

## Romans 6:7

### *Forgiveness Complete*

I can hardly wait to cover this passage. If it affects your life the way it has mine, you are in for a treat!

The great news is that we have been released from the power of sin through our death with Christ on the cross:

*for he who has died is freed from sin.* (Romans 6:7)

The “*old self*” (Adamic nature) has been “*crucified*” (Romans 6:6), and we are free to say “no!” to any thought the power of sin sends into our minds. Paul’s message is that no “*crucified*” man can respond to any sort of stimulus. The eradicated “*old self*,” who naturally desired to sin, can no longer respond to the power of sin’s lies. The new man, therefore, who naturally desires righteousness, can refuse any thought from the power of sin’s arsenal of untruths. The answer to why some New Testament believers continue to sin is provided later, but a short detour is mandatory.

We are no longer enslaved to the power of sin. Our “*old self*” was eradicated on the cross (Romans 6:6-7). But, are we also freed from the penalty of sin? In other words, how many of our acts of sin were forgiven when we were made new in Christ? Were only our past sins forgiven, or were our future sins also forgiven? We need to settle this issue, for a life of victory is unattainable without a thorough knowledge of the depths of God’s forgiveness.

The Greek tenses of the verbs and participles contained in Ephesians 4:32, Colossians 2:13, Hebrews 9:26, 10:10, 10:14, and 1John 2:12 (all of which address the subject of forgiveness) are often aorist and perfect. (“Aorist” is a Greek term that in this instance points to past action. “Perfect” points to past action as well.) These tenses tell us that forgiveness had to be dealt with in the past, at one particular point in time—at the cross.

When we accepted Christ we were placed into Christ (1Corinthians 12:13; 2Corinthians 5:17). We received eternal life, and God sees us as having always been in Christ—as having always been holy, perfect, complete, blameless, and forgiven. We are a finished product in the eyes of the Father because of this transformation that occurred at the point of justification.

Forgiveness need not be received on an ongoing basis. Christ would have to be re-crucified each time we sin as New Testament believers if we needed forgiveness more than once. Hebrews 10:10 states:

*“By this will we have been sanctified through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once for all.”* (Hebrews 10:10)

Christ’s body was offered once, never to be offered again. Thus, all forgiveness is complete when Christ’s blood is initially applied to our lives. This total clemency is the meaning of justification; it allows God the Father to make us holy, blameless, and forgiven. We are not obligated to seek forgiveness for sins committed after justification (salvation). In fact, we live in a state of forgiveness.

Some people misunderstand the forgiveness granted to the New Testament believer and incorrectly conclude that New Testament saints no longer sin. They use 1John 3:9 in an attempt to validate their beliefs:

*Whosoever is born of God doth not commit sin; for his seed remaineth in him: and he cannot sin, because he is born of God. (1John 3:9 KJV)*

The fact that the word “commit” is a present, active, indicative verb in the Greek verifies that John is speaking of a lifestyle of habitual sin, unrestrained sin, the frequency of sin experienced by those who are unbelievers. The NASB takes this fact into account and renders the passage as:

*No one who is born of God practices sin, because His seed abides in him; and he cannot sin, because he is born of God. (1John 3:9 NASB)*

Even the word “sin” in the phrase, “and he cannot sin,” is a present tense verb, indicating again the habitual sin experienced by the unredeemed.

A great disparity exists between practicing and enjoying sin as a lifestyle (that which occurs with unbelievers) versus being grieved while walking in occasional sin (that which occurs with believers). Again, if you remove the nature of a hog and replace it with the nature of a cat, you have an animal that looks like a hog in appearance but actually hates mud. The animal (the cat), in fact, avoids mud at all costs, although at times makes unwise choices that allow the grimy substance to adhere to its body. These occurrences are loathed by the cat—never enjoyed. Hogs, on the other hand, love, pursue, and bask in them.

Another verse that validates our findings is 1John 1:8:

*If we say that we have no sin, we are deceiving ourselves, and the truth is not in us. (1John 1:8)*

Writing to believers, John states that we would deceive ourselves by perceiving New Testament saints as incapable of committing sin. Oh, the value of the full counsel of God’s Word!

Another pertinent subject that must be considered is “confession.” Even though we are no longer required to ask for forgiveness when we sin, we are required to confess sin once it is committed. Confession means to speak the same thing about sin that God speaks about sin—calling sin what it is before Him. Repentance is a change of attitude that involves both a turning from sin and a turning to God (2Corinthians 7:9-10). Thus, we are required to confess and repent of sins committed after salvation (justification), not to receive forgiveness, but for the restoration of fellowship with the Father. We are eternal beings who have been eternally forgiven. Why would the Lord require us to ask for something we already have? That situation would be totally unreasonable!

The Lord requires us to confess and repent because sin severs our fellowship with God. God created us for the purpose of fellowship. When we sin, the broken fellowship is our problem—not God’s. God took care of His side of the problem on the cross.

Consequently, He waits (in His mercy and grace) until we repent and confess, at which time fellowship is restored.

Confession can be beneficial in other ways as well. For example, a young couple asked that I hold them accountable prior to marriage. They wanted to remain pure until the wedding day, so they suggested that I ask them (on a weekly basis) if they were abiding by the guidelines they had established for their relationship. I agreed, and the outcome was enormously encouraging. They both said that their relationship grew deeper as a result of their decision, and that their accountability with me was a tremendous motivation to remain pure. That accountability provided incentive because they both realized that compromise would require a face-to-face confession before the man holding them accountable. God knows that the accountability of confession stimulates us to say “no!” to temptation. Thus, God uses confession and repentance for our good—to enhance our desire to walk in holiness.

