

**“God for
Christ’s sake
hath forgiven
you”**

Ephesians 4:32

By Gary and Lynda Miller

Ps. 86:5, “For thou, Lord, art good, and ready to forgive, and plenteous in mercy unto all them that call upon thee.”

The scriptures tell us that God is good, ready to forgive and to show mercy to all them that call upon Him.

In this study we will look at what the Bible teaches about God’s forgiveness to those living in the current, “age of grace,” in which we live. We will then compare what the Bible teaches about God’s forgiveness in “time past.”

Eph. 3:2, “If ye have heard of the dispensation of the grace of God which is given me to you-ward.”

Christ died for our sins

Rom. 4:25, “Who was delivered for our offences,”

I Cor. 15:3, “...how that Christ died for our sins according to the scriptures;”

II Cor. 5:21, “For he hath made him to be sin for us, that we might be made the righteousness of God in him.”

Gal. 1:4, “Who gave himself for our sins,”

Is. 53:10, “when thou shalt make his soul an offering for sin,”

Man’s part is to believe

Romans 3:22, “Even the righteousness of God which is by faith of Jesus Christ unto all and upon all them that believe.”

Christ’s sacrifice is unto all, or on behalf of all mankind, but it is only upon all or applied to “them that believe”.

Eph. 2:8, 9, “For by grace are ye saved through faith...”

I Cor. 1:21, “it pleased God by the foolishness of preaching (the cross) to save them that believe.”

Once a person hears the gospel:

I Cor. 15:3, 4 “Christ died for our sins according to the scriptures; and that he was buried, and that he rose again the third day according to the scriptures:”

Believes it, he immediately becomes a partaker of God’s forgiveness.

Forgiven of all sins

Col. 2:13, “And you, being dead in your sins and the uncircumcision of your flesh, hath he quickened together with him, having forgiven you all trespasses;”

There are two important truths we learn from this verse.

- Saints have been (past tense) forgiven
- Forgiveness includes all sins

God forgave us the moment we trusted Christ and imparted forgiveness to His saints. Saints never need to be “re-forgiven.”

All sins were forgiven. Christ’s sacrifice did not leave one sin unpaid.

Eph. 1:7, “In whom we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of His grace;”

God tells us that we have (present tense) forgiveness of all our sins.

Forgiven according to grace

We have His forgiveness, “according to the riches of His grace”.

The words “according to” tells us how something is to happen or occur. God forgives according to the “riches of His grace”.

God’s “grace” and the “riches of his grace” are found in the precious blood of Christ. It is because of His blood that God could accomplish the full and complete payment for our sin. It is by these riches that believers have already been forgiven.

Rom. 5:20, “Moreover the law entered, that the offense might abound. But where sin abounded, grace did much more abound.”

Where sin abounded, grace did much more abound! The riches of God’s grace are greater than the depths that sin can go. Paul tells us that there is always more grace than sin. Not just more but “much more.” Saints should have complete confidence in the riches of the grace of God to be more than sufficient to bring about their full and complete forgiveness.

Forgiven for Christ’s sake

Eph. 4:32, “And be ye kind one to another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, even as God for Christ’s sake hath forgiven you.”

“Hath” is past tense, you have been forgiven. You should be kind, tenderhearted and forgiving because you are forgiven.

God forgives for “Christ’s sake,” on behalf of the Lord Jesus Christ.

Christ's love sent Him to Calvary's cross to endure the agony and ultimately the penalty for every sin. It was Christ who sweat great drops of blood in the garden of Gethsemane as He prayed to the Father. It was Christ who willingly laid down His life to pay for our sin. It was Christ who was forsaken by God the Father when He became sin and satisfied the justice of a Holy God.

The work of the cross made full payment for sin and the work was finished by Christ. Christ proclaimed victory from His cross with the words, "It is finished."

God asks that we come to Him by faith, believing, and He will save us and forgive us from all our sin. God accepts the atoning work of Christ at Calvary as "propitiation," a fully satisfying sacrifice. The sinner should agree with God's assessment of the work of His Son and by faith, believe that all sin was paid for once and for all.

