

The Forgiveness of Sins

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A little boy came to the Washington Monument and noticed a guard standing by it. The little boy looked up at the guard and said, "I want to buy it." The guard stooped down and says, "How much do you have?" The boy reached into his pocket and pulled out a quarter. The guard said, "That's not enough." The boy replied, "I thought you would say that." So he pulled out nine cents more. The guard looked down at the boy and said, "You need to understand three things. First, thirty-four cents is not enough. In fact, \$34 million is not enough to buy the Washington Monument. Second, the Washington Monument is not for sale. And third, if you are an American citizen, the Washington Monument already belongs to you."

In a similar way we need to understand about forgiveness today. First, we cannot earn it. Second, it is not for sale. And third, if we believe in Jesus Christ to be our Savior then we already have forgiveness before God. It is already ours! We are eternally forgiven of all our sins that we have committed in the past and will ever commit in the future.

This study is all about the forgiveness of sins. The forgiveness of sins is the greatest subject or topic that we could ever discuss. What does the Bible say about the forgiveness of sins? If we really are forgiven of our sins can any sin such as lying, anger, unforgiveness, lustful thoughts, hatred, or divorce ever condemn us to hell? Do we really understand the joy of complete forgiveness? I want you to bask in the grace of God's forgiveness today. I want you to experience the sunshine of God's gracious forgiveness. I want you to know about the joy of forgiveness. I want you to see God's grace of forgiveness in a new light. Dear friend, if there is one word that I would want on my tombstone it would be the word "forgiven." How glorious and wonderful to know that God has eternally forgiven us of all our sins finally and forever and that God accepts us unconditionally and eternally in spite of our sins that we commit and in spite of the many times we fail him and falter in our lives. Let's make it personal. God has forgiven me.

The Bible presents two types of forgiveness – forensic and family forgiveness. We want to look at these two types of forgiveness in this study.

1. Forensic forgiveness

What is forensic forgiveness? Forensic forgiveness speaks of the judicial forgiveness that we have before God in His heavenly courtroom of justice. The word “forensic” comes from a Latin word meaning “forum.” This word has its roots in the ancient Roman forum. A court would meet and make judicial or legal declarations based on Roman law. Forensic forgiveness involves God’s judicial declaration of a believer’s forgiveness before Him. The believer has been legally acquitted of all guilt in the courtroom of Heaven.

We must understand that the ideal of judicial forgiveness pertains to the court or Heaven. God has His own court or law and God says that every sinner must pay the penalty for his own sins that he has committed. The judicial scene and scenario is not hard to understand. God has a law and we broke the law (1 John 3:4 – “sin is transgression of the law”). Because we have sinned and broken God’s holy law we must now pay the penalty for our sins, which is one of judgment (John 3:36). God’s righteousness and holiness demands that sinners pay for the judgment of their own sin and sins (Gen. 2:17; Rom. 5:12-14, 6:23) and therefore His righteous wrath and condemnation must be meted out on the sinner who has broken God’s law (Romans 2:5). If a person is ever going to be saved the penalty must be removed. We are seen to be in the courtroom of God’s justice sitting on the execution chair awaiting God’s wrath and judgment. It appears that there is no hope of escape. Then, a Lamb appears in the courtroom scene. It is the Lord Jesus Christ who is the Lamb of God “that taketh away the sin of the world (John 1:29). This Lamb says, “I died on the cross to pay the penalty for your sin and all your sins so you could go free. Do you want to go free and escape God’s judgment?”

When we answer yes we believe in the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ (Acts 16:31) to save our souls from God’s wrath and judgment (hell) understanding that Jesus Christ paid the penalty for our sins so we could be judicially forgiven in God’s courtroom. This is

what it means when the Bible says, “Christ died for our sins” (1 Cor. 15:3). He paid the penalty for our sins or the price that God demanded for sin, which was death, separation from God, and hell. Jesus bore all of these things when He died on the cross. He took our place and died bearing sin’s full penalty so the case against us could be thrown out of Heaven’s court and we can escape the sentence of condemnation (Rom. 8:1; Acts 13:38-39; 2 Cor. 5:21).

So the Bible teaches that when a person is unsaved God is the Judge over their lives and He sees them as a condemned criminal and enemy who must pay the penalty for their own sins (Rom. 5:8-9). But when a sinner believes in Jesus Christ, depends upon Him to be their Savior from sin’s penalty, it’s then that God judicially forgives them of all their sins. **This means that in God’s courtroom we have been released from the obligation of paying the penalty for our own sins since Jesus paid the penalty in our place.** *In other words, judicial forgiveness relates to how the Father has released us from the punishment of His divine retribution.* **Forgiveness means that God releases a person from his obligation to be judged for his own sins – to pay the penalty for his own sins.** This is because Jesus paid it all (John 19:30 – “it is finished”).

Expiation is the act of bearing a penalty for sin. Although this is not a Biblical word, the concept is supported in the act of redemption (Rom. 3:23-25). When Christ died, He died in the place of mankind and in His offering paid the demands of God’s justice, which was death and separation from God. Because of this every Gospel believer who exercises salvation faith in Christ is eternally released from their obligation to be judged for their own sins. Their indebtedness to God is taken away. When they place their faith in Jesus Christ for salvation (**2 Tim. 3:15**) His blood, or the payment He made for sins, is applied to their sins. In other words, when a person believes in Jesus Christ for salvation, the payment that Christ made on the cross for sins is placed on the sinner’s account before God, and the account is paid for in full much like a monetary debt is paid. This is because the Father sees Jesus being judged in the sinner’s place, paying the penalty for their own sins, so that they don’t have to pay the penalty. **This has been called the “incredible exchange.”** Jesus died for me, as me, and in my place, bearing the penalty of sin that I deserved so I could go free. When Jesus died on the cross He provisionally

paid for the debt of man's sin, which consisted of judgment and separation from God (1 Pet. 3:18). The forensic or judicial forgiveness we receive in God's courtroom is granted to us forever based upon what Jesus Christ has done for us – paying the penalty for our own sin.

John 5:24

“Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that heareth my word, and believeth on him that sent me, hath everlasting life, and shall not come into condemnation (pay the penalty for their sin); but is passed from death unto life.”

We might think of judicial forgiveness of sins as relating to the cancellation of a sin debt that we had before God in the courtroom of Heaven. When we are forgiven of our sins it means that God cancels our debt of judgment that we had to pay and a penalty that we deserved (hell) because of all the sins we would commit in our lives. When God forgives us He *sets us free from this obligation forever*. **Forgiveness means that God sets us free from the penalty of sin forever (He cancels our debt) by pardoning all of our sins (past, present, and future sins).** We have a canceled debt before God! This means our sins are forgiven by God and the debt has been paid by Another Person – His name is Jesus. Through His death upon the cross the Lord Jesus has dealt with our sins and paid our awful sin debt before God (Rom. 5:8).

Ephesians 1:7

“In whom we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of his grace.”

Forgiveness (aphesis) literally means “to send away, or “to let go” and speaks of complete freedom or pardon. Thayer says it refers to “release from bondage or imprisonment, forgiveness or pardon, of sins (letting them go as if they had never been committed), remission (forgiveness) of the penalty.” *This is the general word used for forgiveness that means being released from obligation or penalty.*

Colossians 1:14

“In whom we have redemption through his blood, *even* the forgiveness of sins.”

This word forgiveness (aphesis) is the same word that means “to send away, or “to let go” and again speaks of freedom or pardon. Again, this is a general word that means releasing from obligation or penalty. **I am forgiven and this means that I don’t have to pay for the penalty for my sin! I have been released from all my sinful and legal charges before God. Every sin that I’ve ever committed or ever will commit will never be brought against me. I’ve been released from every sinful charge – all of them!!** Hallelujah! The believer HAS (and continues to have) forgiveness of sins. This implies that there is never a time when we do not have forgiveness before God. When we place our faith in Christ’s death and resurrection to save us we have the complete forgiveness of all our sins forever. **There is no time in the future when we will not have God’s forgiveness.** God clears us of all our charges before His presence forever and we have a sense of peace knowing that we will never be condemned by God for the sins we have committed in the past or will commit in the future.

