

Title: Glad You Asked: Is it possible to find Full Forgiveness?**Text:** Matthew 12:22-32**Main Idea:** If you've placed your faith in Jesus Christ, you have full forgiveness.**Date & Location:** June 29th – 30th, 2019 | Edgewood Baptist Church | Rock Island, IL**Introduction**

Are you one of the 30,000 cars that drive along John Deere Road on a daily basis? It is the second busiest stretch of road in the Quad Cities and is only surpassed by Interstate 74. Do you know what the speed limit is for the majority of John Deere Road? It's 45 miles-per-hour. Could you imagine how chaotic driving would be if the speed limit on all roads was just a suggestion...if you could drive whatever speed you wanted to on any road and you were never breaking the law? It would be nuts. It'd be like...it'd be like we all still drove 55 down John Deere Road.

Or think about this: what if you were playing a sport but there were no boundaries? You could take whatever path you wanted to get to the end zone, the basket, or the finish line. Wouldn't that be crazy! How would you play defense? How would you compete in the race?

Now, we may not like where the boundary line is and we may not agree with the law in place, but the reality is, we need laws and boundaries. As a matter of fact, laws are a clear indicator that our tendency is to break them. We might obey the majority of laws but the very fact that we have laws to begin with indicates that we are, by nature, not law abiders but law breakers. All law breaking has consequences and some consequences are harsher than others. The consequence for running a red light is very different from the consequence for running a red light and intentionally trying to hit someone in the crosswalk. Our reality is that we need boundaries, we need laws, laws that distinguish between right and wrong and good and evil.

But with our reality as law-breakers also comes the reality that we try to find the line, we try to find the boundary, and see how close we can come to it without crossing it. One of my

daughters does this to her sister a lot. She is frequently looking for the boundary and she will come right up to it, cross it, and then high tail it out of there. For example, several months ago we were invited to have dinner with Suzy's family and all of the Kuriscak's at Ed & Sheila's. Brynleigh had junior theatre practice that night so the plan was to drop off Suzy, Maddie, and Eli and then Bryn and I would come late to dinner. Well, Brynleigh is distraught that we can't stay at Kuriscak's and have to come later. Maddie picked up on that so probably ten seconds after Brynleigh is done lamenting, we arrive at the Kuriscak's and Suzy says, We're here. Maddie gleefully says, "Yeah!" And then hops out of the van leaving me to clean up her mess with Brynleigh. Now that's probably not really crossing a line. She just likes to tease her sister.

My 1 ½-year-old son, Eli, on the other hand, has no clue about boundaries. There is no piece of furniture he can't climb. No drawer he can't empty. No sister's toy he won't steal. No food of mine he's not willing to share, although we did learn the hard way Friday night that he doesn't like the Chick-fil-A Spicy Chicken Sandwich. That scarred him. He spent the rest of the night not eating anything in Suzy's hands. It had to come from me. We are constantly telling Eli "no." I was saying to a friend last weekend, "We're just gonna quit telling him no and visit him in prison." We are tired.

We like to think that some boundaries can be crossed back and forth with minimal to no damage and then there are other boundaries that, once you cross them, there is no going back.

I have been asked this morning to tackle the question, "Is it possible to find full forgiveness?" What we're going to see is that the answer is a resound, "Yes, it is possible to find full forgiveness." But before we get to that answer we must first discover if there is any possible sin that isn't forgiveable. We need to ask, "Is there a sin that is so heinous, so ugly, so terrible, so

shocking, scandalous, wicked, and evil, that committing it would be unforgiveable?” And that answer is also, “Yes.”

Open your Bible to Matthew chapter 12. We are going to start in Matthew 12:22-32. Matthew 12:22-32 and tackle the first of four questions related to finding full forgiveness and it's, “What is the unforgiveable sin?” We're going to find out here in Matthew 12:22-32.

