





# GOOD NEWS

## for the unsaved WORLD!

(#152)

Justification and our willingness to forgive people.

1

### A GENUINE SALVATION IS A GROWING SALVATION

"REPENTANCE" doesn't turn into "NON-REPENTANCE."

- ✓ God has given us all we need for life and godliness; he has *empowered* us to do his will – 2 Peter 1:3-4.
- ✓ That's why we are to make every effort to *increase* in godly character traits (= an ongoing way of life) – 2 Peter 1:5-8.
- ✓ Doing this is how we can know we are saved – 2 Peter 1:10-11.
- ✓ The Bible is the very truth from God – 2 Peter 1:19-21.
- ✓ Beware of false teachers – chapter 2; beginning of chapter 3.
- ✓ The opportunity to repent will someday be gone; Jesus will return and judge the world – 2 Peter 3:8-13.
- ✓ "Since you know all this, you need to *grow*" – 2 Peter 3:14-18.

2

### A GENUINE SALVATION CAN BE RECOGNIZED.

THIS MEANS WE CAN AFFIRM THAT PEOPLE ARE (OR AREN'T) SAVED.


- This concept is expressed in many ways, in factual statements, commands, and examples. The *apostles* recognized it, and the tell us we can recognize it. We can be sure about it!

James, Cephas and John ... <b>recognized</b> the grace given to me [= Paul]. <small>Galatians 2:9a (NIV)</small>	This is how you can <b>recognize</b> God's Spirit [in a person] ... <small>1 John 4:2a (GW); also v. 6.</small>
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And **we can be sure** that we know him if we obey his commandments. If someone claims, "I know God," but doesn't obey God's commandments, that person is a liar and is not living in the truth. But those who obey God's word truly show how completely they love him. **That is how we know** we are living in him. Those who say they live in God should live their lives as Jesus did.  
1 John 2:3-6 (NLT)

3

### SCRIPTURE WARNS US ABOUT TEMPORARY "BELIEVERS" AND FAKES



They may even do religious activities.

Many will say to me on that day, 'Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy in your name and in your name drive out demons and in your name perform many miracles?' Then I will tell them plainly, 'I never knew you. Away from me, you evildoers!'  
Matthew 7:22-23 (NIV)

These people are not justified or forgiven, because they never had genuine repentance. Even if they successfully fool us for a while, God, who sees the heart, is not fooled.

People with genuine "repentance unto salvation" are willing to *grow*. These people do not grow.

4

### WE CAN RECOGNIZE PEOPLE WHO AREN'T SAVED.

THEY CAN BE RECOGNIZED "BY THEIR FRUIT" (MATTHEW 7:16, 20).

**EXAMPLE: People who cause divisions.**  
You CAN know if they are condemned. *Their own actions will do the condemning*, and we simply need to *recognize* it!

As for a person who stirs up division, after warning him once and then twice, have nothing more to do with him, knowing that such a person is warped and sinful; **he is self-condemned.**  
Titus 3:10-11 (ESV)

HOWEVER:

- ❖ **DON'T HUNT FOR SINNERS!** We don't have to, because they tend to reveal themselves by their conduct (and/or their words).
- ❖ **DON'T FORCE PEOPLE INTO CATEGORIES** of "saved vs. unsaved." We don't have to. If the evidence isn't obvious, we don't have to reach a conclusion. "I don't know" is a *legitimate answer!*
- ❖ **DON'T EXPECT 100% PERFECTION** in saved people. We aren't perfect, either.

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**FORGIVENESS ISSUES we have already looked at:**

1. **Forgiveness does NOT cancel justice.** (The opposite of "justice" is "injustice," not "forgiveness.")
2. **SOMEONE has to pay AND justice needs maintained.** (For our sin against God, Jesus accomplished this.)
3. **There is an obligation connected to forgiveness.** It's not a "free ticket" for ongoing sin/offense/debt. (Repentance is a prerequisite for forgiveness.)
4. **FORGIVENESS does not erase all the consequences of sin.** (There may be long-term damage; there may also be consequences for the one who was forgiven, and for others.)
5. **God's FORGIVENESS of us is to influence our actions** toward other people – including the way we *forgive* them. (We also looked at many commands and examples related to our forgiveness of others – in both Old and New Testaments.) →

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6. Forgiveness has to do with actual sin that causes a barrier or breakdown of fellowship. It's not mere differences of opinion in non-moral issues.

7. Forgiveness is **NOT avoidance of the issue, or merely being kind**. Kindness, though necessary, is not the same as forgiveness; and choosing to ignore the issue and leave the other person trapped in sin is not love!

8. There are two parts to forgiveness: 1) **OUR** willingness to forgive, to not hold their sin against them; and 2) **THEIR** willingness to repent, so that they can receive the forgiveness we offer (and its blessings).

**TODAY: Another FORGIVENESS ISSUE.**

But first, we need to look at some justification issues.

**THE QUESTION WE NEED TO ANSWER.**

Jesus tells us that we need to forgive others, if we want our heavenly Father to forgive us.

For if you forgive others their trespasses, your heavenly Father will also forgive you, but if you do not forgive others their trespasses, neither will your Father forgive your trespasses.  
Matthew 6:14-16 (ESV)

Both of these (forgiving and not forgiving) are obvious, and can be recognized for what they are. By our conduct, we (and others) can know if we have been forgiven.

★ BUT WHICH COMES FIRST? ★  
God forgiving us or us forgiving other people?

When we forgive people, do we earn God's forgiveness? Or is it the fruit of a growing salvation that *already exists*?

