

## How Jesus Forgave



### *Sabbath Afternoon*

**MEMORY TEXT:** “And Jesus said unto her, Neither do I condemn thee: go, and sin no more” (John 8:11).

**T**HE CROSS is the means by which God could be just and, at the same time, forgive our sins. That is quite a feat, because justice, by nature, demands being given the punishment you deserve, while forgiveness demands the opposite, being given what you *do not* deserve. Justice and forgiveness, then, seem mutually exclusive: You can have one or the other—but not both. Yet God, through Christ, accomplished both at the Cross.

This week we will look at one side of this amazing paradox—forgiveness, as it was revealed by Jesus when here in the flesh. Remember, Jesus came to show us the Father, a God who wants to forgive us our acts, no matter how bad. No wonder that Jesus was constantly offering forgiveness to those who would accept it. He was merely expressing His Father’s will for us all. Let us look at some examples of how Jesus forgave and see what lessons we can learn.

**THE WEEK AT A GLANCE:** What was the main reason why Jesus healed the paralytic? What does that story teach about the link between forgiveness and healing? What does forgiveness have to do with human self-esteem? What can we learn from the different accounts of how Jesus forgave Peter? Why did Jesus forgive the woman caught in adultery? Was Christ’s prayer for those who crucified Him answered?

\*Please study this week’s lesson to prepare for Sabbath, April 26.

**THE FORGIVING OF THE PARALYTIC (Mark 2:1-11).**

A powerful illustration of how Jesus forgave is found in the healing of the paralytic (Mark 2:1-11). Mark 1 ends with the news being spread far and wide of Jesus' ability to heal the sick, so that people from everywhere were coming to Him (Mark 1:45). In this context, the story of the paralytic appears.

**Read the first five verses of Mark 2. By all indications, what was the reason they brought the sick man to Jesus? Was it to secure healing for their friend, or was it to secure forgiveness of his sin?**

Using the typical Jewish understanding of the relationship between sin and sickness and between healing and forgiveness, Jesus proclaimed God's new kingdom by first forgiving this man his sins and then healing him.

**What significance, if any, is found in the fact that Jesus first forgave the paralytic his sins and then healed him? Does forgiveness always precede healing, or is the other order more common? Or, perhaps, less important than the question of order is the fact that healing and forgiveness are linked. What do you think?**

It is important to remember that whatever good Jesus did ministering to humanity and whatever good He does for us now, without the forgiveness of our sins and the hope of eternal life that come from His forgiveness, any healing, any restoration, any comfort that we derive from the Lord is only a temporary measure, one that doesn't solve our ultimate dilemma. In other words, Christ did *not* come to earth in order to spend three and a half years just healing and comforting people. On the contrary, one could argue that the healing and ministering and comforting were all for a greater purpose, and that was to point people to Him as the Sin Bearer and to God's forgiveness.

**Read Mark 2:6-11. "But that ye may know that the Son of man hath power on earth to forgive sins, (he saith to the sick of the palsy,) I say unto thee, Arise, and take up thy bed, and go thy way into thine house" (vss. 10, 11). Was the healing of the paralytic an end in itself? Where was the Lord seeking to lead those who saw what happened with the paralytic? In the context of this story, Ellen White wrote, "It was to manifest His power to forgive sins that the miracle was performed."—*The Desire of Ages*, p. 267. Why did Jesus want people to know that He had the power to forgive sin?**

**TEACHERS COMMENTS**

**Key Text: John 6:44-51.**

**Teachers Aim:**

1. To show that Jesus came to reveal the Father.
2. To explain how God wants to forgive us no matter how badly we sin.
3. To understand how Jesus dealt with human weakness, the need to be forgiven, and the need to forgive.

**Lesson Outline:****I. Forgiveness or Healing (Mark 2:5).**

- A. Jesus forgave the paralytic before healing him.
- B. Forgiveness points us to the hope of eternal life.
- C. Physical healing does not solve our ultimate dilemma: the problem of sin.
- D. Jesus understood that the spiritual needs of the paralytic were of greater importance than his physical need for healing.

