

Father, Forgive Them

With his dying breaths, Jesus petitions the Father to forgive. Why was Jesus' first word about forgiveness? Who was he forgiving? Studying these brief, yet pointed words of intercession Christ speaks from the cross gives us greater understanding of the Christian practice of forgiveness, what makes it so powerful, and why it relates to our salvation.

AWARENESS Before listening reflect on what you already know or understand about topics we'll cover in the episode.

- What comes first, repentance or forgiveness?
- When do you find it most difficult to *ask* for forgiveness? When is it most difficult for you to *grant* forgiveness?



LISTEN TO THE EPISODE: [Father, Forgive Them](#)

READ [Luke 23:32-38](#)

REFLECTION After listening, consider the following questions:

- In *The Seven Last Words from the Cross*, Fleming Rutledge reflects on the circumstances around Christ's words "Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do," and notes "...it is against the Geneva Conventions to display or humiliate a POW. Crucifixion, however, was purposefully designed to do just that—to display and to humiliate" (p. 7). What does it mean to you that in this moment of utter humiliation and degradation, Jesus Christ prays and petitions the Father to forgive others?
- In segment 2, host Scott Hoezee states, "even though at a moment of torture and humiliation and mockery you don't expect a word of forgiveness, really, this keeps Jesus very consistent with who he had been all along." Identify some examples of stories, healings, or teachings from the Gospels that demonstrate Christ's consistency of character. Why is the consistency of Christ's character important?
- At the end of segment 2, Scott and host Dave Bast assert that unsolicited forgiveness is the only kind of grace "that can snap the history-long cycle of vengeance and revenge." Where have you seen this truth in action? Why does Jesus need to intervene and ask forgiveness on our behalf?
- Read [Romans 5:6-8](#). What similarities do you notice between this passage and Christ's words from the cross asking the Father to "forgive them" in [Luke 23:32-38](#)? Why is this important?

RELATED PASSAGES for further study

[Matthew 5:38-48](#), [Matthew 6:9-13](#), [Hebrews 4:14-16](#), [Romans 5:6-11](#), [Romans 8:31-39](#)

CONCLUSION

In the Lord's Prayer ([Matthew 6:9-13](#)), Jesus teaches us to pray "And forgive us our debts, as we also have forgiven our debtors." Consider our human practice of forgiving those who sin against us. What would it look like if God truly forgave us as we forgive others? What characteristics define your practice of forgiveness? Do you think your own practice of forgiveness models Christ's prayer of forgiveness on the cross? Why or why not?

Close your time of reflection in prayer, using these prayer prompts:

- Give thanks for God's unmerited grace and forgiveness.
- Talk to God about your reflections and learnings after studying Christ's first words from the cross.
- Pause, slowly read today's scripture passage and/or the related passages, and listen for how God may be speaking to you.
- Share your answers to the above questions with God, if appropriate use words of confession or praise.
- Close with praise for Jesus Christ and the way his incarnation, sacrifice, and forgiveness restore our relationship with the Triune God.

<https://groundworkonline.com/episodes/father-forgive-them>

Printed on July 12, 2025