



Marlboro Heights Missionary Baptist Church, Inc.

2901 Illinois Avenue - Killeen, Texas 76543

P.O. Box 11568 - Killeen, Texas 76547

254. 690.4521 Office - 254.690.4546 FAX

Shaun L. Moton, Pastor/Teacher

PASTORAL INSPIRATION FOR BIBLE STUDY

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The Sanctified Life of believers, expressed through Prayer, values the Principle of Preservation as essential to the health of their communion and fellowship with God and with other believers. The Principle of Preservation assures the forgiveness of sins committed against God and one another out of the believer's appreciation for the Gospel of Redemption. The Gospel of Redemption declares sinners Righteous by Faith, and eternally secure through Christ's substitutionary sacrifice on the cross for the sins of the world. (2 Corinthians 5:21)

Righteous is the redemptive standing that every blood-bought, born-again believer sustains through God's forgiveness of our sins, past, present, and future. We should be certain that every believer embraces **Positional Righteousness** through the death, burial, and resurrection of Jesus Christ. That Christ rose from the dead marks the reality of Him conquering the root and fruit of every sin on behalf of all those who believe in Him. Such is what constitutes positional righteousness, more appropriately referred to as Justification. All of our sins have been seen and settled by God through our belief, confession, and repentance from sin.

We should be equally sure that every believer experiences **Practical Righteousness** through the Holy Spirit's work over the course of time and experience. This is known as the Spirit's Work of progressive Sanctification. Through this work, every believer is progressively growing and maturing into the fullness of their identity in Christ, allowing Him to live through them to fulfill the Ministry of Reconciliation. Such a Ministry would be non-existent if we did not commit sins against God, ourselves, and one another. As each of us live from day-to-day, experiences proposition us with sins to commit, and plague us by the sins others commit against us.

From your lane of life, what would you surmise as to why sins are permitted a path to exist, and a course to endure?

The above question may elicit as many responses as there are perspectives on the theology of sin. The theology of sin, by definition, is God's perspective expressed through the scriptures on Sin.

Sin is conceived through the exercise of humanity's will under the influence of iniquity, expressed through independent initiatives. In **Psalm 51:5** we read, *"Behold, I was brought forth in iniquity, and in sin my mother conceived me."* This verse confirms that each of us is born with a sinful nature, emerging from humanity's iniquity, originating with Adam. This nature is what directs our human tendency to sin, not by choice, but by condition. **Romans 5:12** says, *"Therefore, just as through one man sin entered into the world, and death through sin, and so death spread to all men, because all sinned— Therefore, just as through one man sin entered into the world, and death through sin, and so death spread to all men, because all sinned— For if by the transgression of the one, death reigned through the one, much more those who receive the abundance of grace and of the gift of righteousness will reign in life through the One, Jesus Christ. So then, as through one transgression there resulted condemnation to all men, even so through one act of righteousness there resulted justification of life to all men. For as through the one man's disobedience the many were made sinners, even so through the obedience of the One the many will be made righteous."*

The course of sin is intended to conflict with God's moral Will, to resist, and ultimately compromise the fulfillment of His redemptive Purpose. However, we have great cause to celebrate the Gospel of Redemption! Although sin is sovereignly permitted by God to exist as a present opponent to His redemptive Purpose, its power is subject to His Authority, as demonstrated through the finished work of our Lord Jesus Christ on the cross, through the tomb, and out of the grave. **Glory!!!!** Sin is, therefore, a defeated opponent to the Gospel of Redemption. **Hallelujah!!!!** Its power has been broken through Christ, preserving to deliver every believer from eternal death, destruction, and all evil through the perpetual forgiveness of sin. **Glory Hallelujah!!!!**

From your lane of life, what constitutes grounds for the assignment of Joy expressed through the Fruit of the Spirit when it comes to demonstrating the forgiveness of sins?

Once again, the responses to the above question might draw as many responses as there are perspectives on the theology of sin.

The answer I would submit is that through the Gospel of Redemption, expressed through the Forgiveness of sin, every believer remains preserved through the perpetual and permanent deliverance from sin. Although Sin remains active in time, it is defeated in authority, limited in reach, and destined for ultimate removal by the redemptive triumph of Christ.

With the above in mind, the instructional platform has been set to teach believers how to pray under the tutelage of Jesus, according to **Luke 11:1** and **Matthew 6:9-13, 14-15**.

Throughout this series, our lessons have disclosed foundational Principles for Practice in the manner by which Jesus instructs His disciples to pray. Each principle has been progressively characterized and clarified for growth and maturity as we discern what the Spirit of Truth reveals to us throughout the unified witness of Old and New Testament scripture. Learning how to pray is therefore a lifetime curriculum, unveiling personal challenges that demand the conformity of our ways and thoughts to shape our manner of living to the Truth He reveals.

Everything we have learned so far has led to a deeper, higher understanding that ascends beyond mere accumulation of knowledge. We have gained deeper spiritual and practical insight to strengthen our obedience, leading to greater growth and maturity. This call to perpetual growth requires Heightened Perspective that will lead to maturity when we adhere to the words communicated to every would-be disciple in **Matthew 11:28**, which says, *“Come to Me, all who are weary and heavy-laden, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you and learn from Me, for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For My yoke is easy and My burden is light.”*

In **2 Peter 3:18**, the apostle Peter commends and confirms our need for continuous growth and maturity by saying, *“But grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.”* Such growth and maturity are not seasonal or circumstantial, but constant and continuous. Such growth and maturity are only complete when believers reach the conclusion of their earthly course.

Our transition from disclosing the **Principle of Preservation** to practicing it through the forgiveness of sins continues as we consider the Fruit of the Spirit as the primary means by which believers are empowered to forgive. **Galatians 5:22-23** reads, *“But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control; against such things there is no law.”*

We have identified Love as the leading and governing grace that animates each of the other virtues unveiled through the Fruit of the Spirit. Love empowers believers to forgive others as they themselves have been forgiven by God through Christ. It addresses both the cause and the cure of offenses, injuries, and insults, neutralizing the destructive impact of sin committed against us. As the apostle Peter exhorts, *“Above all, keep fervent in your love for one another, because love covers a multitude of sins.”* (1 Peter 4:8)

Love addresses the cause, cure, and conclusion for every offense, insult, and injury of sin’s damaging impact imposed against us.

What role does Joy occupy, empowering believers to forgive others for the sins committed against them as they have been forgiven by God?

Joy is the second grace that empowers believers to forgive others as we have been forgiven. Inspired by the leadership of Love, Joy views the outcome beyond the sins committed against us as the urgent necessity of forgiveness. Joy views the outcome of forgiveness to be greater than the sins of others committed against us.

Inspired and governed by Love, Joy fixes its vision on the redemptive outcome that lies beyond the offense. Rather than being ruled by the weight of the sin committed against us, Joy esteems the necessity and value of forgiveness as greater than the insult, injury, and impact endured. This Joy expressed through the Fruit of the Spirit in the life of believers mirrors the example of Christ in **Hebrews 12:2**, which reads,

“Fixing our eyes on Jesus, the author and perfecter of faith, who for the joy set before Him endured the cross, despising the shame, and has sat down at the right hand of the throne of God.”

Joy sustains forgiveness by heightening the believer’s perspective on what God is producing through their obedience to forgive, rather than on what has been suffered by the offense(s) committed against them by others.