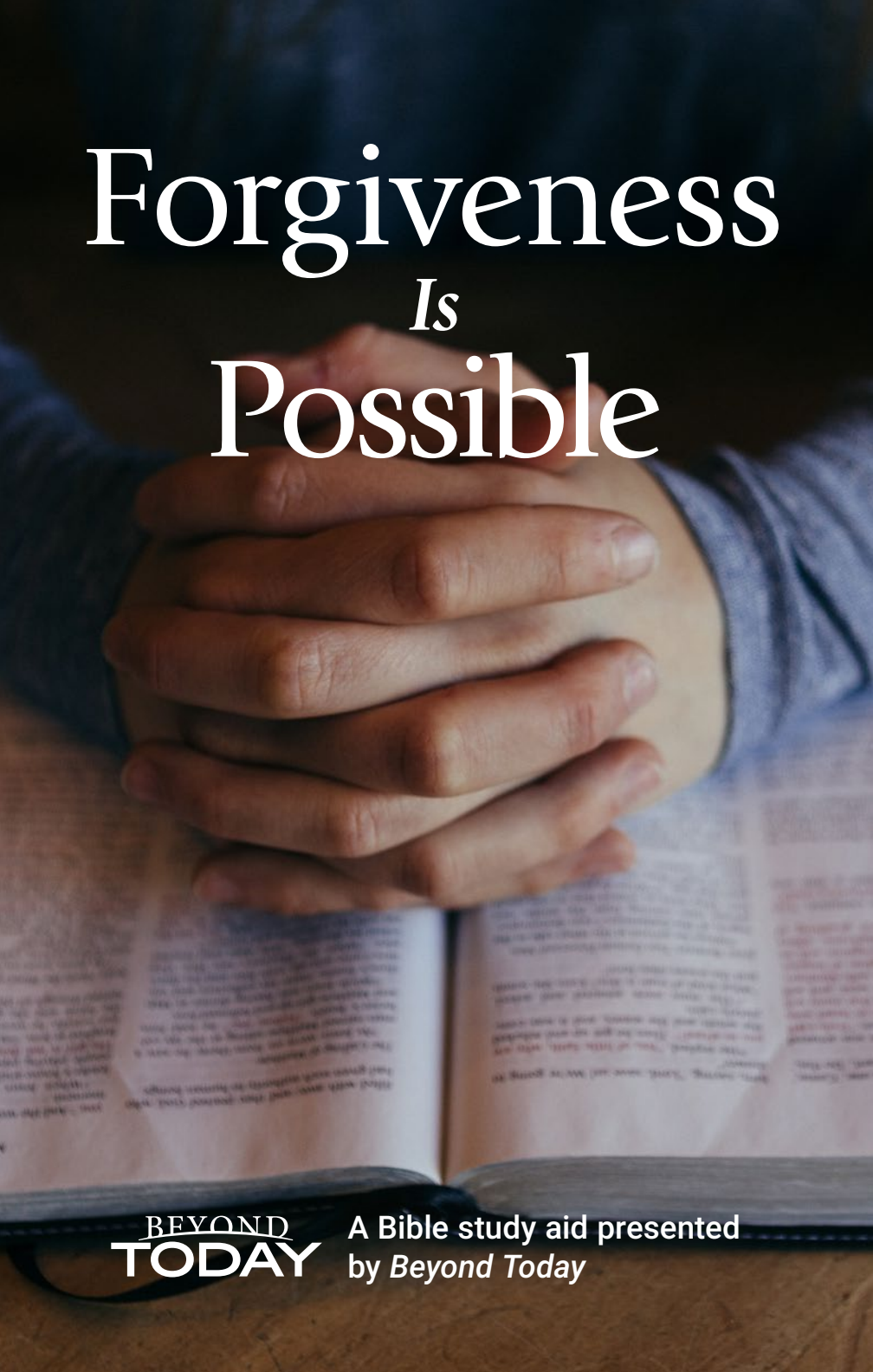


Forgiveness *Is* Possible

A close-up photograph of a person's hands clasped together in a prayerful gesture, resting on an open Bible. The hands are positioned with fingers interlaced, and the palms facing each other. The Bible is open, showing text on both pages, though the text is slightly blurred. The person is wearing a blue long-sleeved shirt. The background is a dark, textured surface, possibly a wooden table.