“I came to Jesus, weary, worn, and sad,
He took my sins away, He took my sins away,
And now His love had made my heart so glad,
He took my sins away.

The load of sin was more than I could bear,
He took them all away, He took them all away,
And now on Him I roll my every care. He took my sins away.

No condemnation have I in my heart,
He took my sins away, he took my sins away,
His perfect peace He did to me impart,
He took my sins away.

If you will come to Jesus Christ today,
He’ll take your sins away, He’ll take your sins away,
And keep you happy in His love each day,
He’ll take your sins away.

He took my sins away, He took my sins away,
And keeps me singing every day!
I'm so glad He took my sins away,
He took my sins away."

1 John 2:12

"I write unto you, little children, because your sins are forgiven you for his name's sake."

This similar word "aphiemi" again means "to send away and was used of a husband divorcing his wife. The idea means "to let go," "cancel" and "to disregard."

The basic lexical meaning of the word forgiveness means, "to release." Forgiveness means I'm released from the obligation to pay the penalty for my sins. I'm set free from experiencing judgment for my sins, when the blood of Jesus Christ is applied to my sins, providing release from sin's penalty. This wondrous forgiveness is described as cleansing from all sins (1 John 1:7), being washed from our sins (Rev. 1:5), or canceling out the record of my sins before God (Col. 2:13-14), since Jesus died paying the penalty for my sins. **When the value of Christ's death is applied to my sins it's then and only then that my sins are taken away, washed away, canceled out before God, or forgiven.**

Colossians 2:13-14 reads:

"And you, being dead in your sins and the uncircumcision of your flesh, hath he quickened together with him, having forgiven you all trespasses; Blotting out the handwriting of ordinances that was against us, which was contrary to us, and took it out of the way, nailing it to his cross."

The word used for "forgiven" (charizomai) is also a common word used for forgiveness that emphasizes the grace of God or His kindness in the matter of pardoning and forgiving people. In Colossians 2:14 Paul graphically compares God's forgiveness of the believer's sins to wiping ink off a parchment. Through Christ's sacrificial death on the cross, God has totally erased ("Blotting out") this certificate of sin debt, which was really a catalog of sins before God, and made our forgiveness complete. Because of His grace you

can have your sins blotted out and the wrath of God's judgment, which was connected with those sins, erased from your life forever!

“My sins are blotted out I know,
My sins are blotted out I know!”

This is actually one of the most potent illustrations of forgiveness found in the Bible. The “certificate of debt” refers to the catalog of sins that are built up against for breaking God's Law. In ancient days, whenever someone was found guilty of a crime, the offender was put in jail and a certificate of debt was posted on the jail door. This certificate listed all the crimes the offender was found guilty of. Upon release, after serving the prescribed time in jail, the offender was given the certificate of debt, and on it was stamped “paid in full.” Scripture says that Christ took the certificate of debt that each one of us had before God and nailed it to His cross paying the penalty for this catalog of sins that were against us. It's interesting that the phrase “It is finished” (John 19:30) comes from the same Greek word translated “paid in full.” Dear friend, we are truly forgiven. The debt has been paid and we are set free forever from the condemnation of our sins. This is what it means to be forgiven. God has released us from all of our sinful charges before Him.

Someone remarked:

“Jesus for thee a body takes, thy guilt assumes, thy fetter breaks, discharging all thy dreadful debt; and canst thou then such love forget?”

Colossians 2:13 says that the Lord has forgiven us “all” trespasses. This includes past, present and future sins and not merely the sins up to our point of conversion. God knows all sins that we have already committed in the past or ever shall commit in the future and Christ died for them all wiping the slate clean forever.

Ephesians 4:32

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

One again this word emphasizes grace in the matter of our forgiveness. The believer's sins have been forgiven or sent away

“according to the riches of God’s grace” (Eph. 1:7). The grace of God as demonstrated in the death of Jesus Christ has cleared my sinful account before God and I have been forever released from the obligation to pay the penalty for my sins. I’m set free from sin’s penalty, which is hell and eternal damnation. In short, I’m forgiven.

Paul spoke of his mission in Acts 26:18 when he says – “To open their eyes, *and* to turn *them* from darkness to light, and *from* the power of Satan unto God, that they may receive forgiveness of sins, and inheritance among them which are sanctified by faith that is in me.” The Bible teaches that every sin that we have committed or ever will commit has been judicially pardoned in God’s heavenly courtroom of justice. We have forensic or judicial forgiveness before God which means we have been released from the obligation to pay the penalty for any of our sins (past, present, and future) since Jesus paid the penalty for all of them when He died on the cross.

Luke 24:47

“And that repentance and remission of sins should be preached in his name among all nations, beginning at Jerusalem.”

Acts 10:43

“To him give all the prophets witness, that through his name whosoever believeth in him shall receive remission of sins.”

The forgiveness of sins speaks of total forgiveness that relates to all of our sins that we would ever commit while living upon earth. Some people warn me that Jesus only died for the sins that were in their past but not in the sins they would commit in their future living as Christians. I usually ask them how many of their sins were in the future when Jesus died on the cross? Dear friend, when Jesus died on the cross *all the sins that we would ever commit were in the future*. The Bible says that Jesus died on the cross to pay the penalty for all of our sins so that we would never have to face the penalty for any of them. No matter what those sins might be we can be sure that Jesus died for those sins and paid the penalty for our sins (every sin) so that in God’s courtroom we could be judicially forgiven of all our sins. The Bible teaches that we have been released from the obligation to pay for the punishment of our own sins. Let me repeat. **I am forgiven and this means that I don’t have to pay for the penalty of my sins! I**

have been released from all my sinful and legal charges before God. I've been set free from every charge forever!

“Glory hallelujah Christ has set me free;
Glory hallelujah! A new life now I see.
My sins are all forgiv'n,
I'm on my way to heavne'n
To live eternally.
Glory, hallelujah!
He's coming soon for me!”

God forgave me of all my sins forever and every one of them has been canceled out and will never come against me. Oh what a day, oh glorious day, day that He took my sins away!!

Forensic Forgiveness and the Advocacy Work of Christ

The forensic or judicial forgiveness that we have before God is reassured by the advocacy work of Jesus Christ whereby He pleads His blood and the eternal efficacy of His sacrifice before the Father.

1 John 2:1

“My little children, these things write I unto you, that ye sin not. And if any man sin, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous.”

An advocate is someone who argues for a cause or pleads on behalf of another person. He is like a lawyer, mediator, and helper. When we place our faith in Christ the penalty of our sins are paid in full and paid forever. So what happens when we sin in our Christian life? When we sin in our Christian life we are not condemned because we have an Advocate, Jesus Christ, who pleads our case before the Father. He presents the value of His atoning death as the ground for casting out of court all of Satan's accusations that are hurled against us (Rev. 12:10). *Christ's continuing work as our advocate (heavenly lawyer) reassures us that He is working on our behalf to maintain our standing and acceptance before God.* This work is one of defense and is based on the work He has already accomplished on Calvary (Heb. 10:10). The advocacy work of Christ does not repeatedly provide judicial forgiveness before God. This is provided only once

(Heb. 10:14). **Christ's advocacy is not the sacrifice itself but a reminder of that sacrifice.**

One should not understand the advocacy work of Christ as involving Christ at the right hand of God *repeatedly forgiving* the sins which believers continue to commit throughout their lifetime on earth. His advocacy work or ministry involves Christ *defending* the believer against the charges of the law and Satan. The law says, "Guilty as charged" and the slanderer or devil says, "This believer has sinned and deserves hell." Now what does Jesus answer? He does not answer, "None of these charges are true because I keep on forgiving him." Rather, Jesus answers, "Even though these charges are true, I have already died for all of this person's sins and paid the penalty in full. Based on my death, shed blood, and finished work I have already forgiven these sins and because of this no one can lay any charge to God's elect."

