

Grace to You :: *Unleashing God's Truth, One Verse at a Time*

Forgive Us Our Sins, Part 2

Scripture: Luke 11:4

Code: 42-153

We come now to the wonderful highlight really of our service and that is to turn to the living and abiding Word of God, Luke chapter 11. We are continuing in a study of the gospel of Luke and we have slowed to a proverbial crawl in this particular section at the beginning of chapter 11, and that is of necessity because what our Lord is giving us here is a framework, a skeleton, a structure for how to pray that impacts and affects every dimension of our Christian experience.

Let me read you the first four verses and establish again in your mind the setting. Jesus, of course, is in His ministry in Galilee. It is merely months now until He will be offered as a sacrifice for sin on the cross. He concentrates in these final months of Judean ministry on instructing His disciples, those who committed themselves to Him and are following Him and need spiritual instruction to strengthen them for what is to come, and to equip them for the ministry that will be theirs in the future. And part of that is teaching them and us how to pray. And that comes as a result of prompting from one of the disciples. Let's begin in verse 1.

"It came about that while He was praying in a certain place, after He had finished one of His disciples said to Him, 'Lord, teach us to pray just as John...John the Baptist...also taught his disciples.' And He said to them, 'When you pray say, Father, hallowed be Thy name, Thy Kingdom come. Give us each day our daily bread and forgive us our sins for we ourselves also forgive everyone who is indebted to us and lead us not into temptation.'"

And as I've been saying all along, there is a parallel text in Matthew 6:9 to 13 in which Jesus gave the same instruction, a little more full than this. We've been drawing some of the elements out of that to fill up the prayer so we get the combination of both of them and the fullness of this instruction. In this case, however, verse 4, "And forgive us our sins," that particular petition or element of this prayer also appears in the Matthew text and here in Luke as well. "Forgive us our sins."

In learning how to pray, we must learn to ask for forgiveness. We affirm God as Father and the source of everything. We affirm His name, that who He is and His purposes as hallowed and sacred. We desire that His Kingdom be advanced above all things, His will be done on earth as it is in heaven, as Jesus taught in the Matthew passage. And now we desire that He forgive us our sins, and we are instructed to ask for that forgiveness. So we're looking then at verse 4 and the petition,

"And forgive us our sins." This is how to pray, beloved. This is how to always pray, to always pray for forgiveness.

Of all the realities, of all the privileges, of all the blessings and benefits, of all the mercies, of all the gracious gifts that God could give to us, nothing is more wonderful than this. Nothing is more wonderful than to be told to ask for forgiveness on the assumption that if you ask you will receive. The Lord God wants us to come to Him and ask to be forgiven. In fact, the Lord Jesus here tells us and this is virtually a command, when you pray, say, "Father, forgive us our sins." We are told to ask for forgiveness, we are even commanded to ask for forgiveness. And since sin is the greatest danger, it brings about eternal destruction, forgiveness is the greatest blessing...the greatest blessing. The greatest need we have is to be forgiven and God offers that. Friends, that is the message of the Christian gospel. That is the message of the true Christian faith. That is the message of the Bible, Old Testament and New Testament. God forgives sinners who come to Him and ask.

The psalmist wrote in Psalm 86:5, "For You, Lord, are good and eager to forgive." God is not reluctant to forgive, He is eager to do so. In the most dramatic moment, I think, in the suffering of Jesus when He was hanging on the cross, He prayed to His Father for those who were murdering Him and He said, "Father, forgive them," as recorded in Luke 23:34. The Son knows the heart of the Father and He knows His heart is a heart to forgive, and to forgive even the most horrific and heinous thing such as the execution of His own beloved Son. It was Daniel the prophet praying in sackcloth and ashes who said confidently, "To the Lord our God belong compassion and forgiveness," Daniel 9:9. And he went before God on behalf of his whole nation because he knew God to be a forgiving God, even forgiving rank idolatry and apostasy and rebellion against His holy name and His will. It was David on a more personal note, not praying out of a sort of national concern but out of a personal concern who came before God and sought His forgiveness for the adultery with Bathsheba and the murder of her husband Uriah, and when receiving that forgiveness burst forth in Psalm 32 to say, "How blessed is he whose transgression is forgiven?"