BEYOND
TODAY

A Bible study aid presented
by *Beyond Today*

Forgiveness *Is* Possible



To God's people,
the apostle Paul wrote:

“Therefore, as the elect of God, holy and beloved,
put on tender mercies, kindness, humility, meekness,
longsuffering; bearing with one another, and

forgiving one another, if anyone has a complaint
against another; *even as Christ forgave you*, so you also
must do” (Colossians 3:12-13; emphasis added throughout).

Forgiving others can be very difficult to do, especially when we've been deeply hurt. It can also be hard to admit wrong and seek forgiveness when *we* are at fault. But both are absolute *musts!*

Forgiveness is at the core of Christian faith, belief and action. It's only by God's grace that we can be saved (Ephesians 2:5, 8), and His grace is the foundation of His forgiveness of our sins (Ephesians 1:7). That forgiveness was made possible by God's love and the sacrifice of His Son Jesus Christ (John 3:16-17). We must never take that lightly. We must do everything that's necessary to receive God's initial forgiveness of all our past sins. And then for the rest of our lives, we must daily ask God for His forgiveness for any new sins we have committed (1 John 1:9).

To receive God's ongoing forgiveness, it is absolutely essential that we extend gracious forgiveness to others for wrongs they have done to us (Matthew 7:13-14). We will see how much this is emphasized throughout the New Testament.

The road to forgiveness can be long and hard, but through God's loving guidance it is possible to remove the mountains of resentment, grudges and bitterness.

Begin the road to lasting, meaningful forgiveness right now—forgiving others and seeking and receiving forgiveness, especially from God.



The Spiritual Need to Forgive Others



Forgiveness does not come easily for most of us. Our natural instinct is to recoil in self-protection, retaliation and revenge. We don't naturally overflow with mercy, grace and forgiveness when we are wronged.

First, let's understand that there is a difference between God's forgiveness and our forgiveness of others. When God forgives us, He completely blots out the sin and removes the guilt (Isaiah 43:25;

Psalms 103:1-12). Only God can forgive sins in that way (Mark 2:5-11). When you forgive someone for hurting you, you are deciding to cancel his or her indebtedness to you personally and to not harbor

any more resentment or grudge. We human beings are not able to quickly “forget” how someone has hurt us, but we can treat the person as if we’ve forgotten the hurt.

In Luke 17:3-4, Jesus Christ said: “Take heed to yourselves. If your brother sins against you, rebuke him; and if he repents, forgive him. And if he sins against you seven times in a day, and seven times in a day returns to you, saying, ‘I repent,’ you shall forgive him.”

There are several things to notice in this passage. “If he repents,” then it is especially essential to “forgive him.” But other scriptures show us that we must forgive even when the guilty party does not repent. This scripture also shows us that it is often appropriate to “rebuke” the person who has hurt you. That means to tactfully confront the person and let him know how he has hurt you. One of the benefits of that is he will be more likely to repent and apologize.

Forgiving someone does *not* mean you should stay in a position to be seriously hurt again. If you are in a relationship that is likely to continue to be dangerous or seriously abusive, you should remove yourself from that vulnerable position.

And why “seven times?” Seven is not meant as an exact number. It was an expression that meant “many times.” At another time, Jesus said, “I do not say to you, up to seven times, but up to seventy times seven” (Matthew 18:21-22).

How is it possible to obey this command from Jesus Christ? Even the apostles were stunned at this statement that their duty was to forgive their brother again and again! Their reac-

tion is in verse 5: “And the apostles said to the Lord, ‘Increase our faith.’” They knew that they needed divine help to be able to do that. They sensed the truth of a later saying, “To err is human; to forgive, divine.”

The command to forgive is most difficult because sometimes we don’t want to forgive. We want to strike back, we want justice, we want the other person to know the pain he or she has inflicted on us. We want to wear it on our sleeve, as it were. If we forgive someone seven times, aren’t we just letting someone get away with a wrong? If we simply forgive, won’t we just be allowing people to take advantage of us?

