

## Forgiveness: A Key to Answered Prayer II

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The whole of the Gospel is based upon forgiveness. There are two ways that God will take care of His enemies:

1. if they don't repent *they'll be destroyed*
2. if they do repent, *to make him His friend*

*Now think about that!*

How did God do that with the Apostle Paul? *He took the number one dedicated enemy against the Church of God and brethren and converted him!* Then went one step further and made him the one to preach to the Gentiles.

Let's come to 1-Tim. 1 because this has an awful lot to do with forgiveness; and this will also tell us why we need to pray for our enemies and those who use us spitefully and persecute us. We will see that there's a reason why God wants us to do this. It's for our benefit and our relationship with God; and it's for the individual's benefit and God's dealing with them.

- Who knows when a person may repent?
- Who knows when a person may turn around?

*That's why God called the Apostle Paul in the way that He did!* Let's understand something concerning forgiveness: ***It is the whole beginning point of the Gospel!***

After talking about the Gospel, 1-Timothy 1:12: "And I thank Jesus Christ our Lord, Who has empowered me... [obviously by His Holy Spirit] ...that He counted me faithful, putting *me* into the ministry."

Here's another very important thing to understand concerning your past life: ***Always remember the lessons on how you conducted your past life before you were called!*** Don't dwell on it to the point of discouragement, depression, anxiety or helplessness because of the weakness of human nature.

Verse 13: "Who was previously a blasphemer and a persecutor and a violent person... [the Greek there means *wontedly violent*—that is, by deliberation and mind-set] ...but I obtained mercy because I did *it* ignorantly in unbelief. But the grace of our Lord abounded exceedingly with *the* faith and love that *is* in Christ Jesus" (vs 13-14).

This is how we overcome sin; this is how everyone overcomes sin:

- through Christ

- through faith
- through love
- through repentance
- through forgiveness

Verse 15: "*This is a faithful saying and worthy of full acceptance that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners, of whom I am chief.*"

We know God has a timetable and plan for saving sinners. Now is *not* the time to save all sinners. You understand that by keeping the Holy Days.

Verse 16: "But for this reason I was shown mercy in order that in the first Jesus Christ might demonstrate all longsuffering, for an example to those who would afterwards believe on Him unto eternal life." *That's quite a statement!* Think of what Paul was forgiven:

- all the persecution
- all the hatred
- all the self-righteousness of Judaism
- all the destroying of the faithful

I wonder if what Stephen said, when he was being stoned to death as Paul stood by holding his garment, if this had an impression upon Paul and how many times he may have recalled it. Because many times I go back when God was first dealing with me. And as we're going to see, forgiveness is based upon repentance; and repentance comes in layers. First there's an initial repentance, then there are stages of deeper repentance. And just like with the Apostle Paul, he started out and he said he was 'least of all the apostles' (1 Cor. 15) and 'I am the least of all the saints' (Eph. 3).

What happens is this—and I'm sure you've experienced it—you go back and you re-examine your life as you go along: you have God's Spirit, you're growing, you're studying, you're overcoming and all these things. You have your trials, you have your ups, you have your downs, you have your difficult times; you have your times of blessing and all of this. You think about how great God's calling is in calling you, and there's a key point that God used to call you. I don't know what it is in your life or what it may have been, but you can look back and see there was that key moment, that key point—which you might say was the tipping point in your life—to cause you to go to Jesus Christ and leave your sinful life.

I wonder if this may have been with Paul? It doesn't say that Paul was there in the Sanhedrin. I wonder, since he belonged to it, if he may have been there. I don't know, maybe not; it doesn't say that he was. After he gave a witness to those in the Sanhedrin:

Acts 7:54: "And when they heard these things, they were cut to their hearts... [in other words, they didn't repent] ...and they gnashed their teeth at him." *Just sat there and ground their teeth, showing anger!*

You've probably seen that when people are angry; they just sit there and grind their jaw and the muscles stand out on their face and so forth. They couldn't stand what he told them, that they were the ones who killed the Righteous One, the Christ.

Verse 55: "But he, being filled with the Holy Spirit, looked intently into heaven and saw the glory of God, and Jesus standing at the right hand of God." *What a powerful encouragement that God gave him just before he was stoned to death!*

Always remember this: ***We have the help of the Holy Spirit in every situation we go through!*** Never forget that. God will help you with it.

Verse 56: "And he said, 'Behold, I see the heavens opened, and the Son of man standing at the right hand of God.'" *That was more than they could take! That just blew them away!*

When you understand that they understood the Scriptures in Dan. 7—'One like the Son of man came to the Ancient of Days'—this really was a witness to them.

Verse 57: "And they cried out with a loud voice..."

