

# **THE FORGIVENESS OF SINS**

**WHAT DOES THIS MEAN?**

# WHERE WE ARE IN THE CREED

## [3<sup>RD</sup> ARTICLE]

*“I believe in the Holy Spirit, the holy Christian church, the communion of saints, the forgiveness of sins, the resurrection of the body, and the life everlasting. AMEN.”*

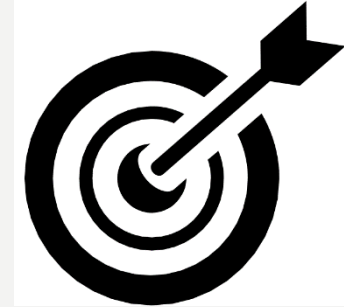
- Luther’s Large Catechism, on this Third Article of the creed:

What holds all the parts of the Third Article together?

- First, it’s about the Spirit who makes us Holy.
- Next, it’s about the Spirit’s means and methods to make us Holy.

# DEFINING TERMS: SIN

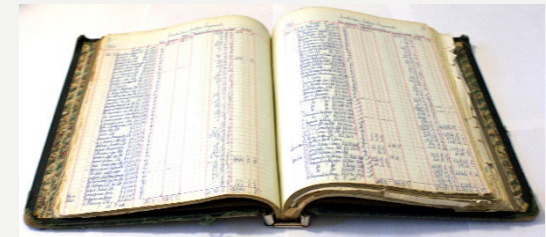
**“Sin”** = Missing the target God has set



**“Trespass”/“Transgression”** =  
Crossing a boundary God set up



**“Debt”** = Having a charge to your account



# DEFINING TERMS: FORGIVENESS

- Treating the **sinner** as if the target was not missed.
- Treating the **trespasser** as if the boundary were not crossed.
- Cancelling the official debt of the **debtor**.



# FORGIVENESS AND CONSEQUENCES

- God's forgiveness cancels the debt, removing sin's eternal consequences

~~HELL & REJECTION BY AN ANGRY GOD~~

HEAVEN & ACCEPTANCE BY A LOVING HEAVENLY FATHER

- Our actions may still have earthly consequences, though.



Wouldn't it be great if your teacher forgot about all your bad grades and didn't figure them into your final grade?

That's what God does through  
the gift of forgiveness.

# **FORGIVENESS = FATHER'S EMBRACE**



Philip Cary Parable

Discuss:

Do you ever struggle to believe that God really forgives you of everything?

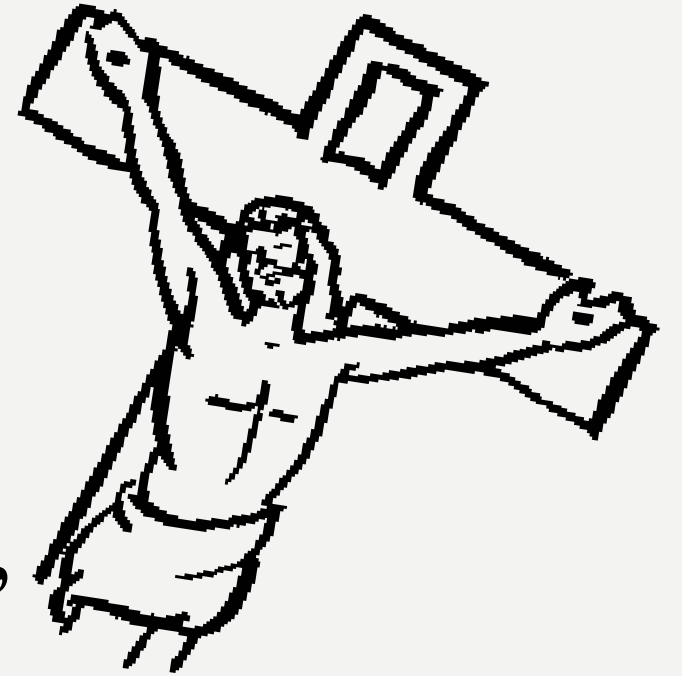
What might you say to someone who thinks he is too bad to be forgiven?

