

## How Jesus Forgave



**MEMORY TEXT:** “ ‘Well, then,’ Jesus said, ‘I [Jesus] do not condemn you [the woman] either. Go, but do not sin again’ ” (John 8:11, TEV).



**GOD COULD BE JUST (FAIR)** and, at the same time, forgive our sins only through the Cross. This is a miracle, because justice (fairness) requires the punishment you deserve and forgiveness requires what you do not deserve. Justice and forgiveness are so far apart, you can have one or the other but not both. But through Jesus, God can have both justice and forgiveness because of what happened at the Cross.

This week, we will study forgiveness, not justice. We will look at the forgiveness Jesus showed while on earth.

Jesus came to show us the Father, a God of mercy.<sup>1</sup> The Father is a God who wants to forgive our sins. It is no surprise that Jesus was always offering forgiveness to people who would accept forgiveness. Jesus was showing His Father's will for all of us. We will look at some examples of how Jesus forgave to see what lessons we can learn for ourselves as a people who look for forgiveness from this same Jesus.

**THE WEEK AT A GLANCE:** What was the main reason for Jesus healing the paralytic?<sup>2</sup> What does that story teach about the connection between forgiveness and healing? What does forgiveness have to do with human self-worth? What can we learn from the different stories about how Jesus forgave Peter? Why did Jesus forgive the woman caught in adultery? Did Jesus receive an answer to His prayer for the people who crucified Him?

\*Study this week's lesson to prepare for Sabbath, April 26.

<sup>1</sup>mercy—kindness we do not deserve.

<sup>2</sup>paralytic—a person who cannot walk.

**SUN FORGIVING THE PARALYTIC.**

A powerful example of how Jesus forgave is found in how He healed the paralytic (Mark 2:1-11).

Mark 1 ends with the news being spread about how Jesus could heal sick people. People from everywhere were coming to Him (Mark 1:45). This is when the story of the paralytic happened.



**Read Mark 2:1-5. Why did people bring the paralytic to Jesus?**

Jesus made use of the Jewish belief that people were sick because they had sinned and were healed because they were forgiven. Jesus preached God's new kingdom by first forgiving the paralytic's sins. Then He healed him.

**What is the meaning of the fact that Jesus first forgave the paralytic his sins and then healed him? Does forgiveness always come before healing? Or should healing be done first? What about the fact that healing and forgiveness may be connected?**

Jesus did good in healing people. He also heals people today. But without the forgiveness of our sins and the hope of eternal<sup>3</sup> life that come from His forgiveness, healing lasts only a short time. It does not solve our greatest problem. Our greatest problem is sin.

Jesus did not come to earth to spend three and a half years healing and comforting people. He healed and comforted people to point them to Himself as the One who died for our sins and who forgives our sins.

**Read Mark 2:6-11. Then answer the following questions.**

1. Was the healing of the paralytic Jesus' most important goal? Explain.
2. Where was Jesus trying to lead the people who saw what happened with the paralyzed man?
3. Ellen G. White wrote, "Jesus did this miracle to show His power to forgive sins."—Adapted from *The Desire of Ages*, p. 267. Why did Jesus want people to know He had the power to forgive sin?

<sup>3</sup>eternal—forever; without beginning or end; lasting forever.

**MON FORGIVENESS AND SELF-WORTH—PART 1.**

Of all the Gospel<sup>4</sup> writers, Luke seems most interested in how Jesus worked with the “sinners” of Jewish society. Luke also was interested in how Jesus socialized with individuals (persons) whose self-worth was so poor that they hated themselves. Jewish leaders rejected these people. So these people often felt even more filthy (dirty) and unworthy.<sup>5</sup> In this group were poor people who did not keep the law perfectly, such as Simon Peter, the fisherman.

Read Luke 5:1-11. Jesus got into Peter’s boat and preached to the crowd. When Jesus finished speaking, he told Peter to put the nets into the water. Peter showed some doubt about catching anything. But he obeyed Jesus anyway. You know what happened afterward!