The greatest trade ever

II Cor. 5:21 "For he hath made him to be sin for us, who knew no sin; that we might be made the righteousness of God in him."

This is the best trade any man could ever experience. Christ took our sin and gives His righteousness to those who believe. Believers are totally forgiven and totally righteous.

Forgiveness is having been cleansed or purged from all unrighteousness. One can only be cleansed from all unrighteousness one time. Once the cleansing is done, one is righteous. Forgiveness and righteousness become the sinner's present possession the moment he is saved.

In “the dispensation of the grace of God,” forgiveness is not dependent on the sinner’s sacrifice, sorrow, or confession but is an accomplished fact of grace. Our forgiveness is complete the moment we are saved. Jesus Christ the Sin Bearer “hath forgiven you.” Forgiveness is not the result of our doing, pleading, or saying “I’m sorry;” but by faith alone. It is “for Christ’s sake.” God forgives those who believe the gospel for the sake of His Son. Our part is to believe!

Paul never commands or even suggests that saints confess their sins to the Lord. Paul proclaims a complete forgiveness based on Christ and His finished work. Christ paid the price with the shedding of His precious blood at Calvary. Our sin debt is paid in full. Christ said, “It is finished.” The work of redemption was completed.

Those who seek to add a confessional or a purgatory to complete their forgiveness need to understand and believe all that Christ accomplished at Calvary. One who would seek to add to Christ’s perfect sacrifice is really subtracting from His atoning death.

Gal. 1:4, “Who gave himself for our sins,”

Forgiveness according to Paul

- Col. 1:14 “In whom we have redemption through his blood, even the forgiveness of sins:”
- Col. 2:13, “having forgiven you all trespasses”
- Col. 3:13, “even as Christ forgave you, so also do ye”
- Eph. 1:7, “the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of his grace”
- Eph. 4:32, “even as God for Christ’s sake hath forgiven you”

- II Cor. 5:21, “For he hath made him to be sin for us, who knew no sin; that we might be made the righteousness of God in him:”
- Acts 13:38, 39, “Be it known unto you therefore, men and brethren, that through this man is preached unto you the forgiveness of sins: And by him all that believe are justified from all things, from which ye could not be justified by the law of Moses.”

Paul proclaims forgiveness as a completed work of God. Our forgiveness is past tense. God deals with His saints as those He has already forgiven.

Baptized into Christ’s death

When you believed the gospel, God baptized or identified you into Christ’s death.

Rom 6:3, “Know ye not, that so many of us that were baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into his death?”

Rom. 6:6, “Knowing this, that our old man is crucified with him, that the body of sin might be destroyed, that henceforth we should not serve sin.”

Gal. 2:20, “I am crucified with Christ: nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me: and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave himself for me.”

God identifies the believing sinner with Christ’s death. The sinner becomes so identified with Christ’s death that all the merit from His blood is applied to the sinner. Every sin is completely submerged in the cleansing blood of Christ.

Paul the apostle of grace

Paul proclaims God's forgiveness as:

- a finished work of grace by God
- a present and continuing possession of the believer
- being total and complete, inclusive of all past, present and future sins

Paul explains how God is justified in providing such a marvelous and complete forgiveness to His saints:

- because Christ died for our sins
- because of the blood
- according to the riches of His grace
- for Christ's sake
- because Christ became sin for us
 - we are made the righteousness of God in Christ
 - we are justified from all things

Paul is the one to whom we go to find our doctrine of forgiveness because it was through Paul that the Lord made known the "dispensation of grace." It is here where we find the "unsearchable riches of Christ." God revealed these riches to Paul so he could make them known to one and all.

Col. 1:25:26, "Whereof I am made a minister, according to the dispensation of God which is given me to you, to fulfil the word of God; even the mystery which hath been hid from ages and from generations, but now is made manifest to his saints:"

Eph. 3:8, "Unto me, who am less than the least of all saints, is this grace given, that I should preach among the Gentiles the unsearchable riches of Christ;"

Eph. 3:1, 2, 3, “For this cause I Paul, the prisoner of Jesus Christ for you Gentiles, If ye have heard of the dispensation of the grace of God which is given me to you-ward: How that by revelation he made known unto me the mystery;”

Forgiveness, before the dispensation of grace was according to the law of Moses.