²² Then a demon-oppressed man who was blind and mute was brought to him, and he healed him, so that the man spoke and saw. ²³ And all the people were amazed, and said, “Can this be the Son of David?” ²⁴ But when the Pharisees heard it, they said, “It is only by Beelzebul, the prince of demons, that this man casts out demons.” ²⁵ Knowing their thoughts, he said to them, “Every kingdom divided against itself is laid waste, and no city or house divided against itself will stand. ²⁶ And if Satan casts out Satan, he is divided against himself. How then will his kingdom stand? ²⁷ And if I cast out demons by Beelzebul, by whom do your sons cast them out? Therefore they will be your judges. ²⁸ But if it is by the Spirit of God that I cast out demons, then the kingdom of God has come upon you. ²⁹ Or how can someone enter a strong man's house and plunder his goods, unless he first binds the strong man? Then indeed he may plunder his house. ³⁰ Whoever is not with me is against me, and whoever does not gather with me scatters. ³¹ Therefore I tell you, every sin and blasphemy will be forgiven people, but the blasphemy against the Spirit will not be forgiven. ³² And whoever speaks a word against the Son of Man will be forgiven, but whoever speaks against the Holy Spirit will not be forgiven, either in this age or in the age to come.

Let's pray.

Brief Background

This is a rich text. Let's look at just a little bit of background. We need to remember that Matthew's goal in his entire book is to show that Jesus is the Messiah. We will see that he accomplishes that goal in this story. A second item that we need to remember is that the Pharisees have now seen Jesus perform miracles on a number of different occasions and their frustration with, and opposition to, Jesus is growing. This is important information because it's going to help us as we make our way through this text.

The Unforgiveable Sin

Now, look at verses 22-23, “Then a demon-oppressed man who was blind and mute was brought to him, and he healed him, so that the man spoke and saw. And all the people were amazed and said, ‘Can this be the Son of David?’” Matthew doesn’t give us a ton of specifics about this demon-oppressed man and the reason is simply that we don’t need them. Matthew isn’t trying to draw our attention to the demon-oppressed man but, rather, to the conversation that Jesus has with the Pharisees following the healing and how that conversation demonstrates that Jesus is the Messiah. What we need to know is that this man was healed and all of the people who witnessed the healing were amazed. The word means to be totally astounded, beside oneself with amazement and wonder.¹ They all were struck with amazement and began to wonder, “Can this be the Son of David?”

Do you remember what I said earlier about the background? Matthew’s goal is to show that Jesus is the Messiah and he tees that up right here. “And all the people were amazed, and said, ‘Can this be the Son of David?’” Have you ever noticed a person off in the distance and thought, “That sure looks like _____. Is that _____? No, can’t be.” That’s the idea being communicated here. The question, “Can this be the Son of David?” is worded in such a way as to indicate a measure of perplexity by the crowd.² “Maybe, this is the Messiah but we didn’t expect Him to come like this. We expected more of a military figure.”

Verse 24 finds the Pharisees in a tough spot. Picture yourself there. We would all be wondering if Jesus was the Messiah. The excitement was mounting—so much so that the Pharisees felt the need to step in and take action. They are certain that the only way Jesus can cast out demons is with the help of Satan. They are saying, “No mere human could do what Jesus

¹ John MacArthur, *The MacArthur New Testament Commentary: Matthew 8-15*, (Chicago: Moody Publishers, 1987), 306.

² Leon Morris, *The Gospel according to Matthew*, *The Pillar New Testament Commentary* (Grand Rapids, MI; Leicester, England: W.B. Eerdmans; Inter-Varsity Press, 1992), 314.

just did.” The rationale then, looks like this: “If He isn’t from God, then His power has to come from somewhere else and the only other alternative is to be aligned with the powers of evil.”

As it turns out, Jesus can reason too and that’s what He does in verses 25-28. He lays the foundation with this statement, “Every kingdom divided against itself is laid waste, and no city or house divided against itself will stand.” In other words, “Can we agree, Pharisees, that a divided group, whether it’s a house, a city, a kingdom, or a small band of people, can we agree that a divided group has no future?”

He builds on that in verse 26, “And if Satan casts out Satan, he is divided against himself. How then will his kingdom stand?” Jesus is showing the absurdity of the Pharisee’s statement. If Jesus’ power comes from Satan then Satan is basically casting himself out. How can Satan enslave people while also giving Jesus the power to free them? That’s a ridiculous proposition.

