sin? *Yes! That's what Christ said!* Because she has love *much* her sins are forgiven. It's the same things with us.

Matt. 18—here's another very important thing concerning forgiveness. This is what we need to understand, especially within the Church. If you have troubles and difficulties with anyone in the Church, you've got to get it solved. It's not the minister's duty to solve it. That's a mistake that too many churches make. Here's what Jesus said:

Matthew 18:15: "So then, if your brother sins against you, go and show him his fault between **you and him alone**..."

That's how all problems are to be resolved first. Don't go to someone else and talk it over. Go to the person first and you say, 'I have something to discuss with you, can I see you?' Go, and be all ears if you're the one to hear.

"...If he is willing to hear you, you have gained your brother" (v 15). *When that happens, that is the end of the issue, it is buried right there!* That stops it. This is how to stop festering attitudes within a group of people. You resolve it in an attitude of understanding and love to do what is right.

Verse 16: "But if he will not listen, take with you one or two others, so that in *the* mouth of two or three witnesses every word may be established."

Two of the biggest problems that come up among brethren has to do with borrowing money; or doing work for someone and not getting paid; or presuming to take something from a brother and using it and never giving it back.

If you have to take one or two other brethren to establish every word then you do it to get it resolved. You better listen on the first step. I recommend, and I'm sure Christ does, solve it on the first step.

The third step is one that if you fulfill step one and two, then step three won't ever have to be used. But if it comes to that point, here is what happens:

Verse 17: “And if he fails to listen to them, tell *it* to the Church...”—*which is the local congregation.*

How do you do that? *Here’s where the minister gets involved!* You have something to bring to the whole church because it’s a big problem. He does not solve the problem there. He sets up a meeting and everybody is there. He may help moderate it, but he doesn’t make the final decision.

“...But if he also fails to listen to the Church...” (v 17). *In other words, the whole congregation of everybody involved!* Not those who were just involved in the problem, but the whole congregation sitting there listening to the problem.

Well, you did borrow \$2,000 from him and you did promise to pay. Now, will you work out a payment plan to pay him back? The person may say, ‘I really don’t want any interest with it. I really do need this money.’ You try to work it out, but he says, ‘No, I won’t pay it back.’ Then:

“...let him be to you as the heathen and the tax collector. Truly I say to you, whatever you shall bind on the earth...” (vs 17-18)—*in the case of disputes!* Of course, you try to judge him according to God’s laws.

“...will have already been bound in heaven; and whatever you shall loose on the earth will have already been loosed in heaven” (v 18). *That is concerning the disputes!*

Verse 19: “Again I say to you, that if two of you on earth shall agree concerning any matter... [that is in these agreements or disputes] ...that they wish to request, it shall be done for them by My Father, Who *is* in heaven. For where two or three are gathered together in My name, there, I am *in the midst of them*” (vs 19-20). *This has to do with resolving the disputes!*

You were to go one-to-one, that’s two. Then you were to take one or two witnesses so it would be three or four. He mentions the three because three would be the minimum. If you agree on it, you pray about it, you’re bound before God in heaven above. That’s so our *yes* can be yes, and our *no* can be no.

Now then we come to forgiveness, and in all of this we have judgment. The first part of this is judgment in resolving a dispute. Then you may have mercy and forgiveness. If the person says, ‘I’m willing to pay back the \$2,000, but it’s going to take me quite a while to pay it back. He may say, ‘If you can get me \$500 I’ll call it square.’ They agree on it; the problem is resolved.

What happens if you have persistent sin? Verse 21: “Then Peter came to Him *and* said, ‘Lord,

how often shall my brother sin against me and I forgive him? Until seven times?’.... [this is the hardest one for people to really grasp] ...Jesus said to him, ‘I do not say to you until seven times, but until seventy times seven’” (vs 21-22),—490! I know of no person who has committed the same sin 490 times in one day.

- Do we expect God to forgive us when we repent? *Yes!*
- Should we not also give forgiveness to those who desire it? *Yes!*
- How often? *Whenever necessary!*

Maybe the sin will continue. I remember a man in Boise who said, ‘I can’t take the Passover this year because I haven’t quit smoking.

If we expect God to forgive us when we say, ‘Forgive us.’ God expects us to forgive those who sin against us when they say, ‘Forgive me.’ When you do, don’t carry a grudge after that. The worst thing in the world is carrying a grudge. That’s what this next parable is all about. This all has to do with your sins being forgiven.

Verse 23: “Therefore, the Kingdom of Heaven is compared to a man, a *certain* king, who would take account with his servants. And after he began to reckon, there was brought to him one debtor who owed *him* ten thousand talents” (vs 23-24)—*probably about \$20-million today!* That’s a big debt. And sometimes we feel as though we owe \$20-million when we’re burdened down with debts.

