

Understanding God's Forgiveness

by Jim Cymbala

God's forgiveness is available through Jesus Christ, and as Christians, we must understand the difference between law and grace to receive forgiveness and live in peace.

Duration: 33:56

Scripture: Psalm 130:4, Isaiah 43:25, Matthew 6:33, 1 John 1:9

Topics: "Forgiveness"

Description

In this sermon, Paul emphasizes the message of forgiveness of sins through Jesus Christ. He warns that rejecting Jesus will result in facing the penalty of one's sins. The sermon highlights that the good news of Jesus Christ is not about material prosperity or physical healing, but rather about the love of God and His willingness to forgive. Paul explains that the law and conscience can only produce fear and guilt, but forgiveness can only be found through the love of the Father and the sacrifice of Jesus on the cross.

Transcript

1 John 1.9 says this, writing to Christians, John the apostle tells them, if we confess our sins, he is faithful and just and will, what? Forgive us our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness. Verse 8 says, if we claim to be without sin, we deceive ourselves and the truth is not in us. But if we confess our sins, he is faithful and just and will forgive us of our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness.

I want to leave a simple thought with you. God is awesome in so many ways. He has all power and all power references the term omnipotent, God is omnipotent.

Everybody say omnipotent. That means all power, there's nothing that he can't do without violating his character. He can't lie, he can't do those things, but he has all power.

Secondly, he's everywhere at once. He's omnipresent. So he's omnipotent, omnipresent, and he knows everything.

There's no secrets from God. And that word is omniscient. Everyone say omniscient.

So he's omnipotent, he is omnipresent, and he is omniscient. But of all the things that makes God great really to us and that draws us to him is not that he knows everything and not that he has all power. Because you can still be scared to death of God even though he has all power.

In fact, the fact that he has all power makes you more afraid. And that he knows everything does not draw you to God. In fact, it can make you feel very uneasy at a time in your life and make you want to run away from God.

But the greatest thing about God, unlike any other God, supposed God, is that God forgives sin. Why we're all here today, if we're truly Christians, what's drawn us is the fact that you don't have to live in condemnation, you don't have to live in fear, you don't have to be afraid of death. But the only thing that will conquer those three things is a spiritual revelation, understanding by faith, and we're gonna see how hard that is, that God forgives sin.

Now, in the Old Testament, there's a couple places where this is how God describes himself. This is what makes him, you know, if you read the Koran, there's not a whole lot about God forgiving anything. And in other religions, there's a God who doesn't define anything as wrong, so that you need forgiveness.

But the God of the Bible, the creator of the universe and the Father of our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ, is both holy and loving at the same time. And this attribute of love, of his grace, which is love in action, issues itself in his ability and his desire to forgive guilty people of their sins, people like you and me. Because we're all sinners.

All we like sheep have gone astray. Do I get a witness here of that in the building? So in the Old Testament, you'll see verses like Psalm 130 verse four, but with you there is forgiveness, therefore you are feared. Reverence is the word that means here.

In other words, because you forgive and because you don't exact punishment, because there's mercy with you, it makes us not only love you, but it makes us even more sensitive in our relationship with you, because you're the one that forgave us. But there's other places. Isaiah 43, 25, God describes himself, the psalmist I already read, but now the prophet says, God says, even I am he who blots out your transgressions for my own sake, not for your sake, for my own sake, and remembers your sins, no more, no more.

I, even I am he who blots out your transgressions for my own sake and remembers your sins no more. And then we go into the preaching of the gospel in the book of Acts, which is the history of the early days of the church. Paul is preaching and he says, therefore my brothers, I want you to know that through Jesus, the forgiveness of sins is proclaimed to you.

You can have forgiveness of sins. If you reject it and you reject Jesus, then you will face the penalty of your sins. But you can be forgiven of your sins.

And that's the message of the good news of Jesus Christ. The good news of Jesus Christ is not about prosperity or even physical healing, because even if should God heal us, we're gonna die one day. It's not about having a better car, a bigger house, apartment, it's the good news is that when you put your faith in Jesus, he forgives you of your sins.

Not only forgive, he blots them out and he remembers them no more. And that is very, very, very, very hard for ministers down to the newest believer to live with a real understanding of that. We say it, oh yeah, God forgives sin.

But from my own life and from years of counseling and study of God's word, you see, that's what I wanna talk about, is very few live with the blessedness of knowing their sins are forgiven. Very few. We stumble

and we fall by the wayside sometimes and we have an aversion to the things of God secretly because we're not sure the forgiveness has really been granted.

