

# Truly Forgiving People

**ACTS 7:50-60 NLT** – (50) Didn't my hands make both heaven and earth?' (51) "You stubborn people! You are heathen at heart and deaf to the truth. Must you forever resist the Holy Spirit? That's what your ancestors did, and so do you! (52) Name one prophet your ancestors didn't persecute! They even killed the ones who predicted the coming of the Righteous One—the Messiah whom you betrayed and murdered. (53) You deliberately disobeyed God's law, even though you received it from the hands of angels." (54) The Jewish leaders were infuriated by Stephen's accusation, and they shook their fists at him in rage. (55) But Stephen, full of the Holy Spirit, gazed steadily into heaven and saw the glory of God, and he saw Jesus standing in the place of honor at God's right hand. (56) And he told them, "Look, I see the heavens opened and the Son of Man standing in the place of honor at God's right hand!" (57) Then they put their hands over their ears and began shouting. They rushed at him (58) and dragged him out of the city and began to stone him. His accusers took off their coats and laid them at the feet of a young man named Saul. (59) As they stoned him, Stephen prayed, "Lord Jesus, receive my spirit." (60) He fell to his knees, shouting, "Lord, don't charge them with this sin!" And with that, he died.

Stephen would be one of the greatest examples of what forgiveness is; he was proclaiming the gospel when his life was taken by those who refused to hear what he was saying. How did he do it? Let's review these three simple points.

**Recognizing** who you are – Verse (55) and (56) tells us that he was full of the Spirit. In other words immediately he was able to recognize who he belonged to. When one knows this, he or she are capable of doing anything and the right thing!

**Choose** – Verse (60) tells us that he asked God (despite being stoned to death) not to hold the sin against them.

**Leave it with God** – He left his choice with God and he did not attempt to change his mind to forgive prior to his dying.

What happens when you have wrong someone? How do you forgive yourself? Let's read the following scriptures and then review three more points.

**LUKE 23:39-43 NLT** – (39) One of the criminals hanging beside him scoffed, "So you're the Messiah, are you? Prove it by saving yourself—and us, too, while you're at it!" (40) But the other criminal protested, "Don't you fear God even when you have been sentenced to die? (41) We deserve to die for our crimes, but this man hasn't done anything wrong." (42) Then he said, "Jesus, remember me when you come into your Kingdom." (43) And Jesus replied, "I assure you, today you will be with me in paradise."

**NOTE: MATTHEW 27:44 NASB** – (44) The robbers who had been crucified with Him were also insulting Him with the same words.

**Confession and Repentance** – In Matthews account, he tells us that both robbers were insulting Jesus. In the book of Luke, the robber confessed his incorrect behavior in verses (40), (41) and (42).

**Forgiveness** – In verse (43) Jesus shows forgiveness.

To **forgive** means "to give up all claims to punish or exact a penalty for an offense." No strings or conditions can be attached, or else it ceases to be a pardon. **EPHESIANS 2:8-9** expands on this concept by contrasting the gift of salvation with works. Neither salvation nor forgiveness can be earned; both must be freely given. Just as God granted us forgiveness, which we did not deserve and could not earn, so we are to release every offender from any form of penalty.

**Unforgiveness** is an emotional bondage that consumes minds with memories of offenses, distorts emotions with revenge, and fills hearts with churning unrest. It has a tendency of getting deep into the soul, affecting both spiritual and physical health. But the one who chooses to put on love and offer forgiveness is ready to receive the peace of Christ. Let God's Word help you release hurt and anger into His caring hands—then watch as vengeful thoughts are transformed into praise and gratitude to the Lord.

### **SCRIPTURE READING**

EPHESIANS 4:32

### **THOUGHT FOR THE WEEK**

Faith is not thinking God can, It is knowing God will.

