

12—God Forgives

Micah 7:18, “Who is a God like You, pardoning iniquity and passing over the transgression of the remnant of His heritage? He does not retain His anger forever, because He delights in mercy.”

Introduction: Have you ever heard someone say, “I’ve done too many bad things. I just don’t think God could ever forgive me.”?

Have you ever heard a Christian say, “This person has hurt me too badly. I don’t think I could ever forgive them.”?

Thank God that my eternal destiny does not hinge upon the judgments or forgiveness of humans, but upon the judgment and mercy of our loving God. Our lesson today is not complicated. It is simple. I just want every person to know regardless of their sinful background, sinful circumstances, or sinfulness—they are not beyond God’s reach. I want every Christian to know it is our duty to share the “Good News” that Jesus has come, sent by God, to save men from their sins as their Deliverer and their Savior. Our God is the God of second chances. He is a God who forgives. In the book of Micah, the prophet wrote, “*Who is a God like You, pardoning iniquity and passing over the transgression of the remnant of His heritage? He does not retain His anger forever, because He delights in mercy*” (Micah 7:18, NKJV).

In our lesson today, I will share with you five passages which display God’s amazing grace extended toward sinners who repent and turn to Him. I want you to just think about the people involved in each passage and the God who forgives them and be convinced—God forgives.

I. David (Psalm 103:1-18)

A. Before you read verse 1 of Psalm 103, we read “A Psalm of David” in the heading.

1. David went through episodes of lying, adultery, and even a murder conspiracy.
2. Is God able to forgive a liar? Is God able to forgive an adulterer? Is God able to forgive a murderer?

B. If we believe our God cannot forgive, allow this passage to change your conception of God. Just read the first eighteen verses of David’s Psalm.

- 1 "Bless the Lord, O my soul, and all that is within me, bless his holy name!
- 2 Bless the Lord, O my soul, and forget not all his benefits,
- 3 who forgives all your iniquity, who heals all your diseases,
- 4 who redeems your life from the pit, who crowns you with steadfast love and mercy,
- 5 who satisfies you with good so that your youth is renewed like the eagle's.

6 The Lord works righteousness and justice for all who are oppressed.

7 He made known his ways to Moses, his acts to the people of Israel.

8 The Lord is merciful and gracious, slow to anger and abounding in steadfast love.

9 He will not always chide, nor will he keep his anger forever.

10 He does not deal with us according to our sins, nor repay us according to our iniquities.

11 For as high as the heavens are above the earth, so great is his steadfast love toward those who fear him;

12 as far as the east is from the west, so far does he remove our transgressions from us.

13 As a father shows compassion to his children, so the Lord shows compassion to those who fear him.

14 For he knows our frame; he remembers that we are dust.

15 As for man, his days are like grass; he flourishes like a flower of the field;

16 for the wind passes over it, and it is gone, and its place knows it no more.

17 But the steadfast love of the Lord is from everlasting to everlasting on those who fear him, and his righteousness to children's children,

18 to those who keep his covenant and remember to do his commandments.

C. David may have had his struggles with sin, yet He was confident God forgives.

II. The Prodigal Son (Luke 15:11-24)

A. When Jesus spoke the parable of the lost sheep, the lost coin, and the lost son in Luke 15 He did so because some of *“the Pharisees and scribes complained, saying, ‘This Man receives sinners and eats with them’”* (15:2). Of course, Jesus was not eating with them to condone their sin, but because you can’t change a sinner if you don’t associate with them!

B. So, Jesus uses these parables to emphasize what our response should be, even to those who have rebelliously walked away from their Father’s care, such as the Prodigal Son.

C. Jesus responds to this stuck-up, snobbish attitude toward sinners with just a simple story to emphasize the superior character and nature of God.

