

Scripture Reading: James 3

“4 Adulterers and adulteresses! Do you not know that friendship with the world is enmity with God? Whoever therefore wants to be a friend of the world makes himself an enemy of God. 5 Or do you think that the Scripture says in vain, "The Spirit who dwells in us yearns jealously"? 6 But He gives more grace. Therefore He says: "God resists the proud, But gives grace to the humble." 7 Therefore submit to God. Resist the devil and he will flee from you. 8 Draw near to God and He will draw near to you. Cleanse your hands, you sinners; and purify your hearts, you double-minded. 9 Lament and mourn and weep! Let your laughter be turned to mourning and your joy to gloom. 10 Humble yourselves in the sight of the Lord, and He will lift you up.”

Psalm 103: “1 Bless the Lord, O my soul; And all that is within me, bless His holy name! 2 Bless the Lord, O my soul, And forget not all His benefits: 3 Who forgives all your iniquities, Who heals all your diseases, 4 Who redeems your life from destruction, Who crowns you with lovingkindness and tender mercies, 5 Who satisfies your mouth with good things, So that your youth is renewed like the eagle’s.”

The Forgiveness of the Church

Well as we saw last week, James is pretty tough on those Saints he writes this Epistle too, and since ALL Scripture is written for our edification, it should speak to us as well.

- We learned that we must be brutally honest in our confession of sin before our holy God, BUT that is not the end of the story as Paul Harvey was known to say!

We have a time of confession each week in our service and then what is formally called the absolution.

- That is a fancy word for when an officer in Christ’s Church pronounces the forgiveness of sins!
- This concept is very appropriate for our subject this morning where I want us to take in the truth of James teaching us that God gives Grace to the humble!
[mention last week’s example of the pharisee and publican]
- The Bad news the Bible gives us is that we are a broken people, but the Good News is that our sins are forgiven and that is what we will study this morning.

In our study of Ephesians, Pastor Lloyd-Jones reminded us that “The Scriptures are meant to feed our souls, to enrich our minds, and to move our hearts; and if we are to know such experiences we must tarry with these things, we must drink them in and take of their fulness.” *[remind them of the museum example]*

So lets take just a moment to remember the other examples we considered last week when looking at proper confession before our holy God... And finish the stories if you will.

- And as we do we will see that there was always Good News for these repentant sinners!

Isaiah thought all was lost in the presence of God and yet the angel came offering healing for his unclean lips!

- After that he was ready and willing to serve the living God!

We saw King David as a broken man in Psalm 51, but his honest confession brings to his mind the forgiveness that we have in the Gospel:

Psalm 51: “7 Purge me with hyssop, and I shall be clean; Wash me, and I shall be whiter than snow. 8 Make me hear joy and gladness, That the bones You have broken may rejoice. 9 Hide Your face from my sins, And blot out all my iniquities. 10 Create in me a clean heart, O God, And renew a steadfast spirit within me. 11 Do not cast me away from Your presence, And do not take Your Holy Spirit from me. 12 Restore to me the joy of Your salvation, And uphold me by Your generous Spirit. 13 Then I will teach transgressors Your ways, And sinners shall be converted to You.”

- **There we have the entire Christian life summed up in seven short verses!**

Confession :

Forgiveness :

Power :

Witness!

- **Just what we saw in the life of Isaiah the prophet and why King David goes on to be known as the man after God's own heart!**

And we also considered the Apostle John who fell on his face before the glorified Jesus in Revelation chapter one: "17 And when I saw Him, I fell at His feet as dead."

IF we only heard the bad news, this would be our state: Crushed under the weight of our sin and unable to stand before God or even lift our head as we saw with the publican in the Temple. However, we see again Jesus extending God's Grace to John in verse 17:

"But He laid His right hand on me, saying to me, "Do not be afraid; I am the First and the Last. 18 I am He who lives, and was dead, and behold, I am alive forevermore. Amen. And I have the keys of Hades and of Death."

