



WEEK 9 - Forgiveness

- Freedom, justice, education and social equality were not the most important topics of the Reformation, but they were all fruits of the good theology.
- The five solas are simply a summary of gospel truths found in the Bible.
- At the center of the Reformation was the question, “How can we be forgiven by God?”

- **The most terrifying thing anyone can say to you...**
- **How can a holy God forgive you and me while maintaining His justice and upholding His holy character?**

Let me paint this picture of the Reformation a little more thoroughly.

From the **Ligonier** Ministries Table Talk:

Here is what it was like to be a believing Christian five hundred years ago. The church did teach that Jesus Christ, the incarnate Son of God, bore the punishment for our sins and died for the forgiveness of our sins. But it taught that the redemption that Christ won had to be dispensed by the church. **It wasn't received by faith.**

What this meant in practice was that Christ's death, applied through baptism, was thought to free us from original sin. Sins committed after baptism had to be dealt with in a different manner. These sins (**the sins after baptism**) could be forgiven if the sinner felt contrition, confessed them to a priest, performed an act of penance, and received absolution. **This saved them from eternal punishment, but they still**

had to undergo temporal punishment in purgatory.

The church taught that after death, Christians must be punished for the sins they committed on earth. This was necessary before the Christian may enter heaven. Purgatory was a realm of fire. Sinners would burn in purgatory, much as they would in hell, though these pains were only temporary. But suffering the fires of purgatory might last thousands of years.

This is what believing Christians had to endure, for sins for which they had repented and found forgiveness, that the church admits were atoned for by Christ, and that were confessed and absolved.

But God, by His grace, could reduce this time, the church taught. This is why they were taught to pray for the dead, so God could remit their penalty.

The other way that your time in purgatory or a relative's time in purgatory could be reduced was by means of the "treasury of merit." The saints—defined as someone found to be already in heaven, their time shortened by God's special grace and the holiness of their lives—have more merit than they need to enter heaven. So the

church can transfer that extra merit to living Christians or to the dead already in purgatory. These are indulgences. (Gene Edward Veith)

Again, at the center of the Reformation was the question, “How can we be forgiven by God?”

Luther and the other reformers, in a thorough examination of the Scriptures, recovered the gospel, which was summarized in the five solas. Sola is a Latin word that means alone. As in salvation in by grace alone through faith alone in Christ alone to the glory of God alone on the basis of Scripture alone.

The 3 types of forgiveness you need.

1. You need forgiveness from God through Christ. You need the gospel.

This forgiveness of the gospel leads to all the other forgiveness, but it all begins here.

When your vertical relationship with your Creator is at peace, you will find your horizontal relationships with others at peace.

When your vertical relationship with your Creator is troubled, you will find your horizontal relationships with others troubled.

This is why we’re told in Scripture to guard our heart, to make sure we’re maintaining the humility of our relationship with the Lord.

The more secure you are in your relationship with God, the more gracious you can be in your relationships with others.

God desires your salvation and if you are saved already, God desires you to be secure in your relationship with Him.

Exodus 32:32

32 But now, if you will forgive their sin—but if not, please blot me out of your book that you have written.”

Moses here is expressing the very heart of Christ and how desirous Jesus is of your salvation.

Lamentations 3:42

**“We have transgressed and rebelled,
and you have not forgiven.**

There's the driving statement of the Reformation. It was the driving question of Luther before he found gospel peace in the pages of Scripture.

God knows your sins. You can't hide them from Him. You can't fool Him with your motives or your thoughts. That is why God being good is such terrifying news.

God says in Ezekiel:

Ezekiel 18:4

4 Behold, all souls are mine; the soul of the father as well as the soul of the son is mine: the soul who sins shall die.

Have you sinned? Then you deserve death. If God treated you as you deserved you would already be wiped from the face of the earth.

So, we find in the Old Testament, the sacrificial system that was instituted by God to point to the coming once and for all sacrifice of Jesus.

