

Our State of Theology – 9g(4)a

The Holy Spirit: The Fruit of the Spirit – Forgiveness from God

- Have you ever doubted that God has forgiven you?
- Have you wondered that, if you died, you would go to heaven, because of unconfessed sin?
- How can you know, have a deep-seated assurance that you are saved and forgiven?
- One of the manifestations (fruit) of the Holy Spirit is that He gives Christians an assurance that they are forgiven and are saved.

Psalm 32:1–4 (NIV84)

¹Blessed is he whose transgressions are forgiven, whose sins are covered.

²Blessed is the man whose sin the Lord does not count against him and in whose spirit is no deceit.

³When I kept silent, my bones wasted away through my groaning all day long.

⁴For day and night your hand was heavy upon me; my strength was sapped as in the heat of summer. Selah

- Some Christians lack assurance, because they can't seem to accept God's forgiveness.

Their sin is too bad for God to forgive.

1 Timothy 1:12–16 (NIV84)

¹²I thank Christ Jesus our Lord, who has given me strength, that he considered me faithful, appointing me to his service.

¹³Even though I was once a blasphemer and a persecutor and a violent man, I was shown mercy because I acted in ignorance and unbelief.

¹⁴The grace of our Lord was poured out on me abundantly, along with the faith and love that are in Christ Jesus.

¹⁵Here is a trustworthy saying that deserves full acceptance: Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners—of whom **I am the worst**.

¹⁶But for that very reason I was shown mercy so that in me, the **worst of sinners**, Christ Jesus might display his unlimited patience as an example for those who would believe on him and receive eternal life.

- Paul, *the worst of sinners*, was shown God's mercy.
- *Puritan, Thomas Brooks (1608-1680), Heaven on Earth:*

Manasseh is saved. **O despairing souls**, the arms of mercy are open to receive a *Manasseh*, a monster, a devil incarnate; he caused that gospel prophet Isaiah to be sawed in the midst with a saw... He turned aside from the Lord to commit idolatry, and caused his sons to pass through the fire, and dealt

with familiar spirits, and made the streets of Jerusalem to overflow with innocent blood... The soul of *Mary Magdalene* was full of devils; and yet Christ cast them out and *made her heart his house*... **Why dost thou then say there is no hope for thee, O despairing soul?**

Paul was full of rage against Christ and his people and full of blasphemy and impiety, and yet behold, Paul is a chosen vessel, Paul is caught up into the heaven, and he is filled with the gifts and graces of the Holy [Spirit]... **Why should thou then say there is for thee no help, O despairing soul!** The apostle tells you of some *monstrous miscreants* that were unrighteous, fornicators, idolaters, adulterers, effeminate, abusers of themselves with mankind, thieves, covetous, drunkards, revilers, extortioners; and yet these *monsters of mankind*, through the infinite goodness and free grace of God, are washed from the filth and guilt of their sins, and justified by the righteousness of Christ, and sanctified by the Spirit of Christ, and decked and adorned with the precious graces of Christ... **Why then, O despairing soul**, shouldst thou fear that thy unworthiness and unfitness for mercy will so stop and turn the stream of mercy, as that thou must perish eternally for want of one drop special grace and mercy?

- What makes you think that you can't be forgiven?

Romans 10:11–13 (NIV84)

¹¹As the Scripture says, "**Anyone who trusts in him will never be put to shame.**"

¹²For there is no difference between Jew and Gentile—the same Lord is Lord of all and richly blesses all who call on him,

¹³for, "**Everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved.**"

- This is an absolute. *Everyone who calls on the name of the Lord* will be saved.

Verse 13 is not saying that anyone who calls on the Lord in a moment of desperation and trial will be saved.

- Verse 11 clarifies what calling on the Lord means.

It is believing in Jesus Christ, adhering, relying and trusting in Him for a salvation that frees them from the wrath of God.

It is believing that Jesus Christ *took away* our sins so that we no longer stand before God's judgment declared, "Guilty!" We have been given the

righteousness of Jesus Christ and are now declared, “Not Guilty!” before the tribunal of God.

- Both the Old and the New Testaments make clear that **salvation is granted only to those who trust in God** and that He offers His gracious redemption to all mankind, Jew and Gentile. No one who **believes in Him will ever be disappointed** by the salvation that He so graciously and universally offers.

