

Forgiveness

Forgiveness is a very important part of the life of a Christian. In this lesson we will hopefully be able to come to a better understanding of the concept of forgiveness as it is related to us in the Bible. What do I need forgiveness from? How do I get forgiveness? These and other issues related to the topic of forgiveness will be addressed in the lesson. Now let's look at what the Bible has to say about forgiveness.

We all need God's forgiveness

Isaiah 59:1-2 "Behold, the LORD'S hand is not shortened, that it cannot save; neither his ear heavy, that it cannot hear: But your iniquities have separated between you and your God, and your sins have hid his face from you, that he will not hear." As none of us are perfect we have all sinned and therefore, become separated from God. So we all need a way to be forgiven of our sins and no longer be separated from God. Fortunately, God loves us and wants us to be no longer separated from Him. His Word tells us how this is possible.

Matthew 1:21 "And she shall bring forth a son, and thou shalt call his name JESUS: for he shall save his people from their sins." Because we have all sinned we all need a path to forgiveness. This is why God's plan included sending Jesus to earth. Jesus, in His short time here on earth, made the ultimate sacrifice with His brutal death on the cross. Jesus did not need saving but we did. He was willing to die for you and me so that His blood can wash away our sins. It is very important to understand that we both need God's forgiveness to be saved from our sins, which Christ made possible through His sacrifice. Also, that God's forgiveness is not unconditional. We must take certain steps or God will not forgive us and we will be lost. No matter the fact that God loves us and wants to save us, we must take certain steps or we choose to turn our backs on God and are lost.

Romans 3:23 "For all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God" Every one of us has sinned, so every one of us needs God's forgiveness.

Romans 6:23 "For the wages of sin is death; but the gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord." Without the forgiveness of our sins we are lost. However, it does not have to be that way. We can and will be forgiven of our sins, and move from a lost to a saved state because of the willing act of love that Jesus did for us with His death on the cross. We can choose to be eternally lost or eternally saved. It comes down to whether or not we are willing to become a Christian and live life as one, or we choose to reject God.

Hebrews 9:22 "And almost all things are by the law purged with blood; and without shedding of blood is no remission." Thankfully for you and me Christ shed His blood for us. We can be saved if we are willing to obey God.

God is ready and willing to forgive us

Psalms 103:2-4 "Bless the LORD, O my soul, and forget not all his benefits: Who forgiveth all thine iniquities; who healeth all thy diseases; Who redeemeth thy life from destruction; who crowneth thee with lovingkindness and tender mercies" God loves us and is willing to forgive us

of any and every sin no matter how bad we think it is. There is nothing we can do that is so bad God will not forgive us of, if we are obedient to Him.

Isaiah 43:25 “I, even I, am he that blotteth out thy transgressions for mine own sake, and will not remember thy sins.” Not only will God forgive us of all of our sins, but He will erase them from our life’s record and never hold them against us, if we become obedient to Him. As a human it is very difficult to comprehend a love so amazing that it not only forgives, but never holds past wrongs against us. That is how incredible God’s love is, if we are willing to be a Christian.

Acts 3:19 “Repent ye therefore, and be converted, that your sins may be blotted out, when the times of refreshing shall come from the presence of the Lord” If we repent and become a Christian God will forgive us and never hold the past against us.

Hebrews 8:12 “For I will be merciful to their unrighteousness, and their sins and their iniquities will I remember no more.” God loves us and wants to grant us His mercy and He will, unless we reject Him.

1 John 1:9 “If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.” If God’s conditions for forgiveness are met, He will forgive. We must meet His conditions to be forgiven, however. God has, through His Bible told us what those conditions are. We can meet them or reject them; it is up to us. Please choose to meet them if you have not already.

How can I be Forgiven?

If you are not a Christian, you have not been forgiven of your sins. However, if you are willing to become a Christian you can be forgiven of all of your sins.

Romans 10:17 “So then faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God” To be forgiven of your sins you must be willing to hear God’s word so that your faith can grow and become stronger.

John 8:24 “I said therefore unto you, that ye shall die in your sins: for if ye believe not that I am he, ye shall die in your sins.” To become a Christian and be forgiven of your sins you must believe that Jesus is the Son of God and that He died on the cross for us then rose from the dead.

Luke 13:3 “I tell you, Nay: but, except ye repent, ye shall all likewise perish.” To be forgiven of your sins you must repent of them. This means putting all your might into stopping them and putting your old life behind you. This means being truly sorry for those past sins and striving never to repeat them. It can be hard but it can be done if you want to become a Christian and be forgiven of your sins.