# HOW IS GOD'S FORGIVENESS POSSIBLE?

## A SUBSTITUTE SACRIFICE

Isaiah 53:5-6

**But he was pierced for our transgressions,  
he was crushed for our iniquities; the  
punishment that brought us peace was  
upon him, and by his wounds we are  
healed. We all, like sheep, have gone  
astray, each of us has turned to his own  
way; and the LORD has laid on him the  
iniquity of us all.**





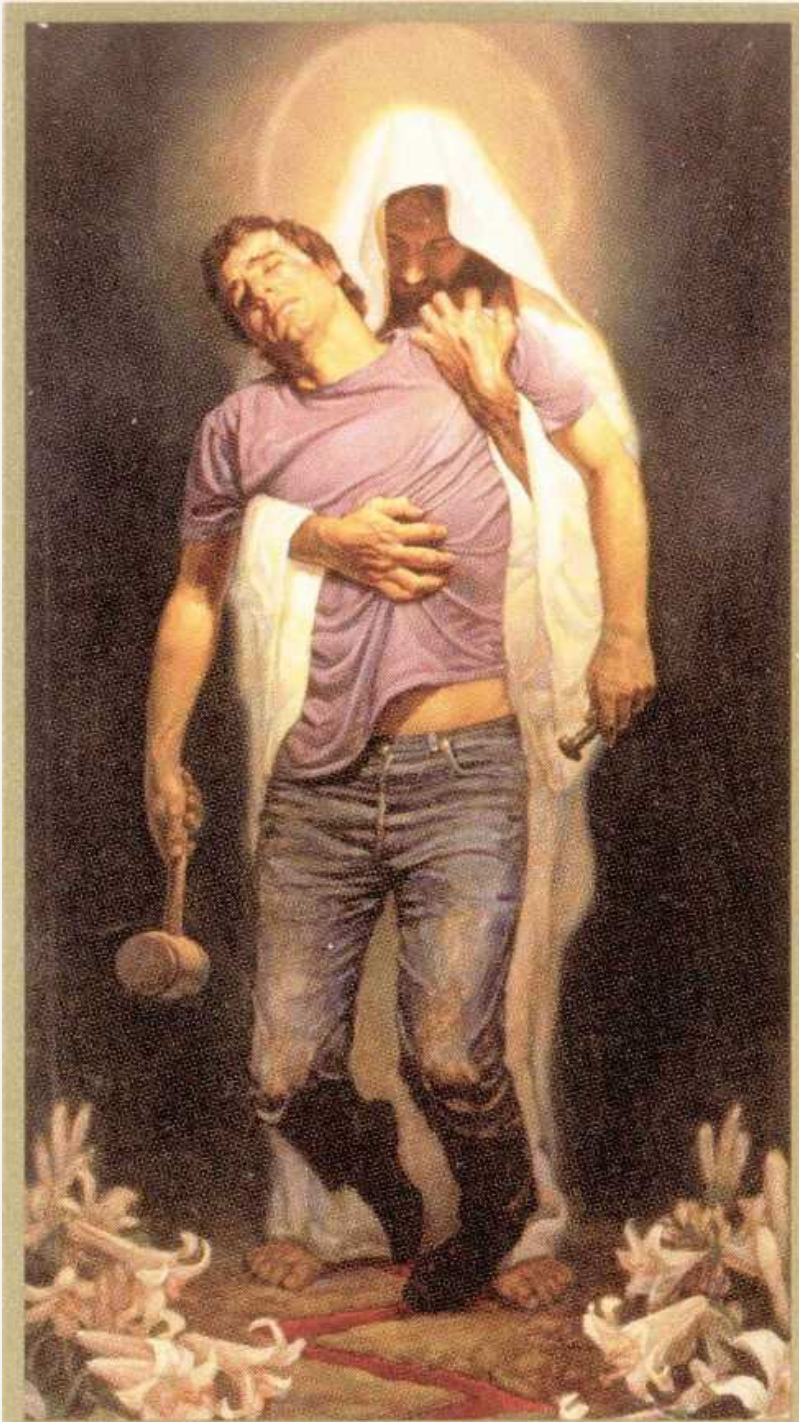
# HOW IS GOD'S FORGIVENESS POSSIBLE?