**II. Forgiveness and Self-Worth (Luke 5:8).**

- A. Jesus knew how to relate to Simon Peter.
- B. Despite Peter's lack of self-worth, Jesus entrusted him with the work of soul winning.
- C. Peter denied Christ but was forgiven.

**III. Guilty as Charged (Rom. 3:23, 24).**

- A. The Pharisees brought the woman caught in adultery to Jesus in order to trick Him.
- B. Jesus forgave her sin and commanded her to sin no more.

**IV. Jesus' Example (Luke 23).**

- A. Jesus prayed for His accusers and attackers.
- B. Jesus' crucifixion prayer extends to all humanity from Adam to the end-time generation.
- C. Jesus' love for sinners is unconditional.

**Summary:** "Jesus did not suppress one word of truth, but He uttered it always in love. He exercised the greatest tact and thoughtful, kind attention in His intercourse with the people. He was never rude, never needlessly spoke a severe word, never gave needless pain to a sensitive soul. He did not censure human weakness. He spoke the truth, but always in love."—Ellen G. White, *Steps to Christ*, p. 12.

**FORGIVENESS AND SELF-ESTEEM: PART 1 (Luke 5:1-11).**

Of all the Gospel writers, Luke seems most interested in how Jesus dealt with the “sinners” of Jewish society and in how He interacted with individuals whose self-image was so poor that they despised themselves. Not only were they rejected as religious and social outcasts but they often faced numerous verbal and nonverbal messages that made them feel even more filthy and unworthy. Included in this group were peasants who did not keep the law in all its details, such as Simon Peter, the fisherman.

With this background in mind, read Luke 5:1-11. Jesus got into Peter’s boat and preached to the crowd. When He finished speaking, he told Peter to let the nets into the water. Though Peter expressed skepticism about catching anything, he was apparently impressed enough by Jesus that he obeyed anyway. The rest is history.

**Read verse 8. Peter says to Jesus, “Depart from me,” because I am sinful. Is it not precisely because we are sinful that we would want Jesus to be with us? What do these words reveal about Peter’s ignorance (however understandable at the time) regarding Christ’s mission? (Compare Peter here to the Peter who wrote 1 Peter 1:18, 19.)**

How fascinating that according to Luke, after Peter declared his sinfulness, Jesus said nothing about Peter’s sins being forgiven. Instead, He says to him, “Fear not; from henceforth thou shalt catch men” (vs. 10). In other words, the first thing Jesus does is tell Simon Peter the work He is going to have him do. Perhaps Jesus, knowing Peter’s lack of self-esteem, immediately told him of his important task in order to help Peter understand that, although he was a sinner, Christ not only accepted him but was going to trust him with important work. Thus, one result of being forgiven by God is that we should learn to respect ourselves as His children and feel good about who we are by His grace. Sure, Peter was a sinful man, and he knew his sinfulness. Yet, imagine what it must have done for his sense of self-worth to be told by the Master that instead of now catching fish he would be working with Him to win souls. Talk about a career promotion!

**How do we strike the right balance between, on the one hand, being aware that we are sinners in need of God’s grace and, on the other, having a healthy sense of self-worth? Are these two concepts mutually exclusive? Can we have both? If so, how?**

**Commentary.****How Jesus Forgave.**

The things Jesus said and did as He forgave individuals show how much He is aware of the impact sin has on a person’s psyche.

The individuals Jesus forgave in the first three stories of this week’s lesson knew they had sinned. The paralytic lived in a society that equated physical disability with sin. Ellen White points out that the paralytic’s disease was the direct result of profligate living (*The Desire of Ages*, p. 267). There was no doubt in his mind as to why he was suffering. Fortunately, he realized Jesus was his only hope. He and his friends were so determined to see Jesus that they entered the building in a rather unorthodox manner. Their tearing a hole through the roof spoke eloquently of their urgent need and of their faith that only Jesus could satisfy their need. Such faith and awareness of one’s need for Christ are essential before Jesus can apply His healing power to either body or soul.

