

Forgiveness of Our Sin in Jesus' Resurrection

Thomas Robinson, *Body & Spirit in a Difficult World 3*, May 17, 2020

Luke 24:44-53 (Translation TR)

⁴⁴ Then he said to them, "*These are my words that I spoke to you while I was still with you, that it's necessary for everything written about me in the law of Moses and the prophets and psalms to be filled to the brim.*"

⁴⁵ Then he opened their mind to understand the Scriptures, ⁴⁶ and said to them, "*This is just what was written, that the Anointed King would suffer and rise from the dead on the third day, ⁴⁷ and that on the basis of his name repentance, a change of heart, will be proclaimed leading to forgiveness of sins for all the nations.*"

Starting from Jerusalem, ⁴⁸ you're the ones who bear witness to these things. ⁴⁹ And look, I myself am sending upon you what my Father promised. But you, sit right here in the city until power from on high wraps you like a cloak."

⁵⁰ But he led them outside all the way to Bethany, and when he lifted up his hands, he blessed them. ⁵¹ And just as he was blessing them, he separated from them and was brought into God's realm (*heaven*). ⁵² And as they were worshiping him, they returned into Jerusalem with great joy, ⁵³ and were continually in the temple blessing God.

Colossians 3:9-10, 13-14 (Translation TR)

⁹ Don't be false to each other, because you've stripped off that old person with its practices ¹⁰ and you've put on the new person, who's being renewed so as to be recognized by the *image* of its creator. ...

¹³ It means that you put up with each other and graciously forgive each other, if one has a complaint against another. Just as the Lord in his grace forgave you, so you too give that grace.

¹⁴ And it means that over all these things you put on love, which holds them together and marks your maturity.

Genesis 3:1-7 (Translation TR)

¹ Now the snake was more clever than all other living animals of the field that YAHWEH God made. He asked the woman, "Did God really say, 'You both shall not eat from any tree of the garden?'"

² The woman responded to the snake, "We're eating fruit from the trees of the garden; ³ but from fruit of the tree that's in the middle of the garden, God did say, 'You shall not eat from it, and you shall not touch it, or else you'll die!'"

⁴ The snake said to the woman, “You won’t certainly die, ⁵ for God knows that when you two eat from it, your eyes will be opened, and you will be like gods who know good and evil.”

⁶ Then the woman saw that the tree was good for food, was a delight to the eyes, and was desirable to gain understanding. And she took some of its fruit and ate. She also gave to her man with her, and he ate.

⁷ Then the eyes of both of them were opened, and they knew they were naked. And they sewed fig leaves together and made coverings for themselves.

Genesis 4:3-9 (Translation TR)

^{4:3} After some time had passed, Cain brought some of the fruit of the ground as an offering to YAHWEH. ⁴ And Abel also brought some of the firstborn of his flock – the fat ones. And YAHWEH looked with favor on Abel and on his offering, ⁵ but he didn’t look on Cain and his offering.

This kindled fierce anger in Cain, and his face fell into a scowl. ⁶ Then YAHWEH said to Cain, “Why are you burning with anger, and why is your face scowling? ⁷ Isn’t it true that if you do what’s good, you’ll be lifted up? But if you don’t do what’s good, sin is crouching at the door. Its desire is against you, and you must gain power over it.”

⁸ And Cain spoke to his brother Abel. Then when they were in the field, Cain rose against Abel his brother and killed him.

⁹ Then YAHWEH said to Cain, “Where’s your brother Abel?”

And he replied, “I don’t know! Am I my brother’s keeper?”

Romans 7:7-20 (Translation TR)

⁷ What can we say about this? Is the Law sin? Of course not!

Still, if it hadn’t been for the Law, I wouldn’t have known sin. For I wouldn’t have known “desire” if the law had not said, “*You shall not desire (covet).*” [Exod. 20:17] ⁸ But sin, by taking a starting point through the commandment, worked in me all kinds of desire.

For apart from a law, sin is lifeless. ⁹ Once upon a time, “I” (*ego*) was alive apart from law, but when the commandment came, the sin came alive, but I died. ¹⁰ The very commandment that intended life was found to lead to death for me. ¹¹ For the sin, by getting a starting point through the commandment, deceived me and through it killed me. ¹² So we can still say that the law is holy, and the commandment is holy and righteous and good.