Time past - the Law of Moses

Forgiveness in time past was according to the Law of Moses. Many saints make the mistake of going back to “time past” to the law of Moses for their doctrine of forgiveness.

The law of Moses said the following:

- Lev. 5:10, “And he shall offer the second for a burnt-offering, according to the manner: and the priest shall make atonement for him for his sin which he hath sinned, and it shall be forgiven him.”
- Lev. 16:21, “And Aaron (a priest) shall lay both his hands upon the head of the live goat, and confess over him all the iniquities of the children of Israel...”
- II Chron. 7:14, “If my people, which are called by my name, shall humble themselves, and pray, and seek my face, and turn from their wicked ways; then will I hear from heaven, and will forgive their sin, and will heal their land.”
- Dan. 9:20, “confessing my sin and the sin of my people Israel”

Forgiveness under the law required and was conditioned on sacrifices, confessions, services of a priest, etc.

Under the law, unconfessed sin had serious consequences.

- Ps. 66:18, “If I regard iniquity in my heart, the Lord will not hear me:”
- Lev. 17:10, I will even set my face against that soul”
- Matt. 6:15, “But if ye forgive men not their trespasses, neither will your Father forgive your trespasses.”

The law was a conditional forgiveness program relying on the Jew’s obedience to the law. If the Jew obeyed, then he would be forgiven. If not, then he wouldn’t be forgiven.

Work of the law

The law made the Jew sin conscious, to turn him to the Lord for forgiveness, as that is the purpose of the law.

Rom. 3:20, “for by the law is the knowledge of sin.”

The law put the Jew under a forgiveness program of “short accounts;” continual confession and sacrifice.

God, through the law, gave the Jew a “conscience of sins” which would produce condemnation. This was the work of the law. The condemnation would bring confession and sacrifice by the sinner, resulting in God’s forgiveness.

Heb. 10:1-3, “For the law having a shadow of good things to come, and not the very image of the things, can never with those sacrifices which they offered year by year continually make the comers thereunto perfect. For then would they not have ceased to be offered? Because that the worshippers once purged should have had no more conscience of sins. But in those sacrifices there is a remembrance again made of sins every year.”

The Jew had an ongoing remembrance (conscience) of sin because the blood of animals could not take away sin.

The gospels - time past

Forgiveness in the gospels is also according to the law of Moses.

Rom. 15:8, “Now I say that Jesus Christ was a minister of the circumcision for the truth of God, to confirm the promises made unto the fathers:”

Christ’s earthly ministry was to Israel. He was a minister to the circumcision, the Jews.

The Lord Jesus Christ came as a Jew according to prophecy and was made under the law of Moses.

Gal. 4:4, “But when the fullness of the time was come, God sent forth his Son, made of a woman, made under the law,”

The law was in effect throughout the earthly ministry of our Lord.

Matt. 15:24, “But he answered and said, I am not sent but unto the lost sheep of the house of Israel.”

The lost sheep were Israel. He was sent only unto them. The four gospels are all about His ministry, according to the law, to His lost sheep, Israel.

The law of Moses reigned during this time and forgiveness was according to the law.

Matt. 23:1-3, “Then spake Jesus unto the multitude, and to his disciples, Saying, The scribes and the Pharisees sit in Moses’ seat: All therefore whatsoever they bid you observe, that observe and do;”

Christ is teaching the multitudes to follow Moses and the law. This is not instruction for you or me to follow.

The four gospels are about God's program with His earthly people, Israel.

Forgiveness in the gospels

Rome errors in taking truths from the gospels and applying them in our dispensation of grace.

John 20:21, "Whose soever sins ye remit, they are remitted unto them, and whose soever sins ye retain, they are retained."

