

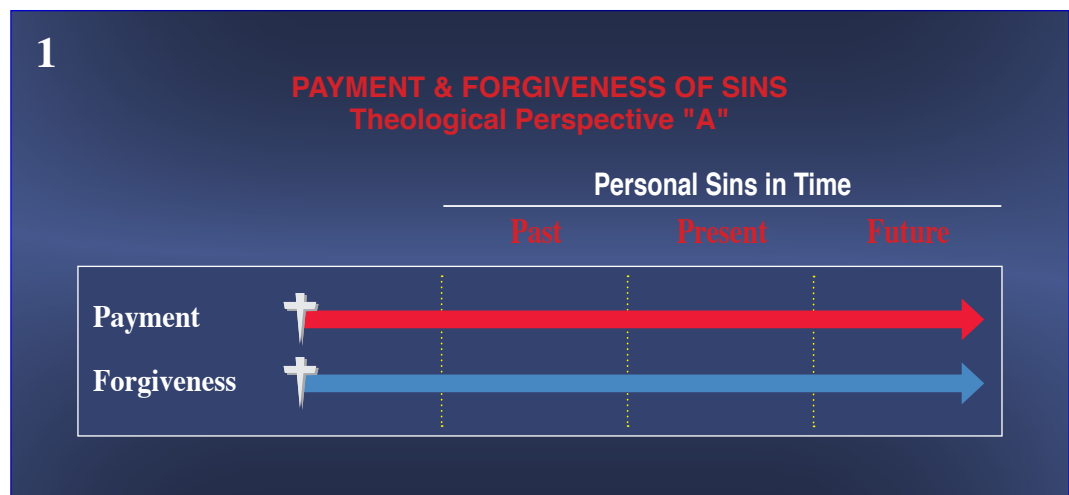
## SOLUTION TO SIN PART TWO THEOLOGICAL POSITIONS

Our theological bent invariably determines our understanding of Scripture. In fact, our bent is reflected in the misconceptions discussed in the article, *Solution to Sin, Part 1: Misconceptions*. In this article, we will address different theological positions and also illustrate through graphical diagrams the varying theological perspectives. In so doing, we show how the different perspectives actually look in relation to time.

When is sin forgiven? Many believe sin paid for by Christ’s sacrificial death on the cross is automatically forgiven. If paid for, sin must also be forgiven. Others espouse the idea that even though sin is paid for on the cross it is not automatically forgiven. More is required in order to receive forgiveness. To address these differences, we will approach each from four different “theological perspectives.”

As shown in chart 1, Perspective “A” understands that Christ’s substitutionary sacrifice 2,000 year ago provided for both the payment of sins (past, present, and future) and the forgiveness of sins (past, present, and future). Through His work on the cross, “Christ Himself is the propitiation (satisfaction) for our sins, but also for *the sins of the whole world*” (1 John 2:2). Payment for and forgiveness of sin are assumed to be judicial issues; resultantly all paid for sins and are thus automatically forgiven sins.