*Conclusion:* We are to confess and repent of sins for two reasons: (1) To have fellowship restored with the Father (2) To motivate us to walk away from temptation through yielding to Christ’s life within (Romans 5:10).

Some believers maintain that after salvation (justification), we are forgiven for each sin committed when we ask for forgiveness. A verse used to support this position is 1John 1:9, which in actuality reveals nothing regarding when the New Testament believer’s sins are forgiven—that is, the sins committed after salvation.

*If we confess our sins, He is faithful and righteous to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness. (1John 1:9)*

The verbs “*forgive*” and “*cleanse*” are in the subjunctive mood, and time is not indicated by this mood. The subjunctive mood indicates kind of action, not time of action; so 1John 1:9 cannot teach that New Testament believers are required to seek forgiveness for sins committed subsequent to salvation. If sins had to be forgiven after salvation, church saints who died with unconfessed sin would enter heaven with sins not yet forgiven. Impossible! The longer I walk with Christ the more I detect hidden areas of immaturity and disobedience—a condition that will remain until physical death. Thus, the entire forgiveness issue had to be completed at the point of justification. How else could God accept us into His family?

Another verse that seems to indicate that we are to seek forgiveness for sins committed after salvation (justification) is Matthew 6:12. This verse is very familiar because it is included in the Lord’s Prayer. Here Jesus said:

*“And forgive us our debts, as we also have forgiven our debtors.”*  
(Matthew 6:12)

On the surface it seems that the Lord is instructing all believers to ask for forgiveness once sin is committed. Before jumping to this conclusion, we must consider whether Jesus made this statement before or after the cross. Obviously, He made it prior to His crucifixion—before the forgiveness issue had been settled. In fact, we learned earlier that

none of the Old Testament sacrifices took away sin (Hebrews 10:4, 11); they only covered sin by serving as atonement for sin. Scripture must be interpreted in the context in which it is stated, and Matthew 6:12 is no exception. Jesus was addressing individuals who lived prior to the cross, meaning that their forgiveness would occur in the future. Therefore, their seeking forgiveness was proper. Things changed after the cross, for we are privileged to have had all sin removed in the past. Please don't hear me saying that the teachings of Jesus are outdated or irrelevant. I am simply trying to communicate that all Scripture must be interpreted in context, even the teachings of Jesus.

Some theologians perceive Acts 8:9-24 as proving that the New Testament believer is to continue to seek forgiveness for sin. Their thesis (view) is based on Peter's statement to Simon in Acts 8:22:

*"Therefore repent of this wickedness of yours, and pray the Lord that if possible, the intention of your heart may be forgiven you. (Acts 8:22)*

Simon "believed" and was water "baptized" in Acts 8:13—prior to Peter's statement in Acts 8:22. Yet the events of Acts 8:14-24 verify that he was not a born again saint of God (read verses 18-21 and 23-24), but a hypocrite. Thus, Peter's words were stated to an unregenerated soul in need of forgiveness. "The demons also believe and shudder" (James 2:19). These verses also verify as well that water baptism does not save, for Simon was water baptized yet remained lost.

To determine when a New Testament believer's sins are forgiven, 1John 2:12 must be considered:

*I am writing to you, little children, because your sins are forgiven you for His name's sake. (1John 2:12)*

Here the word "forgiven" is in the indicative mood, a mood which can express time. Its perfect tense indicates completed action with a resulting state of being. Ephesians 4:32, Colossians 2:13, Hebrews 9:26, Hebrews 9:28, Hebrews 10:10, Hebrews 10:12, Hebrews 10:14, Jude 24 and other passages also indicate that all sin was dealt with when Jesus died. We can conclude, therefore, that when Christ's blood was applied to our lives, at the point of justification, forgiveness was thorough and complete.

We must remember this magnificent news and renew our minds with this truth on an ongoing basis. The following statements summarize what has been expressed.

1. When we were lost (depraved), we exercised personal repentance and faith. Then God saved us by eradicating our "old self" and, in turn, forgiving our sin.
2. At the point of salvation (justification), our past, present, and future sins were forgiven. We were also given eternal life and made into eternal beings. As a result, God sees us as having always been in Christ and as having always been forgiven. In fact, we live in a state of forgiveness!! Justification means to be forgiven and made not guilty for all eternity.

3. After we are saved (justified), we continue to confess and repent of sin realizing that our sin was forgiven prior to our bringing it before the Father. We must constantly remember that God forgave all past, present, and future sin at the point of justification, subsequent to our exercising personal repentance and faith while depraved. Confession and repentance after salvation are for the purpose of restoring fellowship with the Father, not for the purpose of receiving forgiveness.

4. Having become aware of this wonderful truth, we should be less prone to harbor unconfessed sin. In fact, we should be motivated to rush to the Father the instant we disobey, knowing that He will receive us with open arms (Hebrews 4:14-16). Isn't it freeing to realize that once we are born again we don't confess sin for the purpose of receiving forgiveness, but that confession restores fellowship instead?

Understanding this truth transforms how life is perceived. In fact, our love for Christ becomes the incentive for service (Galatians 5:6)—not duty or law. His heart becomes our treasure, not the temporal which fades away. In fact, our passion to walk in constant fellowship with the Creator will become our motivation for daily living. Only then will the world see Jesus in and through us and, hopefully, desire to know this wonderful, loving, forgiving God Who is our life.

Thank you, Lord, for your indescribable gift!