

“God Will Never Forgive Me”

Theme: Looking at the lie that we cannot receive forgiveness from the LORD.

Scripture: Jonah; 1 Corinthians 6:9-11

- A. **Over the past few weeks we have looked at the topic of lies... specifically the lies that we tell ourselves and the often terrible power they have over us.**
1. We started by looking at the impact of believing a lie (looking at Jacob’s account)
 2. Next we looked at the lie “I am all alone” which often expresses a deep-seated loneliness leading to self-alienating actions.
 3. Last week we took a look at the lie “I have no value” a lie which expresses inappropriate feelings of worthlessness counter to the truth that we all have intrinsic value because we are made in God’s spiritual image.
- B. **Today we consider another lie: “God will never forgive ME.”**
1. This isn’t saying that God won’t forgive others.
 2. Rather... the emphasis is on **“ME”** (*the shame, regret, and perhaps hurt caused by a particular individual as a result of their actions*).
 2. While sin can be a terrible weight on an individual which binds and blinds – either God is all-powerful (capable), all-benevolent (willing), and all-knowing (aware of our need), all-authoritative (has the right to acquit) or he isn’t God for these things are all essential aspects of deity.
- C. **The willingness of God to forgive is found throughout both the Old and New Testaments. Today we will look at one example in each of these sections which demonstrates God’s unchanging willingness and ability to forgive man’s sins.**

I. Old Testament Example: The Assyrians

- A. **In the Old Testament, one of the most bloodthirsty opponents of Israel was the kingdom of Assyria – who would eliminate Israel’s Northern Kingdom.**
1. Throughout the Old Testament they are described as idolatrous villains.
 2. The capital of the Assyrian Empire at the time of Jonah was Nineveh.
 - a. It was the greatest of the capitals of the ancient Assyrian empire.
 - b. Located on the banks of the Tigris River (in modern Iraq) the city is described by the LORD as **“that great city”** (*“exceedingly great, three days journey in breadth” 3:3; with “120,000” children 4:11*) whose **“evil has come up before me.”** (*Jonah 1:2*)
 3. How is the “evil” of Assyria (with Nineveh as one of its capitals) described by noted **Assyrian scholar Archibald Sayce?** *“The barbarities which followed the capture of a town would almost be incredible, were they not the boast of (Assyrian) inscriptions... Pyramids of human heads marked the path of conquerors; boys and girls were burned alive or reserved for a worse fate; men were impaled, flayed alive, blinded, or deprived of their hands and feet...”* (*Assyria: It’s Princes, Priests, and People, p127*)
 4. It was for this reason that Jonah was commissioned by the LORD to go to Nineveh, the heart of Assyria, and preach: **“Yet forty days, and Nineveh shall be overthrown!”** (*Jonah 3:4*)

- B. Despite the ugliness of the Assyrian actions, the LORD showed them mercy.**
1. In a great show of respect for the LORD, the people of Nineveh responded so positively to Jonah's message that they repented: **Jonah 3:6-9**
 2. And in response to their turn towards Him... the LORD relented: *"When God saw what they did, how they turned from their evil way, God relented of the disaster that he had said he would do to them, and he did not do it."* (**v10**)
 3. As great God's mercy was towards these Assyrians in Nineveh, the anger of Jonah towards the LORD for granting them mercy was greater!
 - a. **Why? Because Jonah understood the depths of God's willingness to extend mercy to those who have sinned! "That is why I made haste to flee to Tarshish; for I knew you are a gracious God and merciful... relenting from disaster" (4:2)**
 - b. In response to God's mercy extended to those who Jonah deemed unworthy the prophet wished only his own death! (**4:3**)
 4. Even God's careful correction of His erring prophet was such that it demonstrated God's willingness to forgive and value of life: **Jonah 4:11**
 - a. Jonah would have said **"NO!"**
 - b. **But our merciful & patient God operates differently! (2 Peter 3:9)**
- C. Did the Assyrians actions merit punishment? Absolutely (as does all sin). But where Jonah would deny them the forgiveness because of their acts/who they were... the LORD preserved them when they repented and turned back to Him despite what Jonah thought of them.**

How many people play the role of Jonah... not to others... but to themselves? By seeking to deny or limit the forgiveness of God because of what they have done? Remember Isaiah 59:1: "Behold, the Lord's hand is not shortened, that it cannot save, or his ear dull, that it cannot hear..." (He is not limited... but we at times seek to place such limits on Him).

II. New Testament Example: The Corinthians

- A. In Paul's first letter to the church in Corinth we also see a great example of God's ability & willingness to extend mercy & forgiveness: 1 Cor. 6:9-11**
1. A little background is necessary on this passage... so please bear with me.
 - a. Paul, writing to the church in Corinth in light of some reports of bad conduct and disputes within the church.
 - i. Sectarian divisions and squabbling. (**1:10-17**)
 - ii. Toleration of open sin and incest by the members. (**5:1-13**)
 - iii. Unwillingness to resolve conflict internally – rather some left resolution to their disputes in the corrupt hands of the Roman judicial system. (**6:1-8**)
 - iv. The problem of sexual immorality in the church – in light of ritual prostitution common to pagan worship. (**6:12-19**)
 - b. **Our passage falls in the middle of the last two and seems to be tied to the unwillingness to solve problems like Christians should.**
 2. The passage revolves around the rhetorical question: **"Or do you not know that the unrighteous will not inherit the kingdom of God?" (6:9)**
 - a. Paul's correction revolves around kingdom expectations.
 - b. Expectations that look radically different than how the world works.