### Theological Perspective “A”

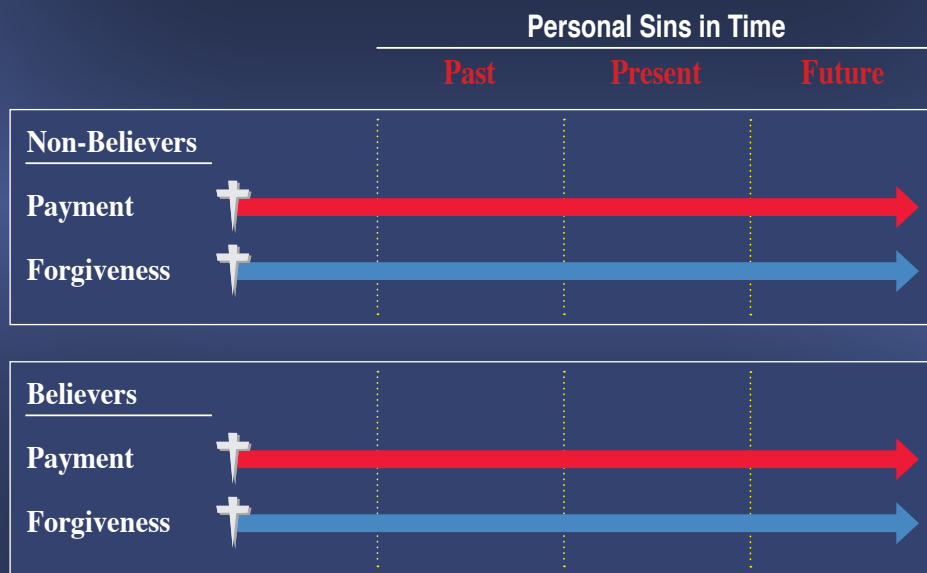


The implication of Perspective “A” in relation to non-believers and believers leads to the same conclusion (see chart 2). In both cases, all their sins (past, present, and future) of every

person are paid for and forgiven. Non-believers and believers alike enjoy the identical benefit from Christ's death. Of course this approach is contradictory to the Scriptures and should be rejected since only believers in Christ receive forgiveness of sin: "When you were dead in our wrongdoings (sins)..., He made you alive together with Him, having forgiven us all our wrongdoings (sins)" (Col 2:13). Consequently, it is biblically inaccurate to offhandedly utter the words, "If all sins are paid for on the cross, they must also be automatically forgiven."

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**PAYMENT & FORGIVENESS OF SINS**  
Result of Perspective "A"

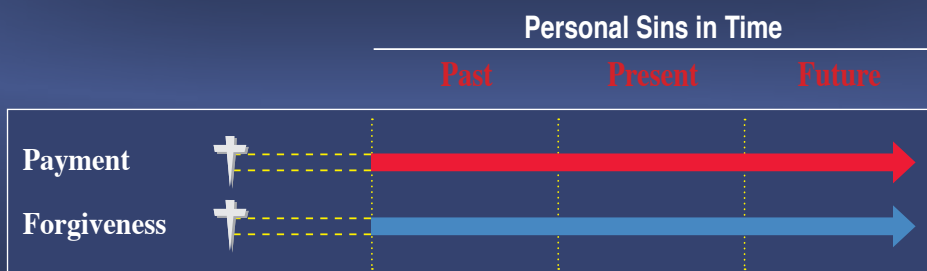


**Theological Perspective "B"**

Similar to the first perspective, Perspective "B" again assumes payment and forgiveness of all sins (past, present, and future) are judicial issues but in this case they occur simultaneously at salvation (see chart 3). While the dash lines indicate that both payment and forgiveness of sins occurred on the cross, appropriation of Christ's work on the cross does not actually take