1. Again, just read Luke 15:11-24.

2. *“And He said, “A man had two sons. 12 And the younger of them said to his father, ‘Father, give me the share of the estate that falls to me.’ So he divided his wealth between them. 13 And not many days later, the younger son gathered everything together and went on a journey into a distant country, and there he squandered his estate living recklessly. 14 Now when he had spent everything, a severe famine occurred in that country, and he began to be impoverished. 15 So he went and hired himself out to one of the citizens of that country, and he sent him into his fields to feed swine. 16 And he was desiring to be fed with the pods that the swine were eating, and no one was giving anything to him. 17 But when he came to himself, he said, ‘How many of my father’s hired men have more than enough bread, but I am dying here with hunger! 18 I will rise up and go to my father, and will say to him, “Father, I have sinned against heaven, and before you. 19 I am no longer worthy to be called your son; make me as one of your hired men.”” 20 So he rose up and came to his father. But while he was still a long way off, his father saw him and felt compassion, and ran and embraced him and kissed him. 21 And the son said to him, ‘Father, I have sinned against heaven and before you. I am no longer worthy to be called your son.’ 22 But the father said to his slaves, ‘Quickly bring out the best robe and put it on him, and put a ring on his hand and sandals on his feet, 23 and bring the fattened calf, slaughter it, and let us eat and celebrate, 24 for this son of mine was dead and has come to life again; he was lost and has been found.’ And they began to celebrate” (LSB).*

D. The world, and even some religious people, may treat some sins and sinners as if they are beyond forgiveness—but Jesus wants us to see God’s perspective on the prodigal.

III. An Adulterous Woman (John 8:3-11)

A. To some people, adultery is nearly an unforgivable sin. It is not a sin to be taken lightly for it can end a marriage and cause much damage to a family (see Exodus 20:14; Malachi 2:16; Matthew 19:9).

B. While adultery may have earthly consequences, God can forgive.

1. Notice how Jesus responds to the adulterous woman of John 8,

2. *“The scribes and the Pharisees *brought a woman caught in adultery, and having set her in the center of the court, 4 they *said to Him, “Teacher, this woman has been caught in adultery, in the very act. 5 Now in the Law Moses commanded us to stone such women; what then do You say?” 6 They were saying this, testing Him, so that they might have evidence to accuse Him. But Jesus stooped down and with His finger wrote on the ground. 7 But when they persisted in asking Him, He straightened up and said to them, “Let him who is without sin among you be the first*

to throw a stone at her.” 8 Again He stooped down and wrote on the ground. 9 When they heard it, they began to go out one by one, beginning with the older ones, and He was left alone, and the woman, where she was, in the center of the court. 10 Straightening up, Jesus said to her, “Woman, where are they? Did no one condemn you?” 11 She said, “No one, Lord.” And Jesus said, “I do not condemn you, either. Go, and from now on sin no more.” (8:3-11, LSB).

C. The world may judge the sin of adultery more harshly, but Jesus was able to forgive this woman and let her go on living a changed life.

IV. The Murderous Passover Jews (Acts 2:22-38)

A. How do you feel about forgiving a murderer? Some have a hard time fathoming the sin of murder could ever deserve forgiveness.

B. Yet, in Acts 2, Peter preaches a sermon to the same Jews who had taken Jesus “*by lawless hands, have crucified, and put to death*”—(2:23).

1. Jesus was one of Peter’s closest friends for three years.
2. Jesus was God’s Son who rose from the dead (2:24-35).
3. It is hard to imagine Peter preaching forgiveness for the death of his friend or God offering forgiveness for those who killed His Son.

C. Yet, in Acts 2:36-42 we read...

1. After preaching of the resurrection of Jesus, Peter says...
2. *“Therefore let all the house of Israel know for certain that God has made Him both Lord and Christ—this Jesus whom you crucified.” 37 Now when they heard this, they were pierced to the heart, and said to Peter and the rest of the apostles, “Men, brothers, what should we do?” 38 And Peter said to them, “Repent, and each of you be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins; and you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. 39 For the promise is for you and your children and for all who are far off, as many as the Lord our God will call to Himself.” 40 And with many other words he solemnly bore witness and kept on exhorting them, saying, “Be saved from this crooked generation!” 41 So then, those who had received his word were baptized; and that day there were added about three thousand souls. 42 And they were continually devoting themselves to the apostles’ teaching and to the fellowship, to the breaking of bread and to the prayers” (Acts 2:36-42, LSB).*

D. We may find it hard to believe God's grace could extend even to the heinous sin of murdering an innocent victim, but Pentecost shows us God forgives.

V. Paul (Acts 22:3-16)

A. Some people absolutely hate Christianity and Christians. They speak evil of every Christian, they rejoice when Christians are mocked, they wish evil upon us.