This passage needs to be understood in its correct dispensational setting. Christ gave authority to His disciples to remit and retain sins in anticipation of His coming kingdom. Israel's rejection of their King caused God to postpone the kingdom along with the kingdom promises.

Many error by applying the forgiveness program found in Matthew six. This was written to Israel in anticipation of the coming kingdom. It is written to Israel, not to those living in the age of grace.

Matt. 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."

Paul's doctrine on forgiveness instructs us to forgive because we are forgiven, not to be forgiven. Under grace, we already have forgiveness.

Nailing it to his cross

The Law of Moses reigned from when God gave it to Moses on Mount Sinai until Paul declared it “nailed to his cross.” The law was abolished at the cross but God did not make this known until he revealed it to Paul. We read about the death of the law from Paul.

Col. 2:14, “Blotting out the handwriting of ordinances (law of Moses) that was against us, which was contrary to us, and took it out of the way, nailing it to his cross;”

Rom. 10:4, “For Christ is the end of the law for righteousness to everyone that believeth.”

God declared the law, with its conditional forgiveness program, over because of the cross. The blood of Christ blotted out the law that was against us.

It is by Paul that God announced the end of the reign of the law and the beginning of the reign of grace.

Rom. 5:21, “That as sin hath reigned unto death, even so might grace reign through righteousness unto eternal life by Jesus Christ our Lord.”

God’s grace, not His law, is reigning in the dispensation of the grace of God.

Rom. 6:14, “For sin shall not have dominion over you: for ye are not under the law, but under grace.”

Rom. 3:21, 22, “But now the righteousness of God without the law is manifested, being witnessed by the law and the prophets; Even the righteousness of God which is by faith of Jesus Christ unto all and upon all them that believe:”

Paul, when using the words, “but now,” is demonstrating that a change has taken place. Things were one way under law, “time past,” “but now,” under grace they are different. We need to recognize the changes in God’s dispensations from “time past” to “but now” if we want to understand our forgiveness.

Acts 13:38, 39, “that through this man is preached unto you the forgiveness of sins: And by him all that believe are justified from all things, from which ye could not be justified by the law of Moses.”

Here Paul says that through Christ is preached “the forgiveness of sins” by which we are justified from all things. The law could not justify anyone from all things.

Work of grace

Under grace, God works in the believer’s conscience to constantly remind him of the great work that God has done in providing His Son, resulting in our total forgiveness. The believer’s conscience should not bring him to God for more forgiveness but should bring him to God to give praise and thanksgiving for His completed work.

Believers should have no more conscience of sins that produce a need for continual forgiveness; this belongs to the law program as we read in Hebrews 10:1, 2.

The fruit of forgiveness

Forgiveness of sins in all dispensations should bear fruit.

Matt. 9:2 “...Jesus seeing their faith said unto the sick of the palsy; Son, be of good cheer; thy sins be forgiven thee.”

Good cheer should result from believing the truth about one's forgiveness.

The doctrines of grace are not just to know; but are designed to produce joy and gladness in our hearts.

Rom. 15:13, "Now the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing,"

The believer, living in the dispensation of the grace of God, should be filled with joy and gladness.

Paul answers those who believe that his teaching will promote sin.

Rom. 6:1, 2, "Shall we continue in sin, that grace may abound? God forbid."

It is not God's will that believers abuse His completed work of forgiveness. "God forbid," is what God says about a saint that would take advantage of His grace.

Paul, before he was saved, was the self appointed leader of man's rebellion against God and believing Israel. Paul was a murderer and persecutor of God's kingdom church. Paul identifies himself as the chief of sinners.

I Tim. 1:15, "that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners; of whom I am chief."

Paul's knowledge of his complete and total forgiveness freed him from the self condemnation and depression that comes from a heavy burden of guilt over sin to serve the Lord Jesus Christ.

Phil. 3:13, 14, “Brethren, I count not myself to have apprehended: but this one thing I do, forgetting those things which are behind, and reaching forth unto those things which are before, I press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus.”

Paul could have sung this little song we sing in our children’s Bible club.