I don't know if you've seen television footage of the Knesset when it's in session and all the Jews are arguing back and forth and against one another. Just picture this: *A great riotous thing!*

"...and stopped their ears, and rushed upon him with one accord. And cast him out of the city and stoned him.... [apparently Paul wasn't there, he was outside] ...and the witnesses laid down their garments at the feet of a young man called Saul. And they stoned Stephen, who called upon God, saying, 'Lord Jesus, receive my spirit.' And he fell to his knees and cried with a loud voice, 'Lord, do not lay this sin to their charge.'...." (vs 57-60). *Notice, he didn't say forgive them!*

He said, "...Lord, Do not lay this sin to their charge.'.... [probably the reason he didn't say, 'forgive them,' is because there was no repentance] ...And after he had said this, he died!" (v 60).

Acts 8:1: "Now Saul had consented to killing him..." I wonder how many times he remembered this and realized what a great sinner he was?

Part of conversion involves this: ***The longer you have God's Spirit to convict you of the sin within, the more you realize what a sinner you really are!*** That's just the way it is with me, with you, with everyone that God is dealing with. The reason for that is that through our calling and growing and overcoming, ***God is perfecting us!*** Because the ultimate goal is:

Matthew 5:48: "Therefore, You shall be perfect, even as your Father Who is in heaven is perfect." *I often wondered how many times Paul thought of that, and prayed to God for that!*

Now let's understand something about the nature of God. The nature of God is love, 'God is love.' And the nature of God is also forgiveness in dealing with human beings. Even in dealing with the stiff-necked, carnal, rebellious Israelites, and you read in one account where God said that they were so pagan in Egypt that He even thought of coming there and destroying them in Egypt, but He remembered His promise to Abraham, Isaac and Jacob!

After they had sinned; after Moses went up and pleaded for their lives; and God said, 'All right, I will spare them, except the ones directly involved,' let's see what happened when He revealed Himself in His glory to Moses.

Exodus 34:4: "And he [Moses] cut out two tablets of stone like the first ones. And Moses rose up early in the morning and went up to Mount Sinai, as the LORD had commanded him, and took in his hand the two tablets of stone."

Isn't that interesting? The first tables of stone God cut Himself and wrote on it. The second tables of stone, one step removed, Moses had to make the tables and take them up to God to be written upon.

Verse 5: "And the LORD came down in the cloud, and stood with him there, and proclaimed the name of the LORD."

For all of those who are stuck on that grace only comes in the New Testament, I want you to read these words and understand that Jesus Christ is the 'same yesterday, today and forever.'

Verse 6: "And the LORD passed by before him and proclaimed, 'The LORD, the LORD God, merciful and gracious, longsuffering, and abundant in goodness and truth, keeping mercy to the thousandth generation, forgiving iniquity and

transgression and sin..." (vs 6-7).

**That's the very nature of God!** He's proclaiming the whole meaning of His name. This becomes important in our relationship with each other, because, as you probably know and we've all done this ourselves—so I include myself in it—in too many of the Churches of God there's a lack of love, and there's a lack of forgiveness; which means there's a lack of understanding and kindness. In some cases, it gets so bad, that some people have been so discouraged when people in the world treat them better than people in the Church. It makes it very difficult to say that 'I belong to Christ.' *or* 'I belong to a Church that follows Christ.' Well, if it is, then there's got to be love and forgiveness in it. **If** we're going to reflect the character of God then we need this. It's not a blind, dumb forgiveness; please understand that.

Verse 7: "Keeping mercy to the thousandth generation, forgiving iniquity and transgression and sin, but Who will by no means clear *the guilty*... [if there is no repentance the rest of the Bible tells us] ...visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children, and upon the children's children, to the third and to the fourth generation" (v 7).

Understand that *in the physical life in the world, how we are as parents, grandparents and great grandparents affects our descendants to the third and the fourth generation!* That is absolutely true when it gets down to the sexual conduct of the parents, grandparents and great-grandparents.

Verse 8: "And Moses made haste and bowed his head toward the earth, and worshiped. And he said, 'If now I have found grace in Your sight, O LORD, I pray You, let my LORD go among us..." (vs 8-9).

God was so angry because of their sin and what they did that He said, 'Moses, stand by and let Me destroy them all, and I'll raise up a great nation through you.' He started with Abraham, He could continue with Moses if necessary. But Moses was an intercessor, and he prayed for them. Were these people, at the time of this rebellion, enemies of God? Enemies of Moses? I don't envy what Moses had to live through the 40 years of wandering in the wilderness with all the children of Israel.

"...let my LORD go among us, although it is a stiff-necked people. And pardon our iniquity... [he included himself] ... and our sin, and take us for Your inheritance.' And He said, 'Behold, I make a covenant. Before all your people I will do marvels such as have not been done in all the earth, nor in any nation. And all the people in whose midst you *are* shall see the work of the LORD, for it is an awesome thing that I will do with you" (vs 9-10).

