

Forgiven in Christ

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[0 : 0 0] Good morning everyone. Good morning. How are we all? Good? Excellent. Welcome people in the balcony. It's, um, this morning we're thinking about in our series about being in Christ and we're thinking about forgiveness in Christ. And I'd like to introduce you to my gran. My gran was an amazing character. Um, she was a larger than life character and she smoked woodbines. If you remember those, I hope for our younger people, you never will enjoy, but these were unfiltered woodbines.

And as she smoked, I was enthralled as a five-year-old watching her as she cooked with a woodbine. And the ash would get longer and longer and longer until it dropped into the food. And it all got stirred in. Now this wouldn't have been so bad if she was catering for herself, but she was a landlady of a pub. And whenever, I mean, she was a great die in the wall, Wesleyan, hat wearing Wesleyan. And I won't tell you about the time I dropped my pocket money down the toilet either. She rescued it and then carried on doing the sandwiches. Anyway, but anyway, her line was, her line was, whenever she heard of anything, she would put her hands on her hips saying, well, your sins will find you out. That was her line. Your sins will find you out. Now I didn't realize until later in life that it is actually from Numbers 32, 23, you know, to have scripture quoted to you when you were five, it's really great. Um, but if you have sinned against the Lord, be sure because your sin will find you out, it says. Yet Jesus again and again, as we have heard this morning, again and again, as here to forgive our sins, forgiveness in Christ. And as we heard again in our scripture, um, as we read that Jesus was always forgiving sin. You know, is it easier to say you are forgiven or to pick up your mat and walk, as he said to the, um, to a person that he was healing? And as we continue in this series this morning, we look in this area of being forgiven in Christ for us. And what does that mean? And what does it, for those that we are reaching to know God's forgiveness? You know, how does our theme fit with our scripture this morning, being forgiven in Christ?

Paul and Timothy are writing this to an early church, an early church that are encouraging them in their prayer and in the way to act as Jesus showed us. You know, we always thank God the Father, our Lord Jesus Christ, when we pray for you. What an encouraging message. Wouldn't that be great if that dropped into our email on a Monday morning? You know, they continue because we have heard of your faith, your faith, your faith in Jesus Christ and of the love you have for all God's people. That's a great endorsement from Paul. If the Colossians had a website, I'd put that right at the top with a five-star rating.

[3 : 3 9] Wouldn't that be great to say something about that church? But what's behind this intensity of prayer? Why are they praying like this? Because Paul and Timothy know all too well in this new community of believers in Jesus that they are vulnerable and that they are open to temptation, exactly as we all are.

This is as fresh today as the day it was given. If I were to say to you, bring to mind now areas of your life where you have sinned, my guess is whatever those things are, they would spring readily to mind. I'll just give you a fraction of a moment to think about those areas in your life where we have sinned. Didn't take long, did it? Certainly for me personally, I mean, I guess if we were to bring those to mind where we have sinned, they would, for me personally, I mean, it's a bit of a tsunami really, because it's amazing how we can remember things from way back where we have made mistakes.

You know, maybe even in our childhood, maybe being disrespectful to a parent as a teenager, maybe doing things in our early life of which you are ashamed or even later. You know, we know as disciples of Christ and as Christians that we are truly sorry and repent of all our sins. It's a stock line that comes out in liturgy. We repent of all our sins and that's absolutely right. So why, why, oh why,

oh why, oh why, don't we forget them?

This is the thing that I've been grappling with with this scripture. We know as disciples of Jesus that he forgives. He says, as far as the east is from the west, so far have I removed our transgressions from you, your transgressions. They are gone. But why is it that we remember them?

The empty cross is that defining reminder that our sins are forgiven. So why is it, when I asked the question earlier of our past sin, that it all came so readily to mind?

[6:10] Why haven't we just forgotten and moved on as though it never happened? I'm forgiven and I'm restored. Paul is encouraging this early church that has heard the gospel for the first time and imagine that, hearing this gospel of renewal and redemption and of new life for the first time. And they have experienced, as many of us will have experienced, that new life in Christ of what that can bring, of being born again. You know, giving thanks, you know, the faith and love that springs from the hope stored up for you in heaven and about which you have already heard in the true message of the gospel has come to you. This is for you and for me. The gospel is bearing fruit and growing throughout the world, as it has been doing amongst you since the day you heard it and truly understood it. This new faith-filled community. These people have found new life, fresh hope in God's amazing grace, set free from sin. What a great feeling that is, that we know and that we experience. And as I pondered on the scripture, I thought, wouldn't it be amazing if all those past sins we have committed, those things that come to mind, just blew away, never to be remembered again. Would that be a good thing or wouldn't it?

