# Do You Believe in the Forgiveness of Sins?

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[0:00] I believe in the forgiveness of sins. Before we read our scripture and consider what it means, let us first set the parameters for our reflections on the phrase in the confession, I believe in the forgiveness of sins. For the phrase forgiveness of sins to have any effect on us at all, we must understand the problem of sin, its seriousness, and what it really truly means for us. To confess we believe in the forgiveness of sins, we must confess that we believe in the reality of sin. Have we forgotten the word sin in our society? Is a term still firmly understood in church circles? But is that even always the case? I would suggest the world and in some circumstances, the church has lost its comprehension of sin and it's eroded to almost nothing. Tonight, we will consider what is the biblical understanding of sin, how people diverge from this understanding.

Then we will look at both Simon the Pharisee and the sinful woman in Luke chapter 7 and how they both experienced the forgiveness of sin. Let's pray before we begin. Our Heavenly Father, we thank you for your word. We pray that your spirit is our teacher, that our hearts, which can be like rock, are malleable to your will. And we pray that everything we do here is to your glory. In Jesus Christ's name. Amen.
So one way to think about sin is rebellion against God. R.C. Sproul describes this as cosmic treason.
God has the right as creator to rule his creation as he sees fit. But if we know the biblical story, Adam rebelled against God's rule by disobeying God's clear command found in Genesis 2, which reads, And the Lord God commanded the man saying, You shall surely eat of every tree of the garden.
But of the tree of knowledge of good and evil you shall not eat. For in the day that you eat it, you shall surely die. Adam ate that fruit and so sin entered the world. When Adam disobeyed God, he became the first in a long line of rebels. That includes all of us, because we take part in Adam's original sin. David spoke of his status as a rebel, saying, Behold, I was brought forth in iniquity, and in sin did my mother conceive me. Paul reflects in our pre-Christ rebellion, all have sinned and fallen short of the glory of God. Jesus highlighted the problem of original sin and the sinner's rebellious status to the rich young ruler. Jesus said to him, Why do you call me good?
[3:25] No one is good except God alone. Apart from Christ, we all share in that treason. We are not victims of it, but we are willing participants in rejecting God's rule. Sin brings us endless strife and ultimately death, but most seriously estrangement from God, the giver of life. This is the seriousness of sin.

This is what is at stake when we confess, I believe, in the forgiveness of sins. The world, even the church, we can be ignorant about the serious nature of sin and rebellion. There are four ways which the world and the church can diverge from this clear doctrine. First, Pelagianism. That's what you wanted to hear on a Sunday night, Pelagianism. Pelagius, a fifth century Roman teacher, opposed the biblical doctrine of original sin. The idea that we all partake in Adam's sin and we're all born in sin rebellion against God. Paul in Romans, though, sums up this biblical understanding. Therefore, just as sin came into the world through one man and death through sin, and so death spread to all, Pelagius, however, diverge from this thought by teaching people are basically good. And therefore, they do not need
God's radical intervention of God's grace to accept God and embrace God. He misunderstood human rebellion by not holding to the orthodox view of original sin. Apart from salvation in Christ, we are all sinners and all our actions are tainted with that rebellion. Roman Catholicism. In Roman Catholicism, there's a categorization of sin that isn't reflected in Scripture. There are mortal and venial sins. Mortal being the more serious which can send you to hell, whereas venial doesn't cut you off from grace. The Bible has no such distinction. In the Sermon of the Mount, Christ clearly

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stated that a mere lustful thought was the same as committing adultery. Or thinking hatefully towards someone was like committing murder. All sin is rebellion no matter how small and causes the same severe fracture in our relationship to God. Prosperity preachers. Number three, sin sounds too negative for the rhetoric of prosperity preachers. If sin exists, it exists as something we are victims of. They want to emphasize blessing and the best life now ideology. Because in this self-help century, they know it sells well. They disregard the seriousness of sin and so present no true gospel. Or finally, what about the most current example of divergent thought?
When Amazon Prime launched its cartoon called The Has-Ban Hotel. Most of you probably aren't aware of this. It presents a creation narrative that follows some biblical storylines, but is completely blasphemous.
It states that the world was created by a democracy of angels, not God, because to mention God would be to give him a place. It introduces Lucifer as this dreamer whose ideas are just deemed problematic.
[7:15] Sin was just his creative thought. This is a quote from the show. He wished to share the magic of free will with all humanity. In this narrative, he gave the fruit to Eve and sin wins and hell continues its good fight against heaven. It's utterly deranged. It's utterly wrong.