The barrier to salvation is not racial or cultural but personal rejection of the God who offers it. People perish because they refuse to “receive the love of the truth so as to be saved” (2 Thess. 2:10).¹

2 Thessalonians 2:9-10 (NIV84)

⁹The coming of the lawless one will be in accordance with the work of Satan displayed in all kinds of counterfeit miracles, signs and wonders,
¹⁰and in every sort of evil that deceives those who are perishing. **They perish because they refused to love the truth and so be saved.**

Romans 3:19-22 (NIV84)

¹⁹Now we know that whatever the law says, it says to those who are under the law, so that every mouth may be silenced and the whole world held accountable to God.

²⁰Therefore no one will be declared righteous in his sight by observing the law; rather, through the law we become conscious of sin.

²¹But now a righteousness from God, apart from law, has been made known, to which the Law and the Prophets testify.

²²**This righteousness from God comes through faith in Jesus Christ to all who believe.** There is no difference,

- The natural tendency in man is to strive to earn acceptance with anyone by attempting to *do* things (*work*) that pleases that person. It is no different when it comes to attempting to gain acceptance with God.
- The natural tendency of man will be to strive to do whatever it takes to get God to accept you. This striving is described in verse 20 as *observing the law*.
Observing the law is strictly adhering to all the rules and regulations set up in the Old Testament.
- Note: Romans 3:20 tells us that no one will be *declared righteous* or *justified* by observing the law or by *works*. This is a statement that made no sense to the religious Jews who spent their lives *working* to establish a righteousness before God.

Romans 9:30-32, 10:1-10:3 (NIV84)

³⁰What then shall we say? That **the Gentiles, who**

did not pursue righteousness, have obtained it, a righteousness that is by faith;

³¹but Israel, who pursued a law of righteousness, **has not attained it.**

³²Why not? **Because they pursued it not by faith but as if it were by works.** They stumbled over the "stumbling stone."

^{10:1}Brothers, my heart's desire and prayer to God for the Israelites is that they may be saved.

²For I can testify about them that they are zealous for God, but their zeal is not based on knowledge.

³Since **they did not know the righteousness that comes from God and sought to establish their own, they did not submit to God's righteousness.**

Romans 4:4-5 (NIV84)

⁴Now when a man works, his wages are not credited to him as a gift, but as an obligation.

⁵However, **to the man who does not work but trusts God who justifies the wicked, his faith is credited as righteousness.**

- Romans 3:21 states that *now* a righteousness from God, apart from law or *works*, has been made known. Here is a righteousness, the very thing that man had been striving for (a right-standing with God), comes through believing instead of working; believing in Jesus Christ who *credits the believer* with His righteousness instead of trying by your own effort to earn it.
This offer of righteousness from God is *gifted* to anyone who believes in Jesus Christ's sacrificial death, substitutionary sacrifice and resurrection. God *gifts us* with *His righteousness*. We are made accepted in the Beloved (Ephesians 1:6).

Isaiah 64:6 (NKJV)

⁶But we are all like an unclean thing, And all **our righteousnesses are like filthy rags**; We all fade as a leaf, And our iniquities, like the wind, Have taken us away.

- All our attempts at goodness to please God are like filthy rags.

Philippians 3:7-9 (NIV84)

⁷But whatever was to my profit I now consider loss for the sake of Christ.

⁸What is more, I consider everything a loss compared to the surpassing greatness of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord, for whose sake I have lost all things. I consider them rubbish, that I may gain Christ
⁹and be found in him, **not having a righteousness of my own that comes from the law, but that which is**

¹ John F. MacArthur Jr., *Romans*, vol. 2, MacArthur New Testament Commentary (Chicago: Moody Press, 1991), 79.

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²⁵“I, even I, am he who blots out your transgressions, for my own sake, and remembers your sins no more.”

through faith in Christ—the righteousness that comes from God and is by faith.

Romans 1:16-17 (NIV84)

¹⁶I am not ashamed of the gospel, because it is the power of God for the salvation of everyone who believes: first for the Jew, then for the Gentile.

¹⁷For in the gospel a righteousness from God is revealed, a righteousness that is by faith from first to last, just as it is written: “The righteous will live by faith.”

- The Bible’s message is God’s work of salvation through Jesus Christ, and its purpose is actually to bring that salvation to individuals who receive that message and believe.²
- Salvation through faith in Jesus Christ *for anyone (whoever believes)* has always been God’s plan.³
- Amazing Grace! A believer is granted, gifted, *credited* righteousness not by striving to obey the law of God, but by *believing* in what Jesus Christ did for all His elect!

It is the gospel that reveals this divine righteousness that comes by faith.

- To believe that you have been *saved* or *totally forgiven* takes a supernatural faith that only God can grant. Natural man cannot do that, but a believer with the help of the Holy Spirit can. At times, even believers can have difficulty in believing in God’s forgiveness for them, personally. They may believe it for others, but for themselves, it is another story.