Verse 25: “But since he did not have *anything* to pay, his lord commanded him to be sold, and his wife and children, and all that he had, and payment to be made. Because of this, the servant fell down *and* worshiped him, saying, ‘Lord, have patience with me, and I will pay you all.’ And being moved with compassion, the lord of that servant released him, and **forgave him the debt**” (vs 25-27).

This is what God does for us! A debt we couldn’t pay. We could not pay with any action, any thought, any thing we could do to pay the price of the death of Christ for the forgiveness of our sins. That’s why this is here. It’s more than we can pay. **“And being moved with compassion, the lord of that servant released him, and forgave him the debt”** Didn’t even give him a stipulation of anything to do, except one thing:

When you are forgiven, you are duty-bound to forgive others, v 28: “Then that servant went out *and* found one of his fellow servants, who owed him a hundred silver coins... [just a couple of ‘bucks’] ..and after seizing him, he choked *him*, saying, ‘Pay me what you owe.’ As a result, his fellow servant fell down at his feet and pleaded with

him, saying, 'Have patience with me, and I will pay you everything.' But he would not *listen*; instead, he went and cast him into prison, until he should pay the amount that he owed. Now, when his fellow servants saw the things *that* had taken place, they were greatly distressed; and they went to their lord *and* related all that had taken place. Then his lord called him *and* said to him, 'You wicked servant, I forgave you all that debt, because you implored me. Were you not also obligated to have compassion on your fellow servant, even as I had compassion on you?' And in anger, his lord delivered him up to the tormentors, until he should pay all that he owed to him. **Likewise... [exactly in the same manner] ...shall My heavenly Father also do to you, if each of you does not forgive his brother's offenses from the heart**" (vs 28-35).

There is a great condition for having your sins forgiven: ***forgiving others!***

Let's see another thing that interferes with our relationship with God. When it's time for the Passover and the Days of Unleavened Bread, and things need to be taken care of, sometimes you may do something and the other person may not even know that you've been offended. Sometimes when that happens we think in our mind that *the other person knows it*, and they haven't done a thing and don't recognize that 'I'm upset with this.'

Matthew 5:23: "For this reason, if you bring your gift to the altar, and there remember that your brother has something against you... [this has to do with prayers] ...leave your gift there before the altar, and go *your way*; **first be reconciled with your brother, and then come and offer your gift**" (vs 23-24).

What happens? *Those things cut off your prayers to God; that's why they have to be resolved!* I know that I've done things that I hadn't even realized that I offended someone. When they came to me I was very surprised. That's just the nature of the way that things are. But I had to repent and change and understand. We can do things, say things, avoid things, all of those are all part of it. But it's very important in having our sins forgiven.

Let's see that this is also in the daily prayer, because God wants us to be renewed day-by-day; He wants us to come before Him and realize that we need that forgiveness daily.

Luke 11:1: "...one of His disciples said to Him, 'Lord, teach us how to pray, as John also taught his disciples.' And He said to them, 'When you pray, say, "Our Father Who *is* in heaven, hallowed be Your name; Your kingdom come; Your will be done, as in heaven, *so* also upon the earth. Give us our bread *as* needed day by day; and **forgive**

us our sins, as we ourselves also forgive everyone who is indebted to us..." (vs 1-4)—*a little different than Matt. 6*; and it's very difficult to do sometimes.

Jesus forgave them right when He was being crucified. Is that not an example for us? *Yes, it is!* So then, we have to do this daily.

Let's look at the parable of the prodigal son, Luke 15. There are some people who are kind of repeatedly like the prodigal son. They have problems and difficulties and weaknesses, and they just can't help themselves sometimes.

There was a movie with James Garner and whenever he got around a roulette wheel he became mesmerized and he had to go bet. He couldn't help himself! He tried, and I guess to make the story good, at the end he hit the jackpot. But, that doesn't always happen. But there are times when you have a sin, a temptation that is so great that you can resist it to a certain point, and then you collapse into giving into it. God understands those things, too.

What do you do when that happens? *You just sort of scrape yourself up off the ground, ask God to help you, forgive you and lead you in the way that you need to go and get everything straightened around!*

The prodigal son is somewhat like this, though this is not a repeated thing. But here in the parable of the prodigal son, we have two lessons on forgiveness and attitude.

Luke 15:11: "Then He [Jesus] said, 'A certain man had two sons; and the younger of them said to *his* father, "Father, give me that portion of the property which falls to me." And he divided to them *his* living. And not many days after, the younger son gathered everything together *and* departed into a distant country. And there he wasted *all* his substance, living *in* debauchery'" (vs 11-13).