It must also be noted that in the key passages of John 17 and Hebrews chapter 10, which speak at length about Christ's present intercessory work, we do not find any evidence that Christ's present ministry in Heaven includes the repetitive forgiveness of believer's sins. In John 17 Christ intercedes for us by defending us. He says, "Father keep them" (John 17:15) and "Father sanctify them" (John 17:17) but Jesus never says "Father, forgive them." This is because He has already forgiven us of all our sins based upon His finished work on the cross.

In 1 John 2:2, Jesus is represented as our Paraclete (helper) who is called along side of God the Father to remind Him that when we sin His one-and-for-all death was a wrath-removing and wrath-satisfying (propitiation) sacrifice. His risen life in Glory is the assurance that Jesus paid the penalty for all our sins and His work in Heaven on our behalf reassures us of our acceptance before God. *As our heavenly Advocate Jesus admits our guilt every time we sin and reassures our release from the penalty of our sins solely upon His merit – His sacrifice on the cross.*

Every time a believer sins Jesus identifies that believer as His own and says, "I paid for that sin on the cross." The Father then answers, "That's right, we will mark it "paid in full." As a result, the Christian

who sins is still judicially forgiven and cleared of all His sinful charges in God's sight and positionally perfect in the presence of God. And it's all because of His amazing grace! **The advocacy work of Jesus Christ is like an insurance policy that every believer has before God.** Christ's work on our behalf assures us that His death has already paid the penalty for our sins in full and that we are no longer obligated to pay the penalty for our sins. His work in Heaven on our behalf maintains our standing before God. Christ is our defense attorney up yonder in Glory.

Let me ask you a question. Is not the advocacy ministry of Jesus Christ in Heaven able to maintain your salvation and acceptance before God? How can we ever be lost when Jesus is constantly pleading on our behalf the efficacy or value of His once-and-for-all sacrifice? Is not the death of Jesus Christ efficient and sufficient to forgive us of all our sins and save us forever? Is not Christ's answer to the accusations of the devil sufficient to maintain our accepted standing before God? To say that Christ's death is not sufficient to maintain our forgiven stand before God and keep us saved is to question grace and frustrate the very plan of salvation (Gal. 2:21).

Many people will say that God can't forgive certain sins. They claim that there are mortal sins that can conceivably condemn even a Christian to hell. For instance, there are the sins of drunkenness, divorce, and demonism that are said to be unforgivable. Let me ask you several questions. Doesn't God view all sin as unrighteousness in His sight? The answer is yes (1 John 5:17). God despises lying, cheating, and sowing discord among the brethren as much as He does divorce, drunkenness, and murder (Proverbs 6:16-19). Here is another question. Did not Jesus pay the penalty for all of our sins when he died on the cross? Is not Jesus able to clear the charges of adultery, fornication, and drunkenness in God's sight? Do you sin every day? Don't answer. I know that you do. What happens when you sin? Does God restore the sinful charges to your account again? A thousand times no! Because of the advocacy work of Jesus Christ the charges never return to our account. God has forgiven us forever and the assurance of this forgiveness is seen in the intercessory work of the resurrected Christ (Rom. 5:10). Yes, God has forgiven us of all our sins forever and He reassures us by the heavenly ministry of Christ on our behalf (Heb. 7:25).

Here is another question. Do you ever commit sins of ignorance? You do (Leviticus 4:2, 13; 5:15, 18; Numb. 15:24-27). So what about these sins? Will you be condemned to hell because of these sins? Will God bring sinful charges against you in Heaven because you sin out of ignorance and do certain things or live a certain way that God is displeased with? A thousand times no! No sin will ever condemn the Gospel believer to hell because he has forever been released of all his sinful charges before God. We might also ask some other questions at this point. Will God condemn you to hell when you swear, watch something on TV that you shouldn't, listen to something that is unwholesome, or when you fail to confess your sin to Him? Will God condemn you to hell when you think a wrong thought or have an argument with your wife? A thousand times no! Dear friend, God has forgiven us of sins of commission (Ex. 21:14; Numb. 15:30; Deut. 1:43; 17:12-13), sins of ignorance (Numb. 15:24), and sins of omission (James 4:17). Sins of omission are when we know to do good but fail to do it. James says that this kind of neglect is sin. "Therefore to him that knoweth to do good, and doeth *it* not, to him it is sin."

What about those times you knew you should have witnessed but didn't? What about those times you knew you should have been in church but were not? What about those times you knew you should have spent with your family but did not? What about those times when you failed to train your children, live for God as you should, and serve the Lord in some manner? What about those times you failed to have your devotions for two weeks or one month? What about those times you failed to pray for others as you should (1 Sam. 12:23)? Will God condemn us to hell for every lack of commitment to Him and His cause? A thousand times no! God has given a clean slate forever and provided eternal forgiveness for every sin that we would ever commit. This is the only way God forgives! He forgives completely and forever. Therefore, since God has cleared our sinful charges in His courtroom providing forgiveness for us no person can bring any charge against us.

Romans 8:33-34

"Who shall lay any thing to the charge of God's elect? *It is* God that justifieth. Who *is* he that condemneth? *It is* Christ that died, yea

rather, that is risen again, who is even at the right hand of God, who also maketh intercession for us.

We are forever acquitted of our sentence of condemnation (John 5:24). We shall never again come under God's judicial wrath (Rom. 5:9). This is because God has judicially forgiven us and provided us with His own righteousness. Remember that after God deals with our sins He then clothes us in the righteousness of His own Son and declares us legally and judicially righteous in His sight. God no longer sees us guilty of any sin (Col. 2:13). This is because Christ has paid the penalty for both original sin in Adam and all our other sins that we would commit in our lifetime. At the same time Christ's righteousness is credited to our account so that we stand forgiven and accepted in Christ's perfection. We are declared legally righteous in God's sight (Rom. 3:24; 8:30). **Who are you to charge a person with condemnation for their sins? If God does not charge them as sinners in His sight then why would we charge some poor believing sinner to be condemned by God?** Furthermore, if any Gospel believer or Christian who sins can be condemned before God then you too can be condemned before God. However, if one sin can condemn a man before God, and if one sin was not paid for by Christ, then we are all in desperate trouble. You see, the *type* of sin is not the issue before God or the *amount* of sins we commit since we all commit many sins and all struggle with different sins. The point is this. If any sin can condemn us before God then Christ's sacrifice is not sufficient to save any man and the Father cannot say, "Paid in full" when Jesus pleads for us in Heaven. It's interesting that Jesus was willing to forgive all who believe on Him regardless of their station in life (Luke 7:48-50) and the sins they have committed (John 8:1-11). Jesus is the friend of sinners for He is willing to forgive all their sins forever.

Luke 7:34

"The Son of man is come eating and drinking; and ye say, Behold a gluttonous man, and a winebibber, a friend of publicans and sinners!"

"Jesus! what a Friend for sinners!
Jesus! Lover of my soul;
Friends may fail me, foes assail me,
He, my Savior, makes me whole."

Jesus forgives prostitutes, adulterers, fornicators, drunkards, sex addicts, and perverts of humanity. He forgives anyone who comes to Him for salvation. He forgives liars, covetous people, and lawbreakers of any and every kind. **Christ does not pick and choose who to forgive, what kind of sins can be forgiven, how long to forgive people, and under what circumstances He will forgive people.** Our Lord simply forgives! Jesus is willing and ready to completely forgive any sinner of all His sins if he will just believe in His death and resurrection for salvation. Therefore, when a sinner believes in Christ all His sins are erased from His account forever.

1 Corinthians 6:9-11

“Know ye not that the unrighteous shall not inherit the kingdom of God? Be not deceived: neither fornicators, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor effeminate, nor abusers of themselves with mankind, Nor thieves, nor covetous, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor extortioners, shall inherit the kingdom of God. And such were some of you: but ye are washed, but ye are sanctified, but ye are justified in the name of the Lord Jesus, and by the Spirit of our God.”