And of course we cannot study the doctrine of forgiveness without taking in the glorious truth that John himself gives us in his first epistle:

I John 1: "6 If we say that we have fellowship with Him, and walk in darkness, we lie and do not practice the truth. 7 But if we walk in the light as He is in the light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus Christ His Son cleanses us from all sin. 8 If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us. 9 If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness."

- **We should always be thankful that God gives such Grace to the humble!**

We know that we are to trust God for material things like food and clothing to keep us alive...

- **But we must also fully trust Him for the spiritual blessings that will sustain us for all eternity in a loving relationship with our Triune God.**

Now as we consider what it means for God to give Grace to the humble, we must remember the glorious truth we studied in Ephesians 1:7 "In Him we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of His grace."

We could also study all the details of our forgiveness found in the first eleven chapters of Romans... This morning I want us to remember that we should often stand in wonder before these incredible truths about the forgiveness of our sins in the same way we would before one of the great masterpieces in a museum or listening to a performance of The Messiah.

Romans tells us about how God was just and the justifier as He sent His own Son to propitiate His wrath against our sin... But in other places in the Scriptures we are given grand pictures to ponder about this incredible truth of God's Grace...

As part of our text this morning I read the opening familiar verses from Psalm 103: "1 Bless Jehovah, O my soul; And all that is within me, bless His holy name! 2 Bless Jehovah, O my soul, And forget not all His benefits: 3 Who forgives all your iniquities, Who heals all your diseases, 4 Who redeems your life from destruction, Who crowns you with lovingkindness and tender mercies, 5 Who satisfies your mouth with good things, So that your youth is renewed like the eagle's."

Later in Psalm 103 we read this:

“10 He hath not dealt with us after our sins; nor rewarded us according to our iniquities. 11 For as the heaven is high above the earth, so great is his mercy toward them that fear him. 12 As far as the east is from the west, so far has he removed our transgressions from us.”

- **As I have pointed out in other messages, the Psalmist is careful to say that our sins are as far from us as the east is from the west and not the north from the south!**

You see **IF** it said as far as the north is from the south then we could imagine how far it is between the north and south poles: Large but measurable.

- **But how far is the east from the west?**
- **Do you see the point?**

Our modern age should be even more in awe of “as the heaven is high about the earth!

God does not want us to try and figure out just how far either of those could be, but to ponder the great work that the Blood of Jesus has accomplished just as we would stand in awe before a Rembrandt painting. The prophet Micah gives us another image to consider when pondering the riches of God’s Grace in forgiving our sin: Micah 7: “[God] does not retain His anger forever, Because He delights in mercy. 19 He will again have compassion on us, And will subdue our iniquities. You will cast all our sins Into the depths of the sea.” Our sins are taken away, cast away with a distance we cannot measure and a depth we cannot imagine!

And finally we can turn to the Book of Hebrews for even more comfort when it comes to dealing with our sins...

Hebrews 10: “15 But the Holy Spirit also witnesses to us; for after He had said before, 16 “This is the covenant that I will make with them after those days, says the Lord: I will put My laws into their hearts, and in their minds I will write them,” 17 then He adds,

- **“Their sins and their lawless deeds I will remember no more.”**
- **Ponder that amazing truth for a moment and then listen as the writer gives us further encouragement...**

18 Now where there is remission of these, there is no longer an offering for sin. 19 Therefore, brethren, having boldness to enter the Holiest by the blood of Jesus, 20 by a new and living way which He consecrated for us, through the veil, that is, His flesh, 21 and having a High Priest over the house of God, 22 let us draw near with a true heart in full assurance of faith, having our hearts sprinkled from an evil conscience and our bodies washed with pure water.”

Just as we learned that we can in some way comprehend the incomprehensible nature of God Himself it is the same with this truth:

- **We can never fully comprehend the wonder of what God has done, but these images help us to stand in awe before these amazing truths.**

So how does this impact our lives?

- **First and foremost, these are truths that we should study and meditate on often in our lives!**

You will find them everywhere in the Scriptures, just as we are using Psalm 103 as an example this morning!

