

## Past Present Future

A prevalent belief being taught in the Church today is that Jesus Christ has forgiven your sins: past, present, and future. Anyone who makes a claim should be able to support that claim. For the Christian, that support must come from the Bible, the supporting document for all Christian beliefs. If one cannot find support for a belief in the Word of God, we must cast away that belief. God has asked us to be diligent in our study of his word; if we are not being diligent in our study of the Bible, we can fall into many snares of the enemy. A classic example of this is found in the person of Eve; she forgot God's word and suffered the consequences. The Bible tells us that, "My [God's] people are destroyed for lack of knowledge" (Hosea 4:6). God's people are defeated every day, not because God has not provided a way to victory or escape, but rather, because his people neglect his word. We study and teach the truth of the gospel because we do not want to be defeated. The truth found in the Bible is the pathway to victory for our every need. We need to align everything we believe with the Bible to ensure we have not believed a lie. The issue at hand today is, what sins are forgiven when we repent? Some claim that when we say the sinner's prayer and turn our life over to God, the totality of our sins are forgiven, from every sin we committed in the past, to every sin that we ever will commit. Others claim, that only the sins we have truly forsaken are covered, but that we still need to be diligent, unless new sins take advantage of us, and leave us doomed on judgment day. It doesn't matter what I believe or what you believe. What matters most is: what does the Bible say one must do to gain forgiveness from God?

1. "If I regard iniquity in my heart, the Lord will

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not hear me." Psalm 66:18

Obviously, the sin issue is a very important issue to God. We know he loves us; we know he has great mercy towards us; we know that he wants to have fellowship with us more than anything, and yet the Bible tells us that if we regard iniquity, the Lord will not hear us. How can one be saved if God cannot hear our prayers? Let us continue to build on our understanding:

2. "He that covereth his sins shall not prosper: but whoso confesseth and forsaketh them shall have mercy." Proverbs 28:13

3. "This then is the message which we have heard of him, and declare unto you, that God is light, and in him is no darkness at all. If we say that we have fellowship with him, and walk in darkness, we lie, and do not the truth: But if we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship one with another, and the blood of Jesus Christ his Son cleanseth us from all sin. If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us. If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness. If we say that we have not sinned, we make him a liar, and his word is not in us." 1 John 6 - 9

According to the first few scriptures at which we have looked, there are two things that must be done

to achieve forgiveness from God: confession and repentance. Confession is being honest with God about where your sin; this is the first prayer that God will hear from you. Repentance is actually forsaking the sin. Repentance is different from confession, as it is the validation of the confession. When we repent, we actually stop committing the sin. The story of the prodigal son (read Luke 15:11-32) is a good illustration on what it means to repent. The point of repentance in the story (as well as for us) is when the son “came to himself” and decided to come back to his house and forsake his old life. You need to go back home to the Father if you intend to get right with him. However, if a sin is confessed, but the person’s intention is to continue on committing the sin, this will not be forgiven.

It is important that we continue to build our understanding of this issue, but before we do, let us recap what we have learned so far:

- I. If we regard iniquity in our heart, the Lord will not hear
- II. If we cover our sins, we will not prosper
- III. If we confess our sins, he will forgive us
- IV. If we forsake our sins, he will have mercy

Now, it is important to look at several more verses that speak of repentance, forgiveness, and the requirements for such. If you read with open eyes and an open heart, I believe you will see striking similarities in the passages that add further light to what we have already discovered. While we do, ask yourself, “Would this passage need to be written, if future sins were indeed forgiven?”