**Peter said to Jesus, “ ‘Go away from me because I am sinful’ ” (Luke 5:8, TEV). But should we not want Jesus with us because we are sinful? What do these words show us about Peter’s understanding of Jesus’ mission? (Compare<sup>6</sup> Peter here to the same Peter who wrote 1 Peter 1:18, 19.)**

How interesting it is to see that after Peter admitted his sinfulness, Jesus said nothing about forgiving his sins. Instead, Jesus said to Peter, “ ‘Don’t [do not] be afraid; from now on you will be catching men’ ” (Luke 5:10, TEV). The first thing Jesus did was tell Simon Peter about the work He was planning for him to do. Perhaps Jesus knew about Peter’s lack of self-worth. So He quickly told Peter about his important work. This helped Peter understand that he was a sinner, but that Jesus accepted and trusted him with important work.

Receiving forgiveness from God helps us to respect ourselves as His children and to feel good about who we are by His grace. Peter knew he was a sinner. But think how Jesus must have increased Peter’s self-worth! Jesus told Peter he would be working with Him to win souls instead of catching fish. Talk about a career promotion!

**How can we have the right balance between knowing we are sinners and having self-worth?**

<sup>4</sup>Gospel—the books of Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John are called the Gospels.

<sup>5</sup>unworthy—not worthy.

<sup>6</sup>compare—show how things are the same.

**TUE FORGIVENESS AND SELF-WORTH—PART 2.**

After accepting Jesus as Lord, Peter became one of His closest and most loyal disciples. Peter boldly announced his faith that Jesus was the Messiah (Matthew 16:16; John 6:69). He also announced that he would stay faithful to Jesus even until death (Luke 22:33).

**Notice how Peter changed from Luke 5:8 to Luke 22:33. What could have brought about such a great change? At which of these two times was Peter in better spiritual shape? Why?**

We know very well how shamefully Peter betrayed Jesus not long after he boastfully claimed loyalty to Him (Luke 22:55-62). Jesus forgave Peter. But what is interesting is how Jesus showed His forgiveness to Peter.



<sup>7</sup>attitude—how a person thinks or feels about something.

**Read the story in John 21:1-17. Then answer the following questions.**

1. In what ways is the story the same as when Jesus first called Peter (Luke 5:1-11)? In what ways is the story different?
2. What does the story about the nets being full of fish symbolize? (Luke 5:6).
3. What did Peter do when he heard that it was the risen Jesus on the shore? Did Peter act the same as someone who was afraid to see Jesus, even after he betrayed Him? What might have been the reason for Peter's attitude?<sup>7</sup>
4. Jesus told Peter three times to feed His sheep. How did Jesus' words to Peter show He had forgiven Him?
5. Jesus forgave Peter for betraying Him. So why did He give Peter such an important job? Peter was forgiven. But should he not have been suspended from important church work because he betrayed Jesus? Explain your answer.

**WED THE WOMAN CAUGHT IN ADULTERY (JOHN 8:1-11).**

Read John 8:1-11. How can a woman be caught in adultery without a man being caught too? But where was the man? Why was only the woman

brought to Jesus? According to Jewish law, it was almost impossible<sup>8</sup> to prove that adultery had taken place. Requirements of proof were so strict that someone almost would have to be set up to be caught. Proof required several witnesses<sup>9</sup> who had not known or suspected adultery would be done. Jewish law also required that if anyone even believed someone else was going to break the law, he or she would have to do all he or she could to prevent it from happening. So catching a person in adultery was supposed to be completely accidental. There should be no plan to trick someone into sin. The man caught with the woman was not accused. But the woman was brought to Jesus. This shows some kind of trap. Ellen G. White wrote that the Pharisees who brought her to Jesus “had themselves led the woman into sin, that they might trap Jesus.”—Adapted from *The Desire of Ages*, p. 461.

**Led into a trap or not, the woman still did the sin. But look at how fully Jesus forgave her. “I [Jesus] do not condemn you either. Go, but do not sin again’ ” (John 8:11, TEV). Just like that, Jesus forgave her. What did she do to deserve such a full pardon for her sins?**

Notice that Jesus’ words to her did not end with a pardon. He warned her not to sin again. He did not say to her “Do not do it again, and then I will no

longer condemn you.” The pardon came first and *then* came the call to obey. This is how the Christian life works. God first forgives our sins out of mercy on His part (as it was for the woman caught in adultery). As a result of that forgiveness and pardon, God gives us reason and power to live in obedience. If works and obedience came before forgiveness, then forgiveness would not be by faith but by works.



“Go and sin no more.”

**Why must forgiveness come before good works?**

**THU** “‘FATHER, FORGIVE THEM.’ ”

“‘Forgive them [the people crucifying Jesus], Father! They don’t [do not] know what they are doing’ ” (Luke 23:34, TEV).

