

## FOR CHRIST'S SAKE

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#### *Scriptures Cited:*

*Ephesians 4:32, 1 John 2:12, Isaiah 59:1-2, Romans 15:4, Matthew 3:13-17, John 8:28-29, John 3:2, Acts 10:38, John 10:30, John 11:41-42, John 17:1-26, Acts 19:1-5, Mark 16:15-16*

Before we begin this lesson, I would like to give thanks to God for giving us another opportunity to share in His word together. It is my hope and prayer that we all grow from the things shared in these lessons by taking His word with us into our daily lives. And rather than worshiping God only once a week, we will live our lives everyday as worship to Him.

The title of this lesson, “For Christ’s Sake” is a phrase that you may have heard people use from time to time. It is usually spoken in a somewhat irreverent way to express either frustration or disappointment. But if we look at Paul’s letter to the church in Ephesus, we see how the Bible uses the phrase “for Christ’s sake”. Ephesians chapter 4 verse 32 reads:

### **Ephesians 4:32**

*<sup>32</sup> And be ye kind one to another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, even as God for Christ's sake hath forgiven you.*

So, even though many people use the phrase “for Christ’s sake” in a *backwards* way, we see here that it is actually a Biblical term. Some of the newer Bible translations show this verse as “...just as God **in Christ also has forgiven you**,” thus highlighting the importance of being “in Him” (see [lesson 23](#)). We read something similar in 1 John chapter 2 verse 12, where it says “...your sins are forgiven you for **his name’s sake**,” - this showing the direct connection between the name of Jesus and the forgiveness of our sins (see [lesson 19](#)).

Nevertheless, we are told here in Ephesians 4:32 that we should forgive each other because we have been forgiven *‘for Christ’s sake’*. We will take a closer look at this as we continue into this lesson, keeping in mind what we have read here and what it means to do something “for someone’s sake” or “on their behalf.”

We will begin laying our foundation by going to the book of Isaiah chapter 59, and by the end of the lesson, we will bring it right back where we began - it is for Christ's sake that we are forgiven.

In Isaiah chapter 59 verses 1 and 2, we read a passage that many of us are familiar with. For context, this was God speaking to the children of Israel (His chosen people). As we read, keep in mind that the things Israel went through are very good examples for us to learn from (see Romans 15:4). We can learn so much from their trials, tribulations, and even their failures - all of which help us to better understand how we should walk with God. And going to Isaiah chapter 59 beginning in verse 1, we read:

### **Isaiah 59:1-2**

*<sup>1</sup> Behold, the Lord's hand is not shortened, that it cannot save; neither his ear heavy, that it cannot hear: <sup>2</sup> But your iniquities have separated between you and your God, and your sins have hid his face from you, that he will not hear.*

We see here a statement that sums up the general condition of mankind, which is: due to our sins and iniquities, there is a separation that exists between us and God. We even see this right from the beginning in the book of Genesis. When Adam and Eve sinned, that sin caused them first to hide themselves from God, and eventually it led them to be separated from dwelling in the garden with God. In addition to the separation from God, we also read here in verse 2 that sins have caused God's face to be hidden. This is similar to what was noted in the [last lesson](#) about the face of God, and how that veil was over His face.

This separation can also be seen by the veil in the temple which separated the “Holy of Holies” where God's presence dwelt. If any sin - or rather, anybody *with* sin would go behind that veil, they were not coming out alive. So, we can see clearly that sin causes a separation to exist between us and God. We will continue with this in mind and look further to see why it is that “for Christ's sake” and because of what He did... that separation has been rectified.

Let’s now go to Matthew chapter 3 when Jesus came to John the Baptist to be baptized. We will read beginning in verse 13 through the end of the chapter.

### **Matthew 3:13-17**

*<sup>13</sup> Then cometh Jesus from Galilee to Jordan unto John, to be baptized of him. <sup>14</sup> But John forbad him, saying, I have need to be baptized of thee, and comest thou to me? <sup>15</sup> And Jesus answering said unto him, Suffer it to be so now: for thus it becometh us to fulfil all righteousness. Then he suffered him.*

*<sup>16</sup> And Jesus, when he was baptized, went up straightway out of the water: and, lo, the heavens were opened unto him, and he saw the Spirit of God descending like a dove, and lighting upon him: <sup>17</sup> And lo a voice from heaven, saying, This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased.*

It is really that last verse that I want to highlight because it tells of the relationship that God had with Jesus. God said 'This is my Son'. But He also called Him "My Beloved Son". God loves Him and He is well pleased.

