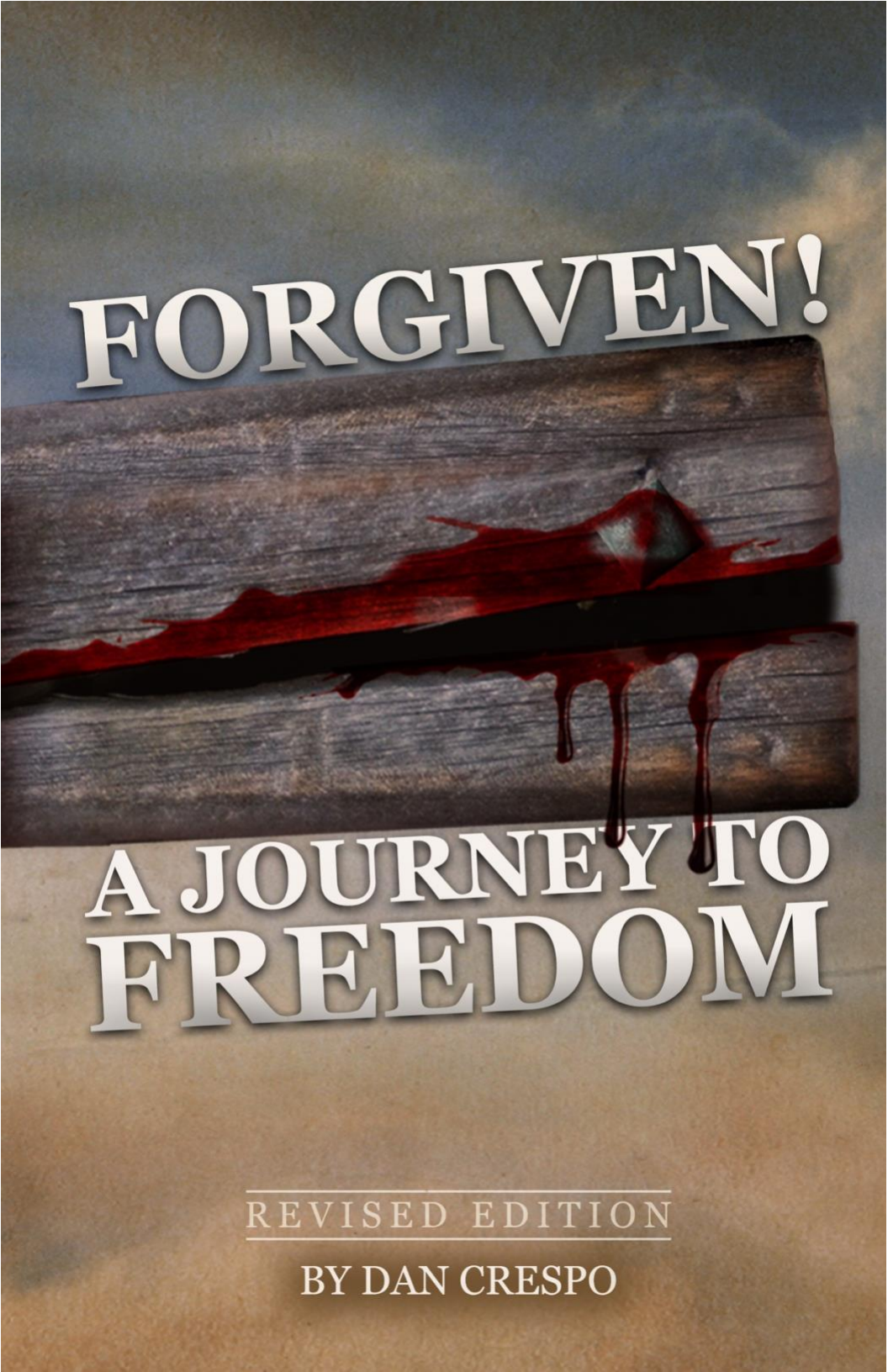


The background of the cover features a dark, weathered wooden plank. A deep, jagged wound is carved into the wood, and a thick, dark red liquid, resembling blood, is dripping from the wound. The liquid is dripping down the front edge of the plank. The overall tone is somber and dramatic.

FORGIVEN!

A JOURNEY TO FREEDOM

REVISED EDITION

BY DAN CRESPO

Table of Contents

Introduction Welcome to the Journey	1
1: Understanding Forgiveness as a Christian	1
2: The Power of Christ's Forgiveness	1
3: The Power of Forgiveness	1
4: The Truth About Forgiveness and Religious Law	1
5: The Battle Between Truth and Tradition	1
6: The Power of Complete Forgiveness	1
7: Finished Means Finished	1
8: When We Fail	1
9: Understanding Forgiveness and the Role of Confession	1
10: The Christian Bar of Soap	1
11: Covenant Confusion	1
12: Understanding Atonement, Propitiation, and God's Love	1
13: Forgiveness Unleashed	1
Epilogue: The Cross That Frees Us to Forgive	1
Scripture Index by Chapter	1

Introduction

Welcome to the Journey

— An Invitation to Freedom, Not Just Theology

Let me begin by thanking you for picking up this book. I don't believe you landed here by chance. If you've been walking through life burdened by guilt, haunted by your past, or exhausted from trying to "earn" your way back into God's favor, then you're holding the right book in your hands.

This isn't just a study in theology—it's an invitation to freedom. *Not surface-level freedom, but true, soul-deep, heart-healing freedom.*

Forgiveness isn't a human idea. It's heaven's gift. It began with God, was fulfilled through Christ, and is now freely offered to you—not as a reward for good behavior, but as a gift of pure grace.

At the center of that gift stands Jesus Christ—crucified for our sins, risen for our life. *Through Him, we don't just get a spiritual "reset button" or a second chance. We get something far greater: a brand-new life, one that doesn't begin with our climb upward but with His finished work coming down to us.*

Throughout this book, we'll explore what it really means to be forgiven. We'll tackle tough questions. We'll challenge popular traditions. We'll walk through Scripture to discover that forgiveness is far more than a feeling—it's a foundation.

Here's my encouragement: keep your Bible close, and your heart open. Some chapters may challenge what you've always believed. That's not a threat—it's an opportunity. Growth often begins with questions. So pray. Think. Study. And trust that the Holy Spirit will not lead you into confusion, but into clarity.

Forgiveness is more than a key to peace with God—it's the key to life itself. Don't push it aside. Don't try to earn it. Don't settle for half of it. Receive it fully—and watch as the prison doors swing open.

Welcome to the journey. Let's walk together into the freedom Christ has already secured for you.

Chapter 1

Understanding Forgiveness as a Christian

— *The Cornerstone of Freedom*

Let me ask you something personal: If someone asked you what God has done for you—*really done for you*—what would you say?

Some might say, “He saved me.” Others might mention peace, joy, a church family, or deliverance from a rough past. All of those are beautiful truths. But here’s one that we too often overlook—yet it is the foundation for all the rest: ***He has forgiven you.***

Not partially. Not temporarily. Not conditionally.

He has completely forgiven you.

That, my friend, is the beginning of freedom.

God Has Already Done More Than You Know

God has not only created you—He’s made a way for you to know Him personally. Through Christ, He has accomplished your salvation, declared you righteous, and invited you into a relationship built not on performance but on faith in His grace.

He’s provided peace for your soul, joy for your heart, and rest for your weariness. ***And all of it begins with forgiveness. It’s the doorway through which every other gift of grace flows.***

Yet tragically, so many Christians live unaware of the depth of what they already have. They keep striving, apologizing, repenting over and over—trying to earn what God already gave.

It’s like living in a mansion but sleeping in the broom closet. You’re not outside the house—but you’re not enjoying the rooms prepared for you either.

What Does Spiritual Growth Really Look Like?

Ask ten people how to grow as a Christian, and you might get ten different answers. Some will say, “Read your Bible more.”

Others: “give more, serve more, obey better.”

Now, those things may be part of our walk—but none of them are the foundation.

Real growth begins when you understand what Jesus has already done on the cross... and when you learn to live from that place, not striving toward it.

The Turning Point: Understanding Forgiveness

The Christian life doesn't start with our promises to God. It starts with His promises to us.

When we talk about forgiveness, we're not talking about a theological footnote. We're talking about the very bedrock of our relationship with God.

Jesus didn't just come to forgive *some* of your sins. He came to deal with the entire problem—once, for all.

Let's be honest: Many believers say, "Yes, I believe I'm forgiven"—but then live like they're still on probation. They constantly wonder:

- "Did I do enough today?"
- "Did I confess every sin?"
- "What if I forgot one?"
- "What if I wasn't sincere enough?"

That's not freedom. That's fear.

Are You Building on the Rock... or the Sand?

In *Matthew 7:24–27*, Jesus described two builders: one built on rock, the other on sand.

"Everyone who hears these words of Mine and does them is like a wise man who built his house on the rock... but everyone who hears and doesn't do them is like a foolish man who built on the sand."

To build your house on the rock means trusting Christ's words, not your own works.

To build on sand means building on your own efforts—your repentance, your devotion, your ability to stay on track.

None of those are bad things. But they're not the rock.
They're not what saves you.
They're not what makes you right with God.

A Question That Changes Everything

Let me ask you plainly:

Are your sins—all of them, even the ones you haven't committed yet—already forgiven?

Most believers quickly answer yes. But dig deeper, and uncertainty creeps in:

- “Well, I'm forgiven so far...”
- “Only if I confess every day...”
- “Only if I'm sincere and repent enough...”

Friend, that's not good news. That's religious anxiety. And it's not the glorious gospel.

Forgiveness Wasn't Cheap—It Was Complete

Jesus didn't offer halfway forgiveness.

“Behold! The Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world!” — John 1:29

“He Himself is the propitiation for our sins, and not for ours only but also for the whole world.” — 1 John 2:2

“Their sins and their lawless deeds I will remember no more.” — Hebrews 10:17

Forgiveness that depends on you is not forgiveness—it's a contract. But what Jesus offered was not a contract. It was a covenant sealed with blood.

Sin Demands Death—Not Apology

“The wages of sin is death...” — Romans 6:23

Sin is not dealt with by good intentions, heartfelt tears, or verbal promises. It's dealt with by death. And Jesus died that death for you once for all.

To suggest we still need to atone for our sins—daily, repeatedly—is to say Jesus’ death was not enough. That is not a light mistake; that’s a serious misunderstanding of the cross.

The Resurrection Is God’s Declaration: You Are Forgiven

| *“If Christ has not been raised, your faith is futile; you are still in your sins.” — 1 Corinthians 15:17*

But He was raised. Which means you aren’t in your sins.

Jesus’ resurrection is proof that God accepted His sacrifice.

The debt has been paid, the record erased, the case dismissed. You’re not on trial anymore.

A Personal Story: My Speeding Ticket Dismissed

I’ll never forget the time I got a speeding ticket on the way to the airport. I was guilty. No excuses.

But when the officer didn’t show up in court, the judge dismissed the charge.

I deserved a fine. I broke the law. But I walked away innocent.

Now, multiply that by a trillion, and you’ll get a glimpse of what Jesus did for you.