Jesus continues to pile on and the Pharisees will be faced with a big dilemma. Jesus says in verse 27, “And if I cast out demons by Beelzebul, by whom do your sons cast them out? Therefore they will be your judges.” The Pharisees implied earlier that a mere human being could not overcome a demon. So, if Jesus has a victory over a demon, the Pharisees are implying that he had help from a superhuman source, namely, Satan. But they spoke too soon and had not considered that some of their own people claimed to cast out demons.³ Jesus basically says, “If I’m guilty of casting out demons with the aid of Satan then what about your own followers who also claim to cast out demons? Why don’t you ask them if Satan aids them?” It’s a great line!

Verse 28 brings us to the conclusion of the argument, “But if it is by the Spirit of God that I cast out demons, then the kingdom of God has come upon you.” If Jesus’s work was by the Spirit of God, then His miracles were of God and He had to be the Messiah, “the Son of David.”

³ Ibid, 316.

Look at verse 29, “Or how can someone enter a strong man’s house and plunder his goods, unless he first binds the strong man? Then he may plunder his house.” Jesus is demonstrating that his power does not come from Satan. He is not working alongside Satan and He certainly is not working for Satan. Jesus is saying, “My power is not less than Satan’s. No, my power is over Satan. I will enter his property, successfully bind him, and carry off his property. I can defeat Satan and a legion of his demonic hosts at will.”

You’re probably wondering where I’m going with this, because we aren’t Pharisees, and we all know that Jesus wasn’t displaying Satan’s power. But hang with me here. Verses 30-32 are the application. He says, “Whoever is not with me is against me, and whoever does not gather with me scatters.” Jesus draws a line in the sand. There is no neutral ground as far as relationship to Him is concerned. You don’t have to oppose Christ to be against Him; it’s only necessary not to be with Him. Nor do you have to actively interfere with His work in order to be one who scatters; it is only necessary to not gather with Him.⁴ In any moral issue we are forced to take sides. You may not actually influence the outcome, but sticking your head in the sand is not an option. Jesus eliminates the notion that your faith is a private matter. Now, listen to this carefully, Jesus is saying He is in conflict with evil, and anyone who doesn’t side with Him is against Him. If your influence is not thrown into the cause of good it helps the cause of evil.⁵ That is sobering.

“Therefore,” verse 31, “I tell you, every sin and blasphemy will be forgiven people, but the blasphemy against the Spirit will not be forgiven. And whoever speaks a word against the Son of Man will be forgiven, but whoever speaks against the Holy Spirit will not be forgiven,

⁴ MacArthur, 311.

⁵ Morris, 318.

either in this age or in the age to come.” Let’s define a couple of terms and try and bring some clarity to one of the most misunderstood sayings of Jesus’s ministry.

Let’s start with “sin.” “Sin,” here, represents the full gamut of immoral and ungodly thoughts and actions. “Blasphemy” represents the conscious denouncing and rejection of God. It is defiant irreverence and the uniquely terrible sin of intentionally and openly speaking evil against holy God or defaming or mocking Him.

Notice that both are forgivable. Jesus says, “I tell you, every sin and blasphemy will be forgiven people...” How? How are blasphemy and sin forgiven? The answer is the same way all other sins are forgiven...when they are confessed and repented of. Look, Paul blasphemed. He says so himself in 1 Timothy 1:13-14, “¹³ though formerly I was a blasphemer, persecutor, and insolent opponent. But I received mercy because I had acted ignorantly in unbelief, ¹⁴ and the grace of our Lord overflowed for me with the faith and love that are in Christ Jesus.”

Peter blasphemed. Mark 14:71-72 tells us of Peter, “But he began to invoke a curse on himself and to swear, ‘I do not know this man of whom you speak.’”⁷² And immediately the rooster crowed a second time. And Peter remembered how Jesus had said to him, ‘Before the rooster crows twice, you will deny me three times.’ And he broke down and wept.”

John MacArthur says that even a believer can blaspheme, since any thought or word that sullies or defames the Lord’s name constitutes blasphemy. To question God’s goodness, wisdom, fairness, truthfulness, love, or faithfulness is a form of blasphemy. All of that is forgivable by grace. Speaking to believers John said in 1 John 1:9, “If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.”⁶

⁶ MacArthur, 311-12.