So, that separation that we read about in Isaiah, didn't exist for Jesus. He did not have that separation from God because of sin. And because of that, God could testify that He was well pleased in Jesus. And we will see it again over in John chapter 8 where Jesus is giving witness that the Father is well pleased in Him. Beginning in verse 28 we read:

### **John 8:28-29**

*<sup>28</sup> Then said Jesus unto them, When ye have lifted up the Son of man, then shall ye know that I am he, and that I do nothing of myself; but as my Father hath taught me, I speak these things. <sup>29</sup> And he that sent me is with me: the Father hath not left me alone: for I do always those things that please him.*

We first saw God Himself saying from heaven that He was pleased with Jesus, and we see Jesus here saying that 'I always do the things that please the Father.' Another thing to note here is Jesus saying "**he that sent me is with me**" - no separation. We also see this when Nicodemus came to Jesus and said "...for no man can do these miracles that thou doest, except God be **with him**." (John 3:2) We see it echoed again in Acts 10:38, "...for **God was with him**". And that is what Jesus is saying here. He was not alone – the Father was with Him. So that sin which separates us, and separated Israel from God so that He wouldn't hear them and His face was hid from them - that situation did not exist with Jesus. There was no separation there, and Jesus even went as far as saying "I and the Father are one." (John 10:30)

Next, staying in the book of John, let's go over a couple chapters to chapter 11 where we will see an example of how this dynamic, (of no sin to separate Jesus from the Father) plays itself out. In John chapter 11 we read about when Lazarus was dead and Mary and Martha were grieving. I want us to pay close attention to what Jesus said before He raised Lazarus from the dead. Beginning in verse 41, it reads:

### **John 11:41-42**

*<sup>41</sup> Then they took away the stone from the place where the dead was laid. And Jesus lifted up his eyes, and said, Father, I thank thee that thou hast heard me.*

*<sup>42</sup> And I knew that thou hearest me always: but because of the people which stand by I said it, that they may believe that thou hast sent me.*

So, here we see Jesus in His own words giving thanks to the Father because the Father hears Him. This is the opposite of what we saw in Isaiah, where it said His ear is not listening because of sin. That was not the case for Jesus. When Jesus spoke, the Father listened. And Jesus even goes further to say "I knew that **thou hearest me *always***". So, we see that the Father's ear was *always* open to Jesus.

Now that we have a clearer understanding of that relationship with God and Christ, we will go to John chapter 17 and see how this all fits together, taking us back to where we started, which was 'for Christ's sake'. Typically we should embrace every part of God's word, but I have to admit that John chapter 17 is one of my favorite passages in the Bible. We get to see more of that relationship between Jesus and the Father as Jesus is about to go pay the ultimate price for us - the price for our sins. In this chapter Jesus spoke this prayer to the Father, and in it we can see something very important. But rather than just picking out certain parts of this prayer, I want us to read it in its entirety. These are the words of Jesus to the Father. So, we will read this chapter starting in verse 1.

### **John 17:1-26**

*<sup>1</sup> These words spake Jesus, and lifted up his eyes to heaven, and said, Father, the hour is come; glorify thy Son, that thy Son also may glorify thee:*

**Note:** We want to keep in mind that because there was no sin causing separation in this relationship, there was no reason for God not to honor this prayer and request. So, everything that Jesus was asking here - we can pretty much guarantee that the Father was going to say Yes. There is no reason for Him not to. Let's continue to verse 2.

*<sup>2</sup> As thou hast given him power over all flesh, that he should give eternal life to as many as thou hast given him. <sup>3</sup> And this is life eternal, that they might know thee the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom thou hast sent. <sup>4</sup> I have glorified thee on the earth: I have finished the work which thou gavest me to do. <sup>5</sup> And now, O Father, glorify thou me with thine own self with the glory which I had with thee before the world was. <sup>6</sup> I have manifested thy name unto the men which thou gavest me out of the world: thine they were, and thou gavest them me; and they have kept thy word.*

*<sup>7</sup> Now they have known that all things whatsoever thou hast given me are of thee. <sup>8</sup> For I have given unto them the words which thou gavest me; and they have received them, and have known surely that I came out from thee, and they have believed that thou didst send me. <sup>9</sup> I pray for them: I pray not for the world, but for them which thou hast given me; for they are thine. <sup>10</sup> And all mine are thine, and thine are mine; and I am glorified in them. <sup>11</sup> And now I am no more in the world, but these are in the world, and I come to thee. Holy Father, keep through thine own name those whom thou hast given me, that they may be one, as we are.*

**Note:** Verse 11 is very important. Jesus asked that the ones which He prayed for here would be one, as He and the Father are one. That has a lot of implications. Verse 12...