This is a natural, human response to

We cannot expect God to forgive our debts, the penalty we owe for sin, if we are not also forgiving. For our debts to be absolved, we must forgive those who have hurt us.

hurt—but look at how Christ further illustrates this teaching for us in what is commonly known as the Lord’s prayer: “And forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors. And do not lead us into temptation, but deliver us from the evil one. For Yours is the kingdom and the power and the glory forever. Amen” (Matthew 6:12-13). He then explains: “For if you forgive men their trespasses, your heavenly Father will also forgive you. But if you do not forgive men their trespasses, neither will your Father forgive your trespasses” (verses 14-15).

Sin is represented here as debts (compare Luke 11:4), and it’s in the plural form—indicating it has amassed or piled up. We cannot expect God to forgive our debts, the penalty we owe for sin, if we are not also forgiving. For our debts to be absolved, we must forgive those who have hurt us. If we show mercy to men, we receive mercy from God.

Forgive again and again?

What should we do if our brother repeats an offense numerous times?



God forgives us time and again, so we must follow His example.

God passes over our sins, and as Proverbs 19:11 states it is our “glory to pass over a transgression” (King James Version). Address it, resolve it if possible, forgive it and move on! Vengeance is God’s alone. It is not ours (see Deuteronomy 32:35; Romans 12:19).

But what if it’s a great wrong? Not forgiving is a *greater* wrong. Forgiveness reflects God’s character, which we are supposed to emulate. When we forgive, we reflect the Father’s love.

The standard is this: Forgive as He has forgiven you. Forgiveness gives us the opportunity to extend to others

All people sin, and therefore all need God’s forgiveness. There isn’t anyone who doesn’t need to be forgiven.

what God has extended to us—and our purpose in life is to develop God’s character. But our corrupted human nature and its accompanying pride are the antitheses of forgiveness. Pride opposes and resists our need to forgive. It demands justice and wants to get even. Our nature does not want to forgive.

Those who deal with human relationship problems see this firsthand. For example, Catholic priest Robert Hagedorn said: “When I was first ordained a priest, I believed that over 50% of all problems were at least in part due to unforgiveness. After 10 years in the ministry, I revised my estimate and maintained 75-80% of all health, marital, family, and financial problems came from unforgiveness. Now after more than twenty years in

the ministry, I have concluded that over 90% of all problems are rooted in unforgiveness.” He makes a good observation of the degradation that a failure to forgive brings to society, and it’s directly linked to the command that Christ gave.

A well-known authority on marriage once wrote that he believed the most important key to a harmonious marriage was the husband and wife being willing to forgive each other day after day after day.

Human nature is vindictive, and it must be overcome in order to extend and experience true forgiveness. You can see a desire for revenge, retaliation and mudslinging in our entertainment—on the movie screen, in music, on television—but also in everyday social interaction, in business and in politics. It surrounds us; but in spite of all this evil, confusion and hatred, we are told to forgive as often as we have opportunity.

Our critical need for God’s forgiveness

All people sin, and therefore all need God’s forgiveness. There isn’t anyone who doesn’t need to be forgiven. Therefore, we had better be forgiving of those who hurt us. And just abstaining from “getting even” doesn’t cut it. Bitterness and resentment will occur even if you do not retaliate, because without forgiveness you’ll never get rid of your inner turmoil. The score is never settled; the anger and pain are never gone.

Christ gave a very sobering example to help us grasp this concept of forgiveness. It’s a parable of a king and his servant. The servant owed the king 10

thousand talents. “But as he was not able to pay, his master commanded that he be sold, with his wife and children and all that he had, and that payment be made” (Matthew 18:25).

The servant begged for forgiveness, and the master forgave him his debt. Soon after, the same servant came

across a fellow servant who owed him a debt and demanded it be repaid. This fellow servant could not pay and also begged for forgiveness, but the servant who had just been forgiven refused and had the man jailed. When the king heard of this, he was very angry that his servant had not also been forgiving

How is sin forgiven?

Sin is the transgression of God’s sacred law (1 John 3:4, KJV). The penalty we all have earned for sinning is death (Romans 6:23). This cause-and-effect relationship is absolute and automatic. The penalty of death must be paid.

We can’t jump out of a 10-story building trying to break the law of gravity without paying a penalty for our actions. In the same way, when we break God’s spiritual law, the death penalty for doing so must be paid. Forgiveness does not mean *eliminating* the penalty for our sins. Rather, it means a transferring of the penalty from us to someone who could accept and pay that penalty in our place. The question is, who pays that penalty?