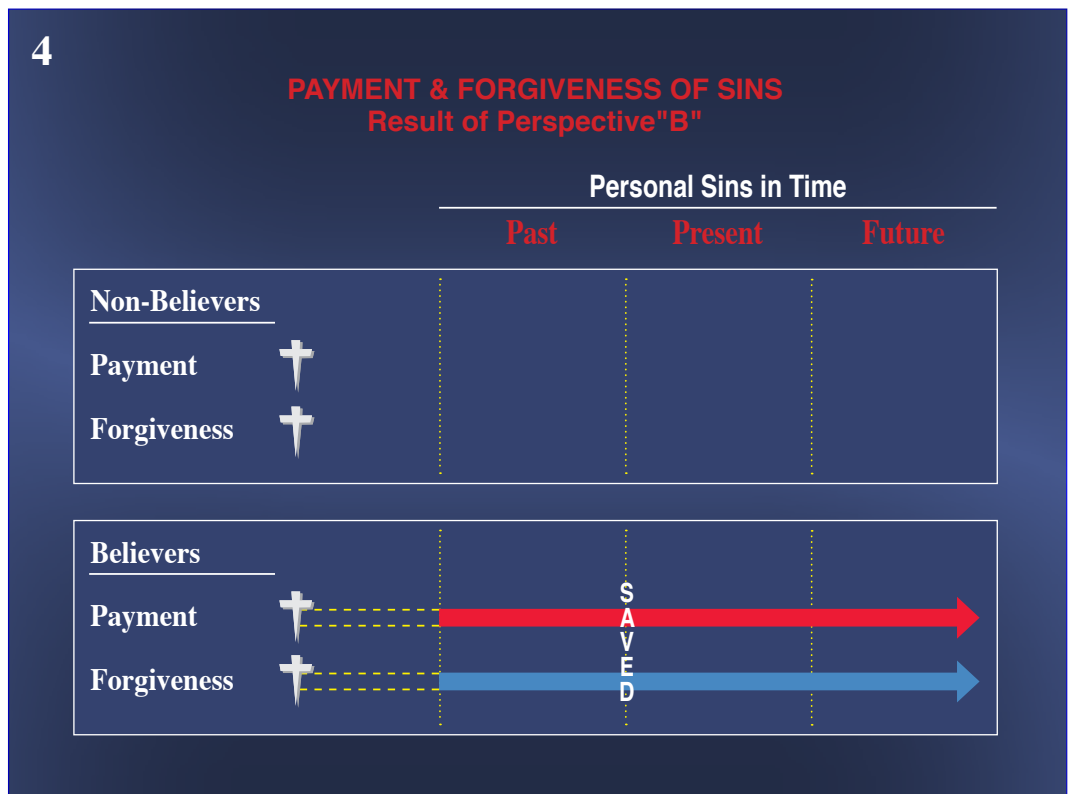
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**PAYMENT & FORGIVENESS OF SINS**  
Theological Perspective "B"



place until a person believes in Christ for everlasting life. At that point, all sins (past, present, and future) are both actually realized as paid for and forgiven.

Consequently, chart 4 shows that Christ’s death has no benefit for the non-believer. On the other hand, believers past sins as well as present and future sins are paid for and forgiven at salvation. The forgiveness of all sins (past, present, and future) is typically based on Colossians 2:13: “When you were dead in our wrongdoings (sins) . . . , He made you alive together with Him, having forgiven us all our wrongdoings (sins).” Notice again that all sin (past, present, and future) paid for on the cross are likewise understood to be forgiven at salvation, since both are assumed to be legal/judicial issues. Nevertheless, as addressed in the “third misconception” found in *Solution to Sin, Part 1: Misconceptions*, “payment of sin” and “forgiveness of sin” are two separate and distinct issues. While righteousness, being justified, is a judicial issue; “forgiveness is not a judicial issue between man and God, but a personal issue between man and God.”<sup>1</sup> Resultantly, Perspective “B” is contrary to the Scriptures and should also be rejected.



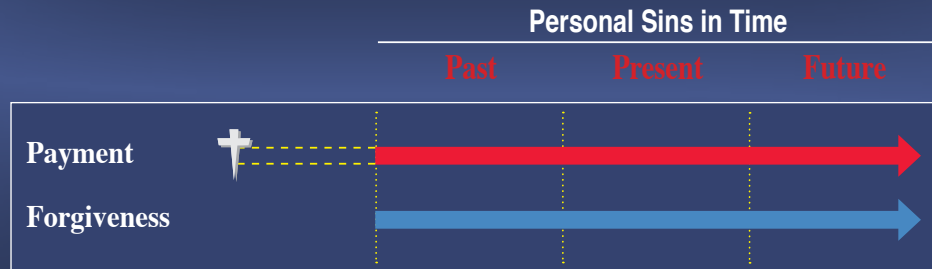
**Theological Perspective “C”**

Theological Perspective “C” understands payment for past, present, and future sin to be connected to the cross, being a “legal issue” (see chart 5). While payment of sin occurred on the cross, appropriation of Christ’s work on the cross does not take place until salvation (indicted by dash lines). On the other hand, forgiveness of all sins (past, present, and future), being a “personal issue” has to do with hostility between man and God, is made available at salvation through faith in Christ. Forgiveness of all sins (past, present, and future) is again based on Colossians 2:13. [The distinction between sin’s payment, being a “legal issue,” and sin’s forgiveness, being a “personal issue,” is addressed in the “third misconception” found in *Solution to Sin, Part 1: Misconceptions*.]

