

“Proclaiming the Gospel of Forgiveness” Luke 24:44-49, Sermon Notes
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Saving Grace Bible Church
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Text

“Now He said to them, ‘These are My words which I spoke to you while I was still with you, that all things which are written about Me in the Law of Moses and the Prophets and the Psalms must be fulfilled.’⁴⁵ Then He opened their minds to understand the Scriptures,⁴⁶ and He said to them, ‘Thus it is written, that the Christ should suffer and rise again from the dead the third day;⁴⁷ and that repentance for forgiveness of sins should be proclaimed in His name to all the nations, beginning from Jerusalem.⁴⁸ You are witnesses of these things.⁴⁹ And behold, I am sending forth the promise of My Father upon you; but you are to stay in the city until you are clothed with power from on high.’” (Luke 24:44-49 NAS)

Introduction

We have answered many questions about forgiveness in this series

Who is to forgive? Why do we forgive? What happens if we don’t forgive? What does forgiveness produce in those who have been forgiven? When should we forgive? What is forgiveness? How do we forgive? How has God forgiven? How does our understanding of forgiveness impact the gospel?

If you have ever studied the doctrine of salvation you quickly realized there are so many parts to understand

- You would think that it was as simple as God is holy and just while man is sinful and unable to stand before a just God. So God sent a perfect substitute, His Son, to take our place so that Christ is treated as if He lived our life and we are treated as if we lived His life. Christ went to the cross, died, and three days later was raised again, thus satisfying the righteous demands of God. All who believe upon Christ and repent of their sins have eternal life in Jesus Christ

In that wonderful paragraph we learn:

- Attributes of God – Holy and Just - Theology
- The Person and Work of Christ – Christology
- Penal Substitution - Justification
- Justification
- The Resurrection
- Faith
- Repentance

Countless volumes have been written on these great doctrines. The doctrine of salvation or soteriology as described by theologians is a rich field of study

The doctrine of salvation is critical to get right

- Paul rebuked the Galatians for embracing a different Gospel – Thus getting salvation wrong Gal 1:6-9
- The Church is to defend the gospel
- The Gospel is the power of God unto salvation, Rom. 1:16-17

“For I am not ashamed of the gospel, for it is the power of God for salvation to everyone who believes, to the Jew first and also to the Greek.¹⁷ For in it *the* righteousness of God is revealed from faith to faith; as it is written, ‘But the righteous *man* shall live by faith.’” (Romans 1:16-17 NAS)

It is not surprising then that there is a lot of passion surrounding this great doctrine

- We are coming up on the 500 year anniversary of the Reformation. Traditionally believed to have started on the day Luther Nailed his 95 Theses to the Door of the Wittenberg Castle Church on October 31, 1517

What is the gospel and the teaching of scripture on salvation, and in particular the doctrine of forgiveness?

- Forgiveness is so integral to salvation that the terms are nearly synonymous. To be forgiven is to be saved and to be saved is to be forgiven

The way these terms are used interchangeably add to our confusion about the doctrine of forgiveness

- We tend to only think about forgiveness in the terms of what happened at the moment of our salvation
- Rightly the gospel demonstrates to us the highpoint of forgiveness
 - The greatest act of God’s love towards us is demonstrated in His forgiveness of our sins
 - This forgiveness came at great expense to Himself
 - He sought us
 - He bought us
 - He died for us
 - He called us
 - He converted us
 - He forgave us
- The moment we were converted and believed upon God is when we were justified by faith and forgiven of our sins
 - We rightly marvel at this work of God and we rightly see this as the most important work
 - It is a work worth defending and proclaiming
 - Sinner, today, this moment you can have peace with God if you turn from your sin and believe upon the Lord Jesus Christ
 - Today you can have your sins forgiven

So when we think about forgiveness we naturally move to forgiveness at the moment of salvation

But I have been demonstrating that there is more to forgiveness than what occurred at the cross

- The cross and our justification are rightly the highpoints of our understanding of forgiveness. But they certainly are not the starting point
- Just as the cross or justification is not the starting point of our salvation

There is more to salvation than what occurred on the day you believed. Just like there is more to your marriage than your wedding day

Let me illustrate it like this, what is the most important date in your relationship with your spouse?