*Then He goes through and He re-gives concerning some of His laws and statutes and so forth!*

Let's carry this one step further and let's see that **forgiveness is part of the very nature of God.** If we want to develop the nature of God then we have to develop *forgiveness*. And forgiveness is not an easy thing for human beings to come by. All you have to do is just look at the world today. Everybody is out after everybody. It's so confused and upside down, and we are seeing more and more how prosecutors, policemen and witnesses **lie**—just to put people in jail. How many have been shown to be innocent later on. It's quite a thing! So, if we're going to develop the character of God, then we need to look at what God is.

This was right after Daniel understood the 70-years; he didn't understand the 70 years until it was just about over.

Daniel 9:3 "And I set my face toward the LORD God, to seek by prayer and supplications..." Whenever we are praying:

- we are seeking the Lord
- we're seeking His Spirit
- we're seeking His Word
- we're seeking His will
- we're seeking His forgiveness
- we're seeking His righteousness

"...with fasting, and sackcloth, and ashes" (v 3).

Notice what his prayer is. He didn't come to God and say, 'God, I thank you that I am the greatest prophet that You've ever raised up outside the land of Israel; that You have put me in charge of Babylon.' **No!** He said:

Verse 4: "And I prayed to the LORD my God and made my confession, and said, 'O LORD, the great and awesome God **keeping the covenant and mercy to them that love Him**..."

Romans 8:28: "...all things work together for good to those who love God, to those who are called according to *His* purpose."

Remember that in any of the circumstances that you go through, especially if they are very difficult, because we'll be faced with very difficult circumstances and trying things that will come upon us. It's going to work for good, and the ultimate is going to be eternal life.

Daniel 9:4: "...and to those who keep His commandments, we have sinned ..." (vs 4-5).

I want you to take this prayer that we're going to go down through and compare that with the model prayer in Matt. 6. And you will see that it fits.

Verse 5: “We have sinned...” What is part of the model prayer? *‘Forgive us our sins as we forgive those who sin against us!’*

“...and have done wickedly, and have rebelled, and have turned aside from Your commandments and from Your ordinances. Neither have we hearkened unto Your servants the prophets, who spoke in Your name to our kings, our rulers, and our fathers, and to all the people of the land” (vs 5-6).

Read in the books of Jeremiah and Ezekiel how the people were toward God and the fall of Jerusalem. It was an ugly, terrible, just horrendous thing. And you read the downfall of the northern ten tribes of Israel, too. It was really a terrible thing. God does not like to have to bring judgment like that. But because He’s given us choice, it’s *our* choice to choose:

- to choose God
- to choose love
- to choose forgiveness

Always remember this: ***Forgiveness is a choice!*** We just saw how God did that back there in the book of Exo. He *chose* to forgive the children of Israel.

Verse 7: “O LORD, righteousness *belongs* to You, but to us confusion of face, as at this day to the men of Judah and to the people of Jerusalem, and to all Israel who are near and who are afar off, through all the countries where You have driven them because they dealt treacherously with You. O Lord, confusion of face belongs to us, to our kings, to our rulers, and to our fathers, because we have sinned against You” (vs 7-8).

When you confess your sins and look at your own sins and you’re desiring forgiveness and understanding, then this helps you to understand that you want this from God. Don’t you think those that you’re dealing with and those that you have trouble with also want forgiveness?

When you forgive someone their sins, it also inspires them. Are you not inspired when you pray and really repent; and you know spiritually, with conviction of God’s Spirit that you have been forgiven. You get up off your knees, how do you feel? *Grateful, humble, thankful, praising God for His mercy and goodness!*

This is what God wants us to have between ourselves. Everything that we’ve gone through in the Church we can say—in recent history—has been very tumultuous, and very trying of the faith. It’s all been over:

- the love of God
- the Truth of God

- the right doctrines of God
- the understanding of God

***We’ve had to fight! We’ve had to be on guard!*** All of this is necessary. But I think while that was going on:

- we forgot about *love*
- we forgot about *forgiveness*
- we forgot about *caring*

You have some of the most hateful behavior in the Churches of God. So bad that some ministers even say that if you belong to this Church you cannot talk to anyone in any other Church of God—not your father, your mother, even your own children—you can’t visit them! You can’t see them! You can’t go into their houses! ***That is the exact opposite of what God wants us to do!*** I pray for mercy and forgiveness for those people who have taught that; that they can recover themselves out of it before God’s judgment comes down upon them. *Because that’s the very opposite of what God is!*

Verse 8: “O Lord, confusion of face belongs to us, to our kings, to our rulers, and to our fathers, because we have sinned against You.” *We could put it this way with the Church:*

To us, O Lord, belongs confusion of face, to all our ministers, to all the elders and all the brethren, because we have sinned against You.

Verse 9: “To the LORD our God belong mercies and forgivenesses even though we have rebelled against Him.”

The reason that I’m going through this is to understand that the nature of God. When we deal with each other we need to deal in an attitude of mercy, kindness and forgiveness; and we also need to deal in an attitude of repentance ourselves so that we can change, with God’s help and Spirit. from our sins. And that if you have something against someone, and you let them know, ‘I forgive you,’ the slate is clean.