This is not an exhaustive list. Paul could have mentioned liars, those who think lustful thoughts, those who are angry, unforgiving, and those who commit many other sins. You may say, “I’m not a drunkard.” Well, have you ever been covetous? This sin appears in a list of sins that are seen to be open and flagrant sins of society. Have you ever committed adultery in your heart (Matt. 5:28)? If you have then you are an adulterer. Please notice that those who were once considered to be sinners are now “washed” or forgiven in God’s sight. The washing or cleansing from a person’s sins speaks of forgiveness and God says that those who were once indebted to God with their sins are now forgiven of all their sins. What a marvel of God’s grace!

Forensic Forgiveness and Original Sin

Now let me say a few things about original sin and the multitudes of sins that we commit throughout our lives on earth. First, when Jesus died on the cross He paid the penalty for original sin that we received through Adam.

Romans 5:12 says, "Wherefore, as by one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin; and so death passed upon all men, for that all have sinned." When the Bible says that "all have sinned" (Rom. 3:23) it contextually is talking about sinning in the loins of Adam and being born with Adam's sin and sin nature. We are born sinners who have inherited the gene of sin! The Bible teaches that we have sinned in Adam (our old position by birth). This means that the original sin of Adam is imputed to our account and judicially reckoned to our lives at the time of conception (Psalm 51:3). Every person has sinned in Adam's loins or posterity since he was the federal head of the human race. So the Bible teaches that we have sinned with the federal head of the human race. In short, when Adam sinned we sinned since we come out of his loins. The inflexible law of heredity tells us that we are born as sinners with Adam's original sin on our shoulders. Thus, every person by conception shares in Adam's sin and sin nature and are born sinners (Eph. 2:1-2). The old saying is still true: "Man is not a sinner because he sins. Man sins because he is a sinner." We are born as a sinner in God's eyes because we have already sinned in Adam's loins and this sin alone condemns us to hell. This is why Jesus had to die. He had to die for this Adamic sin (original sin) which condemned us to hell in God's courtroom. The verses below teach that Jesus died to pay for the penalty of our sin that we inherited from Adam.

Hebrews 9:26

"For then must he often have suffered since the foundation of the world: but now once in the end of the world hath he appeared to put away sin (original or inherited sin) by the sacrifice of himself."

John 1:29

"The next day John seeth Jesus coming unto him, and saith, Behold the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin (original or inherited sin) of the world."

Forensic Forgiveness and Personal Sins

When Jesus died He paid the penalty for all the sins that we would personally commit during our lifetime on earth. These would be the sins that we would commit since we are already sinners who were born in the loins of Adam. Therefore, Jesus has to die for all the sins that would flow forth from the inherited sin that we received from

Adam. Original *sin* from Adam is the root of all sin but the *sins* that we commit while living on earth are the fruit that comes from the root of Adam's sin. Jesus had to die for every personal sin that you would commit in your earthly life.

1 Peter 2:24

“Who his own self bare our sins (all the sins we would ever commit in our lives) in his own body on the tree, that we, being dead to sins, should live unto righteousness: by whose stripes ye were healed.”

Every sinner is condemned by God because he is found guilty of sinful crimes. Therefore, he is sentenced to punishment. God has found us guilty of inherited sin or original sin from Adam (Rom. 5:16, 18). But God has also found us guilty of all the personal sins that we would commit throughout our entire lifetime on earth (Rom. 3:9-19). Because of sin and sins God had passed His sentence of judgment on the sinner (John 3:18, 36). This means Jesus paid the penalty for every sin that you would commit while you live on earth. Jesus died for all of your sins so that you could be released from judgment and judicially pardoned and set free from the penalty of sin in God's heavenly courtroom. **Judicial or forensic forgiveness is pardon from the penalty of all our sins.** We are cleared of all our sinful charges before God forever for the simple reason that Jesus Christ has already born the penalty in His own body on the tree.

1 John 3:5

“And ye know that he was manifested to take away our sins (the many sins we would commit throughout our lives); and in him is no sin.”

Bible teacher William McCarrell often used this illustration to point out what a person has to do to be saved: "While Andrew Jackson was President of the United States, a man was given a court trial and condemned to die. President Jackson offered to pardon him but the condemned man refused the pardon. Prison authorities, the Attorney General of the United States, and others earnestly endeavored to convince the man to accept the pardon. They tried to impress upon him that it would not only spare his life, but that if he did not accept the pardon, it would be an insult to the President. Still the man refused. The Attorney General consulted the Supreme Court, asking

whether legal authorities could not force the man to receive the pardon. The court ruled that the pardon was merely a printed statement until the man accepted it. If he rejected the pardon, it remained printed matter."

Dear friend, have you had your sins taken away? You can receive pardon for all your sins if you really want pardon. When Jesus takes our sins away it means he forgives us of every sin that we would commit and clears all of our sinful charges before God's holy presence. **I am forgiven and this means that I don't have to pay for the penalty of my sin! I have been released from all my sinful and legal charges before God.** Since Jesus paid for the penalty of my sin and sins I am beyond the reach of any charge that might be brought against me.

"I'm free from the fear of tomorrow,
I'm free from the guilt of the past,
For I've traded all my shackles for a glorious song,
I'm free, praise the Lord, free at last."

Forgiveness is the legal act of God whereby He removes the sinful charges that were held against the sinner because proper payment for those sins has been made by Jesus Christ.

Forensic Forgiveness and Justification

The Bible also teaches that when a believer is forgiven they then receive justification in God's sight. God first takes their sins away and clears them of all of their sinful charges; He then credits them with His very own righteousness.

Romans 4:5 states:

"But to him that worketh not, but believeth on him that justifieth the ungodly, his faith is counted for righteousness."

Justification is the natural result of forgiveness. *Christ's death on our behalf provides the basis for our righteous standing and acquittal before God's presence.* Justification means to be declared legally or

judicially righteous in God's eyes. Before one can be accepted before God the sin question must be settled. This sin question is settled when God forgives us of our sin in Adam and all the sins we would ever commit. Afterward, God gives to us a righteous standing in His presence by imputing His own righteousness to our account. When God says that we are righteous (declared legally righteous in His courtroom) is presupposes that God has dealt with our sins and we have been forgiven. Our sins must be forgiven before Christ's righteousness is credited to our lives (1 Cor. 1:30). In the wonderful saving transaction our sins are removed from our account and then Christ's righteousness is credited to our account bringing us into a completely *forgiven* and *righteous* standing before God. The sinner must not only be pardoned for his sins but also supplied with righteousness before he can have fellowship with God. So after the sin question is settled the declaration of righteousness before God is given to every Gospel believer. Out with the sin and in with Christ's righteousness! The result is this. The believer is restored to a right relationship before God when they are released from their sin debt and Christ's righteousness is credited to their account.

I remember when I was throwing football with some of my college buddies. We were on a music tour in the Midwest and when we got off the bus we had some energy to burn. So we began throwing football around in the street. It was going really good until one fellow overthrew the receiver allowing the football to go crashing through a nearby house window. To make a long story short we were indebted or obligated to pay for the window since we had broken it. However, the homeowner was a very gracious man and he released us from our obligation to pay for the debt. In a similar way Jesus Christ has released us from paying for the debt of our sins. This is because God in His grace sent His only begotten Son to pay the debt for us by penalizing His Son in our place.

Let us never forget that God could not forgive sins without a proper payment for sin. Jesus was a holy sacrifice (Heb. 7:26), He was a lamb without blemish or spot (1 Pet. 1:19). A proper ransom had to be offered to God (Eph. 5:2). Through Christ's substitutionary ransom a provision was made for our forgiveness before God. Through His death Jesus purchased our freedom. This liberation from God's judgment occurred because Christ's death was the price that was

paid to God, which could cancel out the sin debt of judgment that was against us, and release us of all our sinful charges before God! Thus, through Christ's death God can legally remove all the charges of sin that are against us and declare that all of our sins are erased from our lives forever. Jesus illustrates this in the parable which He gave in Matthew 18:27: "Then the lord of that servant was moved with compassion, and loosed him, and forgave him the debt." Jesus also illustrated the grace of His forgiveness when He said in the parable of Luke 7:42: "And when they had nothing to pay, he frankly forgave them both."