You Are Justified, Reconciled, and Free

| *“Having been justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ.” — Romans 5:1*

| *“God was in Christ reconciling the world to Himself, not counting their trespasses against them...”
— 2 Corinthians 5:19*

God isn’t holding your sins over your head. He’s not angry.

He’s not waiting for your next confession. He’s not grading you.

He’s welcoming you—because when He looks at you, He sees Jesus.

So, Where Do We Go From Here?

Here's the bottom line:

- Forgiveness is not something you earn.
- It's not something you maintain.
- It's not something you can lose and regain.
- It's something Jesus already gave.

And the resurrection is your receipt: Paid in full.

Conclusion: Walk in Freedom, Not Fear

This chapter lays the cornerstone for the journey ahead. Understanding forgiveness isn't just helpful—it's essential. Because if you don't know you're free, you'll keep living like a prisoner.

At its core, **the cross is about forgiveness** — God removing our sin once for all — and through that forgiveness, making way for reconciliation, righteousness, and resurrection life.

Forgiveness is the foundation of faith. The resurrection is its seal. And the Christian life? ***It's not about striving to stay forgiven—it's about living from the freedom Christ already won for you.***

Next, we'll go even deeper. You'll see how this forgiveness doesn't just release you from guilt—it reshapes your entire relationship with God and shows you the true power of Christ's crucifixion.

So take a breath. Exhale the pressure.
You are forgiven. Now let's learn how to live like it.

Chapter 2

The Power of Christ's Forgiveness

— *Grace That Breaks Logic and Restores Life*

Some truths are so astonishing that we almost hesitate to believe them. Forgiveness is one of those truths.

In Chapter 1, we saw that forgiveness isn't just part of the gospel—it's the foundation. It's the evidence of God's grace and the platform for everything else He gives us.

Now we move deeper: *into the power of Christ's forgiveness and how it reshapes our relationship with God—from beginning to end.*

Forgiveness: A Paradox That Turns Religion On Its Head

Forgiveness, by its very nature, is a paradox. It's backward to human logic. It's unreasonable to religious minds.

The world tells us, "You get what you earn." But God says, "You get what Jesus earned."

Consider the moment Jesus hung on the cross, battered and bleeding, surrounded by mockers and murderers. And yet—He prayed this:

“*Father, forgive them, for they do not know what they do.*”
— Luke 23:34

That prayer wasn't just for the Roman soldiers or the angry crowd. It was for us—the very sinners who made His death necessary. ***In that moment, forgiveness was extended before anyone asked for it.***

It's a shocking truth:

- We were forgiven when we ignored or even hated Jesus.
- We were forgiven before we even knew we needed it.
- We were forgiven before we ever said, "I'm sorry."

That's not human justice. That's divine mercy.

Is Forgiveness for Everyone?

This question comes up a lot: “*Is everyone already forgiven, or just believers?*”

The answer is clearly found in Scripture:

“*And He Himself is the propitiation for our sins, and not for ours only but also for the whole world.*” — 1 John 2:2

Jesus didn’t die just for the sins of those who believe. He paid for the sins of the whole world. Every person. Every failure. Every sin. That’s the scope of His mercy.

Does that mean everyone is saved? **No.**

But it does mean that ***everyone has been forgiven—the barrier of sin has been dealt with.***

Forgiveness is the gift, and salvation is what happens when we receive the Giver.

The Crucial Distinction: Forgiveness Is Not Salvation

Let’s clear something up that trips many people: ***forgiveness and salvation are not the same.***

- Forgiveness removes the barrier between God and man—sin (through the cross).
- Salvation restores the life that was lost—God’s Spirit (through the resurrection).

Back in the Garden of Eden, God gave Adam one command:

“*But of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil you shall not eat, for in the day that you eat of it you shall surely die.*” — Genesis 2:17

Adam did eat. But he didn’t drop dead physically. So what happened?

He died spiritually.

The moment he sinned; God’s Spirit departed from him. He was still breathing—but he was now spiritually dead. That’s what sin does—it separates us from the life of God.

Jesus Solved Both Problems: Sin and Spiritual Death

Jesus didn't just come to pardon your sins.

He came to restore what Adam lost—the presence of God in you.

- At the cross, He solved the sin problem.
- Through the resurrection, He solved the death problem.

“Behold! The Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world!” — John 1:29

“He has made alive together with Him, having forgiven you all trespasses.” — Colossians 2:13

Jesus' blood washed away every sin—past, present, and future. That removed the legal barrier between God and man.

But that's not all. Through His resurrection, Jesus returned in Spirit to live in us. That's the miracle of the New Covenant.

“But you are not in the flesh but in the Spirit, if indeed the Spirit of God dwells in you. Now if anyone does not have the Spirit of Christ, he is not His.” — Romans 8:9

“And because you are sons, God has sent forth the Spirit of His Son into your hearts, crying out, ‘Abba, Father!’” — Galatians 4:6

You don't become a child of God just because your sins are forgiven. You become a child of God when His Spirit enters your heart.

Forgiveness: The Prerequisite to Life in Christ

Why is forgiveness so vital? Because God doesn't share space with sin.

The Holy Spirit could never enter your heart unless the sin issue was already resolved.

That's what Christ did. He discharged the sin of the world through His death so He could give you His Spirit and live His life in and through you.

“Having wiped out the handwriting of requirements that was against us, which was contrary to us. And He has taken it out of the way, having nailed it to the cross.”

— Colossians 2:14

Jesus gave His life for you, so He could give His life to you, so He could live His life through you.

You’re Not on Parole

Many Christians live as if they’ve been released from spiritual prison—only to be placed on probation with God.

They think their forgiveness is conditional. One wrong move, and they’re out.

They imagine God as a parole officer, watching closely to see if they slip up.

But Scripture tells a different story:

“There is therefore now no condemnation to those who are in Christ Jesus.” — Romans 8:1

You’re not on probation. You’re in union with Christ. There is no more sentence, no more trial, no more fear.

He Came to Give You Life

“The thief does not come except to steal, and to kill, and to destroy. I have come that they may have life, and that they may have it more abundantly.” — John 10:10

That’s not just a better lifestyle. **It’s His very life in you.**

When Jesus rose from the dead, He didn’t just conquer death—He offered you resurrection life. Through forgiveness, He made room for His Spirit to enter you and live within you.

Forgiveness and Salvation Go Hand in Hand

It’s worth repeating: forgiveness isn’t salvation, but it makes salvation possible to those who believe and receive Him.

- Once sin is removed, the Spirit can be received.
- Once the Spirit is received, salvation is secured.

“For Christ also suffered once for sins, the just for the unjust, that He might bring us to God, being put to death in the flesh but made alive by the Spirit.” — 1 Peter 3:18

Forgiveness is what brought you to God. Salvation is what brought God into you.

Conclusion: Forgiveness Transforms Everything

When you understand the power of forgiveness:

- You stop living like a criminal.
- You stop fearing you'll lose what you never earned.
- You stop doubting God's love every time you stumble.
- You start living in peace, not pressure.

*“Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? ... I am persuaded that neither death nor life ... nor any other created thing, shall be able to separate us from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus our Lord.”
— Romans 8:35, 38–39*

Friend, forgiveness is not a footnote to your faith. It's the foundation.

It's not a doctrine to memorize—it's a gift to embrace.

And this gift doesn't just clear your past—it empowers your present.

In the next chapter, we'll explore how forgiveness doesn't only pardon sin but actually fuels transformation. You'll see why salvation demands complete forgiveness, and why this truth changes the way we live every single day.

Chapter 3

The Power of Forgiveness

— **Why Complete Pardon Changes Everything**

In Chapter 2, we uncovered a powerful truth: forgiveness isn't just a concept—it's a crucial component of salvation. Without it, the human race would still be completely separated by sin, separated from God, and spiritually dead. But because of Jesus—because of His death and His resurrection—we are offered both pardon and life.

Now we turn to this question: If forgiveness is so complete, why do so many believers still struggle to live in its freedom? And how does complete forgiveness actually transform us?

Salvation Demands Complete Forgiveness

Let's be clear: salvation doesn't happen in stages. You're not "partially saved" today and "fully saved" tomorrow. You're not being forgiven little by little as you confess and perform. No.

Forgiveness must be total—because God will not dwell where sin remains unforgiven.

*"In Him we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of His grace."
— Ephesians 1:7*

This forgiveness isn't earned—it's received. ***And it's not partial—it's complete.***

Rescued from Darkness and Death

Paul put it this way:

"He has delivered us from the power of darkness and conveyed us into the kingdom of the Son of His love, in whom we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of sins." — Colossians 1:13–14

Not only are we forgiven—we're transferred into a new

kingdom. One ruled by love, not law. One filled with light, not darkness.

Jesus didn't just cover your past. He rescued you—completely—from the domain of sin, death, and its condemnation.

Made Alive by the Spirit

Again, Peter wrote:

“For Christ also suffered once for sins, the just for the unjust, that He might bring us to God, being put to death in the flesh but made alive by the Spirit.” — 1 Peter 3:18

The goal of the cross wasn't just to forgive you. ***It was to bring you to God—to make you alive again.***

That's what salvation means: God living in you by His Spirit, forever.

Why Do Some Struggle to Embrace This?

Despite this incredible truth, many believers still struggle. Why? Here are two major reasons:

1. The Pain of Unforgiveness Toward Others

Let's be honest: forgiving others can be brutally difficult—especially when the wounds go deep.

When someone hurts you, your heart whispers, “They don't deserve forgiveness.”

That struggle can bleed into how you see God. You think, *If I can't forgive them, how could God forgive me—or them?*

You resist the idea that God might forgive someone who hurt you... as if they got off “scot-free.”

But Scripture is clear: Christ died for everyone's sin—including those who sinned against you.

“Behold! The Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world!” — John 1:29

Your pain is real—and we'll address it more deeply later in this book. ***But don't confuse the depth of your pain with the depth of God's mercy. His forgiveness isn't based on what people deserve. It's based on what Jesus accomplished.***

2. Using Guilt to Control Others

Some people struggle with complete forgiveness because they've used guilt as a tool.

- Parents fear telling their children they're fully forgiven worried it will give them permission to sin.
- Pastors hesitate to preach grace—afraid their congregations might get lazy or rebellious.

But Paul faced that exact objection:

“*Shall we continue in sin that grace may abound? Certainly not!*” — Romans 6:1–2

God's grace doesn't excuse sin—it breaks sin's power. And the Holy Spirit doesn't lead us into lawlessness—He leads us into love.

Grace Doesn't Cause Sin—It Crushes It

Yes, some people will abuse God's grace. That's been true from the beginning. But grace abusers weren't walking in truth to begin with.

Our job isn't to twist the gospel into a guilt-driven leash. Our job is to proclaim it—fully and faithfully—and let the Spirit work in people's hearts.

“*You shall receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you shall be witnesses to Me...*” — Acts 1:8

Power to sin more? No. ***Power to be transformed.***

Complete Forgiveness Produces Lasting Change

When a person finally accepts that they are fully forgiven—that there's nothing left to confess, repay, or earn—they begin to live differently.

- No more hiding.
- No more pretending.
- No more bargaining with God.

Instead, they live in freedom, discussing our sin freely with our heavenly Father. Instead of hiding and living a double life.