**RIGHTEOUSNESS AND JUSTIFICATION ARE INTERRELATED.**  
In fact, they both come from the same New Testament word, and are often used interchangeably!

**1 N.T. Greek word group...** → **N.T. GREEK** δίκη, δίκαιος, δικαιοσύνη, δικαίω, δικαίωμα, δικαίωσις, δικαιοκρισία → **2 English word groups.**

**ENGLISH** justification, just, justify

**ENGLISH** (declare) righteous, right, righteousness

Translations may use either word group, and it means the same thing.

"The just shall live by faith." = "The righteous will live by faith."

**JUSTIFICATION/RIGHTEOUSNESS changes the heart.**

If the heart-change exists, there will be compatible conduct-changes ... including a desire to forgive others.

⇒ **JESUS DID NOT DO A HALF-WAY JOB!**  
He not only died to deal with our sins (and our sinful nature) ... he came back to life to bring us a new (changed) life – one controlled by the Spirit.

So then, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; what is old has passed away — look, what is new has come!  
2 Corinthians 5:17 (NET)

⇒ These changes **START** at the moment of salvation  
⇒ and **CONTINUE** from then on.

★ As we consider this issue, we should remember ★ the Bible's constant theme regarding salvation:

[God] has saved us and called us to a holy life— not because of anything we have done but because of his own purpose and grace.  
2 Timothy 1:9a (NIV)

**NOTE ALSO:**

⇒ All Scripture passages that focus on us obtaining justification and righteousness describe it as NOT by works.

... the blessing of the person to whom God credits righteousness *apart from works*:  
Blessed are those whose lawless acts are forgiven and whose sins are covered.  
Blessed is the person the Lord will never charge with sin.  
Romans 4:6b-8 (CSB)

**THE PHRASE "CREDIT'S RIGHTEOUSNESS" (IN ROMANS 4:6) REFERS TO THE ACT OF JUSTIFYING.**

It refers to what happened when Jesus exchanged his righteousness for our sin.

God made him who had no sin to be sin for us, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God.  
2 Corinthians 5:21 (NIV)

This "CREDITING of JESUS' RIGHTEOUSNESS" to us is the "ACT OF JUSTIFICATION" that changes us!

Since justification, which results in salvation, IS NOT EARNED:

⇒ This leads us to today's **FORGIVENESS ISSUE**:

Issue #9:

9. Our obligation to forgive others does **NOT** mean we're *working for salvation*. It does not cause God to save us.

THE QUESTION:

If our need to FORGIVE others is connected to God's forgiveness of us, does that mean we're working for our salvation?

THE ANSWER:

**Absolutely NOT!**

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**GOD'S FORGIVENESS COMES TO PEOPLE WHO HAVE BEEN CHANGED FROM DEATH TO LIFE.**

★ **THIS CHANGE ENABLES US TO FORGIVE** ★

- ① **DEAD** people are not forgiven; those **LIVING** in Christ are.

You were **dead** because of your sins and because your sinful nature was not yet cut away. Then God made you **alive** with Christ, for he **forgave** all our sins.

Colossians 2:13 (NLT)

- ② If we have become *alive*, we need to focus on things that are a part of **LIFE!**

You have **died** with Christ, and he has set you free from the spiritual powers of this world.

Since you have been raised to **new life** with Christ, set your sights on the realities of heaven, ...

Colossians 2:20, 3:1a (NLT)

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- ③ If we have become *alive*, our only option is to get rid of those old ways of **DEATH** ... and pursue the ways of **LIFE!**

For you **died** to this life, and your **real life** is hidden with Christ in God. And when Christ, who is your **life**, is revealed to the whole world, you will share in all his glory.

So **put to death** the sinful, earthly things lurking within you. ... You used to do these things when your life was still part of this world. Put on **your new nature**, and be renewed as you learn to know your Creator and become like him.

Christ is all that matters, and **he lives** in all of us [who are saved].  
Colossians 3:3-5a, 7, 10, 11b (NLT)

**A WILLINGNESS TO FORGIVE IS ONE OF THOSE "WAYS OF LIFE" WE NEED TO PURSUE!**

(WHY would a **LIVING** person ever prefer the ways of **DEATH**?)

15

**NEW LIFE IS THE CONTEXT IN WHICH WE ARE TO FORGIVE OTHERS!**

We are alive and forgiven; with a *new* life and a *new* nature...

... God made you **alive** with Christ, for he **forgave** all our sins. ... you have been raised to **new life** with Christ ... your **real life** is hidden with Christ in God. ... Christ, who is your **life** ...

Put on **your new nature**, and **be renewed** as you learn to know your Creator and become like him.

Christ is all that matters, and **he lives** in all of us [who are saved].

Colossians 2:13b; 3:1a, 3b, 4a, 10, 11b (NLT)

We have a *new* way to live – which includes a *willingness to forgive*.

Since God chose you to be the holy people he loves, you must clothe yourselves with [a list of godly character traits].

**Make allowance for each other's faults, and forgive anyone who offends you. Remember, the Lord forgave you, so you must forgive others.**

Colossians 3:12a, 13 (NLT)

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**We can CONCLUDE:**

- Justification (which is connected to forgiveness) *changes* the heart and mind. Part of that change is a *willingness to forgive others*.
- So if we have an unwillingness to forgive other people... that is *proof* that the changes that are a part of salvation have not occurred.

**It leaves us with a MISSION:**

⇒ **Evaluate the fruit of your life!**

As you observe your attitude toward forgiving other people, what is the "fruit" that others see?

**Forgiveness may be a "work"... But if so... It isn't a work FOR salvation, but a work CAUSED BY salvation!**

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