This is what Christ did for you! He frankly forgave you of all your sins when you had absolutely nothing to offer Him to pay for your sin debt. Did you catch that? You had nothing to pay. Dear friend, how could we ever pay for our sin debt before God? It is impossible to pay God back because we have already broken the Law and God requires absolute holiness and perfection in His sight. We could never offer up to God the kind of holy sacrifice that He requires. Therefore, we must only suffer the righteous vengeance of a holy and just God (Habakkuk 1:13). **How wonderful to contemplate that the vicarious death of Jesus Christ removed the penalty of sin for those who could not remove it themselves.**

Micah closed his book with a series of promises that one day God would pardon the sins of His people Israel, forgive their transgressions, tread their sins underfoot, and hurl all their sins into the depths of the sea.

Micah 7:19 reads:

"He will turn again, he will have compassion upon us; he will subdue our iniquities; and thou wilt cast all their sins into the depths of the sea."

Figuratively speaking, our sins are buried in the deepest depths of the sea where God cannot and will not remember them. Someone has remarked: "When God buries our sins in the deepest sea, He posts a sign, which reads: No Fishing!"

"Gone, gone, gone, gone,
Yes my sins are gone!"

A pastor's son and his mom had been to a shopping mall and the boy had acted badly, wanting this and that, running off, etc. As they were driving home, he could sense her displeasure and said, "When we ask God to forgive us when we are bad, He does, doesn't He?" His mother replied, "Yes, He does." The boy continued, "And when he forgives us, He buries our sins in the deepest sea, doesn't He?" The mom replied, "Yes, that's what the Bible says." The boy was silent for awhile and then said, "I've asked God to forgive me, but I bet when we get home, you're going to go fishing for those sins, aren't you?" Of course, the boy had misapplied the text and was trying to escape a good old-fashioned whipping. And yet, too often we do "go fishing" for other people's sins that God has already buried! The boy had made a valid point.

There is a Calvary Doxology that we need to sing today. It is written in the book of the Revelation. Revelation 1:5 says: "Unto him that loved us, and washed us from our sins in his own blood."

"Here's pardon for transgressions past,
It matters not how black their cast;
And oh, my soul, with wonder view,
For sins to come, here's pardon too!"

This my friend is the glorious truth of forgiveness. His blood takes all of our sins away forever and we escape the judicial judgment of God's hand. Someone had said: "Our God has a big eraser." How very true. The Old Testament wonderfully portrayed this truth of forgiveness to us.

Leviticus 16:15, 21-22

"Then shall he kill the goat of the sin offering, that *is* for the people, and bring his blood within the vail, and do with that blood as he did with the blood of the bullock, and sprinkle it upon the mercy seat, and before the mercy seat:

"And Aaron shall lay both his hands upon the head of the live goat, and confess over him all the iniquities of the children of Israel, and all their transgressions in all their sins, putting them upon the head of the goat, and shall send *him* away by the hand of a fit man into the

wilderness: And the goat shall bear upon him all their iniquities unto a land not inhabited: and he shall let go the goat in the wilderness.”

On the Day of Atonement two goats were to be taken and presented before the Lord. One goat would be killed and the other goat would then be introduced following the death of the first goat. The first goat that was killed represented or pictured the death of Jesus Christ. As the blood of the goat was shed so the blood of Christ was shed on our behalf in order to provide forgiveness before God (Eph. 1:7). The first goat typically portrays the sacrifice of Christ and forgiveness through the shedding of His precious blood. The second goat was introduced after the first one was slain and points to the effects and results of Christ’s death. He provided forgiveness for our sins. The goat was left to run in the wilderness. This beautifully portrays that through the cross of the Lord Jesus Christ all of our sins were forgiven and taken away from the presence of a holy God. It encompasses the thought of complete forgiveness. The scapegoat was sent off into the wilderness bearing “all their iniquities.” **The goat in the wilderness typically portrays how Christ took all of our sins away from us and vows to remember them no more. It teaches the practical truth of forgiveness.** This goat was called the “scapegoat” (vs. 8). In one sense, our sins were transferred out into the wilderness of God’s forgiveness and forgetfulness. Jesus became our scapegoat there on the cross! He became our scapegoat who took away our sins into the wilderness of God’s forgetfulness. Our sins are gone!

Dwight Moody's father died when Dwight was only four. A month later Mrs. Moody gave birth to twins; she now had nine mouths to feed and no income. Merciless creditors dogged the widow claiming everything they could get their hands on. As if Mrs. Moody didn't have enough troubles, her eldest boy later ran away from home. Certain that her son would return, Mrs. Moody placed a light for him in the window each night. Young Dwight was inspired by her faith and prayers. He wrote: "I can remember how eagerly she used to look for tidings of that boy; how she used to send us to the post office to see if there was a letter from him--some night when the wind was very high, and the house would tremble at every gust, the voice of my mother was raised in prayer for that wanderer."

Her prayers were answered. Her prodigal son did eventually return. Dwight remembered: "While my mother was sitting at the door, a stranger was seen coming toward the house, and when he came to the door he stopped. My mother didn't know her boy. He stood there with folded arms and a great beard flowing down his breast, his tears trickling down his face. When my mother saw those tears she cried, 'Oh, it's my lost son!' and entreated him to come in. But he stood still! 'No mother,' he answered, 'I will not come in until I hear first that you have forgiven me.'" Mrs. Moody was only too willing to forgive. She rushed to the door, threw her arms around him, and there the prodigal found forgiveness. The same was true of all of us when we came to God for forgiveness. The heavenly Father threw His arms around us and forgave us of all our sins (Luke 5:20-32).

Forensic Forgiveness and Old Testament Saints

Many people have asked me if the Old Testament saints were forgiven. How did God forgive sin prior to the cross of Christ? David answers this question in Romans 4:6-7: "Even as David also describeth the blessedness of the man, unto whom God imputeth righteousness without works, *Saying*, Blessed *are* they whose iniquities are forgiven, and whose sins are covered."

This verse is quoted from Psalm 32:1 and reminds us of the Old Testament plan and procedure for forgiveness. The word "covered" speaks of God's procedure in providing forgiveness for Old Testament saints. The sins of those living before the cross were forgiven on a yearly basis and the people knew that God's forgiveness was true and genuine (Isaiah 1:18 – "though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow"). However, at the same time their sins were only temporarily atoned or covered by the blood of animal sacrifices until Christ would come and actually deal with their sins in a final and permanent way by taking all of them away (Hebrews 10:4,11). According to Leviticus 16:30 the sins of all Old Testament saints were covered and the person was *ceremonially* cleansed but their sins were not actually taken away and judicially pardoned by God until Christ would come and pay the penalty for their sins and take them away. *Old Testament saints did not experience the forensic forgiveness that New Testament saints do when they believe in the finished work of Christ.* Ultimately only the

finished work of Christ on Calvary could take away sins permanently and provide actual judicial forgiveness in God's sight. Old Testament saints were forgiven **ceremonially** but not **judicially** until the actual forgiveness was secured when Jesus took their sins away and released them from God's righteous wrath and judgment.

We must remember that Hebrews 10:1-18 compares the benefits of salvation enjoyed by Old Testament saints before Calvary with the benefits we enjoy today as New Testament saints. OT saints had year-by-year sacrifices (vs. 1) which could not make worshippers "perfect" (to accomplish a goal or purpose – the purpose of complete forgiveness before God). The purpose these sacrifices could not accomplish is stated in vs. 2 and includes: (a) a once-for-all purging and (b) no more conscience [or consciousness] of their sins. Throughout the Old Testament era there was a remembrance made of sins every year (vs. 3). This "remembrance" is important. Old Testament believers knew their past sins were covered and cleansed but they also knew they couldn't be sinless during the next 12 months and so another sacrifice would be necessary to cover their sins for another year. This is because the Law only provided ceremonial and typical forgiveness through the system of "atonement" or temporary covering. It did not provide complete and eternal forgiveness or judicial pardon in God's sight since Christ had not yet actually died on the cross.