As disciples, as apprentices of Jesus, we get that God forgives us and he has forgiven us. And we get the cross and all that Jesus did for us, but we struggle often to forgive ourselves.

Do you find that? We struggle to forgive ourselves. We can't let go of those things that often punish us in the remembering and pause on that because I'm going to suggest to you this morning that's not bad news.

The truth of the matter is, as a disciple of Jesus, we seek to live and work with the Lord in his love. And when we truly repent, and I pray that we do, we are genuinely forgiven by God, by his amazing and his redeeming grace. And by seeking to live by the gospel, by the good news of Jesus Christ, you and I will be more aware of sin than those who don't believe in the power and cross of the resurrection. Because we know what we have been forgiven of, we have a greater awareness of the grace that is in our lives and the grace that we can share with other people. Why? Because as Christians, we have a new nature. This is what we're told. The Lord has done an amazing work in yours and my life. We are not just forgiven, he has declared righteousness over us.

Over us and in us, we are in Christ. His spirit has taken up residence in our lives, in our hearts, in our minds, in the way in which we deal with other people. He died for our sins and therefore, being in Christ, our sensitivity to sin and sinning will be more heightened than it's ever been in your entire life. Because you will know the price that has been paid to set you free.

[10:03] Why? We know that cost. We know the price of sin. We know what it was. And we know Jesus and all that he has done for us. Those who are not in Christ often don't experience that heightened awareness of sin that we do. It's okay. That's life. The devil made me do it. No. Some who have not yet or yet to know Christ don't feel the weight and the pain of sin that we do. Because we feel that. We feel that for other people. We want to, as we've just said, we want to know God's saving love to rescue you from that and bring you back into a place of love and redemption and forgiveness and that new dignity that he has for each and every one of us to live in. Some who have yet to know Christ don't feel that weight. The reality of a disciple life is we know that cost for the sins of the world, for others. We look at this world and our community to those that say there is no God and we feel that pain for them.

In their sin and their rebellion against all that goodness that could be theirs. Because Christ is in us and we know it and it hurts us as much as it hurts him because he is in us and we are in him.

When we are in Christ, when we are in Christ, we know that awareness and we feel it deeply. And many of you will feel that as we do for those that we pray for day in and day out alongside us. They just need to know that they are forgiven just to repent and come back to God and have this new beginning. That's why Paul writes, you know, for this reason, since the day we heard about you, we have not stopped praying for you.

Paul knew his sin. My goodness, if there was anybody that knew what it was like to have a change in life, it was Paul. And Paul knew that. He knew the passion that grew in him because he had been in that place as many of us have had to be. And we know that love of God when we are rescued

and we are made new.

Paul knew his sin. And as we grow older and hopefully wiser in our discipleship, we know the danger signs that leads to sin because we have a heightened awareness in our own lives.

[12 : 51] Righteousness has sadly been misinterpreted by many Christian communities. You know, followers of Jesus who set themselves up above others and stand in judgment. That's not righteousness. Maybe we have known Christians who are like that. Yet righteousness is an attitude that flows from and belongs to God and is manifest in his laws. It is acting and living in according to his ways, free from guilt and shame.

Being free from guilt and shame. That's why we love Jesus. Because we encounter that righteousness in us and through us.

The more we love him, the more we love others. We want to walk in his ways. We want to share that with others. We want to live his risen life. We become more like him. And the more we become like him, the more we see and acknowledge the things that separate us from him. And it hurts.

If your soul is hurting for the community in which we live, praise God. Because it will stir us into action and into love.

And when people say you can't forgive yourself, that's true because we are already forgiven. We are forgiven. When we repent, what you are doing is effectively reminding yourself, not of the sin and of the shame and the guilt of your sin, but the infinite and loving goodness of God's righteousness in taking you from that place to a new place in him.

