



Part 15: Forgiveness of Sins

Matthew 9:1-8

Jesus has all authority on earth to heal our greatest brokenness through the forgiveness of sins.

“Forgiveness of sins is practically speaking, the engine of Christian movement.” – Frederick Bruner, *The Christbook*

And yet, there is a disconnect with forgiveness in our own culture and maybe in our own hearts. There is a failure to understand and live out of the depth of God’s forgiveness. (i.e. Cancelled Culture: Will Smith, JK Rowling, Justin Timberlake, Ellen DeGeneres)

“Americans don’t know how to forgive...We wake up mad, we go to bed mad, and in between, the only thing that might change is what’s making us angry. The one gesture that could offer substantive change, or at least provide a way forward – forgiveness – seems perpetually beyond our reach.” – Vox.com, “*America’s Struggle for Forgiveness*”

The Disconnect: Teachers of the law and the paralyzed man

- Friends bring a paralyzed man who is probably in great need, maybe shunned and looked down upon. He most likely is reliant on his family and friends or even has to beg to survive. Thankfully he has friends. He is lowered down to Jesus, the healer. Jesus responds with the words, “Take heart, son; your sins are forgiven.”
- The disconnect of the teachers of the law: The ones responsible for God’s honor and to uphold the law, were probably confused, baffled, and outraged. For, Jesus is blaspheming, claiming to be God because only God can forgive sins which is punishable by death. Instead of Jesus claiming to be the channel of forgiveness, He is claiming to be the source of forgiveness.

- The disconnect of the paralyzed man and his friends: They were there for a healing, wanting to see their friend walk, restored back to a place in his family and society. And yet, Jesus only forgives his sins.

Sins are forgiven: This meant something to the Jews

- Jews would go to the temple to receive forgiveness of sins through the sacrificial system.
- Old Testament: Moral, Civil, Ceremonial laws – to set the Jews apart from other nations and to point them to their coming king and salvation.
- Ceremonial Laws: Sacrificial System, Day of Atonement – Leviticus 16:30: “...on this day atonement will be made for you, to cleanse you. Then, before the Lord, you will be clean from all your sins.” A foreshadowing of Jesus, “Look, the lamb of God who takes away the sins of the world” (John 1:29).
- Hope and power in God’s forgiveness: “Blessed is the one whose transgressions are forgiven, whose sins are covered. Blessed is the one whose sin the Lord does not count against them and in whose spirit is no deceit” (Psalm 32:1-2).
- Twisted Ancient Near East Karma: Blind man from birth, “Rabbi, who sinned, this man or his parents, that he was born blind” (John 9:2). For those with physical ailments, they were often seen as deserving of it, cursed because of something they or their parents did.
- The point: “But I want you to know that the Son of Man has authority on earth to forgive sins” (Matthew 9:6).

The Brokenness of the world vs. Jesus’ healing power

- Matthew 8:1-4: Jesus heals the man with leprosy.
- Matthew 8:5-13: He heals the Centurion’s servant (healing from a distance).
- Matthew 8:14-15: He heals Peter’s mother-in-law.
- Matthew 8:16: He drives out demons and heals all the sick.
- Matthew 8:23-27: He calms the storm.
- Matthew 8:28-34: He heals two demon-possessed men.

Jesus’ Authority

- Matthew 7:29: “taught as one who had authority”
- Matthew 8:9: “For I myself am a man under authority.”
- Matthew 8:27: Authority over nature
- Matthew 8:32: Authority over the demonic
- Matthew 9:6-8: “But I want you to know that the Son of Man has authority on earth to forgive sins.” So, he said to the paralyzed man, “Get up, take your mat and go home.” Then the man got up and went home. When the crowd saw this, they were filled with awe; and they praised God, who had given such authority to man.”

Forgiveness of sins

- Our greatest brokenness is sin. Hebrew – Khata – missed the mark. Missing God’s mark to love God and love others. But it is also a poison that taints all of who we are, leads to destruction and ultimately separation from God.
- “...sin is crouching at your door; it desires to have [overpower/devour] you, but you must rule over it” (Genesis 4:7).
- The point is not for us to just have our sins forgiven; the point is to be with God. To know and experience the fullness of His presence. To be rescued and redeemed, adopted as a beloved child of His in His beautiful kingdom.

“What if salvation isn’t mostly about getting us into heaven but about getting heaven into us.” – John Ortberg, *Eternity Now*

The Story of the Gospel: Three movements

Glory of God | Gravity of Sin | Grandeur of Grace

Three Movements of the gospel in worship

- **Glory of God:** it all starts with God. It does not start with us in deep self-examination at all our brokenness and sin. It starts by looking up to a God who is majestic, holy, exalted, and worthy to be praised. The one who has all authority and power and is the very embodiment of love.
- **Gravity of Sin:** from God’s perfection, we see our imperfection. As Isaiah said in response to God’s holiness, “Woe to me!...I am ruined! For I am a man of unclean lips, and live among a people of unclean lips, and my eyes have seen the King, the Lord Almighty” (Isaiah 6:5). From God’s glory, the brilliance of His presence, we truly start to see our sin. But thankfully God does not leave us there. This sets the stage for the next movement, for grace only appears as high as we are brought low.
- **Grandeur of Grace:** through the fullness and height of God’s love He reaches down and pulls us from the depth of our sin. Jesus comes to the rescue, He destroys sin, death, and Satan through His death and resurrection. As Romans 8:1 says, “Therefore, there is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus.”

Discussion Questions:

1. How have you noticed an unforgiving and graceless culture? Have you personally found yourself being sucked into greater judgment and condemnation?

2. Read Matthew 9:1-8 again. What comes to mind when you think of “sin” and “forgiveness.” How do you hear the words, “Take heart, son, your sins are forgiven”?

3. Has there been a disconnect, a failure to understand the depth of God’s forgiveness for you in your life? What has helped you to live in the depth of God’s forgiveness for you?

4. What do you think of the three movements of the gospel; Glory of God, Gravity of Sin, and Grandeur of Grace? In your time with God, is there anything you can do to help you walk through the greater heights and depths of the gospel?

5. If you feel comfortable sharing, how have you had to extend forgiveness to others?