

Will God Forgive Me?

1 John 2:1: *My little children, I am writing these things to you so that you may not sin. And if anyone sins, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous.*



The definition for sin in the Bible is to “miss the mark.” To illustrate the point, let’s think about shooting an arrow at a target. As you aim for the bullseye, you shoot. You hit the target but missed the bullseye. Because your shot did not hit the mark, it fits the definition of sin. You can say, but wait a minute, I hit the target, and you did, but you were aiming for the bullseye. Seeing sin through this “all or nothing” lens can be frustrating, even scary. What does God do with all of our “just missed” sins? How about those bigger sins, where at times we may not even aim the arrow? Are we simply lost causes? Fortunately, the Bible explains all of this to us in great detail. The conclusions the Scriptures draw us to are both dramatic and inspiring.

Christians are often confused on the basics about being forgiven. Christian sources generally offer three broad answers about the mechanics of how God forgives us:

1. We pray specific prayers asking for forgiveness, with faith that they are being heard.
2. We confess our sins to our clergy, and they absolve us through the power of the holy spirit.
3. When Jesus died on the cross, all the sins of humanity were transferred to him. We are all forgiven because of this, and there is no sin we can commit that is beyond the reach of God’s forgiveness.

But does this apply to all of humanity, including those who lived before Jesus, or only Christians? And do we have a clear, scriptural explanation as to how this works, exactly?

This subject is much bigger than we might think. Let’s lay some groundwork.

The Apostle John knew that we, as Christians, need to have our highest focus on walking in Jesus’ footsteps.

He also knew that even though we have God’s spirit, we can easily fall into sin. Here is his fatherly advice for all of us:

1 John 2:1-2: *1 My little children, I am writing these things to you so that you may not sin (to “miss the mark”). And if anyone sins, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous; 2 and he himself is the propitiation (satisfaction) for our sins (offenses); and not for ours only, but also for those of the whole world.*

This needs a broader context. It can sound like whenever we sin, we simply go to God through Jesus, ask forgiveness, and then we’re good.

Many Christians believe all we have to do is put it out there in prayer, and we can walk away clean. Well, there is much more to forgiveness than that!

There are primarily four New Testament Greek words for “forgiveness.”

The first word is broadly used in the sense of having a big heart. It is not used to describe the taking away of sin.

Forgive: Strong’s Exhaustive Concordance #5483 *charizomai*; to grant as a favor, i.e. gratuitously, in kindness, pardon or rescue:--deliver, (frankly) forgive, (freely) give, grant

The second word is broadly used in the sense of freeing yourself, letting go, releasing. While sometimes it is translated into English as *forgive*, it’s usually translated as *to free, relieve, release, dismiss, let die, pardon or divorce*. These words are similar but are used in different circumstances.

Forgive: Strong’s Exhaustive Concordance #630 *apoluó*; to free fully, i.e. (literally) relieve, release, dismiss (reflexively, depart), or (figuratively) let die, pardon or (specially) divorce:--(let) depart, dismiss, divorce, forgive, let go, loose, put (send) away, release, set at liberty

The third word is also broadly used and covers both God’s forgiveness and the kind we humans give each other.

Forgive: Strong’s Exhaustive Concordance #863 *aphiémi*; from #575 and *hiemi* (to send; an intensive form of *eimi*, to go); to send forth, in various applications (as follow):--cry, forgive, forsake, lay aside, leave, let (alone, be, go, have), omit, put (send) away, remit, suffer, yield up.

For example:

Matthew 18:21: (NRSV) *Then Peter came and said to him, Lord, if another member of the church sins against me, how often should I forgive <863>? As many as seven times?*



It’s also often used regarding Jesus forgiving the sins of others:

1 John 2:12: *I am writing to you, little children, because your sins have been forgiven <863> you for his name’s sake.*



Forgiven in both of these verses means “to send forth” or “to send away”; to send something away from your attention so it is not right in front of you.

Forgiveness: Strong’s Exhaustive Concordance #859 *aphesis*; from #863; freedom; (figuratively) pardon:--deliverance, forgiveness, liberty, remission

This fourth word is never used in the context of humans forgiving one another. It is only related to the pardon granted through Jesus’ sacrifice, which is the big picture of what we refer to as the “ransom price” paid by Jesus for Adam; a perfect man for a perfect man.

Here is an example of how it is used:


Ephesians 1:7: (KJV) *In whom we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness <859> of sins, according to the riches of his grace.*

This describes the highest form of forgiveness in the Bible and is ONLY available from God through the blood of Jesus.

There is a significant difference in the meaning between *aphiemi* and *aphesis*. They show us very different applications of God’s forgiveness.


1. First, God can take our individual sins and put them away from His attention. That is sending forth or sending away. We can do that, too. We can put others’ sins away from us—meaning, not consider them or let them affect us.
2. Second and more deeply, He has removed and will remove in the future every bit of Adamic sin away from each and every human being through Jesus’ dying for Adam’s sin.

