

## **206 God can't do that!**

*How can God forgive my sins?* – Has anyone ever actually asked you that? In over 50 years as a Christian, I don't think anyone has. However, if I were asked, I think I could give an answer... and so could you: "Jesus died on the cross... etc, etc." Whether we are confident in expressing it or not, we **know** how it's done – we've been told a million times.

*Yes, but is that the **only** way?* (Clearly, we've got an awkward customer here!) We reply that, yes, it is the only way – and perhaps we can manage a few scriptures to prove it.

*Did God forgive people in the Old Testament?* Well, yes, but...

*How could Jesus forgive people even **before** he had died on the cross?* I guess that's because he was God, and God can do anything.

*Well, did Jesus say to his disciples, 'If you forgive anyone his sins, they are forgiven; if you do not forgive them, they are not forgiven.'?*<sup>[Jn 20:23]</sup> Yes, I suppose he did, but...

Do you see where I'm going with this? We've had it drummed into us by constant repetition (a.k.a. 'indoctrination') that **God can ONLY** forgive sins in one way, by one mechanism.

So can a baby or young child, unable to understand about Jesus' death, not be freed from sin?

Or an adult of limited mental capacity? Can they not be forgiven?

Who are we to say, "**God can ONLY...**"?!

In the past few years, I've been spending more and more time in the Gospels, and I've constantly been surprised by things that Jesus said about his Father. I think what I've realised is how unlike, say, the prodigal father my image of God was.

God is absolutely besotted with us; he loves us more than we could ever imagine and if, like the younger son, we show the slightest inclination to head in the general direction of home, he comes racing down the road to greet us. No time for rehearsed speeches – *shoes, robe, ring, party!*

The first time I tried to write this article, I started with:

*Have you ever lost your faith? I did, ten years ago, and it's a **very** lonely place. All that I had built my life on was gone! For five years I tried to rebuild it, but it still didn't feel real. But then, as I wrote last time,*<sup>[205]</sup> *I finally discovered a lovely community, based a form of faith I could relate to.*

There's nothing wrong with that paragraph, but I think what I *really* found was the total, utter and **unconditional** love of God. And I've never been happier!

[End of article] No need to say any more – well short of my allotted 500 words!