

Lesson 2

God Graciously Forgives

Bible Lesson: Luke 23:32-43

Summary: We ask God to forgive us our sins, because there is no other way to get rid of them. The thief on the cross beside Jesus proves this. The thief knew of his sin and knew that he could not do any good deeds to erase his sin and guilt. The story of the cross always leads us to His forgiveness.

Memory Verse: For the wages of sin is death, but the free gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord. *Romans 6:23*

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

Catechism Student Memory Work: *What does this mean?* ...We pray in this petition that our heavenly Father would not regard our sins nor because of them deny our prayers; for we neither merit nor are worthy of those things for which we pray; but that He would grant us all things through grace, even though we sin daily, and deserve nothing but punishment...

Catechism TM Reference:

What does this mean?

What do you pray for in the fifth petition?

I pray God to forgive us our trespasses.

Can we feel assured that God will forgive us this debt?

Yes; Jesus Christ has paid for all our sins.

Why must the believer ask the forgiveness of sins every day?

Because he sins every day, and is always in need of forgiveness.

TEACHER PREPARATION

Prepare to Teach

Help students understand that:

- ♦ the forgiveness of sins in Christ is the central message of the Christian faith.
- ♦ Christ died for our sins, and He willingly forgives us for His sake.

Prepare Materials

- ♦ Bible, pencils, crayons or colored pencils.

BIBLE BACKGROUND

A. Introduction

“We pray in this petition (forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive those who trespass against us) that our heavenly father would not regard our sins nor because of them deny our prayers; for we neither merit nor are worthy of those things for which we pray” (Explanation of Luther’s Small Catechism). In this lesson from Luke 23 our focus is on the thief on the cross who received the forgiveness of his sins, even though he knew that he neither merited nor was worthy of being forgiven.

B. Prayer Preparation

1. Praise God for His willingness to forgive your sins.
2. Ask the Lord to help you always remember that the forgiveness of sins in Christ is the central message of the Christian faith.
3. Ask the Lord to help you clearly share with your students God’s willingness to forgive their sins.

C. Bible Study

In contrast to Jesus, who was innocent of the charges against Him when He was crucified, Luke relates, “Two others, who were criminals, were being led away to be put to death with Him (Jesus).” These other two were criminals, often referred to as “thieves,” who were deserving of the punishment of death. One of the thieves, in Luke 23:41, admitted as much when he stated, “We indeed justly (are being condemned), for we are receiving what we deserve for our deeds.” On the other hand, this thief acknowledged, “This man (Jesus) had done nothing wrong.” Pontius Pilate, even though he gave the death sentence to Jesus admitted, “I have found in Him no guilt demanding death” (Luke 23:22).

Jesus was no criminal. He had done nothing deserving of the death sentence that had been given to Him. However, He willingly took the cross upon Himself so that He might offer to the repentant criminal, and to each one of us the forgiveness of our sins.

In verse 34, Jesus prayed, “Father, forgive them; for they do not know what they are doing.” This prayer of forgiveness was offered for the Roman soldiers that carried out the execution of our Savior. It was offered even for the crowds that had called for His crucifixion and now were standing at the foot of the cross hurling insults at Him, calling out, “He saved others; let Him save Himself if this is the Christ of God.”

What they did not know was that Jesus could have saved Himself. The hymn writer has written, “He could have called ten thousand angels to destroy the world and set Him free. He could have called ten thousand angels, but He died for you and me.”¹ The truth is, Jesus could have saved Himself from the agony of the cross, but instead He chose to stay on the cross in order to make atonement for the sins of the world and have the authority to offer the forgiveness of sins to all mankind.

Because of what He accomplished by staying on the cross, Jesus had the authority to say to the repentant criminal that was hanging next to Him, “Today you shall be with Me in paradise.” Here is a man, who by his own admission, had been condemned to death for the crimes he had committed. This man was not seeking to be released from his “death sentence.” He was seeking instead the mercy of Christ when it came to judgment in eternity.

Like this “thief on the cross” we all are guilty of some sin. Even though our sins may not cause us to be condemned to death by this world’s courts we are no more deserving of Christ’s forgiveness than this criminal was. However, the offer of forgiveness that Christ made to the “thief on the cross” is the same offer of forgiveness that Christ makes to each one who will acknowledge his/her sinfulness.

¹ Ambassador Hymnal, #552.

