

## Will God Forgive Me?

### Psalm 103:8-17 (NIV84)

<sup>8</sup> The LORD is compassionate and gracious, slow to anger, abounding in love. <sup>9</sup> He will not always accuse, nor will he harbor his anger forever; <sup>10</sup> he does not treat us as our sins deserve or repay us according to our iniquities. <sup>11</sup> For as high as the heavens are above the earth, so great is his love for those who fear him; <sup>12</sup> as far as the east is from the west, so far has he removed our transgressions from us. <sup>13</sup> As a father has compassion on his children, so the LORD has compassion on those who fear him; <sup>14</sup> for he knows how we are formed, he remembers that we are dust. <sup>15</sup> As for man, his days are like grass, he flourishes like a flower of the field; <sup>16</sup> the wind blows over it and it is gone, and its place remembers it no more. <sup>17</sup> But from everlasting to everlasting the LORD's love is with those who fear him, and his righteousness with their children's children—

I have only known Beverly for about two months. I have nothing on so many of you who have known Beverly for years, and some of you, for your whole lives.

In that short time, though, I learned a few things. She liked to talk. More specifically, she liked to tell you stories. And maybe to keep you a little longer and tell you more stories, she also liked to ask you to do things for her. The second to last time I visited Beverly, I think I fluffed her pillow about four times, replaced it three times, added a pillow twice, propped her arm up on a little stuffed doggy animal, went to the nurses' station three times to get something to make her more comfortable, and adjusted her bed setting I don't know how many times. From what I've heard, I wasn't the only one doing those "errands."

Another thing I learned about Beverly: she was a Lutheran if there ever was one. How I came in contact with Beverly was unique. Our church had gone to Rocky Mountain Care in December to do some Christmas caroling. The next Monday I get a phone call from Rocky Mountain telling me that they had a Lutheran lady there and asked if I would be willing to come out and give her communion. It was only our second time meeting when I started asking her about what she believed. For a pastor, I heard some of the greatest testimonies of faith that I've probably ever heard. Per her desire and her confession of faith, she was received into membership at my congregation, Light of the Valley Lutheran Church, just this past January.

As her new pastor, I looked forward to visiting her, bringing her God's Word and communion. I only did it a handful of times before God decided it was time for Beverly to come home.

The last conversation I had with Beverly, she brought up some pretty specific sins on her part. Each one she brought up, she asked, "Can God forgive me for that?" Isn't that the question we all want the answer to? Can God forgive me for that?

When someone you love dies, it gets us thinking about our own mortality. God "remembers that we are dust... [that our] days are like grass. [We] flourish like a flower of the field; the wind blows over it and it is gone." (verses 14-16) Just like that, one day, our lives on this earth will be over. How will I go? What will happen to me when I die? Is there a heaven? Maybe more importantly, is there a hell? Because if there is a hell, how do I avoid that outer darkness devoid of anything good? How can I get into heaven?

Whether or not you want to admit it, there is a voice in your head that tries to tell you when you are doing something right and blames you when you are doing something wrong, makes you a bit queasy and uneasy. We don't want to admit when that voice is telling us that we've doing something wrong. That voice is our conscience. Every person has it. Every person has had that queasy and uneasy feeling wondering if the wrongs that I've done will be forgiven or not.

That's what Beverly wanted to know. That's what we want to know. Will God forgive me for what I have done?

Beverly already knew the answer, but she needed to hear it again. She needed the reassurance. She needed to know that, "The LORD is compassionate and gracious, slow to anger, abounding in love. He will not always accuse, nor will he harbor his anger forever; he does not treat us as our sins deserve or repay us according to our iniquities. For as high as the heavens are above the earth, so great is his love for those who fear him; as far as the east is from the west, so far has he removed our transgressions from us." (verses 8-12)

Even as a child Beverly knew what God had done for her. God had given his one and only Son, Jesus Christ, who was not just a man but also God himself, the one who made the heavens and the earth. Jesus was given to us to live a perfect life for you and me and to

die. He died on the cross to take away from us the payment that our sins deserve. When Jesus shouted from that cross on Good Friday, "It is finished!" he was telling us that our debt to God, the just punishment that our sins deserve, was paid for in full. There is nothing more owed. There is nothing more due. Your sins are forgiven. I have removed them from you as far as the east is from the west. I will accuse you of your sins no more. Never again will you have to ask that question, "Will God forgive me for that sin?" No matter how many times your conscience reminds you of your sin, God tells us, "Your sins are forgiven."

In getting to know Bev, I know that it was very important to her that her whole family knew what she knew and believed it. She never really knew what to say or how hard to push or if she was just being a bother with all her religious talk, but she hoped and prayed that you would all know and believe that God has given you this wonderful forgiveness that she herself had.

Friends and family of Beverly, I want you to know the hope she had. She hoped that the Lord would indeed remove her sins as far as the east is from the west because that is what God promised her and what he actually did for her. Because God has done this for her, she is not lost. She is in heaven right now. We can all see her again because the Lord has had compassion on us all. His abounding love paid for our sins in full. He does not hold his anger over our sin against us. "From everlasting to everlasting the LORD's love is with those who fear him, and his righteousness with their children's children." (verse 17)

Beverly is enjoying heaven right now. With Jesus as your Savior from sin, you will be reunited with her again in eternal bliss because God has removed your sin as far as the east is from the west. You are forgiven, just like Beverly. Amen.

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