Okay, you're probably thinking, Jason, what about blasphemy of the Spirit? What is that and why won't it be forgiven? Blasphemy of the Spirit is attributing to Satan what was accomplished by the power of God and then flagrantly, willfully, and persistently rejecting God and His commands. It is to have a full and complete knowledge of Jesus, to know that He is everything He says He is, including that He is the Messiah and then to not only reject Him as the Messiah but to ascribe His work to Satan. The one who does that is not forgiveable. Why? Because it takes repentance, it takes humility, it takes a lowliness to realize your need for forgiveness. If you have all of the evidence of who Jesus is--you are fully aware of Him--and you still reject Him, you don't want forgiveness because you don't think you need it. Forgiveness is for those who see their need and ask for it.

Now, if you are a follower of Jesus Christ, have you committed the unforgiveable sin? That answer is no. Remember, Jesus is talking in this passage to His enemies. If you have placed your faith in Christ for the forgiveness of your sins, you aren't an enemy, you are an heir. You are an adopted son or daughter of the One true and living God. Christ is your brother. This sin is committed today only by unbelievers who deliberately and unchangeably reject the ministry of the Holy Spirit in calling them to salvation. A follower of Christ cannot commit the unforgiveable sin.

That means that the answer to the question, "Is it possible to find full forgiveness?" Is "Yes!" Psalm 103:10-12, "¹⁰He does not deal with us according to our sins, nor repay us according to our iniquities. ¹¹For as high as the heavens are above the earth, so great is his steadfast love toward those who fear him; ¹²as far as the east is from the west, so far does he remove our transgressions from us."

Careless Words

Now that we know that the unforgiveable sin can't be committed by followers of Christ and that we can have full and complete forgiveness, we have a foundation that will help us answer the other questions so let's move on to the next question. It's, "If I am forgiven of my sins, what does it mean when Jesus says I will have to give an account for my careless words? Does that mean I'm not forgiven for my words?"

This question stems from the passage that follows the one we just looked at so scan down to Matthew 12:33-37, "³³ Either make the tree good and its fruit good, or make the tree bad and its fruit bad, for the tree is known by its fruit. ³⁴ You brood of vipers! How can you speak good, when you are evil? For out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaks. ³⁵ The good person out of his good treasure brings forth good, and the evil person out of his evil treasure brings forth evil. ³⁶ I tell you, on the day of judgment people will give account for every careless word they speak, ³⁷ for by your words you will be justified, and by your words you will be condemned."

Let's start with the end of verse 34, "For out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaks." The person you are on the inside, your mouth will declare on the outside. Your mouth speaks what is going on inside of your heart. Throughout Scripture, the heart represents the center of your thinking and your will. The heart represents character so to say that words reveal the heart is to say that words reveal what the person is like. When the mouth speaks it is simply reproducing verbally what is going on in the heart.

Now, verse 35, "The good person out of his good treasure brings forth good, and the evil person out of his evil treasure brings forth evil." "Treasure" means storehouse or treasury and it's where we get the English word, "Thesaurus." If your heart is good, a vocabulary of good, life-giving, words, thoughts, actions, ambitions, desires, loves, attitudes, and loyalties will flow from

you. Likewise, if your heart is bad, you will have a storehouse of bad vocabulary, thoughts, actions, ambitions, desires, loves, attitudes, and loyalties that will flow from you.

The result then is verses 36 and 37, “³⁶I tell you, on the day of judgment people will give account for every careless word they speak, ³⁷for by your words you will be justified, and by your words you will be condemned.” Your words are an accurate gauge of your heart and you will give an account for them in the day of judgement. What does that mean? Salvation and condemnation are not produced by words or deeds, but they are demonstrated by them. Your words and your deeds are evidence of your spiritual condition. In the day of judgement, that future general time when the Lord evaluates who belongs in and out of His eternal kingdom, the criteria will include the speech of every person. That’s not because speech is the basis of salvation or condemnation but because they are reliable evidence of the reality of salvation. So, when Jesus says, “By your words you will be justified, and by your words you will be condemned.” He is saying that if your faith is in Christ, your words will be evidence of your justification and if your faith is not in Christ, your words will be evidence of your condemnation.