And there's a lot working against us, which I'll get to in a second. Now, some people might be here today and you don't believe in sin. You don't believe there's anything to be forgiven of.

That is called situational ethics or a non-absolute position. There are no absolute truths. There is nothing that's wrong.

It's only wrong if I call it wrong. But nobody can impose a morality on me and say you must do this. And there are all kinds of dime store atheists running around who have this thing of you're not so old-fashioned that you think that's wrong.

Hey, lighten up, brother. Just don't be held by this oppressive dinosaur age concepts like sin and something is wrong and something's terrible. But of course, that position is ripe with problems because it's hard to study what Hitler did in Germany and say he didn't do something wrong.

It's hard to put six million people in ovens and say, no, for him, it was okay. For me, I couldn't do it. No, something gnaws at us and we see some predator rape a child or something like that go on.

It's very hard to just say, well, for him, that was right. For me, I look at it a little differently. But don't judge anyone.

Don't judge anyone. And of course, this is one of the reasons why many atheists have been formed by denying God because they don't want to be forced to think about these things. They don't want their lifestyle interrupted and intervened.

So what they want is by saying there's no God, it frees me from this yoke of right and wrong. But this is one of the reasons why there's a lot of fake atheists. They're only atheists because they wanna argue that way so they don't have to live with such extreme guilt.

But just bring up death and they get very nervous. You know, one of the sayings is at an office party, there's a couple things you don't talk about and one of them is death. Why doesn't anyone talk about death? Everyone's gonna die.

Why wouldn't you wanna talk about it? Ah, because there's that secret little voice inside that says you're gonna have to stand and be judged for the way you lived your life. And you try to suppress it. You try to cast it out.

But God wrote some stuff inside of us, right? It's in our DNA, shall we say. And you're gonna answer up. Yeah, a guy like Hitler's not gonna die.

Idi Amin, who not only killed people but then ate their body parts, his end is gonna be different than someone who went about doing good and helping people. Now, there are Christians, there are people then, of course, who don't know what they believe and this is what draws them to Jesus, is because they find in him the savior from their sins, i.e., he forgives them of their sins, delivers them from the condemnation of the sin having to be paid for. And this is how people get saved.

This is how we got saved. How about you? This is the way I got saved. How many knew at one time that, boy, I'm a sinner and I need a savior? Raise your hand, right? Right, so God made that amazing thing real

to us.

We got the conviction of sin. Then we repented, we turned from our sin but just by turning from your sin, you don't get forgiveness. Just like these guys, you turn from killing people, you still gotta pay for the one you killed.

Even if you promise you won't kill anyone anymore, it doesn't matter to the law. The law says you gotta pay. So we turn from our sins but we still need forgiveness and that's how a person gets saved.

That's the message of the good news that we're all supposed to be sharing with people. And you can know no matter how they act on the outside, on the inside, they're searching and they're battling with this question of right and wrong and penalty and there's a holy God and there's a day of judgment that's coming. Now, what I wanna especially talk about today is sin in the believer because after you become a Christian, you're not through dealing with this question of forgiveness and sin.

In fact, for many Christians, for many of us, the problems are heightened of what to do after you sin because now you're not some stone cold hard unbeliever. You're a Christian, you're a child of God and yet you've got trapped and you've said something or done something or watched something or indulged some appetite or committed an act and the moment you do it or say it or whatever, if the Holy Spirit is living in you, you feel the reaction. You've grieved God's Spirit.

You've sinned by something you said. You got trapped and you told a lie. No one in the room know you told a lie but God was in the room and he was going, no way, that's not true.

No one's saying amen here. Is it because you're sleeping or because? How many know exactly the situations I've just described? Lift up your hands high so I know, okay. Now, what to do, what to do? We know we're children of God.

I know I'm saved. You know you're saved. You know you're a child of God.

You know by sinning, you didn't lose your salvation. You've gotten to the point where you're not saved, unsaved, you know, 100 times a day going back and forth but what to do and what to do with that feeling of guilt? And this is especially true with besetting sins because besetting sins, things that you fall into, it's like how many times God gonna put up with this? You see, you mess up after you become a Christian. No one said amen.

What are you, all angels? Why, you never sinned? What is this? Who do I have here today? How many know that feeling? The pang of guilt but listen, it's worse because let me tell you the three enemies against forgiveness and I close so you can learn how to deal with this. If you don't need this today, I believe God laid this on my heart out of nowhere because some people need to hear this today but if you don't need it today, you might need it tomorrow or down the road because these are battles that we all fight which hardly anyone ever talks about. Well, let me tell you the enemies of knowing that you're forgiven.