BEGINNING YOUR CLASS HOUR

Welcome with Love

Some religions teach that you have to work hard at doing good things to try to earn the forgiveness of your sins. Other religions teach that you need to pray many times a day and in certain ways to be acceptable to God. Have your students list good works that many would consider ways to work their way to heaven. You could draw a ladder and put them on the

rungs. Have a header that reads. Work our Way? - NO WAY! - One Way!!! Some ideas could be daily prayers, giving to the needy, discipline for my body, never smoking, drinking, cursing etc. Even door-to-door witnessing in some religions is a way to "earn points." Our God is not on a point system. For that we can all be so thankful. Our lesson today is the story of the cross - this always leads to forgiveness.

TEACHING TODAY'S BIBLE LESSON

Sing the Message

Use the theme hymn here: "*Savior, Like a Shepherd Lead Us*," Ambassador Hymnal, #450. "*King of my life I crown thee now*" verse one of "*Lead Me to Calvary*" Use the Ambassador Hymnal to look for more songs that focus on the cross. Even having your students read the words is invaluable. There is richness in great hymns and spiritual songs. We are asked to praise God and make a joyful noise. Regardless of our musical ability we can do this. Use tapes or CDs, play praise music while your students are arriving or leaving. Even while they are working on their workbooks. Give the class opportunity to bring in their favorites too.

Pray the Message

Give your students time to share some prayer requests. Ask individuals to pray for these needs out loud. For example, "Who would pray for Carrie's grandfather?" Justin? Thanks. "Who would pray for Miles' neighbor?" Melody? Great. Are there any other requests? OK Then lets pray and we will close with the Lords prayer. Justin will you start for us? ETC.

Learn the New Words

wages

unacceptable

religions

earn

thieves

Paradise

gift

Introduce the Message

We receive gifts on our birthday or at Christmas time. Often these are given from the heart. They are undeserved. We receive them gratefully. We receive a "free" gift at times for placing an order with a particular company or with a purchase we have made. This is to entice us to try a certain product. The thief on the cross was offered an incredible gift of forgiveness. There was absolutely nothing he could do to repay Jesus for this. He was about to die with him. And Jesus offers hope and eternal life. God's grace.

G God's

R Riches

A At

C Christ's

E Expense

Praise God for His wonderful gift!

Read/Tell the Message

Now read the lesson from your student books. Teacher read to them or they read a paragraph or let them break into pairs to read together.

Reinforce the Message

ASK:

♦ Do you deserve to die? (Everyone does)

Lesson 2

God Graciously Forgives

- ♦ So what can we do with our sin? (Nothing - by ourselves)
- ♦ How does Jesus respond to the thief? ("Today you shall be with me in Paradise)
- ♦ What is God's grace to you? (Answers may vary – emphasize that Jesus died to forgive our sins.)

APPLYING THE BIBLE LESSON

Memorize the Bible Verse

This verse today is the second step on what is often called "The Roman Road." You may be able to find these on a card either at your local Christian book store or on the internet. It is a great tool for your students to have memorized. An excellent way to lead others to the Lord. They could even write these in order in the back of their Bibles. Some have even

put the next verse in the margin near the verse. Find Romans 3:23 in the margin of their Bible next to it could be a notation to go to Romans 6:23 with a page number beside it. Or use the memory verse activity in your material.

Do the Activities Together

CLOSING YOUR CLASS HOUR

Use of a video cued up to this part of the crucifixion would be excellent. Jesus video or The Life of Christ. There are many great resources available with the Parish Ed office too. It is always painful to watch it depicted but it gives us a realization of all Christ did for us. He suffered and died. Remind your students that the forgiveness of sins in Christ is the central message of the Christian faith. Jesus left an empty tomb. Mohammed, Joseph Smith, etc. all have a burial site and cannot offer living hope. Christ died for our sins, and He willingly forgives us for His sake. We can fellowship with other denominations that hold this as their truth. The only way to heaven is faith in Christ Jesus.

Pray Together

Use the ACTS for a way to pray today.
A = Adoration Give your students time to think of ways we can adore and worship God
C = Confession Give a silent time for your students to think of their shortcomings and times when they have fallen short of God's standard.
T = Thanksgiving We can list many things for which we can be thankful today. Our homes and families, church families, our country, our schools and communities, etc.
S = Supplication This is the time to share requests for others. Pray for my mom who is sick. Pray for our basketball team this week etc.

Prepare for Next Week

Gather and Prepare Materials

- ♦ Bibles, pencils, colored pencils,

Prepare Lesson 3

Begin your study and preparation with prayer.

Pray for each student daily by name.