Because all have sinned and the death penalty hangs over everyone, God knew that a Savior was needed to die for the sins of the world. Notice Peter’s words: “For you know that it was not with perishable things such as silver or gold that you were redeemed . . . but with the precious blood of Christ, a lamb without blem-

ish or defect. He was chosen before the creation of the world, but was revealed in these last times for your sake” (1 Peter 1:18-20, NIV).

The apostle John spoke of God’s great love for us and the sacrifice of Jesus Christ that pays the penalty for our sins, making forgiveness possible. “He is the atoning sacrifice for our sins, and not only for ours but also for the sins of the whole world” (1 John 2:2, NIV).

John also wrote: “This is how God showed his love among us: He sent his one and only Son into the world that we might live through him. This is love: not that we loved God, but that he loved us and sent his Son as an atoning sacrifice for our sins” (1 John 4:9-10, NIV).

God actually created all things through Jesus Christ (John 1:1-14; Ephesians 3:9; Colossians 1:16-17; Hebrews 1:1-2). As mankind’s Creator who, being the perfect Son of God, lived a sinless life in the flesh, Jesus Christ was able to serve as the *perfect sacrifice* for the sins of all humanity for all time.

and sent the man away to be punished until he could repay (verses 32-34).

Christ is here contrasting two debts. The first servant owed the king a huge fortune—10,000 talents. The second servant owed a measly 100 denarii. Let's say that the servants' debts were to be paid in nickels. The 100 denarii debt could be carried in one person's pocket. But it's been estimated that the 10,000 talents (in the form of nickel-sized denarii) would take an army of 8,600 lined up single file, in a line that stretched five miles long. This is with each of the men carrying a sack of

No wrong that men may do to us in any way compares with the wrong that we have done to God. And we pray for the merciful reprieve that only He can give.

nickels weighing 60 pounds! What an enormous contrast.

Obviously, the first servant with the huge debt pictures you and me in our relationship with God. The second servant pictures our relationship with those who have inflicted injuries on us that are small by comparison.

Remember the Lord's Prayer

Of course, the amount owed really doesn't matter, does it? The point is, no wrong that men may do to us in any way compares with the wrong that we have done to God. And we pray for the merciful reprieve that only He can give, taking away our accumulated piles of shortcomings and failings.

Author C.S. Lewis once said, "To be a Christian means to forgive the inexcusable, because God has forgiven the inexcusable in you."

Forgiving is a major part of loving others. When Jesus gave us the outline

that we call the Lord's Prayer, it was a part of His Sermon on the Mount (Matthew 5-7), which teaches the necessity to love everyone, including through forgiveness. In particular, read Matthew 5:38-48 about how we must follow God's example in being merciful and loving toward everyone, rather than having the mentality of "an eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth."

What did Jesus mean by "turning the other cheek" (see verse 39)? He meant that loving other people will always make you more vulnerable to being hurt, but you should be so dedicated to

loving others that you are willing to run the risk of being hurt.

How merciful and loving we are toward others largely determines how

merciful God will be when He judges us and deals with us (see Luke 6:27-38; Matthew 7:2-5). "Blessed are the merciful, for they shall obtain mercy" (Matthew 5:7).

Forgiveness is an act of faith. By forgiving someone, we are trusting that God is better at justice than we ever could be. God does everything out of love, not spite. When forgiving, we give up our desire to get even, leaving all of the issues of fairness for God to work out.

By doing so we are following the Scriptures, and we can truly say, "I will forgive my brother, not seven times only, but as many times as is necessary."

It's by softening our hearts and allowing forgiveness to develop toward those who have wronged us that we open the opportunity for ourselves to be forgiven by God. Make no mistake—God *wants to forgive you*, no matter what you've done in the past.

Baptism's role in repentance and forgiveness

"And Peter said to them, 'Repent and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins . . .'" (Acts 2:38, English Standard Version).

Peter said that baptism is an essential part of forgiveness. But where does baptism fit in with the grace of God and Jesus? Through faith in Christ's sacrifice, we have all of our sins and the guilt we harbor entirely removed. We are then completely clean in God's sight (Acts 22:16).

It is comforting to know that God not only forgives our sins, but totally dissociates them from us: "For I will be merciful to their unrighteousness, and their sins and their lawless deeds I will remember no more" (Hebrews 8:12).