Leviticus 4:20

20 Thus shall he do with the bull. As he did with the bull of the sin offering, so shall he do with this. And the priest shall make atonement for them, and they shall be forgiven.

But these sacrifices of bulls and goats did not have an eternal effect. They did not erase the record of the people's sins. The blood of lambs on the altar only pointed to Jesus.

Hebrews 9:14

14 how much more will the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered himself without blemish to God, purify our conscience from dead works to serve the living God.

The Apostle Paul echoes the prophet Ezekiel when he writes:

Romans 6:23

23 For the wages of sin is death, but the free gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord.

Salvation by grace alone through faith alone in Christ alone to the glory of God alone on the basis of Scripture alone.

Psalms 32:1

Blessed is the one whose transgression is forgiven,
whose sin is covered.

And you can only be blessed if you know this to be a fact — you know you're forgiven because of what Christ has done.

That's the first type of forgiveness you need, the forgiveness offered in the gospel.

2. You need forgiveness for those who sin against you.

Luke 17:1-4

17 And he said to his disciples, "Temptations to sin are sure to come, but woe to the one through whom they come!

You will either be a person who is showing grace to others or you will be a person through whom temptations come to others. The soul who sins shall die. And God have mercy on the soul who causes others to sin.

2 It would be better for him if a millstone were hung around his neck and he were cast into the sea than that he should cause one of these little ones to sin. 3 Pay attention to yourselves!

Make sure you're not the one through whom the temptation to sin comes.

If your brother sins, rebuke him, and if he repents, forgive him,

There's relational harmony. If someone sins against you, you tell them and if they admit it and turn from it, you forgive them.

4 and if he sins against you seven times in the day, and turns to you seven times, saying, 'I repent,' you must forgive him."

3. You need forgiveness for when they sin against you again that same day.

Do you extend that much grace to others? And the only way it's possible for you to do so is through the gospel.

Ephesians 4:31-5:2

31 Let all bitterness and wrath and anger and clamor and slander be put away from you, along with all malice. 32 Be kind to one another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, as God in Christ forgave you.

Your forgiveness for others is based upon your grasp of God's forgiveness for you in Christ.

The more secure you are in your relationship with God, the more gracious you can be in your relationships with others.

5 Therefore be imitators of God, as beloved children. 2 And walk in love, as Christ loved us and gave himself up for us, a fragrant offering and sacrifice to God.

Forgiving someone else is not letting them off the hook. It's offering yourself up to God.

But even if it is letting them off the hook. What does God say? “Let them off the hook, because I let you off the hook.”

Christ took the hook on which you should hang.

Matthew 18:23-35

23 “Therefore the kingdom of heaven may be compared to a king who wished to settle accounts with his servants. **24** When he began to settle, one was brought to him who owed him ten thousand talents. **25** And since he could not pay, his master ordered him to be sold, with his wife and children and all that he had, and payment to be made. **26** So the servant fell on his knees, imploring him, ‘Have patience with me, and I will pay you everything.’ **27** And out of pity for him, the master of that servant released him and forgave him the debt. **28** But when that same servant went out, he found one of his fellow servants who owed him a hundred denarii, and seizing him, he began to choke him, saying, ‘Pay what you owe.’ **29** So his fellow servant fell down and pleaded with him, ‘Have patience with me, and I will pay you.’ **30** He refused and went and put him in prison until he should pay the debt. **31** When his fellow servants saw what had taken place, they were greatly distressed, and they went and reported to their master all that had taken place. **32** Then his master summoned him and said to him, ‘You wicked servant! I forgave you all that debt because you pleaded with me. **33** And should not you have had mercy on your fellow servant, as I had mercy on you?’ **34** And in anger his master delivered him to the jailers, until he should pay all his debt. **35** So also my heavenly Father will do to every one of you, if you do not forgive your brother from your heart.”