After experiencing the blessings of God’s power, spontaneous, outspoken Peter blurted out his feelings of inferiority: “Depart from me; for I am a sinful man, O Lord” (Luke 5:8). “With telling force the sense of his own unworthiness to be associated with Jesus bore down upon the conscience of Peter. Yet he clung to Christ, silently testifying that his words reflected a sense of utter unworthiness rather than the desire to be separated from Jesus.”—*The SDA Bible Commentary*, vol. 5, p. 738. “This sense of unworthiness is the first reaction in the human heart when God, through His Spirit, begins His work of transforming the life and character. . . . God can do nothing for the man who does not first feel his need of salvation.”—Page 739.

When Jesus showed Himself to His disciples by the Sea of Tiberias, Peter was smarting from his betrayals of Christ just before He was crucified. Upon being asked three times whether he loved Jesus, he became grieved, because he thought Jesus was questioning his sincerity. Yet, he remained humble. He “knew he had given cause for others to doubt his love for his Master. The repeated questions brought his shameful denials vividly to mind, and like a barbed arrow must have cut his wounded heart.”—Page 1072.

Even though she did not ask for forgiveness, the adulterous woman also was clearly aware of her sinful condition. Indeed, those who accused her made quite certain she was aware of it. She expected Jesus to respond to her situation in the way the others did. Jesus’ words and actions, however, came to the trembling woman as words of mercy.

The way Jesus dealt with these three sinners demonstrates the importance He places on our feelings of self-worth. “In the uplifting of [these fallen souls], Jesus performed a greater miracle than in healing the most grievous physical disease; He cured the spiritual

**FORGIVENESS AND SELF-ESTEEM: PART 2.**

After accepting Jesus as Lord, Peter emerged as one of Christ’s closest and most loyal disciples, boldly proclaiming his faith that Jesus was the Messiah (Matt. 16:16; John 6:69) and his firm intention to stay faithful to His Master, even until death (Luke 22:33).

**Notice the transition from the Peter of Luke 5:8 to the Peter of Luke 22:33. What could have brought about such a tremendous change? Which Peter do you think was probably in better spiritual shape, and why?**

The story of Peter’s blatant betrayal of Christ (Luke 22:55-62) not long after his boastful claim of loyalty is well-known. Of course, Christ forgave him for his denial. What is interesting, however, is the manner in which Christ manifested His forgiveness to Peter.

**Read the account in John 21:1-17 and answer the following:**

1. **What similarities appear both here and in the account of the time when Jesus first called Peter (Luke 5:1-11)? What are some of the differences?**
2. **What symbolism, if any, can be found in the fact that their nets were now full of fish? (vs. 6).**
3. **Look at Peter’s actions when he first heard it was the risen Christ on the shore. Did he act like someone who felt afraid to see Jesus, even after the betrayal? What might have accounted for Peter’s attitude?**
4. **Jesus told Peter three times to feed His sheep. In what ways were Christ’s words to Peter an indication that He had forgiven Him, even without specifically saying so?**
5. **Though Christ could have forgiven Peter for his shameful betrayal, why did He give him such an important task? Couldn’t it have been said, and justly so, that though Peter was forgiven, his act disqualified him for any major role in the church?**

**TEACHERS COMMENTS**

malady which is unto death everlasting.”—Ellen G. White, *The Desire of Ages*, p. 462.

Of the paralytic’s story, Barclay writes, “It is a lovely story because the first thing that Jesus does for everyone of us is to say, ‘Child, God is not angry with you. Come home, and don’t be afraid.’”—William Barclay, *The Gospel of Mark* (Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1975), p. 48. In other words, He gives us hope.