Romans 10:9-10 “That if thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus, and shalt believe in thine heart that God hath raised him from the dead, thou shalt be saved. For with the heart man believeth unto righteousness; and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation.” You must be willing to confess that Jesus is the Son of God to be forgiven of your sins and become a Christian.

Acts 2:38 “Then Peter said unto them, Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost.” You must be baptized into Christ to become a Christian and be forgiven of your sins. These are the steps you must take to become a Christian and be forgiven of your sins. There is no other way.

If you once were a Christian but have turned from God and sinned again, fear not there is still hope. The Bible tells us how to correct our path and be in good standing with God again.

Acts 8:22 “Repent therefore of this thy wickedness, and pray God, if perhaps the thought of thine heart may be forgiven thee.” and **1 John 1:9** “If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.” God will forgive our sins even if we have become Christians and fallen back into sinful behavior, if we repent. Repent, meaning being filled with Godly sorrow for what we did and changing our lives to try very hard not to fall back into sin again. If we truly repent God will forgive us.

James 5:16 “Confess your faults one to another, and pray one for another, that ye may be healed. The effectual fervent prayer of a righteous man availeth much.” We must pray to God and ask His forgiveness if we are a fallen Christian and we will be restored back to the fold. If we commit some private sin a Christian can pray to God for forgiveness and be forgiven. Should a Christian commit some publicly known sin, in such a case, they should repent and ask for the prayers of their congregation. This will not only let the congregation know they are repenting of sin but will also give the congregation a chance to reach out and try and help their fallen brother or sister be stronger in the future. God will forgive the truly repentant Christian but there might still be earthly consequences. A Christian for example, might repent of robbing a bank and be forgiven by God but still have to serve time in prison for their actions. However, this Christian would do so knowing their soul was safe.

1 John 5:16 “If any man see his brother sin a sin which is not unto death, he shall ask, and he shall give him life for them that sin not unto death. There is a sin unto death: I do not say that he shall pray for it. All unrighteousness is sin: and there is a sin not unto death.” If we see a Christian brother or sister struggling, we should try to help them. God will forgive any sin that is truly repented of. The only sin God will not forgive are those we do not repent of and ask His forgiveness of.

Forgiving others

Matthew 6:14-15 “For if ye forgive men their trespasses, your heavenly Father will also forgive you: But if ye forgive not men their trespasses, neither will your Father forgive your trespasses.” and **Luke 6:36** “Be ye therefore merciful, as your Father also is merciful.” Also in **Luke 17:3** “Take heed to yourselves: If thy brother trespass against thee, rebuke him; and if he repent, forgive him.” If we hope to receive God’s forgiveness, we have to be willing to forgive others too. If someone comes to us repenting of something they did to us and asks our forgiveness a Christian must be willing to forgive them. We must adopt the attitude of being willing to forgive others as they seek forgiveness. Just as God is willing to forgive all that ask Him too and change their lives accordingly, a Christian must have that same attitude. A Christian must be willing to forgive others or God will not forgive us. We must extend mercy to others if we expect God to extend His mercy

to us. However, just as God does not forgive the sinner that does not repent, we as Christians, can not forgive our fellow man that does not want our forgiveness. A Christian should always have the attitude of being ready and willing to forgive just as God does. However, like God is not going to forgive sin that is not repented of, we too can't forgive those that don't care and don't want our forgiveness.

Ephesians 4:32 “And be ye kind one to another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, even as God for Christ's sake hath forgiven you.” God expects His Christians to forgive others as He has forgiven them.

Some Bible examples of forgiveness

Genesis 50:19-21 “And Joseph said unto them, Fear not: for am I in the place of God? But as for you, ye thought evil against me; but God meant it unto good, to bring to pass, as it is this day, to save much people alive. Now therefore fear ye not: I will nourish you, and your little ones. And he comforted them, and spake kindly unto them.” Joseph's brothers had treated him with cruelty and sold him into slavery. However, years later when they met again, he could see they had changed and he was able to forgive them.