*<sup>12</sup> While I was with them in the world, I kept them in thy name: those that thou gavest me I have kept, and none of them is lost, but the son of perdition; that the scripture might be fulfilled. <sup>13</sup> And now come I to thee; and these things I speak in the world, that they might have my joy fulfilled in themselves. <sup>14</sup> I have given them thy word; and the world hath hated them, because they are not of the world, even as I am not of the world. <sup>15</sup> I pray not that thou shouldest take them out of the world, but that thou shouldest keep them from the evil. <sup>16</sup> They are not of the world, even as I am not of the world.*

*<sup>17</sup> Sanctify them through thy truth: thy word is truth. <sup>18</sup> As thou hast sent me into the world, even so have I also sent them into the world. <sup>19</sup> And for their sakes I sanctify myself, that they also might be sanctified through the truth.*

**Note:** Verse 20...

*<sup>20</sup> Neither pray I for these alone, but for them also which shall believe on me through their word;*

**Note:** I think verse 20 is the reason why this is one of my favorite chapters; because this is where I can see that Jesus prayed for me. There are a lot of places in the Bible where we can say, 'well He was talking to the apostles, or He was talking to this person' - but here I see that Jesus, the one whom God answers all His prayers... right here, Jesus said this prayer for me. That's what I see here. We will continue by reading that one more time.

*<sup>20</sup> Neither pray I for these alone, but for them also which shall believe on me through their word;*

**Note:** That's me.

*<sup>21</sup> That they all may be one; as thou, Father, art in me, and I in thee, that they also may be one in us:*

**Note:** This is what Jesus prayed for me... that the separation which we read about earlier, the sin that separates us from God - Jesus literally prayed that there would no longer be that separation for us, and we would be one with Him and the Father. And He was going to accomplish this by what He would do for us on the cross.

<sup>21</sup> (cont'd) *that the world may believe that thou hast sent me.*

<sup>22</sup> And the glory which thou gavest me I have given them; that they may be one, even as we are one: <sup>23</sup> I in them, and thou in me, that they may be made perfect in one; and that the world may know that thou hast sent me, and hast loved them, as thou hast loved me. <sup>24</sup> Father, I will that they also, whom thou hast given me, be with me where I am; that they may behold my glory, which thou hast given me: for thou lovedst me before the foundation of the world.

<sup>25</sup> O righteous Father, the world hath not known thee: but I have known thee, and these have known that thou hast sent me. <sup>26</sup> And I have declared unto them thy name, and will declare it: that the love wherewith thou hast loved me may be in them, and I in them.

So, hopefully you see why I wanted us to read the whole thing. It's so powerful when understood in the context of where we started this lesson - that we should forgive one another just as **God has forgiven us for Christ's sake** (Ephesians 4:32). We often talk about forgiveness through His blood and the sacrifice for us on the cross, but we should also keep in mind that we are forgiven because Jesus **asked** that we be one with Him and the Father. This could only be possible by removing the sin that separates us from God.

Before Jesus went to the cross, making it possible for us to be forgiven, He petitioned the Father that we all may be one. And because the Father always hears Jesus, we can be granted forgiveness for Christ's sake. That is the heart of this lesson.

We began this lesson in the letter to the Ephesians, and in Acts chapter 19 we can read about how those people entered into the forgiveness that Paul was writing about. In Acts 19:5 after Paul had preached to them of Jesus, we read: "When they heard this, they were baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus."

If you are someone who has not obeyed the gospel in the way instructed and exemplified in the Bible, there is no better time than the present to come into that petition which Jesus made for us to be one with Him. After Jesus made that prayer and petition for us in John 17, He suffered, He died, and He rose again. He then went back to the same apostles that He had prayed for, and told them to go out and spread this word - "preach the gospel". 'He that believes and is baptized will be saved' (Mark 16:15-16). We can trust that what Jesus said is the truth. By believing and obeying, we can be forgiven "For Christ's Sake."

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