Only a few words in the Bible have ever equaled Jesus’ prayer in Luke 23:34.

<sup>8</sup>impossible—not possible.

<sup>9</sup>witnesses—people who see something happen.

His Prayer is a powerful testimony to His unlimited<sup>10</sup> love for all people. Jesus' prayer gives the world the greatest example of what forgiveness means.

**Read as much of Luke 23 as possible. Then answer these questions.**

1. Did the Father answer Jesus' prayer? Read 1 John 1:9; Romans 3:28; Romans 8:1.
2. Jesus said that these people did not know what they were doing. But He still asked the Father to forgive them. What does this suggest about failing to understand our wrong actions is no excuse for those actions?
3. By praying to the Father for the people crucifying Him, what position was Jesus accepting? How does His prayer help us understand just what He does for us in that position? Romans 8:34; 1 John 2:1; Hebrews 8:1.

Jesus' prayer becomes even more amazing when we understand just how unfairly<sup>11</sup> they had treated Him. Jesus had spent three and a half years doing nothing but good. He had given much clear proof of His work and mission. He had over and over showed His willingness to love and help the worst of sinners. But Jesus faced the undeserving<sup>12</sup> anger and cruelty of these people. We cannot understand the terrible injustice<sup>13</sup> that Jesus went through. If any-

one had the right to be angry with the people, Jesus did. If anyone had the right to call out for God's revenge<sup>14</sup> against them, Jesus did. If anyone had the right to want to see these people punished for their actions, Jesus did. But He cries out for God to forgive them! This we cannot understand!

**The Jesus who asked the Father to forgive the people who were crucifying Him is the same Jesus who now works as our High Priest in heaven. He is just as eager to forgive our sins too. How can you use this story to help anyone who is afraid that his or her sins are too terrible to be forgiven?**

**FRI FURTHER STUDY:** "The Saviour did not complain. His face remained calm and peaceful. But great drops of sweat were upon His forehead. No one showed mercy by wiping the sweat from His dying face, or giving words of sympathy to support His human heart. The soldiers were doing their terrible work. Meanwhile, Jesus prayed for His enemies, 'Father forgive them; for they know not what they do.' His mind forgot His own suffering as He prayed for the sin of His attackers. He also prayed about the terrible punishment that would come to them. He did not curse the soldiers who handled Him so roughly. No curse was spoken to the priests and rulers, who were celebrat-

<sup>10</sup>unlimited—without limit. Jesus loves us even when we sin.

<sup>11</sup>unfairly—acting in a way that is not fair.

<sup>12</sup>undeserving—not deserving.

<sup>13</sup>injustice—not being fair.

<sup>14</sup>revenge—getting even.

ing His arrest. Jesus pitied them for their stupidity and guilt. He breathed only a plea for their forgiveness, ‘for they know not what they do.’

“They did not know that they were hurting the One who had come to save them from eternal death. If they really knew who Jesus was, they would have been filled with guilt and horror. Their lack of knowledge about Jesus did not remove their guilt, because they had the honor to know and accept Jesus as their Savior. Some of them would later see their sin, repent,<sup>15</sup> and be converted.<sup>16</sup> By refusing to repent, some would make it impossible<sup>17</sup> for God to answer Jesus’ prayer for them. But God’s purpose was being fulfilled. Jesus was earning the right to become our defender in front of the Father.

Jesus’ prayer for His enemies reached all over the world. It covered every sinner that had lived or should live, from the beginning of the world to the end of time. The guilt of crucifying the Son of God is upon all people. But forgiveness is freely offered to all

people too. ‘Whosoever will’ may have peace with God, and receive eternal life.”—Adapted from Ellen G. White, *The Desire of Ages*, pp. 744, 745.

#### DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

1. How does Jesus’ prayer for the people who crucified Him help us understand Romans 12:19?
2. Read the last few lines in Ellen G. White’s quote above. How do we understand her words that “the guilt of crucifying the Son of God is upon all people”?
3. Ellen G. White also says that “forgiveness is freely offered to all people too.” Notice that she does not say that all people are forgiven, but that forgiveness is *offered* to all people. What is the difference between these two ideas?
4. What does Galatians 2:7-14 tell us about Peter needing forgiveness again?

<sup>15</sup>repent—being sorry for your sins and wanting to stop sinning.

<sup>16</sup>converted—to have become a Christian.

<sup>17</sup>impossible—not possible.