John 5:24 (NIV84)

²⁴“I tell you the truth, whoever hears my word (*the gospel*) and believes him who sent me has eternal life and will not be condemned; he has crossed over from death to life.

Isaiah 1:18 (NIV84)

¹⁸“Come now, let us reason together,” says the LORD. “Though your sins are like scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they are red as crimson, they shall be like wool.

Isaiah 43:25 (NIV84)

² Richard D. Phillips, *Hebrews*, ed. Richard D. Phillips, Philip Graham Ryken, and Daniel M. Doriani, Reformed Expository Commentary (Phillipsburg, NJ: P&R Publishing, 2006), 137.

³ John F. MacArthur Jr., *Romans*, vol. 2, MacArthur New Testament Commentary (Chicago: Moody Press, 1991), 79.

Isaiah 53:5 (NKJV)

⁵But He was wounded for our transgressions, He was bruised for our iniquities; The chastisement for our peace was upon Him, And by His stripes we are healed.

- When God forgives you, it is complete.
- His forgiveness toward His elect was predestined before the creation of the world.
- God’s forgiveness that granted us Christ’s righteousness was accomplished at the cross.
- What about the sins committed after we are saved? How are they taken care of?

1 John 1:8-10 (NIV84)

⁸If we claim to be without sin, we deceive ourselves and the truth is not in us.

- Who is *we* referring to? *Believers!*

⁹If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just and will forgive us our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness.

¹⁰If we claim we have not sinned, we make him out to be a liar and his word has no place in our lives.

- V.8, The heresy of “*perfectionism*”—the claim that our sin-nature has been completely eradicated, so that we no longer commit sin—is self-deception. It is related to the Gnostic heresy of the time which claimed that the soul had been set free from one’s sinful flesh.⁴
- V.9, *Perceived* unforgiven sins produce a lack of assurance of salvation in the mind of an unbeliever. If you confessed your sins to God, then God *is faithful to forgive all* your sins and purify you from *all* unrighteousness, period. God does not wait until you feel like you’ve been forgiven to forgive you of your sins. Your forgiveness is accomplished the moment you confessed your sins.
- The word “*confess*” is from the word *homologeō* {*hom-ol-og-eh’-o*} which means “to say the same thing as another; to agree with, or to declare one’s self guilty of what one is accused.” Confessing your sins means that you agree with God about your sinfulness. There is no debating, deliberation, or disputing with the Lord about them. You don’t try to justify them.

⁴ Henry M. Morris, *The Defender’s Study Bible* (WORDsearch, 2012), 1 Jn 1:8.

It is simply a restoration to the place of blessing in the eyes of a displeased father.

- The word “*confess*” is also in the present tense which means that **we are to confess our sin continually to the Lord**. We are to do it on a regular basis and keep the sin garbage out of our lives.

Cornelius Plantinga said, “Recalling and confessing our sin is like taking out the garbage: once is not enough.”⁵

- If our sins have been forgiven at the cross, do we still have to confess our sins?
- What happens when we don’t confess our sins?
 - Do we lose our *right standing* with God when we sin?
 - Do we lose our *right standing* with God, when we don’t confess our sins?
 - Subsequently, do we regain our *right standing* with God when we do confess our sins?
 - What is another word for *right standing* with God?
 - Another word for *right standing* is *righteousness*.
- The unnecessary anguish that a person suffers regarding the issue of whether they are in *right standing with God* is due to a lack of knowledge of God’s love, mercy and grace resulting in a lack of assurance of how and *who* maintains this *right standing* or *righteousness* a person has with God.

Galatians 3:1 (NIV84) 3:2-3 (Amplified)

¹You foolish Galatians! Who has bewitched you? Before your very eyes Jesus Christ was clearly portrayed as crucified.

²Let me ask you this one question: **Did you receive the [Holy] Spirit as the result of obeying the Law and doing its works, or was it by hearing [the message of the Gospel] and believing [it]?** [Was it from observing a law of rituals or from a message of faith?]

³Are you so foolish and so senseless and so silly? **Having begun [your new life spiritually] with the [Holy] Spirit, are you now reaching perfection [by dependence] on the flesh?**

- Our right standing or righteousness with God is not just gifted to us at conversion and then ends up fluctuating (*coming and going*) for the rest of our lives based on our performance.
- We, the elect, do not lose our salvation when we sin. Confessing sin is *not* a matter of regaining lost salvation or renewing our justification.
- *Forgiveness* and *cleansing* are the two aspects of the promise of God in 1 John 1:9.

