

WHY I BELIEVE: I AM FORGIVEN
Acts 10:34-48 [Focal verse 34, with Lk 24:47]

I. INTRODUCTION

A. I BELIEVE GOD IS FATHER, ALMIGHTY, CREATOR

1. ALMIGHTY CREATOR

- Evidence of—Biblical Record—Science—Nature
- Human—Logic—Conscience—Intuition

2. FATHER

- His Spirit enables us to call Him “Abba, Father”—**Gal 4**
- His Spirit bears witness to our Spirit—we are His children—**Rom 8**

B. I BELIEVE JESUS IS THE SON OF GOD AND LORD

1. ONLY BEGOTTEN SON OF GOD

- Eternal—co-equal and co-creator with God the Father
- Poured out—as Son of Man

2. LORD

- Exalted above all—for His obedience—death on cross
- Restored Son of Man—to pre-incarnate glory of Son of God
- We acknowledge Him as Lord—key to salvation

3. IRREFUTABLE EVIDENCE—HE HAS CHANGED ME

- **II Cor 5:17**—*Therefore if anyone is in Christ, his is a new creature; the old things passed away; behold, new things have come.*

C. I BELIEVE GOD’S SON WAS VIRGIN-BORN

1. IMPORTANCE

- Full humanity of Christ—born of woman
- Full deity of Christ—supernaturally conceived by God

2. CHRIST’S ETERNAL RIGHTEOUSNESS—BASIS FOR REDEMPTION

- a. **Perfect** God-Man—inherently **sinless**—**infinite** divine sacrifice for all human sin
- b. Our Righteousness—comes from His perfect obedience—*and* eternal righteousness as Son
- c. Our Pardon—relies on this righteousness

D. I BELIEVE GOD’S SON DIED FOR ME

1. WHAT HIS DEATH DOES

- Defeats death
- Atones for sins
- Reconciles us to Father—saves us
- Demonstrates God’s love
- Assures us of victory

2. HOW I KNOW CHRIST DIED FOR ME

- *Only* to those being saved—the preaching of the cross is the *power* of God—**I Cor 1:18**

E. I BELIEVE JESUS CHRIST WAS RESURRECTED

1. EVIDENCE OF EMPTY TOMB

2. BIBLICAL ACCOUNTS OF RESURRECTION AND HIS APPEARANCES
3. WITNESS OF EARLY CHURCH
4. PERSONAL EXPERIENCE OF PROMISE OF RESURRECTION

II Cor 4:14—*Because we know that the one who raised the Lord Jesus will raise us also with Jesus and will present us with you.*

F. I BELIEVE JESUS REIGNS WITH THE FATHER

1. HIS POSITION IS SUPREME—SOVEREIGN
2. HE IS IN HIS RIGHTFUL PLACE—GLORIFIED AT THE FATHER’S SIDE
3. HE IS RULING OVER HIS KINGDOM
4. HE IS DOING HIS WORK THERE
 - Fulfilling His promise—preparing us a place
 - Interceding with the Father
 - Achieving final victory—working it out
 - Holding everything together
5. WE ARE CALLED TO SERVE ETERNALLY
 - He is Servant King
 - As His bond-servants, we share His kingdom
 - We follow Him: to reign—is to serve

G. I BELIEVE JESUS WILL RETURN

1. HOW PAROUSIA WILL OCCUR
 - a. Visibly—noticeably—everyone will see and hear
 - b. Instantly— in the twinkling of an eye
 - c. Powerfully—on the clouds with great power and glory
 - d. Unexpectedly—as a thief in the night—nobody knows the time or day
2. WHY PAROUSIA WILL TAKE PLACE
 - a. To consummate redemptive history
 - o Complete His victory over sin, death, and evil
 - o Usher in His eternal kingdom
 - o Re-create the new order—new heaven and new earth
 - b. To collect His saints
 - c. To judge the living and the dead
 - o Believers before the *bema*—for rewards to serve and reign eternally
 - o Non-believers before Great White Throne—condemned for disbelief