- I think it is fair to say the day you got married
- But there are other important dates.
 - The day you met
 - The day you went on your first date
 - Post marriage – day you had your first child
 - First house
 - Anniversary dates
 - Overcome adversity together

The point is that while you have a highpoint in your relationship with your spouse there were many other events which demonstrated your commitment and relationship before that highpoint and after that highpoint

To treat forgiveness as what happens at the cross and only at the cross is to miss the events leading up to the cross and the great demonstrations of God's forgiveness leading up to and then after that wonderful work of God

Let me illustrate this for you theologically. When did God love you?

"We know love by this, that He laid down His life for us; and we ought to lay down our lives for the brethren." (1 John 3:16 NAS)

- The expression of love from God is Christ laying down His life for us

BUT we also see:

John 3:16

"For God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish, but have eternal life." (John 3:16 NAS)

- But here in sending and giving the Son is the expression of love

"But God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us." (Romans 5:8)

So which is it? Did God love us by sending His Son and giving His Son as a sacrifice for us? Or did God love us by laying down His life for us? Yes both are love

The same is true with forgiveness. Forgiveness is expressed well before the highpoint of being forgiven at the cross. Just as love is expressed well before the highpoint of laying down your life

- Just as love is expressed in small ways and significant ways so too forgiveness is expressed in small and large ways

We have been making the point that forgiveness is not a status we give someone but a moral quality we practice

Some would like to make forgiveness a status we give someone and leave it like that

- I forgave them
- But you won't talk to the person anymore so how have you forgiven them?
- I forgave them
- But you ignore them and you will not fellowship with the person, so how is your forgiveness demonstrated?
- I forgave them
- But you treat the person like your enemy when you go silent in their presence, avoid interaction with them, and abandon any demonstration of grace towards that person. Do you want God to forgive you in that same way?
- I forgave them
- But you secretly rejoice when they are hurt and you secretly desire they are harmed in some way
- I forgave them
- But you will not show them any love, so what kind of forgiveness is it you have shown?

Do you want a kind of forgiveness from God which abandons you, ignores you, and leaves you to your own devices? What kind of forgiveness is that? That is not the biblical example of forgiveness

In fact, we can say this: God demonstrates forgiveness to every person, and those who repent and believe are forgiven by God. Our repentance does not make God forgiving, it only reveals the extent and fullness of His forgiveness towards sinners

- Notice I did not say everyone is forgiven
- I said He forgives all
- Only the repentant and believing enjoy the benefits of being forgiven

Our struggle to understand this simple statement is evidence that we are greatly confused about forgiveness and the message of scripture about the gospel and our salvation

Let me say it like this: God loves every sinner (the whole world, every person who ever lived) and those who repent and believe are the beloved of God. Our repentance does not make God loving, it reveals the fullness and extent of God's love

God's love and forgiveness, which is expressed to all people, finds its fullest and most mature expression in those who are called and chosen and who evidence this calling by their repentance and faith in God

We know there is an element of God's forgiveness demonstrated when He is patient towards sinners and then full forgiveness when those sinners repent and believe so we say things like:

"When we are really forgiven"

"When we have the full forgiveness"

"When we have been finally forgiven"

We think of the most significant and profound expressions of God's forgiveness and usually lose sight of the smaller expressions of God's forgiveness

We have said this, forgiveness is an unconditional act of love towards a sinner which releases their sin debt whereupon their confession and repentance, they receive the full benefits of that forgiveness

As we saw last week in Luke 23:34 Christ was willing to give and privately sought forgiveness for those who sinned against Him. Upon repentance, the thief on the cross, received forgiveness from God

So the begging question which is left is this: how does our understanding of forgiveness impact our preaching of the gospel?

To answer this, I want to turn to another passage of scripture which many who hold to conditional forgiveness turn to in order to describe forgiveness. Luke 24:47

"and that repentance for forgiveness of sins should be proclaimed in His name to all the nations, beginning from Jerusalem." (Luke 24:47 NAS)

- Key phrase here being: "repentance FOR forgiveness of sins"
- It appears that forgiveness of sins is conditioned upon our repentance
- We cannot and do not have forgiveness until we have repented from our sin

You see the tension, right?