4. “He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches; To him that overcometh will I give to eat of the hidden manna, and will give him a white stone, and in the stone a new name written, which no man knoweth saving he that receiveth it. And unto the angel of the church in Thyatira write; These things saith the Son of God, who hath his eyes like unto a flame of fire, and his feet are like fine brass; I know thy works, and charity, and service, and faith, and thy patience, and thy works; and the last to be more than the first. Notwithstanding I have a few things against thee, because thou sufferest that woman Jezebel, which calleth herself a prophetess, to teach and to seduce my servants to commit fornication, and to eat things sacrificed unto idols. And I gave her space to repent of her fornication; and she repented not. Behold, I will cast her into a bed, and them that commit adultery with her into great tribulation, except they repent of their deeds. And I will kill her children with death; and all the churches shall know that I am he which searcheth the reins and hearts: and I will give unto every one of you according to your works. But unto you I say, and unto the rest in Thyatira, as many as have not this doctrine, and which have not known the depths of Satan, as they speak; I will put upon you none other burden. But that which ye have already hold fast till I come. And he that overcometh, and keepeth my works unto the end, to him will I give power over the nations: And he shall rule them with a rod of iron; as the vessels of a potter shall they be broken to shivers: even as I received of my Father. And I will give him the morning star. Rev 2:17-27

*Note: In this passage, it is not the one who goes down to the altar and says a salvation prayer that is saved, but it is the one who keeps the works of God to the end. This is an important distinction and in line with the first verses that introduced us to confession and true repentance. If we have truly repented, we are keeping his works unto the end.*

5. But he that shall endure unto the end, the same shall be saved. Matt 24:7

*Note: This is a validation of the previous verse. Implication is made that it is not enough just to believe at one point in life, but one must continue belief to the end in order to prove his heart. Would this statement be*

*written if future sins were absolved? This statement is incompatible with that belief.*

6. If ye continue in my word, then are ye my disciples indeed; And ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free. They answered him, We be Abraham's seed, and were never in bondage to any man: how sayest thou, Ye shall be made free? Jesus answered them, Verily, verily, I say unto you, Whosoever committeth sin is the servant of sin. And the servant abideth not in the house for ever: but the Son abideth ever. If the Son therefore shall make you free, ye shall be free indeed. John 8:31 – 36

*Note: Another validation: in the mouth of two or three witnesses, let everything be established. We must continue in the Word. If we sin, we are the servants of sin, while the servants of Jesus Christ are free from its impact. Why would this be said if person's future sins were forgiven? Does it not seem illogical?*

7. The seed is the Word of God. Those by the way side are they that hear; then cometh the devil, and taketh away the word out of their hearts, lest they should believe and be saved. They on the rock are they, which, when they hear, receive the word with joy; and these have no root, which for a while believe, and in time of temptation fall away. And that which fell among thorns are they, which, when they have heard, go forth, and are choked with cares and riches and pleasures of this life, and bring no fruit to perfection. But that on the good ground are they, which in an honest and good heart, having heard the word, keep it, and bring forth fruit with patience.

Luke 8:11-15

*Note: Differentiation is made between those who hear and receive the word but later fall away and those who continue in the word and keep it to the end.*

8. But after thy hardness and impenitent heart treasurest up unto thyself wrath against the day of wrath and revelation of the righteous judgment of God; Who will render to every man according to his deeds: To them who by patient continuance in well doing seek for glory and honour and immortality, eternal life: But unto them that are contentious, and do not obey the truth, but obey unrighteousness, indignation and wrath, tribulation and anguish, upon every soul of man that doeth evil, of the Jew first, and also of the Gentile; But glory, honour, and peace, to every man that worketh good, to the Jew first, and also to the Gentile: For there is no respect of persons with God. Romans 2: 5-11

*Note: "Every soul that doeth evil", includes those who at one point in time have repented and confessed sin. Again, it is our consistent production of Godly fruit that proves our testimony true. To say that our testimony at a singular point in time provides a free pass to salvation regardless of our actions is contrary to scripture. This understanding is not grace; it is dishonest handling of the word of God.*

9. This I say then, walk in the Spirit, and ye shall not fulfill the lust of the flesh. For the flesh lusteth against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh: and these are contrary the one to the other: so that ye cannot do the things that ye would. But if ye be led of the Spirit, ye are not under the law. Now the works of the flesh are manifest, which are these; adultery, fornication, uncleanness, lasciviousness, Idolatry, witchcraft, hatred, variance, emulations, wrath, strife, seditions, heresies, Envyings, murders, drunkenness, revellings, and such like: of the which I tell you before, as I have also told you in time past, that they which do such things shall not inherit the kingdom of God. Galatians 5