We’ll talk about the responsibilities on both sides of that when that happens. When there is the true forgiveness and God wants the true, deep spiritual forgiveness that comes as motivated with His Spirit.

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 wages of sin is death!’* No one can stand. All have ‘come short of the glory of God.’

Verse 4: “But there *is* forgiveness with

you... [because that's the very nature of God] ...that You may be feared"—*that you may be loved*. You can put in any word there that you want, that You may be worshipped, adored and so forth

Verse 5: "I wait for the LORD, my soul does wait, and in His word do I hope." ***When there is forgiveness, there is hope!*** What does everybody need who's in trouble and difficulty?

- they need hope
- hope brings encouragement
- hope brings spiritual strengthening
- hope lifts the pall and depression that sin brings

***That's why there's forgiveness!***

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." (vs 1-2). *Isn't that something?*

Verse 3: "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 3-4).

Let's pray that for the Church of God. Let's pray that everyday for the people of God. God is still trying and sifting His Church because, unfortunately, too many people have not gotten the point of what God wants them to learn: to love God, to understand about forgiveness. As the Apostle Paul said, *If you have anything against anyone, forbear and forgive*, "**...cause Your anger toward us to cease**"

Psalms 103 is something that only God can do. We can't do it in the way that God does. I'm going to bring a whole sermon for the Days of Unleavened Bread, on *how we are cleansed and unleavened in Christ*. As we read this, ***let's understand that everything we have comes from God***: every breath, every particle of food, every bit of knowledge and understanding of God's Word. ***Everything that we have comes from God, and we live by the grace of God!*** We live under the grace of God, and His blessings come upon us.

Psalms 103:1—this is New Testament doctrine as well as Old: "Bless the LORD, O my soul; and all that is within me, bless His Holy name."

That's why God wants us to be wholehearted; *wholehearted toward God* in everything that we do.

Verse 2: "Bless the LORD, O my soul, and forget not all His benefits." *The greatest benefit of all is:*

- forgiveness of sin
- the love of God toward us
- the receiving of God's Holy Spirit

*All the physical things are secondary to that!* That's why God doesn't want us to get wrapped up in the physical things and chasing after things of this world and so forth. He wants us to remember all His great benefits.

Verse 3: "...Who forgives all Your iniquities..." When you repent, you ask God to forgive your sins, He does! Don't get up off your knees and say, 'I wonder if God forgave me.' ***He promised that every sin***—which is not a sin unto death—***He will forgive!*** You need to understand that.

"...Who heals all your diseases" (v 3). *We do need more healings in the churches!* We do need to have more understanding about the things we need with health at the same time, too. Both go hand-in-hand.

Verse 4—here's one of the benefits: "Who redeems your life from destruction..."—*because you look at the way we're going when God called us!* We were just going headlong into a pit; when you really understand it.

"...who crowns you with loving kindness and tender mercies" (v 4).

All of this flows from the grace of God. Lots of times these things come upon us and we don't even know that they've come upon us until we have time to sit back and take notice and think about it.

Verse 5: "Who satisfies your mouth with good things; so that your youth is renewed like the eagle's."

If you want an extra Bible study, get out your concordance and look up *merciful, gracious, grace, forgiveness, kindness, loving kindness*. Those are all the characters and qualities of God that He wants us to have. He'll fight our battles for us; He'll take care of our enemies for us; and He will watch over us. Always put in there Psalms 91: Do not worry what's going to happen in this world. Be 'wise as a serpent, harmless as a dove,' follow God, do what He says.

Verse 8: "The LORD is merciful and gracious, slow to anger... [sounds like a repeat of Exo. 34] ...and abundant in mercy. He will not always chasten..." (vs 8-9). *That is to give you hope that whatever trial you're in will come to an end!*

"...nor will He keep His anger forever. He has not dealt with us according to our sins, nor rewarded us according to our iniquities" (vs 9-10).

What reward can you give to humanity for

killing Christ? Think of that!

Verse 11: “For as the heavens are high above the earth, so is His mercy toward those who fear Him.” *And you can put in there:* those who love Him, who worship Him and so forth.

Notice what God does with our transgressions. This is something that is hard for us, as human beings, to do with our finite minds and the memories that we have:

Verse 12: “As far as the east is from the west, so far has He removed our transgressions from us”—*through the whole operation of the sacrifice of Jesus Christ!*

Verse 13: “As a father has compassion upon his children, so the LORD has compassion upon those who fear Him, For He knows our frame; He remembers that we are dust. As for man, his days are as grass; as a flower of the field, so he flourishes, for the wind passes over it, and it is gone; and its place shall know it no more. But the steadfast love of the LORD... [this is how we get forgiveness] ...is from everlasting to everlasting upon those who fear Him, and His righteousness is unto children’s children, to those who keep His covenant, and to those who remember His precepts to do them” (vs 13-18).