“Then I will give you a new heart and put a new spirit within you... and cause you to walk in My statutes, and you will keep My judgments and do them.” — Ezekiel 36:26–27

“For the grace of God that brings salvation has appeared to all men, teaching us that, denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly in the present age.” — Titus 2:11–12

That’s the best definition of grace in the bible! God’s grace doesn’t lead to apathy—it teaches, trains, and transforms.

Beyond the Law, Beyond Condemnation

The law was never meant to cleanse your soul. It was meant to reveal your sin.

But now, in Christ, that law has been fulfilled and its penalty fully satisfied.

“Christ has redeemed us from the curse of the law, having become a curse for us.” — Galatians 3:13

“For sin shall not have dominion over you, for you are not under law but under grace.” — Romans 6:14

Forgiveness sets us free—not to run back to sin, but to walk forward in the liberty of His love. It teaches us to turn to the Lord for the deepest needs of our hearts, rather than looking to a world that cannot heal us.

Conclusion: The Power Is in the Forgiveness

The gospel doesn’t just confront sin—it conquers it. And it starts with complete forgiveness.

It doesn’t come through fear or guilt or manipulation. It comes through Christ.

When you truly grasp what Jesus has done:

- You stop using condemnation as a crutch.
- You stop fearing that someone will “get away with it.”
- You stop controlling others with religion.
- You start living in the love that sets people free.

In the next chapter, we’ll go deeper into the relationship between forgiveness and the law. You’ll see that God didn’t just modify the old system—He replaced it with something far better. He gave us grace. ***And that changes everything.***

Chapter 4

The Truth About Forgiveness and Religious Law

— *Why Mixing Law and Grace Keeps Us Stuck*

Let's be honest: nothing confuses the Christian life more than mixing grace with law.

It's a cocktail that produces guilt, pride, spiritual exhaustion—and tragically, keeps many believers from ever truly resting in God's forgiveness.

This chapter is a much-needed spiritual detox. We're going to examine what God's law was meant to do, what it was never meant to do, and why clinging to it today can keep you from enjoying the freedom Jesus died to give you.

The Law: What Was It Really For?

When we hear “law,” many of us think of rules to obey, hoops to jump through, or standards to maintain in order to earn God's approval.

But let's step back.

God didn't give the law to make people holy. He gave the law to show that we're not.

“Therefore by the deeds of the law no flesh will be justified in His sight, for by the law is the knowledge of sin.”
— Romans 3:20

The law is like a mirror—it reveals the dirt but can't wash it off. ***It was never designed to save, cleanse, or give life. It was designed to prepare the way for Jesus.***

The Law Was Given for Specific Reasons

God gave different laws in different eras for different purposes:

- After the flood, He gave laws to restrain evil.
- Through Moses, He gave laws to form Israel as a nation, guiding their worship, justice, health, and economy.

- The law protected and preserved Israel until Christ came—the true fulfillment of God’s promises to Abraham.

“What purpose then does the law serve? It was added because of transgressions, till the Seed should come to whom the promise was made...” — Galatians 3:19

“The law was our tutor to bring us to Christ, that we might be justified by faith.” — Galatians 3:24

The Law Cannot Cleanse You or Give You Life

The law could reveal sin, restrain evil, and even predict the coming of Christ. But it could not cleanse you.

It could not give you spiritual life. It could not give you righteousness.

*“For what the law could not do in that it was weak through the flesh, God did by sending His own Son...”
— Romans 8:3*

“If righteousness comes through the law, then Christ died in vain.” — Galatians 2:21

The truth? ***The law was a shadow. Jesus is the substance.***

The Law Stirs Up Sin—It Doesn’t Suppress It

Here’s the irony: the more law you put on a sinful heart, the more it rebels.

Paul puts it bluntly:

“I would not have known sin except through the law. For I would not have known covetousness unless the law had said, ‘You shall not covet.’ But sin, taking opportunity by the commandment, produced in me all manner of evil desire. ...The commandment, which was to bring life, I found to bring death.” — Romans 7:7–10

It’s not the law is evil— it’s that the flesh is. And the law, when combined with the flesh, acts like an accelerant on a flame.

The Law Also Fuels Religious Pride

Here's another trap: those who think they're good at keeping the law tend to look down on those who aren't.

Legalism breeds judgment, not joy.

“Behind every legalist is a lawless man (or woman).”

And behind every system of performance-based religion is a soul that's secretly exhausted and afraid.

So Why Do People Still Cling to the Law?

Some hold to it out of fear—afraid they'll lose God's favor or come under His judgment.

Others use it to control—especially in religious circles, parenting, or pastoral leadership—because fear is an easy motivator when grace feels too risky.

But most cling to the law simply out of ignorance—never having truly heard the gospel that sets them free.

But it's not the way of Jesus.

Only the Spirit Can Change the Heart

No law can transform the human heart. It can scare people into compliance—but only for a while.

Eventually, it either burns them out or puffs them up. That's why God gave something better.

“I will give you a new heart and put a new spirit within you... I will put My Spirit within you and cause you to walk in My statutes.” — Ezekiel 36:26–27

And:

“Grace and peace be multiplied to you in the knowledge of God and of Jesus our Lord, as His divine power has given to us all things that pertain to life and godliness, through the knowledge of Him who called us by glory and virtue.” — 2 Peter 1:2–3

You don't need more laws. ***You need to believe and yield to Jesus.***

The New Covenant: A Better Way

The Old Covenant said: “Do this and live.”

The New Covenant says: “Believe this and live.”

The Old Covenant was based on your performance.

The New Covenant is based on Christ’s performance—and it’s already finished.

“*Christ is the end of the law for righteousness to everyone who believes.*” — *Romans 10:4*

Forgiveness Is the Door to Freedom

Once you realize God isn’t holding your sins against you—past, present, or future—you begin to breathe again.

“*Their sins and their lawless deeds I will remember no more.*” — *Hebrews 10:17*

“*You are not under law but under grace.*” — *Romans 6:14*

You stop fearing curses. You stop trying to “deserve” blessings.

You live in the confidence that you are loved, accepted, and free.

What Happens If We Reject Forgiveness and Keep the Law?

We remain in a cycle of:

- Constant failure
- Endless guilt
- Secret shame
- Powerless religion
- Surface-level performance
- And a whole lot of sin

And we stay vulnerable to Satan’s greatest deception: ***that God’s love is still on the line.***

But What Happens If We Embrace Complete Forgiveness?

We walk in:

- Confidence in Christ

- Rest in our souls
- Joy in our relationship with God
- Power to say no to sin
- Freedom from guilt
- A major reduction in sin
- Peace, even when we stumble

Because we finally understand: ***Jesus is enough.***

Conclusion: Let Go of the Law and Live

You weren't made to live by rules—you were made to live by relationship.

The law can't love you. The law can't save you. The law can't fill your heart.

But Jesus can.

So let go of the system that kept you in bondage. Let go of trying to deserve what God already gave. Let go of the fear of curses, and walk in the blessing that is already yours in Christ.

“It is for freedom that Christ has set us free. Stand firm, then, and do not let yourselves be burdened again by a yoke of slavery.” — Galatians 5:1

In the next chapter, we'll see why this message of freedom often collides with tradition—and how the battle between truth and tradition still shapes the church today.

Chapter 5

The Battle Between Truth and Tradition

— *When Religion Resists Grace*

Some of the fiercest battles in the Christian life are not fought with fists or swords, but in pulpits, pews, seminaries, and quiet hearts. These are battles between truth and tradition—between the liberating message of the gospel and the subtle grip of legalistic religion.

This chapter is about that battle. It's about the tug-of-war between freedom and fear, between grace and guilt, between what God has done and what man tries to maintain.

And at the center of it all stands a simple but often misunderstood truth: ***The law stirs up sin. Forgiveness sets us free.***

The Lie: The Law Will Keep You Holy

Let's start with what many well-meaning believers have been taught: "If you want to live right, you need the law to keep you in line."

But Scripture says otherwise:

"The law entered that the offense might abound. But where sin abounded, grace abounded much more."
— Romans 5:20

Did you catch that?

The law didn't come to suppress sin. ***It came to amplify it—to expose it.***

The law increases awareness of sin, not righteousness. That's why it leads us to desperation... and ultimately, to Jesus.

Why the Law Stirs Up Sin

We've all felt it: the moment you're told not to do something, everything in you wants to do it.

That's human nature—and the law taps right into it.

“...I would not have known sin except through the law. For I would not have known covetousness unless the law had said, ‘You shall not covet.’ But sin, taking opportunity by the commandment, produced in me all manner of evil desire.”
— Romans 7:7–8

The law wasn’t given to tame the flesh. It was given to expose it. **And it often stirs up sin simply by saying, “Don’t.”**

Religious Pride: The Sin Behind the Smile

The law doesn’t just stir up rebellion—it stirs up pride.

Religious pride is sneaky. It’s that inner voice that says:

- “Look how good I’m doing.”
- “I obey more than they do.”
- “I pray longer. I repent harder. I’m cleaner.”

But that pride is just as sinful as the things we’re proud of not doing.

“God resists the proud, but gives grace to the humble.”
— James 4:6

This pride is especially dangerous in spiritual leadership. It builds walls instead of bridges. **It exalts law-keeping and buries grace.**

How the Law Distorts Our View of God

Perhaps the most damaging impact of legalism is what it does to your relationship with God.

Instead of seeing Him as a loving Father, you start to see Him as a cold judge—distant, disappointed, and always watching for your next slip-up.

And when you start believing God is disgusted with you, it’s only a matter of time before you run to the world to fill the vacuum.

The devil thrives on distortion.

He lures us with pleasure, affirmation, and escape—anything to convince us that because our efforts to keep the law haven’t earned God’s blessings, we are failures, forgotten by Him. In

our desperation for relief, we turn to the world. And in doing so, we turn to sin.

The Truth: You Are Free from the Law

Here's the good news:

Jesus didn't come to help you live under the law.

He came to free you from it.

"For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus has made me free from the law of sin and death." — Romans 8:2

"Having wiped out the handwriting of requirements that was against us... He has taken it out of the way, having nailed it to the cross." — Colossians 2:14

That's not partial relief. ***That's total freedom.***

Diplomatic Immunity: A Gospel Picture

Let me offer a picture.

In international law, diplomats enjoy something called diplomatic immunity. They're not subject to the laws of the host country. If they break a local rule, they're not arrested—they're released.

In the same way, you and I now live with gospel immunity.

- Sin has no claim.
- The law has no jurisdiction.
- The punishment has been paid—in full.

And while we're not called to abuse this freedom, ***we're certainly called to enjoy it.***

The Holy Spirit: Our New Guide

The Holy Spirit is now our guide—not rules on stone tablets.

He leads. He teaches. He corrects. And when we stumble, He doesn't condemn us—He trains us.

"And you, being dead in your trespasses... He has made alive together with Him, having forgiven you all trespasses."
— Colossians 2:13

The Law Still Has a Purpose—for Unbelievers

Let's be clear: the law isn't useless. It still has a powerful purpose—for those who don't yet believe.

It exposes sin. It convicts the heart. It brings people to the end of themselves and protects society from evildoers.