David was awed by God's complete mercy and forgiveness. He wrote, "For as the heavens are high above the earth, so great is His mercy toward those who fear Him; as far as the east is from the west, so far has He removed our transgressions from us" (Psalms 103:11-12).

Through the prophet Isaiah, God tells us of the forgiveness that follows when we repent and turn to Him: "Wash yourselves, make yourselves clean; put away the evil of your doings from before My eyes. Cease to do evil, learn to do

good . . . Though your sins are like scarlet, they shall be as white as snow" (Isaiah 1:16-18).

This is where baptism comes in. Paul explained how we are cleansed and made right with God: "But you were washed, but you were sanctified, but you were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus and by the Spirit of our God" (1 Corinthians 6:11). Jesus Christ cleanses the Church "with the washing of water by the word" (Ephesians 5:26).

This washing away of the accumulated filth of our sins is part of what is symbolized by baptism. Before Paul was baptized, Ananias said: "Why are you waiting? Arise and be baptized, and wash away your sins, calling on the name of the Lord" (Acts 22:16). By plunging our entire body under water, we are symbolically cleansed throughout.

Of course, the water is only a symbol. In reality, the cleansing of sin and reconciliation to God are by the shed blood of Jesus Christ, our Savior (Romans 5:8-10; Acts 20:28). Without His sacrifice, our sins cannot be washed away. But when we submit to God and are baptized as He wants us to be, we're demonstrating our faith that our sins can and will be cleansed by Jesus' sacrifice.

God Can and Will Forgive You



Peter, Jesus' disciple and friend, knew the depths of God's forgiveness. Vowing loyalty to His Master, Peter promised that He would never forsake Jesus in His time of trouble. Jesus knew Peter's heart,

however, and He knew Peter wasn't ready to live up to that promise. He was still too weak and all too human.

Peter denied Jesus three times just before the crucifixion, leaving His friend and Master alone, just as Jesus said he would. Luke wrote that Peter saw his failure and left, weeping bitterly (Luke 22:62).

It's easy to understand Peter's despair. Could he ever be forgiven for his betrayal? Did he even deserve forgiveness? Well, after Jesus was resurrected, He acknowledged Peter's sincere and deep repentance and let Peter know that he was forgiven.

As a result, just a short time later, we find a very different Peter. Instead of being ruled by fear and doubt, he was bold and courageous. Instead of suffocating in shame and guilt, he triumphantly preached God's forgiveness and mercy.

His statement recorded in Acts 2:38 is one of the most crucial passages in the Bible. Peter cut to the core of what God expects from us. He told his convicted listeners: "*Repent and be baptized, every one of you, in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins. And you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit*" (New International Version).

Having the indwelling gift of God's Spirit brings countless

benefits. One precious benefit is that it enables us to much more easily forgive others who hurt us.

Peter set forth the vital truth: that our repentance and God's merciful forgiveness are both necessary, complementary parts of the overall salvation process.

Since repentance has to occur before forgiveness, let's look at repentance first.

The necessity of repentance

The book of Acts covers about 30 years of early Church history, reaching from Jerusalem to Rome. Paul, like Peter, continually preached the importance of repentance. He testified "to Jews, and also to Greeks, repentance toward God and faith toward our Lord Jesus Christ" (Acts 20:21).

True repentance has two components. First, there must be sincere "godly sorrow"—sorrow toward God for breaking His commandments—not just sadness that one is suffering a penalty (2 Corinthians 7:9-10). Second, there must be a turning around—turning from the way of sin to the way of obedience to God (Ezekiel 18:23, 30-32).

Paul emphasized that promising to turn away from sin

Jesus Christ's perfect love and sacrifice

The incredible truth is that “God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life” (John 3:16). Even more amazing is that God loved us when we were still sinners. We were still under the death penalty of sin when He called us to conversion (Romans 5:8).

Jesus has a deep, burning desire to help mankind share eternity with Him (Matthew 23:37). The book of Hebrews says that we should be “looking unto Jesus, the author and finisher of our faith, who for the joy that was set before Him endured the cross, despising the shame, and has sat down at the right hand of the throne of God” (12:2).

