

Study 5

THE FORGIVENESS OF SINS

The only means of being cleansed from sin is through repentance and faith in the finished work of Christ (Eph. 1:7).

Even if you can only find the solution to one problem, make it this one: *How can I deal with the problem of my sin?* Of all the problems that you will ever have to deal with, this is by far the greatest. It is a problem that has plagued mankind for millennia. It has caused men to trek mountains in pursuit of forgiveness of sins. Others have retreated to monasteries and devoted themselves to prayer in the pursuit of forgiveness for their sins. Still others have started their own religion and devised religious ceremonies in the vain hope that these would free them from the weight and stain of their sins.

1. But does any of this count toward finding forgiveness of sins according to Ephesians 2:9?
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In Hebrews 6:1, the writer calls religious efforts (like those mentioned above), as “dead works”. In First Corinthians 13, Paul says that such religious works without being motivated by God’s love were *worthless*. He reiterates this in Galatians 4:9.

THE GRAVITY OF SIN

We sometimes think of the Devil as the ultimate Enemy of God. But God's ultimate opponent is not a person. It was not the *Devil* that led to Christ having to die. It was *sin* (Galatians 1:4; 1Cor. 15:3).

2. What are the wages of sin according to Romans 6:23?

The world often thinks of "death" as 'the end'. But the Bible presents *death* as *separation* (from a life source). This is why James 2:26 says that the body without (separated from) the spirit is dead just as faith without (separated from) works is dead. Sin brings death, in the sense that it causes *separation from God* (Isaiah 59:2).

3. Knowing this, how does Ephesians 2 describe those who are sinners? Read and discuss.

4. Trying to solve your sin problem is called "works". What does Galatians 3:10 reveal is the result of those who depend on their *works* to find salvation from their sins?

5. What are some ways that you have seen people attempting to deal with the guilt and shame of sin?

6. What do you think Jesus meant in John 16:8?

CLEANSSED FROM SIN

Under the Old Covenant period (the time before Jesus came) God established an elaborate system of animal sacrifices to serve at least as a visual display of how sin must be atoned for. In Hebrews 9:19 it describes the Old Covenant priestly practice of taking the blood of the sacrifices and *sprinkling* it over the assembled people. It reinforced the idea that *life was in the blood* (Lev. 17:11, 14). By sprinkling the sacrificial blood over people, the High Priest was portraying two realities: firstly, that our sin contaminates our life (our ‘blood’), and secondly, every sinner needs to have a *spiritual blood transfusion*.

7. According to Hebrews 10:1, where the Old Testament sacrifices meant to actually atone permanently for our sin?

8. In Hebrews 12:24, it refers to the sprinkled blood that has cleansed the believer from sin. What is unique about this ‘blood’ and how is it ‘sprinkled’ over a believer?

9. What evidence is there a person has been washed in the blood of Christ? (1John 1:7)

REPENTANCE

To “repent” is to turn around, or *back*. It involves stopping, and turning around. In the Biblical sense, repentance is ceasing to sin, and turning back to God.

10. When John the Baptist appeared, what was his message to the nation? (Matt. 3:2)

11. When Jesus began to preach, what did He immediately preach? (Matt. 4:17)

12. When Peter had finished preaching to the Pentecostal crowd of Acts 2, and they responded positively, what was the first thing he told them to do in Acts 2:38?

Jesus commissioned His disciples to preach *repentance* and forgiveness to the world (Luke 24:47).

13. Read Acts 11:18. From this verse, would you say that repentance is entirely up to the sinner?

For the person who feels that they are so bound in their sin that they cannot repent, there is good news. God *grants* repentance. That is, it is an act of God's grace. For the person who does feel deep sorrow over their sin and grieves for how they have hurt God and injured His Name - and is able to cease from their sin, they too should realise that this is only possible because of the grace of God.

FAITH

To receive the forgiving salvation of God, we must do so by faith.

14. What does Ephesians 2:8 say is necessary for salvation to be transacted to convert a sinner into a believer?

15. To be forgiven is to be justified before God. How does Romans 3:28 say that a sinner must be justified?

“Faith” is not merely blind faith. Rather, it is faith based on evidence (Heb. 11:1). We have faith not merely in an idea, or even a historical account, but a Person and that what He has done is sufficient to pay the penalty for our sin. Having faith in Christ for our salvation means that we regard that Christianity is not spelt: D-O, but rather it is spelt: D-O-N-E.

16. How has your faith in Christ helped you even beyond your salvation?

FINISHED WORK OF CHRIST

There is *nothing* to add to the saving work of Christ. Early in Church History, there arose a false teaching that a believer was only partially saved by faith in Christ. Most notably among them was a Welsh Monk named, *Pelagius*. He actually taught that faith in Christ alone did not save! He said that a person must *earn* their salvation by doing good works. His teaching was denounced by the most famous theologian of the day, Augustine, who stressed that the Scriptures teach that salvation was by faith in Christ alone. Several hundred years later, there was a revival of Pelagianism, but in a modified form. A group of Medieval teachers were teaching that salvation was the result of faith in Christ *plus* works. This became known as *Semi-Pelagianism*. The Reformers of the 16th century condemned this unbiblical idea. They coined several mottos (in Latin) that summed up what Christianity was about. These include- Sola Fide (Faith alone), Sola Scriptura (Scripture alone), Sola Gratia (Grace alone), Soli Deo Gloria (to God alone be all glory), and Solo Christo (Christ alone).



Salvation is only possible because of what Christ has done. Nothing can be added to it. This is what we believe.

17. Why does Christ's statement in John 19:30 give us some confidence that faith in Christ alone leading to repentance resulting in the forgiveness of sins is well grounded?
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Amen.