The answer, then, to the question about being forgiven for careless words is found back in verse 31, “Therefore I tell you, every sin and blasphemy will be forgiven people...”

Forgiving Others

Here’s the next question. What about if someone sins against another person and asks God for forgiveness but does not ask the person they’ve sinned against. Are they still forgiven? So that answer is “Yes” but if you have a way to seek out their forgiveness, I’d encourage you to do so with this caveat. Proceed cautiously and seek out wise counsel before you proceed. Remember, you sinned against them and while all sins are serious, some sins do more damage

than others. Your sin against them created a trust gap and the amount of time it takes for that gap to close is up to them and not you.

I have a humorous example of this from this week. I needed to ask for forgiveness from someone that I sinned against.

Last week, my in-laws took the Bryn and Maddie to see *Toy Story 4* which meant Suzy and I were free to have a date night as long as Eli could tag along.

Do you remember earlier this week when Vikki posted on Edgewood's Facebook page, "Tell us something you dislike that everyone else seems to love." I didn't post it but one of my answers to that question is "Red Lobster." Now, understand that I have don't have anything against the restaurant at all. I just don't like seafood.

I get asked to preach at other churches and once in a blue moon, I'll get a gift card in addition to an honorarium for preaching. So, I'm done preaching, leave the church and open up an envelope I was handed at the end of the message. Inside was a gift card to Red Lobster. I was disappointed.

So, fastforward several weeks and Suzy and I have a Friday night free. We called some friends to see if they also were free and wanted to join us at Red Lobster. It worked out, so we met them at the restaurant later that night.

Our friends beat us to Red Lobster and got us booth. We arrived and met them at the booth and I immediately begin complaining about never coming to Red Lobster, not liking sea food, only reason we're here is because of this card, etc. My heart is in a bad spot and I'm feeling pretty ungrateful.

Shortly into our visit, Suzy and I trade spots so that, well quite frankly, so that's it's easier for me to talk to the other husband. As we trade spots, I glance to my left and peer out of

the booth and notice that the family on the other side of the wall is the family who gave me the gift card. I was embarrassed. I had no idea if they heard anything I said earlier in the night. We recognized each other and I waived and smiled and we had a short conversation but I was so embarrassed that I was distracted for the rest of the evening.

So, we're at a restaurant I don't like, with food I'm not interested in having, and a family that I'm pretty sure I just offended. Then at the end of the night, we go to pay the bill and the gift card doesn't work. It was never activated. Now, I'm paying for food that I don't want to pay for.

Well, I knew my heart wasn't right and that I needed to apologize to the family and ask for forgiveness. I was running errands for the radio station on Wednesday and decided to stop by the and visit the husband at work. I asked him if he had heard anything that I had said at Red Lobster and he hadn't but it didn't matter, I still had a guilty conscience. I told him that I had sinned against him by being ungrateful for the gift card that they gave me and I apologized and asked for his forgiveness. He gave it to me but then, and this is a testament to his character, when he found out that the gift card didn't work, he showed me grace and gave me cash for the gift card. He didn't have to do that but he demonstrated the grace of Christ to me in that moment by forgiving my debt and then also giving me something that I did not deserve.

Well, let's change the question a little bit. What if I was sinned against? To what extent is my forgiveness contingent upon my forgiving others? This question comes out of a verse of scripture found in the Sermon on the Mount. Let's turn there. Turn to Matthew 6:5-15. Jesus says,

⁵ And when you pray, you must not be like the hypocrites. For they love to stand and pray in the synagogues and at the street corners, that they may be seen by others. Truly, I say to you, they have received their reward. ⁶ But when you pray, go into your room and shut the door and pray to your Father who is in secret. And your Father who sees in secret will reward you. ⁷ And when you pray, do not heap up empty phrases as the Gentiles do, for they think that they will be heard for their many words. ⁸ Do not be like them, for your

Father knows what you need before you ask him. ⁹ Pray then like this: ‘Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name. ¹⁰ Your kingdom come, your will be done, on earth as it is in heaven. ¹¹ Give us this day our daily bread, ¹² and forgive us our debts, as we also have forgiven our debtors. ¹³ And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil. ¹⁴ For if you forgive others their trespasses, your heavenly Father will also forgive you, ¹⁵ but if you do not forgive others their trespasses, neither will your Father forgive your trespasses.