It was anything but joyous to go through scourging and crucifixion, an incredibly brutal form of execution. Isaiah 52:14 prophesied that Christ's appearance would be “disfigured beyond that of any man and his form marred beyond human likeness” (NIV).

Psalms 22 describes some of the thoughts and feelings of anguish and pain Jesus faced when enduring His betrayal and death. Yet He had the spiritual vision to look past His own suffering to the joy of spending eternity with others who would choose the road to eternal life (Hebrews 12:2).

He willingly accepted the curse, the death penalty meant for us, “having become a curse for us (for it is written, ‘Cursed is everyone who hangs on a tree’)” (Galatians 3:13). (To learn more about who Jesus actually was and what He went through for us, read or download our free study guide *Jesus Christ: The Real Story*.)

Christ's sacrifice was so complete that no sin ever committed is too big or small for God to forgive (Psalms 103:3). Paul called himself the chief of sinners, as he had persecuted Christians, yet God used him powerfully after his conversion (1 Timothy 1:15). Throughout the book of Psalms, King David praised God's mercy. He saw God's mercy as endless, filling the earth (Psalms 119:64).

Such examples inspire great hope. No matter what our background or past mistakes, when we genuinely repent and are baptized, God promises complete forgiveness.

We can try to hide from sin, ignore sin or pretend that there is no consequence of sin. We can try to run away from the natural penalty of sin. But no human efforts can forgive sin and completely remove the spiritual penalty associated with it. Only Christ's sacrifice can permanently cleanse and forgive us.



isn't enough. Repentance also needs to bring about obvious good works—the fruits of repentance. He stated that people “should repent and turn to God and prove their repentance by their deeds” (Acts 26:20, NIV). Earlier John the Baptist had demanded “fruits worthy of repentance” from his listeners (Luke 3:8).

Paul and Barnabas urged the people of Lystra to “turn from these worthless things to the living God” (Acts 14:15, NIV). Those who are truly being called by God feel a strong sense of urgency to move forward toward forgiveness—taking the biblical steps of repentance our Creator requires.

Continuing in sin—unrepentance—has a way of leading us into a box canyon with no way out. There is only one way forward, and it's toward God's forgiveness by repenting of sin and allowing Him to change us.

David's example of repentance leading to forgiveness

God does not view sin lightly, and

neither should you. It's a deadly serious topic, as it's something that God hates. He hates it because it brings about death and removes us from Him. As our Father, He wants to have a close, intimate relationship with us, and sin left unrepented of keeps us from experiencing that level of closeness.

A poignant example of the relationship between repentance and forgiveness comes from the life of Israel's King David. When he broke at least two of the Ten Commandments in murdering a soldier named Uriah after committing adultery with Uriah's wife Bathsheba, God asked him through Nathan the prophet: “Why did you despise the word of the LORD by doing what is evil in his eyes?” (2 Samuel 12:9, NIV). The shaken king responded, “I have sinned against the LORD.”

But notice Nathan's reply: “The LORD has *taken away your sin*. You are not going to die” (verse 13, NIV). David's sincere, heartfelt repentance is expressed for us in Psalm 51. Every Christian should read it from time to

time to recognize the kind of heart and attitude God wants to see in us. David's repentance was *from the heart*, and it created change in him. It reestablished his relationship with God. As a result, God showered grace and forgiveness on him.

God has mercifully provided us a way out of sin—at great cost to Himself. Once we really grasp the greatness of God—and really begin to see ourselves in comparison to our Creator like Job did—we are well on our way to genuine, heartfelt repentance and His gracious forgiveness.

God's merciful and compassionate forgiveness

King David praised God's gracious nature in Psalm 103: "Praise the LORD, O my soul . . . and forget not all his benefits—who forgives all your sins and heals all your diseases . . . The LORD is compassionate and gracious, slow to anger, abounding in love . . . He does not treat us as our sins deserve or repay us according to our iniquities.

"For as high as the heavens are above the earth, so great is his love for those who fear him; as far as the east is from the west, so far has he removed our transgressions from us. As a father has compassion on his children, so the LORD has compassion on those who fear him; for he knows how we are formed, he remembers that we are dust" (verses 1-14, NIV).

Once you have truly repented of your sins, God's forgiveness is absolute, total and complete. He applies the sacrificial blood of His Son Jesus Christ to you personally. "For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life" (John 3:16).

