

The Basis of Forgiveness



Forgiveness (Part 2)
by Derek Prince

It's good to be with you again, as we continue to study together this theme that is of such vital, personal importance for each one of us: the theme of Forgiveness.

Yesterday I spoke about the Blessedness of Being Forgiven. Well, today I'm going to speak about the Basis for Forgiveness from God. It's extremely important. The basis for forgiveness is the cross of Jesus Christ. We can be forgiven only on the basis of what Jesus did on our behalf. More than seven centuries before Jesus suffered and died on the cross, the prophet Isaiah gave us a prophetic preview of what He was to do and why He was to do it. It's found in the 53rd chapter of Isaiah. Although Jesus is not mentioned by name, all the writers and evangelists of the New Testament alike concur that Jesus is the one spoken of here—the nameless suffering servant of the Lord. In Isaiah 53 verses 4, 5, and 6, this is how Isaiah portrays the atonement, the suffering death of our Lord Jesus Christ. He says this:

> "Surely he took up our infirmities and carried our sorrows, yet we considered him stricken by God, smitten by him, and afflicted. But he was pierced for our transgressions, he was crushed for our iniquities; the punishment that brought us peace was upon him, and by his wounds we are healed. We all, like sheep, have gone astray, each of us has turned to his own way; and the Lord has laid on him [that's Jesus] the iniquity of us all."

That's the basis of forgiveness from God. Forgiveness which does not compromise God's justice. God's justice was fully and finally satisfied because Jesus took our iniquity, our rebelliousness, all our guilt.

And again you see Isaiah emphasizes, as Paul does in Romans 3:23, that none are excluded from the need of forgiveness. "We all like sheep have gone astray, each of us has turned to his own way." Again, it's not exactly some terrible crime we may have committed. It doesn't say we've all committed murder, or got drunk, or anything like that. It says we've gone astray. We've turned to his own way. We've been rebellious. We've been self-pleasers. We've lived by our

own standards. We've robbed God of His glory. And all that is summed up in the one strong word of scripture—iniquity. But thank God the Lord laid on Jesus, the iniquity of us all.

The Hebrew word that's translated "laid on him" is very vivid. It means "made to meet together on him". All the sins, all the guilt, all the burdens of all men of all ages, of all races, past, present and future came and met together upon the person of the Lord Jesus Christ, as He hung on the cross. He did not die for His own sins. "He was pierced for our transgressions," Isaiah says, "He was crushed for our iniquities. The punishment that brought us peace was upon Him. And by His wounds we are healed."

See again, how close healing and forgiveness are. They always are. Many, many times people who are seeking healing really need forgiveness before they can be healed. Isaiah says, "the punishment that brought us peace." See again the consequence of forgiveness is peace because Jesus was punished for our sin because He took our place. God offers us peace and reconciliation.

Then I want to turn to Romans the 4th chapter and see another important lesson about forgiveness. The lesson is this, none of us can earn forgiveness. Paul bases his teaching there on the experience of Abraham, the great forefather of the Jewish people of Israel. And he points out that Abraham did not earn his relationship with God. He was justified because he believed, not because of what he did. This is what he says in Romans 4 verses 1 through 8:

> "What then shall we say that Abraham, our forefather, discovered in this matter? If, in fact, Abraham was justified by works, he had something to boast about—but not before God. What does the Scripture say? 'Abraham believed God, and it was credited to him as righteousness.' Now when a man works, his wages are not credited to him as a gift, but as an obligation. However, to the man who does not work but trusts God who justifies the wicked, his faith is credited as righteousness."

So Paul is saying, if we lead perfectly good lives then we would have received the reward of righteousness as a due. But he says because none of us has lead perfectly good lives, we cannot claim it as a due. We have to receive it out of God's graciousness as a gift. And then Paul quotes those words from Psalm 32 that we looked at yesterday. David says the same thing when he speaks of the blessedness of the man to whom God credits righteousness apart from works. That means we can't earn it. There's nothing we can do to get it. Blessed are they whose transgressions are forgiven, whose sins are covered. Blessed is the man whose sins the Lord will never count against him. Blessed words, "Never will our sins be counted against us." And then he speaks about how Abraham received this blessedness, and he goes on in Romans 4 verse 20:

> "Yet he did not waver through unbelief regarding the promise of God, but was strengthened in his faith and gave glory to God, being fully persuaded that God has power to do what he had promised."

