

How to Receive God's Forgiveness



Walking Through the Land of God's Promises (Part 2)
by Derek Prince

It's good to be with you again today as we continue to explore together the limitless inheritance which God has provided for us in the promises of His Word.

The problem that I'm going to deal with in my talk today is basic to our whole spiritual life: the problem of sin. When we are confronted with the fact that we have sinned, how can we be sure that God will forgive us?

Let's first of all face the fact of sin. The whole Bible is very clear about this fact. There is no one who has not sinned. This applies to people of all races, all faiths, all backgrounds. It's one thing we all have in common. In 1 Kings 8:46 Solomon says:

> "(...there is no man who does not sin)..." (NAS)

In Isaiah 53:6, the prophet says:

> "All of us like sheep have gone astray, Each of us has turned to his own way..." (NAS)

Notice how emphatic those words are, "all of us" and "each of us."

We've all gone astray, we've all turned each to his own way. Notice the essence of going astray. It's not necessarily that we've all committed some heinous sin like murder or adultery, but we've done one thing that all of us have in common, we've been stubborn, we've been self-willed, we've been disobedient toward God, we've turned to his own way and our own way is not God's way.

And then in the New Testament Paul say in Romans 3:23:

> "For all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God..." (NAS)

Again you see the essence of sin is not necessarily some terrible crime, but it's falling short of the glory of God. We need to understand the real nature and essence of sin. I would define sin as a failure for which we are accountable. It's a failure to live according to the laws of God. It's a failure to

fulfill the purpose of which God created us. It's a failure to live up to God's requirements of us. God created us that we might have the unspeakable privilege of living for His glory, of bringing glory to Him, our Creator. When we sin, we rob God of His glory and we fail to fulfill the function for which we were created.

So I think you could understand sin simply as a failure to fulfill the function for which we were created by God. But we have to add that it's a failure for which we are accountable. We cannot excuse ourselves by saying we couldn't help it. We are accountable for our sin.

Now let's look at the prognosis of sin. Prognosis is, of course, a medical term. It means that when you have a disease the doctor diagnoses it first and then he tells you the course that your disease is likely to follow. Now the prognosis of sin in the Bible is also very, very clear. There's no doubt about the course that this disease will take. In Romans 6:23, Paul says:

> "For the wages of sin is death..." (NAS)

In other words, our wages are what we earn for what we do and what we have all earned for the sins we have committed is death. That's clear, emphatic, simple and undeniable. It's a law.

And then again in James 1:13-15, James says this:

> "Let no one say when he is tempted, 'I am being tempted by God'; for God cannot be tempted by evil, and He Himself does not tempt any one. But each one is tempted when he is carried away and enticed by his own lust." (NAS)

You see, James very carefully closes the door to our putting the blame upon God for the fact that we've done wrong. He says, "God is not to be tempted with evil, He does not tempt others with evil. But when we are tempted, it's our own lust, it's our own perverted desires that carry us away and entice us into sin. And then comes the prognosis in the 15th verse of that chapter. James goes on to say:

> "Then when lust has conceived, it gives birth to sin; and when sin is accomplished, it brings forth death." (NAS)

So there's a kind of progressive order. Lust (that's perverted desire), when we yield to it, that produces sin; and when we continue in sin, that produces death. And I need to warn you in all honesty that death is not merely the cessation of physical life but the condition of alienation and separation from God forever, if we reach that point. Then there's no turning back. So that's the prognosis. Lust (that's perverted desire) produces sin; sin, if it's allowed to take its course, brings forth death.

Now let's look at the burden of sin for a moment. This is so vividly stated in the Psalms by David, a man who, a righteous man at heart but who knew what it was to fall and to sin grievously but also to repent and return and to find God's mercy. This is what David says in Psalm 32:3-5:

> "When I kept silent about my sin, my body wasted away Through my groaning all day long. For day and night Thy hand was heavy upon me; My vitality was drained away as with the fever-heat of summer. I acknowledged my sin to Thee, And my iniquity I did not hide; I said, 'I will confess my transgressions to the Lord'; And Thou didst forgive the guilt of my sin." (NAS)

Thank God for that last statement, "Thou didst forgive the guilt of my sin." But notice what David went through before he confessed his sin. He said, "my body wasted away through my groaning all day long, my vitality was drained away." Sin produced an impact on his whole being. And again David says this in another psalm, Psalm 38:3-4:

> "Because of your wrath [and he's speaking to God] Because of your wrath there is no health in my body; my bones have no soundness because of my sin. My guilt has overwhelmed me like a burden too heavy to bear." (NIV)

Do you feel that way right now? That your sin, your guilt, is a burden too heavy to bear? Well, I've got good news for you. There's a way that you can be delivered from that burden of guilt and be free from it forever.