But people watch it and some believe this narrative completely. It has over 2 million followers on TikTok and 440,000 followers on Twitter. It's becoming a pervasive thought in a generation of young Westerners. And it has to be called out for the sin that it is.
Why does this matter today? Because there's nothing new under the sun. Most people like Pelagius want to say that they are inherently good and not inherently sinful. Like the Roman Catholic view, we naturally enjoy categorizing our sin, making some less serious and letting ourselves off with minor sins.
We all like to be positive and fix ourselves, like the prosperity preaching brothers and sisters. And as with the has-been hotel, we often just want to rewrite the truth to suit ourselves.
All sin is rebellion and needs to be called out for what it is because it's serious. Sin causes estrangement and ultimately judgment from a loving maker and ruler of life.
[8:52] The forgiveness of sins, though, brings reconciliation to a loving father who bore that judgment in her place. Let's read our passage now before we continue to reflect on it.

Luke 7. You'll find that on page 864 of your few Bibles. Luke 7. We'll be reading this last part of that chapter.
Luke 7 from verse 36. Luke 8.
Luke 8.
Luke 8.
[10:58] Luke 8.

Luke 8. Luke 9.
Luke 9.
Luke 9.
interacted with Simon. Jesus, in the most inviting way, offers Simon to look at the grace being displayed in verse 44. Do you see this woman? Giving him a chance to take his laser focus off of Jesus and whether or not he's a prophet and turn it to look at this woman. This is an extremely visceral moment of teaching of Christ and he gave him and Simon an opportunity to grow in his understanding of the forgiveness of sin along with an awareness of his own deep need for that.
[13:40] Luke doesn't write, Jesus looked on him with anger. Jesus doesn't turn over any tables like he does elsewhere. No, Simon invites, Jesus invites Simon to participate and that same forgiveness of sin, that same repentance of rebellion that has brought this woman to tears. This is good news for us because we can so often be more like Simon in our passage than the sinful but repentant woman.

All of us need to have a greater understanding and a lived out belief in the forgiveness of sin. Let us spend the rest of our time looking at these two characters and what each of them have to teach us about believing in the forgiveness of sin can look like and the effect it has on our walk on this earth.
Simon the Pharisee. First, Christ wants Simon the Pharisee to understand the forgiveness of sin more.
We could ask what motivated Simon to invite Jesus into his home. We don't have an answer. Was it just simple curiosity for who Jesus was? Was he this prophet that people had been speaking

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about?
Was it keeping his enemies closer than his friends? Or was it the fact that Jesus was basically the first century oratory version of the latest Bugatti or Lamborghini and he just wanted to be associated with the newest thing that would bring him social capital? We don't know. Whilst we might give Simon the benefit of the doubt, the passage is clear. Jesus was not invited through any sense of love or devotion.
Verse 44 through 47, Jesus calls Simon out for his shortfall on social etiquette and care for his invited guests. Now we have this situation where this woman has entered Simon's home and she's caused a scene. Her presence, her presence, her weeping is likely strong enough to bring table conversations to a halt. What's Simon thinking? Read verse 39 with me. Now when Simon the Pharisee who invited him saw this, he said to himself, if this man were a prophet, he would have known who and what sort of woman this is who is touching him. Simon doesn't think that Jesus is a prophet. Why? The Bible tells us it's because Jesus was allowing the sinful woman to touch him. Jesus will answer that unspoken criticism by proving he is not only a prophet by answering Simon's secret thoughts. He will also go on to prove he is greater than a prophet by pronouncing this woman's sins are forgiven in verse 48. Consider with me.
[16:48] If Simon had understood what was actually happening before him, would he approve of this sinful woman being forgiven? What would keep him from thinking that this woman could be forgiven? His understanding of forgiveness would have been founded in obeying the laws of Moses and performing sacrifices to gain forgiveness for sins from God when sinned. He might wonder, has this woman ever seen the inside of a temple?

