

LD 21 (56) | John 1:5-2:6; | John 3:4-5; Forgiveness of Sins I. Acknowledging Sin II. Acknowledging the Savior III. Rejoicing in Forgiveness

Congregation of our Lord Jesus Christ, how often do you ask for forgiveness? One of the things that parents teach their children is how to ask for forgiveness- as we tell our little ones to go and say that they are sorry for hitting their brother. But do we really understand the gravity of asking for and receiving forgiveness! One of my favorite illustrations from RC Sproul is as follows. Evidently a young lady had visited Dr. Sproul with a heavy and guilt laden heart. She expressed that she often prays- asking God for forgiveness- but she still did not feel forgiven! To this Dr. Sproul responded- well then you should pray and ask God to forgive you! The point Dr. Sproul was making is this- when we do not feel like we are forgiven after we have properly asked for forgiveness from God is itself a sin! Doubting God's promises- doubting that He will forgive His people when they ask- is a sin we should confess as well! So today we are going to focus in on the forgiveness of sins as we look at this theme: Jesus Christ teaches us to ask for since He has purchased the forgiveness of our sins.

I. Acknowledging Sin

In our first point we are going to see the importance of acknowledging that sin is real- sin is present- and that you and I are all guilty of committing sin. The fact is, there is something desperately wrong with the world today. Creation in general- and people in specific- are really messed up. With the crime and abuse that is so ramped- with all the pain and suffering that man inflicts on other men- we have to understand where all this suffering comes from. Well, the reason that this world is so messed up- that people are so mean, harsh, rude and wicked- is because sin is in the world. Now we have to be very upfront with the truth here- you and I do things every day that are bad. Can you imagine a politician coming on TV to say that they had sinned- and to ask for forgiveness? But we all tend to soften this fact by speaking in a rather gentle way about our faults. We are prone to say that we have messed up- we made a mistake. We did something wrong- we might have spoken out in anger- but we always have a reason. I am sorry that I did that- but you pushed me to it. That, by the way, is one sign of abuse.

When a person is confronted for a sin, they always shift the blame to others. Or our lies- well- they are little, white lies. I meant no harm. But we have to be clear- we need to learn to confess this truth- I have sinned! I am a sinner with a sinful nature who commits grievous sins! Not mistakes- not oversights- not just faults- but real sin! As we read in I John 1:8- if we say we have no sin we deceive ourselves and the truth is not in us. I remember a former president saying- I have never asked God for forgiveness because I have never done anything wrong. Really?! Or again in I John 1:10- if we say that we have not sinned, we make God to be a liar and His word is not in us. So the first action of faith is this- confess that you are a sinner! That your actions are sinful! The Bible uses many different words to describe sin- in fact there are over 20 different words and constructs that define and illustrate what sin is. In the OT we find the word Raah- something is bad or evil. Or Chaah- an action is offensive and deserving punishment. In the NT we have Hamartia- a sin or offense. Or Kakas- meaning bad, evil or offensive. To sin then is to miss the mark- to do something that God sees as bad, evil and offensive. Our reading from I John 3:4 says that sin is lawlessness. So to sin is to break God's Law- to do what God says you shall not do- that is a sin of commission. But we also commit sin when we fail to do something that we should have done- a sin of omission. Like failing to help our neighbor or failing to worship God rightly. Sin is twisting something that God created straight- perverting that which God made clean and good. Sin is treachery and rebellion against the true King and His Word. Sin is not only bad for us- it is incredibly offensive to God! And where did all this sin and perversion come from? Well, as you know God created this world and mankind good- without any stain, rebellion or perversion. But mankind being tempted by the Devil fell into sin and transgressed God's Law in Gen. 3. Adam's fall into sin now means that we have both a sinful nature and that we commit sinful actions. As I said before, the first application of this truth is simple- we all need to confess that we are sinners in need of a Savior! We are not just a little messed up- we are born dead in our sins and transgressions! I am a sinner- and I need to be saved! As David found out, when I kept silent my bones wasted away within me! But to confess your sins- to acknowledge your guilt- that is the path to healing!