The whole system of a yearly Day of Atonement and addressing sin on a yearly basis caused all the Old Testament saints to realize that the animal sacrifices were incomplete or insufficient and could not take away sins. They were only a temporary system of covering awaiting a grandeur sacrifice and a glorious day when all their sins would be erased and wiped away due to Christ's sacrificial death (Heb. 9:13-14). In the Old Testament God chose to forgive sin on a yearly basis and this forgiveness was based on a temporary program of covering or atonement. The Old Testament believers were grateful for this covering of their sins and experienced forgiveness for their sins through God's temporary covering program. But their actual judicial forgiveness and salvation before God was based upon the shed blood of Jesus Christ that would one day grant them judicial pardon in God's sight (Hebrews 9:15; 12:23; Romans 3:25-26).

Every saint living prior to the cross knew that the blood of those animals could never take away their sins forever (Heb. 10:4). The Law gave the shadow of Christ and forgiveness (Heb. 10:1) but it was never able to pronounce any person to be judicially forgiven in God's sight and the winner of eternal life. This is because Christ had not yet died to take away sins. Hebrews 10:17-18 anticipates the complete forgiveness of sins through the sacrifice of Christ when saying: "And their sins and iniquities will I remember no more. Now where remission of these *is, there is* no more offering for sin." This is significant because during the Old Testament there was the yearly remembrance made for sin (Heb. 10:3). Therefore, the passage in Hebrews 10:17-18 teaches us an important principle: HOW MANY SINS ARE FORGIVEN DETERMINES WHETHER ANOTHER SACRIFICE IS NECESSARY. Since no other sacrifice is necessary for today ("their remaineth no more sacrifice for sins" - Heb. 10:26) this means that the sacrifice of Christ is sufficient to forgive all our sins forever (past, present, future). Christ's sacrifice stands in stark contrast to the multitudes of Mosaic sacrifices that could never take away sins but only cover them on a yearly basis. Christ's sacrifice does not *atone* for sins but it actually *takes away* all of our sins forever and judicially pardons us in God's sight completely and eternally. This is the glorious truth related to New Testament forgiveness.

We have something that Old Testament saints could never have. According to Hebrews 10:10-14, believers today have all their sins forgiven (past, present and future) because the sacrifice of Christ was once-for-all. The verb in vs. 14 ("hath perfected") is the same as in vs. 2 and refers to the same two-fold purpose stated above. Calvary believers are once-for-all purged or forgiven of their sins and should have no more conscience of their sins in the future. That's why the Holy Spirit is a witness to us (v 15) when He says, "their sins and iniquities will I remember no more" (v 17). The implication is that the sacrifice of Christ, in contrast to the yearly Old Testament atoning (covering) sacrifices, does not cause the conscience of a person to reflect on all the sins they are going to commit in the future which can break their accepted relationship with God and bar them from God's presence (Heb. 10:2). This is because the sacrifice of Christ is only one sacrifice that takes all our sins away forever (past, present, and future). The contrast is very clear and cannot be missed!

So let's simplify what we have learned. Those saints who lived and died prior to the cross were actually justified, forgiven, and saved because God looked ahead and applied the substitutionary sacrifice of Christ to their lives (1 Peter 1:19-20; Revelation 13:8 – “the Lamb slain before the foundation of the world”). In other words, God saved them on credit. I know that sounds rather unscholarly, but I am not a scholar and it gets the point across. Christ's substitutionary death was typically represented in the sacrificial system of the Old Testament (Genesis 3:21; Leviticus 17:11). But the Old Testament worshippers were forgiven and saved on the basis of the future work of Christ on their behalf (John 1:29). Their salvation was based on Christ's work and had nothing to do with the atoning sacrifices of animals. God used these sacrifices to provide a temporary covering for their sins until Christ died and would actually take their sins away.

According to God's credit system, Old Testament saints were justified and saved (Rom. 4:6-7) but their judicial or actual salvation and forgiveness was based on the future sacrifice of Christ. God actually saved them on a credit system but in another sense their salvation and forgiveness was on temporary hold through a system of animal sacrifices until Christ would actually die on the cross, secure their salvation, and judicially pardon them forever before God. Because of God's credit system there was salvation and pardon for Old Testament believers but this was due to Christ's future sacrifice to which the temporary system pointed.

The thing to remember about Old Testament forgiveness was that it was a forgiveness that occurred yearly (Heb. 10:1-4), it was temporary, insufficient, and it was reapplied to the sins that the people would commit in the new year. There was an annual covering of sin and reminder of sin to demonstrate that complete and judicial forgiveness in God's sight would not be secured until the Redeemer actually came to take away sins. **So salvation was credited (applied) to all Old Testament saints on the basis of Christ's future sacrifice on the cross but it was not confirmed (actualized) or secured until Christ actually died on the cross (Romans 3:25-26; Hebrews 9:15).** The temporary atoning sacrifices that covered the sins of the people attest to the truth that their salvation and forgiveness were not actually completed until Christ came to take away sins. Until Christ's final sacrifice came a

temporary system of sacrifice was instituted by God to cover the sins of the people every year and prepare His people to look forward to the ultimate sacrifice and Savior in the coming Messiah.

We must add something else at this point. Since the sins of Old Testament saints were not actually taken away in God's sight, but only temporarily covered every year, it was necessary that Old Testament saints go to the center of the earth (sheol) when they die (Gen. 15:15; 25:8; Numb. 20:6; 27:13; 31:2; Deut. 32:49-50; Luke 16:22). It's here that they would await the day of Christ's death and resurrection when He would finally and forever take away the sins of pre-cross saints (Romans 3:25) and rise from the dead as the great Victor over sin, death, and hell, allowing these people to enter the very presence of God when their sins were (Eph. 4:8). Now that Christ had paid the penalty for their sins the Old Testament saints could be judicially accepted by God, made perfect in His presence through their actual forgiveness in God's sight (Heb. 12:23 - "spirits of just men made perfect"), and enter God's heavenly abode. The word "perfect" means to carry to completion, to add what is yet wanting in order to render something full, to bring to an end." Such was the case with the salvation of Old Testament believers.

The yearly covering of sins brought assurance to the people that they were forgiven and that God was willing to cover their sins for another year and provide them with forgiveness. The sacrifices were a reminder that God would one day provide them with the final and complete forgiveness before His presence through the coming Redeemer, Messiah, and true Savior (John 8:56). In any event, the forgiveness of sins was a precious truth that was dear to the hearts of God's Old Testament saints. Who can forget the words of forgiveness expressed by Psalmist in Psalm 103:12:

"As far as the east is from the west, so far hath he removed our transgressions from us."

This is one of the most wonderful expressions of forgiveness found in the Bible. It's wonderful to know that a person can be completely forgiven and pardoned by God for their sins. Did you ever wonder why God did not say, "As far as the north is from the south, so far hath he removed our transgressions from us?" Think of it this way.

There is a definite point that is north and a definite point that is south – the North and South Poles. You can head north and at one point start to head south. But there are no such points for east and west. It does not matter how far one goes to the east; one will never arrive where east begins because by definition east is the opposite of west. The two will never meet. They could never meet because they are opposites. When you start traveling east you are going east forever! Therefore, to remove sins “as far as the east is from the west” is to put them where no one can ever find them. This is the kind of forgiveness that God grants to every believer.

The Bible presents two types of forgiveness – forensic and family forgiveness. We now want to look at the second type of forgiveness.

2. Family forgiveness

1 John 1:9

“If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us *our* sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.”

John is talking to those who are already in the family (“my little children” - 1 John 2:1, 12) and the vital need or importance of remaining in fellowship with God. This theme of fellowship is seen by the repeated use of the word – “fellowship with us” (1:3), “we have fellowship” (1:6), and “we have fellowship one with another” (1:7). Oh the wonder of it all! God wants our fellowship! He wants to walk with us in the cool of the day as He did with Adam. He wants us to enjoy His presence in our lives as we live free from moral contamination and pollution of sin. This book is all about family fellowship. By this I mean the fellowship the believer can have with God – “fellowship one with another” – 1 John 1:7). The context is talking about the fellowship each believer can have with God when he walks in purity and holiness.