Luke 15:11-32 “And he said, A certain man had two sons: And the younger of them said to his father, Father, give me the portion of goods that falleth to me. And he divided unto them his living. And not many days after the younger son gathered all together, and took his journey into a far country, and there wasted his substance with riotous living. And when he had spent all, there arose a mighty famine in that land; and he began to be in want. And he went and joined himself to a citizen of that country; and he sent him into his fields to feed swine. And he would fain have filled his belly with the husks that the swine did eat: and no man gave unto him. And when he came to himself, he said, How many hired servants of my father's have bread enough and to spare, and I perish with hunger! I will arise and go to my father, and will say unto him, Father, I have sinned against heaven, and before thee, And am no more worthy to be called thy son: make me as one of thy hired servants. And he arose, and came to his father. But when he was yet a great way off, his father saw him, and had compassion, and ran, and fell on his neck, and kissed him. And the son said unto him, Father, I have sinned against heaven, and in thy sight, and am no more worthy to be called thy son. But the father said to his servants, Bring forth the best robe, and put it on him; and put a ring on his hand, and shoes on his feet: And bring hither the fatted calf, and kill it; and let us eat, and be merry: For this my son was dead, and is alive again; he was lost, and is found. And they began to be merry. Now his elder son was in the field: and as he came and drew nigh to the house, he heard musick and dancing. And he called one of the servants, and asked what these things meant. And he said unto him, Thy brother is come; and thy father hath killed the fatted calf, because he hath received him safe and sound. And he was angry, and would not go in: therefore came his father out, and intreated him. And he answering said to his father, Lo, these many years do I serve thee, neither transgressed I at any time thy commandment: and yet thou never gavest me a kid, that I might make merry with my friends: But as soon as this thy son was come, which hath devoured thy living with harlots, thou hast killed for him the fatted calf. And he said unto him, Son, thou art ever with me, and all that I have is thine. It was meet that we should make merry, and be glad: for this thy brother was dead, and is alive again; and was lost, and is found.” In this

parable Jesus taught us about a man that had never given up on his sinful son. The Father in this parable longed to forgive his son but waited until his son wanted to be forgiven. His son had repented of the wrong he had done and came back to his father seeking forgiveness. Then, his father immediately and fully forgave his son and was happy to have him back. Please note, the son is not forgiven by his father until the young man changes and comes to his father seeking forgiveness. God will forgive all sins we repent of and seek His forgiveness of and none we do not repent of.

Luke 23:33-34 “And when they were come to the place, which is called Calvary, there they crucified him, and the malefactors, one on the right hand, and the other on the left. Then said Jesus, Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do. And they parted his raiment, and cast lots.” Jesus was willing to see even the people that put Him to death be forgiven if they truly sought forgiveness, and makes that request.

Acts 7:59-60 “And they stoned Stephen, calling upon God, and saying, Lord Jesus, receive my spirit. And he kneeled down, and cried with a loud voice, Lord, lay not this sin to their charge. And when he had said this, he fell asleep.” Stephen, like Jesus, was willing to forgive even the very people that were killing him if they changed and prayed to God for them.

Ephesians 4:31-32 “Let all bitterness, and wrath, and anger, and clamour, and evil speaking, be put away from you, with all malice: And be ye kind one to another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, even as God for Christ's sake hath forgiven you.” God is willing to forgive us if we are willing to obey His Word.

Colossians 3:12-14 “Put on therefore, as the elect of God, holy and beloved, bowels of mercies, kindness, humbleness of mind, meekness, longsuffering; Forbearing one another, and forgiving one another, if any man have a quarrel against any: even as Christ forgave you, so also do ye. And above all these things put on charity, which is the bond of perfectness.” As Christ is willing to forgive His Christians, so should they be willing to forgive others.

So we are forgiven, then what?

Acts 22:16 “And now why tarriest thou? arise, and be baptized, and wash away thy sins, calling on the name of the Lord.” If you have been baptized and become a Christian your sins have been washed away as if they never existed. Amazing!

Romans 6:4 “Therefore we are buried with him by baptism into death: that like as Christ was raised up from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life.” Being baptized and becoming a Christian is not the end. At this point you are a Christian and must strive to live the rest of your life following Christ’s New Testament teachings.

Romans 6:17-18 “But God be thanked, that ye were the servants of sin, but ye have obeyed from the heart that form of doctrine which was delivered you. Being then made free from sin, ye became the servants of righteousness.” and **Romans 6:22-23** “But now being made free from sin, and become servants to God, ye have your fruit unto holiness, and the end everlasting life. For the wages of sin is death; but the gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord.” A Christian

has been forgiven their past sins and are free of them. Now a Christian will serve God trying to become a stronger Christian and teaching others when they have opportunity to do so.

2 Corinthians 5:17 “Therefore if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature: old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new.” For as much time as they have left in life a Christian will be striving to lead a life that is pleasing to God and try to teach others about Jesus and His New Testament. When a Christian’s life here on earth is over, they can rest knowing God will reward them with a home in Heaven.

Conclusion

Hopefully, in this lesson we have all come to better understand why we need God’s forgiveness from our sins and how we can all obtain it. Please take a few moments to think about your own life. Have you been forgiven for your own sins? I hope so, but if not please remember no matter what your sins are God will forgive you if you truly repent. Please remember we never really know how much time we have left in this life. Don’t wait too long.