

praise, let your mind dwell on these things." (NAS
Philippians 4:8)

- c. But there is more! *When we fill our minds with God-pleasing thoughts, the result will be God-pleasing actions!* The very next Bible verse says: "The things you have learned and received and heard and seen in me, **practice these things**; and the God of peace shall be with you." (NAS Philippians 4:9) The future may not be easy; however, ♥ *having God's forgiveness in Christ and ♥ offering sincere forgiveness to others*, God will be with us to help us in all our ways!

Conclusion: So let us always → *forget* the sinful past, → *rejoice* in our forgiven present, and → *focus* on a God-pleasing future! And all God's people said: *Amen!*

"Forgiveness Allows Us to Focus on the Present and the Future – rather than the Past!"

Based on Various Passages
6th Wednesday of Lent – 2010
March 24 → 11:00 & 7:00

Introduction: Dear friends in Christ, over the past five Wednesdays we have looked at these very important aspects of forgiveness:

- **Forgiveness is a promise!** We may not *forget* the sins committed against us, but we **SHOULD** promise to *never mention them up or even think about them!*
- **Forgiveness is a gift!** When a person sins against us, we know he needs our forgiveness; therefore, because we have received God's gift, we **SHOULD** offer our gift!
- **Forgiveness stops the cycle of revenge!** When it is our turn to get revenge, we **SHOULD** do the God-thing by offering the gift of forgiveness!
- **Forgiveness can restart a broken relationship!** When God enabled us to receive His forgiveness in Christ – by grace through faith, *our relationship with Him was restored!* Now, as we offer forgiveness – *and others accept it*, our relationship with them will be restored!
- **Forgiveness is a Chain Reaction!** (God→us→others!) Whenever a person receives God's wonderful gift of forgiveness, *he will be filled with joy and gratitude; he will also sincerely forgive those who sin against him!*

Today, in our *LAST SERMON* on the topic of forgiveness, God is calling us to →forget the *sinful past*, →rejoice in the *forgiven present*, and →focus on a *God-pleasing future*!

1. **Forget the Sinful Past:**

- a. Esau and Jacob – *the twin sons of Isaac*: Do you remember their situation?
 - i. Esau – *the firstborn* – should have received his father’s blessing – *it was important*; however, *through deception and lying*, Jacob received it instead! Esau was so angry that he wanted to kill his brother, *so Jacob fled to save his life*!
 - ii. Then, after 20 years and many blessings, Jacob had to flee from his father-in-law – *which led him toward Esau – his brother – and 400 men!* What would happen? Would Jacob live or die? The Bible says: Jacob “*...bowed down to the ground seven times as he approached his brother [“A sign of total submission.” CSSB]. But Esau ran to meet Jacob and embraced him; he threw his arms around his neck and kissed him. And they wept.*” (Genesis 33:3-4 NIV) That was Esau’s way of saying to Jacob: “*I forgive you! So forget the sinful past!*”
- b. Jesus regarding the Roman soldiers: ^{NIV} **Luke 23:34** [He prayed:] “*Father, forgive them, for they do not know what they are doing.*” In other words: “*Don’t hold what they did against them – because they acted in ignorance, without knowledge. They did not realize that I am Your sinless Son, their Savior! Father, please forget their sinful past!*” *God wants us to do the same to all who have sinned against us!*

2. **Rejoice in the Forgiven Present:** Since forgiveness wipes out past sins and restores broken relationships, *forgiveness is certainly a wonderful blessing* – ✦from God to us, ✦from us to others, and ✦from others to us!

- a. What is your current situation? †Do you know you are a sinner? †Do you fear God’s wrath? †Would you like to receive God’s forgiveness? Here is the answer: ^{NAS} **Acts 3:19** “*Repent therefore and return, that your sins may be wiped away, in order that times of refreshing may come from the presence of the Lord...*” Repent; *then rejoice in God’s forgiveness!*
- b. We forgive, *but we can’t forget!* Is God like us? Here is the answer: ^{NAS} **Isaiah 43:25** “*I [the Lord] ...am the one who wipes out your transgressions for My own sake; And I will not remember your sins.*” *What good news!* Let us rejoice in our forgiven present!

3. **Focus on a God-Pleasing Future:**

- a. Thoughts of past sins – *ours and others* – will certainly try to sneak back into our minds. Whenever those thoughts begin, ✦close the door, ✦lock it, and ✦throw away the key! *Then focus on a God-pleasing future!*
- b. This verse – *especially by memorizing it* – will help us direct our thoughts in a God-pleasing direction: “*Finally, brethren, whatever is true, whatever is honorable, whatever is right, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is of good repute, if there is any excellence and if anything worthy of*