BY GRACE THROUGH FAITH

Acts 10:43

*(Peter in the house of Cornelius)*

**“To Him all the prophets bear witness  
that everyone who believes in Him  
receives forgiveness of sins through  
His name.”**



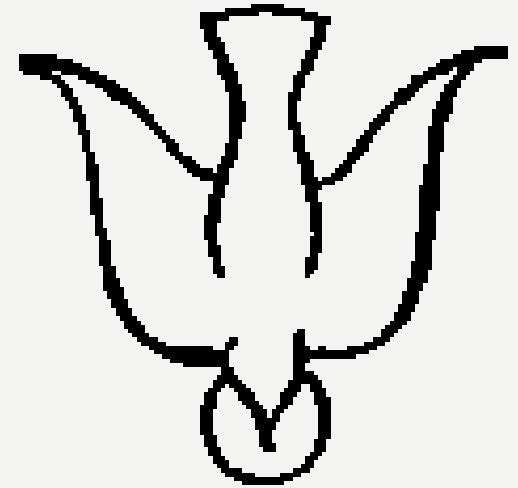
# **HOW IS GOD'S FORGIVENESS POSSIBLE?**

## **THE WORK OF THE SPIRIT**

**Romans 4:5**

**However, to the man who does not work but trusts God who justifies the wicked, his faith is credited as righteousness.**

**Small Catechism: “But the Holy Spirit has called me by the Gospel...”**



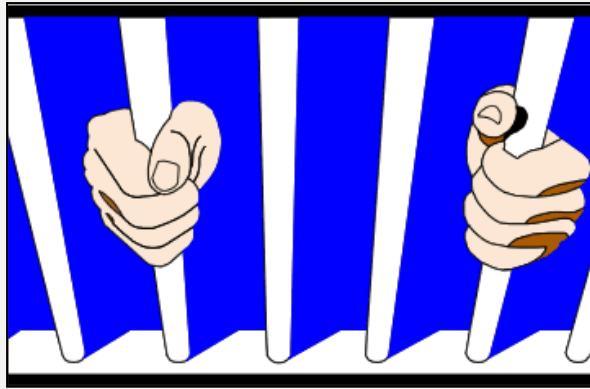
# **FORGIVENESS “HOW” = THE GOSPEL**

1. A SUBSTITUTE SACRIFICE: Jesus atoned for our sins in 1<sup>st</sup>-century Jerusalem, dying on the cross and rising from the dead.
2. THE GOSPEL DELIVERED: The Means of Grace (Word and Sacrament) allow us to hear about what Jesus did and to hear God's proclamation that “you are forgiven.”
3. THE GOSPEL BELIEVED: We trust what God tells us through the Means of Grace. That is, the Holy Spirit causes us to have faith in Christ's work and forgiveness.

# NOT LIKE OTHER FAITHS

Forgiveness is 100% free of any requirements, except that we trust the one who proclaims us to be forgiven.

- Does NOT require enumeration of all sins to a priest (RC canon law).
- Does NOT require us to earn God's trust in some way.
- Does NOT require us to prove that we have changed before we get forgiveness.