H. I BELIEVE GOD HAS SENT US HIS SPIRIT

- THE PERSONAL PRESENCE OF ETERNAL GOD
- COMES ALONGSIDE—COMFORTER—ADVOCATE—TEACHER
- BRINGS BOLDNESS—STRENGTH—POWER—TO WITNESS FOR CHRIST
- BUILDS GOD’S KINGDOM—IDENTIFIES—EQUIPS—EDIFIES HIS CHURCH
- ULTIMATE PURPOSES—TESTIFY ABOUT CHRIST—AND GLORIFY HIM

I. I BELIEVE THE CHURCH IS THE COMMUNION OF SAINTS

1. IT HAS A COMMUNAL DESTINATION—HEAVEN
2. IT IS PART OF THE HEAVENLY COMMUNITY
3. IT FOLLOWS A COMMUNAL PATH—ADMISSION IS THE SAME FOR EVERYONE
 - Mediation
 - Sanctification
 - Perfection
 - Adoption
4. IT SHARES A COMMON EXPERIENCE—COMMUNION OF THE SAINTS
 - Universal in Scope
 - United in One Body—of Christ
 - Uniform in Identity
 - Unified in Koinonia
5. IT EMBRACES DIVERSITY IN UNITY—COMPOSED OF ALL NATIONS/RACES
6. IT DEFIES HUMAN WISDOM
 - It grows when it dies
 - It has survived throughout the ages—and continues to thrive
 - It proclaims a unique, radical, unearthly message—grace not works

J. I BELIEVE I AM FORGIVEN

I believe in the forgiveness of sins .

II. BIBLICAL TEXT—Acts 10:34-48

34 Opening his mouth, Peter said: “I most certainly understand now that God is not one to show partiality, **35** but in every nation the man who fears Him and does what is right is welcome to Him. **36** The word which He sent to the sons of Israel, preaching peace through Jesus Christ (He is Lord of all)— **37** you yourselves know the thing which took place throughout all Judea, starting from Galilee, after the baptism which John proclaimed. **38** You know of Jesus of Nazareth, how God anointed Him with the Holy Spirit and with power, and how He went about

doing good and healing all who were oppressed by the devil, for God was with Him. 39 We are witnesses of all the things He did both in the land of the Jews and in Jerusalem. They also put Him to death by hanging Him on a cross. 40 God raised Him up on the third day and granted that He become visible, 41 not to all the people, but to witnesses who were chosen beforehand by God, that is, to us who ate and drank with Him after He arose from the dead. 42 And He ordered us to preach to the people, and solemnly to testify that this is the One who has been appointed by God as Judge of the living and the dead. 43 Of Him all the prophets bear witness that through His name everyone who believes in Him receives forgiveness of sins.” 44 While Peter was still speaking these words, the Holy Spirit fell upon all those who were listening to the message. 45 All the circumcised believers who came with Peter were amazed, because the gift of the Holy Spirit had been poured out on the Gentiles also. 46 For they were hearing them speaking with tongues and exalting God. Then Peter answered, 47 “Surely no one can refuse the water for these to be baptized who have received the Holy Spirit just as we did, can he?” 48 And he ordered them to be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ. Then they asked him to stay on for a few days.

III. WHY I NEED FORGIVENESS

A. MY SIN CAUSES A RIFT BETWEEN ME AND GOD

1. SIN CANNOT COME INTO GOD’S PRESENCE
2. MY SIN BREAKS COMMUNION BETWEEN ME AND GOD
 - o I rebel against God—and become His enemy
 - o Sin erects an insurmountable—impenetrable barrier
 - o Sin creates a great gulf—a huge gap I cannot cross