God also stipulates that forgiveness is not enough. Those whom He forgives He calls to abandon their sinful ways. All three of the people we studied this week needed to make life changes. In reference to the adulterous woman, *The SDA Bible Commentary* states, “Repentance must be honest and sincere. Not only must she be sorry for her sin;

**INDUCTIVE BIBLE STUDY**

**Texts for Discovery: Mark 2:1-11; Luke 5:1-11; 23:32-43; John 8:2-11; 21:1-17.**

1. “‘Be perfect, therefore,’” said Jesus, “‘as your heavenly Father is perfect’” (Matt. 5:48, NIV). That’s quite a direct, unambiguous command. The Bible would be considerably shorter if all it contained were similar injunctions. Rather, we have stories about how people struggled to live up to God’s ideal. Like case studies, these stories reveal how biblical characters acted in situations very similar to those we face today. What did Jesus’ forgiveness mean to the paralytic who was carried to Jesus?
2. Christian pastors and authors often use incidents from Peter’s life as examples of what to do and what not to do. What makes Peter such an interesting Bible character? In what ways are we like him?
3. The woman taken in adultery (John 8:2-11) was only a pawn in the power struggle between Christ and His detractors. She was brought to Jesus because she was guilty, and Jesus’ words, “‘If any one of you is without sin, let him be the first to throw a stone at her,’” (vs. 7, NIV) must have come to her as a death sentence. She offered no defense (how could she?), and Jesus didn’t excuse her sin or declare her innocent (she wasn’t). He just refused to “pile on” more condemnation. Is forgiving someone’s immoral behavior the same as “lowering our standards”? Why, or why not?
4. Categorize the types of characters who surrounded Jesus as He hung on the cross (Luke 23:34-43). Can you make some modern-day comparisons to the people with whom you live, work, and worship?

**THE ADULTEROUS WOMAN (John 8:1-11).**

**R**ead the story of the woman caught in adultery. Though the account is rather brief, a few background thoughts may help put it in perspective.

First of all, how can a woman be caught in adultery without a man being caught, as well? Yet, where is the man? Why is only the woman brought to Jesus? Second, according to Jewish law, it was almost impossible to prove that adultery had occurred. Requirements of evidence were so strict that someone would all but have to be set up to be caught. Proof demanded several witnesses who had no prior knowledge or suspicion that the act would be committed. Jewish law also stipulated that if anyone even believed someone else was going to break the law, he or she had to do all within his or her power to prevent the transgression. In other words, catching one in the act was supposed to be completely accidental. There should, ideally, be no plotting to ensnare someone in sin. However, the fact that the man caught with the woman was not accused when she was brought to Jesus indicates entrapment. In fact, Ellen White wrote that the Pharisees who brought her to Jesus “had themselves led their victim into sin, that they might lay a snare for Jesus.”—*The Desires of Ages*, p. 461.

**Entrapped or not, the woman still committed the sin. She had no excuse for her actions. And yet, look at how firmly and unequivocally Jesus forgave her. Notice His words: “Neither do I condemn thee: go, and sin no more” (John 8:11). Just like that, she was forgiven. What did the woman do to deserve such a complete and firm pardon for her sins?**

Notice, however, that Christ’s words to her did not end with pardon. He then admonished her not to sin again. He did not say to her “Don’t do it again, and then I will no longer condemn you.” Instead, the pardon came first and then the call to obey. Is this not how the Christian life works? God first forgives our sins, an act of total mercy on His part (as it was for the woman caught in adultery); then, as a result of that forgiveness and pardon, we are motivated and empowered to live in obedience, not in order to be forgiven but because we have already been forgiven. If it were any other way—that is, if works and obedience came first, with forgiveness following as a result—then forgiveness would be not by faith but by works.