As shown in chart 6, believers’ past sins as well as their present and future sins are paid for (see 1 John 2:2) and forgiven (see Col 2:13) at salvation. Nevertheless, Christ’s death has no benefit in the payment of sin for non-believers even though Christ is “the propitiation (satisfaction) for our sins, but also for *the sins of the whole world*” (1 John 2:2). Since Christ’s death paid for all the sins of non-believers, as well as believers, Perspective “C” should be rejected.

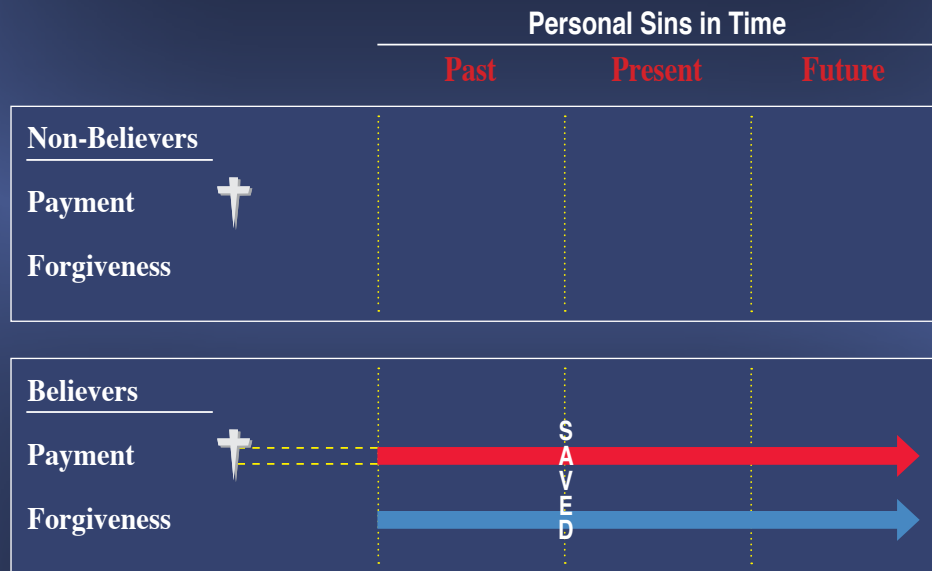
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**PAYMENT & FORGIVENESS OF SINS**  
Theological Perspective "C"



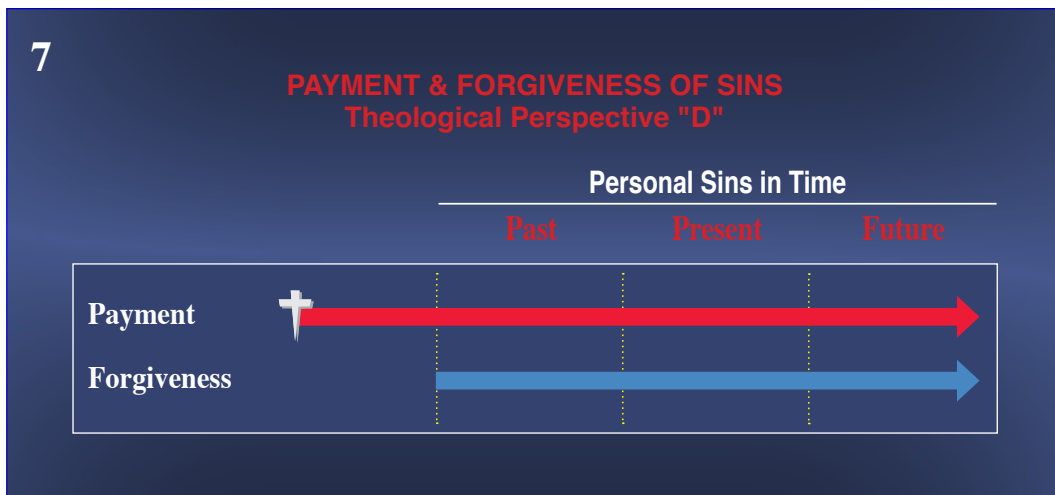
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**PAYMENT & FORGIVENESS OF SINS**  
Result of Perspective "C"