Next the reality must be real in our lives and allow me use my own experience if you will: I came to Christ in the spring of 1976 and down through the years I have obtained many riches: Wife, homes, children, grandchildren, jobs, comfort in my old age...

But Linda and I have always asked one simple question with regard to all of them: IF we lost them would it change our relationship with Jesus?

As the Apostle Paul declared, “

Philippians 3: “7 But what things were gain to me, these I have counted loss for Christ. 8 Yet indeed I also count all things loss for the excellence of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord, for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and count them as rubbish, that I may gain Christ 9 and be found in Him, not having my own righteousness, which is from the law, but that which is through faith in Christ, the righteousness which is from God by faith; 10 that I may know Him and the power of His resurrection, and the fellowship of His sufferings, being conformed to His death, 11 if, by any means, I may attain to the resurrection from the dead.”

- **We must never look for any righteousness in ourselves, but come humble before God confessing our sins and then experiencing the joy of forgiveness and the fullness of life that we are offered in Jesus!**

And we must remember that this joy comes in the midst of real life... It does not remove all the burdens of the Fall in this life, so men you will sweat and toil in your profession and ladies, there will always be another dirty diaper and those same dishes to wash again!

But in the midst of this life we can know that we are forgiven for all of our sins!

- **And finally we must also remember that forgiveness does not always remove the consequences of sin in this life.**

Suppose a child is disobedient and plays with an expensive vase they were told to never touch and it is broken: The child will be disciplined with forgiveness & love extended after proper repentance, BUT the vase is still broken.

We have used King David as our example of a sinful man who is broken and properly confesses his sins, but we know from that account there were consequences. However, we learn that King David experienced the riches of God’s Grace even in the midst of very serious sin in his life, and that Grace even extended to the consequences of his sin.

II Samuel 12: “9 When David saw that his servants were whispering, David perceived that the child was dead. Therefore David said to his servants, “Is the child dead?” And they said, “He is dead.” 20 So David arose from the ground, washed and anointed himself, and changed his clothes; and he went into the house of the Lord and worshiped. Then he went to his own house; and when he requested, they set food before him, and he ate. 21 Then his servants said to him, “What is this that you have done? You fasted and wept for the child while he was alive, but when the child died, you arose and ate food.” 22 And he said, “While the child was alive, I fasted and wept; for I said, ‘Who can tell whether the Lord will be gracious to me, that the child may live?’ 23 But now he is dead; why should I fast? Can I bring him back again? I shall go to him, but he shall not return to me.” 24 Then David comforted Bathsheba his wife, and went in to her and lay with her. So she bore a son, and he called his name Solomon.”

Not only did King David see his personal relationship with God restored after his sins, but God went on to have King Solomon as their heir.

And that brings us back to the rest of Psalm 103, where we see King David reflecting on these grand truths...

14 “For He knows our frame; He remembers that we are dust. 15 As for man, his days are like grass; As a flower of the field, so he flourishes. 16 For the wind passes over it, and it is gone, And its place remembers it no more. 17 But the mercy of Jehovah is from everlasting to everlasting On those who fear Him, And His righteousness to children’s children, 18 To such as keep His covenant, And to those who remember His commandments to do them.

19 Jehovah has established His throne in heaven, And His kingdom rules over all. 20 Bless Jehovah, you His angels, Who excel in strength, who do His word, Heeding the voice of His word. 21 Bless Jehovah, all you His hosts, You ministers of His, who do His pleasure. 22 Bless Jehovah, all His works, In all places of His dominion. Bless Jehovah, O my soul!

Communion Meditation: Luke 12

“29 “And do not seek what you should eat or what you should drink, nor have an anxious mind. 30 For all these things the nations of the world seek after, and your Father knows that you need these things. 31 But seek [f]the kingdom of God, and all these things shall be added to you.

32 “Do not fear, little flock, for it is your Father’s good pleasure to give you the kingdom. 33 Sell what you have and give alms; provide yourselves money bags which do not grow old, a treasure in the heavens that does not fail, where no thief approaches nor moth destroys. 34 For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.”