**Why, in order to have any assurance of salvation, must forgiveness precede good works?**

**TEACHERS COMMENTS**

she must turn away from it. That repentance which consists in nothing more than feeling, talking, professing, wishing, hoping, is utterly worthless in the sight of God. Until a man ceases to do evil and turns from his sins, he does not really repent.”—Volume 5, p. 986.

In each of these stories, Christ also intended to teach those who witnessed the events a lesson. Ellen White writes that the paralytic was healed to “manifest [Christ’s] power to forgive sins” (Ellen G. White, *The Desire of Ages*, p. 267), and that “every act of Christ’s ministry was far-reaching in its purpose” (p. 265). Jews believed that only God could forgive sins. When Christ forgave the paralytic, He demonstrated His Lordship to the onlookers. “Any charlatan could say, ‘Your sins are forgiven.’ . . . Such a statement was completely uncheckable. But to say, ‘Get up and walk’ was to say something whose effectiveness would either be proved or disproved there and then.”—Barclay, *The Gospel of Mark*, p. 50. Thus, when the paralytic walked, the people would have been convinced that his sins had been forgiven.

**WITNESSING**

In New Testament times, an individual’s worth was based on social status or spiritual condition. Jews were God’s chosen people while Gentiles weren’t. Someone with leprosy was a social outcast. It was believed that a person’s disease was punishment for his or her sin. Even today, we often see others as what they are rather than who they are.

As God’s witnesses, we can testify of His unconditional love. Love that knows no boundaries. Love that is not limited by social status or human weaknesses. Love that was revealed in the flesh.

It was by this unconditional love that Jesus offered the *Living Water* to the Samaritan woman at Jacob’s well, even though the Jews despised the Samaritans.

This same Love would not condemn another woman who had been caught in adultery but said to her, “Go, and sin no more” (John 8:11). And on many occasions Jesus healed the sick, making no mention of their sins. He healed them in spite of their sins, showing only that He loved them and wanted to save them.

Throughout His ministry, the Lord was found *associating with sinners*. It was His mission to show the world that He loves the sinner and forgives the sin. In our witnessing, let us tell others that no matter how great the sin, we may **all** go “boldly unto the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy, and find grace to help in time of need” (Heb. 4:16).



**FATHER, FORGIVE THEM (Luke 23:34).**

**F**ew words in Scripture have echoed through history with the power and intensity of Christ’s quick prayer that the Father would forgive those who were crucifying Him. What a powerful testimony to His unceasing, unconditional love for all humanity. With that utterance, spoken under the most incredible conditions, Jesus gave the world the great example of true forgiveness.

**Read Luke 23 and then answer these questions:**

**1. Did the Father unconditionally answer Christ’s prayer? Were those people automatically forgiven? If not, why not? See Rom. 3:28; 8:1; 1 John 1:9.**

**2. Though Jesus specifically stated that these people didn’t know what they were doing, He still asked the Father to forgive them. What does this imply about ignorance of the full implications of our wrong deeds not being a valid excuse for those deeds?**

**3. By praying to the Father in behalf of these people, what role was Jesus already, in a sense, assuming? How does what He said here help us understand just what He does for us in that role? Rom. 8:34; Heb. 8:1; 1 John 2:1.**

Christ’s prayer in their behalf becomes even more remarkable when we realize just how unfairly He had been treated. Having spent three and a half years doing nothing but good, having given, time and again, remarkable evidence of His work and mission, having over and over showed His willingness to love and minister to even the most corrupt among them, Jesus nevertheless faced their undeserved scorn. The sheer injustice of it all remains incomprehensible. Thus, if anyone had the right to be angry with them, it was Jesus; if anyone had the right to call out for God’s vengeance on them, it was Jesus; if anyone had the right to want to see these people punished for their deeds, it was Jesus. *Instead, He cries out for God to forgive them?*

**This same Jesus, who asked the Father to forgive those who were crucifying Him, is the same Jesus who now ministers in heaven for us, who is just as eager for our sins to be forgiven. How can you use this account to help anyone struggling with the fear that, perhaps, their sins are too grievous to be forgiven?**

**LIFE-A PPLICATION APPROACH**

**Icebreaker:** In most secular thinking presented by the media, people should get what they “deserve,” nothing less and certainly nothing more. How would people who buy into this thinking react to Jesus forgiving the paralytic (Mark 2)? Forgiving the woman caught in adultery (John 8)? Forgiving you?

who is filled with self-loathing, approach the sinless Christ? How would Peter’s experience help you with the challenge of encouraging this person to risk fellowship in your church?

