

# You Can Be Forgiven

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Have you ever known someone who refused to become a Christian or to be faithful because he said he did not believe God would forgive him? Perhaps this person has a lack of understanding regarding Biblical forgiveness. The following questions are posed to the person who believes his sins are too horrible or numerous to be forgiven:

**1. Have you done something worse than putting Christians to death?** Notice the guilt of Saul in the persecution of Christians:

*Then they cried out with a loud voice, and stopped their ears, and ran upon him with one accord, And cast him out of the city, and stoned him: and the witnesses laid down their clothes at a young man's feet, whose name was Saul. And they stoned Stephen...And Saul was consenting unto his death. And at that time there was a great persecution against the church which was at Jerusalem; and they were all scattered abroad throughout the regions of Judaea and Samaria, except the apostles. And devout men carried Stephen to his burial, and made great lamentation over him. As for Saul, he made havock of the church, entering into every house, and haling men and women committed them to prison (Acts 8:1-3; cf. Acts 9:21; 22:3-4; 26:9-11; Gal. 1:13).*

Later, when Paul was on his way to Damascus, the Lord spoke to him and made him aware that he had been persecuting Christ by persecuting Christ's church (Acts 9:4-5). Obviously Saul believed what Jesus was saying, and he desired to be forgiven of these terrible sins he had committed. The Lord then told him, "*Arise, and go into the city, and it shall be told thee what thou must do*" (Acts 9:6). The Lord sent Ananias to Saul to tell him how to wash away his sins and be forgiven: "*And now why tarriest thou? arise, and be baptized, and wash away thy sins, calling on the name of the Lord*" (Acts 22:16). When Saul came up out of the water, he was a "*new creature*" "*in Christ*" (2 Corinthians 5:17; Gal. 3:26-27; Romans 6:3-5), and his sins had been washed away.

Paul would later write that he was "*the chief of sinners,*" and the fact that he was forgiven serves as a "*pattern*" for all sinners who would later seek forgiveness through Christ:

*This is a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptance, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners; of whom I am chief. Howbeit for this cause I obtained*

*mercy, that in me first Jesus Christ might shew forth all longsuffering, for a pattern to them which should hereafter believe on him to life everlasting (1 Timothy 1:15-16).*

Saul was basically saying, "If I, the chief of sinners, could be forgiven, then anybody can be forgiven!"

**2. Have you done something worse than crucifying the Son of God?** Peter told the Jews in Jerusalem on the day of Pentecost that they had crucified Christ, and they knew it was true:

*Therefore let all the house of Israel know assuredly, that God hath made that same Jesus, whom ye have crucified, both Lord and Christ. Now when they heard this, they were pricked in their heart, and said unto Peter and to the rest of the apostles, Men and brethren, what shall we do? (Acts 2:36-37).*

If sins could be put into categories, surely this would be the greatest sin ever committed! Many consider murder to be the "worst" sin of all, but these people murdered God's Son! Could these people be forgiven for doing something so utterly heinous? Yes, they could be forgiven, if they would repent and obey God: "Then Peter said unto them, Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost" (Acts 2:38). Those that gladly received his word repented and were baptized; thus they were forgiven of their sins, even though they had slain the Lamb of God (Acts 2:40-41, 47). If they could be forgiven, why could not any of us be forgiven?

**3. Do you believe that the blood of Christ is not powerful enough to wash away your sins?** Do you lack faith in the cleansing power of the blood of the Lamb? A serious problem with a person who does not believe his sins can be forgiven by God is that he seems to lack faith in the power of God! Will the blood of Christ only wash away "minor" sins? (as if there were such a thing). The truth is that although many tend to put sins into categories, any sin of any kind will separate us from God, causing us to need forgiveness through Christ (Isaiah 59:1-2; Romans 6:23). Although some may consider sins to be overt acts that are performed outwardly, there could simply be an evil thought of lust or hatred that separates us from God (Matthew 5:28; 1 John 3:15). No matter the exact nature of any particular sin one commits, they are all deadly, but they can all be forgiven!