 **What do we mean by “Adamic sin”? There is no Scripture that uses that phrase.**

 Every human being is born into sin because they are descended from Adam. None of us escape this. Adamic sin is the imperfection we inherit from Adam. Sometimes, people look at themselves and say, *Well, God made me this way; I can’t do anything about it.*


No, He didn’t make us that way. Being born in sin made us whatever way we are. That is what Jesus’ sacrifice on the cross removes from us. *For as in Adam all die, even so in Christ shall all be made alive (1 Corinthians 15:22 KJV).*

The sin of Adam brought everyone down. The sacrifice of Jesus takes us from being born but condemned die—to having the opportunity for a resurrected life.

 **Does simply sincerely believing with all our heart that Jesus died for us to take away our sins mean God forgives us? How can his dying on the cross 2,000 years ago take away the sin I’m going to commit next Thursday?**

 It doesn’t. That’s why we need individual forgiveness for what we ourselves have done.

 **And if his being on the cross already transferred my sins to him, why do I need to ask for individual forgiveness?**

 Jesus’ death takes away the death sentence instituted on all humanity because of Adam’s disobedience. His death does not take away what we *do* with being born in sin. We are still accountable for our personal choices, which is why there are two different words for forgiveness.

In some of the examples we cited, the word translated as *forgive* does not fully convey the correct concept of forgiveness. The translators did not take into account the details the Scriptures give us that show the depth of what real forgiveness encompasses.

Jesus described this removal of sin when he read from Isaiah while in the synagogue in Nazareth:

Luke 4:16-18: *16 And he came to Nazareth, where he had been brought up; and as was his custom, he entered the synagogue on the Sabbath, and stood up to read. 17 And the book of the prophet Isaiah was handed to him. And he opened the book and found the place where it was written, 18 THE SPIRIT OF THE LORD IS UPON ME, BECAUSE HE ANOINTED ME TO PREACH THE GOSPEL TO THE POOR. HE HAS SENT ME TO PROCLAIM **RELEASE** <859> TO THE CAPTIVES, AND RECOVERY OF SIGHT TO THE BLIND, TO SET **FREE** <859> THOSE WHO ARE OPPRESSED.*

Release and set free here are both the Greek word *aphesis*, meaning freedom or pardon.

Q. Who are the captives and what are they being set free from?

Remember when we said we are all born in Adam, into sin, destined for death? Jesus declares he has been sent to *proclaim release to the captives—to set free those who are oppressed*—oppressed by what? By the fact we cannot get away from Adamic sin—sin that is in all of Adam’s descendants leading us all to death.

Jesus announces he is here to cancel all that. *I am here to take that overwhelming pressure off each individual at the appropriate time so they can learn to live without sin and degradation.* This is his gift. This is his sacrifice—his ransom for us.



Jesus died ONCE for ALL—every individual born in Adam! His blood is applied ONCE for each individual. For his faithful followers, it is applied now in their lifetime. For the “everybody else,” it will apply when they are resurrected in the kingdom.

Remember this is the Greek word *aphesis*—to forgive—the canceling out, the taking away (of sin). It is not the word meaning to send something away from you; rather, it is the actual taking sin away so it is gone forever. There is a big difference.



In summary, there are two kinds of forgiveness:

1. Personal forgiveness—the relief that comes from the wrong we do every day.
2. Adamic sin—the relief from inherited sin.

Both sides of our sinning are handled differently through different approaches and different kinds of forgiveness.

This is the best news we can ever hear! Now it comes down to us knowing what our part is and seeking to do it with our whole being.

How do we daily seek God's forgiveness? Are there things we are supposed to do? Are there things we are not supposed to do?

Yes, on both counts. When we are desiring to be clean before God, it is no small matter. Think about what we are requesting. We are asking the Mighty Creator of all things, whose universal rule is founded upon justice, to look upon us with acceptance. The amazing thing is that He is willing to grant this acceptance to us. However, there is a specific process we do need to go through.

There is a spectrum of thoughts to incorporate into our discussion:



On one end, people might say, *Don't judge me. This is the way I am. God knows this because He made me this way, so there's nothing to forgive.*



On the opposite end, some people feel that what they have thought or done is so bad that it is unforgivable. They are so overwhelmed by the guilt, shame and regret that they can't move out from under it.



Somewhere in the middle, people say, *I asked for forgiveness, I'm basically a good person, so I'm set,* and they live their lives doing what they want within reason.

People with each of these mindsets need to be careful that their own interpretation doesn't override what the Scriptures tell us on this subject. We all need to stop, listen to

the Scriptures and bring our mirror! As we continue, we will discuss one of those mirror lessons in great depth.

Back to John’s fatherly advice. Now he gets to the core of who we are to be before God:

1 John 2:3-6: *3 By this we know that we have come to know him, if we keep his commandments. 4 The one who says, I have come to know him, and does not keep his commandments, is a liar, and the truth is not in him; 5 but whoever keeps his word, in him the love of God has truly been perfected. By this we know that we are in him: 6 the one who says he abides in him ought himself to walk in the same manner as he walked.*

John’s focus is keeping God’s commandments. The warning is against hypocrisy; claiming to be keepers of God’s word but not living it.

It’s the *This is just the way I am*, part of the spectrum. *I can’t help it. I’m a Christian, but this is what I do.* John is telling us we need to be living higher, living in a way the moves us forward. What are we supposed to do? Look in the mirror, be honest and *repent* before God!

What exactly is *repentance*? There are two primary words in the New Testament meaning “to repent” with slight distinctions in meaning.