God blots out our transgressions of His law through the sacrifice of Christ, "in whom we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of sins" (Colossians 1:14).

Our new status with God

Repentance, water baptism and receiving God's Holy Spirit (Acts 2:38) begin a completely changed life for a Christian. Once this bridge has been crossed, forgiveness is sure. Salvation is always assured provided we keep repenting when we fall short, returning to the path of God's law, mirrored by obedience to the Ten Commandments (1 John 1:9). As the psalmist wrote, "Your word is a lamp to my feet and a light to my path" (Psalms 119:105).

Our new status with God

Jesus Christ said, "Truly, truly I say to you, whoever hears My word and believes in Him [the Father] who sent Me has eternal life and shall not come into condemnation, but has passed from death into life" (John 5:24, Modern English Version).

The apostle John repeated this encouraging truth in 1 John 5:11-12: "And this is the testimony: that God has given us eternal life, and this life is in His Son. He who has the Son has life; he who does not have the Son of God does not have life."

After His resurrection, Jesus said of the Messiah, referring to Himself, that "repentance and forgiveness of sins will be preached in his name to all nations, beginning at Jerusalem" as a key component of the mission He gave His disciples (Luke 24:47, NIV). Now we can see how genuine repentance, followed by God's merciful and compassionate forgiveness, converge to impart true conversion—putting us firmly on the road to eternal life!

of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus."

Realizing how complete forgiveness is possible through Christ's perfect sacrifice, we must look ahead to maintaining the right course. We are told in Hebrews 10:22: "Let us go right into the presence of God, with true hearts fully trusting him. For our evil consciences have been sprinkled with Christ's blood to make us clean, and our bodies have been washed with pure water" (New Living Translation). A clear conscience is one of the most wonderful gifts God gives His children.

Burying the past

As God no longer associates us with our old sins, so should we put the past behind us. With our old sins now buried in the grave, as pictured by baptism, we should not go back and dig them up. Considering the symbolism involved, this would be akin to grave robbing.

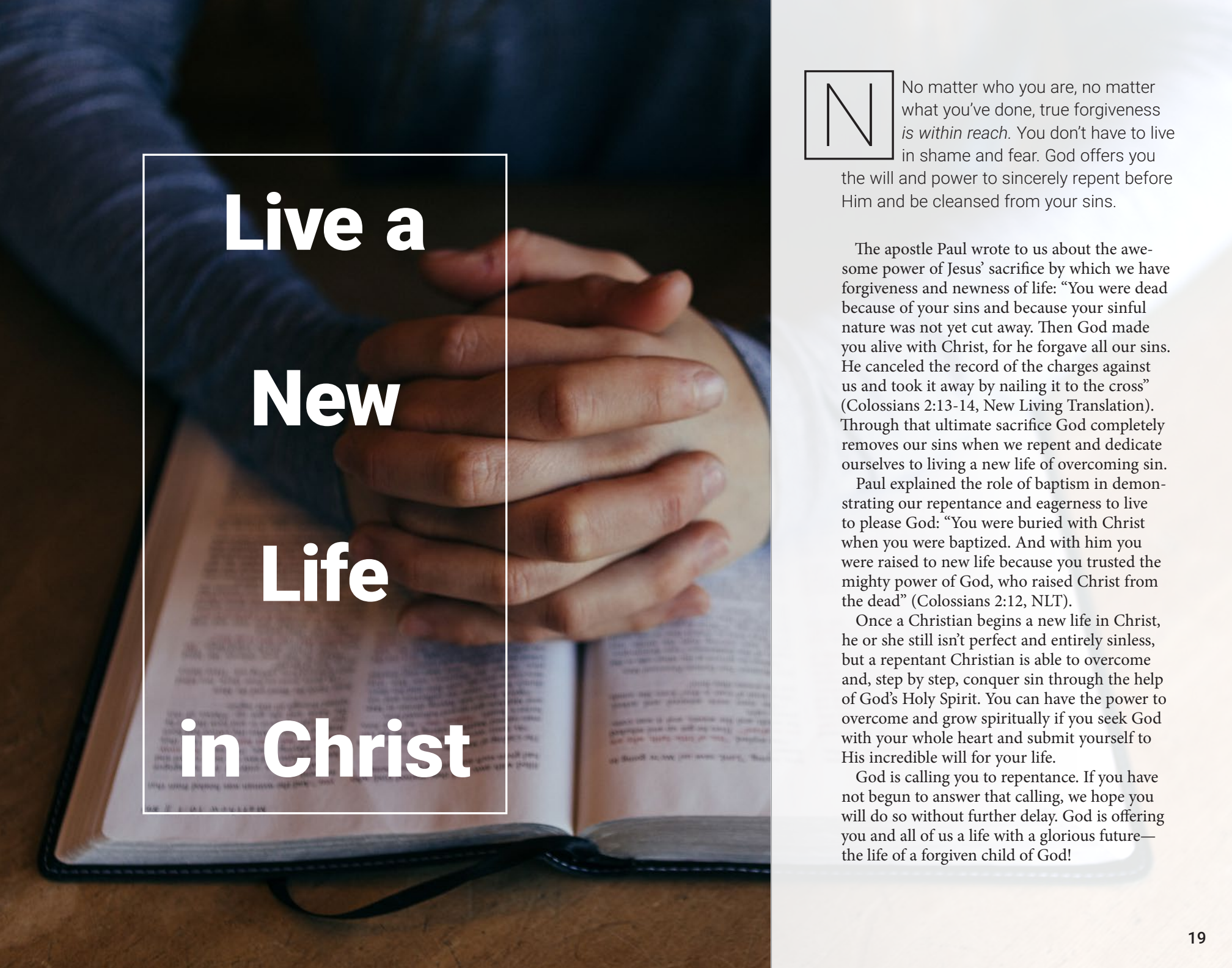
Continuing to fret about past sins may seem like repentance. But it's more like self-punishment. The truth is that God wants *repentance*, not penance. He doesn't want us to punish ourselves once He's forgiven us. He doesn't want us to throw old sins back into His face by continuing to