Since this is our greatest need, forgiveness is God's greatest gift. This is the gospel. This is the message we proclaim. God will forgive sinners who ask on His terms. As we saw last time, the problem here is sin. We're sort of breaking the verse out into its components, forgive us our sins, and we defined sin. Sin, of course, is rebellion against God, disobedience to God And sin is something that has literally destroyed the whole human race. All of have sinned and fallen short. We all missed the mark. We all are therefore universally and helplessly guilty before God and set for eternal condemnation in an everlasting hell of punishment. It is to us standing on the brink of this eternal condemnation that God says forgiveness is available, it has been secured for you by the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ and it is offered to you by God if you will believe in His son, repenting from your sin. James sort of summed up the issue when he said, "You have not because you ask

not." And the Bible literally from beginning to end is full of invitations to sinners, invitations to sinners to come and seek forgiveness.

Now as we saw last time, we talked about sin which is the problem. The word for sin here is *hamartia* which means to miss the mark. The mark is perfection, isn't it? "Be holy for I am holy." The mark is absolute righteousness and holiness and we all miss the mark. We all fall short. The sin is also described here as an indebtedness. In the second part of that verse, "We ourselves also forgive everyone who is indebted to us." Those who sin against us are indebted to us. Why? Because they have violated us. And so it is with God, sin is a debt. In Matthew 6 it says, "Forgive us our debts," and there Matthew in Matthew's text, Jesus actually uses a word *opheilema* which means a debt. Sin is not only a violation of God's Law, it is a debt incurred to God because God is due obedience. God is due perfect respect, perfect honor, perfect worship, perfect adoration, perfect love. And whenever you don't give God that perfectly, He is due that, you therefore owe Him, you are in debt to Him. The debt is so profound and far reaching as to be humanly unpayable. That is illustrated by the Lord's story in Matthew 18 of the king who called some of his governors in and he called one in who owed him an unpayable debt. And out of the graciousness of his heart, when the man fell on his face in penitence, he forgave the man. We're in the same situation as that man. We have incurred an unpayable debt, we have failed to give God what we owe God and the debt has accumulated our whole life long, it is unpayable. Even an eternity in hell will not pay it off and that's why hell is forever. The debt is never ever paid. And yet along comes God and says, "I'll forgive you because My Son has paid the debt for you." We have to first face then the sin, face the debt that we owe to God, face the reality that we're in a desperate condition which has horrific consequences.

Upon understanding that condition, upon understanding the provision of God in Christ who paid the debt, we can come by the work of the Holy Spirit to a place of repentance and confession and belief in Christ, and ask for forgiveness through Jesus Christ and we can receive it. The problem then is sin and the greatest gift God has ever given sinful humanity is the offer of complete forgiveness.

Now that takes us to that second element. Sin is the problem. Forgiveness is the provision, that's point two. Forgiveness is the provision. And I want to talk a little bit about forgiveness because I want you to understand what it really is. Forgiveness is God passing by our sin. In a sense, it is God overlooking our sin. It is God wiping off the record of our sin. It is God freeing us from cope-ability and guilt. It is God removing the threat of punishment and its reality. No wonder Micah the prophet writes in chapter 7 verses 18 and 19, "Who is a God like Thee who pardons iniquity and passes over the rebellious act of the remnant of his possession." Forgiveness is to pardon iniquity. Forgiveness is to pass over rebellion without bringing on the rebellious soul the due consequence of that debt. Further Micah writes, "He does not retain His anger forever because He delights in unchanging love, or grace." Forgiveness is to cease being angry and to love the sinner because sin is no longer an issue. Micah goes on, "He will have compassion on us. He will tread our iniquities under foot, yes Thou wilt cast all their sins into the depths of the sea." Forgiveness is literally trampling our iniquities

under your feet as if they are inconsequential. Forgiveness is demonstrating compassion to the guilty. Forgiveness is burying their sins in an irretrievable grave of depths. Put in New Testament language, 2 Corinthians 5:19, "It is not counting their trespasses against them." Forgiveness is eliminating the record of our sin.

The Bible talks about this Old Testament and New Testament repeatedly. In fact, I feel when I'm going through this with you that I'm an echo and not a voice because through the years we celebrate and proclaim this so frequently. Forgiveness is taking away our sin, that is removing it. It is God lifting it off of us and laying it on Jesus Christ and then punishing Him for it. That's what Isaiah 53:6 says, "The iniquity of us all He has laid on Him." He is pictured as a scape goat, you remember, who was sent out of the camp, as it were, in the sacrificial ceremony in Israel, bearing the sin away symbolically. Forgiveness is removing our sin and putting it on Christ who bears the punishment of God for it. Forgiveness is covering our sin. It is covering it over, covering it with the blood of Christ. Psalm 85:2, "Thou has covered all their sin." Forgiveness is blotting out our sin. It's literally removing it from the record. Isaiah 43:25, "I am He that blots out your transgressions. They can't ever be seen again." And forgiveness is forgetting our sin. God remembers it no more.