Now let's look at this text of scripture

Body

This section begins in Luke 24:36 and ends in verse 49

- We only give a passing look to it
- Vs 33 - The two men who were walking on the road to Emmaus, which was 7 miles from Jerusalem met up with Christ and talked with Him
- "And they arose that very hour and returned to Jerusalem, and found gathered together the eleven and those who were with them" Luke 24:33 NAS.

So in this room were the 11 disciples, plus a gathering, and these two men who walked and talked with Christ

Now Jesus appears in the presence of these people vs 36

He comforts them vs 37-42

- He eats with them
- He demonstrates that He is real and truly resurrected

After dining with them and talking with them Luke records His final commission to His Apostles and the other believers who had gathered together on this day

In this text we learn of the appearance of Christ and of His final commission to His disciples

1. The Basis of the Commission: Scriptures Fulfillment vs 44
2. The Support of the Commission: God's Enablement vs 45
3. The Execution of the Commission: The Message Proclaimed vs 46-47
4. The Defense of the Commission: Eye Witness Testimony vs 48
5. The Power of the Commission: The Promised Helper vs 49

There is no way we can exhaust this text but we can look at it and draw some principles for us to understand the importance of forgiveness and what we are proclaiming to others

1. The Basis of the Commission: Scriptures Fulfillment vs 44

“Now He said to them, “These are My words which I spoke to you while I was still with you, that all things which are written about Me in the Law of Moses and the Prophets and the Psalms must be fulfilled.” (Luke 24:44 NAS)

On what basis do we go out and preach the gospel to the world?

- Why were the Apostles sent out to proclaim to Christ to all?

The answer is because the message of Christ has its foundation in the teaching of the Old Testament

- If you want to know the meaning of what is taught today in the Church about Christ, look to the Old Testament to find its historical roots
- It is the Word of God

All the Scriptures point to Christ

- The Old Testament was broken into parts. The Law, The Psalms, and the Prophets

Jesus says “these things were written about Me.”

- When we go back through Moses we will see how the law points forward to Christ
- When we go through the Psalms we will see how they point forward to Christ
- When we cover the prophets, we will see how they point forward to Christ

The basis of our message to the world finds its historical roots in the work of God since the beginning of time

- Christ is the historical highpoint of redemptive history
- While His coming did not go the way the people thought, as they expected Christ to come as a conquering King and not a suffering Servant

So Christ commissions His disciples by pointing them to the Law, Psalms, and Prophets

- This is helpful for us as it shows us the continuity of the whole Bible
- This would have been comforting for the disciples and they would know that the message of these books would point people to Christ

- This would also give God's people an authoritative message as they found God's intended meaning of the text and sought to demonstrate the application and fulfillment in Christ. Clearly many texts of the OT pointed to Christ

No, we are not saying every verse and every word is about Christ. We are saying the emphasis in each of these works points to Christ

Authorial intent will reveal a message from God which can and will find its explanation and fulfillment in Christ but its meaning is what is demonstrated by what the original author intended

2. The Support of the Commission: God's Enablement vs 45

"Then He opened their minds to understand the Scriptures" (Luke 24:45 NAS)

Not only has Christ commissioned His disciples but He seeks to help them

- This is part of the work of God as He enables us to understand

Simply said here: Christ enabled them to understand His message

- He taught them clearly so that they understood the message

Since 1 Cor 2 describes the work of illumination as being the work of the Holy Spirit and this verse says it is Christ who opened their minds, I believe the emphasis is on Christ's ability to make clear the message from the OT and how it applies

- He taught them and helped them see the truth
- Like He did earlier in this chapter with the two men on the road to Emmaus

By opening their minds Christ helped them to understand the truth

- How is this helpful for us?
- Paul said the church is built on the foundation of the Apostles and Prophets in Eph 2
- We have the NT which comes from the testimony of these men who heard the truth, understood it, and then recorded it for us to remember and apply ourselves

The Commission comes from Christ and is helped by Christ as He taught His disciples the message

- The commission comes with Christ's help

God enabled the disciples to understand and communicate His message

3. The Execution of the Commission: The Message Proclaimed vs 46-47

"and He said to them, "Thus it is written, that the Christ should suffer and rise again from the dead the third day; and that repentance for forgiveness of sins should be proclaimed in His name to all the nations, beginning from Jerusalem." (Luke 24:46-47 NAS)

From this passage we learn of the message we proclaim to sinners

- Christ should come and suffer and die for our sins
- Then on the third day He was resurrected
- And sinners are to repent for the forgiveness of sins

This message is to be proclaimed to all the nations.

