



World Christian Fellowship

www.wcflondon.com
wcflondon@gmail.com

Good Friday

Forgiveness:

Luke 23:32-42, *There were also two others, criminals, led with Him to be put to death. ³³ And when they had come to the place called Calvary, there they crucified Him, and the criminals, one on the right hand and the other on the left. ³⁴ Then Jesus said, "Father, forgive them, for they do not know what they do." And they divided His garments and cast lots. ³⁵ And the people stood looking on. But even the rulers with them sneered, saying, "He saved others; let Him save Himself if He is the Christ, the chosen of God." ³⁶ The soldiers also mocked Him, coming and offering Him sour wine, ³⁷ and saying, "If You are the King of the Jews, save Yourself." ³⁸ And an inscription also was written over Him in letters of Greek, Latin, and Hebrew: THIS IS THE KING OF THE JEWS.*

³⁹ Then one of the criminals who were hanged blasphemed Him, saying, "If You are the Christ, save Yourself and us." ⁴⁰ But the other, answering, rebuked him, saying, "Do you not even fear God, seeing you are under the same condemnation? ⁴¹ And we indeed justly, for we receive the due reward of our deeds; but

this Man has done nothing wrong.”⁴² Then he said [k]to Jesus, “Lord, remember me when You come into Your kingdom.”

There’s a well-known story of **Corrie ten Boom**, a Christian woman who, along with her family, hid Jews from the Nazis during **World War II**. Eventually, they were caught.

Corrie was sent to a concentration camp, where her sister, **Betsie**, died due to the harsh conditions.

Years after the war, Corrie spoke at a church service about forgiveness. Following her talk, a man approached her.

She immediately recognized him as one of the cruellest guards from the concentration camp where she had suffered so much pain. The man didn’t seem to recognize her, but he extended his hand and told her he had become a Christian. He asked if she could forgive him.

Corrie described the intense struggle in her heart at that moment. She had suffered unimaginably, and here was the man who had contributed to her pain, asking for her forgiveness.

She felt it was impossible.

But then she remembered the example of Christ on the cross, forgiving even His enemies. She prayed silently for God’s help

and made the choice to forgive. As she took his hand, she said she felt a wave of healing and love flow through her.

This powerful story illustrates that forgiveness, while often incredibly difficult, is transformative.

It brings healing not just to the one who is forgiven but also to the one who forgives.

The kind of radical forgiveness Jesus exemplified in **Luke 23:34**.

Jesus on the cross, in immense pain, showing love and mercy even to His persecutors.

Luke 23:34, *“Father, forgive them, for they know not what they are doing.”*

This verse captures the profound depth of Jesus' compassion and the heart of His redemptive mission.

Jesus modelled forgiving love even in His darkest hour.

The nature of divine forgiveness – undeserved, unconditional, and freely given.

1. Undeserved.

The concept of divine forgiveness, particularly when undeserved, is a profound and recurring theme in the scriptures.

a) The Prodigal Son (Luke 15:11-32)

This parable beautifully illustrates God's boundless forgiveness. Despite squandering his inheritance on reckless living, the younger son is welcomed back by his father with open arms and a celebratory feast. It emphasizes that forgiveness is not earned but freely given.

b) The Adulterous Woman (John 8:1-11)

When the Pharisees bring a woman caught in adultery to Jesus, seeking her condemnation, Jesus responds with compassion. He challenges those without sin to cast the first stone, and when they leave, He forgives her and encourages her to sin no more—a profound example of mercy over judgment.

c) David's Repentance (2 Samuel 11-12; Psalm 51)

King David's sins of adultery with Bathsheba and the orchestrated death of her husband, Uriah, are gravely serious. Yet, when confronted by the prophet Nathan, David repents

deeply, and God forgives him, showing His readiness to restore even those who fall grievously.

d) Saul's Transformation to Paul (Acts 9:1-22)

Saul, who actively persecuted early Christians, encounters Jesus on the road to Damascus and experiences radical forgiveness. His transformation into Paul, a devoted apostle, underscores that no one is beyond redemption.

Jesus' act of forgiveness towards His executioners exemplifies the ultimate undeserved mercy.

These examples remind us of the divine nature of forgiveness—unearned, generous, and transformative.

2. Unconditional:

The concept of unconditional divine forgiveness is beautifully illustrated throughout Scripture. Here are several examples that highlight this extraordinary mercy:

a) The Thief on the Cross (Luke 23:39-43)

One of the criminals crucified alongside Jesus asks Him to remember him in His kingdom. Despite a lifetime of sin, Jesus assures him, "Today you will be with me in paradise."

This forgiveness comes without conditions or prior good deeds, emphasizing grace over merit.

b) Jonah and the Ninevites (Jonah 3-4)

God spares the city of Nineveh after its people repent, despite Jonah's anger and belief that they do not deserve mercy. God's forgiveness is shown to be unconditional, prioritizing compassion over judgment.

c) Peter's Denial of Jesus (John 21:15-19)

After Peter denies Jesus three times, Jesus lovingly restores him, asking Peter to feed His sheep. This forgiveness is given without condemnation, demonstrating unconditional grace.

These examples reveal the depth and breadth of divine forgiveness—a gift given freely and without conditions, rooted in boundless love.