Is there a limit on the number of sins the blood of Christ will wash away? Will the blood of Christ be ineffective on a person who has sinned more than one hundred

times? What about one thousand times, or ten thousand times? Jesus commands us to have unlimited forgiveness toward a brother, as long as he repents: *"And if he trespass against thee seven times in a day, and seven times in a day turn again to thee, saying, I repent; thou shalt forgive him"* (Luke 17:4). Why would He expect us to forgive an infinite number of times, while He only has a limited number of times He will forgive?

There is no limit on the number of sins which can be washed away, and there is no sin people commit today that cannot be forgiven. The only limitations on forgiveness are those that we place on ourselves. If we choose not to repent of all of our sins, then those sins will not be forgiven. Repentance and obedience to God always precede forgiveness (Luke 17:3-4; Acts 2:38); but upon that repentance and obedience, the blood of Christ fully, wholly, completely, and absolutely washes our souls to make them sparkling clean! *"...These are they which came out of great tribulation, and have washed their robes, and made them white in the blood of the Lamb"* (Revelation 7:14). *"And from Jesus Christ, who is the faithful witness, and the first begotten of the dead, and the prince of the kings of the earth. Unto him that loved us, and washed us from our sins in his own blood"* (Revelation 1:5). May we never question the efficacy of the blood of the Son of God!

Although any sin will separate us from God, any sin will be forgiven when we contact the blood of Christ. What must one do to contact that blood? For the person who has never obeyed the Gospel, he must be Scripturally baptized to contact that cleansing blood. This immersion in the name of Christ for the remission of sins happens after the penitent believer's confession of faith (Acts 2:38; 8:37-38; 22:16). The child of God then walks in the light of God's Word to receive continual cleansing from the blood of Christ: *"If we say that we have fellowship with him, and walk in darkness, we lie, and do not the truth: 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"* (1 John 1:6-7). Christians should not sin: *"My little children, these things write I unto you, that ye sin not..."* (1 John 2:1; cf. Romans 6:6); but *"...if any man sin, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous: And he is the propitiation for our sins: and not for ours only, but also for the sins of the whole world"* (1 John 2:1-2). If a child of God commits a sin of a private nature, he should repent of that sin and confess it to God in prayer (Acts 8:22; 1 John 1:9). If a child of God commits a public sin, he should repent and confess it as far as it is known, and his brothers in Christ can pray for him to be forgiven (Acts 8:22-24; James 5:16; 1 Tim. 2:1; Luke 17:3-4).

**4. Are you keeping yourself from salvation because you will not forgive yourself?** Knowing that Christ had to suffer and die because of our sins, it is only natural that we should mourn over them. Surely that is why Saul was fasting and

praying for days before Ananias came to him. He felt intense remorse for what he had done. It should break our hearts to know that we have sinned against God and caused Him grief (Ephesians 4:30). However, notice again the *"pattern"* that *"chief of sinners"* left for us. Did Saul simply fast and pray until he died, or did he get up off the ground and start serving God? (Acts 9:17-20). Although we should have great sorrow because of our sins, Paul said that sorrow should lead to repentance and salvation!

For godly sorrow worketh repentance unto salvation, a repentance which bringeth no regret: but the sorrow of the world worketh death. For behold, this selfsame thing, that ye were made sorry after a godly sort, what earnest care it wrought in you, yea what clearing of yourselves, yea what indignation, yea what fear, yea what longing, yea what zeal, yea what avenging! In everything ye approved yourselves to be pure in the matter (2 Corinthians 7:10-11 ASV).

It is not the will of God for a person to wallow in grief forever because of his sins. It is true that *"Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners,"* but He will not save those who will not allow themselves to be saved. Have enough faith in God to believe that He will forgive you. Like the father of the prodigal son, our loving Father will run to you and embrace you if you will come to Him! (Luke 15:20). Then you must forgive yourself. It is only then that you will be able to faithfully serve God and have *"the peace of God, which passeth all understanding"* (Philippians 4:7). Once our sins have been washed away, God says, *"...their sins and their iniquities will I remember no more"* (Hebrews 8:12). Therefore, let us accept God's forgiveness and move forward as the apostle Paul did: *"...this one thing I do, forgetting those things which are behind, and reaching forth unto those things which are before, I press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus"* (Philippians 3:13-14).

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