*Note: There is no evidence here to suggest that a person's future sins are forgiven. Those who commit sin*

*will not make it in. Sins listed here range from what most Christian circles would consider serious, (murder, adultery, etc.) to what most Christians might deem common, (wrath, reveling, etc.) Maybe we should reconsider the seriousness of sin in God's eyes.*

10. Whosoever committeth sin transgresseth also the law: for sin is the transgression of the law. And ye know that he was manifested to take away our sins; and in him is no sin. Whosoever abideth in him sinneth not: whosoever sinneth hath not seen him, neither known him. Little children, let no man deceive you: he that doeth righteousness is righteous, even as he is righteous. He that committeth sin is of the devil; for the devil sinneth from the beginning. For this purpose the Son of God was manifested, that he might destroy the works of the devil. Whosoever is born of God doth not commit sin; for his seed remaineth in him: and he cannot sin, because he is born of God. In this the children of God are manifest, and the children of the devil: whosoever doeth not righteousness is not of God, neither he that loveth not his brother. 1 Jo 3:4-10

*Note: We see that committing sin is a mark of who our true father is. We also see that those who are born of God have a seed that remains. While we are in the flesh, we will always have the potential to sin, but Jesus Christ lived, died, rose again, and ascended into heaven to give us the power to live above sin's power. Anything less than living above sin, is missing his plan. To claim that all future sins are forgiven is logically inconsistent with this scripture.*

Now we can clearly see that a person's past sins are forgiven from the passages above. It is not clear that a person's future sins are taken care of. It will be a benefit to explore the concept of having our future sins forgiven. If our future sins were forgiven, the following situation would have to be true:

A person that is a sinner hears the gospel message and is convicted

- I. He confesses his sins to God
- II. He repents of his sin and becomes a child of God
- III. Past, present and future sins are now forgiven
- IV. What happens from that day forward, is now irrelevant
  - He can murder as often as he chooses
  - He can become a drunkard every weekend
  - He can eat as much food as he wants
  - He can commit adultery
  - He can fornicate all he wants, etc.

According to this doctrine, not only can this new believer do all of these things, but he can also be glad in knowing that God has forgiven all of his other future sins that he is sure to commit during the rest of his life. One who espouses this doctrine might object at this point and say that a true Christian would never really do such things as are listed above. However, one cannot truly believe that future sins are forgiven and make the above statement, as they both cannot be true. If forgiveness of sins applies to sins committed in the future, there would be no other requirement for how the person lives his life. It would simply be a situation where the blood of Christ was strong enough to cover the sin. By adding any further requirement, one is actually admitting that there is some standard by which a Christian must act in order to be in good standing with God. The end result of our belief structure is clear, and vitally important. If one believes his future sins are covered by the blood of Jesus, he can guarantee that at some point in the future he will slip up. If sins need to be confessed in real time, there are still no guarantees, for sin is very deceitful but he will certainly take sin more seriously. One model produces cheap grace, while the other produces a holy and righteous life.

This false doctrine sounds nice, and it would be easier on us if it were true, but the Bible does not teach such things. Where did this false doctrine come from? As far as I can tell, two ideas are the source, one is scriptural and the other, logical. Let us look at the scriptural argument first. Here is the one verse people use to suggest that future sins are forgiven.

But this man, after he had offered one sacrifice for sins forever, sat down on the right hand of God; from henceforth expecting till his enemies be made his footstool. For by one offering he hath perfected for ever them that are sanctified.