“The law was our tutor to bring us to Christ, that we might be justified by faith.” — Galatians 3:24

But once you've come to Christ, the tutor is no longer needed. **You're now taught by the Spirit.**

Why the Truth Is Often Silenced

Here's where the battle intensifies.

Some pastors and leaders know this truth—but don't teach it. Why? Because they're afraid:

- Afraid people will sin more.
- Afraid of losing control.
- Afraid of grace being misunderstood.

So instead of proclaiming freedom, they tighten the leash. They withhold the truth to “protect” the people.

But in doing so, they rob them of the joy of knowing God personally.

Will Some Abuse the Truth? Yes. Should We Still Preach It? Absolutely.

Of course some will misuse grace. Paul addressed that:

“Shall we continue in sin that grace may abound? Certainly not!” — Romans 6:1–2

But that doesn't mean we hide grace.

It means we teach it properly and trust the Spirit to work.

Because when someone truly embraces grace, **they don't run toward sin—they run toward Christ.** That's what Paul says in:

Titus 2:11–14: the grace of God doesn't excuse us, it trains us—teaching us to deny ungodliness and to live with self-control, righteousness, and godliness in this present age.

Conclusion: Share the Truth, No Matter the Cost

This chapter reminds us that truth always meets resistance—especially when it confronts tradition.

But silence helps no one. So, teach the truth. Live the truth. Trust the Spirit. And don't fear the outcome.

Because the truth does set people free. Even if it rattles a few cages first.

“Stand fast therefore in the liberty by which Christ has made us free, and do not be entangled again by a yoke of bondage.” — Galatians 5:1

In the next chapter, we'll face the biggest fear of all: that complete forgiveness will lead to sin. We'll see why the exact opposite is true—and how complete forgiveness actually fuels holiness.

Chapter 6

The Power of Complete Forgiveness

— *Why Grace Doesn't Create Sin, It Crushes It*

In the previous chapters, we explored the liberating truth that in Christ, our sins are completely forgiven—past, present, and future. But with that truth comes a tension. Some fear that such a message might lead people to throw off restraint, to live however they please.

It's the age-old accusation: ***"If forgiveness is truly complete, won't people abuse it?"***

Let's face that concern head-on—and in doing so, rediscover why complete forgiveness is not a license to sin, but the very fuel that ignites a deeper walk with God.

Understanding the Fear of Antinomianism

Many well-meaning Bible teachers hesitate to proclaim complete forgiveness because they fear it will lead to antinomianism—a fancy word that simply means “lawlessness.”

The concern is this: if believers are truly and eternally forgiven, what will keep them from running wild?

But that fear reveals a misunderstanding—not just of grace, but of the heart of a true believer.

What Is Antinomianism, Really?

The word *antinomianism* comes from two Greek words: *anti* (against) and *nomos* (law). It refers to the idea that grace gives someone a “free pass” to ignore God's moral standards.

But let's be crystal clear: ***Complete forgiveness is not a license to sin—it's the power to live free from its grip.***

In fact, when someone genuinely receives God's grace, they're not led away from obedience... they're drawn deeper into it. Not from fear, but from love.

What Real Christians Do When They Sin

Over the years, I've known many true believers—those who've truly trusted Christ and rest in His finished work. I've yet to meet one who, upon realizing they've sinned, shrugged it off like it didn't matter.

Instead, their hearts are tender. They care. They grieve. They turn to the Lord—not to beg for forgiveness all over again, but because they are embarrassed of themselves.

Complete forgiveness doesn't harden the heart—it softens it.

Choosing Truth Over Fear

The question we must all ask is this: ***Are we willing to teach the truth, even if some may misuse it?***

If we shy away from proclaiming complete forgiveness because someone might abuse it, we've put fear in the driver's seat. But truth—God's truth—is never meant to be hidden.

| *"You shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free." — John 8:32*

Let's be honest: those who twist the message of grace to justify sin were never interested in pleasing God to begin with. But the real danger lies in something else entirely...

Who Is the Real Antinomian?

Here's the irony: many who warn against antinomianism are practicing it—by disregarding the very law they claim to uphold.

| *"Cursed is the one who does not confirm all the words of this law." — Deuteronomy 27:26*

God never gave permission to pick and choose which parts of the law to follow. If we try to be righteous by the law, we must keep all of it, perfectly.

Let's look at one example.

Sabbath Law: A Case Study in Picking & Choosing

| *"Remember the Sabbath day, to keep it holy... Six days you shall labor and do all your work, but the seventh day is the Sabbath of the LORD your God." — Exodus 20:8–10*

Most Christians today treat the Sabbath as a day of worship. But did you notice the command? You're not only to rest on the seventh day—you're commanded to work six days first!

What about the thirty-nine categories of work forbidden on the Sabbath? They include everything from writing and carrying to cooking and turning off a light. Even touching money violates Sabbath law in Jewish tradition.

If we're going to insist on keeping the law, we must keep it as God gave it. Anything less is, by definition, a disregard for God's law.

Modern-Day Antinomianism in the Church

Many churches today say they follow “biblical principles,” but in practice they've built man-made systems that blur the line between law and grace. They mix a few Old Testament commandments, sprinkle in some of Jesus' instructions, and then add a layer of their pastor's own rules. The result isn't freedom in Christ—it's a patchwork faith, a **denomination** built not on divine truth, but on human tradition mixed with truth. And instead of setting people free, it keeps them bound.

Whether it's diet, dress codes, tithing rules, or behavioral standards enforced through fear and shame—these are not the gospel.

Paul said it plainly:

*“For as many as are of the works of the law are under the curse... ‘Cursed is everyone who does not continue in all things which are written in the book of the law, to do them.’”
— Galatians 3:10*

And again:

“Desiring to be teachers of the law, understanding neither what they say nor the things which they affirm.” — 1 Timothy 1:7

When we teach partial law as a path to righteousness, we step into the very thing we fear: **true antinomianism**.

Jesus Fulfilled the Law—And Took Its Curse

Here's the heart of it all:

*"He Himself bore our sins in His own body on the tree, that we, having died to sins, might live for righteousness."
— 1 Peter 2:24*

Jesus didn't just keep the law—He bore its curse. He was hung on a tree, cursed in our place, so that you and I could walk in freedom with His Spirit, not fear.

"For Christ is the end of the law for righteousness to everyone who believes." — Romans 10:4

The Ministry of Death vs. the Ministry of Life

"But if the ministry of death, written and engraved on stones, was glorious... how will the ministry of the Spirit not be more glorious?" — 2 Corinthians 3:7–8

The old covenant was a ministry of condemnation. It said, "Stay back!"

But the new covenant says, "Come close!"

In the Old Covenant, only one man—the high priest—could enter God's presence once a year, after elaborate sacrifices.

But now?

"We have boldness to enter the Holiest by the blood of Jesus." — Hebrews 10:19

God's Goal: A Relationship, Not Rules

*"But now the righteousness of God apart from the law is revealed... even the righteousness of God, through faith in Jesus Christ, to all and on all who believe."
— Romans 3:21–22*

"They all shall know Me, from the least of them to the

greatest of them... for I will forgive their iniquity, and their sin I will remember no more." — Jeremiah 31:34

In the new covenant, the goal isn't improved behavior—it's an intimate knowledge of God Himself, and out of that relationship He does the transforming.

A 5-year-old child, a 90-year-old man, Jew or Gentile—anyone who receives the Holy Spirit can know God intimately. ***That's the miracle of grace.***

The Grace That Teaches

“For the grace of God that brings salvation has appeared to all men, teaching us that, denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly in the present age...” — Titus 2:11–12

Grace doesn't lead us into sin. ***It teaches us to say no to it.***

That's the real power of complete forgiveness: not permission to rebel, but the freedom to love God from the heart.

Conclusion: Embrace the Freedom, Share the Truth

Don't be afraid to proclaim complete forgiveness. Yes, some will misunderstand it. Some may even abuse it. But many will be set free—and transformed.

Because when you know you're truly forgiven, you can stop hiding, stop pretending, and finally start walking with God in truth.

And that changes everything.

*“If the Son makes you free, you shall be free indeed.”
— John 8:36*

In the next chapter, we'll see how Jesus' cry from the cross—“It is finished!”—shatters the lie of conditional forgiveness and secures your standing with God once for all.

Chapter 7

Finished Means Finished

— *Why Forgiveness Is Complete, Not Conditional*

What more could be done?

If Jesus cried out from the cross, “It is finished!” (John 19:30), why do so many Christians live like He only meant, “It has begun”?

Why do churches today teach believers to keep asking for forgiveness, as if Christ’s sacrifice wasn’t enough?

In this chapter, we expose one of the most subtle lies undermining the gospel: the idea that forgiveness must be repeatedly requested to remain in right standing with God. It’s time to bring this distortion into the light of God’s Word.

The Lie: “Ask and You Shall Be Forgiven... Again”

Many Christians are taught that forgiveness is granted only when we ask for it, over and over again. But here’s the issue: ***That’s not the glorious gospel language—it’s Old Covenant practice dressed in Christian clothing.***

This belief:

- Keeps sin alive in the believer’s conscience
- Treats Jesus’ sacrifice as ongoing rather than once-for-all
- Turns confession into a ritual instead of an agreement with truth
- Makes pastors into modern-day priests, mediating repeated forgiveness

“Now where there is remission of these, there is no longer an offering for sin.” — Hebrews 10:18

If there is no more offering, why are so many still offering up prayers for forgiveness?

The Old Covenant: Repeating What Could Never Remove Sin

Under the Mosaic Law, sacrifices were offered continually, yet never sufficient.

“For the law, having a shadow of the good things to come... can never with these same sacrifices, which they offer continually year by year, make those who approach perfect.” — Hebrews 10:1

“But in those sacrifices there is a reminder of sins every year. For it is not possible that the blood of bulls and goats could take away sins.” — Hebrews 10:3–4

The Old Covenant kept the people **reminded of sin—not relieved from it**.

The New Covenant: One Sacrifice for All Time

Here’s the radical, freeing truth: Jesus’ sacrifice didn’t just cover sin temporarily. ***It removed it permanently.***

*“But this Man, after He had offered one sacrifice for sins forever, sat down at the right hand of God.”
— Hebrews 10:12*

“For by one offering He has perfected forever those who are being sanctified.” — Hebrews 10:14

The priests stood daily—because the work was never done. But Jesus sat down—because the work is finished.

Let that sink in: ***Perfected forever.***

The Dangerous Blending of Covenants

Modern churches, unknowingly or not, often combine Old Covenant thinking with gospel language.

For example:

- Teaching people to ask for forgiveness repeatedly
- Warning believers that unconfessed sin breaks fellowship
- Positioning the pastor or priest as the one who helps “restore” you.

All of this creates dependence on a system instead of dependence on the finished work of Christ.

| *“He takes away the first that He may establish the second.”*
— *Hebrews 10:9.*

In other words, Jesus brought the old covenant to its completion and set it aside, so that in His blood He could establish a brand-new covenant that never needs replacing.

Jesus Forgave Without Being Asked

Let's look at some powerful examples of unrequested forgiveness:

1. The Paralytic – Mark 2:1–5

| *“When Jesus saw their faith, He said to the paralytic, ‘Son, your sins are forgiven you.’”*

No request. No confession. Just faith—and immediate forgiveness without asking.