Enemies of 1 John 1, 9, if we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us. First of all, there's the law of God because if you read the Bible, you know about the law God gave to Moses and the law has no provision for forgiveness. The laws came through Moses but death, grace and truth came through Jesus Christ.

The law says basically this, thou shalt not, thou shalt not, thou shalt not and the soul that sinneth, it shall surely die for the wages of sin is death and sin is a violation of the law. So the more you and I read the word of God, if we don't rightly divide the difference between law and grace, if we don't realize that what was written, we're not under the law of Moses, we're under the law of Christ, if we don't understand that and we just read it, this very Bible stings you and brings fear to you because the law was written on stone, nothing soft about it. Grace and truth came through Jesus Christ's body being broken for us but the law just says and he who obeys these things shall live by them but once there's a violation of the law, there has to be punishment and that's the court system.

We got some attorneys in the front row here. They'll tell you about the court system. You do the crime, you do the time and if you promise or cry, the judge could care less about your tears and if you promise you'll never hold up that bank again, fine, don't hold them up but you're gonna go to jail for the one you did hold up.

So the law works against any feeling of forgiveness because the law is cold and hard and straight about it. You did the sin, you will pay. You will pay.

Every sin gets a retribution paid to it. So the law of God, a lot of us, if we don't rightly divide and understand the Bible and where I'm gonna take you to here, if you don't understand this, this is why a lot of people stop reading the Bible. I know from my own life, when I was in college, half backslid most of the time, I didn't wanna pick up the Bible, why? Because the thing would condemn me and nail me 10 times a day and it seemed like every time I picked it up, you're the man, every time I would read come on, am I the only one? Are you not listening to me this morning? Are we gonna have to fight about this thing here? How many know exactly what I'm talking about? This is why a lot of people give up the Bible and give up going to church because they're under condemnation.

The law is pounding them because God never gave the law to save anyone. The commands of God were never given to get anybody justified in his sight. They were only to do one thing, show the sinfulness of sin.

That's the only reason the law was given. Everyone under the law is under what? The curse. Paul says in 2 Corinthians that the law and all the commandments, that's the ministry of death which was written on stone but we are under the ministry of the gospel of Jesus Christ where there's pardon and forgiveness but the law was only sent to quiet every mouth and get everybody without an excuse so that we could then receive God's mercy.

So if you only go to the law, the law will totally take away any sense of peace and forgiveness. It'll keep you torn up the whole day. But Pastor Simbla, are you telling me but God gave that law? Exactly but you gotta know why he gave it.

If he gave it to save people then why did he have to send Jesus? He sent Jesus because the law was only sent to prepare us. It was a school teacher, a tutor to lead us to Christ. So if you just look at the commands and the do's and the don'ts and after you've sinned then you just wanna commit suicide.

There's another enemy to understanding God's forgiveness and that's your conscience. And it's worse when you become a Christian because your conscience becomes more tender. This is what hurts us so much.

When you violate your conscience, there's a pain. There's a pain, there's a grieving of the spirit but when you violate your conscience and your conscience, some of us have sensitive, more sensitive conscience, some of us have less sensitive, some people have almost obliterated their conscience because they've run over the little inner voice so many times. This is a great proof of God by the way.

Why do all people in the universe that are born have a conscience? Animals don't have a conscience. If a lion wants to mate with another female lion and she's just had little pups or whatever they're called, little lions, baby lions, whatever, you know what the lion will do, the male lion? He'll go and kill every one of her children so that he can mate with her and once she sees they're dead, she'll mate with him. You think he goes, whoa, you got a little family here.

No, I can't be doing that. This little lion is defenseless. The little baby lion is this big.

The big male lion comes, grabs it by it, just kills it. Why, because it has no conscience but we have a conscience and when you serve the Lord, your conscience gets worse or more tender. So now things you say bother you, things that never even bothered you before, now they're bothering you, why? Because God is making your conscience more sensitive but the problem with the conscience is just like the law.

There's no forgiveness in conscience. Conscience has no mechanism for forgiveness. Conscience only works this way, wrong.

You do something wrong, wrong. You say something wrong, beep. You do something right, that's right.

That's what the Bible says. The conscience that people have, and it won't ever lie to you. Your conscience, right, that's right.

Beep, wrong, wrong, wrong. But after you've done the wrong and got the beep, conscience is done. There's no help conscience is gonna give you.

Conscience is not gonna say, but believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and you'll be saved. Conscience isn't made for that. Conscience is made, an inner mechanism so that we just don't, I guess, destroy each other on planet Earth.