¹³ Did something good, then, become death for me? Certainly not!

Rather, the sin! That’s in order that sin may be clearly visible, by bringing about death for me through something good, so that the sin may become sinful beyond measure through the commandment.

¹⁴ For we know that the Law is spiritual, but I am always in flesh, sold under sin’s slavery.

¹⁵ For I don’t understand what I’m actually doing. For I’m not performing the action I want, but I’m doing what I hate. ¹⁶ Now if I’m doing what I don’t want to do, I agree with the Law, that it’s good. ¹⁷ So now I’m no longer doing this action, but rather the sin that dwells within me.

¹⁸ For I know that what’s dwelling in me – that is, in my flesh – isn’t a good thing. For the will to do is always present with me, but actually doing the excellent thing? – no! ¹⁹ For I’m not doing what I want – a good thing – but rather what I don’t want – a bad thing – that’s what I’m

doing. ²⁰ Now if I'm doing what I myself don't want, I myself am no longer actually doing it, but the sin that's dwelling within me.

Romans 8:1-4 (Translation TR)

8:¹ Now, nothing can bring condemnation for those who are in Anointed King Jesus! ² For now the law, empowered by the Spirit who gives life in Messiah Jesus, has itself set you free from that law wielded by sin to bring death.

³ For God has done what was impossible for the law on its own to do, because it was weakened by the flesh.

By sending his own Son in flesh like our own sin-enslaved flesh and to deal with sin, God condemned sin itself in that very flesh. ⁴ God's purpose was that his faithful righteousness promised by originally giving the law might come to its full reality in us, who walk a path not determined by the flesh but empowered by God's Spirit.

Jeremiah 31:31-35 (Translation TR)

³¹ *"The days are coming,"*
declares Yahweh,
*"when I'll make a new covenant
with the house of Israel
and with the house of Judah.*

³² *It won't be like the covenant
I made with their ancestors
when I took them by the hand
to lead them out of Egypt,
because they broke my covenant,
though I was a husband to them,"*
declares Yahweh.

³³ *"This is the covenant
I'll make with the house of Israel
after that time,"* declares Yahweh.
*"I'll put my law in their minds
and write it on their hearts.
I'll be their God,
and they'll be my people.*

³⁴ *No longer will they teach their neighbors,
or say to one another, 'Know Yahweh,'
because they will all know me,
from the least of them to the greatest,"*
declares Yahweh.

*"For I will forgive their wickedness
and will remember their sins no more."*

Colossians 2:9-19 (shortened and paraphrased translation TR)

⁹ For in Jesus the Anointed King dwells all the fullness of God in bodily form, ¹⁰ and **you** have been filled by him, since he is the head from which all rule and authority flows ¹² You shared in his death in baptism, and were also raised to new life with him through God's faithful work when he raised Jesus from the dead.

¹³ And although you were dead in (sin, brokenness and alienation), he made you alive with him, by giving gracious forgiveness to all of us for all those sins. ¹⁴ He erased the ... record ... against us, and removed it ...by nailing it to the cross.

¹⁵ God stripped bare all the powers and authorities that claim to rule life. He boldly exposed (their destructive claims), by leading them defeated in a triumphal procession in Jesus.

¹⁶ Therefore don't let anyone pass judgment on you in eating and drinking, or (in special rites) ¹⁷ which foreshadow what he has done, because your body is part of the Anointed King.

¹⁸ Don't let anyone set standards of piety against you (based on their own experience), ¹⁹ that aren't in firm contact with Jesus, the Head, from whom the whole body, nourished and joined together ... grows with the kind of growth that God gives.

A People of Grace and Forgiveness

When Jesus came to his disciples after his resurrection, he faced a great challenge. These were people who thought that they understood Jesus. They left everything to follow him. But though he had told them what was going to happen, everything about Jesus' crucifixion and resurrection struck them with utter surprise.

Even when they found Jesus' tomb empty, it required the actual presence of Jesus himself with them to break their certainty that death was the end of him, to start the journey of understanding what it meant for God to raise him from the dead. (Amy took us through one of the great examples of that journey last week.)