2. The Woman Who Wept at Jesus' Feet – Luke 7:47–48

| *“Therefore I say to you, her sins, which are many, are forgiven... Then He said to her, ‘Your sins are forgiven.’”*

She brought tears, not words, or confessions. Jesus gave grace, not a checklist.

3. The Thief on the Cross – Luke 23:42–43

| *“Then Jesus said to him, ‘Assuredly, I say to you, today you will be with Me in Paradise.’”*

No time for religious ritual. No prayer of confession. Just belief, just “Remember me”.

4. The Crowd That Crucified Him – Luke 23:34

| *“Then Jesus said, ‘Father, forgive them, for they do not know what they do.’”*

No confession. No apology. No remorse.
And yet—Jesus prayed for their forgiveness.

Did the Father say No? Or did He say Yes?

The cross itself is the answer. The Son asked, and the Father agreed. **Forgiveness was released at the very**

moment sin was at its worst. Trying to remove God from His world.

In the very moment they were driving nails through His hands, mocking Him, spitting on Him—He interceded: ***“Father, forgive them.”***

This is not cheap grace—it’s costly mercy. It was not earned—it was given.

So, let’s think clearly. If Jesus forgave His executioners in real time—while they were still mocking Him—how could He expect us to wait for perfect apologies before we forgive others? His example sets the tone: forgiveness is a gift, not a transaction.

Let’s not miss this crucial fact:

If God commands us to forgive without condition, see *Mark 11:25-26*—even those who harm us, even those who never repent—then surely He does not hold Himself to a **lesser standard**.

Would He ask us to extend forgiveness He Himself withholds? **No.** The cross itself is proof: while hanging in agony, Jesus said, *“Father, forgive them.”* That wasn’t just a moment of mercy—it was a revelation of God’s heart. So, if forgiveness flows from Him so freely, maybe we need to rethink how freely we receive it.

5. Cornelius, His Friends, and His Family – Acts 10:44–48

“To Him all the prophets witness that, through His name, whoever believes in Him will receive remission of sins.”
(v.43)

Peter didn’t finish the sermon.

There was no altar call.

No sinner’s prayer.

No confession booth.

Just belief—and the Spirit fell.

While Peter was still speaking, the Holy Spirit interrupted—confirming that these Gentiles had received the same gift given to Jewish believers at Pentecost.

The Jewish believers were shocked. Not because God had moved—but because He had done it without circumcision, without the Law, without the temple.

God's message was loud and clear: ***Faith alone in Christ alone.***

But What About 1 John 1:9?

Great question. We'll cover it in depth in Chapter 9, but here's a sneak preview:

“*If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.*”

This verse isn't a prescription for repeated confession. It's an invitation to salvation for those—especially Gnostics—who denied they were sinners in need of grace.

Conclusion: Resting in a Finished Work

Forgiveness that depends on you is not forgiveness—it's a contract.

What Jesus offered was not a contract. It was a covenant sealed with His blood.

His cry of “*It is finished*” wasn't a slogan—it was a verdict.

And when God declares it finished, nothing remains unfinished.

“By one offering He has perfected forever those who are being sanctified.” — Hebrews 10:14

In the next chapter, we'll face the question every believer asks sooner or later: What happens when I fail? Do I lose forgiveness—or does Christ's finished work hold me fast?

Chapter 8

When We Fail

— *What Happens When a Believer Sins?*

As believers, we don't lose forgiveness when we sin. We may grieve the Holy Spirit, but we don't forfeit relationship.

Think about it—when you became a child of God, all you could do was believe that Jesus paid for all your sins. And now that you are His child, when you sin, all you can do is believe again—believe that you are still forgiven, still accepted, and still His.

The Two Options After Sin

Let's get practical. What should a believer do after they sin? You only have two options:

1. **Try to get more forgiveness.**
2. **Rest in the forgiveness already granted.**

That's it. This is the difference between ***working for forgiveness and trusting in what Christ has already done.***

Too many Christians instinctively default to guilt, shame, and spiritual self-punishment—as if that will restore what they believe they've lost. But here's the truth:

“*And do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God, by whom you were sealed for the day of redemption.*” — *Ephesians 4:30*

Sin does grieve the Spirit. It affects our peace, our relationships, and our clarity. But it does not undo what Jesus finished. Our forgiveness is not suspended when we stumble. It is rooted in the cross—not in our ability to stay clean.

Confession Doesn't Earn Mercy — The Cross Did That

Confession is not a magic ritual that activates grace. The cross already satisfied God's justice once and for all.

When we sin, we don't crawl back for scraps. We rest in the feast already laid before us. We don't beg. ***We believe.***

*“My little children, these things I write to you, so that you **may not sin**. And **if anyone sins, we have an Advocate** with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous. And **He Himself is the propitiation for our sins**, and not for ours only but also for the whole world.” — 1 John 2:1–2*

Notice how John finally calls his readers “little children” here. Why? Because now he’s no longer warning unbelievers—he’s pastoring believers. He’s reminding them they already belong. Jesus took away everything that once stood between us and God.

Again, “*It is finished*” wasn’t a slogan. ***It was a verdict.***

Jesus, Our Advocate and Defender

When a believer sins, Jesus doesn’t act surprised. He doesn’t re-apply the blood. He doesn’t defend your failure—He defends your identity.

The Greek word for “Advocate” is *paraklētos*—a legal term for one who stands alongside to plead a case. But Jesus isn’t making emotional appeals. He’s not asking the Father to “go easy.”

He presents the evidence: ***His finished work.***

The phrase “we have an Advocate with the Father” is written in the present active tense—meaning His defense is constant, not occasional. Even when we fall, our status is unchanged.

Why? Because our identity is anchored in Christ’s obedience, not our own.

Jesus does not excuse sin—He removes guilt. He proclaims what the cross accomplished:

- You are righteous in Him.
- You are sealed, not shaky.
- You are accepted, not under review.

We Draw Near — Because We’re Already Forgiven

We don’t draw near to earn forgiveness. ***We draw near because we already have it.*** We sincerely speak to Him how to change.

God doesn't wait for your feelings to catch up before declaring you clean. The moment you sinned, Christ was already standing before the Father on your behalf—not to plead for mercy, but to present the blood that already satisfied justice.

We don't bring sacrifices anymore. We bring faith.

We don't bring shame. We bring surrender.

We don't bring performance. We bring our identity—hidden in Christ.

Jesus Took the Curse—So You Could Be Free

The law demanded flawless obedience—and condemned all who fell short.

“Christ has redeemed us from the curse of the law, having become a curse for us (for it is written, ‘Cursed is everyone who hangs on a tree’).” — Galatians 3:13

He took the curse. ***You get the blessing.***

He bore the wrath. ***You receive the righteousness.***

This is not just forgiveness. It's freedom.

No More Sacrifices, No More Confession Rituals

“Now where there is remission of these, there is no longer an offering for sin.” — Hebrews 10:18

Let it settle deep in your spirit: ***There is no more offering.***

- Not from you.
- Not from your prayers.
- Not from your pastor.

You don't need to bring an apology to the altar for forgiveness. Jesus already brought the blood.

You don't need to confess to cleanse yourself.

He already made you clean.

You don't need to fear distance. ***He already brought you near.***

Conclusion: Rest—Don't Repeat

You are forgiven.

Not because you got the formula right.
Not because you felt bad enough.
Not because someone prayed over you.

You are forgiven—because ***Jesus said so.***

| *“It is finished!” — John 19:30*

It’s time to stop washing with soap He already used. Start living clean in the power of His Spirit—not to stay forgiven, but because you are.

Chapter 9

Understanding Forgiveness and the Role of Confession

— *Why Confession Doesn't Earn Forgiveness but Points to Christ*

In the previous chapters, we explored how confession is often taught and practiced in today's church. We also addressed the accusation of having a "license to sin," and showed how that distortion twists God's grace into an excuse for immorality. This is the very error the book of Jude warns against—turning the grace of God into lewdness while denying the authority of Christ.

But we also exposed another subtle trap—this idea that believers must stay on a spiritual treadmill of confessing sin after sin just to remain close to God.

Let's now tackle a critical question: ***Does confession really deal with the seriousness of sin?***

Reducing the Seriousness of Sin to a Confession

To suggest that confession is what brings forgiveness reduces the weight and wickedness of sin.

It implies that all one needs is a quick apology and a verbal acknowledgment, and the eternal consequence of sin is wiped away.

This turns forgiveness into a human-controlled formula:

- Sin for a while
- Confess when you're ready
- Receive forgiveness on demand

But here's the problem: ***Sin is not a light thing, and forgiveness is not a vending machine.***

Sin is so serious, it took nothing less than the death of God Himself in the flesh to remove it.

“So Christ was offered once to bear the sins of many.”

— Hebrews 9:28

“And according to the law almost all things are purified with blood, and without shedding of blood there is no remission.”

— Hebrews 9:22

“For the wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord.” — Romans 6:23

To believe that sin is removed through confession is to treat its penalty as nothing more than a spoken apology. But Scripture is clear: “*the wages of sin is death*” (Romans 6:23). Anything less than death as the penalty not only misrepresents sin’s seriousness—it undermines the cross itself, making the sacrifice of Jesus appear unnecessary and of no effect.

Forgiveness Is Complete—But It’s Not Salvation

Here’s a critical truth: ***Forgiveness makes salvation possible—but forgiveness is not salvation.***

- Forgiveness removes the barrier between God and man—sin.
- Salvation restores the life that was lost—God’s Spirit.

It’s not just the canceling of sin, it’s the indwelling presence of Christ through the Holy Spirit.

When someone receives Jesus, they don’t just get their sins removed—they get God Himself. They move from death to life.

“I have come that they may have life, and that they may have it more abundantly.” — John 10:10

“To them God willed to make known what are the riches of the glory of this mystery among the Gentiles: which is Christ ***in you***, the hope of glory.” — Colossians 1:27

“Now if anyone does not have the Spirit of Christ, he is not His.” — Romans 8:9

The only reason a person is saved is because the Spirit of Christ

is in them. If He is not, they are not saved—no matter how many sins they confess.

The Devil's Lie: "Be Like God—Do Good"

I personally believe Satan has deceived billions with the same old lie: ***"You can be like God. Just do good and avoid evil."***

Churches are filled with people who believe that as long as they confess their sins, do their best, and keep up with their good works, God will accept them into heaven.

They think that forgiveness equals salvation, and that ongoing confession maintains their status.

But listen to what Jesus Himself said:

"Many will say to Me in that day, 'Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in Your name, cast out demons in Your name, and done many wonders in Your name?' And then I will declare to them, 'I never knew you; depart from Me, you who practice lawlessness!'" — Matthew 7:22–23

The issue isn't whether someone knows God—it's whether **God knows them**.

"But now after you have known God, or rather are known by God..." — Galatians 4:9

Unless God lives inside you, He doesn't know you. And many are hiding from Him in plain sight—behind pews, behind prayers, behind church programs. But God sees the heart.

Just like Adam and Eve tried to sew fig leaves to cover their shame, many people cover their guilt with religion. But the only covering that works is Christ's Holy Spirit who dwells in us.