1. The first is a verb that is more of an emotional response, including regret and even remorse.

Repent: Strong’s Exhaustive Concordance #3338 *metamellomai*: to care afterwards, i.e. regret

Here’s an example:

Matthew 27:3: (KJV) *Then Judas, which had betrayed him (Jesus), when he saw that he was condemned, repented himself <3338>, and brought again the thirty pieces of silver to the chief priests and elders.*

Emotionally Judas felt regret and remorse, but he didn’t change his path of selling out Jesus for money. He showed regret, but only after he had already betrayed Jesus. He didn’t try to change his path; he ended it.

2. The second word for *repent* is a verb where you make an actual change—you reconsider and change the way you think or act. You change direction.

Repent: Strong’s Exhaustive Concordance #3340 *metanoeo*: to think differently or afterwards, i.e. reconsider (morally, feel compunction)

Compunction: uneasiness of mind due to feelings of remorse or guilt; twinge of conscience

For example:

Acts 17:30-31: (NRSV) *30 While God has overlooked the times of human ignorance, now He commands all people everywhere to **repent** <3340>, 31 because He has fixed a day on which He will have the world judged in righteousness by a man whom He has appointed, and of this He has given assurance to all by raising him from the dead.*



The first word for repentance #3338 means to think about your actions and feel bad about them. *I really shouldn't have done that. It wasn't a good thing to do... I'm having second thoughts.*

The second word #3340 commands all people everywhere to repent. This is not just talking about, *Maybe I shouldn't have done that...* It is about taking action, *I am changing the way I live and am now going in the opposite direction.* This is true repentance. It's important to understand the difference between these two words in order to understand how God's forgiveness works in our lives.

Another example of this word:

Matthew 11:21: *Woe to you, Chorazin! Woe to you, Bethsaida! For if the miracles had occurred in Tyre and Sidon which occurred in you, they would have **repented** <3340> long ago in sackcloth and ashes.*

Jesus was essentially saying, *Woe to you cities in which I am preaching! You have the greatest gift humanity has ever been given. You have me, Jesus, teaching you, showing you miracles, showing you God's word and God's will. If the miracles I'm doing here had occurred in Tyre and Sidon (two very wicked cities), they would have changed directions long ago and MEANT IT.*

Repentance is not just feeling bad about your actions. Repentance is changing right here, right now.

3. A third word #3341 is the noun form of #3340, that "changing of direction" word.

Repentance: Strong's Exhaustive Concordance #3341 *metanoia* from 3340; compunction (for guilt, including reformation); by implication reversal (of [another's] decision)

For example:

Acts 5:31: (KJV) *Him hath God exalted with His right hand to be a prince and a saviour, for to give **repentance** <3341> to Israel, and **forgiveness** <859> of sins.*

The nation of Israel will have an actual new way of life, a different way to live, planted in their hearts.


The interesting thing about this verse is the repentance (the turning around or reversal) that the nation of Israel will have to do. But it also talks about the *forgiveness* <859> of sins. This is the forgiveness that comes through Jesus paying the price. It is not the forgiving of our personal sins. It is us having a new life outside of Adam's heritage of sin. It is brand new. Repentance and that forgiveness together bring entirely new opportunities!


When we begin to study repentance and forgiveness and delve deeply into the Scriptures, we see they are full of explanations that bring us to a level most of us never consider.

Let's go further to understand repentance. Repentance is not regret. Let's not throw regret away, though, because regret does play a role. Regret causes us to pause because something we thought or did doesn't sit well in our hearts or minds. It's good to have that kind of pause, *Maybe I shouldn't have done it*. But the key is what happens afterward, and that is where repentance can enter if we allow it.

While regret causes us to pause, repentance causes us to stop, observe, process what is happening, make conclusions—and then fundamentally change the direction we are going. When we talk about repenting from our sins, that is what God is looking for from us.

Regret (⏸) Repentance

 **What about Christians who are battling addiction? That is probably more under Adamic sin. Do we look at this form of sin and repentance differently?**

 Addiction causes a person to get sucked back into something in ways almost impossible to control. They need to ask themselves, *What am I going to do tomorrow to gain more control than today?* Often there is no answer to this question other than to take the first step, which is to get help.

Repentance is: *I am sick and tired of falling into this trap over and over. I will look for ways to change my direction. Even if I slip back again, I am still working on a different path.*



People suffering from addictions need to claw their way back onto that path to fight the addiction and get help! Please get help if you have addictions! When we work at it, God can bless us amazingly in the midst of that great big fight. Repentance is only accessible if we are willing to take the moral high road.

Sometimes we fight it until we have no choice. King David ignored his sins regarding Bathsheba until they were forcibly revealed. He then repented:

Psalms 51:1-4: *1 Be gracious to me, O God, according to Your lovingkindness; According to the greatness of Your compassion blot out my transgressions. 2 Wash me thoroughly from my iniquity and cleanse me from my sin. 3 For I know my transgressions, and my sin is ever before me. 4 Against You, You only, I have sinned and done what is evil in Your sight, so that You are justified when You speak and blameless when You judge.*

He's definitely not saying, *Well, God, this is just the way I am*. He also isn't blaming someone else. **Psalm 51** is known to be one of the greatest scriptural examples of repentance. It is wonderful to read through the entire Psalm.



