

INTRODUCTION

In New Testament times, the Romans had perfected the worst form of punishment for criminals imaginable: death on a cross. The Romans would attach a sign to each cross detailing the charges brought against the criminal. Every person has a sign listing our charges, which are all the sins we have committed. When we are saved by grace through faith in Jesus, His blood covers those charges. Jesus took the punishment we deserved – and now we can be forgiven!

In Colossians 2:13 and 1:13, Paul describes how we were spiritually dead and trapped in darkness before salvation. Being spiritually dead means unresponsive to the things of God. We were completely unable to move or save ourselves from the casket of sin. What Christ did on the cross unlocked the casket so we could be alive with Him and accept His forgiveness. Forgiveness does not mean that no wrongs were done. It means that the debt is cancelled. We owed God a debt we could never pay, but Jesus paid the debt for us. Now our ledger is clean and the balance is zeroed out.

Why do many Christians live as though they still owe a debt? Some of us are running a stressful audit on an account that God has permanently closed. If we continue punishing ourselves, we are acting as if our court is higher than God's court and His punishment did not meet our standards. Eventually we will also hold other people to account and refuse to forgive them until they pay us back. We must let it go and forgive them because Christ forgave us. Forgiveness is about realizing we are too rich in Christ to care about collecting these small debts from others. If we unlock forgiveness, we will discover the incredible joy of experiencing our salvation.

GETTING STARTED

1. What kinds of debts can people owe, and are some kinds worse than others?
2. How does it feel when you refuse to forgive someone or when someone will not forgive you?

LET'S GET PERSONAL

1. Do you feel that you still owe a debt to God? Why or why not?
2. Have you experienced joy in your salvation? What might be blocking that joy for you?
3. What is the difference between forgiveness and reconciliation? How could that impact decisions in your life regarding relationships?

TAKE THE NEXT STEP

1. In what ways are you still trying to punish yourself for your sins? How can you begin to let go right now and experience the joy of God's forgiveness?
2. Is there someone you have refused to forgive? How can you move toward forgiving that person this week?
3. ***Want to dig deeper?*** Take a look at the following passages: Colossians 2:10-12; Colossians 1:13-14; 1 Corinthians 2:14; Ephesians 2:5, 8-9; Romans 4:4-5; Galatians 2:21; John 1:12; 1 Timothy 2:4, 6; 1 Timothy 4:10; 1 Peter 2:24; Psalm 32:1; Galatians 3:10; John 19:19; 2 Corinthians 5:21; Matthew 18:23-34; John 19:30.

RENEW YOUR MIND

*For He rescued us from the domain of darkness, and transferred us to the kingdom of His beloved Son, in whom we have redemption, the forgiveness of sins. – **Colossians 1:13***