Gone, gone, gone, gone
Yes my sins are gone
Now my soul is free and in my hearts a song
Buried in the deepest sea
Yes that’s good enough for me
I shall live eternally
Praise God, my sins are G O N E, gone

Paul knew that the precious blood of Christ made full payment for “all trespasses” and it was this knowledge that freed him from the “power of sin” to serve Christ.

The power that comes from knowing that we are totally forgiven is greater than the power of sin. Saints need this power.

I Cor. 15:10, “But by the grace of God I am what I am: and his grace which was bestowed upon me was not in vain; but I labored more abundantly than they all: yet not I, but the grace of God which was with me.”

Phil. 1:21, “For me to live is Christ, and to die is gain.”

After Paul’s conversion he led a life of selfless service for his Lord. He endured affliction, persecution and the loss of all things. This is what God’s forgiveness is designed to do in the life of the believer, to free him to serve Him.

Paul's doctrine for sinning saints

The psalmist wrote:

Ps. 119:11 “Thy word have I hid in mine heart, that I might not sin against thee.”

This is God's great protection and provision for a life of victory over sin.

The believer, living in the dispensation of grace, is instructed to believe and act on the truth that God sets forth in Romans 6:11-13.

“Likewise reckon ye also yourselves to be dead indeed unto sin, but alive unto God through Jesus Christ our Lord. Let not sin therefore reign in your mortal body, that ye should obey it in the lusts thereof. Neither yield ye your members as instruments of unrighteousness unto sin: but yield yourselves unto God, as those that are alive from the dead, and your members as instruments of righteousness unto God.”

The only remedy for a sinning saint is faith. Believe the doctrine concerning the old man. He's dead! He's buried! Take God at His word. Victory over sin is found in knowing this glorious truth concerning the “old man”. The battle with the old man has been won for us by Christ and with our identification with Him. Just as it is as necessary for a believer to agree with God regarding the death of the old man, it is also necessary to reckon ourselves “alive unto God”. Focus on the positive! The believer was raised in “newness of life”.

These are powerful truths that can and will keep the believer from sin or bring him quickly back from sin. There is one little word upon which all this hinges though. Romans 6:12, “Let,” the will must be willing to apply the doctrine we know to be

true. Only when the believer is so captivated by the “love of Christ,” in full display at Calvary’s cross, will he gladly yield his members as instruments of righteousness.

Rom. 12:1, 2, “I beseech you therefore, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service.”

Our will, motivated by the knowledge of the great doctrines of grace is empowered by the Holy Spirit to will and to do that which is pleasing unto God.

Phil. 2:13, “For it is God which worketh in you both to will and to do of his good pleasure.”

The believer will be able to, “abhor that which is evil; and cleave to that which is good,” if he by faith believes the doctrine of Romans six and lets the love of Christ motivate and constrain him to live unto Him.

Turn not aside

In the Old Testament God commanded Israel to stay true to His words and to not depart from them.

Deut. 5:32, “Ye shall observe to do therefore as the LORD your God hath commanded you: ye shall not turn aside to the right hand or to the left.”

How did Israel know what God had commanded them? The answer is found in the man God sent to be His spokesman. They knew that God sent Moses and that they were to obey Moses! If Israel would obey Moses they would be obeying God. Departing to the right or left of “Moses” was to “depart from God”.

Jesus said in John 13:20, “Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that receiveth whomsoever I send receiveth me; and he that receiveth me receiveth him that sent me.”

God sent Moses to Israel and Israel refused to receive him. They did turn to the right and left. Israel’s disobedience resulted in Israel crucifying the Lord and with God setting Israel aside.

Just as God sent Moses to Israel He sent Paul to the Gentiles.

Rom. 11:13, “For I speak to you Gentiles, inasmuch as I am the apostle of the Gentiles, I magnify mine office:”

The church at large has refused to receive Paul as God’s apostle to the Gentiles choosing rather to follow the law program and Jesus in His earthly ministry to Israel (the gospels). The confusion exists not because the church has left the words of God, but because the church has departed from Paul. God is not the Author of confusion.

