

# The Cross and Forgiveness

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(Luke 23:32-37)

## I. Introduction

- A. Most of us have seen “*The Passion of the Christ*” (maybe here Friday night)
1. *The Passion* reminds a top-50 biggest grossing movie—holds some records
    - a. It is certainly the highest grossing movie based on a Biblical theme
    - b. It is the highest grossing foreign language film (*Aramaic, Latin, Hebrew*)
    - c. It is easily the highest grossing R-rated movie and by a large margin
      - 1) It was rated R because of its violent depiction of the crucifixion
      - 2) Roger Ebert said, “*This is the most violent film I have ever seen.*”  
*The movie is 126 minutes long, and I would guess that at least 100 of those minutes, maybe more, are concerned specifically and graphically with the details of the torture and death of Jesus.*
      - 3) Someone observed Gibson used more fake blood than in *Braveheart*
  2. Was the violence in the movie too much? Could it have been toned down?
    - a. Probably— though few people went to see the re-released PG-13 version.
    - b. Maybe violence served to shock us into seeing the horror of cross
      - 1) Maybe the violence helped us see the horror of our rebellion
      - 2) Maybe Pope John Paul II was right when he said, “*It is as it was!*”
- B. One thing is certain—the Bible writers don’t really stress the violence of cross
1. In fact, if anything, the record in the gospels downplays the detail
    - a. Gospels sound matter-of-fact (**Matt 27:26, Mark 15:24-25, Luke 23:33**)  
*But he had Jesus flogged, and handed him over to be crucified*  
*And they crucified him. Dividing up his clothes, they cast lots to see what each would get. It was the third hour when they crucified him.*  
*When they came to the place called the Skull, there they crucified him, along with the criminals—one on his right, the other on his left*
    - b. Of course, the reason the NT doesn’t go into detail—it didn’t need to
      - 1) First century folks were very aware the details of this torture & death
      - 2) They didn’t need it spelled out; they didn’t need any fake blood!
  2. Knowing the excruciating (*of the cross*) pain helps us focus on His love
    - a. While hanging on the cross in agony, Jesus spoke words of forgiveness
    - b. He reminds us the cross is about forgiveness (**Reading: Luke 23:32-37**)

## II. Discussion

- A. Forgiveness was a topic that Jesus stressed during His ministry.
1. In fact, he said some things about forgiveness that are hard for us to hear.
    - a. This is especially so when we are the ones who have been wronged
    - b. Forgiveness makes good sense when we are the ones who need forgiving
  2. Jesus ties our forgiveness to our willingness to forgive (**Text Medley**)
    - a. Hostility is harmful physically, psychologically & especially spiritually
    - b. Unless we forgive, we are in no position to seek God's forgiveness!
    - c. And that is true even if the other person does not deserve to be forgiven!
  3. Jesus is still preaching forgiveness even as he dies on the cross!
- B. Placement of this story in Luke's gospel contrasts divine love with human sin—
1. **Divine Love:** Words of forgiveness are spoken soon after Jesus is crucified.
    - a. They are His first words spoken after the nails have pieced his hands/feet.
    - b. They are spoken after the shock of his weight crashes down on wounds
    - c. Divine love responds to first wave of agony with words of forgiveness.
  2. **Human Sin:** After the words of forgiveness are words of mocking/ridicule
    - a. Jewish rulers, Roman soldiers and condemned sinner mock/ridicule Jesus
      - 1) What poignant contrast between God's grace and man's sinfulness?
      - 2) What kind of sadistic cruelty would mock the agony of another?
    - b. Can you imagine such a love that offers forgiveness to ones so unworthy?
- C. We can understand the cry, "*Why have you forsaken me.*" That sounds normal
1. We struggle to understand this cry of forgiveness—anything but normal
  2. But for Jesus words of forgiveness are natural; not easy, but in character:
    - a. Jesus taught forgiveness must "70 times 7" and "from the heart" (**Mt 18**)
    - b. He came to earth was to "give his life as a ransom for many" (**Mt 20:28**)
      - 1) Jesus said miracles shows his authority to forgive sin (**Luke 5:18**)
      - 2) He was dying for forgiveness; Jesus was all about forgiveness
  3. In *The Passion*, Jesus' words of forgiveness convert the thief on the cross
    - a. His words of love and forgiveness from cross should convert us as well
    - b. Ultimately, they should convert us into a people of forgiveness!
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### III. Father Forgive Them: Our Forgiveness