Conscience just says wrong when it's wrong. And when you're a Christian and your conscience is more developed, now you got two against you. You open the Bible and it hits you between your eyes.

And you go, why did I reopen the Bible? Now I'm lost, where am I gonna hide from God? Then you read that verse and say, where can I go and hide from you, oh Lord? I mean, you know, there's no hope in here. And your conscience is against you. Then, let me add one other, and then there's the devil who's the accuser of the brother.

So he's just waiting for my brother to slip and do something wrong. And his ministry, he impersonates a preacher. He impersonates the Holy Spirit.

He'll even use verses. The soul that sinneth shall surely die. You know that, why'd you do that? Didn't you tell God 20 times you wouldn't do that again? Didn't you tell God you wouldn't slander and gossip like that? Didn't you tell God you wouldn't look at that filth any longer? That you wouldn't be a part of that? And when you're talking with that other person inappropriately of the opposite sex or the same sex, and you're talking inappropriately, and you know you got a warning from the Holy Spirit, from your conscience, from God,

from Saint Peter, Saint Paul, Michael, Gabriel, all the angels, and you said, no, that's wrong, that's wrong.

I'm not gonna do that again. And here it is 48 hours later, and you're doing it again. So what's it gonna be with you? You're not really a Christian, and don't go to church.

Because God doesn't like hypocrites. You know why a lot of people stop coming to church? They're living, they're being played by the devil. Devil's saying, get good enough to go to church, then you can go to church.

The only trouble is, you'll never get good enough. Because church is not a place for good people, it's a place for people like you and I who need the Lord Jesus Christ. Come on, can we put our hands together? So, the devil's attacking, condemning, accusing, that's his ministry, and he'll imitate the Holy Spirit.

A lot of people are living in guilt, they think it's the Holy Spirit. A lot of people are depressed at the altar, and even after we pray, they're still depressed, they think it's the Holy Spirit convicting them. It's not, it's the devil condemning them.

And the law is doing its thunder, because remember, Moses, when Moses got the law, it was thunder, there was lightning, there was a shaking mountain, people were quaking for fear. That's all the law will ever do, is produce that in you and me. Quaking, and thunder, and lightning, and fear.

And conscience adding, it's me. Can we turn that thing off? And that's why I can tell this is the right message. Because there's a lot of you, a lot of us, who even though we're Christians, we're not enjoying the fact that God loves to forgive sin.

We acknowledge it, but the working out of it, we're living half in guilt, uneasy about what might happen. Oh, the hammer's gonna fall for what I did 11 years ago. I'm not gonna get away with that.

But what father acts like that as I close? What father acts like that with his children? And that's the ground for forgiveness. First of all, there's just two grounds I wanna leave you, there's many more, but the two grounds I wanna give you, the two foundation stones, number one is the love of our father. For God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten son.

Many of us see Jesus as a loving figure, but the father, mm, that's another thing. And a lot of us have had bad fathers, so we got a lot of psychological junk in there. It's very hard to get a picture that my father loves me.

My heavenly father loves me. When I didn't even know him, he gave his only son on the cross. Now, when he give his son, and see his son punished, and mocked, and wounded, and beaten up, and his back was like hamburger meat.

Isaiah tells us he became formless and shapeless. He became so distorted from the beatings he took that he couldn't be recognized anymore. He had no comeliness that anyone would want him.

There was no handsome Jesus on the cross. And there was no loincloth or clothes on him. He was stripped naked and beat to death.

And it was only for one reason, so that God could forgive us of our sins. Jesus Christ on the cross provided the legal basis for God to forgive me of my sins. God is holy.

He cannot let any sin go unpunished, or he would violate his own holy nature. Every sin must get a recompense, must have a punishment. So the Bible says that when Christ was on the cross, every filthy wrong thing you've done and will ever do was all put on Jesus Christ.

All the sins of the world in some mysterious way were all put on Jesus Christ. And he was sinless. He was innocent.

He was the lamb of God. And all that sin was put on him. And then the father, because he loves you and me so much, lashed out at his own son and punished him.

It wasn't the nails that hurt. It was the punishment that he took in his soul for the sins of the world. And because he was the son of God, he was qualified to be our substitute.

And he knew what happened when the father did that because he said, my God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me? The same feeling that a sinner has when they have no savior. Forsaken. And God did all of that so you and I could enjoy forgiveness and holiness because that blood that is shed is stronger than any accusation that the law will ever give me.

