

# The Good News of God: God Forgives Our Sins

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## 1. Scripture for today: Matt 9:1-8

**Matt 9:1-8 (NIV)** Jesus stepped into a boat, crossed over and came to his own town. Some men brought to him a paralyzed man, lying on a mat.

When Jesus saw their faith, he said to the man, "Take heart, son; your sins are forgiven."

At this, some of the teachers of the law said to themselves, "This fellow is blaspheming!"

Knowing their thoughts, Jesus said, "Why do you entertain evil thoughts in your hearts? Which is easier: to say, 'Your sins are forgiven,' or to say, 'Get up and walk'? But I want you to know that the Son of Man has authority on earth to forgive sins."

So he said to the paralyzed man, "Get up, take your mat and go home."

Then the man got up and went home. When the crowd saw this, they were filled with awe; and they praised God, who had given such authority to man.

## 2. "Cheap Grace"

Cheap grace is the deadly enemy of our Church. We are fighting to-day for costly grace...

Cheap grace means grace as a doctrine, a principle, a system. It means forgiveness of sins proclaimed as a general truth, the love of God taught as the Christian "conception" of God. An intellectual assent to that idea is held to be of itself sufficient to secure remission of sins. The Church which holds the correct doctrine of grace has, it is supposed, ipso facto a part in that grace. In such a Church the world finds a cheap covering for its sins; no contrition is required, still less any real desire to be delivered from sin. Cheap grace therefore amounts to a denial of the living word of God, in fact, a denial of the Incarnation of the Son of God...

Cheap grace means the justification of sin without the justification of the sinner. Grace alone does everything, they say, and so everything can remain as it was before... The world goes on the same old way, and we are still sinners... Well, then, let the Christian live like the rest of the world, let him model himself on the world's standards in every sphere of life, and not presumptuously aspire to live a different life under grace from his old life under sin... Instead of following Christ, let the Christian enjoy the consolations of his grace! That is what we mean by cheap grace, the grace which amounts to the justification of sin without the justification of the repentant sinner who departs from sin and from whom sin departs. Cheap grace is not the kind of forgiveness of sin which frees us from the toils of sin. Cheap grace is the grace we bestow on ourselves.

Cheap grace is the preaching of forgiveness without requiring repentance, baptism without Church discipline, Communion without confession, absolution without contrition. Cheap grace is grace without discipleship, grace without the Cross, grace without Jesus Christ, living and incarnate...

...We must therefore attempt to recover a true understanding of the mutual relation between grace and discipleship...<sup>1</sup>

### 3. Some Important Forgiveness Texts

**John 2:23-25** Now while he was in Jerusalem at the Passover Festival, many people saw the signs he was performing and believed in his name. But Jesus would not entrust himself to them, for he knew all people. He did not need any testimony about mankind, for he knew what was in each person.

**Luke 18:9-14** He also told this parable to some who trusted in themselves that they were righteous and regarded others with contempt: “Two men went up to the temple to pray, one a Pharisee and the other a tax collector. The Pharisee, standing by himself, was praying thus, ‘God, I thank you that I am not like other people: thieves, rogues, adulterers, or even like this tax collector. I fast twice a week; I give a tenth of all my income.’ But the tax collector, standing far off, would not even look up to heaven, but was beating his breast and saying, ‘God, be merciful to me, a sinner!’ I tell you, this man went down to his home justified rather than the other; for all who exalt themselves will be humbled, but all who humble themselves will be exalted.”

**Hos 11:8-9a** How can I give you up, Ephraim?  
How can I hand you over, Israel?  
How can I treat you like Admah?  
How can I make you like Zeboyim?  
My heart is changed within me;  
all my compassion is aroused.  
9 I will not carry out my fierce anger,  
nor will I devastate Ephraim again.  
For I am God, and not a man—  
the Holy One among you.

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<sup>1</sup> Dietrich Bonhoeffer, *The Cost of Discipleship* (ET of 1937 German original; trans. R. H. Fuller; New York: MacMillan, 1953).