(go to the next track)

Let’s see how God—Psa. 103—proposes to do this for the whole world, because the very essence of God is forgiveness.

John 1:29: “On the next day, John sees Jesus coming to him, and he says, ‘Behold the Lamb of God, Who takes away **the sin** of the world.’ Isn’t that interesting that it is called ‘**the sin** of the world’ and not the **sins** of the world? Why does he say that?

We have the answer; talking about Christ Who is the Lamb to take away the ‘sin of the world.’ Note Rev. 13:8—‘the Lamb of God slain from the foundation of the world.’ Before man was even created, when God was forming the foundation of the world, He had this plan all in mind.

Romans 6:9<sub>[transcriber’s correction]</sub>: “Knowing that Christ, having been raised from *the* dead, dies no more; death no longer has any dominion over Him. For when He died, He died unto sin... [singular] ...**once for all**; but in that He lives, He lives unto God” (vs 9-10).

Romans 5:6: “For even when we were without strength, at the appointed time Christ died for *the* ungodly.... [we know that was on the Passover Day, 30<sub>A.D.</sub>] ...For rarely will anyone die for a righteous man, although perhaps someone might have the courage even to die for a good man. But God commends His own love... [love and forgiveness go hand-in-hand] ...to us because, when we were still sinners, Christ died for us” (vs 6-8).

***God prepared the way first***, then we have to repent. Where there is no repentance there is no forgiveness—we need to understand that. We’re not dealing with blanket forgiveness because Christ came.

Verse 9: “Much more, therefore, having been justified now by His blood, we shall be saved from wrath through Him. For if, when we were enemies... [This is why Christ says ‘pray for your enemies and those who despitely use you.’] ...we were reconciled to God through the death of His own Son... [The reconciliation does not take place without repentance. You have to keep that in mind.] ...much more *then*, having been reconciled, we shall be saved by His life. And not only *this*, but we also boast in God through our Lord Jesus Christ, by Whom we have now received the reconciliation” (vs 9-11).

Verse 12 ties into what we’ve been talking about: sin: “Therefore, as by one man sin entered into the world, and by means of sin *came* death, and in this way, death passed into all mankind, *and it is* for this reason that all have sinned” (vs 9-12).

So, when He takes away the sin of the world, where did the sin of the world, with mankind, originate? *With Adam!* And we bear ‘*the law of sin and death*’ because of Adam. *As in Adam, we all die!*

God made preparations for that. Maybe we can understand this verse in Luke 23 a little more, a little better. Many times when we read it, we think of the application to those who were involved in the crucifixion of Christ: Pilate, the high priest, the people, the soldiers that did the nailing and so forth.

Luke 23:34: “Then Jesus said, ‘Father, forgive them, for they do not know what they are doing.’....”

Let’s take a broader view of that in relationship to the sin of the world. This is not only God letting it be known that forgiveness was available to those, of course, if they repented.

But this is also a prophecy of all mankind! ***Forgiveness will not be brought to them until God grants them repentance!*** But you read about the forgiveness given to Israel when God brings them out of their final captivity. What is He going to do? He’s going to grant them repentance, give them a new heart, give them a new spirit, and as we’re going to see in a minute here concerning repentance, they’re going to loathe themselves.

This is not only just for the immediacy of the people that gathered there for the crucifixion and all of those who were involved in it. But it’s also for all human beings that have gone the way of Adam;

and have lived their lives in societies and everything that there is down through the whole scope of history. Here's a prophecy that they will be forgiven; obviously, upon repentance.

Now let's see something else: how this applies and how the apostles understood it. We won't get involved in all of the things that took place leading up to that.

Acts 5:29: "But Peter and the apostles answered... [after they were told to quit teaching these things in Jerusalem] ...and said, '**We are obligated to obey God rather than men.**' Always remember that!"

For those that I mentioned that have been told by their leading minister that they cannot associate even with their own family if they do not belong to that particular church, apply this verse please! You're obligated to obey God Who says, '*Honor your father and your mother, love your children.*' That comes before any edict of man to the contrary. ***You are obligated to obey God rather than men!***

Verse 30: "The God of our fathers raised up Jesus Whom you killed *by hanging Him* on a tree. Him has God exalted by His right hand *to be a Prince and Savior, **to give repentance and remission of sins to Israel***" (vs 30-31).

*Remission of sins is the result of forgiveness!* You are forgiven and then they are 'wiped away,' as we said, 'as far as the east is from the west and has removed them from us.' That is remission. "...remission of sins to Israel." Notice: ***it has to be given!*** It's God Who leads us to repentance. We'll talk a little bit more about repentance. But it's *through Christ!*

Now let's see how that is given through Christ. You can never earn forgiveness, you can never work for forgiveness; ***it has to come from God!*** We know that God is going to grant repentance and forgiveness during the Millennium. The Great White Throne Judgment period is going to be a fantastic time. Imagine how many billions of people will come into the Kingdom of God. Includes all their sins because of Adam.