This is what you might say is the most stupid thing that he could do, but he did it! He probably had a compulsion that he couldn't help himself, and he just had to come back to this riotous living. Whether it was gambling or wine, women and song—you know how the story goes—he just couldn't help himself. He wasted it.

When you see people do that, you think they ought to know better. Look at the millions that go to the casinos today. Not only in the United States, but around the world. What do they do? *They know they're going to lose money!* They can't help themselves. There's such a thing as Gambler's Anonymous—like Alcoholic's Anonymous—because they can't stop gambling. Today you can get it online, all you have to do is go on the web and

gamble your money away. Just flick out your credit card and waste everything away. Then what happens? *You have to face your husband or your wife!* They look at the bill and ask, ‘Where did this \$4,000 on the credit card come from?’ Whatever the case may be.

Verse 14: “But after he had spent everything... [now he’s flat broke] ...there arose a severe famine throughout that country, and he began to be in need. Then he went and hired himself out to one of the citizens of that country... [so he could survive] ...and he sent him into his fields to feed swine” (vs 14-15).

Can you imagine a more obnoxious lower gut-wrenching job for a Jew than to go take care of swine.

Verse 16: “And he was longing to fill his stomach with the husks that the swine were eating, but no one gave *anything* to him.” *In other words, he couldn’t even sneak a little bit of hog food!*

Verse 17: “And when **he came to himself**...” *This is what is so important in anything!* Part of your repentance and part of asking God to forgive you your sins is to *come to yourself*. If you feel that you haven’t come to yourself, you need to ask God to help you come to yourself. **He will!**

Look at what it took for him to do it. He was young, filled with vanity. He said, ‘I’m going to go out and I’m going to make a fortune. Dad, give me the money; I’m going to go!’ So, he left, and he went out and did the worst thing in the world! Now he’s in the worst circumstances in the world.

- Have you ever worked in a swine field? *It smells!*
- Have you ever seen the slop and the mud that they go in? *It is something!*

So, probably standing out there in the stench and watching the hogs eat—all the slopping that hogs do—and here he is starving and hungry and nothing to eat, and all the good food going to the hogs! He finally came to his senses! Sometimes a person has to hit bottom before they’re ready to come out of it. Sometimes they have to come clear to the bottom, which he did!

“...he said, ‘How many of my father’s hired servants have *an abundance of bread*, and I am dying of hunger?’” (v 17). *God can get your attention when you have no food and the circumstances are irretrievably bad!*

Verse 18: “I will arise and go to my father, and I will say to him, ‘Father, I have sinned against heaven and before you.’”

He knew that he had to repent and was already practicing what he was going to say to his father. This was hard for him to do! Remember, he left with a high hand; he left with all the money so he could go out and really be something. Now he’s coming home broken, sinful and with nothing; he wasted everything that he had! It was so bad! Here’s his attitude:

Verse 19: “‘And I am no longer worthy to be called your son... [not fit to be a human being] ...make me as one of your hired servants.’” *Just put me on the payroll and I’ll be fine.*

Verse 20: “And he arose *and* went to his father. But while he was still a long way off, his father saw him and was moved with compassion, and ran *and* embraced him, and ardently kissed him.”

The son is repentant! If the son had come back unrepentant, it probably wouldn’t have been this way. There’s got to be repentance in these things.

Verse 21: “And his son said to him, ‘Father, I have sinned against heaven and before you, and I am no longer worthy to be called your son.’”

This also shows what God the Father will do for us when we repent, though we come to the very end of the road, to the very bottom of the pit. I think that we’re going to see a lot of people out of this generation that are going to come from circumstances similar to this.

- they’ve wasted their lives on drugs
- they’ve wasted their lives on riotous living
- they’ve wasted their lives on gambling
- they haven’t been educated
- they’ve been dumbed down

All these problems are going to come crashing down upon them and they’re going to wonder what they’re going to do.

Verse 22: “But the father said to his servant, ‘Bring out a robe, the best robe, and clothe him, and give *him* a ring for his hand and sandals for *his* feet; and bring the fattened calf and kill *it*, and let us eat and be merry. For this my son was dead, but is alive again; and he was lost, but is found.’ And they began to be merry” (vs 22-24). *It says that even the angels rejoice when even one sinner repents!*

So, here comes the other side of the coin. What about those who have been home a long time and haven’t gone out and done that?