Looking Ahead: The "Bar of Soap" Verse

In the next chapter, we'll dive deep into the most misunderstood verse in this entire debate:

1 John 1:9 — often referred to as *"The Christian Bar of Soap."*

We'll see in the context, and we'll explain how it was not written

as a prescription for Christians to keep confessing sin to stay forgiven. Instead, it's a rhetorical invitation to unbelievers, especially the Gnostics in John's day, to finally agree with God about their sinfulness and receive salvation.

Conclusion: Rest in What's Already Yours

God's forgiveness isn't handed out one apology at a time—it was handed down from the cross once and for all.

And if Christ is in you, you are forgiven, forever.

Salvation is not confession-based—it's ***Christ-in-you-based***.

And the one who lives in you is also your Advocate. His message?

"It is finished."

Chapter 10

The Christian Bar of Soap

— *Why 1 John 1:9 Is About Salvation, Not Daily Cleansing*

“If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.”

— 1 John 1:9

For generations, 1 John 1:9 has been referred to in Christian circles as *“The Christian Bar of Soap.”* Pastors have taught that if we want to be clean again—if we want to maintain our fellowship with God—then we need to “use the bar” through continual confession of sins.

But is that really what John was saying? To answer that, we need to go back—not just to the verse, but to the **context, history, and crisis** that gave rise to these words.

Clarifying the Context

This letter wasn’t written in a vacuum. The Apostle John wasn’t simply offering a spiritual hygiene tip.

He was writing into the middle of **a church split**—one born from heresy, confusion, and division.

John was responding to **a church crisis** caused by false teachers who introduced distorted views of Jesus, sin, and salvation.

“They went out from us, but they were not of us...”

— 1 John 2:19

Church split! The fellowship was shaken. These false teachers weren’t just drifting—they were defectors. They became early forerunners of Gnosticism, a rising heresy that peddled spiritual elitism, denied the bodily incarnation of Christ, and dismissed sin as irrelevant. To them, knowledge was salvation, flesh was evil, and repentance was unnecessary.

They claimed the material world was evil, but their spirit was pure—so sin didn't touch them. As a result, they believed they had no sin and never needed forgiveness.

It's no wonder John wrote what he did.

Who Was John Really Addressing?

Let's look closely at the pattern of *1 John 1:8–10*:

- Verse 8 – *“If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us.”*
- Verse 9 – *“If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us...”*
- Verse 10 – *“If we say that we have not sinned, we make Him a liar...”*

Three verses. All starting with “If we...”

But who is the “we”?

Is John lumping all Christians into this group? Is he saying all believers are in danger of deceiving ourselves and calling God a liar?

Not at all. John is using a **rhetorical “we”**—a writing technique where the author includes himself to soften the blow of a rebuke aimed at others.

John wasn't accusing faithful believers of denying sin—he was confronting the false teachers, the Gnostics, who claimed sinlessness and spiritual superiority.

Verse 9: A Call to Confession (for Unbelievers)

So what is *1 John 1:9* really saying?

It's not a ritual for Christians to stay forgiven—it's an invitation to salvation. John is throwing a lifeline to those drowning in self-deception, offering them the truth that if they confess their sins, God is faithful and just to forgive and cleanse.

At the same time, these words reassure young believers who were unsettled by false teachers: forgiveness is not fragile or conditional, but rooted in Christ's finished work.

My translation: *“You Gnostics, if you would just agree with God about your sin—if you’d stop denying it and confess the truth—God is faithful and just. He will forgive you and cleanse you completely.”*

That’s not a bar of soap for believers—it’s a doorway to salvation for unbelievers.

Greek Word Study

The word “confess” is *homologeō*—meaning “to agree” or “to say the same.”

Confession isn’t about groveling. It’s about ***coming into agreement with God—admitting the truth about our condition and our need for Him.***

A true believer already does this. For example, they know that getting drunk is sin, and they already agree with God about that. To continually “confess” the same sin over and over, as if forgiveness depended on repeating the words, is religiously irrational. You can’t keep agreeing with God about something you already agreed with Him on.

The point of *homologeō* is not endless repetition—it is the decisive act of siding with God’s truth against the lies of sin and unbelief.

Not a Daily Cleansing Ritual

Some believers have been taught that we need to “stay forgiven” by regularly confessing our sins.

But the Bible never says that.

“For by one offering He has perfected forever those who are being sanctified.” — *Hebrews 10:14*

“Blessed is the man to whom the Lord shall not impute sin.” — *Romans 4:8*

Jesus’ sacrifice didn’t create a subscription plan for forgiveness—it paid in full.

Paul’s Parallel: Confession and Salvation

The Apostle Paul gives a complementary perspective in *Romans 10:9–10*:

“...if you confess with your mouth the Lord Jesus and believe in your heart that God has raised Him from the dead, you will be saved...”

This is not about confessing sins every time we fail—it’s about confessing faith in Jesus. That’s how salvation comes.

Likewise, Hebrews reminds us:

“Consider the Apostle and High Priest of our confession, Christ Jesus.” — *Hebrews 3:1*

Here again, confession is linked to faith in Christ, not repeating our faults.

So, What About Sin in the Believer’s Life?

Do Christians still sin? Of course. But our response isn’t to beg for forgiveness again. Instead, we:

- We believe Jesus’ finished work of the cross
- Thank God for His mercy.
- Let the Spirit lead us toward growth, not guilt
- Respond with gratitude, not groveling

“My little children, these things I write to you, so that you may not sin. And if anyone sins, we have an Advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous.” — *1 John 2:1*

Notice the shift. John moves from warning deceivers to comforting believers. Once you’re in Christ, forgiveness is no longer conditional—it’s complete.

Conclusion: 1 John 1:9 Is Not the Christian Bar of Soap

It is not a daily ritual for believers.

It is a one-time invitation to the deceived, the deniers, and the disillusioned—calling them to step into the light of truth and receive eternal forgiveness.

As believers, our confession is not about trying to be clean again. ***We are already clean by the blood of Jesus.*** Our

confession is faith in Jesus Who Himself cleaned us from all sin.

“*You are already clean because of the word which I have spoken to you.*” — John 15:3

We confess—not for forgiveness—but because we walk in the light. We agree with God, because we are His. We speak of Christ as our Savior, because He speaks for us.

Looking Ahead: The Covenant Shift

In the next chapter, we’ll trace the great divide between the Old and New Covenants. We’ll explore how Jesus’ death introduced a once-for-all forgiveness that rendered temple sacrifices, confession rituals, and conditional forgiveness obsolete.

Get ready for freedom. Because when you understand the difference between law and grace—between confession *for* forgiveness and confession of faith—everything changes.

Chapter 11

Covenant Confusion

— *Understanding the Difference Between the Covenants So We Can Rest in Christ*

Introduction: The Bible teaches that God has related to humanity through multiple covenants throughout history, but two primary covenants define humanity's standing before God: the Old Covenant (given through Moses) and the New Covenant (established through Jesus Christ).

Why So Many Are Still Confused

Imagine trying to live by two different rulebooks at the same time. That's exactly what many Christians unknowingly do.

They mix the Old Covenant—based on law, works, and performance—with the New Covenant—based on grace, rest, and faith in Jesus' finished work.

But God never meant for these two to coexist in the same heart. He gave one to prepare us, and the other to save us.

It is essential to understand both but only live in one.

It's time to clear the fog and embrace the New Covenant for what it really is: ***a better covenant, built on better promises.***

“In that He says, ‘A new covenant,’ He has made **the first obsolete**. Now what is becoming obsolete and growing old is ready to vanish away.” — Hebrews 8:13

The writer of Hebrews declared that the first covenant was made obsolete when Christ died. Then in A.D. 70, with the destruction of the Jerusalem temple and the end of the sacrificial system, that covenant became not only theologically obsolete but effectively obsolete.

The Bible teaches that there are two distinct covenants:

1. The Old Covenant – Given to Isreal (Not Gentiles) through

Moses; centered on the law, sacrifices, and external obedience. (Impersonal relationship)

2. **The New Covenant** – Established between God the Father and God the Son; offered to the world, centered on grace, internal transformation, and the once-for-all sacrifice of Christ. (Personal relationship)

Jesus had a role in both. He lived under the Old Covenant law, taught it, fulfilled it—and then replaced it with the New Covenant at His death.

“But when the fullness of the time had come, God sent forth His Son, born of a woman, born under the law.”
— Galatians 4:4

“Then He said, ‘Behold, I have come to do Your will, O God.’ He takes away the first that He may establish the second. By that will we have been sanctified through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once for all.” — Hebrews 10:9–10

The New Covenant Began at the Cross, Not the Manger

Jesus’ birth fulfilled prophecy, but it was His death that launched the New Covenant.

“And He said to them, ‘This is My blood of the new covenant, which is shed for many.’” — Mark 14:24

“For this is My blood of the new covenant, which is shed for many for the remission of sins.” — Matthew 26:28

These verses make it clear: ***the New Covenant began at the cross, not in the manger.***

Until that moment, Jesus was teaching the law to people who thought they were already righteous.

Jesus Fulfilled the Law, Then Replaced It

“Do not think that I came to destroy the Law or the Prophets. I did not come to destroy but to fulfill.”
— Matthew 5:17

Jesus didn't abolish the law—He fulfilled it. And then He replaced it with something better.

*“But this Man, after He had offered one sacrifice for sins forever, sat down at the right hand of God.”
— Hebrews 10:12*

*“Now where there is remission of these, **there is no longer** an offering for sin.” — Hebrews 10:18*

The priests stood daily because the work was never finished.
Jesus sat down, because the work was finished.

The Sermon on the Mount: Law 2.0

Some people treat the Sermon on the Mount as if it were Jesus' updated version of the Torah—a new and improved checklist for Christian behavior.

But that's not what it is.

The Sermon on the Mount is not a “Christian Torah” or Law 2.0” for the church.

- It is not a moral upgrade.
- It is not a challenge to “do better” or “try harder.”
- It is not a picture of life in the millennium.

It is a divine spotlight exposing the false religion of His day. And it is a holy invitation to trade in self-righteousness for His righteousness. Jesus wasn't reinterpreting the Law. He was fulfilling - burying the self-righteous leaders of His day beneath the crushing weight of their own misguided efforts.

*“For I say to you, that unless your righteousness **exceeds** the righteousness of the scribes and Pharisees, you will by no means **enter** the kingdom of heaven.” — Matthew 5:20*

He wasn't trying to save them through law but to expose their false religion, so they would see His authority as their Messiah.

Conditional vs. Unconditional Forgiveness

In *Matthew 6:14–15*, Jesus was teaching under the old covenant, He said:

*“For if you forgive men their trespasses, your heavenly Father will also forgive you. But **if you do not forgive** men their trespasses, **neither** will **your Father forgive** your trespasses.”*

That’s Old Covenant teaching—**forgiveness was conditional**.

But under the New Covenant, forgiveness is **complete as a gift**.

“And He Himself is the propitiation for our sins, and not for ours only but also for the whole world.” — 1 John 2:2

Living from Forgiveness, Not Toward It

*“And be kind to one another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, **even as God** in Christ forgave you.”
— Ephesians 4:32 (NKJV)*

*“...bearing with one another, and forgiving one another, if anyone has a complaint against another; **even as Christ forgave you**, so you also must do.”
— Colossians 3:13 (NKJV)*

Notice what Paul doesn’t say:

He doesn’t say, *“Forgive others so Christ will forgive you.”*

He doesn’t say, *“Be kind so God will be kind back.”*

He says something radical—*Christ already forgave you*. It’s done. Complete. Past tense.