Only God can do this. He doesn't have to, He chooses to. It's His nature to do so. Only God can forgive sin. Mark 2:7, "Who can forgive sins but God only?" The people knew that and when Jesus forgave sins, they were stunned. They knew God forgave sins and God alone forgave sin and when Jesus did it, they refused to make the obvious connection that this was God in their midst. Only God can forgive sin, listen, because only the creditor can forgive the debtor. Unless you have been offended, unless you have been the one who has been defrauded, you have no grounds on which to offer forgiveness. No finite power can discharge an infinite debt. The debt is against God, against Thee, Thee only have I sinned and therefore only the one sinned against can provide forgiveness. This is the whole story of redemption. All the Old Testament looks forward to the one who would come and pay the price for sin so the debt having been paid, the sinner could be forgiven. It is in Christ and Christ alone that the debt is paid. And because He paid the price for sin, because He satisfied God, because He paid our debt, we can be forgiven.

Now you say, "When we look at this statement in verse 4, 'When you pray say: Father, forgive us our sins,' are we talking here about salvation?" Well certainly initially we are. You have to start there. And when we come that first time to Christ, that saving event, and we repent and confess and embrace the gospel and ask God for Christ's sake to forgive our sins, we are certainly doing what this text tells us to do. But that's not all because this basic prayer is given to believers, it is given to disciples. It is given to those already saved, if you will, already followers of Jesus Christ, and so there's more here than just that initial asking for forgiveness. We then have to see in this request two aspects of forgiveness. And that's what I want to unfold for you a little bit this morning, two aspects of forgiveness. This could be a much more comprehensive study than say the next half hour we give to

you, but I hope you'll get the grip on these two distinctions.

Number one, the first kind of forgiveness you have to understand, and it's that which we have been referring to, is what I would call judicial forgiveness...judicial forgiveness. That is looking at God as the judge who forgives us judicially. That is He declares us to be forgiven.

Now what do we mean by that? We mean the full complete positional forgiveness granted by God as the moral judge of the universe, the law-giver and the moral judge of the universe, the sovereign judge. We're talking about the full complete forgiveness that He gives at the time of salvation. When you came to Christ the very first time with a penitent heart, convicted of your sin by the working of the Holy Spirit and the Word, when you saw your miserable condition as a sinner, when you understood the consequence of your sin, namely eternal punishment, when you embraced the truth of the gospel and you sought forgiveness through the work of Christ, you received from God as the judge total and complete forgiveness of all your sins because by asking they were then transferred to Christ who paid your debt. By this forgiveness then, all our sins committed at the time we prayed that, and uncommitted, all the sins of the past and the future were totally, completely and forever and irreversibly forgiven and we are declared righteous by the judge who is God. We are declared just. We are declared holy, justified from all condemnation. All sin is dealt with, all guilt is removed, all our iniquities are buried in the depths of the sea, all transgressions are forgotten before God and we are literally given the righteousness of God in Christ. And when God looks at us, He sees Christ. He bore our sins in His body that we might be made the righteousness of God in Him. He became sin for us that we might be made the righteousness of God. This is what happens at salvation,. All your sins are irreversibly and forever totally forgiven, God's justice is satisfied judicially, forensically, the issue is settled forever because your sins were transferred to Christ who bore in full the punishment for them all. This is a massive grace act, but this is the work of Christ.

In Matthew 26:28 we read, Jesus said, "This is My blood of the New Covenant which is shed for the remission of sins." He died on the cross to remit our sins, to pay the debt and remove our sins. Ephesians 1:7 , "In whom...in Christ...we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of sins." Through His death is provided this complete, total, irreversible forgiveness. In 1 John 2 it says in verse 12, "I write unto you, little children, because your sins are forgiven you for His namesake." Because of Christ you are forgiven. Ephesians 4:32, "Even as God for Christ's sake has forgiven you."

In the work of Christ on the cross is provided a complete forgiveness so that our standing before the judge is as righteous, just and holy because our sins have all been paid for. And I say again, past, present, committed and uncommitted at the time of that salvation, they were all covered there.

