



Selah: Stop, Look, Listen – February 20, 2024

The Lord be with you.

Does guilt sometimes weigh heavy on you? Are you ever burdened about things you have done or maybe burdened about things you haven't done? And you long to know if God really does forgive you, perhaps, you know, in your head that God forgives you, but your head hasn't yet notified your heart.

The renowned psychiatrist, Doctor Carl Menninger, founder of the famed Mininger Clinic. He said that if patients in psychiatric hospitals could be convinced that they're really forgiven. He said that 75 per cent of patients could walk out of the hospitals the next day. And as a pastor and chaplain across the years, I, I have frequently talked with people longing for reassurance that that God really does forgive us of our sins. And there's a scripture that has helped me a lot and helped many others come to real assurance about God's free and full forgiveness.

I'm looking at right here in my bible psalm 130 verses three and four where I read if you, oh Lord should mark iniquities, Lord who could stand but there is forgiveness with you so that you may be revered. Notice here that the Psalmist like so many of us, I mean, he knows what it is to struggle with feelings of guilt, longing to know God's forgiveness of our sins.

And here we see, the psalmist says, he imagining the dreaded thought. He says, if God should mark iniquities who could stand the Hebrew word here, that's translated as Mark, as should God mark iniquities. The word translated, mark it, it has the idea of guarding or keeping a close watch. This word is used of the vigilance, the watchfulness of a, of a guard who's keeping watch over a city. He's marking it.

And thankfully, the psalmist, he's come to know that that God does not mark or keep track our watch with diligence, our sins. I mean, God is nothing like Santa Claus making his list of who's been naughty or nice and checking it twice or else with, with all of our sins who could stand before God, the Hebrew word translated here as stand.

It's a legal word that comes straight out of the Hebrew law courts. And and it means to stand in the sense of to stand acquitted before a judge, it means to be declared not guilty set free. So that rather than covering in guilt before a holy God, the sinner stands boldly before the Father with, with head held high. And that is because that is because of Christ,



water from rock

as the apostle Paul says in second Corinthians 5:19, that in Christ, God was reconciling the world to himself, not counting their trespasses against them.

So, the psalmist is assured and he wants to assure us that yes, there is forgiveness with God. Now, it's a remarkable Hebrew word here that's translated as forgiveness. And I say that because in all of scripture, this word is only used for God's forgiveness and never for human forgiveness. And that's significant because because God forgives in ways that are infinitely beyond the way we humans forgive this incomparable, unparalleled God kind of forgiveness. Well, it's embodied in our dying savior praying for his torturers from the cross. Father forgive them for, they do not know what they do.

God forgives like no one else can forgive. So the scripture says, as far as the East is from the west, so far, God removes our transgressions from us. And so the psalmist reminds us that that it is because of God's extravagant forgiveness that He is revered. There is forgiveness with you, Lord so that you are revered, held in esteem and high awe.

God does not seek to win our worship or win our love by frightening us or shaming us, but by so freely forgiving us, whatever our sins, whatever our sins, we can boldly say with the Psalmist today, but there is forgiveness with you so that you may be revered and the more we realize God's forgiveness of us, the more we revere and love him. Jesus puts his finger on this truth in his, in his parable of the two debtors found in Luke seven.

As there, Jesus shows that the one who is forgiven the most loves God the most. So we do love and revere God for taking away all of our sins, taking away all of our guilt. Martin Luther told the dream that he had one time as in the dream, he was being attacked by Satan and the devil enrolls a long scroll of a list of Luther's sins and holds it up before Martin Luther. And then I'm reaching the end of the scroll. Luther asked the devil, is that all? No, the devil said.

And he brings out a second scroll and holds up before Luther and, and then after a second, a third and, and then the devil has no more. And then Martin Luther says, hey, you've forgotten something. Quickly write on each one of those scrolls, quickly write these words, the blood of Jesus Christ. God's son cleanses us from all sins. If you Lord should mark iniquities, Lord who could stand. But there is, there is forgiveness with you so that you may be revered.

I'm Tim Smith, a fellow traveler. Thank you for listening. Until next time.