Read the Bible text Matthew 18:21-35

Memorize the Bible verse:

And be kind to one another, tenderhearted, forgiving each other, just as God in Christ also has forgiven you. *Ephesians 4:32*

Lesson 2

God Graciously Forgives

Enrichment Memory Verse:

And so, as those who have been chosen of God, holy and beloved, put on a heart of compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness and patience; bearing with one another, and forgiving each other, whoever has a complaint against any one; just as the Lord forgave you, so also should you. *Colossians 3:12-13*

Memorize the Catechism:

What does this mean? ...And certainly we, on our part, will heartily forgive, and gladly do good to those who may sin against us.

Read the Teacher Manual.

Highlight, underline, and write in your own notes to help you teach Lesson 3.

The Fifth Petition: And forgive us our trespasses, . . .

What does this mean? We pray in this petition that our heavenly Father would not regard our sins nor because of them deny our prayers; for we neither merit nor are worthy of those things for which we pray; but that He would grant us all things through grace, even though we sin daily, and deserve nothing but punishment. . . .

Look for the KEY WORDS in your lesson to answer these questions.

Then mark the words in your lesson with colored pencils.

1. WHO has sinned? Circle in black.
2. WHAT can we do with our sin? Draw a red cross next to these words.
3. WHAT do some religions teach that we have to do to receive forgiveness of sins? Circle in purple.
4. When Jesus was dying on the cross, WHO hung on crosses beside Him? Underline in blue.
5. WHERE did Jesus promise one thief he would go after he died? Circle in yellow.
6. WHAT do we call something given to us freely that we do not have to earn or work for? Draw a green box around the word.

What do we pray for in the Fifth Petition? Fill in the blanks below.

We ask that our heavenly Father would not regard our Sins
Nor because of them deny our prayers;
For we neither merit nor are worthy of those things
For which we pray;
But that He would grant us all things through grace,
Even though we sin daily,
And deserve nothing but punishment.



**A
P
P
L
Y**

Unscramble the words at the right to help you answer these questions.

1. What do we do every day that we need forgiveness for? _____
2. How often do we sin? _____
3. What do we deserve for our sins? _____
4. What do we ask that God would not deny? _____
5. Through what does God grant us all things? _____

yarpres ruo
thinspuemn
nis
ceagr
yaild

* Confess your sins to God every day. Remember to thank Him for graciously forgiving you!

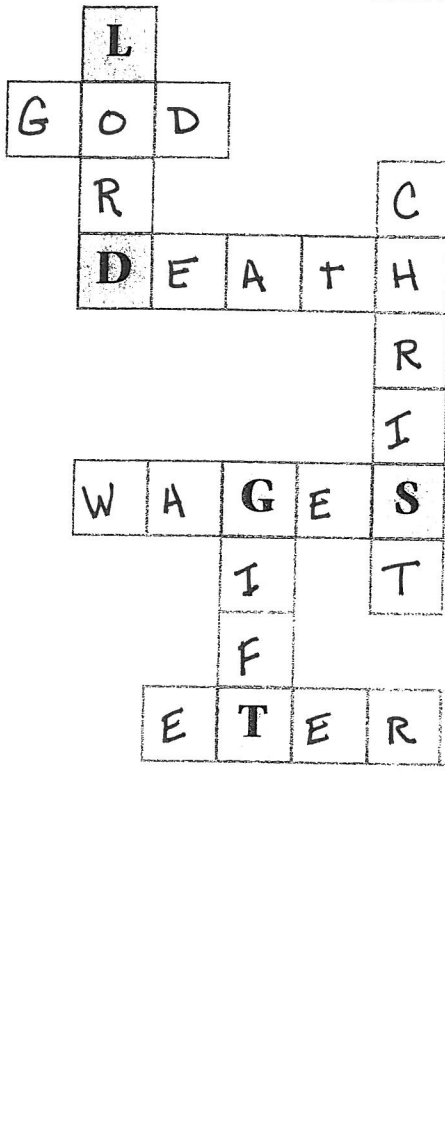
Memory Verse

For the *wages* of sin is death, but the free gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord.

Romans 6:23

Enrichment Memory Verse: Romans 5:8

Fill in the missing letters to complete the word puzzle.



DOWN	ACROSS
LORD	GOD
LIFE	ETERNAL
GIFT	WAGES
SIN	DEATH
CHRIST	JESUS

Forgiveness is a LIFE or DEATH matter!

Finish these sentences by putting an "X" across the incorrect word.

- The wages of sin is _____. Romans 6:23
- Jesus took the punishment for our sins by His _____. I Peter 2:4
- God's free gift is eternal _____. Romans 6:23
- This free gift of God removes our fear of _____. Psalm 23:4
- Faith in Jesus assures us of eternal _____. John 3:16

LIFE	DEATH
LIFE	DEATH
LIFE	DEATH
LIFE	DEATH
LIFE	DEATH