This was not only for us, this forgiveness has been available since man's fall. If you go back in to the book of Genesis you read the story of Abraham, you will find that Abraham received this forgiveness. You say, "Well Jesus hadn't died yet." But when He did die, He died for the sins of Abraham. Why? Abraham didn't believe in Jesus. No, he didn't know about Jesus and therefore couldn't have believed, but he did believe God and he believed what God had revealed and he believed that he himself could not remedy his sinful condition and he knew that God alone could forgive. And he went to God with faith and sought forgiveness and received it on the basis of the death of Christ that would come later, about which he didn't know.

Listen to what James 2:23 says, "Abraham believed God and it was imputed unto him for righteousness." Before Christ you had to believe all that God had revealed about Himself. You couldn't be expected to believe what hadn't happened, but to believe all that God had said. And what had God said? That He was holy, that man was sinful, that sin had consequence, but that God would forgive. Abraham believed it, knew himself to be a sinner, believed forgiveness came only from God and asked for it. In Romans 4:3 and 4 it says this about Abraham, "Abraham believed God and it was counted to him for righteousness." It's the same principle as in the New Testament. Abraham believed God. The New Testament would say, "And so-and-so believed in Christ and it was counted to him for righteousness." But in the Old, believing God was all they could know and Abraham did and it was counted to him for righteousness. God was viewed....God viewed Abraham as if he was perfectly righteous and perfectly holy. Why? Because his sin was to be paid for by Christ. And then Romans 4:3 and 4 goes on to say, "To him that believes on Him that justifies the ungodly, his faith is counted for righteousness." God will literally justify, or declare righteous, people who are not righteous, they are ungodly. You say, "How can God declare ungodly people godly?" By counting their faith as righteousness. You say, "How can your faith be enough to make you righteous?" It can't, but faith is all that we can give, the payment has to come from someone else and it did in Jesus Christ. When Jesus died on the cross, He bore the sins of Abraham and Adam and Eve and Enoch and everybody else who lived before the cross and believed. And so Romans 4:7 and 8 says, "Blessed are they whose iniquities are forgiven and whose sins are covered. Blessed is the man to whom the Lord will not impute sin." That's the great doctrine of justification by faith, the great truth of forgiveness of sin, the great truth of imputed righteousness and that's a direct quote out of Psalm 32. That's not just reserved to the New Testament, that's an Old Testament principle. The salvation standard has always been the same, you repent of sin, you believe in God alone as the one to whom the debt has been incurred, and God alone the one who can forgive and will. Again as we quoted at the beginning of the service in Psalm 103, "Bless the Lord, O my soul, all that is within me, bless His holy name." Why? Because He forgives all your iniquities, all of them. He is a forgiving God. And that's where people went in time past when they came to the end of themselves, when they realized they had nothing within themselves to secure their own redemption, they could not change their sinful

condition, they could not satisfy God's holy Law. They came penitently and trusted in the God who had revealed Himself as a forgiving God and they asked for Him to forgive even though they yet did not know who the provision would be to bear their punishment. In Jeremiah 33:8 it's...that thirty-third chapter is presenting God, "Thus says the Lord who made the earth, the Lord who formed it, to establish it, the Lord is His name, call to Me and I will answer you and will tell you great and mighty things which you do not know." God is establishing His glory and His greatness. And a few verses later in verse 8 of Jeremiah 33 he says, "And I will cleanse them from all their iniquity from which they have sinned against Me and I will pardon all their iniquities by which they have sinned against Me and by which they have transgressed against Me." God says, "This is who I am, I am a forgiving God and if you come penitently and believe in My forgiveness and ask for it, I'll give it." And whether it was Jeremiah or whether it was the people of Israel, or whether it was the patriarch Abraham, or whether it was the Apostle Paul or whether it's one of us, when we come and ask God for forgiveness this side of the cross believing in the Lord Jesus Christ, apart from whom there is no forgiveness, God will forgive.

Let me sum it up in Colossians 2:13 and 14. Paul writes, "And you being dead in your sins and the uncircumcision of your flesh has He made alive together with Him...together with Christ...having forgiven you all trespasses." Because you are in Christ, all trespasses are forgiven. Listen to the next statement, "Blotting out the handwriting of ordinances that was against us." What is a handwriting of ordinances? It's a legal indictment, ordinances are laws. Here is the record of the violation of the Law. You have such a record, I have such a record, every human being who has ever lived has accumulated this. This is what Paul calls "treasuring up wrath against the day of wrath." We just continue to commit crimes against God. We continue to come short of the standard. We continue to miss the mark. We continue to build the unpayable debt. It's accumulated and accumulated and accumulated. And here it says that because we are in Christ, God has forgiven all trespasses and obliterated this statement, obliterated this record, this indictment.