In appearing to them, Jesus had to take on the task of expanding their vision, their understanding in new ways so that they could take in what God was doing in him.

Luke 24: 45-49

⁴⁵ Then he opened their mind to understand the Scriptures, ⁴⁶ and said to them, "This is just what was written, that the Anointed King would suffer and rise from the dead on the third day, ⁴⁷ and that on the basis of his name repentance, a change of heart, will be proclaimed leading to forgiveness of sins for all the nations.

Starting from Jerusalem, ⁴⁸ you're the ones who bear witness to these things. ⁴⁹ And look, I myself am sending upon you what my Father promised. But you, sit right here in the city until power from on high wraps you like a cloak."

Luke emphasizes Jesus describing two things that flow out from Jesus as God's Anointed King being crucified and raised from death:

Repentance, a change of thinking, a change of heart, seeing myself and my world in a new way, realizing the reality and depth and power of God's love in taking on human suffering and sin.

Forgiveness of Sins. Not punishment for sins.

Jesus is not crucified so that an angry God can punish the innocent Jesus when he really wants to punish us.

Jesus is the very presence of God among us. God refuses to let human sin and suffering be something outside God's self. He takes it into God's-self. Jesus drinks the cup of human alienation from God so that the power and alienation and condemnation of our self-enslavement to sin can be broken.

We can receive forgiveness not just in a simple, superficial way, but so that we can be renewed and created anew in the image of God. This is God's long-term inclusive work that reaches "all the nations" of humanity.

Two weeks ago when we talked about being **Shaped in the image of God**, we started from **Col 3:9-14** that talks about the very challenging process of stripping off the “old person” and putting on a “renewed person” recognized by the “image of its creator.”

We went back to the narrative of creation in Gen 1 where humans are created “**in the image of God**” and came forward to Jesus showing us that image as he renews us in very practical ways.

Paul says that being in the image of God...

Colossians 3:13

¹³ means that you put up with each other and graciously forgive each other, if one has a complaint against another. Just as the Lord in his grace forgave you, so you too give that grace.

The gracious forgiveness that God gives us – knowing all our sin – shapes us and remakes us so that we become gracious, forgiving people in a world that makes excuses for so many things but genuinely forgives very few.

Between Gen 1 and Jesus and Us is the whole biblical story of human “sin,”

Sin is a powerful, inclusive term that includes our bad choices to consciously go against God’s will, to hurt and destroy others and ourselves, and all that that implies as we build structures of injustice, alienation, deception, etc.

but it also includes the ways we humans get trapped and enslaved by our sin, our self-deception, our blinkered vision of our life, our little self-sized gods, so that we can’t free ourselves.

At our best we can recognize and aspire to what is noble and good, but human experience shows that no human life remains unbroken, undistorted by sin: hurting ourselves and others, sharing in structures of injustice and alienation.

In fact, it’s one of the most basic characteristics of the Bible that it never tries to hide the deep, universal problem of human brokenness and sin and all the suffering that it brings.

There are no flawless human heroes. That doesn’t mean that there’s not better and worse, that there aren’t things to learn even from flawed examples.

We Humans are always limited beings – made of dust – but made with potential to know the God of the universe who created us.

We’re in a world where our choices make a difference.

We can do good and beautiful and just things—for others, ourselves, the world.

We can do absolutely awful and destructive things.

And we’re vulnerable to each other and the world and powers around us.

That’s the understanding of us humans that’s present in the whole Bible narrative.

The Challenge of Suffering and Sin

Just as our grasp of the “image of God” goes back to Gen 1, that amazing narrative of creation that has no hint of evil or brokenness, so when we’re talking about sin our minds are drawn back to the parabolic narratives of **Gen 3-4** that emphasize how human brokenness invades human life.

The first parable of human brokenness centers around God’s warning not to eat fruit from “*the tree of the knowledge of good and evil.*” Human good intentions lead to lying, self-deception, breaking trust, and a realization of weakness and vulnerability.