[14 : 34] Restored, forgiven, ransomed and loved. Hallelujah. My sins are gone. I've been set free. Amen. Amen. Amen.

We are forgiven. Reminded me of my sin reminds me of the amazing, saving grace of God in my life and in others.

And that's at the heart of that great hymn penned by John Newton. Saved, forgiven, yet as a slave ship master, he hadn't forgotten his sin, but he knows the amazing grace of God in his life.

So if those sinful things that come to mind earlier when I asked, give thanks that you are free and you are forgiven and you are standing in relationship with Jesus.

You are a new creation. Yes, the evil one will try and twist it. He always does. That's his job. Oh, do you remember that?

[15 : 38] Do you remember what you did on your way? I am new. I am restored. I am forgiven in Christ. You know, Buzzy Man, In Christ we have been given a new dignity, a new life, a life that isn't defined by who we are in ourselves, but who he is in us, living in us and through us.

In that worship song, we stand spotless before the throne. I love that idea. We are made that new. Will you take that message to somebody this week? Will you take that message this week out into wherever we are, that you are known and loved by God, and that there is the cross, which has been a rescue package for you individually to come and know Jesus.

So as I finish, I've got something to share with you, and it's from a dog poo bin. It's, being a conscientious dog owner, I pick up after my dog and look for dog poo bins in which to deposit the said deposit.

At Lee Woods in Bristol, Mandy saw this message that had been very artistically and beautifully sprayed onto a dog poo bin. This was the actual image.

Let Jesus change your story. And as I thought about this morning, I thought, what great news to be forgiven and let Jesus change your story.

[17 : 17] Whatever your story was, that you were bound in sin and shame, let Jesus come in this forgiveness and infinite love and let him change your story. Now maybe that was message just for dog owners.

I don't think it was. Let's go out and share that good news this week. Let's invite people to meet with Jesus and bring them back and to restore them into that perfect image that we know and that love that is there for us.

I have a desire as we pray and move towards thy kingdom come in Pentecost, that as we pray for five people, let's share that message with them, the fullness of Christ as we approach.

We pray Jesus come into our lives in the power of your Holy Spirit and make your story their story. Make your story, Lord, their story.

Maybe that bold and courageous offer as we pray for others, maybe just those words. I'm praying with you because I'd love Jesus to change your story, whatever that is, to set you free from

whatever is binding you, your guilt, your shame, to recall the sin with a perspective of thanks that he has saved you, to be free.

[18 : 32] Let Jesus change your story. Why? Why do you want to do that? Because we love and we care and we don't want to see lives dragged into the depths of despair, of guilt and shame.

We know because God has seen us. We see your sin. Our heart cries out because we are in Christ. Let Jesus change your story.

I think this is a message that comes through in Paul's writing in the early church because he knew what that change of story looked like in his own life and he wanted it for everybody else.

The same as each one of us here this morning and listening on our podcast would want that for friends that we know. In today's message that came first to the Colossians, maybe it is for the Clevedonians too.

That message to the Clevedonians that we know and that we love in our community. Let Jesus change your story for him. That word earlier, the greatest thing you can do is love me.

[19 : 41] We come to that point with joyful thanks to the Father. To share in the inheritance of his holy people in the kingdom of light for he has rescued us from the dominion of darkness and brought us into the kingdom of the Son he loves in whom we have redemption and we have the forgiveness of sin.

Is there any question starting soon where people can come? If you're in need of that reassurance of forgiveness in new life now, if you need that, there's going to be people at the back to pray for you. There'll be people there to pray with you and maybe your prayer this morning may be giving thanks as one who has found righteousness and the awesome forgiveness of God for what we have been forgiven and that new status that we have.

Amen. And you long to share that with others who have yet to experience that freedom. Come and receive that new sense of energy, boldness and courage to share and proclaim that message of freedom in the name of Jesus.

Just since this morning when I was walking up the hill that many here would have a real heart for young people in our community. Maybe you share my heart.

[21 : 09] Maybe this is the day that you leave and think, okay Lord, show me how I can make a difference with that.

We've got lots of opportunities here in Christchurch for you to work alongside our youth team to reach a whole community of young people and we're doing that. Maybe you want to be part of that as well so that we too can make sure that we share and change their story.

Thank you.