***WHAT IF AFTER SOMEONE PAYS MY FINE I  
TELL THE JUDGE, “I REJECT IT! I’LL PAY  
IT MYSELF!”***

***WHO COULD BLAME THE JUDGE THEN IF  
HE WOULD PUT ME IN PRISON?***

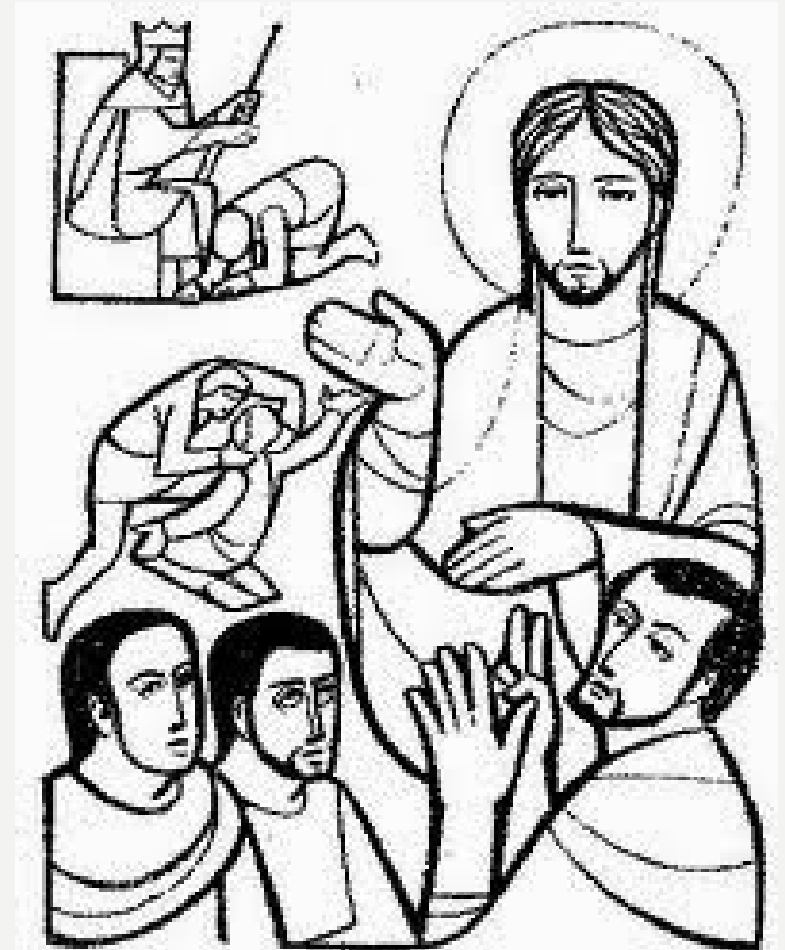
***GOD DOES THE SAME THING WITH THOSE  
WHO REJECT JESUS’ PAYMENT.***

# FORGIVEN >> FORGIVER

Once we grasp God's forgiveness, we become forgivers.

Matthew 18:21-35 The Unmerciful Servant

Discuss: What advice would you give to someone who says she struggles to forgive someone who has wronged them?



# TWO KINDS OF FORGIVENESS

	Give your own forgiveness	Give God's forgiveness
<b>What</b>	Choose not to hold the sin against him or her.	"Office of the Keys": Speak God's forgiveness to the contrite.
<b>For Whom</b>	Anyone who wrongs you.	Anyone who has sinned against you or God, and who repents.
<b>When</b>	Always, even with no repentance; "77 times" = without ceasing.	Only when there is repentance. <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Pastors called to do this as part of public ministry of the church.</li><li>• Individual Christians can do this individually</li></ul>
<b>Why</b>	We have been forgiven much; The Unmerciful Servant; Lord's Prayer, 5 <sup>th</sup> Petition.	Jesus commanded it and promises that it effects forgiveness in heaven, too. (John 20:22-23)

# **FORGIVE AND FORGET?**

**FORGIVE vs. FORGET**

**EMBRACE vs. ENABLE**

Discuss: When you forgive a person and no longer hold his sin against him, does this mean you should “forget” the sin so much that you don’t try to help prevent it from happening again?

When might you need to forgive a person but still take action so as not to enable her to cause harm again?



# LUTHER ON WHAT WE GET WITH “THE FORGIVENESS OF SINS”

Jesus, when he instituted the Sacrament of the Altar, at the Last Supper:

*“This cup is the new testament in My blood, which is shed for you for the forgiveness of sins.”*

Luther’s Small Catechism:

*These words, “Given and shed for you for the forgiveness of sins,” show us that in the Sacrament forgiveness of sins, life, and salvation are given us through these words. **For where there is forgiveness of sins, there is also life and salvation.**”*

Forgiveness of Sins is a Big Deal !

# LENT: FOCUS ON THE CROSS WHERE FORGIVENESS WAS WON

MOVING TOWARD  
EASTER:

- How does **being forgiven** help you grow and advance spiritually?
- How does **forgiving others** help you grow spiritually?

