



World Christian Fellowship

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God's greatest gift!

Mark 2:1-12, *And again He entered Capernaum after some days, and it was heard that He was in the house. ²Immediately many gathered together, so that there was no longer room to receive them, not even near the door. And He preached the word to them. ³Then they came to Him, bringing a paralytic who was carried by four men. ⁴And when they could not come near Him because of the crowd, they uncovered the roof where He was. So when they had broken through, they let down the bed on which the paralytic was lying. ⁵When Jesus saw their faith, He said to the paralytic, "Son, your sins are forgiven you." ⁶And some of the scribes were sitting there and reasoning in their hearts, ⁷"Why does this Man speak blasphemies like this? Who can forgive sins but God alone?"*

⁸But immediately, when Jesus perceived in His spirit that they reasoned thus within themselves, He said to them, "Why do you reason about these things in your hearts? ⁹Which is easier, to say to the paralytic, 'Your sins are forgiven you,' or to say, 'Arise, take up your bed and walk'? ¹⁰But that you may know that the Son of Man has [b](#)power on earth to forgive sins"—He

said to the paralytic, ¹¹“I say to you, arise, take up your bed, and go to your house.” ¹²Immediately he arose, took up the bed, and went out in the presence of them all, so that all were amazed and glorified God, saying, “We never saw anything like this!”

What is the most distinctive benefit that Christianity offers?

Our modern culture asks people what they think the message of Christianity really is, you would be surprised.

If you found somebody who got the right answer because there are so many viewpoints of Christianity.

- Some think it is some kind of a moral form of political ideology.
- Some people think it is a rule so that you can live the kind of life that God will accept.
- Some people think Christianity is to give purpose to your life with some significant goal and objective.
- Some people think Christianity is to provide love in the heart so that we can counter the hatred in the world.
- Some people think that Christianity’s goal and objective is peace.
- Some think that Christianity is social responsibility and to bring about moral change in society.

- Some people think its basic existence is to provide personal fulfilment, personal happiness, a personal peace and joy.

None of those is the right answer.

There is one benefit that transcends all other realities, a benefit that directly corresponds to man's greatest need.

Whatever man's greatest need is, Christianity must respond to that need. That is precisely what it does.

What is the greatest problem for man?

Sin.

John 8:21, *Then Jesus said to them again, "I am going away, and you will seek Me, and will die in your sin. Where I go you cannot come."*

John 8:24, *Therefore I said to you that you will die in your sins; for if you do not believe that I am He, you will die in your sins."*

What is man's greatest need?

What sends people to hell?

Not sin!

Unforgiven sin.

We all sin, and we would all end up in hell if our sins were not forgiven.

This is the message of Christianity.

God through His lovingkindness has designed a way for sinners to be forgiven with such magnanimity.

It could be spoken of as if it's

- removing your sins as far as the east is from the west, or
- burying them in the depths of the sea, or
- putting them behind His back, or
- remembering them no more.

What sends people to hell is unforgiven sin.

So, the greatest need of every soul is divine forgiveness.

The greatest benefit that Christianity offers is just that forgiveness.

Again, it is unforgiven sin that sends people into eternal punishment in hell.

Christianity answers, then, the compelling question.

Can I be forgiven?

If you are giving a faithful message concerning the Christian message, the Christian truth, the Christian gospel, what you are telling people is, the good news is that you can be forgiven.

Acts 13:38-39, *Therefore let it be known to you, brethren, that through this Man is preached to you the forgiveness of sins; ³⁹and by Him everyone who believes is justified from all things from which you could not be justified by the law of Moses.*

The “all things” there has to do with punishment, judgment.

You cannot be freed from judgment, punishment, and hell through the law of Moses, through obedience to the law.

No, “everyone who believes is freed.”

This is the Christian message:

Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, and you can be forgiven.

Ephesians 1:7, *In Him we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of His grace.*

Ephesians 4:32, *And be kind to one another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, even as God in Christ forgave you.*

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

God is merciful.

God being merciful basically means that, when we deserve punishment, He doesn't punish us, and in fact blesses us instead.

Mercy is the withholding of a just condemnation.

Throughout the Bible, God gives many illustrations of His mercy. God fully demonstrates His mercy in Jesus Christ.

When you go into the Old Testament, you find the same thing.