Romans 3:9: "What then? Are we of ourselves better? Not at all! For we have already charged both Jews and Gentiles—ALL—with being under sin." *Isn't it interesting how many times it's singular?*

Verse 10: "Exactly as it is written: 'For there is not a righteous one—not even one! There is not one who understands; there is not one who seeks after God'" (vs 10-11).

What He's talking about is *on their own*. Why? *Because Satan deceives the whole world, and he's got control of them through sin!* God has done that to let them be blinded so that He may have mercy on them in the final analysis in His plan; how marvelous that is! Even Paul said, 'Oh the debts of the riches of the wisdom of God.'

Verse 12: "They have all gone out of the way... [*the way of God*] ...together they have *all* become depraved. There is not *even* one who is practicing kindness. No, there is not so much as one! Their throats *are* like an open grave; with their tongues they have used deceit; *the* venom of asps is under their lips, whose mouths are full of cursing and bitterness" (vs 12-14).

Just take these words and apply them anywhere in the world. I suppose one place to start is Washington, D.C., and your local government, your state government, any of the governments of the world.

Verse 15: "Their feet *are* swift to shed blood; Destruction and misery *are* in their ways; and *the* way of peace they have not known. There is no fear of God before their eyes" (vs 15-18).

Isn't that something? Yet, God is going to forgive, because the very character of God is *forgiveness*. What I want you to do is think about what we have covered there in Luke 23:34: 'Father, forgiven them for they no not what they are doing.' If you want to know about *works of law* and so forth, so that

"...all the world may become guilty before God. Therefore, by works of law..." (vs 19-20). {Appendix R (*The Holy Bible In Its Original Order, A Faithful Version*): **What Is Meant by 'the Works of the Law'**}

Remember this: ***No law can substitute for the sacrifice of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness and remission of sin! Law defines sin,*** tells us what sin is. Therefore, by keeping the Law you cannot receive justification for past sin by Law-keeping alone. So, you read that and study that.

"...there shall no flesh be justified before Him..." (v 20). And 'justification' is *forgiveness of sin and the removal of sin through the forbearance of God!*

"...for through *the Law is the knowledge of sin*. But now, ***the righteousness of God***" (v 20)—in this case: ***your state of relationship with God when you have been forgiven and your sins have been removed!***

Verse 21: "But now, the justification of God *that* is separate from law has been revealed, being

witnessed by the Law and the Prophets; Even *the* righteousness of God *that is* through *the* faith of Jesus Christ..." (vs 21-22).

It all has to come through Christ, there is no other way. Jesus said, 'I am *the Way, the Life and the Truth* and none can come to the Father except through Me.' Jesus was raised to sit at the right hand of God the Father to bring repentance and forgiveness of sin.

"...through *the* faith of Jesus Christ, toward all and upon all those who believe..." (v 22).

That gets right back to where we started in the sermon series *The Keys to Answered Prayer— you must believe God!* You must believe His Word. You must believe that the sacrifice of Christ is sufficient for all forgiveness of all sin, for all time.

"...for there is no difference. For all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God... [Why? *Because we have the 'law of sin and death' within us.*] ...*but* are being justified freely by His grace through the redemption that *is* in Christ Jesus" (vs 22-24).

***There must be repentance first!*** That's why God is dealing with the firstfruits now. That's why God has not forgiven the sin of the world, yet; that will all be accomplished in God's plan in the way that He's going to do it.

"...being justified freely by His grace through the redemption that *is* in Christ Jesus... [Who said *Father, forgive them for they no not what they do*] ...Whom God has openly manifested..." (vs 24-25).

That's why it had to be at a time in history that it could not be forgotten in the ages past. It had to be done publicly; it had to be done notoriously so that there would be no doubt that even the centurion said, when he saw all things that took place, he said, 'Surely, this is the Son of God!'

"...*to be* a propitiation through faith in His blood, in order to demonstrate His righteousness [or justification]..." (v 25).

*Righteousness* in the sense that God is righteous and merciful and forgiving to do this; *justification* in that you have your sins forgiven.

"...in respect to the remission of sins that are past.... ['remission' means *the removal*; they are gone] ...Through the forbearance of God... [sounds a little bit like Exo. 34] ...*yes*, to publicly declare His righteousness... [or justification] ...in the present time, that He might be just, and the one Who justifies the one who *is* of *the* faith of Jesus. Therefore, where *is* boasting?..." (vs 25-27).

- What could a man do?
- Compared to the sacrifice of Jesus Christ?
- Compared to Who He was before He became a human being?

*Put that all together!* That's why it's so fantastic and magnificent in what God has done.