I know my transgressions, and my sin is ever before me—he is keeping his sin in front of him, not just the painful consequences, and is not complaining about them. He is no longer trying to cover up what he did in committing adultery and having Bathsheba’s husband killed.



David shows his repentance by keeping his sin in front of him so as to never forget the experience. He uses it as motivation to be better. We can do the same.

(Source: Life Application Study Bible) All sin hurts us and others, but ultimately, it offends God because sin in any form is rebellion against His way of living. When you are tempted to do wrong, remember that you will be sinning against God. That may help you avoid disaster.

(Source: Bible Commentary by David Guzik) And done this evil in Your sight David realized that God was there and God was looking when he did his evil. He was not absent from the bedroom of adultery or the place where the command to kill Uriah was given.

It is important to recognize God does see all.

In his repentance, notice David is not asking to look good, he is begging to BE good:

Psalms 51:10-13: *10 Create in me a clean heart, O God, and renew a steadfast spirit within me. 11 Do not cast me away from Your presence and do not take Your holy spirit from me. 12 Restore to me the joy of Your salvation and sustain me with a willing spirit. 13 Then I will teach transgressors Your ways, and sinners will be converted to You.*

In other words, Sustain me through this pain and suffering, and in this way I will be an example to others of You.

This is the work needed to execute inward change! Help me, sustain me with a willing spirit. Restore to me the joy of Your salvation.

Help me find my footing again, so I can walk towards you instead of wallowing in the mess that I’ve made on my own. This is repentance. It isn’t just thinking about it; it isn’t just praying for God to forgive us. It is acting differently and making a change.

In most Bibles, the heading at the top of **Psalm 51** reads: *For the director of music. A psalm of David. When the prophet Nathan came to him after David had committed adultery with Bathsheba.* Think about your worst, most shameful, most disgusting sin. Now, set it to music. Now, have everyone who looks up to you sing about that sin and how sorry you are. What a humbling experience!



That is why David said, *I know my transgressions, and my sin is ever before me.*

In other words, I am not running away from it. I am looking at it because I need to motivate myself to get away from it and get back to where I belong.



Do I want God's forgiveness in my life or not? If I want it, I need to make room for it. If there is no room, it is because I am just regretting and not repenting—I need to clean house! *I don't have the space. I don't have the wherewithal. My heart is not big enough.* I need to push those things away.

Regret is a great place to start, but don't end with regret. End with true repentance so that God's forgiveness has a place to live and to grow.

This is where being forgiven by God gets serious. We truly need to let go so the work of living forgiven can take root and flourish.

Our need for true, heartfelt repentance is obvious and it puts us in a position of being forgiven. So, what does this work look like?

The work of repentance resembles many other daunting and potentially overwhelming tasks. It can look like a long, narrow and difficult road that has many twists and turns. Though scary, we have great scriptural assurances of its destination being both fruitful and joyous.

The Bible does speak of an “unforgiveable” sin and “sinning against the holy spirit.” We're not going to talk about those today, but we refer you to Episode 1265: “What Sins Can Never Be Forgiven?” *Identifying what unforgivable sins are and their consequences.*

Our core question is: Will God forgive me? When it comes to sins we choose to commit or commit by accident, whatever it is, we need to have this concept of repentance clearly in front of us.

Repentance is a necessary scriptural foundation. In the spectrum of mindsets we talked about, none of these have the scriptural foundation of repentance. It was more along the lines of, *Oh, God will take care of me.* Sure, He will. But we must do our part by building a foundation of Scripture. This deeper understanding gives us a basis to stand and reach up toward Him.

Why is repentance the necessary foundation?


God’s justice requires it:

Galatians 6:7-8: *7 Do not be deceived, God is not mocked; for whatever a man sows, this he will also reap. 8 For the one who sows to his own flesh will from the flesh reap corruption, but the one who sows to the spirit will from the spirit reap eternal life.*

Some people hope God’s grace will overpower God’s justice and the necessity for justice goes away. But that is not what happens.

This metaphor of reaping and sowing is profound. Technically, we reap much more than we sow. For example, on average, a farmer plants or sows one seed for every wheat plant he wants to grow. At harvest, each of those wheat plants yields approximately 100 more seeds. Our actions, like literal seeds, can have exponential results—to our benefit or detriment.

Just feeling bad about what we have done isn’t enough. We have to do what we can to change and transform to do better.



Does my life honor God despite my Adamic brokenness? Do I consciously repent for that brokenness as I see it and as I recognize it? Do I pray about it? “Lord, this is what I have done. Please forgive me.”

We might think we can stop with, *Please forgive me. In Jesus’ name, Amen.* But what is the next thing we do after that prayer? If we do not change direction and do our best to live differently, then the prayer has just been empty words.

Repentance is the foundation. *God is not mocked!*

Applying ourselves to this just requirement of repentance is what the gospel is built upon:

Hebrews 6:1: *Therefore leaving the elementary teaching about the Christ, let us press on to maturity, not laying again a foundation of **repentance** <3341> from dead works and of faith toward God.*

What does *repentance from dead works* mean? Does this address the “this is just how I am” excuse?