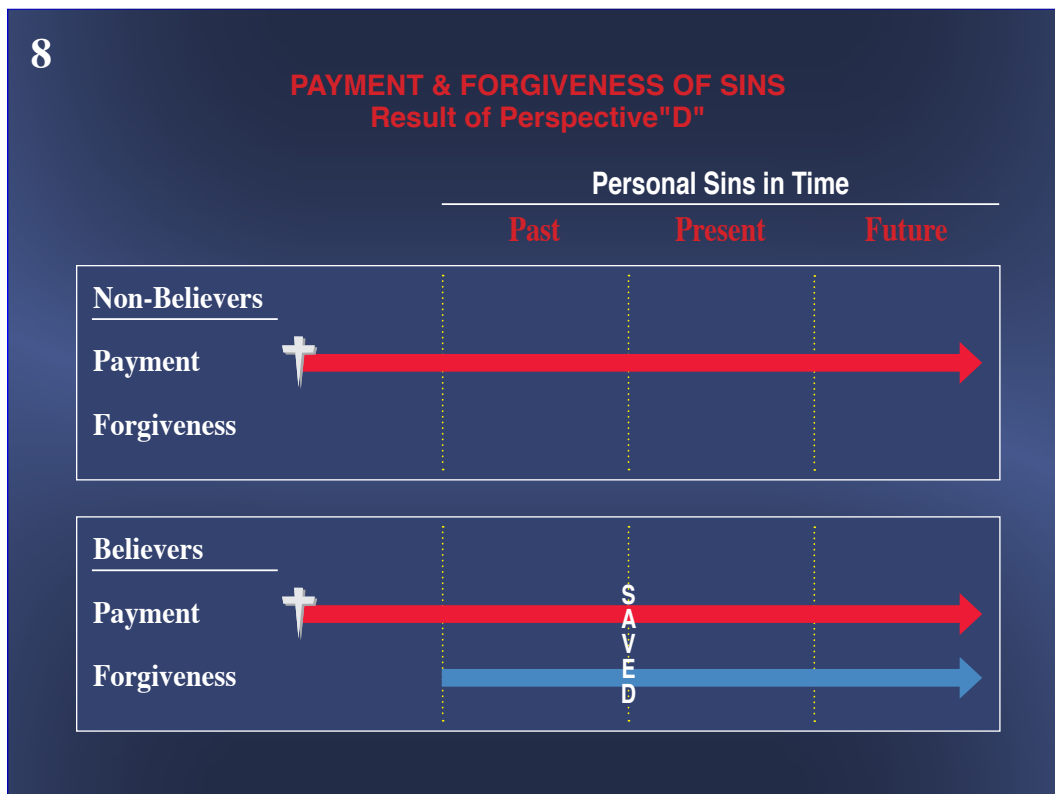


**Theological Perspective "D"**

Being identical to Perspective "C," with the exception of the removed dash lines, chart 7 indicates that the legal payment for past, present, and future sin on the cross, which took place 2,000 years ago, is a current reality. Christ is indeed, "the propitiation (satisfaction) for our sins, but also for *the sins of the whole world*" (1 John 2:2). His death paid for all the sins of the whole world. Sin is no longer an issue in order to have a relationship with God since God is judicially satisfied with the work of Christ on the cross—*He paid it all and He paid it for all!* On the other hand, the same is not true for forgiveness. Forgiveness, which is received at salvation through faith in Christ (Col 2:13), is made possible because the *sin barrier* between God and sinful man has already been removed.<sup>2</sup>