How did He do that? It says He nailed it to the cross. Wow, vivid language.

Whenever a criminal was crucified, the crime was posted on the cross so that everybody who passed by would see the record of their crime and what brought about this horrendous capital punishment. You remember for Jesus it was a mocking ridicule, scornful statement: "This is Jesus of Nazareth, King of the Jews." They were essentially accusing Him by that of sedition against Caesar. The capital crime that Jesus committed, at least the thing that they put up on display, was civil rebellion, and, I guess, religious rebellion against the emperor who was both ruler and god. And when someone was crucified, the indictment was there. That wasn't the real indictment against Jesus, that was the mocking, false indictment. If you want to see the real indictment against Jesus, what you would have there is the record of all the sins of all the people who would ever believe. They were all

nailed there. And if you wonder what He died for, you could read the record if the record were available to be read. Your own record should be sufficient, though, to make the point. He nailed it to the cross and there on the cross hangs the record of your sin and Jesus is dying to pay for all of it. He's forgiven it all because the indictment was nailed to the cross. This is judicial forgiveness. This great gift of God once for all forgiveness for all our sins irreversibly and forever.

Let me take you a step further in thinking about that. Turn to Romans 8...Romans 8...well we'll look at verse 28 and work our way quickly through this great text, I just want to seal this in your mind. "God causes all things to work together for good to those who love God, to those who are called according to His purpose." This establishes a theme here. Everything that happens in our lives works together for good. In other words, nothing that happens to us works for bad. Nothing can reverse your standing before God. Nothing can change the salvation that God has given you. And he goes on to prove that in verse 29, "For, or because," here's why everything works together for good, "because whom He foreknew He predestined to become conformed to the image of His Son that He might be the firstborn among many brethren." Every thing is going to work together ultimately for your good because God planned from before time to choose you, to predestine you, to ultimately be conformed to the image of His Son and to become one of the brethren among whom Jesus is the premier one in heaven. In other words, everything has to work together for good because of God's predetermined plan. Verse 30 expands it even further, "He predestined you and whoever He predestined He also called, and whom He called these He also justified, and whom He justified, these He also glorified."

Here is the irreversible nature of salvation. God predestined it and so He called the sinner. The sinner responds, He justifies. And whomever He justifies He also glorifies. You will be glorified because you've been justified. You have been justified because you've been called. And you were called because you were predestined. And so everything works to good because you can't undo this standing that you have before God. Why? Because all your sins committed and uncommitted have been paid for. Do you understand that? So on what basis would you lose your salvation? On what basis would you be condemned? On what basis would God take away His grace? The sin you have yet to commit was already paid for. That's the point.

And so, he goes on to ask some rhetorical questions. What are we going to say to thee things, verse 31? I mean, how we going to respond to this? If God is for us to this degree, if God has established that this is the way it is, who could successfully be against us? Well the obvious answer to that is no one since God is the ultimate power in the universe. If this is God's plan and this is what God has determined that it's all going to work to good, and that it goes from predestination to calling to justification to glorification, and it's all in God's power and there is no power equal to His power, who is ever going to change that?

Further more, you say, "Well maybe God will change it?" Well verse 32, "If God didn't spare His own Son but delivered Him up for us all..." In other words, if He would take the most precious thing, His own Son, and He wouldn't spare Him when we were wretched sinners, won't He do something less than that to make sure He keeps us to glory? It's the argument from the greater to the lesser. God already did the greatest thing in giving His Son to rescue us when we were not His children, when we were not a part of His family. Will He not do whatever it takes to keep us now that we are? You say, "Well maybe somebody will bring a successful accusation against us?" Verse 33 says, "Look, who's going to bring a charge against God's elect?" Satan might try, he did in the book of Job, who's going to bring a successful charge? No one, God is the one who justifies. God has already declared us righteous. He has covered us with His righteousness, He views us that way. Verse 34, maybe somebody is going to condemn us, who's it going to be? Well, maybe Jesus Christ, but He's not going to do that because He already died and He was raised proving the validity and sufficiency of His death, and He is now at the right hand of God and He's busy doing...what?...interceding for us. This is airtight. Therefore he says, "Who's going to separate us from the love of Christ?" Who's going to make Christ hate us, or God condemn us? "Nobody and nothing...not tribulation, distress, persecution, famine, nakedness, peril, sword...verse 38...not death, life, angels, principalities, things present, things to come, powers, height, depth, any other created thing, nothing can separate us from God's love which is in Christ, nothing."