3. Freely given.

Scripture is filled with examples of divine forgiveness that is freely given, highlighting God's boundless grace.

a) Jesus Forgiving the Paralytic (Mark 2:1-12)

Before healing the paralytic, Jesus declares, "Son, your sins are forgiven." This statement shows that Jesus freely offers forgiveness, apart from any act or request from the paralytic.

b) The Woman Who Anointed Jesus' Feet (Luke 7:36-50)

Despite her past sins, Jesus tells her, "Your sins are forgiven," recognizing her faith and love. The forgiveness is a gift, not something she earns or deserves.

c) Jesus and Zacchaeus (Luke 19:1-10)

Zacchaeus, a tax collector known for extortion, is forgiven and welcomed by Jesus simply for seeking Him. His transformation follows as a response to the freely given forgiveness.

d) God's Forgiveness of Israel (Nehemiah 9:17)

Despite repeated rebellion, God continues to forgive His people. The verse declares, "But you are a forgiving God, gracious and compassionate, slow to anger and abounding in love."

These examples underscore the divine nature of forgiveness—not earned or deserved but freely given as an act of love and grace.

They Know Not What They Are Doing”

Reflect on human ignorance and sinfulness. Jesus recognized that those crucifying Him acted without fully understanding the magnitude of their actions.

4. Spiritual blindness:

Consider how sin blinds us to the truth, and yet God’s grace prevails.

Spiritual blindness, the inability to perceive or understand spiritual truths, is a theme addressed in several scriptures. Here are some key references:

Isaiah 6:9-10, *And He said, “Go, and tell this people: ‘Keep on hearing, but do not understand; Keep on seeing, but do not perceive.’¹⁰ “Make the heart of this people dull, And their ears heavy, And shut their eyes; Lest they see with their eyes, And hear with their ears, And understand with their heart, And return and be healed.”*

This prophecy highlights the condition of spiritual blindness among the people of Israel.

John 9:39-41, *And Jesus said, “For judgment I have come into this world, that those who do not see may see, and that those*

who see may be made blind.”⁴⁰ Then some of the Pharisees who were with Him heard these words, and said to Him, “Are we blind also?”⁴¹ Jesus said to them, “If you were blind, you would have no sin; but now you say, ‘We see.’ Therefore your sin remains.

The Pharisees’ inability to recognize Jesus as the Messiah serves as a powerful example of spiritual blindness.

2 Corinthians 4:4, *whose minds the god of this age has blinded, who do not believe, lest the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ, who is the image of God, should shine on them.*

See how spiritual blindness prevents people from understanding the truth of the gospel.

Matthew 15:14, *Let them alone. They are blind leaders of the blind. And if the blind leads the blind, both will fall into a ditch.”*

Jesus warns about spiritual leaders who are spiritually blind and their impact on others.

Revelation 3:17, *Because you say, ‘I am rich, have become wealthy, and have need of nothing’—and do not know that you are wretched, miserable, poor, blind, and naked—*

Spiritual blindness stemming from complacency and pride.

These scriptures illustrate how spiritual blindness can manifest and its consequences.

Are there moments in our lives when we act out of ignorance, needing forgiveness?

5. The Call to Imitate Christ.

Jesus' words are not just a moment in history but a calling for His followers.

Forgiveness in our lives:

What does it mean to forgive those who have wronged us, especially when it's difficult?

In 2006, in **Nickel Mines, Pennsylvania**, a tragedy struck an Amish community. A gunman entered a small Amish schoolhouse, took hostages, and ultimately killed five young girls before taking his own life. The devastating loss shocked the world.

What stood out, however, was the response of the Amish community. In the midst of their grief and unimaginable pain, they made the extraordinary choice to forgive the gunman. Members of the community even reached out to the gunman's family, offering comfort and support. They attended his funeral

and donated money to his widow and children, showing incredible grace and compassion.

Their decision to forgive wasn't easy, nor did it erase their pain, but it was a testament to their faith and belief in the power of forgiveness. They lived out Jesus' teachings, even in the face of heartbreak.

This story can serve as a moving reminder of how forgiveness can break the cycle of hatred and bring healing, even in the most tragic circumstances. Would you like help incorporating this story into your message?

The Cross: The Ultimate Symbol of Grace

Jesus' prayer for forgiveness to the larger story of the cross and resurrection.

This moment is the epitome of grace forgiving those who deserve judgment.

In 2003, **Mary Johnson's son, Laramiun Byrd**, was tragically killed by a young man named **Oshea** Israel during an altercation. The pain and grief Mary experienced were overwhelming, and at first, she felt nothing but anger toward Oshea.

Years later, Mary made the incredible choice to meet with Oshea in prison. She wanted to hear his story and understand what had led to that devastating night. Their conversation was not easy, but over time, Mary chose to forgive Oshea completely. Her forgiveness brought her peace and freedom from the weight of bitterness.

What's even more remarkable is that, after Oshea served his sentence, Mary helped him rebuild his life. The two now share a close bond, with Mary even calling Oshea her “**spiritual son.**”

This story is a profound example of how forgiveness can mend hearts, transform lives, and create unexpected connections. It's a modern reflection of the same kind of forgiveness Jesus demonstrated on the cross.

Application:

Reflect your own hearts:

Who do you need to forgive?

Do you fully embrace the forgiveness God offers me?

Take a moment of silent prayer, inviting personal reflection and release of grudges.