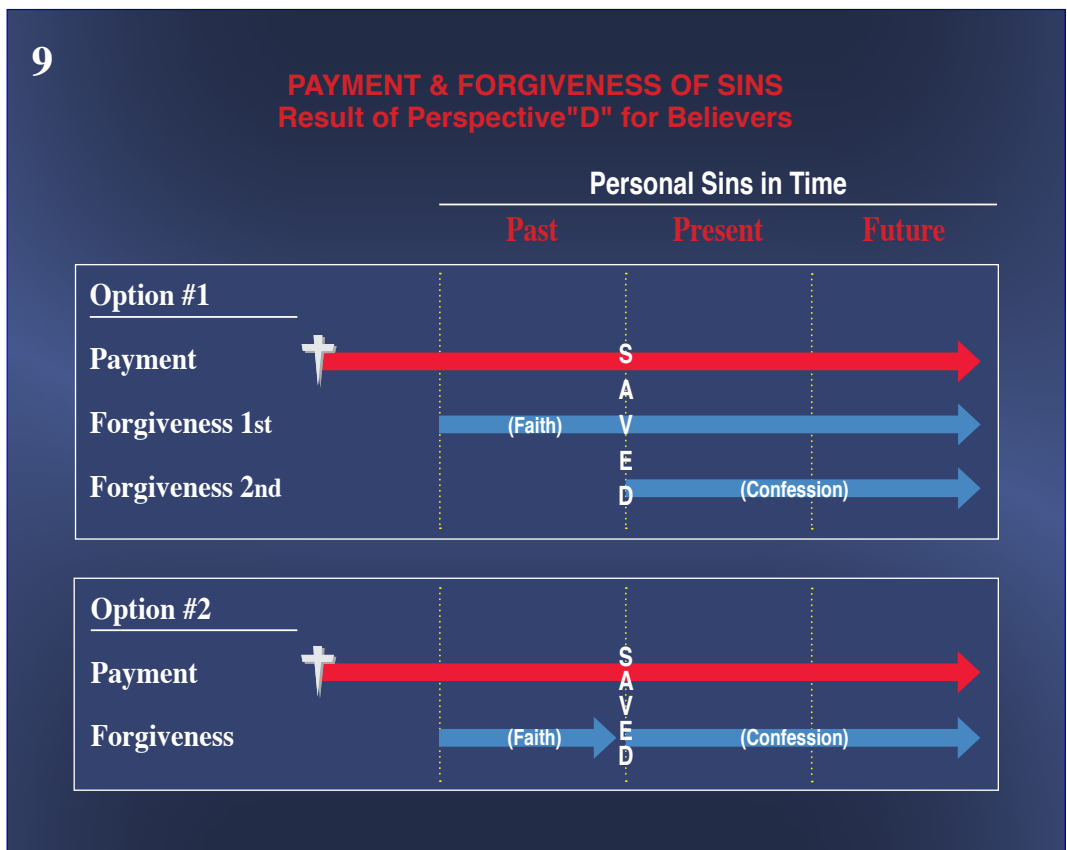
The implication of Perspective “D” is that the legal payment for sin on the cross is equally applied to both non-believers and believers (see chart 8). As addressed in the “Second Misconception” found in *Solution to Sin, Part 1: Misconceptions*, the cross removed the *sin barrier* that separated man and God. Consequently, no one goes to Hell because of sin (see “Seventh Misconception” found in *Solution to Sin, Part 1: Misconceptions*). Rather, not believing in Christ is the only thing that excludes anyone from experiencing eternity with God. Additionally, “since God’s judicial demands against sin have been met, the cross makes possible the repair of the *personal barrier* between sinful men and a holy God.”<sup>3</sup> As a result of receiving forgiveness at salvation, “God and man can have fellowship with each other.”<sup>4</sup>