So, you see, the essence of receiving this forgiveness is having unwavering faith that God will do what He has promised to do. And Paul continues:

> "This is why 'it was credited to him as righteousness.' The words, 'it was credited to him' were written not for him alone, but also for us, to whom God will credit righteousness—for us who believe in him who raised Jesus our Lord from the dead. He was delivered over to death for our sins and was raised to life for our justification."

We have to believe those two aspects of the cross that Jesus died as the penalty for our sins and was raised again to bring us justification. That's a kind of technical theological word—justified. We are justified through faith and the death of Jesus on our behalf.

I always like to give you this explanation of "justified": Justified is "just-as-if-I'd" never sinned. Because when all my sins are forgiven, I'm reckoned righteous with the righteousness of Jesus Himself.

For the latter part of my talk today, I want to speak about the totality of God's forgiveness. God does not partially forgive. He totally forgives. This is so beautifully set forth in a verse of the prophet Micah. Micah 7 verses 18 and 19:

> "Who is a God like you, who pardons sin and forgives the transgression of the remnant of his inheritance? You do not stay angry forever but delight to show mercy."

That's perhaps one of the most distinctive features of the God of the Bible that He delights to show mercy. He's reluctant to inflict judgment. He loves to show mercy. And so Micah goes on in the next verse:

> "You will again have compassion on us: you will tread our sins underfoot and hurl all our iniquities into the depths of the sea."

Isn't that beautiful. Everything that we've ever done wrong, everything that could ever make us feel guilty, every accusation that the enemy could every bring against us, God treads them underfoot and then hurls them into the depths of the sea. The deepest sea. And somebody remarked once that when God casts your sins into the sea, He puts up a notice on the beach which says, "No Fishing!" In other words, don't you ever try to go back and resurrect something that God has buried. If God has forgiven you, you're forgiven. There's no questions, there's no reservations, it's total forgiveness.

There's another lovely verse in Isaiah 43 verse 25. God speaks to His people, and He says:

> "I, even I, an he who blots out your transgressions, for my own sake, and remembers your sins no more."

When God forgives us, He blots out the record. It's clean. It's just as though the thing that has been forgiven had never taken place. And not only does He blot out the record, but He blots it out from His own memory. He says that He will remember our sins no more.

I just want to tell you this as I close today. God does not have a bad memory, but He has the ability to forget. And when He forgives, He forgets!

Well, our time is up for today. But, I'll be back with you again tomorrow at this time. Tomorrow I'll speaking about reconciliation in two directions.

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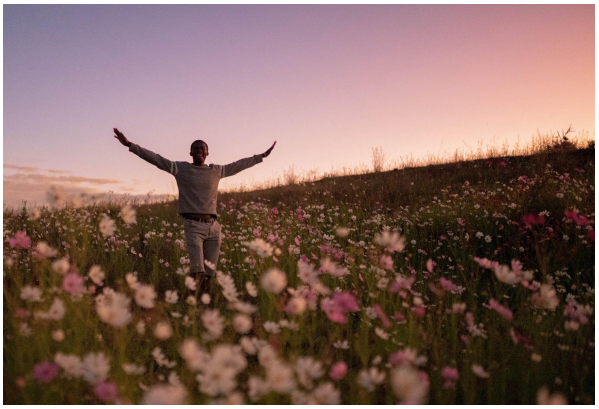

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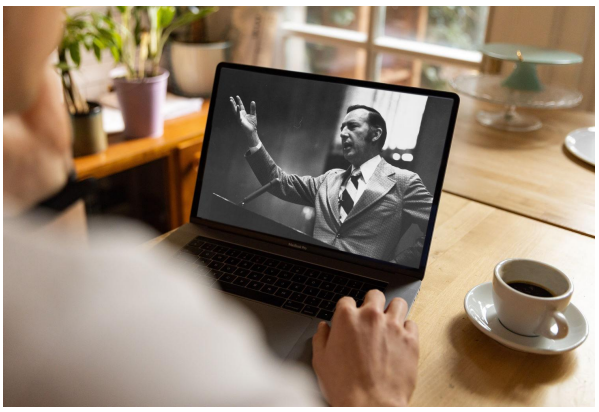

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