

Forgiven According to the Riches of His Grace

Ephesians 1:7-8 (NKJV)

7 In Him we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of His grace 8 which He made to abound toward us in all wisdom and prudence,

A holy and just God dealing with sin is a complicated issue.

He could just pass judgment on the sinner and the issue would be over.

But if God determines to not pass judgment on the sinner it raises a whole host of complicated and thorny issues.

If God allows the sinner to go unjudged then it reflects on the justice and holiness of God.

So in order for God to pass over judgment of the sinner there must be a satisfaction of the justice and holiness of God.

But God is holy and cannot allow sin to go unpunished. The transgression of the law demands that the offender be dealt with. The soul that sins will die.

Eze 18:4 "Behold, all souls are Mine; The soul of the father As well as the soul of the son is Mine; The soul who sins shall die.

Romans 6:23 (NKJV) 23 For the wages of sin is death,

So how can a God who has made such proclamations simply allow the sinner to go free.

These complications is why just one word is not sufficient to explain what God has done for us in this process called salvation.

I. What does it mean to forgive or to be forgiven.

A. The word forgive means to let go.

1. The word "forgiveness" is aphesis from aphiemi, "to send from one's self, to send away, to bid go away or depart." The noun aphesis, used in relation to "sins," means "a release, the letting them go as if they had not been committed, thus, forgiveness, a remission of their penalty" *Kenneth S. Wuest, Wuest's Word Studies from the Greek New Testament: For the English Reader (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1997), Eph 1:7.*
2. The verb means to send forth or discharge, and is the standard New Testament word for forgiving. Forgiveness is a putting or sending away of sins, with a consequent discharge of the sinner; thus differing from *παρεσις* (Rom. 3:25), which is a passing by of sin, a pretermission as distinguished from a remission. *Marvin Richardson Vincent, Word Studies in the New Testament, vol. 1 (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1887), 763-764.*

B. Illustrated

1. Leviticus 16:20-22 (NKJV) 20 "And when he has made an end of atoning for the Holy Place, the tabernacle of meeting, and the altar, he shall bring the live goat. 21 Aaron shall lay both his hands on the head of the live goat, confess over it all the iniquities of the children of Israel, and all their transgressions, concerning all their sins, putting them on the head of the goat, and shall send it away into the wilderness by the hand of a suitable man. 22 The goat shall bear on itself all their iniquities to an uninhabited land; and he shall release the goat in the wilderness.
2. SCAPEGOAT — a live goat over whose head AARON confessed all the sins of the people of Israel. The goat was then sent into the wilderness on the Day of Atonement, symbolically taking away their sins (Lev. 16:8, 10, 26; Azazel, NRSV). *Nelson's New Illustrated Bible Dictionary* (Nashville, TN: Thomas Nelson, Inc., 1995).

C. Bible language

1. Isaiah 44:22 (NKJV) 22 I have blotted out, like a thick cloud, your transgressions, And like a cloud, your sins. Return to Me, for I have redeemed you."
2. Psalm 103:12 (NKJV) 12 As far as the east is from the west, So far has He removed our transgressions from us.
3. 2 Samuel 12:13 (NKJV) 13 So David said to Nathan, "I have sinned against the LORD." And Nathan said to David, "The LORD also has put away your sin; you shall not die.

II. The difference between the forgiveness by God and the forgiveness by people.

- A. Always the forgiveness of God implies that the debt was paid, the matter was settled not just forgotten.
 1. That's why here in verse 7 the implication is that forgiveness of sins is through the redemption (price paid) in Christ Jesus.
 2. He forgives all our sins in the sweeping grace of salvation. That does not mean we will no longer sin, nor that when we do, our sins have no harmful effect. They have a profound effect on our growth, joy, peace, usefulness, and ability to have intimate and rich communion with the Father.
MacArthur New Testament Commentary, The - MacArthur New Testament Commentary – Ephesians.
- B. In human forgiveness someone still must absorb the loss.
 1. If in money or hurt feelings.
 2. In the case of murder or physical harm, no payment can be made to satisfy

the offended party.

3. But God commands us to let it go.
4. Jesus makes it clear that those who do not forgive cannot be forgiven.
 - a. Right after what we call the Lord's Prayer Jesus says, "For if you forgive men their trespasses, your heavenly Father will also forgive you. "But if you do not forgive men their trespasses, neither will your Father forgive your trespasses." Matthew 6:14-15
5. But some will say that is not just, its not fair.
6. And that is true
7. It was not fair that Jesus should die in our place and for our sins.
8. But since God has let us go with such at great offence at such a great cost we must let those go who we hold as debtors to us.

III. God is a merciful and forgiving God.

- A. Micah 7:18-19 (NKJV) 18 Who is a God like You, Pardoning iniquity And passing over the transgression of the remnant of His heritage? He does not retain His anger forever, Because He delights in mercy. 19 He will again have compassion on us, And will subdue our iniquities. You will cast all our sins Into the depths of the sea.
- B. Romans 8:1-2 (NKJV) 1 There is therefore now no condemnation to those who are in Christ Jesus, who do not walk according to the flesh, but according to the Spirit. 2 For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus has made me free from the law of sin and death.
- C. 1 John 2:12 (NKJV) 12 I write to you, little children, Because your sins are forgiven you for His name's sake.
- D. Romans 5:20 (NKJV) 20 Moreover the law entered that the offense might abound. But where sin abounded, grace abounded much more,

IV. According to the riches of His grace.

- A. "According to the riches of his grace." That is an interesting expression. It doesn't say out of the riches of His grace but according to the riches of His grace. Let me illustrate the difference. I read many years ago that when the late John D. Rockefeller played golf in Florida he always gave the caddy a dime. I always felt that that must have almost broke the man to pay out such a handsome sum. You see, he didn't give according to his riches—he gave out of his riches. I think he could have done a little better than that, and if he had paid according to his riches, the caddy would have been rich. God has redeemed us according to the riches of His grace. *J. Vernon McGee, Thru the Bible Commentary, electronic ed., vol. 5*

(Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 1997), 221.

“The forgiveness of sins.” Forgiveness is not the act of an indulgent deity who is moved by sentiment to the exclusion of justice, righteousness, and holiness. Forgiveness depends on the shedding of blood: it demands and depends on the payment of the penalty for sin. Christ’s death and the shedding of His blood is the foundation for forgiveness and, without that, there could be no forgiveness.

I think here we need to learn the distinction between human forgiveness and divine forgiveness—they are not the same. Human forgiveness is always based on the fact that a penalty is deserved and that the penalty is not imposed. It simply means that one wipes out the account. God is holy and righteous. Therefore divine forgiveness is always based on the fact that there has been the execution of the penalty and the price has been paid.

J. Vernon McGee, Thru the Bible Commentary, electronic ed., vol. 5 (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 1997), 220.

Friend, we are lost, hell-doomed sinners, and God cannot forgive us until the penalty has been executed. The good news is that the penalty has been executed. That is the reason that in the Word of God you will find forgiveness back to back with the blood of Jesus Christ. Forgiveness depends on the blood of Christ. That is how valuable His blood is. *J. Vernon McGee, Thru the Bible Commentary, electronic ed., vol. 5 (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 1997), 220–221.*