“Forgiveness is a constant theme in Luke’s gospel. Zacharias prophesied that God would “give to His people the knowledge of salvation by the forgiveness of their sins” (Luke 1:77). John the Baptist’s ministry involved “preaching a baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sins” (3:3). Jesus said to a paralytic, “Friend, your sins are forgiven you” (5:20) and to a sinful woman, “Your sins have been forgiven” (7:48). He commanded believers to pray, “Forgive us our sins” (11:4), and while on the cross prayed, “Father, forgive them” (23:34).” John MacArthur, Luke 18-24 Commentary, page 443

Forgiveness of sins is the message announced

- Today, this very moment all sinners can have their sins forgiven if they repent and believe upon the Lord Jesus Christ

“Forgiveness of sins is available only to those who repent. Repentance is the foundational biblical, spiritual act that moves the heart in the direction of salvation. It is turning from sin’s presence, power, dominance, and consequences to righteousness. It is not simply feeling bad about one’s circumstances, or condition, or the consequences that resulted from one’s sins, but mourning over the reality of sin. Repentance is prompted by the Holy Spirit (John 16:8), who came to convict the world of sin, righteousness, and judgment, and is granted by God (2 Tim. 2:25; cf. Acts 11:18).” John MacArthur, Luke 18-24 Commentary, page 444

“‘Repentance and remission of sins’ are the first things which ought to be pressed on the attention of every man, woman, and child throughout the world. – All ought to be told the necessity of repentance. All are by nature desperately wicked. Without repentance and conversion, none can enter the kingdom of God. – All ought to be told God’s readiness to forgive everyone who believes on Christ. All are by nature guilty and condemned. But any one may obtain by faith in Jesus, free, full, and immediate pardon. – All, not least, ought to be continually reminded, that repentance and remission of sins are inseparably linked together. Not that our repentance can purchase our pardon. Pardon is the free gift of God to the believer in Christ. But still it remains true, that a man impenitent is a man unforgiven.” J.C. Ryle, Expository Thoughts on Luke Vol. 2, page 518

First the disciples, and then us by following their example, are to go out and proclaim the gospel of forgiveness by pointing people to Christ and showing how He can and will forgive the repentant sinner

We are to go out and preach this message to all people. This is our message. We have a message of forgiveness to proclaim to all. Not to a select and special few but to all

- in His name to all the nations, beginning from Jerusalem

4. The Defense of the Commission: Eye Witness Testimony vs 48

“You are witnesses of these things.” (Luke 24:48 NAS)

- The commission is affirmed and credited by the disciples and those who saw Christ before and after the resurrection
- There were people who were involved with Christ
 - There were the secular authorities – Pontus Pilate

- Roman centurion
- Religious leaders
- Then there were the crowds
- There were the disciples all testifying to Christ

Some testified to the historicity of Christ

While others, like the disciples of Christ, to the person and work of Christ

Our message then comes with the assurance of having been verified by many

5. The Power of the Commission: The Promised Helper vs 49

"And behold, I am sending forth the promise of My Father upon you; but you are to stay in the city until you are clothed with power from on high." (Luke 24:49 NAS)

The last truth is that the commission comes with current support. We have the promised Helper

- We can say much about this
- Let us just affirm this, that the spirit came at Pentecost to enable the Apostles to rightly proclaim the message of God
- The Spirit brought to mind the teaching of Christ
- The Spirit enabled them with power to demonstrate the Work of God
 - They healed
 - Cast out demons
 - Spoke in tongues
- But they also proclaimed the gospel and the spirit converted sinners and brought many to saving faith in Christ
- The spirit brought understanding and help

So our commission comes with help from God as the Spirit of God enables us to do this work

Conclusion

- 1. The Basis of the Commission: Scriptures Fulfillment vs 44**
- 2. The Support of the Commission: God's Enablement vs 45**
- 3. The Execution of the Commission: The Message Proclaimed vs 46-47**
- 4. The Defense of the Commission: Eye Witness Testimony vs 48**
- 5. The Power of the Commission: The Promised Helper vs 49**

So the begging question which is left is this, how does our understanding of forgiveness impact our preaching of the gospel?