- B. The hope of God's forgiveness is powerfully demonstrated in Paul's review of the actions of the Corinthians lives before Christ! (1 Cor. 6:9b-10)**
1. This passage provides a list of shame producing worldly activities that array one against the very God of Heaven: *"friendship with the world is enmity with God" (Jas. 4:4)*
 - a. From sexual immorality and adultery to the passive & dominant partners within a homosexual relationship.
 - b. From thieves to greed to drunkards, to those who maliciously attack people with their words in an attempt to injure their reputation.
 2. Yet Paul reminds them of their own forgiveness from these actions that some feel is "unforgiveable:" ***"And such were some of you. But..." (6:11)***
 - a. **"But"** speaks to **the possibility** of man to change.
 - b. **"But"** speaks of **the reality** of God willingness/ability to forgive in response to the way man deals with Him (repentance).
 - c. This message of repentance is central to man's response to the way of forgiveness made available through Jesus: **Acts 2:37-38; 3:19**
 - d. And we noted before... it is God's desire that man should reach repentance (*2 Peter 3:9*) - it's God's desire to forgive! **Ezk. 18:20-23**
- C. The totality of God's forgiveness is pictured in three important ways:**
1. ***"But you were washed"*** = Cleansed from sin when they submitted to the LORD through the faith response of baptism and were freed from sin to serve the living God.
 - a. The only other time this word is used? **Acts 22:16**
 - b. Paul perhaps would have felt the weight of his prior actions, yet he understood the great power of the LORD to forgive!
 2. ***"But you were sanctified"*** = **Passive voice** (what God does in response to man's faith response) – setting one apart as a part of spiritual Israel.
 - a. It speaks to a radical change of life as one is dedicated to the LORD.
 - b. Yet this "setting apart" is superior since it is accomplished not by the blood of bulls and goats... **but by the blood of Christ! Heb. 9:13-14**
 3. ***"But you were justified"*** = **Passive voice** (what God thinks of us because of Jesus' work on the cross and our faith response to Him).
 - a. This is a technical courtroom term... to be judicially vindicated.
 - b. But this vindication is not something that we earn – it's what we obtain through a living faith in Christ's sufficiency: **Php. 3:9 NET**
 - c. This "justification" only takes place in the mind of God who pronounces us "not guilty" by virtue of being "in Christ."
- D. Plainly put. This passage instructs us that God in "the forgiving business." Jesus is His agent of reconciliation (the means of obtaining His mercy and grace) and the Holy Spirit is His agent of renewal, strength & refreshment.**

The Point: Adding Up The Accounts

- A. It is my hope that from these account you can see **the fallacy** of believing ***"The LORD will never forgive ME!"*****
1. The Bible is filled with people who have failed in living right before God and in a myriad of ways that they might feel **"unforgiveable."**
 2. Yet the LORD in His mercy deals with people the way they deal with Him.

3. **And even an adulterous murderer like David** could speak experientially of the goodness and forgiveness which comes from God: **Psa. 51:1-2; 34:8**
 4. **And a violent persecutor of the church like Paul** could praise the mercy received from the LORD through Jesus and see purpose: **1 Tim. 1:15-16**
- B. I have an powerful example from the church in Karns, TN that speaks of the power of the LORD to forgive and change people who might otherwise feel such forgiveness/change was impossible.**
1. During the course of conducting a regular prison ministry, Steve Higginbotham (the preacher) met a man named Kenneth Washington.
 2. Mr. Washington was being held in the Knox County Jail awaiting trial for first degree murder and attempted aggravated assault.
 3. *Many people in Kenneth's position might feel that "God would never forgive him" for their actions that landed them in jail.*
 4. Yet he attended the studies and always asked for the prayers for the needs of others – indicating a good heart who desired the LORD.
 5. In July, he became our brother in Christ and was forgiven by God.
 7. Finding his purpose in life, **BROTHER Washington** went on to convert three fellow in-mates in jail during July 2015.
 8. **SIMILAR:** My experience with Dwayne in Vinita (medium security) who was converted and went on to serve as a deacon in a church in TX.
- C. Satan wants you to believe the lie that God will not forgive you. Yet the LORD clearly demonstrates that the opposite is true!**

John 3:14-17 (ESV)

¹⁴And as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, so must the Son of Man be lifted up, ¹⁵that whoever believes in him may have eternal life. ¹⁶"For God so loved the world, that he gave his only Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life. ¹⁷For God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world, but in order that the world might be saved through him.

The first step is resolving to change your life in line with the LORD's will (repentance), and submitting to Jesus' command of your life through the faith response of baptism and you will receive forgiveness from God through the finished work of Jesus on the cross.