If this is just how we are, then we need to change! *Foundation of repentance*—we shouldn’t have to be taught the *foundation of repentance* again, the foundation of changing direction.

If we think the changing direction needed to happen only once at the time we accepted Jesus as our personal Savior and now everything is good, we have ignored all the work that has to follow later—because we still sin. It is not, *I still sin, but God’s got it because we have been taken care of.*

HOW are we changing? HOW are we transforming our thoughts and actions so we do not repeat those sins? The *dead works* that were there before are things we should have left behind. The whole point is not to be that person anymore. Dead works versus faith in God. The Bible presents a completely different picture. It tells us we cannot sit back compacently, thinking we have been saved and no longer need to grow beyond our dead works.

We just reviewed part of **Psalm 51** where David spoke of needing God to put his sin away and to wash and cleanse him. He begged God—*create in me a clean heart, and renew a steadfast spirit within me*—he asked God to restore in him the joy of God’s salvation and a willingness to move forward.

The next verses in this Psalm begin to reveal what living a life of repentance actually looks like:

Psalms 51:14-17: *14 Deliver me from bloodguiltiness, O God, the God of my salvation; then my tongue will joyfully sing of Your righteousness. 15 O Lord, open my lips, that my mouth may declare Your praise. 16 For You do not delight in sacrifice, otherwise I would give it; You are not pleased with burnt offering. 17 The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit; a broken and a contrite heart, O God, You will not despise.*

David isn’t downplaying the requirements of the Law; he is acknowledging that God isn’t looking for us to just go through the motions of worship without an authentic, godly heart attitude.

(Source: Life Application Study Bible) Brokenness here is about being open and responsive to God’s correction, as opposed to being hardened or resentful. God is pleased by this kind of humble repentance.

“Being open to God’s correction”—not God’s acceptance of our plea, but to His correction. This is the point of repentance. Genuinely seeking God’s forgiveness means truly working at living a godly life. Let’s get up and change direction!

This is hard. Unfortunately, much of Christianity doesn’t seem to focus on this. This means we’re missing out on a depth of mature Christian character that we’re leaving on the table if we’re not seeking to change each and every day by repenting when we’ve gone wrong.

At times, Israel struggled with the depth of what living a repentant life actually meant. The prophet Isaiah was told to call out their false dedication to God while they were living sinfully and should have been truly repenting.

THE ISSUE: THE PEOPLE ARE NOT RECEIVING GOD’S BLESSINGS:

This is God speaking, and at times this reads a little sarcastically:

Isaiah 58:1-3a: (NLT) *1 Shout with the voice of a trumpet blast. Shout aloud! Don’t be timid. Tell my people Israel of their sins! 2 Yet they act so pious! They come to the temple every day*

and seem delighted to learn all about Me. They act like a righteous nation that would never abandon the laws of its God. They ask Me to take action on their behalf, pretending they want to be near Me. 3 We have fasted before You! they say. Why aren't You impressed? We have been very hard on ourselves, and you don't even notice it!

They were not receiving God's blessings, so their complaint was, What do You mean, God? We're doing all the things You are asking us to do, and it is really hard, and You don't even notice! There is this attitude that completely misses the point. That is the issue.

THEIR PROBLEM: THEY ARE ONLY PLAYING THE PART SO THEY CAN LOOK GOOD:

God continues:

Isaiah 58:3b-5: (NLT) *3 ...I will tell you why! I respond. It's because you are fasting to please yourselves. Even while you fast, you keep oppressing your workers. 4 What good is fasting when you keep on fighting and quarreling? This kind of fasting will never get you anywhere with Me. 5 You humble yourselves by going through the motions of penance, bowing your heads like reeds bending in the wind. You dress in burlap and cover yourselves with ashes. Is this what you call fasting? Do you really think this will please the LORD?*

They were only fasting in order to “check the box” and say, We did what we were supposed to do. We don't know what the problem is! This is not a repentant attitude. God doesn't look for a mechanical reaction like these Israelites gave; He looks for a heartfelt response.

THEIR SOLUTION: LIVE THE REPENTANCE THAT YOU SO PLAINLY CLAIM TO HAVE! BE BETTER:

Isaiah 58:6-7: (NLT) *6 No, this is the kind of fasting I want: Free those who are wrongly imprisoned; lighten the burden of those who work for you. Let the oppressed go free, and remove the chains that bind people. 7 Share your food with the hungry, and give shelter to the homeless. Give clothes to those who need them, and do not hide from relatives who need your help.*

But we're fasting! We're doing what You told us to! God is calling out their lack of actual repentance.

It sounds like they are given a checklist of sorts:

- ✓ Remove oppression
- ✓ Feed the hungry
- ✓ Help those in trouble

 **Is this saying that if we volunteer at a homeless shelter, we'll be forgiven? Can we work ourselves out of sin?**



Not exactly. Volunteering at a homeless shelter isn't a bad thing—we don't want to discourage this kind of service.

But this is saying, *Live the way I taught you to live initially. You've stopped that. You are now play-acting, and you're fasting just to look good. NO. I am Almighty God, and you are My people. I've given you My Law, and My Law talks about not oppressing those who work for you. It talks about removing the chains that bind people. It talks about being compassionate individuals. It talks about being somebody better who serves God.*

This is repentance—changing the way we live and not just “going through the motions.” It is being that person God looks at and says, *This is My child. These are my people.* This is what we are looking for.