Okay, so what’s happening here? This passage is right in the middle of the Sermon on the Mount. Jesus was talking to his disciples and followers here, that’s you and me if we lived then—and he was saying this: “If you’re going to be a follower of mine, this is what it looks like.” And He then lays it out in Matthew 5, 6, and 7.

Here, Jesus is teaching the disciples how to pray and when we get down to verse 12, “and forgive us our debts...” Jesus is implying that Christ-followers who pray this prayer are guilty. “Debts” means “sins.” The one who prays this prayer is guilty before God and in need of His forgiveness. But notice the next part, “as we also have forgiven our debtors.” Think about that. You are asking God to imitate you, which means, that if you claim to be a Christian and withhold forgiveness and cling to a grudge, you are asking God to do the same thing to you.

Now, look at verse 14, “For if you forgive others their trespasses, your heavenly Father will also forgive you, but if you do not forgive others their trespasses, neither will your Father forgive your trespasses.” Forgiveness is at the heart of Christianity. Romans 3:23-26 reads, “for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, ²⁴ and are justified by his grace as a gift, through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus, ²⁵ whom God put forward as a propitiation by his blood, to be received by faith. This was to show God’s righteousness, because in his divine forbearance he had passed over former sins. ²⁶ It was to show his righteousness at the present time, so that he might be just and the justifier of the one who has faith in Jesus.”

Romans 5:10-11, “For if while we were enemies we were reconciled to God by the death of his Son, much more, now that we are reconciled, shall we be saved by his life. ¹¹ More than that, we also rejoice in God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom we have now received reconciliation.”

Forgiveness is at the heart of Christianity. Think about it with me. God’s grace enters the moment of salvation, bringing us forgiveness. It follows that, if we’ve been forgiven, we demonstrate that grace by being forgiving. So, understand what Jesus is saying in Matthew 6:14-15. When Jesus says, “For if you forgive others their trespasses, your heavenly Father will also forgive you, but if you do not forgive others their trespasses, neither will your Father forgive your trespasses.” He is saying, “It is impossible for God to forgive the trespasses of the one who is unforgiving because that person isn’t saved to begin with. The saved person forgives because they have been forgiven.”

There are two groups of people Jesus is not talking about. He is not talking about those who have forgiven but still struggle with bitterness. Listen, if you are in that group, the fact that you have forgiven and continue to forgive is a sign of grace.⁷ Jesus is not talking about people who are wrestling with forgiveness.

Jesus is also not talking about people who have recently been offended and are still in emotional shock and have not been able to properly respond with forgiveness.

There is a very specific group Jesus is addressing and it’s those who claim to be Christian and have absolutely no desire to forgive. It is the group whose most precious possessions are their grudges. It is the people who pride themselves on the fact that they never forgive. Jesus is

⁷ R. Kent Hughes, *The Sermon on the Mount: The Message of the Kingdom*, Preaching the Word (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Books, 2001), 190.

saying to that group, “Your failure to forgive, condemns you.” If you know Jesus, you have the ability and the expectation to forgive.

Forgiveness and Sexual Sin

There are two final questions that were sent in related to the topic of complete forgiveness and they have to do with sexual sin and forgiveness. Those questions are, “Romans 1:24 says, ‘Therefore God gave them up in the lusts of their hearts to impurity.’ Having done what I did, am I really saved?” And the second question is, “If I’ve committed a sexual sin, am I now unclean (see Ephesians 5:3-7).”

You and I wear a lot of different hats. In my case, I am a father, a son, a husband, a manager of a radio station, a deacon, a friend, a Vikings fan. Those are a number of different descriptors that describe me. Identity is what’s at the heart of the two questions I mentioned. Identities come in all shapes and sizes: white, black, male, female, Democrat, Republican, gay, straight, married, divorced, separated, single, widow, widower. Unfortunately, these identities have different weights and values placed on them by our culture but did you know that there is only one identity that really matters? Redeemed.

2 Corinthians 5:17, “Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation. The old has passed away; behold, the new has come.”

