

Biblical Forgiveness

How Does God Forgive?

Introduction

- In the previous lesson, we explored the foundation definition and concepts related to forgiveness.
- Paul writes in Colossians 3:13 and Ephesians 4:32 that God's forgiveness is the model for how we forgive our fellow man.
- Therefore, to know how to forgive we must understand how God has forgiven us.

Foundations of God's Forgiveness

- Holiness
 - God's holiness is expressed in three aspects:
 - Perfection – He cannot be anything other than holy – Matthew 5:48
 - Purity – He cannot be defiled – James 1:17
 - Partition – He cannot contact sin or be corrupted by it – Habakkuk 1:13
 - God never wrongs us, but we wrong Him through our sins.
 - God's holiness cannot abide sin – Isaiah 59:2
- Sin
 - The simplest definition is that sin is the transgression of God's law - I John 3:4
 - "The teaching of Scripture is that sin is any want of conformity to the character of God, whether it be an act, disposition, or state." - Lewis Sperry Chafer
 - We are guilty of sins by our actions and our depravity – Romans 3:10,23
 - Our sins are crimes against God – Psalm 51:4
 - God is the wronged party and sets the requirements for reconciliation.
- Debt
 - Sin may be seen a "debt" against God for our deficiency in holiness – Matthew 6:12, 18:23-35; Colossians 2:13
 - The debt of sin must be paid for reconciliation to be made with sinful man -
- Propitiation
 - "The act of appeasing wrath and conciliating the favor of an offended person; the act of making propitious." – Webster's 1828
 - Christ's sacrifice is the propitiation that covers our sin debt and makes it possible to be reconciled to God – I John 2:2, 4:10

The Theological Foundation of Forgiveness

- The Gospel message is that we must repent to find forgiveness – Luke 13:3,5; Acts 2:38, 3:19, 8:22

- Paul's Explanation in Romans 3:21-26
 - *"But now the righteousness of God without the law is manifested, being witnessed by the law and the prophets;"*
 - The Law reveals our sin and reveals our lack of righteousness.
 - *"Even the righteousness of God which is by faith of Jesus Christ unto all and upon all them that believe: for there is no difference:"*
 - *"For all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God;"*
 - Our lack of righteousness by our sin is a debt to God.
 - Faith in Christ is shown as the only way to find forgiveness.
 - *"Being justified freely by his grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus:"*
 - Justified – "In theology, to pardon and clear from guilt; to absolve or acquit from guilt and merited punishment, and to accept as righteous on account of the merits of the Savior, or by the application of Christ's atonement to the offender." – Webster's 1828
 - Grace – unmerited favor of God
 - Redemption – "In theology, the purchase of God's favor by the death and sufferings of Christ; the ransom or deliverance of sinners from the bondage of sin and the penalties of God's violated law by the atonement of Christ." – Webster's 1828
 - *"Whom God hath set forth to be a propitiation through faith in his blood, to declare his righteousness for the remission of sins that are past, through the forbearance of God;"*
 - The means of reconciliation is faith in Christ.
 - The "sins that are past" are those of the Old Testament, as only Christ's sacrifice can save.
 - *"To declare, I say, at this time his righteousness: that he might be just, and the justifier of him which believeth in Jesus."*
 - God's method of reconciling sinners to Himself is altogether just and right.
 - The debt of sin is not ignored but paid through Christ.
 - God forgives the sin debt of the sinners that place their trust in Christ (repent).

Summary

- Our sins create a debt against God that must be paid, either by His judgment against us or by Christ's redemption.
- God's forgiveness requires that the sin debt be covered.
- The catalyst for God's forgiveness is our repentance.
 - Without repentance, there is no forgiveness.