THEIR POTENTIAL RESULT: GOD BLESSES THE GENUINE ACTIONS OF THOSE WHO SEEK TO SERVE HIM:

God gave them a list of things to do. Here is His response:

Isaiah 58:8-10: (NLT) *8 Then your salvation will come like the dawn, and your wounds will quickly heal. Your godliness will lead you forward, and the glory of the LORD will protect you from behind. 9 Then when you call, the LORD will answer. Yes, I am here, He will quickly reply. Remove the heavy yoke of oppression. Stop pointing your finger and spreading vicious rumors! 10 Feed the hungry, and help those in trouble. Then your light will shine out from the darkness, and the darkness around you will be as bright as noon.*

Notice *then* is used three times:

- *THEN* your salvation will come.
- *THEN* when you call, the LORD will answer.
- *THEN* your light will shine.

In other words, *When you have changed the way you live, THEN I will change the way I treat you.* By not keeping His Laws, the nation of Israel was sitting outside of the blessings God wanted to give them.

What does this mean for the Christian and God's forgiveness?

It is the same principle. Be a follower of Christ. Do we know what it means to be a follower of Christ? We always talk about walking in Jesus' footsteps, and it's a nice little phrase. But do we do it? Do we walk the way Jesus walked, into the kind of circumstances he walked, with the attitude he walked, and with his wisdom and grace?

When we say we are a follower, are we actually following him? A repentant life says, *Instead of what I was, I will walk this way.* This is what Christian repentance is all about.

Sometimes it is about walking away from things. We don't put ourselves in the way of temptation—that's how Jesus walked away.



Why aren't you impressed? We have been very hard on ourselves, and You don't even notice it! Is this how we sound?

We want to live in a way that shows God we are serious about honoring Him, not just in our words, not just in our thoughts, not just in our sighs or in our regret, but in our actual actions of living. This is how we find and apply God's forgiveness.



Today is the best day to start! It doesn't matter where you've been, and you don't have to wait to hit rock bottom to start.

Even if we don't know what to do, we can start by saying, *Lord, I'm walking differently now. Please show me how.* Then follow through. Even if we don't have a great big plan, we can still start by heading in the right direction.

The power of God's forgiveness cannot be easily attained by simply trying to look good before Him. He wants our hearts to drive our repentance.

It is obvious as we try and work through all of these challenges that we will have difficulties. What can we do to keep us moving forward?

This is a big question. Even though God's spirit dwells in those whom He has called, we still function in a broken, sinful, physical body. This creates a massive contradiction that we must live with every day. To find success within this contradiction, there are a few simple truths that we need to remind ourselves of constantly. They are simply stated scriptural principles that help us walk toward Him, that help us with repentance.



First Simple Truth: We WILL fall because we are sinners.

Proverbs 24:16: *For a righteous man falls seven times, and rises again...*

This is an important perspective—face it, we WILL fall. We already talked about Jesus paying the ransom price and buying us back from the sin in Adam, but that did not make our daily sins just walk away or leave us. It made it so God can deal with us because we are justified by faith. Now, we have to deal with the contradiction between our focus on God and our earthly failings and recognize that, yes, we are going to fall here and there.



Second Simple Truth: As true Christians, our lives HAVE ALREADY been delivered from Adamic sin:

We read Ephesians 1:7 already, but let's add the context by reading the surrounding verses:

Ephesians 1:6-8: *6 To the praise of the glory of His grace, which He freely bestowed on us in the beloved. 7 In him we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness <859> of our trespasses, according to the riches of His grace 8 which He lavished on us. In all wisdom and insight.*

This simple truth is that our lives have been delivered. The forgiveness here is that of having redemption through Jesus' blood and being bought back from the sin of Adam.

Now, we are in a place where God can work with us. There's the beauty—even though we will fall, we have already been delivered to a place where God can work with us.

This forgiveness is the gift that releases us from Adam's sin so we can truly live in Christ:

Romans 5:18: *So then as through one transgression there resulted condemnation to all men, even so through one act of righteousness there resulted justification (acquittal) of life to all men.*

We have this simple truth—Jesus took care of the things that were beyond us. We need to face the things that are not beyond us, the daily thoughts and actions we can strive to control in a way that honors God every day.

We are actually made right before God from the standpoint of Adamic sin, but we continually fall and therefore require continuous forgiveness.



Third Simple Truth: We benefit from CONTINUOUS forgiveness as we strive to do God's will.

1 John 1:8-9: *8 If we say that we have no sin, we are deceiving ourselves and the truth is not in us. 9 If we confess our sins, He is faithful and righteous to forgive <863> us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.*


This speaks about God being faithful and righteous to forgive us our sins and send them away from us. It also reminds us that for this to happen, we have to confess our sins and repent. Confession and repentance in Scripture are not just saying the words; they are living what those words mean.

“Sending away” our sins gives us a clear and regularly renewed path towards doing God’s will. We need a regularly renewed path. Jesus bought us and set us on the path of justification with God. We require a daily renewal of our Christian walk as we deal with our weaknesses.

Let’s talk about confession for a moment. The Catholic church, for example, has some technical explanations about confessing sins to the priest, how it works and when it should be done.