Genesis 3:6-7

⁶ Then the woman saw that the tree was good for food, was a delight to the eyes, and was desirable to gain understanding. And she took some of its fruit and ate. She also gave to her man with her, and he ate.

⁷ Then the eyes of both of them were opened, and they knew they were naked. And they sewed fig leaves together and made coverings for themselves.

It all leads to their separation not from God but from the Garden of Delight/Eden and living in a world where everything good is mixed with suffering, brokenness, and structures of domination.

The narrative quickly goes downhill. In **Gen 4** we meet their sons, **Cain** and **Abel**. Cain grows angry when God takes notice of Abel’s offering but not his.

Genesis 4:5b-9

This kindled fierce anger in Cain, and his face fell into a scowl. ⁶ Then YAHWEH said to Cain, “Why are you burning with anger, and why is your face scowling? ⁷ Isn’t it true that if you do what’s good, you’ll be lifted up? But if you don’t do what’s good, sin is crouching at the door. Its desire is against you, and you must gain power over it.”

⁸ And Cain spoke to his brother Abel. Then when they were in the field, Cain rose against Abel his brother and killed him.

⁹ Then YAHWEH said to Cain, “Where’s your brother Abel?” And he replied, “I don’t know! Am I my brother’s keeper?”

Notice that very striking image: Sin crouching at the door!

The narrative doesn’t spell out for us the internal battle in Cain between God’s good guidance and the “sin crouching at the door, desiring to gain power over him.”

It just let’s us see the result, a result that’s been played out in every human generation since.

God’s Aim to Bear and Forgive and Renew

So much of the narrative of the Hebrew Scriptures describes the power of sin, rebellion, brokenness in every great character from Abraham, to Moses, to David, and on and on. Some of the latest books of the scripture have powerful prayers reciting the history of sin and rebellion.

But there are also prophetic anticipations that God is not anxious to destroy but to renew his people to make them a light to all the nations. One great example:

Jeremiah 31:31-35 (Translation TR)

³¹ "The days are coming," declares Yahweh,
 "when I'll make a new covenant
 with the house of Israel
 and with the house of Judah.

³² It won't be like the covenant
 I made with their ancestors
 when I took them by the hand
 to lead them out of Egypt,
because they broke my covenant,
 though I was a husband to them,"
 declares Yahweh.

³³ "This is the covenant
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 after that time," declares Yahweh.

"I'll put my law in their minds
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 I'll be their God,
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³⁴ No longer will they teach their neighbors,
 or say to one another, 'Know Yahweh,'
because they will all know me,
 from the least of them to the greatest,"
 declares Yahweh.

"For I will forgive their wickedness
 and will remember their sins no more."

Israel is a concentrated example of the problem of human brokenness and sin in all the world, every nation, every person. The Law is a lens that brings that deep, enslaving power into focus.

But God intends, God promises, to break that power. Do something different!

When Paul reflects on the character of sin, he goes back to the image in **Gen 4** and the battle between Cain and the Sin crouching at the door.

We are both the perpetrators of our wrong actions and one of the victims of their consequences. His description in Romans 7 is perhaps long but it bears reflection:

Romans 7:7-20 (Translation TR)

⁷ What can we say about this? Is the Law sin? Of course not!

Still, if it hadn't been for the Law, I wouldn't have known sin. For I wouldn't have known "desire" if the law had not said, "*You shall not desire (covet).*" [Exod. 20:17] ⁸ But sin, by taking a starting point through the commandment, worked in me all kinds of desire.

For apart from a law, sin is lifeless. ⁹ Once upon a time, "I" was alive apart from law, but when the commandment came, the sin came alive, but I died. ¹⁰ The very commandment that intended life was found to lead to death for me. ¹¹ For the sin, by getting a starting point through the commandment, deceived me and through it killed me. ¹² So we can still say that the law is holy, and the commandment is holy and righteous and good.

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¹⁵ For I don't understand what I'm actually doing. For I'm not performing the action I want, but I'm doing what I hate. ¹⁶ Now if I'm doing what I don't want to do, I agree with the Law, that it's good. ¹⁷ So now I'm no longer doing this action, but rather the sin that dwells within me.