be consumed with thinking about them. He wants us to trust Him and His desire to completely forgive *and forget*. Forgetting may not be possible for people, but God works this miracle in our lives by completely removing past sins from us when we repent. After forgiveness, those sins no longer exist to God. Again: "As far as the east is from the west, so far has He removed our transgressions from us" (Psalm 103:12).

We need to learn from our mistakes. But once we have done so, we need to leave them buried in the past. We are to "walk in newness of life"

(Romans 6:4). Someone who does this, in God's eyes, becomes a new person, someone completely forgiven as though he or she had never sinned in the first place. What a wonderful miracle God works through repentance and forgiveness!

It's important that we see ourselves from this perspective and focus on the *future*, not on the *past*. Paul expressed the concept this way in Philippians 3:13-14: "One thing I do, forgetting those things which are behind and reaching forward to those things which are ahead, I press toward the goal for the prize

A close-up photograph of a person's hands clasped in prayer, resting on an open Bible. The hands are positioned with fingers interlaced, and the Bible is open to a page with visible text. The background is dark and out of focus.

Live a New Life in Christ



No matter who you are, no matter what you've done, true forgiveness *is within reach*. You don't have to live in shame and fear. God offers you the will and power to sincerely repent before Him and be cleansed from your sins.

The apostle Paul wrote to us about the awesome power of Jesus' sacrifice by which we have forgiveness and newness of life: "You were dead because of your sins and because your sinful nature was not yet cut away. Then God made you alive with Christ, for he forgave all our sins. He canceled the record of the charges against us and took it away by nailing it to the cross" (Colossians 2:13-14, New Living Translation). Through that ultimate sacrifice God completely removes our sins when we repent and dedicate ourselves to living a new life of overcoming sin.

Paul explained the role of baptism in demonstrating our repentance and eagerness to live to please God: "You were buried with Christ when you were baptized. And with him you were raised to new life because you trusted the mighty power of God, who raised Christ from the dead" (Colossians 2:12, NLT).

Once a Christian begins a new life in Christ, he or she still isn't perfect and entirely sinless, but a repentant Christian is able to overcome and, step by step, conquer sin through the help of God's Holy Spirit. You can have the power to overcome and grow spiritually if you seek God with your whole heart and submit yourself to His incredible will for your life.

God is calling you to repentance. If you have not begun to answer that calling, we hope you will do so without further delay. God is offering you and all of us a life with a glorious future—the life of a forgiven child of God!

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