They say that during the process of confession, the priest is acting in place of Christ to declare the sinner forgiven by the power of the holy spirit. The basis for this is **John 20:19-23**. After Jesus was resurrected, he told his apostles in **verse 23**, *If you forgive the sins of any, they are forgiven; if you retain the sins of any, they are retained.*

John 20:19-23: 19 *On the evening of that day, the first day of the week, the doors being shut where the disciples were, for fear of the Jews, Jesus came and stood among them and said to them, Peace be with you. 20 When he had said this, he showed them his hands and his side. Then the disciples were glad when they saw the Lord. 21 Jesus said to them again, Peace be with you. As the Father has sent me, even so I send you. 22 And when he had said this, he breathed on them and said to them, Receive the holy spirit. 23 If you forgive the sins of any, they are forgiven; if you retain the sins of any, they are retained.*


What power did Jesus give to his apostles that day? Were the apostles given authority to actually forgive sins? If so, did that power flow to priests and/or all believers?



We don’t know what power they were given, but this absolutely did not mean that whatever authority Jesus gave to the apostles flowed freely onto everyone else. We know the “showier” gifts of the spirit that Jesus gave to his apostles (speaking in tongues, healing, etc.) were used to establish the early church and did not continue after the death of the apostles. If the apostles were given the authority to forgive sins, it wasn’t because they themselves could do the miracles; it was because God’s spirit was driving them in a way that is beyond us now.



We do not believe it is scriptural that today’s clergy can proclaim our sins forgiven. We can go directly to God through Jesus. **1 John 1:9**: *If we confess our sins, He (God) is faithful and righteous to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.* **Mark 2:10** confirms Jesus was also given that power: *But so that you may know that the Son of Man has authority on earth to forgive sins...*

Here is another perspective:

(Source: Life Application Study Bible) The disciples did not have the power to forgive sins (only God can do that), but Jesus gave them the privilege of telling new believers that their sins have been forgiven because they have accepted Jesus' message. All believers have this same privilege. We can announce forgiveness of sins with certainty when we ourselves have come to repentance and faith.

This is a key point. Once we have done the work of repentance, we can announce the forgiveness of sins with certainty. Yes, forgiveness! Dwell in that, bask in the wonderment, goodness and grace of that forgiveness. This is the continuous forgiveness we receive as we strive to do God's will, even though we mess up every single day.



Fourth Simple Truth: We are covered by Christ even when we are not aware of all we may do wrong.

Psalms 19 shows the length and breadth of what our dedication to God as Christians does for us:

Psalms 19:7-11: *7 The law of the LORD is perfect, restoring the soul; The testimony of the LORD is sure, making wise the simple. 8 The precepts of the LORD are right, rejoicing the heart; The commandment of the LORD is pure, enlightening the eyes. 9 The fear of the LORD is clean, enduring forever; The judgments of the LORD are true; they are righteous altogether. 10 They are more desirable than gold, yes, than much fine gold; Sweeter also than honey and the drippings of the honeycomb. 11 Moreover, by them Your servant is warned; In keeping them there is great reward.*

All the things we just read through, all the goodness God pours upon us and makes available to us through His word, are there for us to work with and help us in these challenges.

With all that God's word and will does for us, we can have confidence in Him in EVERY experience:

Psalms 19:12-14: *12 Who can discern his errors? Acquit me of hidden faults. 13 Also keep back Your servant from presumptuous sins; Let them not rule over me; Then I will be blameless, and I shall be acquitted of great transgression. 14 Let the words of my mouth and the meditation of my heart be acceptable in Your sight, O LORD, my rock and my Redeemer.*

Sometimes, we are acting in sinful ways, and we may not even know it. This verse helps us understand that God "gets it." Secret faults are not necessarily the ones we don't want to pay attention to, but they are often the ones we don't see in ourselves. If we can, by receiving all these wonderful things from His word, say to Him, *Acquit (cleanse) me from secret faults*, He will show them to us. And they can be pretty disgusting! And then what? We repent and say, *Lord, thank you. Help me put that behind me.*



Fifth Simple Truth: God's loving and just forgiveness is given to us because WE MATTER TO HIM!

Psalms 103:1-3: *1 Bless the LORD, O my soul, and all that is within me, bless His holy name. 2 Bless the LORD, O my soul, and forget none of His benefits; 3 Who pardons all your iniquities, who heals all your diseases.*