This second type of forgiveness (family forgiveness) that we want to study about is presented in 1 John 1:9 and contextually deals with the forgiveness that is needed for the believer’s restored fellowship with God. John does not want us to fool ourselves about the sin that has invaded our lives (1 John 1:7-8). Instead of denying the fact that we have sinned we must face our sins and confess them before God so

forgiveness and fellowship can be granted to our lives once again (1 John 1:9). This forgiveness is granted on the basis of the judicial forgiveness or pardon that we *already* have in God's sight. **This family forgiveness is not a forgiveness that repeatedly restores our judicial standing before God since the believer's judicial standing never changes (Hebrew 10:10-14; Rom. 8:33-34).** This is a forgiveness that restores a believer's fellowship with God. It's a forgiveness that relates to only those who are in the family of God. When there is a family feud forgiveness needs to be restored to the family. This is the type of forgiveness that is being taught in this passage. One of God's children has strayed and there needs to be a restoration or healing of the breach of fellowship with the heavenly Father. This is why I call this type of forgiveness family forgiveness. We could also term it *parental* forgiveness for it is a forgiveness that is similar to a father who must forgive his son for doing something wrong. God our heavenly Father is willing and ready to forgive us of our sins, so that we can have a restored relationship with God, and so the family is functioning together once again as a unit.

There is a forgiveness that is needed for salvation (Acts 10:43) which clears the believers once-and-for-all of all his sinful charges before God. But the forgiveness of 1 John 1:9 is needed for restored fellowship with God. The condition for receiving judicial and eternal forgiveness in God's sight is *believe* (Acts 10:43) but the condition for receiving family forgiveness and restored fellowship with God is *confess* (1 John 1:9). The judicial forgiveness granted at the time of salvation brings us into a *new relationship* with God that we never possessed before (John 1:12) while the forgiveness of 1 John 1:9 brings us into a *renewed fellowship* with God. The forgiveness we receive at salvation is *once for all* (Heb. 10:14,18) whereas the forgiveness needed for fellowship is *repeated* throughout the Christian life (Prov. 28:13; Psalm 32:5). The forensic or judicial forgiveness we receive at salvation involves the believers perfected standing in Christ (an unchanging position in heaven – 1 Cor. 1:30) whereas the forgiveness spoken of in 1 John 1:9 refers to the believers state (a changing pattern of living – Col. 1:10). The unsaved person who needs judicial forgiveness can only walk in darkness (Acts 26:18; Eph. 5:8; Col. 1:13) whereas the saved believer who needs family forgiveness can “walk in the light” and have fellowship with God (1 John 1:7). The unsaved need to have the forgiveness of

their sins that are related to their salvation (Col. 1:14) whereas the saved need to have the forgiveness of sins related to the joy of their salvation (Psalm 51:12). Without judicial forgiveness an unbeliever will die in their sins (John 8:24) but without family forgiveness a believer will lose his close intimacy with God (1 John 1:7).

Jesus gave a perfect illustration of these two types of forgiveness in John 13. They will help us understand the difference between forensic (judicial) forgiveness and family forgiveness (fellowship forgiveness). In the context of John 13 Jesus was contemplating “that his hour was come” (John 13:1) when He would die on the cross in order to provide forgiveness for both the unsaved (Judas) and the saved (Peter). His death would be necessary for both salvation and the sociable relationship He wants to possess with His own children.

John 13:2-11

“And supper being ended, the devil having now put into the heart of Judas Iscariot, Simon's *son*, to betray him; Jesus knowing that the Father had given all things into his hands, and that he was come from God, and went to God. He riseth from supper, and laid aside his garments; and took a towel, and girded himself. After that he poureth water into a bason, and began to wash the disciples' feet, and to wipe *them* with the towel wherewith he was girded. Then cometh he to Simon Peter: and Peter saith unto him, Lord, dost thou wash my feet? Jesus answered and said unto him, What I do thou knowest not now; but thou shalt know hereafter. Peter saith unto him, Thou shalt never wash my feet. Jesus answered him, If I wash thee not, thou hast no part with me. Simon Peter saith unto him, Lord, not my feet only, but also *my* hands and *my* head. Jesus saith to him, He that is washed needeth not save to wash *his* feet, but is clean every whit: and ye are clean, but not all. For he knew who should betray him; therefore said he, Ye are not all clean.”

In this symbolic teaching of washing, which speaks of forgiveness, the Lord Jesus points to the two types of forgiveness. One type of forgiveness is related to a person's salvation. This is the type of forgiveness that Judas needed and it likened to being “clean every whit” (vs. 10) or washed completely and entirely of all sins (past, present, and future). When Jesus says “He that is washed” he was referring to Peter and any person who has already received

salvation's wash, which is related to the complete forgiveness of sins forever. This of course refers to the cleansing needed for judicial pardon and forgiveness in God's sight where He clears us of all our sinful charges in His presence forever (Col. 2:13). Peter did not need this type of washing or forgiveness since He already possessed it. What Peter would need is the forgiveness that is related to His Christian life (family forgiveness) that is likened to feet washing ("needed not save to wash his feet" – vs. 10). So Jesus was teaching an important lesson about forgiveness when he washed the disciple's feet. He was teaching them that there will be many times when a Christian needs to be cleansed from defilement that comes from walking in this world (James 1:27).

There are many times a follower of His will need to be washed from the defilement of their sins so that they can be restored to fellowship within the family. This is likened to washing a person's feet. It's not like taking an entire bath ("he that is washed" – vs. 10) for this type of washing refers to the complete judicial pardon and cleansing that unbelievers like Judas need before God. Peter had the complete bath of salvation and eternal forgiveness in God's sight but Judas did not ("and ye are clean, but not all" – vs. 10). The complete bath refers to the forgiveness that is related to the new birth and initial entrance into God's family. However, the washing or cleansing of the feet points to the cleansing needed in the Christian life. It is a cleansing needed for restored fellowship and partnership with Christ (John 15:7).

After teaching about the family forgiveness that Jesus supplies for His own, He then reminds them how they too can have a washing or cleansing effect on the lives of other fellow disciples or followers of Christ. Today we can wash one another's feet as Jesus said (John 13:14-15). What did Jesus mean by this statement? Some brethren take this literally and incorporate feet washing as a mandatory ordinance for the church today. However, this is definitely not what Jesus had in mind since there is no mention of such a practice in the later epistles (1 Cor. 11:24-25). Christ's actions and words were representative of how His followers can have a cleansing impact upon one another's lives. Christ cleanses us when we sin. In a similar way, we too can have a cleansing impact in the lives of fellow disciples or believers. In other words, Jesus was teaching that we are to seek to restore fallen believers to a place of fellowship with God by

guiding them in truth, getting them to see their sins, and encouraging them to repent (Galatians 6:1-2). We are to wash one another's feet by becoming a servant of others when they are fallen and defiled by the world system (John 13:16-17). The washing that Jesus was endorsing was not a physical washing of the feet of brethren but a spiritual washing that we are to have among the brethren. We are to care enough to help them resolve their sinful pitfalls of life and help them to be restored to a place of fellowship with God. Have you washed somebody's feet this week? All this is related to the family and is connected with family forgiveness.

1 John 1:9

"If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us *our* sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness."

There is a family forgiveness that God provides for His children. If we will confess our sins before God we will receive the forgiveness that is necessary for restored fellowship and communion with God. The Greek word for "confess" means to say the same thing or be in agreement with God. It does not simply mean to say you are sorry. *When you confess you sin to God it means that you are saying the same thing about your sin that God says.* It means that you are agreeing with God about your sin. The holiness of God (the light) will cause us to see our sins for what they are – despicable, rotten, and dirty. Therefore, when we pray we will confess specific sins that the light of God's holiness has revealed. We will confess or agree with God about our sins and name specific sins before God. We will not pray, "Lord, if I have sinned, forgive me." We will pray, "Lord, I have committed this horrible sin in Your sight, please forgive me." We must see our specific sins for what they are and confess to God that they are a horrible and terrible stench in His holy sight! This is real confession!