B. Because certain religious groups and cultural groups have spoken and acted hurtfully it may seem difficult to think they could be forgiven in such a state of hatred.

C. But, listen to Paul tell his story in Acts 22:3-16,

1. *"I am a Jew, born in Tarsus of Cilicia, but having been brought up in this city, having been instructed at the feet of Gamaliel according to the strictness of the law of our fathers, being zealous for God just as you all are today, 4 I persecuted this Way to the death, binding and delivering both men and women into prisons, 5 as also the high priest and all the Council of the elders can testify. From them I also received letters to the brothers, and started off for Damascus in order to bring even those who were there to Jerusalem as prisoners to be punished.*

6 "But it happened that as I was on my way, approaching Damascus about noontime, a very bright light suddenly flashed from heaven all around me, 7 and I fell to the ground and heard a voice saying to me, 'Saul, Saul, why are you persecuting Me?' 8 And I answered, 'Who are You, Lord?' And He said to me, 'I am Jesus the Nazarene, whom you are persecuting.' 9 And those who were with me beheld the light, to be sure, but did not understand the voice of the One who was speaking to me. 10 And I said, 'What should I do, Lord?' And the Lord said to me, 'Rise up and go on into Damascus, and there you will be told of all that has been determined for you to do.' 11 But since I could not see because of the glory of that light, being led by the hand by those who were with me, I came into Damascus. 12 "Now a certain Ananias, a man who was devout by the standard of the Law, and well spoken of by all the Jews who lived there, 13 came to me, and standing near, said to me, 'Brother Saul, regain your sight!' And at that very hour I regained my sight and saw him. 14 And he said, 'The God of our fathers has appointed you to know His will and to see the Righteous One and to hear a [e]voice from His mouth. 15 For you will be a witness for Him to all men of what you have seen and heard. 16 Now why do you delay? Rise up and be baptized, and wash away your sins, calling on His name'" (LSB).

2. Turn to 1 Timothy 1:12-15 to see why God wanted Paul's story told, *"I am grateful to Christ Jesus our Lord, who has strengthened me, because He regarded me faithful, putting me into service, 13 even though I was formerly a blasphemer and a*

persecutor and a violent aggressor. Yet I was shown mercy because I acted ignorantly in unbelief; 14 and the grace of our Lord was more than abundant, with the faith and love which are in Christ Jesus. 15 It is a trustworthy saying and deserving full acceptance: that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners, among whom I am foremost” (LSB).

C. Some may find it hard to even extend forgiveness to those who have mocked and persecuted their faith—but God forgives.

VI. Lessons For Us...

A. You are not too bad to be forgiven by God (Romans 5:6-9).

B. God does call upon us to repent and turn to Him in every case of forgiveness.

1. The David who wrote of the blessings of forgiveness in Psalm 103 was the David who had a *“broken and contrite heart”* after his sin with Bathsheba in Psalm 51.

2. The Prodigal Son who was received back home by his Father was also the one who *“came to his senses”* and admitted his sin (Luke 15:17-19).

3. The adulterous woman who was released by Jesus was also told by Him *“Go, and sin no more”* (John 8:11).

4. The murderous Jews who called for the death of Jesus were told by Peter they must *“repent and be baptized”* preceding their forgiveness (Acts 2:38).

5. Even sinful Paul was told to *“Arise and be baptized, and wash away your sins, calling on the name of the Lord”* (Acts 22:16).

C. We are called to forgive as God forgives. *“Instead, be kind to one another, tender-hearted, graciously forgiving each other, just as God in Christ also has graciously forgiven you”* (Ephesians 4:32; cp. Luke 17:3-4).

Conclusion: God forgives. You are not too far gone. You have not done too many bad things. If you have a penitent heart, are willing to bear the fruits of repentance, and are longing to come home, then you have a God who has been waiting. He is longsuffering. You have a God who runs. When God sees you come, He'll run to embrace you to help you in your journey. You need to know you have a God who transforms. He can change your status—from an enemy to a friend. He can change your situation—from lost to saved. He can change your soul—from hopeless to hope-filled. Then, when He has changed you He is the God who sends. He will send broken and mended people to bring the Good News to broken people. He has taken the first step when He sent His Son to the cross to bridge the gap our sins have caused. We must walk over that bridge in true repentance as we come to Him. Come home.