- A. Luke doesn't record Jesus dying words here just as historical record
1. He means them as an example to follow—an example of forgiveness
    - a. In Acts, Luke includes the story of the first in a long line of martyrs
      - 1) Like Jesus, Stephen ran afoul of the religious establishment
      - 2) Like Jesus, Stephen became the victim of a lynch mob mentality
    - b. Like Jesus, Stephen prayed for killers as he died (**Acts 7:58-60**)  
*“dragged him out of the city and began to stone him. Meanwhile, the witnesses laid their clothes at the feet of a young man named Saul. While they were stoning him, Stephen prayed, “Lord Jesus, receive my spirit.” Then he fell on his knees and cried out, “Lord, do not hold this sin against them.” When he had said this, he fell asleep.*
  2. Stephen doesn't just follow Jesus example but uses Jesus words... twice
    - a. *“Lord Jesus, receive my spirit”* sounds like *“Father, into your hands...”*
    - b. *“Lord, don't charge them with this sin!”* sounds like, *“Father, forgive...”*
  3. Stephen's prayer did not take away responsibility from his killers
    - a. They were still accountable to God, but they witnessed some powerful
      - 1) We wondered whether Jesus' forgiveness converted thief beside him
      - 2) We also wonder if Stephen words had any impact on Saul of Tarsus
    - b. Like Stephen, we are called by the divine forgiveness of the cross
- B. Chris Carrier of Coral Gables, Florida, was abducted when he was 10 years old.
1. He was burned with cigarettes, stabbed with ice pick, and shot in the head
    - a. Thought left to die in Everglades, Carrier survived (*lost sight in one eye*).
    - b. The statute of limitations on this crime expired, and no one was charged.
  2. In 1997, a man confessed to this brutal abduction and attempted murder
    - a. Carrier went to see David McAllister, 77 yr-old blind con in nursing home
    - b. Carrier visited often, read from the Bible and prayed; later he would say  
*While many people can't understand how I could forgive David McAllister, from my point of view I couldn't not forgive him. If I'd chosen to hate him all these years, or spent my life looking for revenge, then I wouldn't be the man I am today, the man my wife and children love, the man God has helped me to be.*
  3. The story of the cross is not just theory or just history—it is invitation
    - a. It is an invitation to imitate the love and forgiveness we see in Jesus
    - b. We are not just called to the cross, we are called to carry it (**Lk 9:23**)

## IV. Conclusion

- A. Today is Easter Sunday—where do you go to read about that in the Bible
1. Easter is in Bible, but only in KJV rendering (or *butchering*) of **Acts 12:4**  
“*intending after Easter to bring him forth to the people*” (Peter arrested by Herod)
    - a. Eostre was a Anglo-Saxon goddess whose festival was at spring equinox
    - b. That was also time of Passover & resurrection, so church annexed feast
    - c. Also borrowed traditions like Easter eggs (*symbol of new life of spring*)
  2. Big problem surrounding Easter is not that the Bible doesn’t command it
    - a. Paul says honoring God through special days is acceptable (**Rom 14:5**)
      - 1) Paul also says that it is acceptable NOT to observe special days!
      - 2) If you slept rather than come to sunrise service, Paul says its OK
    - b. The problem with Easter is the same problem we may have with Sunday
    - c. **Problem:** May see the cross and resurrection as a story to remember
- B. Jesus Christ was raised from the dead; we need to believe that with all our heart
1. But you know, we can believe the right thing and miss the whole point
    - a. Take for example one of our baptismal proof texts (**Rom 6:3-4**)  
*Or don’t you know that all of us who were baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into his death? We were therefore buried with him through baptism into death in order that, just as Christ was raised from the dead through the glory of the Father, we too may live a new life.*
      - 1) So the point is the necessity of baptism? No. Paul *assumes* baptism
      - 2) The point is that because Jesus is raised, we can live a new life!
    - b. Because Jesus died and was raised, we die to sin and live a new life
    - c. The point of resurrection is the power it exerts in our lives (**Eph 1:19-20**)  
*and his incomparably great power for us who believe. That power is like the working of his mighty strength,<sup>20</sup> which he exerted in Christ when he raised him from the dead*
  2. The point of the cross is that Jesus died for sin so we can live for Him
    - a. The example of Jesus love and forgiveness on the cross calls to us
    - b. The cross leads us to forgive others because that is what Jesus did
      - 1) The cry of the cross is FOR us, “*Father forgive them, they don’t...*”
      - 2) The cry of the cross is also TO us—for us to forgive others
  3. We proclaim today that Jesus is risen! He is risen indeed!
- C. So what? Is the FACT that Jesus is risen leading you to live a new life?