When God in His Word says that the thing you did is sin, you are to get over on God's side and look at it. And you are to say, "You are right, Lord, I say the same thing about my sin that You say. It is sin. It is wrong and unholy." Don't cry on my shoulder about your sin or some priest's shoulder. Go tell God about it! You confess it to God. He is the only One who can forgive it. Some of you are whitewashing your sin! You are perfuming your sin! But remember this. You cannot

perfume a skunk! You must call sin as sin before a holy God. The problem with some of us today is that we are holding onto our sin. We have a secret love life with our sin and are not willing to see our sin as an awful and hideous crime in God's holy sight. We are not willing to really get down on our knees, confess our sin before God, or agree with God about our sin, and see it for what it really is. When we truly agree with God about our sin, only then can we have real victory over that sin.

Fellowship with God does not require lives that are sinless but rather that all our sins should be brought out into His presence, confessed, and forsaken (1 John 1:9). It means that we must be absolutely honest about our condition, and that there should be no hypocrisy or hiding of what we really are. All must be brought out into the light, the light of God's holiness! Only then can fellowship be maintained.

1 John 1:7 says:

But if we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship one with another, and the blood of Jesus Christ his Son cleanseth us from all sin.

This promise of family forgiveness is based upon the cleansing power of the blood of Jesus Christ. The tense of the verb speaks of the blood as having a continual cleansing effect upon our life as a believer. The word "cleanse" is in the present tense and denotes continuous action. The blood of Jesus "keeps on cleansing" from all sin. The translation "all sin" is better understood "sin of every kind" or "sin in its every form."

Romans 5:9 states:

Much more then, being now justified by his blood, we shall be saved from wrath through him.

The Bible teaches that we have been justified before God's presence through the blood of Christ. His cleansing blood provides the basis for our righteous standing and acquittal before God's presence. Through His blood all of our sins are forever washed away in the sight of God and we are judicially forgiven and saved from God's wrath (Eph. 1:7; Col. 1:14). Romans 5:9 speaks of salvational forgiveness and

acceptance before God's presence based upon the blood of Jesus Christ.

In the context of 1 John 1:7 we now see how the blood of Jesus continually maintains our judicial standing before God due to Christ's advocacy work (1 John 2:1). Because of Christ's unending ministry (Heb. 7:25) the blood of Christ grants us with the privilege of *forgiveness within our own Christian life*, so that we can have fellowship and communion with God on a daily basis. This forgiveness is speaking about the necessity to restore our fellowship before God - not our salvation and acceptance before God. And this forgiveness is applied to our lives when we confess our sin (vs. 9). The blood of Jesus Christ forgives us of our sins so that we can have restored fellowship with God.

Ray Stedman said: "The blood of Jesus cannot cleanse us from excuses!" In other words, if you try to excuse yourself from sin and cover up your sins, and claim that you do not sin when you do, then there can be no cleansing. We must face our sins and confess them as such in order to receive cleansing and forgiveness.

The text of 1 John 1:9 gives us two reasons why God chooses to cleanse us from sin.

1. Because God is faithful (He is faithful to His Word).

Hebrews 11:11

Through faith also Sara herself received strength to conceive seed, and was delivered of a child when she was past age, because she judged him faithful who had promised.

God is faithful! God is faithful to what He promises to do for the confessing believer. God has just said that the blood of Jesus Christ will cleanse us from any kind of sin (read 7b) so that our fellowship can be restored with Him. Through the blood of His Son, God has promised (vs. 7) that He will forgive us of any and every sin, so that we can have our relationship or fellowship restored and renewed with Him. God is faithful. He is faithful to His word. **He has promised to look upon the blood of Jesus Christ as the eternal agent of cleansing for our Christian lives, which provides renewed**

fellowship with Him. We come to God and sometimes wonder if He will forgive us. Oh my friend, God is faithful! God is faithful to His word!

Don't come to him if you don't really want to admit your sin to Him as dirty and rotten and see it in the light of His holiness. But if you come with the right attitude and heart, then God will always forgive you and restore your fellowship and walk with Him. God is faithful. We are not faithful as we should be, but God is faithful. God is waiting for you to return to the place of fellowship with Him and He will be standing there with open arms waiting for you. The arms of a loving God are waiting to greet you my friend. He is faithful to His word. **As God looks upon the blood of Jesus Christ His Son, He faithfully restores us to a right relationship with Himself.** There is forgiveness in the family! He brings us back into a joyous fellowship with the divine. And it's all because God is faithful to His word. And God is faithful to His word because he is faithful in His very character.

2. Because God is just (He is just in His actions).

This means that God is righteous and the actions He takes toward His children will always be right. He will never do things in a wrong way. He will always do what is right for His own children. This means that He will choose to forgive us of all the sins that we commit against Him within our Christian life, since He looks upon the blood of Jesus Christ as the agent of cleansing for our lives. God always does what is right. God will forgive and cleanse our lives on the basis of His own righteous character. He will do so in a way that is befitting to His own character of righteousness. God does not do any work apart from His character of perfection and flawless righteousness.

So God is seen to be faithful and righteous in view of the cleansing blood of His own beloved Son. He looks upon the eternal offering of His Son and realizes that His Son's blood sacrifice upon the cross is sufficient to not only grant us eternal judicial forgiveness in His presence, but also grant us restored fellowship with Him. **God looks at Christ's sacrifice or blood and sees that we have judicial pardon in His sight and therefore gladly restores our fellowship on this basis.** The blood of Christ keeps the way of fellowship open for those believing sinners who break God's laws and need

forgiveness and restored fellowship with Him. Family forgiveness is based upon the blood of Jesus Christ as God sees the blood as the only sufficient ground for continued acceptance in His sight and fellowship with His presence. **The blood will never lose its power!** This is because it has lasting efficacy, efficiency, and effectiveness to cleanse us within the Christian life so our fellowship with God can be maintained. **The blood of Jesus Christ not only maintains our salvation before God; it also maintains our fellowship with God.** And this fellowship with God is what John is talking about.

But what about those sins that we commit that we do not know are sins? What about those sins that we commit without really knowing we are committing sins? Can we unknowingly sin and still have fellowship with God? For instance, there are sins of ignorance that we can commit because of our lack of knowledge and growth in the Christian life. Can such a person as this have fellowship with God? Can a young Christian who is still discovering about many of their sins have fellowship with God? Yes, for the blood of Jesus, His Son, keeps constantly cleansing us from all sins of every kind. Sins of ignorance, or those sins we know nothing about in our lives, while we are growing in grace, can be forgiven on the basis of Christ's blood. These sins would prevent our fellowship with God unless the divine provision of the constant cleansing away of defilement of sin were not taken care of by the blood of the Lord Jesus Christ. Our God is a forgiving God.

The primary teaching of 1 John 1:7-9 is this. When we walk in the light of God's holiness we will be increasingly aware or conscious of the various sins that invade our lives (7). We will not try to hide our sins or deceive ourselves about these sins (8,10). We will realize that we can only have fellowship with God as we walk in the light of His holiness (7). In order to maintain this fellowship with God the holiness of God (the light) will drive us to confess our known sins as they invade our lives (9). The blood of Christ will then cleanse us from sin of any kind and every form (7b, 2:1-2). The blood maintains our forensic or judicial forgiveness before God and it's on this basis that we can receive family forgiveness or the type of forgiveness that grants restored fellowship with God (Psalm 51:12).

In this study we have identified two types of Biblical forgiveness – forensic and family forgiveness. When we understand how God has forgiven us, and the difference between these two types of forgiveness, we will then experience freedom from the fear of condemnation. No longer will we sense God’s wrath upon our lives but the wonderful freedom that forgiveness brings. We will also experience fellowship with a faithful and just God. May this be true in your heart and life today, as you better understand about the Biblical doctrine of the forgiveness of sins.

“Rock of Ages, cleft for me,
Let me hide myself in Thee;
Let the water and the blood,
From Thy riven side which flowed,
Be of sin the double cure,
Cleanse me from its guilt and pow’r.”