

“Who Can Forgive Sins?”

Luke 23:32-34, 39-43

Forgiveness is a word that comes from the word “to send away”. So forgiveness means are sins are sent away/removed. Thus, we think of forgiveness as something which brings freedom and peace.

Over and over again at the cross the Lord Jesus said “*Father, forgive them, for they do not know what they do*” (Luke 23:34). Despite all the pain and suffering the soldiers had given to Jesus, He did not fight back, but responded with gentleness and forgiveness. Calvary is the place of forgiveness and grace – it is there that God gives out His forgiveness.

Some important things to remember about forgiveness:

- 1) **IT IS NOT DESERVED** – forgiveness is never something a person can demand, it must be willingly given. Ephesians 1:7 tells us “We have ... forgiveness of sins according to the riches of His (Jesus) GRACE.”
- 2) **IT IS FOR ALL SINS** – there is not one sin which cannot be forgiven by God, that is how great His power is. See 1John 1:7, “*The blood of Jesus Christ His Son cleanses us from all sin.*”
- 3) **IT IS RECEIVED ALL AT ONCE** – many people think that forgiveness is something they have to come over and over to God for, but it is not true – He gives complete forgiveness when we come to Him in faith.

Some examples to help us understand forgiveness:

- 1) **A BURDEN CARRIED FOR US** – sin is a burden on our conscience. We can try to forget about it, but often it comes back. Knowing that God forgives us through Jesus Christ’s blood is a huge relief. See 1Peter 2:24.
- 2) **A DEBT PAID** – Jesus used this illustration in Matthew 18:23-35. Sin is like a debt because we have an obligation to do what is right. When we fail and sin, we are not meeting our obligation to God. But at the cross Jesus paid the price of our debt with His precious blood.
- 3) **A RELATIONSHIP RESTORED** – sin is a barrier between us and God. We cannot have a good relationship with Him because of sin. But forgiveness removes this problem and allows us to come to God freely. See Luke 17:3-4

A personal example of this is the thief who was crucified beside Christ. He knew he was dying and when he heard Christ speak of forgiveness, it likely touched him deeply. When he asked the Lord for a place in His kingdom, Christ immediately responded with a wonderful promise to him: “Today you will be with Me in Paradise” (Luke 23:43). These words would be an incredible comfort for him as he died. Do you think he knew where he was going when he died? Apply these words to your own salvation:

TODAY – The Immediacy of Forgiveness. When we turn to Christ for forgiveness we do not have to wait for it to happen; He gives it right away!

YOU WILL – The Assurance of Forgiveness. We can know we are forgiven, not because we feel good about ourselves, but because we know what the Word of God (the Bible) says.

BE WITH ME – The Relationship of Forgiveness. Forgiveness brings us into a new, fresh relationship with Almighty God.

IN PARADISE – The Destination of Forgiveness. Because I am forgiven, I am confident my final destination will be in the presence of the Lord in heaven.

If you turn to Christ who died at Calvary like this man did, you will find that Calvary is the place where people may have their sins forgiven, since it was there that the Lord died to wash away our sins!