



In Christ, I Am ... Forgiven and Free!

Main Truth

Because of Jesus Christ's death on the cross, we are redeemed from our sins and can experience the lavishness of God's grace and forgiveness.

Introduction

On Monday morning, October 2, 2006, a gunman burst into a Pennsylvania Amish school and ordered the boys and the teacher to leave. He tied the legs of the ten remaining girls and prepared to shoot them telling the girls, "I'm angry at God for taking my little daughter." The oldest hostage, a thirteen year old, begged the gunman to shoot her first and let the little ones go. He refused her offer and opened fire on the children killing five and leaving the others critically wounded. Then he shot himself just as the police arrived.

The incident caught the attention of the entire world as the media camped out in the small village of Nickel Mines. The tragic story was overshadowed by the love and forgiveness of the Amish community. After burying their own children, the grieving Amish families attended the burial of the killer, Charles Roberts. His widow was deeply moved as Amish families greeted her and her three children. Besides speaking to her of their forgiveness, they started a fund to support the shooter's family.

The world was incredulous that these people could offer such forgiveness to the family of the man who had slain their children. Three weeks after the event, "Amish forgiveness" had appeared in 2,900 news stories worldwide. Everyone asked the question, "How could the Amish do this?" In examining the Amish beliefs, one sees that their tradition is grounded in the firm belief that the New Testament commands

forgiveness. Their counter-cultural lifestyle is lived out through all aspects of their lives, even in tragedy.

We realize this kind of forgiveness does not come from ordinary human nature. It is the result of being rooted in God's love and forgiveness. It comes from the deep understanding that God has purchased our freedom from sin with the death of his Son. As a result, we are able to forgive others.

Scripture

So we praise God for the glorious grace he has poured out on us who belong to his dear Son. He is so rich in kindness and grace that he purchased our freedom with the blood of his Son and forgave our sins. He has showered his kindness on us, along with wisdom and understanding. Ephesians 1:6-8 NLV

Additional Reading: Romans 5:12-17

For Discussion

What does this passage tell us about God's nature? Does God expect us to give him some payment in return for his forgiveness?

Describe our relationship with God when we fully understand his gracious nature and realize we are forgiven.

In what ways should God's grace toward us influence our relationships with others, including those who have hurt us?

Consider how Christ's death and resurrection is the fulcrum, or the center support from which God's grace reaches us. Why does human nature tend to reject this act of grace and instead try to be self-sufficient?

How does disbelief in God's forgiveness keep us from being victorious?

Why do some of us have difficulty receiving God's forgiveness as a free gift?

What further thoughts about God's forgiveness do you get from Romans 5?

Application

Pray the Lord's Prayer. Make a list of the people you need to forgive and pray for them.

In prayer, name the sins you are aware of and ask God for forgiveness. Name the guilt you experience and ask God for inner healing based on his forgiveness.

What false ideas about God keep you from accepting his full forgiveness? Using Ephesians 1:6–8, ask God to reveal his full forgiveness for your sins and for your false guilt that the enemy uses to deter us from experiencing God’s grace.

Going Deeper

Draw a picture of two trees. One tree is large and the roots grow deep. There is lots of fruit and birds are in the branches. In the soil around the roots write the words, *God’s forgiveness and grace*. The other tree is small and the roots are not very deep. There are only a few fruits and there are only two birds. In the soil around the roots write the words, *Man’s guilt and lack of forgiveness*. What insights do you have from this drawing?

Rent the movie *To Kill A Mockingbird*. Consider how Atticus Finch demonstrates forgiveness and grace while he carries out justice. Discuss with others the incidents when people were forgiving. How is forgiveness integrated into the story?