B. MY SIN CREATES A DEBT—OBLIGATIONS I CANNOT REPAY

1. MY SIN ROBS ME—OF SEEING GOD’S GLORY
2. MY SIN REFUSES TO THANK GOD—FOR HIS GOODNESS, GRACE, AND MERCY
3. MY SIN HARMS OTHER HUMANS—MADE IN GOD’S IMAGE
 - o Robs them of dignity and human rights
 - o Hurts them physically—emotionally—and spiritually
4. MY SIN DAMAGES GOD’S CREATION

C. MY SIN DAMAGES ME

1. PHYSICALLY—inflicts harm—causes disease and sickness

2. EMOTIONALLY—guilt cripples me psychologically
3. RELATIONALLY—alienates me from others
4. SPIRITUALLY—causes isolation—finally death—kills the soul

D. MY SIN IMPRISONS ME

1. HOLDS ME CAPTIVE—to human depravity
2. ENSNARES ME—causes me to sin even more—habitually and addictively
3. MAKES ME VULNERABLE—to evil influences and satanic oppression

IV. WHAT HAPPENS WHEN I AM FORGIVEN

A. WHAT FORGIVENESS IS NOT

1. KING JAMES VERSION—PROBLEM

10:43—To him give all the prophets witness, that through his name whosoever believeth in him shall receive remission of sins.

2. REMISSION—NOT BEST TRANSLATION TODAY

- a. Remission means—**reduction**—or **temporary** state of improvement

- o **Illness in ‘remission’**
- o **Reduction in prison sentence**

- b. Biblical parallels

1. God *overlooking* sin—temporarily disregarding it—passing it over

Rom 3:23-26— *23 for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, 24 being justified as a gift by His grace through the redemption which is in Christ Jesus; 25 whom God displayed publicly as an appeasement in His blood through faith. This was to demonstrate His righteousness, because in the forbearance of God He remitted [passed over] the sins previously committed 26 for the demonstration, I say, of His righteousness at the present time, so that He would be just and the justifier of the one who has faith in Jesus.*

2. God’s patience

- a. He overlooked sin for a long time—**Acts 14:16**

- b. His ‘forbearance’ of sin will not last forever—**Acts 17:30**

3. **Jesus’ parable about unfruitful fig tree**—**Lk 13:6-9**

- o Fig tree unproductive for 3 years
- o Owner told keeper to cut it down
- o Keeper says—tend and fertilize it—give it one more year

- o If unfruitful after one year—then cut it down

c. Principle

- God may overlook sin . . . for a while
- But ultimately He will call everyone to final account!

3. TRUE FORGIVENESS IS **NOT TEMPORARY**—**NOT JUST A REDUCTION**

- **Not**—**delayed adjudication**
- **Not**—**probation**
- **Not**—**suspension/suspended sentence**

B. WHAT FORGIVENESS REALLY IS

1. COMPLETED CANCELLATION—**total** release

2. VERB = **αφημι**

- **Forgives**—repays the debt
- **Eradicates**—total cancellation
- **Releases**—sets free from bondage
- **Pardons**—as if prisoner had never been committed to jail

—IT **REPAYS AND RELEASES**—

C. FORGIVENESS **REPAYS THE DEBT**

1. HEALS RIFT BETWEEN ME AND GOD

- Closes the gap
- Removes the barrier

2. GOES BEYOND JUST DISMISSING WRONGFUL ACT—THE ‘SIN’ ITSELF

- **Repairs** the damage
- **Heals** the wound
- **Restores** the relationship

3. CANCELS THE DEBT

a. **Example: sabbatical year**—Dt 15:3

- o Total cancellation of all debts between Jews

b. **Example: Lord’s Prayer**—Mt 6

- o Forgive us our ‘debts’—not trespasses
- c. **Example: not just an interest payment—but payment of full principle**
- 4. **DIVINE FORGIVENESS IS TOTAL/ABSOLUTE—ONLY GOD CAN DO THIS!**
 - a. God **forgets** sin
 - o **Is 43:25**—*I, even I, am He who blots out your transgressions for my own sake, and will **not remember** your sins.*
 - o **Heb 8:12**—*For I will be merciful to their unrighteousness, and their sins and their iniquities I **will remember no more.***
 - b. God **casts** sin away
 - o **Ps 103:12**—*As far as the east is from the west, so far He has **removed** our transgressions from us.*
 - o **Mic 7:19**—*He will again have compassion on us; He will tread our iniquities under foot. Yes, You will **cast all their sins into the depths of the sea.***
 - c. God **remakes** the sinner—into a new creature
 - o **II Cor 5:17**—*Therefore if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creature; the old things passed away; behold, new things have come.*