This is not performance-based religion. This is **New Covenant living**, where forgiveness isn’t a reward—it’s the root.

And because we’ve been forgiven **once for all** (Hebrews 10:14), we now *live from that forgiveness*, not *toward it*. Our kindness doesn’t earn God’s kindness. Our mercy doesn’t purchase His. We are kind, merciful, and forgiving *because we’re already overflowing with what He’s poured into us*.

Forgiveness is no longer an obligation driven by fear—it’s an **overflow driven by freedom of being completely forgiven**. We aren’t white-knuckling kindness to impress God. We’re releasing what we’ve received.

Agreement with Grace, Not Guilt

Paul anchors forgiveness in both letters to this one phrase:
“even as Christ forgave you.”

This is not an abstract model. It's not: *Try to be like Jesus and do your best.*

No, it's the opposite.

It's: **Jesus forgave you. Fully. Forever. Now let that complete forgiveness flow outward.**

The grace that saves you is the same grace that empowers you to bear with difficult people, to forgive deep wounds, and to show undeserved kindness. Not because they've earned it—but because **you didn't earn it either.**

To deny forgiveness to someone else is to act as if yours wasn't a gift.

To withhold grace is to imply that you received it because you were more worthy.

But the cross tells the truth: *none of us were worthy—and Christ forgave us anyway.*

Summary: The Cross Makes Forgiveness the Starting Point

Old Covenant forgiveness was conditional—*forgive and you'll be forgiven.*

New Covenant forgiveness is foundational—*you've been forgiven, now live like it.*

That's why Paul never commands us to beg for God's mercy. He tells us to **live from it.**

Forgive others—not to stay forgiven, but because you already are.

Bear with the difficult—not to earn anything, but because Jesus bore your worst.

Be tenderhearted—not because God will be nicer—but because **He already gave you His heart.**

This is not law. This is **grace with power.**

The Role of the Holy Spirit in the New Covenant

What the law couldn't do—change the heart—the Spirit now does from within.

“By so much more Jesus has become a surety of a better covenant.” — Hebrews 7:22

The Spirit empowers what the law only demanded. The Old Covenant said “try harder.” **The New Covenant says “walk with Me.”**

The Irrationality of a Partially Forgiving God

Again, let's follow the logic of those who claim God has *not yet* forgiven the world:

1. God tells *you* to forgive your enemy before they confess.
2. But God *Himself* withholds forgiveness until people confess or believe first?
3. Therefore, you are expected to show **more mercy and grace** than the God who saved you.

That's irrational. And worse—it misrepresents the nature of mercy and grace.

Would God tell a mother to forgive her son before he says sorry... but refuse to do that Himself?

Jesus forgave His enemies before they asked:

“Then Jesus said, “Father, forgive them, for they do not know what they do.” — Luke 23:34

The Cross Was the Moment of Forgiveness, Not Just the Offer

When Jesus cried, “*It is finished*” (John 19:30), He wasn't starting a new list of conditions—He was ending the old one.

“Behold! The Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world!” — John 1:29

The only rational, biblical conclusion is this:

- **God has already forgiven the world.**
- The only thing left is for the world to **receive** it by faith—not earn it by confession or moral effort.

Final Point: A Higher Standard?

If God still holds forgiveness *conditionally* while asking us to forgive *unconditionally*—then He is:

- A moral hypocrite.
- A legalistic taskmaster.
- And not the God revealed in Jesus Christ.

But if God has already forgiven the world—*fully, freely, forever*—then the gospel is truly **good news**.

“God was in Christ reconciling the world to Himself, not counting their trespasses against them...”
— 2 Corinthians 5:19

That is the only gospel worth preaching.

Conclusion: Stop Mixing the Covenants

When you confuse the covenants, you live in guilt, not grace. You try to earn what God already gave. You read Jesus’ words to Israel under the law and assume they apply directly to the Church (Both Jews and Gentiles) under grace.

But God has invited us into something better. Not because we’re better people, but because **Jesus finished the work**.

“Therefore by the deeds of the law no flesh will be justified in His sight, for by the law is the knowledge of sin.”
—Romans 3:20

“All have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, being justified freely by His grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus.” — Romans 3:23–24

“He takes away the first that He may establish the second.”
— Hebrews 10:9

The gospel is not about trying harder—it’s about believing deeper.

The cross is where law and grace collided—and ***grace won.***

Chapter 12

Understanding Atonement, Propitiation, and God's Love

— *From Covering Sin to Removing Sin Completely*

Introduction: Why Words Matter

In the Christian world, few words are more misunderstood than *atonement*.

While it often gets used interchangeably with forgiveness or salvation, it means something entirely different. This chapter will unpack the biblical meaning of atonement, distinguish it from propitiation and forgiveness, and show how these truths affect your experience of God's love today.

What Is Atonement? A Covering, Not a Cleansing

In the Old Testament, the word *atonement* (Hebrew: *kaphar*) literally means **to cover**.

It did **not** mean to cleanse or remove sin. It meant something had been placed **over** the sin to shield it from judgment—usually **blood**, applied by the high priest in the Tabernacle.

Think of it like a layer of **clear shellac** over a stained wood surface. The stain is still there—it hasn't been removed—but it's **sealed in**, preserved for the future. That's exactly what atonement did. It **preserved** the memory of sin without cleansing the guilt.

“*For it is not possible that the blood of bulls and goats could take away sins.*” — Hebrews 10:4

Only Jesus, through His death, brought forgiveness that didn't just *cover but cleansed completely*. Christ didn't seal sin from sight—He removed it from the record.

“*Behold! The Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world!*” — John 1:29

The Promise of a New Covenant: Sins Remembered No More

God always had a plan to do more than cover sin — He would one day remove it.

Through the prophet Jeremiah, He promised:

“For I will forgive their iniquity, and their sin I will remember no more.” — Jeremiah 31:34

The writer of Hebrews repeats this as evidence that the New Covenant was now active:

“For I will be merciful to their unrighteousness, and their sins and their lawless deeds I will remember no more.”
— Hebrews 8:12

And Paul affirms it:

“For this is My covenant with them, when I take away their sins.” — Romans 11:27

Old Covenant: sins remembered. New Covenant: sins removed and not remembered.

Atonement vs. Forgiveness: What the Priest Could and Couldn't Do

The Law of Moses makes a sharp distinction:

- **Atonement** was the priest's job.
- **Forgiveness** was God's alone.

“So the priest shall make atonement for them, and it shall be forgiven them.” — Leviticus 4:20

“And the priest shall make atonement for him for the sin... and it shall be forgiven him.” — Leviticus 5:10

The priest could cover sin. **Only God could forgive sin.** In the Old Testament, you will not find the phrase “sins are forgiven” used the way it is in the New Testament — that is, as a present or perfect tense declaration of a believer's standing with God. Instead, the OT uses almost exclusively the future passive form: “it shall be forgiven him”

In the New Testament is past tense:

*"And you, being dead in your trespasses and the uncircumcision of your flesh, He has made alive together with Him, **having forgiven you all trespasses.**"*
— Colossians 2:13

Propitiation: Not Covering Sin, but Removing It Entirely

Propitiation is not the same as atonement. It means **to satisfy wrath, to remove sin completely**.

Imagine you owe a debt you can never repay. *Atonement* is the bank covering the bill with a sticky note. *Propitiation* is the debt erased from the ledger.

"And He Himself is the propitiation for our sins, and not for ours only but also for the whole world." — 1 John 2:2

Jesus didn't just cover sin. **He removed it forever.** That's the heartbeat of the New Covenant / Testament.

Forgiveness Is Not Salvation

Here's another crucial truth: forgiveness is not the same as salvation.

- Forgiveness removes the barrier of sin.
- Salvation restores the life of God to you.

"He who has the Son has life; he who does not have the Son of God does not have life." — 1 John 5:12

Forgiveness makes relationship possible, but salvation is what happens when the Holy Spirit comes to live in you.

The Fullness of Time: Timing Matters

God doesn't rush. He moves according to *His* timeline, not ours. The new birth—being born of the Spirit—was not available until Jesus had *died* and *risen*.

"But when the fullness of the time had come, God sent forth His Son... to redeem those who were under the law, that we might receive the adoption as sons." — Galatians 4:4–5

Under the Old Covenant, believers were granted provisional comfort. Their sins were *covered*, not *removed*. And because the price of sin had not yet been paid, **the Spirit would not yet dwell in anyone.**

“*The Holy Spirit was not yet given, because Jesus was not yet glorified.*” — John 7:39

Even the righteous dead could not yet enter heaven. Instead, Jesus describes a temporary place of comfort for them—

Abraham’s Bosom:

“*The beggar died and was carried by the angels to Abraham’s bosom.*” — Luke 16:22

They were waiting. Why? Because **the final payment for sin had not yet been made.**

But after Jesus died and rose, everything changed. Propitiation was complete. Sin was finally removed—not just covered. And the gates of heaven swung open.

The term “**Abraham’s bosom**” appears in *Luke 16:22*, in Jesus’ talk of the rich man and Lazarus:

Abraham’s bosom = a *paradise-like compartment of Sheol*, for the faithful who died before Christ’s finished work.

Why Were They There?

Under the **Old Covenant**, forgiveness was not yet final—**sins were covered, not removed** (*Hebrews 10:1–4*).

So the saints could not yet enter heaven in the full sense, because the way had **not yet been opened** by Jesus’ blood (*see Hebrews 9:8–12*).

What Changed at the Cross and Resurrection?

When Jesus died, He descended to the “*lower parts*”

(*Sheol/Hades*)—but **not to suffer**. He went to **proclaim victory** (*see 1 Peter 3:19*) and **lead the righteous out** (*see Ephesians 4:8–10*).

“When He ascended on high, He led captivity captive...”

— Ephesians 4:8

“...by His own blood He entered the Most Holy Place once for all, having obtained eternal redemption.”

— Hebrews 9:12

At that moment, **Abraham’s bosom was emptied**—its faithful occupants finally brought into heaven.

The Raised Saints in Matthew 27:51–53

“Then, behold, the veil of the temple was torn in two from top to bottom; and the earth quaked, and the rocks were split, and the graves were opened; and many bodies of the saints who had fallen asleep were raised; and coming out of the graves after His resurrection, they went into the holy city and appeared to many.” — Matthew 27:51–53

These were likely **some of the saints from Abraham’s bosom**, resurrected as a **firstfruits sign** of Christ’s victory over death.

Note the order:

“Coming out of the graves after His resurrection, they went into the holy city and appeared to many.” — Matthew 27:53

Christ’s resurrection was the **first**, and these saints followed as **proof of the new life He secured**.

Summary

The Old Testaments saints who died in faith likely went to **Abraham’s bosom** before the cross their sins were “atoned” covered and **remembered**).

After Jesus’ death, their sins were “propitiated” removed and **forgotten**.

Jesus’ resurrection **emptied Abraham’s bosom**, bringing the righteous into full access to God’s presence.

