

The Wonderful Forgiveness of God

Come now, and let us reason together," Says the LORD, " Though your sins are as scarlet, They will be as white as snow; Though they are red like crimson, They will be like wool. (Isaiah. 1:18) There is an incredible amount of hope in the words in this verse. God will forgive the vilest of sinners! Through the years, I have heard some say "I'm too mean," "I've committed terrible sins," "I've gone too far," or "I've sunk too deep." And their conclusion is that God will never forgive them. God **is** willing to forgive—as long as we are ready to follow Him in obedience. The word *scarlet* has always stood out to me—perhaps because of the hymn we often sing. "Scarlet" was the color of a deep, red permanent dye. The Hebrews obtained the dye from an insect that infested oak trees. The deep stain was virtually impossible to remove from clothing. Fausett describes it as a "glaring, gorgeous color." Some have said that "scarlet" means to be "double-dipped." There is little doubt that sin can "stain" one's life. But the message here is that we do not have to go through life permanently stained with sin! There is hope—even for the vilest of sinners. Everyone has the opportunity to have their sins washed away! Think of numerous examples within the old and new testaments:

David. Guilty of unbridled lust which led to adultery and the murder of Bathsheba's husband (Uriah), David had some serious sins! (2 Samuel 11-12). But yet—he trusted in God's forgiveness: *Be gracious to me, O God, according to Your lovingkindness; According to the greatness of Your compassion blot out my transgressions. Wash me thoroughly from my iniquity And cleanse me from my sin. For I know my transgressions, And my sin is ever before me. (Psalm 51:1-3)*

The brethren at Corinth. Paul describes some of the sins they engaged in before coming to Christ: *Do not be deceived; neither fornicators, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor effeminate, nor homosexuals, nor thieves, nor the covetous, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor swindlers, will inherit the kingdom of God. **Such were some of you;** but you were washed, but you were sanctified, but you were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ and in the Spirit of our God. Upon coming to Christ—and having their sins washed away in baptism—they lived new lives through Christ Jesus. Their slate had been wiped clean!*

The apostle Paul. Some bible versions describe him as the *chief* of sinners. But yet, we can easily see the hope that filled his life—because of the price Jesus paid on the cross: *the grace of our Lord was more than abundant, with the faith and love which are found in Christ Jesus. It is a trustworthy statement, deserving full acceptance, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners, among whom I am foremost of all.*

These and other men trusted that God will do what He says, i.e., forgive them of their sins. We must do the same. While we trust in God for forgiveness, there is a responsibility on our part: live in a way that is pleasing to Him. This starts by obeying the gospel of Jesus Christ.

Do you **believe** that Jesus is the Christ; that He can save you from your sins? (Acts 16:30; John 8:24; Romans 5:1)

Are you willing to **repent** and turn away from sinful behavior? Repentance is more than sorrow for sin—it involves positive **action** on our part! Repentance is a complete reversal of one's attitude and values, i.e., a turning to God. (Luke 13:3; Matthew 8; Acts 17:30)

Will you **confess** that Jesus is the Son of God? (Acts 8:37; Romans 10:9-10)

Will you be **baptized** for the remission of sins? It is at this point one's sins are forgiven! Salvation results at baptism—Peter said *baptism now saves you*. (1 Peter 3:21) Saul of Tarsus had his sins washed away at baptism (Acts 22:16). Jesus said *He that believes and is baptized shall be saved*. (Mark 16:16)

After obeying the gospel, we remain responsible to live in a *God-pleasing* manner. Heaven will only be ours when we choose it without reservation. We must be firm in our resolve to grow closer to God and put off worldly living. Imagine a life filled with hope—because of the precious gift of Jesus' blood—shed on the cross of Calvary.

After God has forgiven us, **we must learn to forgive ourselves**. Some try to pay a cancelled debt. Wendell Winkler has said, *when God forgives us and we do not forgive ourselves it is like paying Sears our balance in full and going down the next month and trying to pay the bill again!* Yes, sorrow for sin is a good thing! But, we must trust in God's forgiveness and move on. We read earlier of David's great remorse for his sin (Psalm 51). Some believe that Psalm 23 was written sometime after this. It, of course, is a psalm filled with hope and trust in God. Verse 6 says, *surely goodness and lovingkindness will follow me all the days of my life, and I will dwell in the house of the Lord forever*. The memory of his sin, probably haunted him for the rest of his days—but this passage can teach us the need to forgive self and move on.

Have you sought the forgiveness found only in Christ Jesus? In speaking about Jesus, John the Baptist said, *Behold, the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world!* (John 1:29) **Has He taken away your sin?** There is no time like the present to be redeemed from sin and reconciled to the Lord.

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