Verse 25: “But his elder son was in a field; and when he was coming *back*, *and* approached the house, he heard music and dancing. And after calling

one of the servants nearby, he inquired what these things might be. And he said to him, 'Your brother has come *home*, and your father has killed the fattened calf because he has received him safe and well.' Then he was angry..." (vs 25-28). *When God blesses someone we should never be angry!*

"...and would not go in. As a result, his father came out and pleaded with him. But he answered *and* said to *his* father, 'Behold, I have served you so many years, and never did I transgress your commandment; yet, you never gave me a kid, so that I might make merry with my friends... [didn't even so much as give me a little goat] ...but when this son of yours came, who has devoured your living with harlots, you killed the fattened calf for him'" (vs 28-30).

Luke 17:3: "Watch yourselves; and if your brother commits a sin against you, rebuke him; and if he repents, forgive him." ***The brother was not forgiving!***

Verse 4: "And if he sins against you seven times in a day, and seven times in a day returns to you, saying, 'I repent,' you shall forgive him.' Then the apostles said to the Lord, 'Increase our faith.' But the Lord said, 'If you had faith as a *tiny* mustard seed, you might say to this sycamine tree, 'Be rooted up, and be planted in the sea,' and it would obey you. But which of you having a servant plowing or shepherding will immediately say *to him when* he comes in from the field, 'Come and sit down *and eat*'? Rather, will he not say to him, 'Prepare what I may eat, and gird yourself, *and* serve me while I eat and drink; and afterwards you may eat and drink'? Is he thankful to that servant because he did the things that were commanded him? I think not. Likewise you also, when you have done all *the* things that are commanded you, say, 'We are unprofitable servants, because we have done that which we were obligated to do'" (vs 4-10).

- that's why commandment-keeping can never save you
- that's why commandment-keeping can never forgive you

It is your duty to do! Likewise with the son that was angry:

Luke 15:29: "But he answered *and* said to *his* father, 'Behold, I have served you so many years, and never did I transgress your commandment...' *He was bound to do that!*

- there's the absence of love
- there's the absence of understanding

This is the same attitude as the scribes and Pharisees had toward Jesus and the sinners that came to call to repentance. Then notice that he went on, and he really had an attitude about it:

Verse 30: "But when this son of yours came, who has devoured your living with harlots, you killed the fattened calf for him.' Then he said to him, 'Son, you are always with me, and all that is mine is yours'" (vs 30-31). *He lost his perspective!* He got his feelings hurt when someone was forgiven!

Verse 32: "But it was fitting to make merry and rejoice because your brother was dead, and is alive again; and was lost, but is found."

Nowhere did the father say he was going to give him back all of his inheritance again. He didn't say that. But he was forgiven; he was covered. Sometimes we have to come to this point. The way that we know our sins are forgiven is that:

- we ask God to lead us to repentance
- we repent
- we confess our sins
- we ask God to help us understand the depths of those sins
- we need to be willing and ready to forgive those of our brothers and sisters, and yea, even those of our enemies

We're commanded that we are to love our enemies (Matt. 5). I can love some of my enemies when they stay far from me! ***We have to be ready to forgive even them!***

That's why it was a difficult thing for the New Testament Church when Saul was converted. That's why he never could go back to Jerusalem and be well received by the people in Jerusalem. They remembered all the things that he did in persecuting the Church and causing to be killed: fathers, mothers, brothers, sisters, etc.

Even Paul, when he was converted, never got over that. That's why he worked harder than any of the others, because of what he did against the Church.

This is how we know that our sins are forgiven! Let's make this a part of the examination that we need to do before Passover, so that we can take the Passover worthily.

Scriptures from *The Holy Bible in Its Original Order, A Faithful Version*

Scriptural References:

- 1) Genesis 6:5-8, 11-13

- 2) Genesis 8:21
- 3) Jeremiah 10:23
- 4) Jeremiah 17:9-10
- 5) Romans 8:7
- 6) 1 John 5:19
- 7) Romans 2:4-6
- 8) Acts 2:38
- 9) Romans 3:23-25
- 10) Joel 2:12-13
- 11) Isaiah 1:2-9, 15-20
- 12) Psalm 130:1-5
- 13) Psalm 85:1-4
- 14) 2-Samuel 12:7-14
- 15) Psalm 51:1-2, 4-11
- 16) Psalm 86:1-6
- 17) Psalm 103:1-3, 8-12
- 18) 1 John 1:6-9
- 19) Luke 7:36-50
- 20) Matthew 18:15-35
- 21) Matthew 5:23-24
- 22) Luke 11:1-4
- 23) Luke 15:11-30
- 24) Luke 17:3-10
- 25) Luke 15:29-32

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- Luke 13
- Romans 5
- Matthew 6

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