Ephesians 2:4-9, “⁴ But God, being rich in mercy, because of the great love with which he loved us, ⁵ even when we were dead in our trespasses, made us alive together with Christ—by grace you have been saved—⁶ and raised us up with him and seated us with him in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus, ⁷ so that in the coming ages he might show the immeasurable riches of his grace in kindness toward us in Christ Jesus. ⁸ For by grace you have been saved through faith.

And this is not your own doing; it is the gift of God, ⁹ not a result of works, so that no one may boast.”

Galatians 2:20, “I have been crucified with Christ. It is no longer I who live, but Christ who lives in me. And the life I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me.”

Listen, I don’t know your sin but I do know the Savior and I take Him at His word when He says that you are a new creation. Jesus Christ’s death, burial, and resurrection covered all of your sins. 1 John 2:1-2, “My little children, I am writing these things to you so that you may not sin. But if anyone does sin, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous. He is the propitiation for our sins, and not for ours only but also for the sins of the whole world.”

Romans 5:8, “but God shows his love for us in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us...”

Your past, whatever sin it contains, no longer identifies you if you have placed your faith in Christ. Your identity is in Christ. You are redeemed.

Application

As we close out our time, I want to make some application points. First, if you’re here and have never placed your faith in Christ for the forgiveness of your sins, let’s settle that. A part from Christ, you are condemned and face an eternity of torture, torment, and wrath. Randy Alcorn in his book, *Heaven*, says, “For Christians, this present life is the closest they will come to Hell. For unbelievers, it is the closest they will come to Heaven.”

Every sin in your past, present, and future, forgiven and you can be reconciled to Jesus Christ. Quit putting this off.

John MacArthur tells the following story.

During World War II, an American naval force in the North Atlantic was engaged in heavy battle with enemy ships and submarines on an exceptionally dark night. Six planes took off from the carrier to search out those targets, but while they were in the air a total blackout was ordered for the carrier in order to protect it from attack. Without lights on the carrier's deck the six planes could not possibly land, and they made radio request for the lights to be turned on just long enough for them to come in. But because the entire carrier, with its several thousand men as well as all the other planes and equipment, would have been put in jeopardy, no lights were permitted. When the six planes ran out of fuel, they had to ditch in the freezing water and all crew members perished into eternity.

There comes a time when God turns out the lights, when further opportunity for salvation is forever lost. That is why Paul told the Corinthians, "Behold, now is the favorable time; behold, now is the day of salvation."

Your window for placing your faith in Christ is closing. Let's settle this today.

Second, some of us need to repent over our lack of forgiveness. Know that I am not standing here up trying to minimize the pain inflicted on you by the sinful actions or words of someone else. I will not stand up here and pretend to know the depth of your pain. I trust that you are talking to someone and that you are working through and processing that pain as you journey toward healing.

The person I'm talking to is the one we talked about earlier. I am talking to the one who claims to be Christian and has absolutely no desire to forgive. The one whose most precious possessions are their grudges. The one who prides themselves on the fact that they never forgive. The Scripture is clear on what you need to do: you need to repent and until you do you should wrestle with the uncertainty you have over whether or not you are saved and your future secure. Christ is calling your unforgiving heart to repentance and He is insisting that you seek His forgiveness and the forgiveness of those you are holding a grudge against. How are you going to respond to His call?

Lastly, if you're here and you've placed your faith in Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins, it seems like the appropriate response for us is to worship. It is difficult to do a study

on forgiveness and not be overwhelmed by the magnitude of our sin and the penalty that comes with it. And yet there is the immense sense of relief that Christ has forgiven, He has covered over, my sins, at tremendous cost to Him and, as a result, I can't help but express my appreciation, my love for Him because of what He has done for me. So, I think an appropriate response for us is to worship Him. So, what does that look like for you? Maybe, you need to use this last song to express your thanks and admiration. For someone else, maybe you need to not sing this last song and you need to pour your heart out in prayer. For another, maybe you need to change the way your going to go into work on Monday and instead of being angry, bitter, or unforgiving about something going on there, you're going to change your attitude and worship Christ by working for Him and remembering that He sees all things, both good and bad, in your work environment. Those are just a handful of ways we can worship Him, there are so many other ways. I just know that, for me personally, my heart is compelled to worship after having done a study on forgiveness and I would love it if yours was too.

Let's pray.