¹⁸ For I know that what's dwelling in me – that is, in my flesh – isn't a good thing. For the will to do is always present with me, but actually doing the excellent thing? – no! ¹⁹ For I'm not doing what I want – a good thing – but rather what I don't want – a bad thing – that's what I'm doing. ²⁰ Now if I'm doing what I myself don't want, I myself am no longer actually doing it, but the sin that's dwelling within me.

All this very human existential reflection leads Paul to unfold the remarkable stamp of the Good News of Jesus. It's easy to say that those who do bad things should be condemned. We know it. We do it.

What God did in Jesus on a vast and unexpected level was not to condemn sinful human beings (who certainly deserve it) – perhaps by deflecting their punishment to the innocent Jesus.

God created a way in Jesus to take that brokenness and alienation and condemnation into God's own self.

He condemned not us human sinners, but Sin itself.

Romans 8:1-4

8:¹ Now, nothing can bring condemnation for those who are in Anointed King Jesus! ² For now the law, empowered by the Spirit who gives life in Messiah Jesus, has itself set you free from that law wielded by sin to bring death.

³ For God has done what was impossible for the law on its own to do, because it was weakened by the flesh.

By sending his own Son in flesh like our own sin-enslaved flesh and to deal with sin, God condemned sin itself in that very flesh. ⁴ God's purpose was that his faithful righteousness promised by originally giving the law might come to its full reality in us, who walk a path not determined by the flesh but empowered by God's Spirit.

Learning God's Joy in Grace and Forgiveness.

This is the great vision and challenge of Jesus' crucifixion and resurrection for us. Just as Jesus had to open the minds of the disciples to see this transformation of thinking and understanding of forgiveness so that they could bear witness to it, so we often find ourselves living with the blinkers of a closed-in world that blinds us to the vast beauty of what God has done and is doing.

God could easily have punished. Instead God chose a transforming forgiveness as an embodiment of God's love for us broken humans.

Acts 2: You've crucified and slain the one whom God made Lord and Messiah
Men and Brethren what shall we do? Run for your lives! Death is about to strike.

No! Change your way of thinking,
be plunged in water in the name of Jesus Anointed King
for the forgiveness of sins
You'll receive the Gift of God's Holy Spirit.

Let's conclude by going back to Colossians and Paul's reflections on Jesus' resurrection and this process of seeing the whole world differently and living in God's grace and forgiveness.

Choosing grace and forgiveness was not easy for God. Grace is costly. Living in life-transforming Grace is not easy for us in the midst of our world. But it is beautiful, it is fulfilling, it is full of justice and love, and it widens our vision to include the whole physical world and every person and creature within it.

Colossians 2:9-19 (shortened and paraphrased translation TR)

⁹ For in Jesus the Anointed King dwells all the fullness of God in bodily form, ¹⁰ and you have been filled up by him, since he is the head from which all rule and authority flows

¹² You shared in his death in baptism, and were also raised to new life with him through God's faithful work when he raised Jesus from the dead.

¹³ And although you were dead in (sin, brokenness and alienation), he made you alive with him, by giving gracious forgiveness to all of us for all those sins. ¹⁴ He erased the ... record ... against us, and removed it ...by nauling it to the cross.

¹⁵ God stripped bare all the powers and authorities that claim to rule life. He boldly exposed (their destructive claims), by leading them defeated in a triumphal procession in Jesus.

¹⁶ Therefore don't let anyone pass judgment on you in eating and drinking, or (in special rites) ¹⁷ which are shadows of what he has done, because your body is part of the Anointed King.

¹⁸ Don't let anyone set standards of piety against you (based on their own experience), ¹⁹ that aren't in firm contact with Jesus, the Head, from whom the whole body, nourished and joined together... grows with the kind of growth that God gives.

God interacts with every one of us individually so that your story is distinct from every other journey. You have a distinct freedom. Stay in firm contact with Jesus. He will nourish you, grow you, unite you with others on the same journey, show you your vibrant living role in God's whole creation.

It is in these journeys that "our struggles keep us near the cross" and "our whole life shows that God is good."

May we be transformed in mind to catch a glimpse of God's great vision and may we trust in God's gracious transforming forgiveness and learn the joy of practicing it in our own lives. Amen.