Folks, what I'm telling you here is when you were saved, all your sins are forgiven totally and completely, committed and uncommitted throughout your entire life, irreversibly that is your state before God. And when He views you, He views you as righteous. In fact, He sees you as righteous as His own Son because His Son paid in full for all your sins.

There's one other text that I can't leave out, Hebrews 10. Every Christian should have a good understanding of the book of Hebrews because it is so rich in the glories of Christ. At the heart of these, of course, is the glory of His great sacrifice. Look at Hebrews 10 verse 10, "By this will...that is the will of God mentioned in verse 9...by God's will we have been sanctified." Here the word means set apart from sin. It's a synonym for salvation here. The word sanctification we often think is a synonym for spiritual growth. Many times in the New Testament it refers to salvation which is a once-for-all setting apart from sin judicially, forensically. And that's the way it's used here. "By this will we have been sanctified." This is a perfect participle in the Greek with a finite verb, and that is the strongest way in the Greek language that a permanent continuous condition can be expressed. We have entered in to a permanent condition of being sanctified, set apart from sin.

How? "Through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once for all." It was through His sacrifice on the cross that sin was paid for and therefore removed from us as far as its guilt is concerned.

Contrast this in verse 11 and 12, "Every priest stands daily ministering and offering time after time the same sacrifices which can never take away sins." Priests were really butchers when they went into their time in the temple, the two weeks that they were there to serve their time. They were butchers, they were neck deep in blood, slaughtering animal after animal after animal, day after day after day, year after year, on and on and on because none of them ever, ever, ever can take away sins. They did demonstrate that sin kills. They demonstrated the desperate need for a sacrifice that could take away sin. They made the people hunger for some sacrifice to come and put an end to the endlessness of this.

And one did come, verse 12, "But He in contrast to the priests standing day after day, time after time, offering sacrifices which can never take away sin, He having offered one sacrifice for sins for all time sat down at the right hand of God." All the other priests are standing, He's sitting cause the work is done. They never sat because the work was never done. He offered one sacrifice that did take away sins. Millions could not take away sins, one could take away sins, I love this, "For all time...for all time." Drop down to verse 14, "For by one offering He has perfected...here's that same phrase...for all time those who are sanctified." Again, sanctified and perfected means saved. Jesus gave an offering which gave us a permanent salvation for all time. And verse 18 then, after a quote from Jeremiah 31, says, "Now where there is forgiveness of these things, the sins and lawless deeds mentioned in verse 17, where there is forgiveness of these things, there is no longer any offering for sin." No other offering ever needs to be made for sin, no other sacrifice ever needs to be made for sin, no other penalty ever needs to be paid for sin. There is no further debt, it's fully paid in Christ. Do you understand this? Therefore this is irreversible and complete. Complete forgiveness for all who believe. Wow!

Let's go back to Luke 11. So you say that all my sins are forever forgiven. If that's true, then why would I need to pray, "Father, forgive us our sins," why would I need to pray that? Because there's a second aspect to forgiveness. There's a second aspect. Let's call it relational forgiveness...relational forgiveness. The fact of our salvation settled, we are declared righteous, the penalty has been paid, that's fixed and irreversible. But we still sin, don't we? And our sin does not affect our standing, it does not affect our position, it does not affect the declaration of the judge of all the earth that we have been declared just and righteous because our sins were paid for, but it does affect our relationship to God. We're talking here about practical forgiveness. It doesn't undo our standing. It doesn't change our status before God, but it does affect our relationship to Him.