The *forgiveness* spoken of here refers to a parental forgiveness, not the forgiveness of justification.

⁵ Rod Mattoon, *Treasures from First ... Second ... Third John*, Treasures from Scripture Series (Springfield, IL: Rod Mattoon, 2017), 37.

- The *cleansing* spoken of in these verses is not the washing of regeneration.

Regeneration imparts new life, often pictured in Scripture as the washing of the heart; but the continual cleansing described in 1 John 1:7–9 is a spiritual washing to rid believers of the defilement caused by sin in their daily walk.⁶

Hebrews 4:9–13 (NIV84)

⁹There remains, then, a Sabbath-rest for the people of God;

¹⁰for anyone who enters God’s rest also rests from his own work, just as God did from his.

¹¹Let us, therefore, make every effort to enter that rest, so that no one will fall by following their example of disobedience.

¹²**For the word of God is living and active. Sharper than any double-edged sword, it penetrates even to dividing soul and spirit,** joints and marrow; it judges the thoughts and attitudes of the heart.

¹³Nothing in all creation is hidden from God’s sight. Everything is uncovered and laid bare before the eyes of him to whom we must give account.

- The words of the Bible are not the *inspired* words of men, arising from their own spiritual insight, but they are *expired, out-breathed words* from God’s very mouth given through them.
- *Martin Luther* said, “Let the man who would hear God speak read Holy Scripture.”
- The *Puritan Thomas Watson* adds, “By reading other books the heart may be warmed, but by reading this book it is transformed.”⁷
- Verse 12 is often cited by itself. Look at the context in which this verse was written.
- The context is about *rest* (κατάπαυσις *katápausis*), a *Sabbath-rest* (σαββατισμός *sabbatismós*). This Sabbath-rest is not a ceasing from work for a day, but a lifestyle of faith that is free from the concern *to work to gain acceptance from God*. Instead, it is lifestyle of faith that *rests in Christ’s finished work* which continues to maintain and sustain our righteousness based on Christ’s righteousness and not a righteousness based on our works.

It is a Sabbath rest because the believer reaches a definite stage of attainment (*right-standing with*

⁶ John F. MacArthur, *The Freedom and Power of Forgiveness*, electronic ed. (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Books, 1998), 65.

⁷ Richard D. Phillips, *Hebrews*, ed. Richard D. Phillips, Philip Graham Ryken, and Daniel M. Doriani, Reformed Expository Commentary (Phillipsburg, NJ: P&R Publishing, 2006), 135–136.

God) and has satisfactorily accomplished a purpose, as God did when He finished the work of creation. It is not the believer's rest into which he enters and in which he participates, but in God's unique, personal rest in which the believer shares.⁸ The believer shares a Sabbath-rest with God, when Christ imputed righteousness to us at the cross, when He said, "It is finished!"

- The Word of God reveals a righteousness from God that is by faith. (Romans 1:17). **It separates and exposes what is of the works of the flesh (soul) versus what is gained by faith (spirit).**

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¹Blessed is he whose transgressions are forgiven, whose sins are covered.

²Blessed is the man whose sin the LORD does not count against him and in whose spirit is no deceit.

³When I kept silent, my bones wasted away through my groaning all day long.

⁴For day and night your hand was heavy upon me; my strength was sapped as in the heat of summer. Selah

⁵Then I acknowledged my sin to you and did not cover up my iniquity. I said, "I will confess my transgressions to the LORD"— and you forgave the guilt of my sin. Selah

- When David left his sins of adultery and murder unaddressed, it took its toll on him, physically and emotionally.

His **bones** ached, his **groaning** filled the air, and his **strength was drained** (32:3–4).

His problem was not medical, though, but theological: God's **hand was heavy on [him]** (32:4).

Look at the relationship between unaddressed sin, physical and emotional wellbeing, and loss of fellowship with God.

When he **acknowledged [his] sin**, God granted forgiveness and removed David's **guilt** (32:5).⁹

- This is what we go through, when we choose to hide our sins instead of confessing them completely to God.
- David told God that he sinned against Him and Him only. When he confessed his sins to God, God removed His heavy hand from him and forgave him.
- What a difference forgiveness from the Lord makes!
- How about when someone sins against *us*. How do we handle that?

⁸ Kenneth S. Wuest, *Wuest's Word Studies from the Greek New Testament: For the English Reader*, vol. 10 (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1997), 87.

⁹ Tony Evans, *The Tony Evans Bible Commentary* (Nashville, TN: Holman Bible Publishers, 2019), Ps 32:3–5.