II. Acknowledging the Savior

But we cannot stop here- to simply confess sin would leave us in the pit of despair! We need to consider the solution to this problem- the cure to our disease! As our QA begins- I believe that God will no longer hold my sins against me because of Christ's satisfaction! The good news is found in the name of Jesus- for as His name means- He saves His people from their sins! Jesus came to deliver, rescue and to secure the pardon for our sins. As I John 3:5 says- Jesus appeared to take away sins! Jesus is able to take away our sins by way of His work as our mediator. There are two aspects to this work. First of all, Jesus lived a perfect life- a sin free and obedient life. As 3:5 continues- in Him there no sin. This is called His active obedience- He fully kept all of God's commandments during His earthly ministry. Jesus never left undone the good He ought- nor did He ever transgress by doing something He should not. For Jesus, the Law was His meditation day and night! He delighted to keep God's commandments at all time- He came to do His Father's will- and submitted to this Law his whole life. Jesus Christ is the righteous one- 2:1 says. It is for this reason that He remains the sinless and perfect one. But there is another aspect to His work as our mediator- and that is of His perfect suffering! We call this His passive obedience- Christ offered His life as a ransom. Taking our place under the wrath and curse of God- securing pardon for us. By His suffering- the man of sorrows as Isaiah put it- Jesus satisfied the justice and appeased the anger of God against sin. As I John 2:2 says- He is the propitiation for our sins. Now propitiation is simply the satisfaction of God's anger- the appeasing of God's wrath- or the drinking of God's cup of wrath until that cup was empty. In this way, Jesus became a curse for us and in our place. So the sinless one becomes the suffering servant. By His active and passive obedience, both aspects of the Law are fulfilled. He perfectly obeys where we have fallen short and transgressed. And He perfectly suffers what we should have endured. All of this is to make the forgiveness of sins possible- God remaining just and the justifier of man!

III. Rejoicing in Forgiveness

Now that we understand our fallen state- having looked at the sins that we commit in our first point. And in our second point we considered the solution to those sins- in our last point we look at the application of the works of Jesus to our cause! I believe in the forgiveness of sins! I confess that the sins I have committed can be pardoned! Having been joined to Christ by faith, His works are credited to my account- my sins having been pardoned- and I am set free! As we read in I John 1:9 if we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleans us from all unrighteousness! And again in 2:1- if any one does sin, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous! As I said before, this article is an article of faith- something that is true that we are called to confess and believe! Not doubting like the woman who visited Dr. Sproul- not trusting in our feelings. But rather, I believe that my sins are forgiven! Not only that sins exist- and that they can be forgiven. But that I am a sinner who has been forgiven! That is a whole different level! What does it mean to be forgiven by God? Well, as QA 56 unfolds we find that those are forgiven enjoy the removal of sins. God will no longer remember my sins! They are pardoned, forgotten, removed, cast away, dealt with- plunged into the sea never to be revived again! I was once crimson red- now I am white as snow! God will not hold my sins against me- He will not bring them up and parade them before others! He will not resurrect that which has been put to death by Christ! He will not charge my past sins to my account- He will not hold me in debt to His justice and wrath! He will not use my sins against me- nor use these actions as a reason to cast me out! That is what forgiveness is- that is what God does for us! Rather, instead of being guilty before God I am now forgiven! Accepted- justified- righteous is in God's sight! I am granted the righteousness of Christ! I am accepted, pardoned- welcomed, embrace and received! So that I will never be cast out into judgment, but rather I will be welcomed by His grace and into His presence! As you can see- this is incredibly good news! Something that I have to believe before I can see it! I know that there is forgiveness- but more than that- that I am and always will be forgiven! A forgiven child of God! That the Father will not hold my sins nor my sinful nature because Christ has satisfied- doing what I could not! And this truth, beloved congregation, is a truth that liberates! I need not worry that my

past sins will be brought up again! I need not fret! You see, the devil tries to use our sins as a wedge- to drive us away from God! The devil says, you are so bad that God will never forgive you! Remember what you did! But by the Spirit you can say- I do remember- but my God has forgiven! He has promised to let them go! He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us! God is faithful to His word- He forgives those who call upon Him asking for pardon! So I do not worry or fret- but rather I fly to the cross! But forgiveness also motivates us- it drives us to a life of thankful obedience! Thankful- because you are receiving pardon which you do not deserve! And obedience- because you know how much sin grieves God! You do not want to cause sorrow to your Father who has so often forgiven! So thankful obedience- or joyful submission is the proper response of those who have been forgiven! As David confessed in Psalm 32- when I tried to keep my sins hidden- when I kept silent my bones wasted away. But when I confessed- when I acknowledged my sins- you forgive the iniquity of my sins! Therefore, let everyone who is godly offer prayers to you. Be glad and rejoice, shout for joy all you upright in heart!

As we close, we can see that words are powerful. So much hinges on 3 little words- I am sorry! Followed by 3 more words- please forgive me! It takes great humility – a broken and contrite heart to confess these words. But as God's people we have a great encouragement to see forgiveness from our God! And praise God- He response with 3 words as well- I forgive you! He is faithful and just to forgive and cleanse us! Jesus Christ teaches us to ask for as He has purchased the forgiveness of our sins. As Jesus taught us in prayer to ask- forgive us our debts- Father, forgive us our sins as we forgive those who sin against us! Only a heart opened- softened by the Spirit will see and confess sins. So now we confess as a church with a heart of faith! I believe that God forgives the sins of those who repent and ask. I believe that I am a sinner who has been forgiven by my gracious God! I believe in the forgiveness of sins.