

#34 “Fully Forgiven”

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It is absolutely true that Christ died for sin once for all (Hebrews 7:27). His sacrifice encompasses all sin, past, present, and future. Of course, only those who repent of their sins and place their trust in Christ for forgiveness are able to experience Christ’s cleansing. It is a sad thing that many reject the gift of salvation which Christ has offered to them. Yet the glory for those who have received Christ is that we are presented in Christ’s righteousness before the Father. Christ’s holiness makes us holy before God and able to have a relationship with Him. Ephesians 2:6 says that we are even seated with Christ in the heavenly places. In the assurances of Christ’s sacrifice, we are already seated in heaven with Christ. We are thus, in a sense of position, identity, and calling, totally forgiven and holy. When it comes to our salvation, our eternity in Christ is sure because our righteousness is based in what He did, which is a done deal.

Colossians 1:13-14 says, “For He rescued us from the domain of darkness, and transferred us to the kingdom of His beloved Son, in whom we have redemption, the forgiveness of sins.” As if speaking of a legal contractual agreement being signed and sealed, we were officially transferred from Satan’s ownership to God’s and forgiven of our sins. Colossians 2:13-14 echoes this idea, saying,

“When you were dead in your transgressions and the uncircumcision of your flesh, He made you alive together with Him, having forgiven us all our transgressions, having canceled out the certificate of debt consisting of decrees against us, which was hostile to us; and He has taken it out of the way, having nailed it to the cross.”

We had a debt that we couldn’t pay because of our sin, but Christ paid it, nailing the burden of our sins to the cross. The result is that we can, by faith in Christ’s work on our behalf and our corresponding repentance, be forgiven of all our sins because our debt is cancelled. This is a permanent, once-for-all forgiveness, which we can praise God for each and every day.

Yet the unfortunate reality of our human condition is that we are not yet perfected; thus, we still sin. We cannot let this go unaddressed, for it grieves the Spirit (Ephesians 4:20), quenches the Spirit (1 Thessalonians 5:19), and keeps us from enjoying the privileges that we have in Christ such as joy, peace, and the manifest presence of God (see Psalm 51:11-12). Furthermore, we will be powerless in terms of bearing true spiritual fruit that endures the fiery test of the judgment seat of Christ (1 Corinthians 3:10-15). Sin needs to be dealt with, and this is why the Spirit convicts our hearts of it. We feel guilty because we are. If we are indeed children of God, it is not that we jeopardize our eternity when we sin, but it is that we dishonor God and jeopardize our rewards in eternity. Sin certainly has consequences, and we need to confess it.

The prodigal son provides a great illustration of the need to confess our sin and receive the forgiveness of Christ. He was always the son of the father, though for a time, he didn't live like it. When he returned to his senses and repented, he recognized that he needed to go and make things right between him and his father. He went home and told his father that he had sinned, and he realized rightly that there was nothing he could do to earn back his father's favor. Yet what he didn't realize was that he had never lost his father's favor, only the benefits of enjoying his fellowship and blessing. His father was deeply grieved, but he still loved his son and wanted him back. He didn't make the son do penance or remove his standing as a son. He received him openly and with celebration. The son was always loved by his father because he was his son. We, who have trusted Christ by faith, will always be His children (John 1:12), and He will always love us (Hebrews 13:5). All that is His is ours (Luke 15:31). We are positionally forgiven in Christ, but we sometimes forget what we have in Jesus and choose to indulge the flesh, follow Satan, and please the world. We run like the prodigal to riotous, self-centered living. Yet when we come to our senses and realize that sin is no fun in the end (Psalm 32:3-4, 1 Corinthians 5:5), we want to return to our Father. Did He ever leave us? No. Did He ever forsake us even if we forsook Him? No way. He is simply waiting to pour out His grace on us and receive us back again. Forgiveness has already been provided for in the blood of Christ. What we need to do is own up to our sin (confess), forsake it (repent), and receive the cleansing (be forgiven) of Christ (see Psalm 32:5, Psalm 51:10, 12, 17). Once we have asked Christ to cleanse our hearts from sin, we simply need to believe that we are received by God in grace and love. There is nothing more that we have to do. We don't have to "redeem ourselves," for we have already been redeemed in Christ. We don't have to perform or earn our way back into God's favor. We simply have to embrace it by faith as we fall into His embrace.

So, positionally, we are clean (John 15:3), but practically and conditionally we can get dirty. When we do sin, let's confess it quickly, repent promptly, and sprint into the forgiving arms of our Lord.