The church has departed from Paul and has gone to the right and to the left. The church has mixed law and grace to such a degree that the glory of neither of God’s administrations can be clearly seen.

The church has gone to the left of Paul’s epistles to the law of Moses. From when God formed Israel and gave them the law to the end of the four gospels, we find God’s words concerning His earthly people Israel. The church has also gone to the right of Paul’s epistles to the books of Hebrews through Revelation. These also are concerning Israel. A prayerful consideration of Gal. 2:6-9 should bring clarity to the confusion concerning who James, Peter and John went to with their gospel of the circumcision.

II Tim. 2:15, “Study to shew thyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth.”

Paul instructs us to “rightly divide” or to cut straight the scriptures. We are to separate law from grace. Mixing them will prevent the saint from having the joy and peace that results in knowing he is totally forgiven.

The church, the body of Christ, will find its doctrine in Paul’s epistles just where God put it for us.

II Tim. 1:13, “Hold fast the form of sound words, which thou hast heard of me (Paul), in faith and love which is in Christ Jesus.”

II Tim. 2:7, “Consider what I (Paul) say; and the Lord give thee understanding in all things.”

Eph. 4:32, “And be ye kind one to another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, even as God for Christ’s sake hath forgiven you”

Be of good cheer, thy sins are forgiven!

Bible Time Line

Time Past

Ephesians 2:11, 12

But Now

Ephesians 2:13

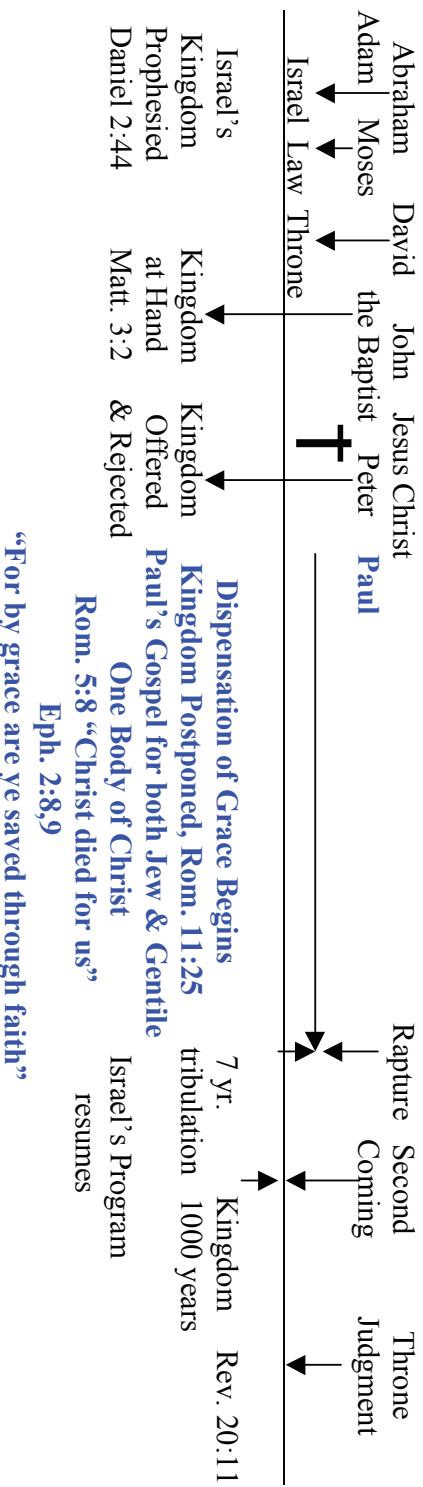
Ages to Come

Ephesians 2:7

Prophecy

Mystery

Prophecy



Genesis to John

Acts

Romans to Philemon

Hebrews to Revelation

The Lord Jesus Christ is our Saviour

We live in the Age of Grace

Paul is our apostle

1 Timothy 1:15

Ephesians 3:2

Romans 11:13

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“And be ye kind one to another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, even as God for Christ's sake hath forgiven you”