Those who hold to a conditional forgiveness love to emphasize that verse 47 says "repentance FOR the forgiveness of sins." The emphasis is that repentance is the condition needed to have sins forgiven

The idea is that forgiveness did not occur until there was repentance

- So their idea is this, preach the gospel so that people can have God's forgiveness

I say friends, we preach the gospel because God is forgiving and because people can have all of God's forgiveness if they repent

So then how would someone who believes that forgiveness is unconditional handle a passage like this?

- This passage seems to indicate that forgiveness is conditioned on our repentance

I would like to ask someone if they really want to make that case from this text

- Those who would hold to a form of doctrine which emphasized an Arminian doctrine would say yes. Absolutely. Many can have forgiveness all he needs to do is take the Free Gift offered to him
- This would be consistent with their view point

What I don't understand is how one who holds to a Calvinist doctrine, can teach conditional forgiveness

- Where does this Calvinist think this faith came from to believe and therefore turn if not by God's gracious and unconditional love poured out on the undeserving sinner?
- At least the Arminian is consistent with his theology

So then how would I, a pastor and preacher of unconditional forgiveness, teach this text?

First, we would proclaim that man needs to repent and believe upon God to be forgiven of His sins. There is no other way we are saved

"That if you confess with your mouth Jesus as Lord, and believe in your heart that God raised Him from the dead, you shall be saved; for with the heart man believes, resulting in righteousness, and with the mouth he confesses, resulting in salvation." (Romans 10:9-10 NAS)

Second, we do not teach that salvation and thus forgiveness began and was completed at the moment of our repentance and faith

No, it began in the eternal council of God when He determined to love us (Eph 1)

- Make us holy and beloved
- Adopt us
- Redeem us
- Give us to the Son
- Set us a part
- And seal us for redemption with His Spirit. All for the praise of the glory of His grace

Third, we teach that God was patient with sinners before Christ and we see by His actions He is patient with sinners after Christ

Let us not forget the sins He passed over and waited to bring His judgment upon. Rom 3:25

“whom God displayed publicly as a propitiation in His blood through faith. *This was* to demonstrate His righteousness, because in the forbearance of God He passed over the sins previously committed;” (Romans 3:25 NAS)

- What do we mean by this?
- What were Adam and Eve told? Not to eat of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil lest they die
- Did they die when they ate the fruit. Not immediately. Why not? God was forgiving. Eventually they would die but they deserved to die on the spot

Fourth, we teach people to look upon Jesus Christ

Let us not forget about the Son

- Both the promise of His coming
- Gen 3
- The Prophets, Law, and Psalms point to the Son
- The coming of the Son to take away the sins of the world

“For while we were still helpless, at the right time Christ died for the ungodly. For one will hardly die for a righteous man; though perhaps for the good man someone would dare even to die. But God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us. Much more then, having now been justified by His blood, we shall be saved from the wrath *of God* through Him. For if while 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.” (Romans 5:6-10 NAS)

“The next day he saw Jesus coming to him, and said, ‘Behold, the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world!’” (John 1:29 NAS)

- He lived a perfect life to bear our sins

Fifth, we teach that God calls all as He offers all the gospel message and He effectually draws His chosen people

Let us not forget about God’s effectual calling

- “And we know that God causes all things to work together for good to those who love God, to those who are called according to *His* purpose.²⁹ For whom He foreknew, He also predestined *to become* conformed to the image of His Son, that He might be the first-born among many brethren;³⁰ and whom He predestined, these He also called; and whom He called, these He also justified; and whom He justified, these He also glorified.” (Romans 8:28-30 NAS)

Sixth, we teach that God, through the Holy Spirit, and means of the preaching of the Word, changes the nature of dead sinners through regeneration

