



Gracestoration

Update

"Restoring people in God's grace and making disciples"

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Biblical Pictures of Forgiveness

God's Forgiveness

Jesus illustrates God's forgiving grace in the parable of the prodigal son (Lk. 15:11-32). We are all familiar with the story of the younger son demanding his inheritance prematurely from his father, which he wasted on riotous living. Destitute, wallowing with the pigs and having *come to his senses*, he returns home with the intent of becoming one of his father's servants.

The wayward son's father, seeing him a way off, runs to him, embraces him and joyously welcomes him back home. The father formally reestablishes him fully as his son with a robe, sandals, ring and feast.

Jesus' Forgiveness

The Lord Jesus also demonstrates, while on the cross, His and His Father's heart towards those who had Him crucified saying, "*Father, forgive them; for they do not know what they are doing*" (Lk. 23:34).

Jesus' death, burial and resurrection paid in full

mankind's sin debt once for all, satisfying God's righteous justice, thus establishing His ability to forgive repentant sinners like us.

"Therefore, having been justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ... For while we were still helpless, at the right time Christ died for the ungodly... God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us... For if while we were enemies we were reconciled to God through the death of His Son, much more, having been reconciled, we shall be saved by His life" (Rom. 5:1-10).

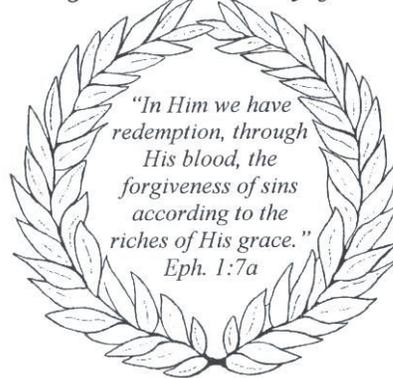
Jesus shows God's heart through the parable, His own life experience, and His finished work on the cross to forgive sinners and make them part of His body – the church.

Man's Forgiveness

It does not take very long for today's Christian to realize that forgiving one another is not a natural part of one's desire or nature – it has to be Jesus' transforming work within the believer that enables one to forgive another. "*Be kind to one*

another, tender-hearted, forgiving each other, just as God in Christ also has forgiven you" (Eph. 4:32). "*...bearing with one another, and forgiving each other, whoever has a complaint against anyone; just as the Lord forgave you, so also should you"* Col. 3:13).

Forgiveness: The Verb of Grace



The Apostle Peter, in an attempt to appear pious, asked Jesus, "*Lord, how often shall my brother sin against me and I forgive him? Up to seven times?*" Jesus said to him, "*I do not say to you, up to seven times, but up to seventy times seven"* (Matt. 18:21-22).

Matthew does not record Peter's response to Jesus' *seventy times seven*. I suspect, however, that he was bowled over with amazement even as
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Christians are today after reading Jesus' words.

Stephen and the other martyrs of the past and present, vividly demonstrate godly forgiveness toward those who severely mistreat them.

Stephen was, *“full of grace and power, was performing great wonders and signs among the people. But some men from what was called the Synagogue of the Freedmen... But they were unable to cope with the wisdom and the Spirit with which he was speaking. Then they secretly induced men to say, “We have heard him speak blasphemous words against Moses and against God.” And they stirred up the people, the elders and the scribes, and they came up to him and dragged him away and brought him before the Council. They put forward false witnesses who said, “This man incessantly speaks against this holy place and the Law; for we have heard him say that this Nazarene, Jesus, will destroy this place and alter the customs which Moses handed down to us” (Acts 6:8-14).*

The high priest said, “Are these things so?” Stephen gives his defense by reviewing Israel's past. As he was finishing *“they were cut to the quick, and they began gnashing their teeth at him... they cried out with a loud voice, and covered their ears and rushed at him with one impulse...they began stoning him; and the witnesses laid aside their robes at the feet of a young man named Saul. They went on stoning Stephen as he called on*

the Lord and said, ‘Lord Jesus, receive my spirit!’ Then falling on his knees, he cried out with a loud voice, ‘Lord, do not hold this sin against them!’ Having said this, he fell asleep” (vs. 54-60).

Stephen was able to forgive because the life and forgiveness that he enjoyed from the Lord Jesus overflowed to those who were stoning him. We are able to forgive one another also only through the overflowing forgiving grace of Jesus Christ. •

The Memorial Day Retreat was on
Forgiveness – the Verb of Grace.



2006 Retreat Participants

The following are a few of the retreat evaluations:

“I really appreciate the work you do to prepare for and speak at this retreat. This was probably the best one yet! Thanks for allowing the Lord to speak through you. As always, there was a good balance of speaking, music and free time.”

“The weekend has been a blessing in many ways. A beautiful place, great food, wonderful new friends and the greatest blessing -- learning more about Jesus and His love and grace. Thank you.”

“The ‘Forgiveness Retreat’ weekend has been a blessing. From the many sessions of ‘Christ Wrapped’ speakers, Dottie, Bob, Averill Huffman, Deedra, etc., to the wonderful accommodations, the blessed staff preparing the wonderful food, and oh...the scenery...WOW...oh Wow.... It’s breathtaking. This weekend will always be in my heart and I hope will be the start of a new journey. Thank you, Lord Jesus.”

“Thank you for reminding us of God’s freeing grace through forgiveness! I learned many new things this weekend. God truly is good! Thank you!

Our God is a Forgiving God! May We Follow in His Steps!