2. What hymn or gospel song best expresses how Jesus forgives humanity? What other artistic expressions of this good news appeal to you and add to your understanding of how Jesus forgives? Share one expression with your class members.
3. Why is Jesus’ method of forgiveness suitable for both faithful church members and inmates in penal institutions? What are the common denominators in these two groups of people?
4. Like Peter we have marvelous successes and dismal failures in our spiritual life. Trace how Christ restored Peter’s relationship with Him after Peter’s glaring public failures. What specific actions and premises that Jesus used are you capable of applying to broken relationships?
5. How does forgiveness “feed” God’s flock? What are the basic components of a “forgiveness diet”?

**Thought Questions:**

1. Are we most like Jesus when we forgive or when we are able to discern sin in other people?
2. As a friend of the paralytic, would you have been more immediately concerned about him being healed physically, mentally, or spiritually? Why? Which aspect do you think most concerned the Lord?
3. How does Hebrews 7:25 add to your understanding of how Jesus forgave? Visualize Christ forgiving you to the uttermost or “absolutely” (*Clear Word*) for every word, thought, action, and intention. What feelings surface? Which sinful actions and reactions would you be motivated to change? Why does being forgiven our sins motivate us to shun them?

**Application Questions:**

1. How would you help a person,

**FURTHER STUDY:**

**T**he Saviour made no murmur of complaint. His face remained calm and serene, but great drops of sweat stood upon His brow. There was no pitying hand to wipe the death dew from His face, nor words of sympathy and unchanging fidelity to stay His human heart. While the soldiers were doing their fearful work, Jesus prayed for His enemies, ‘Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do.’ His mind passed from His own suffering to the sin of His persecutors, and the terrible retribution that would be theirs. No curses were called down upon the soldiers who were handling Him so roughly. No vengeance was invoked upon the priests and rulers, who were gloating over the accomplishment of their purpose. Christ pitied them in their ignorance and guilt. He breathed only a plea for their forgiveness,—‘for they know not what they do.’

“Had they known that they were putting to torture One who had come to save the sinful race from eternal ruin, they would have been seized with remorse and horror. But their ignorance did not remove their guilt; for it was their privilege to know and accept Jesus as their Saviour. Some of them would yet see their sin, and repent, and be converted. Some by their impenitence would make it an impossibility for the prayer of Christ to be answered for them. Yet, just the same, God’s purpose was reaching its fulfillment. Jesus was earning the right to become the advocate of men in the Father’s presence.

“That prayer of Christ for His enemies embraced the world. It took in every sinner that had lived or should live, from the beginning of the world to the end of time. Upon all rests the guilt of crucifying the Son of God. To all, forgiveness is freely offered. ‘Whosoever will’ may have peace with God, and inherit eternal life.”—Ellen G. White, *The Desire of Ages*, pp. 744, 745.

**DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:**

- 1. How does one reconcile Christ’s prayer for His persecutors with Romans 12:19?**
- 2. Read the quote above. How do we understand the words that upon all “rests the guilt of crucifying the Son of God”?**
- 3. At the same time, Ellen White also states that “to all, forgiveness is freely offered.” Notice that she does not say that all are forgiven but that forgiveness is offered to all. What is the difference between the two concepts?**
- 4. Read Galatians 2:7-14. What does it tell us about Peter again needing forgiveness?**