Psalms 103:10-14: *10 He has not dealt with us according to our sins...*

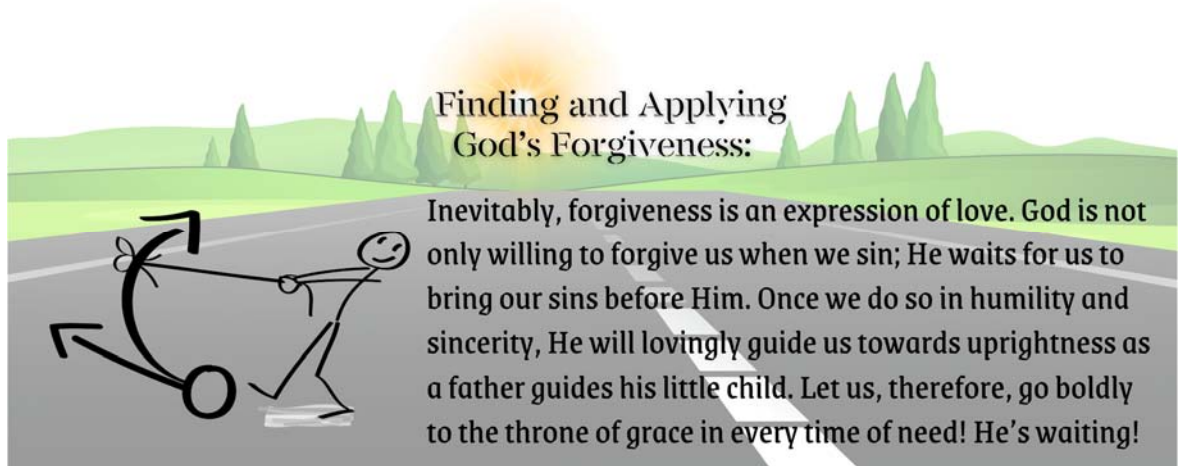
Why? Because we matter!

...nor rewarded us according to our iniquities.

Why? Because we matter!

11 For as high as the heavens are above the earth, so great is His lovingkindness toward those who fear Him. 12 As far as the east is from the west, so far has He removed our transgressions from us. 13 Just as a father has compassion on his children, so the LORD has compassion on those who fear Him. 14 For He Himself knows our frame; He is mindful that we are but dust.

As small as we are and as difficult as life may be, we matter to our heavenly Father. If He has called us in Christ and He has given that justification to us, our very lives matter. Notice it doesn't say these sins are thrown away. It says, *As far as the east is from the west, He has removed them from us.* They are no longer relevant because we are walking towards Him. That is what true repentance looks and feels like. It is one of the most wonderful things we can ever experience!



He is waiting! That is the answer to the question, Will God forgive me? Absolutely!

Here is the key: What are we doing in relation to recognizing our need for forgiveness? If we just speak repentance and consider it done, that is not going to bring forgiveness. What does bring forgiveness is our desire to show God we want to honor Him with our lives so badly, we are willing to put aside our erring path to change and go in a different direction.

That is what brings true forgiveness. With true forgiveness comes true strength, and with true strength comes true maturity in Christ. With true maturity in Christ comes faithfulness even unto death. God will forgive us if we walk that path.

**So, will God forgive me?
For Rick, Jonathan, Julie and Christian Questions...
...Think about it!**

All scriptures cited are from the NASB1995 translation unless otherwise noted.



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Ep.1321: Have We Lost Our Ability to Honor One Another? (Part I)

Biblical examples of how honor can and should permeate our lives

<https://christianquestions.com/character/1321-honor-part-i/>



Parents and Bible class teachers, continue your studies on this topic with these short, animated videos for kids at ChristianQuestions.com/YouTube:

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Study QUESTIONS

Ep.1374: Will God Forgive Me?

<https://christianquestions.com/character/1374-will-god-forgive-me/>

See:  CQ.Rewind
SHOW NOTES

1. Distinguish the difference between Strong's Exhaustive Concordance #863 *aphiemi* and #859 *aphesis*:
 - Who uses the forgiveness (Strong's #863 *aphiemi*)? (Matthew 18:21, 1 John 2:12)
 - Have you used this kind of forgiveness in your life recently?
 - b. What is the only way Strong's #859 *aphesis* is used in Scripture? How is it never used? (Ephesians 1:7)
 - c. Summarize these very different applications of God's forgiveness in our lives. (Luke 4:16-18)
2. What is expected of us in 1 John 2:3-6? Describe the relationship between regret and repentance. (Matthew 11:21, 27:3, Acts 5:31, 17:30-31)
 - Give an example of a time you regretted something but did not seek to change it.
 - Give an example of a time you regretted something and acted on that regret by repenting.
3. In the beautiful Psalm 51, what did David use as motivation to be better? How did he seek to be an example? How does David show a deep and soul-changing repentance?
 - What failures have you experienced that remind you to stay close to God?
 - What do you need to do be able to accept God's forgiveness in your life?
4. Why do we need repentance as our foundation in dealing with God? Explain Galatians 6:7-8. What is necessary after praying for forgiveness?
 - Does your life honor God despite your Adamic brokenness?
 - Do you pray and repent for that brokenness, walking away from temptations?
5. To successfully live with the contradiction of our sinful nature and God's spirit, do you believe the following:
 - Do you understand you WILL fall? What will you do when you inevitably fall? (Ephesians 1:6-8)
 - Do you honestly believe you have been delivered from Adamic sin? Do you feel that God has "lavished on you the riches of His grace" and that He is working with you? (Ephesians 1:6-8)
 - Do you comprehend that despite being made right before God from Adamic sin, you still continually fall and need continuous forgiveness? What is required to "send away" your sin? Once this happens, what is renewed? (1 John 1:8-9)
 - What about your "secret faults?" What will you do to uncover and correct these? (Psalms 19:7-14)
 - Why do you believe God gives us His loving and just forgiveness? (Psalms 103:1-3,10-14)
6. What prevents you from understanding God is waiting for you to turn to Him with your sins? What will you do to repent? Will God forgive you?