Exodus 33:19, *Then He said, "I will make all My goodness pass before you, and I will proclaim the name of the Lord before you. I will be gracious to whom I will be gracious, and I will have compassion on whom I will have compassion."*

Exodus 34:6-7, *And the Lord passed before him and proclaimed, "The Lord, the Lord God, merciful and gracious, longsuffering, and abounding in goodness and truth, ⁷keeping mercy for thousands, forgiving iniquity and transgression and*

sin, by no means clearing the guilty, visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children and the children's children to the third and the fourth generation."

God is introducing Himself there in the mountain to Moses, and He wants Moses to know His character, and He describes Himself as compassionate, gracious, slow to anger, abounding in lovingkindness and truth, forgiving iniquity, transgression, and sin.

Deuteronomy 7:9, *"Therefore know that the LORD your God, He is God, the faithful God who keeps covenant and mercy for a thousand generations with those who love Him and keep His commandments."*

His grace and mercy shine as the apex of his glory.

Wrath is his righteous response to evil, but it is not his heart.

Justice is the stem. Mercy is the flower.

Numbers 14:18, *'The Lord is longsuffering and abundant in mercy, forgiving iniquity and transgression; but He by no means clears the guilty, visiting the iniquity of the fathers on the children to the third and fourth generation.'*

2 Chronicles 30:9, *For if you return to the Lord, your brethren and your children will be treated with compassion by those*

who lead them captive, so that they may come back to this land; for the Lord your God is gracious and merciful, and will not turn His face from you if you return to Him.”

Nehemiah 9:17, *They refused to obey, And they were not mindful of Your wonders That You did among them. But they hardened their necks, And in their rebellion They appointed a leader To return to their bondage. But You are God, Ready to pardon, Gracious and merciful, Slow to anger, Abundant in kindness, And did not forsake them.*

Psalm 103:8, *The Lord is merciful and gracious, Slow to anger, and abounding in mercy.*

Psalm 111:4-5, *He has made His wonderful works to be remembered; The Lord is gracious and full of compassion. ⁵He has given food to those who fear Him; He will ever be mindful of His covenant.*

Psalm 116:5, *Gracious is the Lord, and righteous; Yes, our God is merciful.*

Psalm 119:64, *The earth, O Lord, is full of Your mercy; Teach me Your statutes.*

Psalm 119:156, *Great are Your tender mercies, O Lord; Revive me according to Your judgments.*

Psalm 145:8, *The Lord is gracious and full of compassion, Slow to anger and great in mercy.*

Jonah 4:2, *So he prayed to the Lord, and said, "Ah, Lord, was not this what I said when I was still in my country? Therefore I fled previously to Tarshish; for I know that You are a gracious and merciful God, slow to anger and abundant in lovingkindness, One who relents from doing harm.*

Ephesians 2:4, *But God, who is rich in mercy, because of His great love with which He loved us,*

Psalm 103:12, *As far as the east is from the west, So far has He removed our transgressions from us.*

How far is the east from the west?

Infinite line.

Isaiah 30:18, *Therefore the Lord will wait, that He may be gracious to you; And therefore He will be exalted, that He may have mercy on you. For the Lord is a God of justice; Blessed are all those who wait for Him.*

Isaiah 38:17, *Indeed it was for my own peace That I had great bitterness; But You have lovingly delivered my soul from the pit of corruption, For You have cast all my sins behind Your back.*

Isaiah 43:25, *"I, even I, am He who blots out your transgressions for My own sake; And I will not remember your sins.*

What an amazing message?

That is the message of the true and living God. That is the essence of the Christian gospel.

It's not a form of morality.

It's not a form of philanthropy, human goodness.

The gospel is the only way that you can have your sins forgiven, and that's the only way you will escape hell.

Micah 7:18-19, *Who is a God like You, Pardoning iniquity And passing over the transgression of the remnant of His heritage? He does not retain His anger forever, Because He delights in mercy. ¹⁹He will again have compassion on us, And will subdue our iniquities. You will cast all our sins Into the depths of the sea.*

What astounding generosity this is!

God's mercy not only shows us who He is, but also tells us something essential about ourselves.

That we have been shown Mercy!

Mercy means not only that we didn't deserve his Favor, but that we deserved His righteous hammer against the justice.

Our cry for mercy admits to our ill-deserving, not just undeserving.

By rights, we should be under his impending wrath, like all mankind (Ephesians 2:3) — but for “the tender mercy of our God” (Luke 1:78).

God is merciful illustrated many times.

God was merciful to the wayward Solomon.

1 Kings 11:13, *However I will not tear away the whole kingdom; I will give one tribe to your son for the sake of My servant David, and for the sake of Jerusalem which I have chosen.”*

God was merciful to Israel in captivity.