"...It's excluded..." (v 27). *Think about it!* Just think about some of these athletes today, when they do something that is expected of them to do. They get up and they do all these gyrations and pound their chest like they're gorillas out swinging. I don't mean that in a deprecating way, but just in a comparative way, lest someone think there is racism involved here. People are so sensitive to racism, but they swear and curse at God! But the boasting; just think: 'I made it! I did it! I can live forever!' Study the book of Job; Job couldn't do it.

"...It is excluded. Through what law? *The law* of works? By no means! Rather, *it is* through a **law of faith**" (v 27). What do you mean 'a law of faith'? You take two terms that appear contradictory, but they're not.

Verse 28: "Consequently, we reckon that a man is justified by faith... [forgiven, reconciled, state of justification by faith] ...separate from works of law. *Is He* the God of the Jews only? *Is He* not also *the God* of the Gentiles?..." (vs 28-29). *Yes, He made all of mankind!* And God has a plan for all mankind.

"...YES! *He is* also God of *the* Gentiles, Since *it is* indeed one God Who will justify *the* circumcision by faith, and *the* uncircumcision through faith. Are we, then, abolishing law through faith?... [all Protestants, listen, pay attention] ...**MAY IT NEVER BE!** Rather, we are establishing Law" (vs 29-31).

How is that done? *By writing the laws and commandments of God in our hearts and our minds, so that you keep the commandments of God as part of your very nature!* That establishes law. Isn't that far better than having them on just tables of stone that you can read them? *or* On a plaque before a courthouse? It's good to have them hanging on the wall, to remind you of it. But the true establishment of the Law is *within*, and that comes *through forgiveness and repentance*.

Romans 4:7: "Blessed are *those* whose transgressions are forgiven, and whose sins are covered. Blessed *is* the man to whom *the* Lord will not impute *any* sin" (vs 7-8). The only way that can be is through the sacrifice of the Lamb of God.

You can't cover the forgiveness of sin unless you go to 1-John 1 and see how the whole

operation works. Even John, in talking about how it applies to us today in our relationship with God and why that's tied in with the model prayer in Matt. 6 and Luke 11—'Forgive us our sins as we forgive others.' We have to understand the nature of God and His forgiveness.

1-John 1:6—and again, attention all Protestants, listen up: "If we proclaim that we have fellowship with Him, but we are walking in the darkness..."—*in everyway contrary to the Word of God*; and remember, Jesus said, 'Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every Word of God.'

"...God is light, and there is no darkness at all in Him. If we proclaim that we have fellowship with Him, but we are walking in the darkness, we are lying to ourselves... [just living in deceitfulness] ...and we are not practicing the Truth" (vs 5-6).  
**What is the Truth?**

- Your Word is the Truth
- Your commandments are true
- Your Law is Truth
- all Your precepts from the beginning are true

*Truth doesn't change from Old Testament to New Testament!*

Here's the key: *Living in a state of grace!* Being able to repent of our sins daily! We need it daily because of the 'law of sin and death' within us and because of the weakness of our human nature, and the struggle we all have in overcoming sin; I do, you do, every human being does, so let's not get spiritually hoity-toity.

Verse 7: "However, if we walk in the Light... [walking in the way of Christ] ...as He is in the Light, *then* we have fellowship with one another..." *That's important to understand because our fellowship with one another also is dependent upon:*

- forgiveness
- grace
- changing, growing and overcoming

*on a continuous basis!*

"...and the blood of Jesus Christ, His own Son, cleanses us **from all sin**..." (v 7). *Whatever you have sinned!*

In relationship to other people and brethren, we all begin from the point we want our sins forgiven. But all too often we rise up off our knees, and instead of praying for forgiveness for the brethren, for other people, we point the ugly finger and become very self-righteous. We've all done it. I mean for us to say, 'Oh, I've never done that.' Well, you haven't grown in grace and knowledge then.

You achieved perfection from the first instant of receiving God's Holy Spirit.

"...cleanses us from all sin. 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..." (vs 7-9). *That is to God, because that's what it says in the model prayer: 'Forgive us our sins as we forgive those who sin against us.'*

"...He is faithful and righteous, to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.... [there is the operation that takes place: forgiveness and then cleansing] ...If we say that we have not sinned..." (vs 9-10).

Oh, we're good people. Human nature is just good, and all we need is knowledge and we can overcome all of our problems and live happily under the U.N. the rest of our lives.

Verse 10: "If we say that we have not sinned, we make Him a liar, and His Word is not in us."

1-John 2:1: "My little children, I am writing these things to you so that you may not sin.... [when you're keeping the commandments you're not sinning] ...And *yet*, if anyone does sin..." We still have a sinful nature to overcome, we go to God in repentance. Why?

"...we have an Advocate with the Father; Jesus Christ *the* Righteous; And He is *the propitiation* for our sins..." (vs 1-2)—*the continual source of forgiveness and atoning through the blood of Jesus Christ!* That's why we have in the model prayer: 'Forgive us our sins.'

"...and not for our sins only, but also for *the sins of the whole world*" (v 2). *That is hard to understand unless you know the plan of God*, and when He's going to apply this to those in the world.