D. FORGIVENESS **RELEASES** FROM CAPTIVITY

1. **RELEASED—FROM PRISON**
 - No longer a prisoner—not ‘**committed**’
 - No longer **remanded**—but released
 - **Example—picture of released Vietnam POWs on plane—March 1973**
2. **SET FREE—FROM CLUTCHES OF SIN**
 - No longer obliged to follow evil habits—begins to break cycle of addiction
3. **PARDONED—NO LONGER A STIGMA**
 - Erases the charge—for which we are arrested
 - Expunges the record
4. **TOTAL AND PERMANENT FORGIVENESS—**not temporary or incomplete
 - **Not out ‘on bond’—requiring later court appearance**
 - **Not ‘suspended sentence’**
5. **SECURED BY OUR ADVOCATE—**not by our own power—not by our own word
 - **Not released on ‘own recognizance’**

- **Based on personal surety of a trusted citizen—Napoleonic Code**

V. HOW I AM FORGIVEN—HOW IT IS DELIVERED

A. PROPHESED—IN THE OT

Is 61:1—*The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because the Lord has anointed me to bring good news to the afflicted; He has sent me to bind up the broken-hearted, to proclaim liberty to captives and freedom to prisoners.*

- **Two proclamations**—liberty to captives—freedom to prisoners

B. FULFILLED—IN CHRIST

1. BEYOND PROCLAMATION—TO ACTION—actually ‘setting free’

Lk 4:18-19—*The spirit of the Lord is upon Me, because He anointed me to preach the gospel to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim release to the captives, and recovery of sight to the blind, to set free those who are oppressed, to proclaim the favorable year of the Lord.*

2. REQUIREMENT—FOR BLOOD

Heb 9:22—the shedding of **blood**—necessary for **forgiveness** of sin

3. JESUS MET THE REQUIREMENT

Mt 26:28—*This is my blood of the covenant, poured out for the forgiveness of sins*

C. PROCLAIMED

1. BY JESUS—JUST BEFORE HIS ASCENSION

Lk 24:45-47—*Then He opened their minds to understand the Scriptures, and He said to them, “Thus it is written, that the Christ would suffer and rise again from the dead the third day, and that repentance for forgiveness of sins would be proclaimed in His name to all the nations, beginning from Jerusalem.*

2. ONLY JESUS’ BLOOD—CAN FORGIVE SINS

Eph 1:6-7—*to the praise of the glory of His grace, which He freely bestowed on us in the Beloved. In Him we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of our trespasses, according to the riches of His grace*

Col 1:14—*In Christ—we have redemption through his blood, even the forgiveness of sins.*

D. IT MUST BE—ACCEPTED

1. TWO CONDITIONS—**BELIEF** AND **REPENTANCE**

2. **BELIEF**

- a. Not just **theoretical** belief—in doctrine—or institutions

- o **ALL THESE DOCTRINES I BELIEVE—REVIEW DOCTRINES**

- o I believe in the Church—as the body of Christ—and communion of saints
- o But doctrinal belief is not enough
- b. **Relational** belief—that *depends* on Him
 1. I believe *in Him*—and call upon *His name*
 2. Not just *assensus*—but *fiducia*
- c. Not just once—but **continuous**
 - o Present active participle—**v 43**—*those who are the believing ones*—continuous