That blood that was shed will quiet my conscience. The Bible says all the blood of bulls and goats in the Old Testament could never help the people's conscience. They were always living with that consciousness.

I have messed up and done it repeatedly. But the blood of Jesus Christ has supernatural power to cleanse my conscience so that I can walk in peace and joy. I could kill someone like they did.

Those guys look like they're living in condemnation. I see the joy of the Lord on them. Did they do something horrific and horrible? Yes, they did.

But God's grace and mercy is so great that though our sins be as scarlet, they'll be whiter than snow. Where sin abounds, grace even more abounds. Come on, everybody in the building, let's thank God for the blood of Christ.

So do you get it now? You have to trust in what God says and not go by what you feel or by what the law says or by what the conscience is beeping or what the devil comes and accuses you. You gotta take your stand on the blood of Jesus Christ. If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us and cleanse us from all unrighteousness.

God, I am sorry, I repent. Forgive me, work in my life. But I receive your forgiveness now.

I plead the blood of Jesus Christ. I'm not standing on my promise I'll do better. That will never get you forgiveness.

Don't you promise you'll do better. That doesn't provide any forgiveness. Don't you cry and feel depressed about it.

There's no forgiveness in tears. Tears don't wash away sin. The blood of Jesus washes away sin.

But listen, it comes by faith. And you know what, brothers, sisters, as we end, some of you are living with this load, secret load you're carrying, from last week, last month, last year, a decade ago. I once ministered to a woman who had seven or eight abortions and the enemy would just come and try to pull

her out of any sense of peace and forgiveness and say, how would you think a holy God would ever accept you? How would you go to heaven? And you see, if you go by the law and conscience and you let the devil talk to you, you'll go under.

But when you take your stand, Christ died for sinners. I'm a sinner. He didn't die for holy people.

He died for sinners. That's why Paul says at the end of his life, and I'm the chief of sinners, but his mercy was greater than my sin. His blood was stronger than all of my violations of the law.

If you're here today and this message was for you, I don't care what you did. Do you think anyone here cares? Don't you think we all understand what I was just talking about? I believe that's why it was so quiet because some of you were saying, I don't believe he's going there. But that's where Jesus wants to help you.

After dying and shedding his blood, does he want you to live in guilt and condemnation? Does that make any sense? If you're here today and either the law or your conscience or the devil is pounding you, and by just what we heard, encouragement through the spirit, you have to believe faith in Christ is the only thing that overcomes these other voices and gives you assurance of forgiveness. Do you hear me? Only faith in Christ. Not trying, not promising.

So just incredible that people have shied away from it and created ideas like purgatory. He just can't forgive. You gotta go and burn and suffer somewhere for a while.

Or you gotta do penance or you gotta harm your body or you gotta do certain masses and all that. But I offer you today full forgiveness through Jesus Christ. And I don't care what you did, he'll never remember it.

If you just confess it and say, I give it to you, and it'll make you love him more, and you'll live differently, not because you're trying to live differently, but because he'll be working in your life in a new way. Everyone who needs to just affirm with me here in the front, deacons and prayer band people, will come and just lay their hand on your arm for just a minute. But get rid of that load.

And if you're behind me and you're living with that secret load or in front of me, you just come, right now, come out of your seat. You're not making any promises, you're just affirming God's word. I believe in 1 John 1, 9, if we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us and cleanse us from all unrighteousness.

You're a Christian, but the enemy's trying to pull you down, bury you, trip you up, use your many failures to have you live without joy and peace. You come. Come on, you come and stand here so I can pray with you.

Father God, I thank you for your word today, that through Jesus Christ, forgiveness of sin is being preached throughout the world. We thank you not only for saving us and forgiving us of our sins before becoming Christians, we thank you that every day we live, whenever we mess up, you are faithful and just as we confess our sins. And it doesn't matter how I feel, my feelings don't forgive me.

The blood of Jesus forgives me. So I thank you for your law, but it doesn't help me. I thank you for your conscience, but in this matter, it doesn't help me.

And Satan, we resist you in the name of Jesus Christ. There is therefore now no condemnation to them who are in Christ Jesus. I thank you, Lord, that you forgive our sins for your sake so that your name might be praised, so that we can sing songs like we're just singing.

Not just for our sake because you love us, but for your name's sake, so that in the ages to come, people might marvel at your great grace and mercy. I thank you that you have all power, that you know everything, that you're everywhere at once. But most of all, this morning, we thank you that you delight in showing mercy and you love to forgive your children of their sins.

Let's give God a hand clap of praise. Thank you.

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