Let us not forget regeneration

- “for you have been born again not of seed which is perishable but imperishable, *that is*, through the living and abiding word of God.” (1 Peter 1:23 NAS)
- “So faith *comes* from hearing, and hearing by the word of Christ.” (Romans 10:17 NAS)

Seventh, we teach that God sends His servants, that is us, to preach the gospel which He uses to transform sinners

Let us not forget about the preachers sent to preach the good news

“How then shall they call upon Him in whom they have not believed? And how shall they believe in Him whom they have not heard? And how shall they hear without a preacher?¹⁵ And how shall they preach unless they are sent? Just as it is written, "How beautiful are the feet of those who bring glad tidings of good things!"¹⁶ However, they did not all heed the glad tidings; for Isaiah says, "LORD, who has believed our report?"¹⁷ So faith *comes* from hearing, and hearing by the word of Christ.” (Romans 10:14-17 NAS)

“And Jesus came up and spoke to them, saying, "All authority has been given to Me in heaven and on earth.¹⁹ "Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit,²⁰ teaching them to observe all that I commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age." (Matthew 28:18-20 NAS)

What do all of these passages show us, and all of this truth about God’s work in salvation teach us?

- That up to the point of our repentance God was pouring out His unconditional forgiveness. And the whole world in some way is experiencing the unconditional forgiveness of God

“For it is for this we labor and strive, because we have fixed our hope on the living God, who is the Savior of all men, especially of believers.” (1 Timothy 4:10 NAS)

- God regularly pours out His forgiveness to all and those who repent receive the full forgiveness of sins

Here is the point, our repentance does not make God forgive us. Our repentance demonstrates the fullness of God’s forgiveness that began in eternity past and is manifested at the day of our conversion and will be celebrated at our glorification

- Our repentance allows us to experience the great depths and riches of God’s forgiveness
- Our repentance gives room to evidence God’s forgiveness for our repentance allows us to be reconciled to God whereby He will demonstrate for the rest of eternity that He has forgiven sinners

We preach a gospel of repentance and faith in Christ for the forgiveness of sins because it is in that gospel that people experience the fullness of God’s forgiveness

- All men live in at very least, a temporal expression of God’s forgiveness right now and God is patient with sin. As all men get to hear the way of salvation through Christ. As those who live among, under, and with Christians and they receive the overflow blessing of God in their life
- These are small examples of forgiveness. The unwillingness to hold a debt over a sinner

You see when God elected us He demonstrated forgiveness as He sought to release us from our debts

- When He adopted us, He chose to remove us from the debt of our sin
- When He redeemed us, He sought to pay for the debt of our sin
- When He sent the Son, He planned to release us from our debts

- When He called us through the preaching of the Word, He desired to release us from our debts
- When He regenerated us and gave us faith, He was seeking to release us from our debt of sin
- When we confessed our sin and repented, He gave us the status of justified whereby our sins were removed and we were declared innocent. By which our sin debt was legally removed
- When we walk in this life and confess our sin, He is righteous and just and forgives us our sin
- When we fall short, Jesus intercedes for us as God forgives our sin
- Eventually we will be in the presence of God, redeemed with our new heavenly bodies and we will live eternally in the presence of God having our sins finally and fully forgiven

Dear friends your forgiveness from God was not conditioned upon your actions. Your forgiveness from God was a result of God's unconditional love poured out on your undeserving soul. The enjoyment of that forgiveness was conditioned upon your faith and that was a gift of grace

Indeed, we are all here because of God's saving grace

Our Church name reminds us of this truth all the time

The outpouring of God's unconditional forgiveness is what vindicates His justice

"Let us ever glory in the cross of Christ. Let us regard it as the source of all our hopes, and the foundation of all our peace. Ignorance and unbelief may see nothing in the sufferings of Calvary but the cruel martyrdom of an innocent person. Faith will look far deeper. Faith will see in the death of Jesus the payment of man's enormous debt to God, and the complete salvation of all who believe." JC Ryle, page 517

We preach the gospel because God is forgiving and because people can have all of God's forgiveness if they repent. All men who hear the gospel have received part of God's forgiveness which allowed them another day to live and time to hear the truth, and those who believe receive the fullness of God's forgiveness in having their sins removed. We preach because God forgives

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