3. REPENTANCE

- a. Jesus—made it a requirement
 1. Beginning His ministry

Mk 1:15—*The time has come. The kingdom of God is near. Repent and believe the good news.*
 2. Before glorification

Lk 24—45 *Then He opened their minds to understand the Scriptures, 46 and He said to them, “Thus it is written, that the Christ would suffer and rise again from the dead the third day, 47 and that repentance for forgiveness of sins would be proclaimed in His name to all the nations, beginning from Jerusalem.*
- b. Basic message of **kerygma**—at **Pentecost**

Acts 2:38—**Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ because of the forgiveness of sin, and you will receive the gift of the Holy Ghost.**
- c. Here grace meets faith—His unconditional meets our conditional
 1. **Unconditional grace**—we cannot work for forgiveness—we are unworthy

I Stand Amazed in the Presence of Jesus the Nazarene
And wonder how He could love me
A sinner, condemned, unclean
How marvelous! How wonderful!
And my song shall ever be
How marvelous! How wonderful!
Is my Savior’s love for me!
 2. But **conditional faith**—our repentance must back up our belief

VI. WHO CAN BE FORGIVEN

A. UNIVERSAL NEED—ALL HAVE SINNED

B. UNIVERSAL REMEDY

43 Of Him all the prophets are bearing witness that through His name all those who are believing in Him are receiving forgiveness of sins.

1. FOR ALL PEOPLE

- **v35**—*in every nation*—the man who fears Him and does right—is welcome to Him
- **v43**—*all those who are believing in Him*

2. FOR ALL TIME

- *All the prophets*—even now **continue** to witness
- **Seamless** message to Israel—and Church—Great Assembly—communion of saints
- Even the **remnant of Israel** will still be reclaimed—**Rom 11**

C. BUT EXCLUSIVE SOLUTION

1. ONLY BY JESUS' BLOOD

2. ONLY TO THOSE WHO CALL ON HIS NAME

3. ONLY TO THOSE WHO RECEIVE HIM—AND THE PRESENCE OF HOLY SPIRIT

VII. RESULTS OF FORGIVENESS

1. SALVATION

2. RESTORATION—OF RELATIONSHIP WITH THE FATHER

3. ACCESSIBILITY TO GOD—THROUGH CHRIST'S BLOOD

- **Heb 10:19-22**—*Therefore, brethren, since we have confidence to enter the holy place by the blood of Jesus, by a new and living way which He inaugurated for us through the veil, that is, His flesh, and since we have a great priest over the house of God, 22 let us draw near with a sincere heart in full assurance of faith, having our hearts sprinkled clean from an evil conscience and our bodies washed with pure water.*

4. REPATRIATION—HOME

- **Example**—Iran-hostages—returned HOME after 444 days—4 Nov 79—20 Jan 81
 - **66 original hostages**—52 captive whole time
 - **To Algeria**—Rhein-Main, Germany—Shannon, Ireland
 - **Finally**—Steward Air National Base, Newburgh, NY
- **Example**—return of PRODIGAL SON—welcomed by Father—**Lk 15**

IX. INVITATION

THE POWER OF THE CROSS

Oh, to see the dawn
Of the darkest day:

Christ on the road to Calvary.
Tried by sinful men,
Torn and beaten, then
Nailed to a cross of wood.

This, the power of the cross:
Christ became sin for us,
Took the blame, bore the wrath:
We stand forgiven at the cross.

Oh, to see the pain
Written on Your face
Bearing the awesome weight of sin;
Every bitter thought,
Every evil deed
Crowning Your bloodstained brow.

Now the daylight flees,
Now the ground beneath
Quakes as its Maker bows His head.
Curtain torn in two,
Dead are raised to life;
'Finished!' the victory cry.

Oh, to see my name
Written in the wounds,
For through Your suffering I am free.
Death is crushed to death,
Life is mine to live,
Won through Your selfless love.

This, the power of the cross:
Son of God, slain for us.
What a love! What a cost!
We stand forgiven at the cross.