We've considered the fact of sin, the prognosis of sin, and the burden of sin. Now let's turn to the good news. Let's turn to God's promises of forgiveness. I'm only going to look at two specific promises, one from the Old Testament, one from the New. Proverbs 28:13 says this:

> "He who conceals his sins does not prosper, but whoever confesses and renounces them finds mercy." (NIV)

You see, that's exactly the opposite of the promise that God gave to Joshua that we looked at in my talk yesterday where God said, "If you will do what I tell you, you'll make your way

prosperous, you'll have success." But one inevitable barrier to true prosperity is sin, if we hold on to it and do not confess it and renounce it. "He who conceals his sins does not prosper." Bear that in mind, it's very important. But, "whoever confesses and renounces them finds mercy."

So there's the promise of mercy from God if we do two things. What are they? First of all, confess; secondly, renounce. God requires that we honestly acknowledge to Him the sins we've committed.

I've met some people who had the impression somehow that if they didn't tell God about their sins, He'd never know! Of course, that's ridiculous. God doesn't ask us to confess for His sake, but for our sake, because when we confess our sin, when we bring it out in the open, honestly and humbly before God, we open the way for God to deal with our sin and deliver us from it. But as long as we hold on to it and try to keep it concealed, there is no way that God can help us or deal with our sin.

Secondly, we have to renounce it. We have to let it go. We have to turn from it. We have to decide that we do not want to go on living that way and committing sins of that kind any longer. This is a decision of the will and the will is involved in this transaction with God. If we do not make a definite decision within the limits that God has set for us, then we cannot experience God's mercy.

The other promise is in the New Testament in the first epistle of John, chapter 1, verse 9:

> "If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just and will forgive us our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness." (NIV)

Notice again that God requires that we confess our sins. And when we meet that condition Scripture tells us two things. It tells us that God is faithful and He is just. We need to see those two things together. They hang together. God is faithful to forgive us because He's promised to forgive us and God will never go back on His promise if we meet His conditions. He's also just to forgive us because He has already visited the penalty for all our sins upon Jesus. When Jesus hung on the cross and died there, He paid the final and full penalty for the sins for the whole human race. Therefore, if we meet God's conditions, if we confess and repent and turn to God, God cannot forgive us totally and finally without compromising His own divine justice.

What then do we have to do? Let me sum it up very simply and clearly for you now. We have to do three things. We have to confess our sins, we have to renounce our sins, and then, by faith we have to receive God's forgiveness. We have to believe that God will do what He has promised. Let me say that once more. Confess, renounce, receive God's forgiveness.

Well, our time is up for today. I'll be back with you again tomorrow at this time. Tomorrow I'll be dealing with another of life's most important issues, "How to Become a Child of God."

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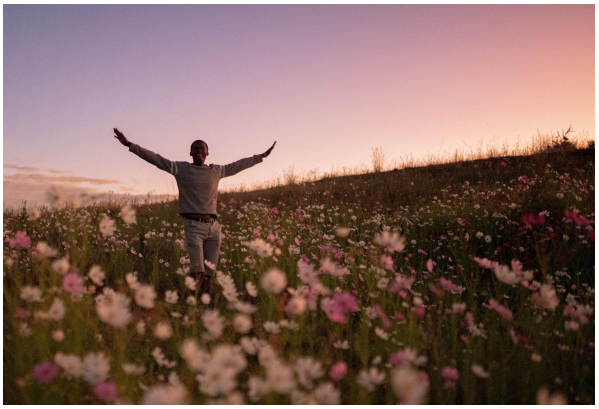
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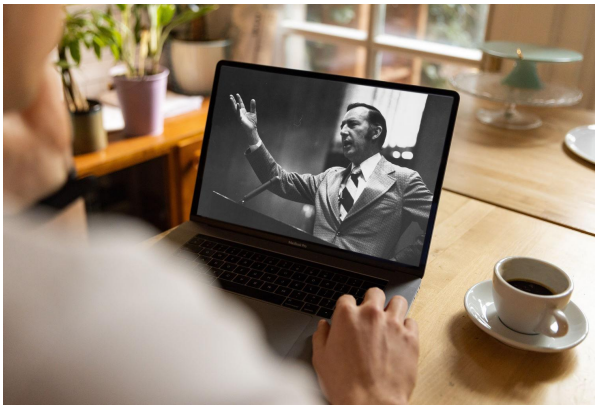
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