The resurrected saints were not just souls, but **bodily raised**, walking around in Jerusalem as a **public testimony that the grave had been broken**.

“Many will come from east and west, and sit down with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob in the kingdom of heaven.”
— Matthew 8:11

Jesus didn't just save *future* believers. He reached back into history and brought *those who waited in faith* home.

They had waited for the *fullness of time*. Now, because of Christ, the wait is over.

The Love of God Keeps No Record of Wrongs

Atonement remembers. Propitiation removes and forgets.

“For I will be merciful to their unrighteousness, and their sins and their lawless deeds **I will remember no more.**” —
Hebrews 8:12

If God still kept a record of your sins, how could He say:

“Love... keeps no record of wrongs.” — 1 Corinthians 13:5

To believe God still remembers your sins is to deny His love and crucifixion.

But when you believe your sins are gone, you stop striving to earn His love — and start living in it.

Conclusion: Free to Be Loved

You are not atoned for — you are forgiven.

You are not covered — you are cleansed.

You are not waiting — you are home in Christ.

That is the power of propitiation. That is the reality of the New Covenant. That is love that keeps no record of wrongs.

Live in it. Share it. Rest in it. **You are free.**

Chapter 13

Forgiveness Unleashed

— *From Receiving Mercy to Releasing Mercy*

Introduction: The Overflow of Forgiveness

In the previous chapter, we explored the meaning of atonement—its roots, limitations, and how it differs from propitiation.

Atonement preserved the memory of sin; it didn't erase it. Think of it like applying a polyurethane to a stained wood table—you still see the blemishes under the gloss.

But in the New Covenant, something radical happened: ***God promised not to remember our sins anymore (Jeremiah 31:34).***

Through Christ's propitiation—His once-for-all sacrifice (*Hebrews 10:14*)—our sins were not just covered... they were taken away.

Now, with that freedom in our hearts, we face the next step: how does being forgiven empower us to forgive?

The Journey Toward Forgiving Others

Forgiveness isn't always quick. It's a journey—sometimes long, sometimes painful, and always personal. You can't microwave a wounded heart. Healing takes time. Seeds without roots don't bear fruit. Rushing forgiveness can lead to more pain, not less. But when the truth of God's forgiveness finally takes root, it produces a harvest of grace in the most unexpected places.

Understanding the Debt We Owe

Consider the story of Karah.

Everyone admired her kindness. She was a pillar in her community, always ready to help. But few knew she carried a wound: betrayal by her husband and closest friend.

An affair. A violation so deep it left her bitter and cold. She didn't want to forgive. She didn't want God to forgive them. They didn't deserve it.

But one day, as she sat in her garden, Karah cried out—not for revenge, but for relief.

God's presence overwhelmed her. And instead of addressing her enemies, He addressed her heart.

He showed her the immensity of her own debt, then whispered: ***"I forgave you before you asked—because I love you."***

That moment changed everything. Forgiveness didn't erase the pain. But it broke the chains.

The Incompleteness of Compensation

Let's be honest. Some wounds are so deep that no apology will ever make it right. That's not because those sins are small—it's because they're massive. And no amount of human repayment can touch them.

That's what makes God's forgiveness miraculous.

| *"For the wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord." — Romans 6:23*

We owed a debt we could never pay. Jesus paid a debt He never owed.

Releasing the Debt

Forgiveness doesn't begin with what we extend—it begins with what we've received.

| *"Be kind to one another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, even as God in Christ forgave you."
— Ephesians 4:32*

The one who hurt you may never apologize. They may never change.

But forgiveness doesn't hinge on their repentance. It begins with your release:

“I no longer expect you to fix what you broke. I release you—not because you deserve it, but because I was released first.”

Forgiveness doesn't minimize the offense. It magnifies grace.

A Journey Through Time

At first, forgiveness may feel impossible. You replay the offense like a broken record.

But as you walk with God and discuss it with Him, something happens:

- The pain doesn't own you anymore.
- The replay becomes less frequent.
- The scar remains, but it no longer imprisons you.

| *“He heals the brokenhearted and binds up their wounds.”*
— Psalm 147:3

Transcending the Self

To forgive others, you must first believe you've been completely forgiven by God.

| *“There is therefore now no condemnation to those who are in Christ Jesus.”* — Romans 8:1

| *“...Your sins and your lawless deeds I will remember no more.”* — Hebrews 10:17

When you rest in that truth, forgiveness stops being a demand and starts being an overflow.

Freedom to Live and Love

Forgiveness doesn't excuse sin. It simply refuses to let sin rule your life. It hands judgment back to God:

| *“Vengeance is Mine, I will repay,” says the Lord.*
— Romans 12:19

You can forgive without reconciling. You can forgive and still set biblical boundaries.

Forgiveness isn't enabling—it's releasing. It's about **freedom**—from bitterness, from resentment, from carrying the justice that belongs to God.

Jesus, the Prince of Peace

Jesus promised something the world cannot give:

| *“Peace I leave with you, My peace I give to you; not as the world gives do I give to you.” — John 14:27*

That peace comes when you let go—not of justice, but of your need to control it.

Forgiveness doesn't just reconcile you to God. It makes you a vessel of reconciliation for others.

Conclusion: Forgiveness Doesn't Stop with You

This book began with one truth: ***you are forgiven.***

Not because of what you've done, but because of what Christ has done.

| *“God was in Christ reconciling the world to Himself, not imputing their trespasses to them.” — 2 Corinthians 5:19*

Now we end with this: forgiveness doesn't stop with you—it flows through you.

- Let go of traditions that keep score.
- Let go of rituals that try to earn what was already given.
- Let go—and live in the freedom of grace.

| *“Freely you have received, freely give.” — Matthew 10:8*

Because forgiveness is not just a lesson—it's a life. And that life is Christ Himself:

| *“I have come that they may have life, and that they may have it more abundantly.” — John 10:10*

Epilogue

The Cross That Frees Us to Forgive

— *The Story That Begins in Christ and Ends in Christ*

The Cross: Where Forgiveness Was Settled

The story of forgiveness didn't begin in your failure—and it doesn't end in your victory.

It began at the cross. It ends in Christ.

The blood-stained wood of Calvary didn't just cover your sins—it erased them.

The empty tomb didn't just whisper hope—it shouted: ***“You are free!”***

For too long, many of us have tried to earn what Jesus already gave. We've knelt at altars wondering if God was still holding something against us. We've searched our hearts for more confessions, more sorrow, more religious duties—hoping they might tip the scales of mercy.

But here's the good news:

“*For by one offering He has perfected forever those who are being sanctified.*” — Hebrews 10:14

Perfected forever. Not temporary. Not probationary. Not performance-based.

Complete. Eternal. Irrevocable.

Forgiveness Is About Identity, Not Just Doctrine

This isn't just doctrine—it's identity.

You are not a slave trying to be good enough.

You are a beloved son.

You are a cherished daughter.

You were forgiven before you even knew how to ask.

That's the freedom the cross purchased.

So What Now?

Now you walk forward.

Not as one burdened by guilt, but as one carried by grace.

Not as a victim of others' sins, but as a vessel of divine forgiveness.

Not in fear of falling short, but in full assurance that Christ already stood in your place.

Live Loved. Forgive Freely.

Let this truth reshape your relationships:

- When you see broken people, remember: you were broken once too.
- When someone sins against you, remember: Christ forgave you before you said sorry.
- When bitterness knocks on your door, remember: you don't live there anymore.

Forgiveness is your inheritance. Don't hoard it—release it.

One Day Soon

One day soon, we'll see Him face to face. There will be no more pain to forgive, no more tears to wipe, no more failures to carry.

Until then, let the cross be your anchor, the resurrection your confidence, and forgiveness your song.

| *"Blessed is he whose transgression is forgiven, whose sin is covered." — Psalm 32:1*

You are blessed.

You are forgiven.

You are free.

Now go... and live like it.

*With love and prayers—always,
Pastor Dan*

Scripture Index by Chapter

Chapter 1: The Problem We Couldn't Fix

- Romans 3:20–26
- Romans 5:1
- Exodus 34:7
- Hebrews 10:1–4

Chapter 2: The Cross That Finished It All

- Genesis 22:8
- Exodus 12:13
- Leviticus 5:10
- Isaiah 53:5–6
- Matthew 26:28
- John 1:29
- John 19:30
- Romans 5:9
- Romans 6:10
- Hebrews 9:12
- Hebrews 9:22
- Hebrews 12:24
- 1 Peter 2:24

Chapter 3: The Confession We Couldn't Maintain

- Psalm 32:1–2
- Matthew 9:2–6
- Mark 2:5–11
- Luke 5:20–24
- Luke 7:41–50
- John 1:29
- John 5:24
- Romans 5:1
- 1 Corinthians 1:18
- 1 Corinthians 15:17
- 1 John 1:7
- 1 John 2:1–2

Chapter 4: The Church That Keeps Sin Alive

- Psalm 32:1–2
- Luke 7:41–50
- Luke 8:11
- Luke 15:11–32

- John 8:11
- 1 Corinthians 6:11

Chapter 5: The Record God Doesn't Keep

- Psalm 103:12
- Isaiah 43:25
- Jeremiah 31:34
- Daniel 9:9
- John 3:17
- Romans 8:1–2
- 2 Corinthians 5:19
- Ephesians 1:7
- Colossians 1:13–14
- Colossians 2:13–14
- Hebrews 8:12
- 1 John 1:7

Chapter 6: The Law We Couldn't Keep

- Exodus 34:7
- Leviticus 5:10
- Leviticus 16:30
- Psalm 51:1–3
- Psalm 85:2
- Isaiah 1:18
- Acts 2:38
- Acts 3:19
- Acts 13:38–39
- Romans 3:20–26
- Romans 4:7–8
- Hebrews 9:12
- Hebrews 10:1–4
- Hebrews 10:10, 14
- 1 John 1:7
- 1 John 2:1–2

Chapter 7: The Confession We Couldn't Maintain

- Leviticus 16:30
- Jeremiah 31:34
- Galatians 2:21
- Galatians 3:24
- Hebrews 8:12
- Hebrews 10:17–18
- 1 John 1:9

Chapter 8 – The Access We Couldn't Gain

- Isaiah 53:5–6
- Luke 24:47
- Acts 2:38
- Acts 3:19
- Acts 10:43
- Acts 13:38–39
- Colossians 1:13–14
- Hebrews 10:17–18
- Hebrews 12:24

Chapter 9 – The Power We Couldn't Muster

- Galatians 3:2–3

Chapter 10 – The Inheritance We Couldn't Access

- Romans 8:15
- Galatians 4:6–7
- 1 John 4:18

Chapter 11 – The Boldness We Now Have

- Romans 6:10
- 1 Peter 2:24

Chapter 12 – The Freedom We Now Live In

- Romans 8:1–2
- Romans 8:32
- Ephesians 2:8–9
- Philippians 1:6
- Philippians 2:13
- Matthew 27:51–53

Chapter 13 – The Forgiveness We Now Share

- Matthew 6:12–15
- Matthew 18:21–35
- Mark 11:25
- Luke 7:41–50
- 1 Corinthians 13:5
- Ephesians 4:32
- 1 John 3:14

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