However, the practical outworking of Perspective “D” presents a dilemma in relation to forgiveness of sins, particularly due to the widely held view that “If all sins are paid for, they

all must also be forgiven.” Many automatically assume all sins (past, present, and future) must be forgiven at salvation since indeed all sins (past, present, and future) have been paid for on the cross. In support, they turn to Colossians 2:13: “When you were dead in our wrongdoings (sins)..., He made you alive together with Him, having forgiven us all our wrongdoings (sins).” In this case, they assume the “all our sins” means “all our past, present, and future sins.” But is that necessarily so? I am suggesting the adage, “If all sins are paid for on the cross, they must also be automatically forgiven,” puts its thumb on the scales. Neither Colossians 2:13 or any other text definitively indicate the extent of “all” in “all our sins.” Rather, the “all” can as well indicate “all our sins up to the point of salvation,” meaning only the new believer’s past sins. In fact, Colossians 2:13 parallels Ephesians 2:5: “When we were dead in our wrongdoings (sins), [He] made us alive together with Christ.” In both texts, believers are made alive at salvation when God saved and forgave us. Consequently, our hostility toward God is replaced with intimacy with Christ. At salvation, we now possess the capacity to have fellowship with Christ since we now have a personal relationship with Him. In the context of the salvation experience, only the past sins of new believers come into play.

In addition, there is another major factor that must be considered in order to understand forgiveness. If it were true that all the sins (past, present, and future) of the believer are forgiven at salvation, why does the believer need to confess, as found in 1 John 1:9, the very identical sins at a later date when he actually commits them? Our next chart (see chart 9) directly addresses this conundrum, which was discussed in the “Fourth Misconception” found in *Solution to Sin, Part 1: Misconceptions*.



There are two major options to forgiveness in the Christian life. The *First Option* overlaps forgiveness based on faith in reference to Colossians 2:13 with forgiveness based on confession of sin as indicated in 1 John 1:9. As discussed above, this view believes Colossians 2:13 refers all sins (past, present, and future) being forgiven at salvation. Then when the Christian does sin, he must confess, agree with God’s assessment of his actions, and God will forgive him again for the same sin that was previously forgiven at salvation. Remember John wrote, “If we confess

our sins, He is faithful and righteous, so that He will forgive us our sins” (1 John 1:9). As a result, Option #1 sets forth a *double-forgiveness* point of view. It is a *forgiving-the-already-forgiven-sin teaching*, since through faith the Christian is forgiven all sins at salvation and yet when that believer does sin in the future the identical sin needs to be forgiven again through confession.<sup>5</sup> As chart 9 illustrates, every sin that the new believer has committed or will ever commit is forgiven when he trusts in Christ (see Forgiveness 1<sup>st</sup>). Forgiveness 2<sup>nd</sup> then refers to the same sins forgiven during the Christian’s life that must be confessed in order to continue to experience fellowship with Christ.

From our previous discussion, this author understands Colossians 2:13 to refer only to the past sins of a person who believes in Christ for eternal life. Consequently, the *Second Option* is viewed in a *sequential order* for forgiveness. At faith, hostility between the new believer and God is repaired as a relationship between the two is established with the believer’s past sins being forgiven. Nevertheless, subsequently unhindered fellowship between the two is dependent on the believer’s confession of sin (present and future).

Notice, therefore, that one’s understanding of forgiveness is based on two theological determinations: (1) identifying which particular sins are referred to in Colossians 2:13 and (2) overlapping or distinguishing forgiveness based on faith in Colossians 2:13 and forgiveness based on confession in 1 John 1:9. Both factors must be addressed in order to properly understand God’s forgiveness. The *sequential order* of forgiveness in Option #2 seemingly aligns with the biblical evidence when compared to the *double-forgiveness* point of view in Option #1.



## Endnotes

1. Zane C. Hodges, *Harmony With God* (Dallas: Redencion Viva, 2001), 72.
2. Zane Hodges, *The Epistles of John* (Irving, TX: Grace Evangelical Society, 1999), 71
3. Hodges, *Harmony With God*, 74 (italics his).
4. Ibid.
5. Do not confuse repeating of the same sin over and over again which needs to be confessed repeatedly with our discussion. Here the concern is confession of the identical sin that was already forgiven at salvation.