Simon, on the other hand, most definitely has visited the temple regularly, sacrificed regularly, and because of this he might have felt pretty secure in his own sense of self-reliance and self-righteousness.
What about us? If we are honest, how would we respond? Has there ever been a situation where you think someone is beyond forgiveness? What if we see the drug addict on the street or even to bring it closer to home?
The person who has so specifically sinned against you being forgiven? Are you joyous over another soul being forgiven? Or are we frustrated thinking that they don't deserve grace? What do we think? Our hearts should overflow with joy when the worst experiences forgiveness. Would any of us here deny this woman whom Jesus has forgiven the forgiveness of sins? Are you joyous when another soul... Oh, sorry.
[18:38] Our hearts... Jesus Jesus then speaks a parable explaining forgiveness and reaction to Simon's secret thoughts.

Technology, I apologize. After Jesus directs the question of who will love him more, verse 33, Simon answers, the one, I suppose, for whom he called cancelled the larger debt.
Can you see the way in which Simon answers? We can't hear tone, but it feels as though it's through gritted teeth, almost spitting out a response, I suppose.
No, Simon, you don't suppose, because you know, yet you still speak this tentative half-in, half-out phrase, I suppose. Simon has been outdone by this woman in showing loving gratitude towards Christ.
Simon gave Jesus no water for his feet, no welcoming kiss, no oil for his head. This woman sees in Christ what Simon is yet to see.
[19:55] Jesus' parable is clear. This woman has found forgiveness from Christ because of her faith. Verse 50. However, I wonder in the days and years to come in this story, did Simon go on ever to seek forgiveness from the very source of forgiveness itself, Jesus Christ?

What does this say about us? We may have been a Christian for many years. We've just taken communion, celebrated the grace of Christ.
Five minutes later, we leave the building. We sin and we get angry. In this moment, do you believe your sins are forgiven?
Immediately, do you believe this or is there a moment of real doubt? Do you have confidence that immediately, just as you have sinned and you have repented that Christ has already removed that sin as far as east as from west?
So often, a lack of the understanding of the forgiveness of sins makes our lives just shaky. We live in worry and fear, not joy and assurance.

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[21:15] is God's grace really enough for me and all of my sins? So often, we start our Christian lives in this shaky way. We often live believing we can lose our salvation with the next sin we fall into.

But that's not what the Bible teaches about our status of those who are in Christ. It is only through robust biblical teaching we unlearn such things that make our lives and faith shaky.
We need to hear the writer of Hebrews who said, for by one sacrifice, he, Jesus, has made perfect forever those who are being made holy.
And where these have been forgiven, sacrifice for sin is no longer necessary. Jesus once died for all sin, past, present, future.
If you're a Christian, all sin has been completely removed as far as east is from west. I remember our very own Nate Taylor once took a prayer meeting in this room where he referenced 1 John 1, 9 which we read earlier.
[22:28] If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just and will forgive our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness. Nate said that this was life-changing for him to realize that God didn't just forgive our sins because he is good and he has a faithful character on a quid pro quo basis.

But, it is because the fact that Christ has died and that death was absolutely effective in winning victory over sin and death.
so we are in Christ, it would be unjust, it would be unjust of God to withhold forgiveness when we ask for it in Jesus Christ.
We can boldly approach God knowing that he is justly and has already removed our sins from us.
Our shakiness, that's one of the ways we see a need to grow in our understanding of the forgiveness of sins.
We need to stop endlessly worrying if we are forgiven, rather we need to hear and accept what scripture tells us, that God justly forgives us through Christ.
[23:44] Once for all. Another way we can see a need for growth in this area is our participation in communion. We just celebrated the death and resurrection of our Lord last week.