Let me show you how this can be understood. Turn to Psalm 51, and we go back to David, and I'll just show you a couple of passages and we'll be done, but Psalm 51. I'm going to say more about this aspect in broader terms perhaps next week, but I'll establish it, I think, well in your mind. Here...here's what I want you to understand. David sinned greatly, okay? David sinned by

committing adultery with Bathsheba. First he sinned by lusting after her, then he sinned by committing adultery with her. Then he sinned by essentially murdering her husband. Now I want you to understand how David views all of this. Psalm 51 is a Psalm of penitence, but I want you to understand something of what David knew, so look at verse 11. He says, "Do not cast me away from Thy presence, do not take Thy Holy Spirit from me." How can he say that if he's not a saved man? Well he can't, he is, he's a believer. He has had his sins forgiven. He is a just man before God. His sins literally will be nailed to the cross of Christ, they are as good as paid for and God views him as just and as righteous in his standing. He also has experienced the presence of God in his life and he has known the Holy Spirit. He understands that because he is a believing man, he is a child of God.

Notice verse 14, "Deliver me from blood guiltiness, O God, Thou God of my...what?...my salvation." He knew he was a saved man. He knew he was a man who had been forgiven and delivered from sin and death and judgment. He understood his salvation. That was never an issue. He knew God was the God of his salvation. Go back to verse 12 and here's the key. "Restore to me...what?...not my salvation, but what?...the joy of Thy salvation." He has his salvation, I want the joy of the salvation that I have. Then he says, watch this in verse 13, "When I get my joy back I will teach transgressors Thy ways and sinners will be converted to Thee." What he's saying is I want my joy back and when my joy comes back then my testimony comes back, then my witness comes back, then the effectiveness of my godliness comes back. He's not asking for salvation to be returned to him. He knew God was the God of his salvation. He knew the presence of God. He knew the Holy Spirit of God. But he also knew that sin had caused him to lose his joy, his peace, his confidence, his testimony, his usefulness. So, he starts out, Psalm 51, asking God to show him loving kindness, compassion, to blot out his transgression, wash him from iniquity, cleanse me from my sin, verse 2, verse 3, "I know my transgressions, my sin is ever before me, I can't get it out of my mind. Against Thee, Thee only I have sinned and done what is evil in Thy sight so that Thou art justified when Thou does speak and blameless when Thou does judge." No matter what You would do to me to chasten me, You'd be just in doing it because I have sinned...I have sinned.

Down in verse 7 he says, "Purge me with hyssop or purify me. I shall be clean. Wash me, I'll be whiter than snow. Make me hear joy and gladness." I want the joy back. And then he says, "Let the bones which You have broken rejoice." I can't stand the pain that guilt brings upon my physical being. Over in Psalm 32 it says, "It dries up my life juices, it wracks my body, it torments my mind. O God...verse 9...hide my face from my sins, blot out all my iniquities." And then this wonderful verse 10, "Create in me a clean heart, O God." That's what I want. I want a steadfast spirit, I want to be faithful and steadfastly obedient to You.

David knew that he was a believer. He wasn't asking for salvation. He was asking to have the joy back. And what happens is this, we go through the world, we only get salvation once but we need to be continually saying, "Father, forgive us our sins because they interrupt our fellowship and they steal

our joy, rob our gladness, take away our song and tamper with our usefulness and hinder our testimony."

There's one more beautiful picture of this in the thirteenth chapter of John's gospel. The Lord is with His disciples in the Upper Room the night of the betrayal by Judas. And He has some final and wondrous lessons to teach them. As He gathers with them and they participate in the dinner that they're having together, Jesus does something that is amazing in verse 4, it says, "He rose from supper," they had already begun to eat and this was really a horrific indignity to begin to eat without taking care of what He will immediately take care of. "He rose from supper, laid aside his garment," that is He took off His outer coat, "and taking a towel girded Himself about...put the towel around Him...poured water into a basin and began to wash the disciples' feet and wipe them with the towel with which He was girded." This was a terrible indignity. You didn't go to a reclining feast, this isn't fast food, folks, in these days, you lounged at a table like this and your head was near somebody's feet. And there were no paved roads in those days and they wore sandals, your feet were either dusty or muddy, and there was always someone who washed the feet of someone who came into a house. It was the lowest slave on the social ladder. Apparently because it was a rented room, none was provided and none of the disciples would stoop to doing that since they were all arguing about which of them was the greatest. Jesus realizing this has to be done sees it as a perfect illustration. So He rises off the table and girds Himself with a towel and gets the water and starts wiping the disciples' feet clean.

Well Peter was greatly offended by this. It was just not right. He came to Simon Peter. Simon Peter says, "Lord, do You wash my feet?" Now you've got to give Peter some credit, at least for brief moments he seemed to see things the way they should be seen. It was as if to say, "You know, this is backwards." It was sort of like John the Baptist saying, "I'm supposed to baptize You?" Jesus said, "What I do you do not realize now, but you shall understand thereafter." I'm going to do something here that's going to be a spiritual lesson for you, you don't quite understand it now but you will.