Eph. 1—you can put in the category of 'behold the Lamb of God Who takes away the sin of the world.' This is referring to Jesus Christ:

Ephesians 1:7: "In Whom we have redemption through His blood, *even* the remission of sins, according to the riches of His grace."

Think about that for a minute. God's grace is going to be so overwhelming and so absolutely fulfilled in great perfection, when all the plan of God is finished and all those who have been raised in the second resurrection and repent and then are brought into the Kingdom of God. *Think of that!* Isn't that going to be something? "**...through His blood, even the remission of sins, according to the riches of His grace.**"

You can look at it this way, another way to look at it: ***The sacrifice of Christ applies to all sin of all mankind, through all ages at the time that God's plan determines that He's going to give it!***

The life of Jesus Christ—Who created all human beings, made the heavens and the earth, created you, called you, forgiven you—***His life for your life!*** Now that's the 'riches of the grace of God.' Think of that!

- His life for your life!
- His life for my life!
- His life for the life of all human beings in the world!

*When God deals with them to bring them to repentance!* We know there will be those who won't repent. We're not talking about those who commit the unpardonable sin.

Verse 8: "Which He has made to abound toward us in all wisdom and intelligence; Having made known to us the mystery of His own will, according to His good pleasure, which He purposed in Himself" (vs 8-9).

Colossians 1:4: "Since hearing of your faith in Christ Jesus, and the love that *you have* toward all the saints; because of the hope that *is* laid up for you in heaven... [going to be brought by Christ] ...which you heard before in the Word of the Truth of the Gospel; which has come to you, even as *it* also *has* in all the world..." (vs 4-6).

That's a statement of fact at that time and a prophecy down to our time and the return of Christ.

"...and is bringing forth fruit, just as *it is* among you, from the day that you heard and knew the grace of God in Truth; even as you also learned from Epaphras, our beloved fellow servant, who is a faithful minister of Christ for you; who has also informed us of your love in *the* Spirit. For this cause we also, from the day that we heard *of it*, do not cease to pray for you..." (vs 6-9).

I think that's very interesting how almost every prayer, everywhere I go, that the one who opens and closes in prayers, prays for all the brethren wherever they are. And do that! And particularly pray for those that you don't even know who are having trials and troubles and difficulties and problems that they have to go through; that you are praying that God will deal with them. That's all a part of loving the brethren. That's all a part of forgiving them because you want them to have the forgiveness of God and to come out of the difficulties that they are in.

"...do not cease to pray for you and to ask that you may be filled with the knowledge of His

will in all wisdom and spiritual understanding. That you may walk worthily of the Lord, unto all pleasing, being fruitful in every good work and growing in the knowledge of God; being strengthened with all power according to the might of His glory, unto all endurance and long-suffering with joy; giving thanks to the Father, Who has made us qualified for the share of the inheritance of the saints in the light" (vs 9-12).

Verse 13 will lead us into another part of the model prayer (Mat. 6): "Who has personally rescued us from the power of darkness..." ***His life for your life!*** The sacrifice of Christ is applied personally to every individual, and God is great enough to do that. It's not life for life. It's *His* life for the life of the world. But as it's applied personally to us.

**"...has personally rescued us from the power of darkness.... [Satan the devil] ...and has transferred us unto the Kingdom of the Son of His love; in Whom we have redemption through His own blood, even the remission of sins" (vs 13-14).**

What I want you to do is this:

- I want you to think about how much God has forgiven you
- I want you think about how much you desire God to forgive you whenever you do sin
- I want you to think about how much you desire God to blot them out and remove them from you 'as far as the east is from the west'
- I want you to begin thinking about your personal relationship: husband/wife and brethren

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

Scriptural References:

- 1) 1 Timothy 1:12-16
- 2) Acts 7:54-60
- 3) Acts 8:1
- 4) Matthew 5:48
- 5) Exodus 34:4-10
- 6) Daniel 9:3-4
- 7) Romans 8:28
- 8) Daniel 9:4-9
- 9) Psalm 130:1-5
- 10) Psalm 85:1-4
- 11) Psalm 103:1-5, 8-18
- 12) John 1:29
- 13) Romans 6:9-10
- 14) Romans 5:6-12
- 15) Luke 23:34
- 16) Acts 5:29-31

- 17) Romans 3:9-31
- 18) Romans 4:7-8
- 19) 1 John 1:6, 5-10
- 20) 1 John 2:1-2
- 21) Ephesians 1:7-9
- 22) Colossian 1:4-14

Scriptures referenced, not quoted:

- 1 Corinthians 15
- Ephesians 3
- Daniel 7
- Matthew 6
- Psalm 91
- Luke 11
- Revelation 13:8

Also referenced:

- Appendix R (*The Holy Bible In Its Original Order, A Faithful Version*): What Is Meant by ‘the Works of the Law’
- Sermon Series *The Keys to Answered Prayer*

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