Psalms 106:45, *And for their sake He remembered His covenant, And relented according to the multitude of His mercies.*

Nehemiah 9:31, *Nevertheless in Your great mercy You did not utterly consume them nor forsake them; For You are God, gracious and merciful.*

David illustrated God's mercy when he showed kindness to Mephibosheth.

2 Samuel 9:7, *So David said to him, "Do not fear, for I will surely show you kindness for Jonathan your father's sake, and will restore to you all the land of Saul your grandfather; and you shall eat bread at my table continually."*

God's mercy was illustrated every year on the Day of Atonement when the high priest entered the Holiest Place and sprinkled the blood of the sacrifice before the mercy seat.

Leviticus 16:14, *He shall take some of the blood of the bull and sprinkle it with his finger on the mercy seat on the east side; and before the mercy seat he shall sprinkle some of the blood with his finger seven times.*

Mercy is coupled with other attributes of God which is His love.

Psalms 86:15, *But You, O Lord, are a God full of compassion, and gracious, Longsuffering and abundant in mercy and truth.*

God's mercy is rooted in His love for us. He is merciful, in large part, because He is love.

1 John 4:6, *We are of God. He who knows God hears us; he who is not of God does not hear us. By this we know the spirit of truth and the spirit of error.*

Because of His love for us, God wants us to be with Him. His mercy is required for that to take place; there is an inseparable connection between God's love and mercy.

Israel's great psalmist-king, David, would cast himself utterly on the mercy of God. He began his great song of confession.

Psalms 51:1-2, *Have mercy upon me, O God, According to Your lovingkindness; According to the multitude of Your tender mercies, Blot out my transgressions. ²Wash me thoroughly from my iniquity, And cleanse me from my sin.*

Later, when David recognized his sin against God by numbering the people, the prophet Gad gave him three options for God's discipline.

2 Samuel 24:13, *So Gad came to David and told him; and he said to him, "Shall seven years of famine come to you in your land? Or shall you flee three months before your enemies, while they pursue you? Or shall there be three days' plague in your land? Now consider and see what answer I should take back to Him who sent me."*

David had glimpsed the heart of God, and he knew where to fall.

2 Samuel 24:14, *And David said to Gad, "I am in great distress. Please let us fall into the hand of the Lord, for His mercies are great; but do not let me fall into the hand of man."*

This is the Christian message.

This is the message that God gave in the Old Testament and in the New: He forgives sins.

Now this raises the question of justice.

God understands that justice must prevail.

God says it's an abomination if you do something that violates justice.

Proverbs 17:15, *He who justifies the wicked, and he who condemns the just, Both of them alike are an abomination to the Lord.*

Yet, that is exactly what God did.

Romans 4:5, *But to him who does not work but believes on Him who justifies the ungodly, his faith is accounted for righteousness,*

The very thing that **Proverbs 17** says is an abomination is exactly what God does; He justifies the ungodly "his faith is credited as righteousness."

The sound foundational law of morality in the world is that evil must be punished, and goodness rewarded.

But God Himself has chosen to violate that law in the sense that He justifies the ungodly—one of the most shocking statements to Jewish people anywhere, in the New Testament.

How can God do that?

How is it possible?

The answer is because He punishes His Son in the place of believing sinners.

Romans 3:25, *whom God set forth as a propitiation by His blood, through faith, to demonstrate His righteousness, because in His forbearance God had passed over the sins that were previously committed,*

Titus 2:14, *who gave Himself for us, that He might redeem us from every lawless deed and purify for Himself His own special people, zealous for good works.*

Isaiah 1:18, *“Come now, and let us reason together,” Says the Lord, “Though your sins are like scarlet, They shall be as white as snow; Though they are red like crimson, They shall be as wool.*

Romans 5:6, *For when we were still without strength, in due time Christ died for the ungodly.*

Romans 5:8, *But God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us.*

Romans 5:10, *For if when we were enemies we were reconciled to God through the death of His Son, much more, having been reconciled, we shall be saved by His life.*

He passed over sins.

But in order to be just and the justifier of the one who has faith in Jesus, those sins had to be punished.

Jesus bore our sins in His own body.

God sacrifices His only Son to accomplish His will of justifying the ungodly.

This is the glorious message of the Christian gospel.

Jesus came to offer forgiveness everlasting, eternal forgiveness.

That is what is demonstrated in Mark chapter 2.