Peter said to Him, and this is where, you know, Peter only seemed to be lucid spiritually for a moment because here, you know, two verses later he's commanding, "Never shall You wash my feet." His brashness is really astonishing. He didn't mind commanding the Lord of the universe on occasion. "Jesus answered and said, 'If I do not wash you, you have no part with Me.'" You don't belong to Me if I don't keep washing you. It's to say...it's as if to say, "If you belong to Me, I have a washing relationship with you. This is what I'm trying to communicate to you. If you belong to Me, I wash you." It's as if the Lord is saying like a parent would say to a little baby, "My role in caring for you is to keep you clean. If I don't wash you, we don't have a relationship." Conversely, Peter, we have a relationship that includes Me washing you. The spiritual overtones should be obvious.

Simon Peter got it. He said, "Lord, not my feet only but also my hands and my head." Always over the top, Peter...always. And then the Lord says, "Look, Peter, he who has bathed needs only to wash his feet." Look, you had a bath this morning, not talking about that. You're completely clean, you're clean, not just all of you is clean. I just need to deal with the feet issue here, let's not overstate this. You already have been bathed, you just need your feet washed.

That's such a wonderful analogy, isn't it? If you're a Christian, you've been bathed. You don't need another bath. You don't need another total cleansing. But as you stumble and bumble, as all of us stumble and bumble through the world, our feet get dirty and we have an ongoing relationship with the One who keeps us clean. And what activates His cleansing work is, "Lord, Father, forgive us our sins." Positional purging needs no repetition, but we need the daily washing that keeps the relationship clean and joyful and useful. When we become a branch in the vine, He prunes it, He cleanses it. We are pardoned but we need to be cleaned.

Nathan came to David after his terrible sin and said, "David, the Lord has put away your sin, He put it away." And David just burst out, "Blessed is the man to whom the Lord does not impute iniquity." And God gave him back his joy. That's what we're talking about, folks.

When we look at this prayer, back to Luke 11, and we hear, "Father, forgive us our sins," we're being reminded that this is a daily part of our life, just as every day we want to say, "Father," recognizing God as the source of everything. Every day we want to say, "Hallowed be Your name, I want Your holy name to be exalted." Every day we say, "I want Your Kingdom to advance, I want Your will to be done on earth as it is in heaven." Every day we say, "God, You're the source of our daily bread." And so every day we say, "Lord, keep my feet clean." It's just a constant daily plea to keep the relationship what it should be that we may enjoy it, be blessed by it, be filled with gladness and usefulness and be able to show transgressors and sinners the way of the truth. Nehemiah said, "You're a God ready to pardon." Micah said, "You delight in mercy." Paul said, "Where sin abounds, grace much more abounds." Isn't it wonderful? We were forgiven once judicially, but we are being forgiven every day, day after day as we come before the Lord to confess. If we don't repent and confess, the feet stay dirty, we lose our joy and our usefulness. Why live like that and forfeit the best of what God has for us?

Let me close. Bow your heads and let me read you a Puritan prayer with which we close. "O God of grace, Thou hast imputed my sin to my substitute and has imputed His righteousness to my soul, clothing me with a bridegroom's robe, decking me with jewels of holiness. But in my Christian walk I am still in rags, my best prayers are stained with sin, my penitential tears are so much impurity. My confessions of wrong are so many aggravations of sin. My receiving the Spirit's work is tainted with selfishness. I need to repent of my repentance, I need my tears to be washed. I have no robe to bring to cover my sins, no loom to weave my own righteousness. I am always standing clothed in

filthy garments and by grace am always receiving a change of raiment. I'm always wandering into a far country and always returning home like a prodigal, always saying, 'Father, forgive me.' And You are always bringing forth a clean robe. Every morning let me wear it, every evening return it. Go out to the day's work in it. Grant me never to lose sight of the exceeding sinfulness of my sin, the exceeding righteousness of salvation, the exceeding glory of Christ, the exceeding beauty of holiness and the exceeding wonder of grace."

And, Father, that certainly would be our prayer. May we know not only the judicial forgiveness of salvation that secures for us an eternity of joy in heaven, but that relational washing day in and day out as we confess our sins that gives us joy and gladness and usefulness in this life. This is our prayer, in Your Son's name. Amen.

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