If we have a blind spot in our understanding of the forgiveness of sins, we are more likely to bar ourselves from communion.
I don't know who here partook or who stayed away, but communion is an amazing, visible picture of God's grace displayed, just like this scene with this sinful woman.
Communion is not for the spiritually impeccable, but is for the repentant sinner. Communion is not for the spiritually impeccable, but for the repentant sinner.
We do not have to check our lives to see if they are sinless, but we need to look and see where we are sinful and in need of great grace. If you are in Christ, come, like this sinful woman, come and receive grace.
[24:52] Don't bar yourself. Communion is not about what we have done, but what Christ has done. Come, receive this grace from God.

Simon the Pharisee. The sinful woman. Second, those who Christ praises for their coherent understanding of the forgiveness of sin.
The sinful woman. It would have not been unusual for members of the public to attend local feasts, even in private residences. They would come in and they'd stand around the sides and listen to the prominent people's conversation at table.
So here we see this woman gain access to Christ. Let's read verses 37 and 38 again. And behold, a woman of the city who was a sinner, when she learned that he was reclining at table in the Pharisee's house, brought an alabaster flask of ointment and standing behind him at his feet weeping, she began to wet his feet with her tears and wiped them with her hair of her head and kissed his feet and anointed them with ointment.
See the, and behold at the very start of verse 37, Luke is drawing our eyes to the importance of this act by this sinful woman. The minute that she learns of Christ is in reach, she runs to him.
[26:22] Then she comes into his presence and she pauses. She begins to weep. Moses could only see the back of God when he passed him and the cleft of the rock.

But here, this woman has no barrier to our Lord and Saviour who is reclining in front of her. She's blown away and she weeps.
Most likely, she's wept like she's never wept before. Her weeping is such that it causes a disturbance to the dinner. Her face would have been covered in streams of tears, running down

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more quickly after the other because of the tear which preceded it.
Can you picture her tears wiping the snot aside from her nose so it's just her tears that are washing Jesus' feet? She lets down her hair, a shameful act on that day and washes Jesus' feet with it.
Can you see this scene? Just as her tears cleanse Jesus' feet from the Galilean dust, you can picture Christ's blood washing her soul, making it purer than snow.
[27:39] It is true, genuine repentance of her rebellion. The genuineness seen in the fact that her tears do not abate. So we're currently working through the Heidelberg Catechism in evenings.

Let me take you back to the very first question and we might have it on screen potentially. Question one, what is your only comfort in life and death?
Do we not have it? It's fine. The first half of the answer follows like this. What is your only comfort in life and death?
That I am not my own but belong body and soul both in life and death to my faithful Savior Jesus Christ. He has fully paid for all my sins with His precious blood and has set me free from the power of the devil.
The next question follows from the first. What do we need to know in order to live and die in the joy of this comfort? So this is very important.
[28:43] What do we need to know in order to live and die in the joy of this comfort? So let's read 38 before we read the answer to that question. Verse 38.

Standing behind him at his feet weeping she began to wet his feet with her tears and wiped them with the hair of her head and kissed his feet and anointed them with the ointment.
The answer to that catechism is first how great my sins and misery are. Second how I am to be delivered from all my sins and misery.
Third I am to be thankful to God for such deliverance. Our passage today is not even noted as a proof text for this answer but is that not mind-blowing?
The sinful woman knows how great her sins are. Tick one. She knows that Christ is the only way she will be delivered. Tick two.
[29:40] And from Jesus' own words in verse 45 from the time I came in she has not ceased to kiss my feet. This woman is extremely thankful for the deliverance that she has received.