Whereof the Holy Ghost also is a witness to us: for after that he had said before, This is the covenant that I will make with them after those days, saith the Lord, I will put my laws into their hearts, and in their minds will I write them; And their sins and iniquities will I remember no more. Now where remission of these is, there is no more offering for sin. Hebrews 10: 12 – 18

This verse does say that there is an offering that was made for sins forever, but it does not say that everyone's future sins are forgiven because of this. A careful reading of the text along with the preceding and following verses help us to see that the writer is instructing us that Jesus gave a complete sacrifice on the cross; this sacrifice is of such power and magnitude that it will be sufficient for all time: those who were believers at that time, to the believers that are alive today (one sacrifice, good for all time –hence the Catholic doctrine of the mass is in error). Next, it says that he has perfected a certain group of people forever. This verse is 100% true, but notice the disclaimer. It was not everyone who claimed Christ at some point in his life. It is those who are sanctified. Being sanctified is to be set apart from the world. However, everyone that has ever confessed Christ and asked him to be his savior is not necessarily sanctified. Scripture does not support a sanctification that lasts forever, but is rather a process that God leads us through by his grace. Hebrews 10:12-18 is one example of this.

The second argument people use really doesn't come from the Bible, but is a mere rendering of logic. This loophole argument goes like this: If God doesn't forgive our future sins, and we are out walking down the road and we commit a sin, and then are hit by a truck and die, what will happen? This argument is used to say that surely God would not send someone to hell in this way. This argument sounds pleasant, but it is not a scriptural argument. How do you know that God would not? Just because it does not seem fair to you, does not mean that God won't do it. For instance, there are a group of so-called believers that will be sent to hell who will be surprised as to their real outcome. They thought they were white as snow (hence why they are called virgins) and believed with all sincerity that they were right. They even did some mighty works in his name, but did not make it to glory (Matt 7:21-23, 25:1-12). Logically, it may seem unfair for this group to be thrown into hell, but God is just and we are not unless he has changed us. Logic should not be the basis of belief, but rather, the Bible. Notice how the very ideas presented in these verses are contrary to a person's future sins being forgiven. Those called virgins (sign of having sins forgiven) became relaxed in their walk and were ultimately not prepared to meet the King at his coming. I only bring up this point of view to show you the danger of using logical arguments alone. The real answer is that the Bible does provide for these "loophole arguments" and they are very simple to understand. The Bible provides other coverings for sin that can be applied in such situations (not to mention God is in control of the exact time in which we die. This is not left to chance). Those coverings are charity and saving a brother from the error of his ways (1 Peter 4:8, James 5:19-20). The loophole is closed.

As we close this discussion on the doctrine of future sins being forgiven, it is clear that it fits nicely with the doctrine of once you are saved, you are always saved. While in a manner of speaking, this idea is true; the way most people preach the doctrine is not scriptural. Once you are saved, you will always be saved, but the Bible tells us that salvation takes place at the end of your days on earth, not when we go to an altar and pray

a prayer of salvation. When Jesus appears in the clouds at his second coming, our faith will not be faith any longer, it will then be reality, our faith will become sight and our salvation will be everlasting. Consider this passage:

Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, which according to his abundant mercy hath begotten us again unto a lively hope by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, To an inheritance incorruptible, and undefiled, and that fadeth not away, reserved in heaven for you, Who are kept by the power of God through faith unto salvation ready to be revealed in the last time. Wherein ye greatly rejoice, though now for a season, if need be, ye are in heaviness through manifold temptations: That the trial of your faith, being much more precious than of gold that perisheth, though it be tried with fire, might be found unto praise and honour and glory at the appearing of Jesus Christ: Whom having not seen, ye love; in whom, though now ye see him not, yet believing, ye rejoice with joy unspeakable and full of glory: Receiving the end of your faith, even the salvation of your souls. 1Pe 1:3-9

This passage gives us insight into how God views this walk, and it is also consistent with verses we have viewed earlier in this analysis. It is those who endure unto the end that are saved. To reach salvation, we must endure various trials and temptations. The Christians in this verse are experiencing great trials. Peter comforts them by exhorting them to hang on, for they are being made into something beautiful, and at the end of it all, they will receive salvation. This is the correct understanding of the situation: Jesus does forgive sins in our past when we confess and repent. If we continue on in faithful service to him, we attain a salvation that cannot be taken away. If we are sinning in the present, we are not very sincere about our repentance and will suffer the consequences. As a matter of fact, for sin to be forgiven, according to the scripture, it must always be in the past. Amen.

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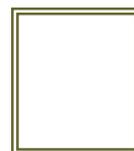
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