

Forgiven: Learning to Open the Gift of Salvation Acts 26:18

Forgiveness: One moment before your last breath, one thing will matter more than anything else—whether you are dying forgiven or unforgiven.

Forgiven: Nothing matters more to any who have sinned—and God says all have sinned.

The peace you can have one moment before you die, is available on a daily basis, if you understand what God has done in Christ and if you choose to respond by faith to Him.

This morning we are beginning a year long look at the Gift of Salvation. The elements of what God does in us when He saves us. The first element of salvation, and maybe the most precious and cherished, is forgiveness.

As we open to Acts 26:18 this morning, we get the true picture of our condition as humans. We are each born spiritually blind, and grow up living lost, helpless, and hopeless in the darkness of sin; as sinners who have sinned even once in God's sight—we are guilty of breaking all of God's commandments (James 2:10).

Thinking about ourselves from the Divine vantage point, as explained in the Bible, should make us see ourselves as worst than we think, rather than better; because Christ's death is only for the guilty, only for the hopelessly stained, and only for the helplessly lost. It is in that condition—that we find God's grace.

Listen now as Jesus explains the Gospel to the Apostle Paul on the Damascus Road.

Acts 26:18 to open their eyes, in order to turn them from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan to God, that they may receive forgiveness of sins and an inheritance among those who are sanctified by faith in Me.'

DO YOU SEE YOUR CRITICAL NEEDS?

All sinners (so that means all humans that have ever lived on planet earth except Jesus Christ) have seven basic Biblically described critical and soul threatening needs.

God's Word describes all humans are hopelessly lost, sitting in the dark and awaiting destruction unless the elements of the gift of salvation. The Bible defines our greatest

needs as:

1. forgiveness; 2. justification; 3. regeneration; 4. reconciliation; 5. adoption; 6. redemption; and 7. sanctification.

Only if we have received Jesus who came to save us from sin, do we really have anything in our possession that matters. Every other possession and gift can be stripped away from us by disease, disaster, or death.

Only Jesus will never leave us; only He can save and keep us forever.

Have you received the gift of salvation that you really need? With salvation comes the wonderful reality of forgiveness.

THE GIFT OF FORGIVENESS— CRITICAL NEED #1

Jesus came to live and then die the substitutionary death to take the hopeless debt we owe to God and pay with His own life our eternal death sin has caused us to be responsible to pay--**that's forgiveness.** **We stood before God as a debtor and that debt is forgotten by Christ's payment.**

*Ephesians 1:7 In Him we have redemption through His blood, **the forgiveness of sins**, according to the riches of His grace NKJV*

Have you **experienced the relief of knowing that all your sins, everyone of them—past, present, and future, are GONE?**

*Psalms 32:1-2 Blessed is he whose **transgression is forgiven**, Whose sin is covered. 2 Blessed is the man to whom the Lord does not impute iniquity, And in whose spirit there is no deceit. NKJV*

Your sins are paid for, and your eternal life is purchased—and you have the receipt in your hand, written in the very blood of the One who paid the price. Christ's record of that payment is forever settled in this book the Bible!

With forgiveness comes the end of ever facing the inescapable wrath of God.

*Romans 8:1 There is therefore now **no condemnation** to those who are in Christ Jesus, who do not walk according to the flesh, but according to the Spirit. NKJV*

Salvation is a package that contains a lifetime of never ending joys and delights as we partake of Christ, finding Him our daily portion.

¹ Forgiveness means that we can offer people the "remission of sins" in Jesus' name (Luke 24:47) which brings "life through His name" (John 20:31). We can then come asking our Father for help in Jesus' name as we pray (John 14:13-14; 15:16; 16:23-26). Because we've been forgiven, when we ask the Father "in the name of Jesus Christ," it is as though Jesus Himself were asking it. If we remember this, it will help to keep us from asking for things unworthy of His name.

Our spiritual lives are all about a life long search in God's Word to find and by faith embrace all that He has given us in Christ.

God's gifts are opened by faith, one by one, as we see who we have become in Christ. Be sure you have opened and enjoyed the gift of salvation, given by Jesus.

If you have never tried this I'd encourage you to start a new dimension of your spiritual life by experiencing the wonders of salvation. Let me share with you one of the most profitable spiritual exercises you can ever do.

OPEN THE GIFT OF FORGIVENESS

Because of our sin—we are all debtors to God's Righteousness; so we need forgiveness.

In Forgiveness we go from hopelessly offending God stained by sin to the peace of complete forgiveness.

We need to experience what the Scriptures often declare—God is a God who offers His children complete forgiveness. Trace with me these life giving words in your hearts as I read them to you.

Then repeat the truth of what God has done!

- "... *as far as the east is from the west, **so far has he removed our transgressions from us***". (Psalm 103:12).

God said all my sins are gone. Say that aloud with me.

- " *Come now, and let us reason together,*" Says the LORD, " *Though your sins are like scarlet, **They shall be as white as snow;** Though they are red like crimson, **They shall be as wool.***" (Is. 1:18).

I am white as snow in God's sight. Say that aloud with me.

- "For I will forgive their wickedness and **will remember their sins no more.**" (Jeremiah 31:34b).

God has forgotten all of my sins. Say that aloud with me.

- "She said, "No one, Lord." And Jesus said to her, "**Neither do I condemn you; go and sin no more.**" (John 8:11). "There is therefore now **no condemnation** to those who are in Christ Jesus..." (Romans 8:1).

Jesus will never condemn me for my sins. Say that aloud with me.

START A NEW SPIRITUAL EXERCISE

As you begin each day, each month, and this new year, one of our greatest privileges is to open and enjoy the gift of salvation God has given to us. By faith we please God when we believe what He's said about us. We need to not live by what others say or have said about us all your life.

Satan is the Accuser and wants us to only remember all the many times we have fallen; Satan delights in the days, weeks, or months he can keep us condemning ourselves for what we've done. That is his plan, so don't fall for it.

Resist Satan as you believe the truth; speak the truth; and preach the Gospel to yourself.

And when ever we fall down, God says to just turn back to Him and repent, confessing our sin immediately--and believe that what God has promised in His salvation. We are forgiven, justified, regenerated, reconciled, adopted, redeemed, and sanctified. That makes us precious in His sight, special in His plan.

One of the most powerful habits you could grow is to take this list of the ramifications of having received the only gift everyone really needs and rejoice by faith in your great salvation!

Keep these seven elements in your Bible, at home, on your computer, put one on your mirror where you start your day, and in your car. Where ever you need to keep reminding yourself of what great things God has promised and done through Christ's death for us!

Slowly as you understand and lay hold on these truths a life-changing transformation take place in our minds, and then in our emotions, and finally throughout our entire life as we live each day based on God's eternal truth. This starts as we:

This morning celebrate your forgiveness that is only in Christ.