Tick three. Another tick. Full marks. By the catechism composers this woman is the perfect example of one who's turned her back on the part she has to play in cosmic treason and gratefully receives the forgiveness of sin that we confess together.
If anyone ever writes a revision feel free to include this as a footnote as a proof text. What is the result of a person who has a robust belief in faith and the forgiveness of sins?
Look at verse 50. Go in peace. The peace that surpasses all understanding comes from a liberating understanding of the forgiveness of sins.
The sinful woman in her passage knew Christ was the God of peace and this was her saviour who did everything she needed to be saved. The sweet sound of her weeping and the smell of her rich perfume was all she had to bring to her saviour and king who would give his life for this meagre sinful woman.
[30:57] But that's our Lord and saviour. Every one of his children are precious to him. William Hendrickson a commentator said about this peace. The peace is the smile of God reflected in the heart of a redeemed sinner.

A shelter from the storm, a hiding place in the cleft of the rock and under his wings. The smile of God reflected in the heart of a redeemed sinner.
Recall back at the start of our sermon there were four ways in which we diverged from the seriousness of our sin and rebellion. Do we not think that we're good and do not need God's intervention for grace?
Or are there mortal and venial sins? Do we categorise some as worthy of hell and some just not so much? Do we bury our heads in the sand like our prosperity gospel brothers and sisters?
Or do we even rewrite the truth completely, making the devil good and Christ bad like some of our modern day media? Here in our passage we see the most profitable way of viewing the forgiveness of sin.
[32:08] This woman receives the forgiveness of sin through faith. Two points of application as we close. The forgiveness of sins is real. And second, it is real for the worst of sinners.

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Forgiveness of sins is real. Do you believe it? An indicator of whether you do or do not believe is when we think to share the gospel. Do we ever think God's grace is enough for me, but will it be enough for anyone else?
Will it work for them? What if it doesn't? If we think like this, this exposes our lack of belief in the forgiveness of sins. Christ's forgiveness is entirely, completely sufficient.
This sinful woman believed in Christ's ability to forgive sin. Let us also have that complete and utter confidence that Jesus is sufficient. Second, the forgiveness of sins is real for the worst of sinners.
In our passage, in its context, we have someone who is in the worst category. She is so sinful that the people of the city all know about it. Yet here, we see the grace displayed in 4K HD.
[33:27] Let's reflect on that scene again. All of our senses can be engaged. In this bold yet vulnerable act of gratitude on behalf of the sinful woman to her great forgiver.

Jesus sees her weeping, acting, and love. He draws Simon's attention to it. Jesus feels every teardrop onto his feet.
He feels every wipe of each strand of her hair as she washes his feet with it. Jesus can hear her weeping in response to his presence.
The smell of the perfume fills the air. Everyone can smell this aroma and probably taste it too because these senses are so intrinsically linked.
We hear in the Old Testament of food, wine, and oil sacrifices being offered to God on the altar. Some burnt, some just presented. But all of these are said to bring a pleasing aroma to God.
[34:31] Here this sinful woman has offered up a pleasing aroma and God with us, Jesus Christ can appreciate the scent in his own nostrils, his own brain processing the joy of the scent.

Here we see the most amazing scene of forgiveness even for the worst. Paul described himself as the chief of sinners. I can empathize with that feeling.
I would not be surprised if many here could speak those words of Paul without a word of a lie. But the forgiveness of sin is for me. The forgiveness of sin is for you.
It is for the worst. All we need is faith in Christ, the great forgiver of sins. There is no sin that is beyond Christ's effective grace.
If you're sitting here and you're thinking, I've never even asked Christ, to forgive me my sins, then like this woman, come to Christ. Come to Christ.
[35:35] There is no qualification to be attained, no reaching of moral perfection to meet the requirements to come to Christ. Just come. Like this sinful woman, come in faith to Christ today.

And then you can be assured that in heaven you will be counted among those like this sinful woman whose sins are forgiven. Amen. Let us pray to our God.
Our heavenly Father, we thank you for the forgiveness of sins. We thank you for this gospel truth that because of your son and what he did on that cross and what he did in rising from the dead, there is forgiveness of sins.
forgiveness of sins. And there is no barrier to that when we have faith in Christ. We pray anyone who has not experienced this forgiveness comes to Christ today.
And we pray that you continue to bless us and let us not forget each day the blessings we have in Christ Jesus our Lord. In Jesus Christ's name, Amen.

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