

# “FORGIVE THEM”

## Key Verse: 34a

**“Jesus said, ‘Father, forgive them, for they do not know what they are doing.’”**

Hello everyone! My name is Curtis, and it is a pleasure to have the privilege of speaking to you this afternoon. Many of you may know me, but still, most of you don't know me. I am from Indianapolis, and I have been a Christian for a little over seven years. What makes this opportunity very special to me is that the first conference I ever attended at UBF was the Easter Bible Conference in Holland Michigan 5 years ago. For me the Easter Conference was a great opportunity because around that time I was still new to UBF and had only recently come to know Jesus as my Savior and King. Through the conference I came to learn many new things I did not know before. The first thing was the number of people in UBF with the same name. It seemed that I had a 50-50 chance to get anyone's name right. Just kidding. Actually, I learned more deeply the meaning of the cross and the power of the resurrection. Amen. The title of today's message is, “Forgive Them.” Key Verse 34a. which says, “Jesus said, ‘Father, forgive them, for they do not know what they are doing.’” Today's Bible passage will be focused on the crucifixion of our Lord Jesus. To give some context in Luke's gospel, Jesus had blessed Israel with his earthly ministry and had called Israel to return to God. He had done wonderful works of God and had shown them the kingdom of heaven. But because of their sin, Israel had turned Jesus over to be tortured and killed. Within this passage we are going to cover Jesus' final moments on this earth and three lessons he shares with us before his death. First “What We Deserve,” second “What God Offers,” and third “What Jesus Accomplished.” I pray that from Jesus' teachings, God may open our eyes and hearts to know Jesus' death more clearly. Let us pray

## Part I “What We Deserve”

The passage starts with Jesus being taken away by the Roman soldiers to the place where he was sentenced to be crucified. Through the Jewish leaders' continuous pleas to have Jesus crucified, the Roman governor Pilate decided to listen to their commands and had Jesus sent as a criminal to his death by crucifixion. While on his way to the top of the hill, the Bible introduces us to a man named Simon of Cyrene. Weakened by the flogging he had received earlier, Jesus was not going fast enough for the Romans' liking. He would have been severely beaten up to this point. He would have been sleep deprived and had exposed wounds from his previous whippings. So, the Roman soldiers forced Simon to help Jesus carry his cross. Simon was not a follower of Jesus at this time, and he must've felt so unfortunate to be forced to carry Jesus' cross. But tradition says he became a Christian because of this. Misfortune can often be a turning point to know Jesus. Later, he must've felt so honored to be able to help Jesus carry his cross.

The other people that were mentioned was the crowd. Jesus was famous at this time, and a large crowd gathered to see him be led away to his death. Just several days earlier Jesus had entered Jerusalem, and this large crowd had praised him and shouted, “Blessed is the king who comes in

the name of the Lord!" But now they sat silently and watched as Jesus was unjustly led out to this death.

The other people mentioned were some women. These women mourned and wailed loudly for Jesus. But Jesus gave them a very strong warning. He didn't thank them for their tears. Instead, Jesus told them not to worry about him, but to worry about themselves and God's coming judgment. Jesus quoted Hosea 8, which describes a day of horror inflicted by the hand of God because of Israel's wickedness and lack of faith in him. The day of God's judgement is a reminder of God's Holy wrath against all sinful humanity. This wrath that Jesus depicts is out of God's divine obligation to judge sin and unrighteousness. Bound by his heavenly responsibility to judge sin, God stands awaiting the day to crush the bones of his enemies, and to condemn all those that have disregarded the authority of God. You may ask, "Who are God's enemies?" Clearly put, Roman 3:9-10 says, "For we have already made the charge that Jews, and Gentiles alike are all under the power of sin. As it is written: There is no one righteous, not even one." Everyone is deserving of this dreaded day of God's wrath, and no one found guilty will be able to escape. Jesus makes it clear that there will be a day when people will wish they would die, so much so that they would call for mountains to fall on them and cover them. But it is beautiful to still see Jesus warning the world, even after he is experiencing the greatest injustice of all time.

## **Part II "What God Offers"**

With Jesus there were two other men, both criminals, who were also led out with him to be executed. Unlike Jesus, these two criminals were guilty of serious crimes against Rome and by Roman law they were worthy of dying a slow and tormenting death by crucifixion. Like these two men, Jesus was crucified and hung between them on the cross. This was to shame Jesus and display him as the King of sinners. Up to this point Jesus had lost his freedom, his rights, his friends, and he was about to lose his life. But those that surrounded him were not going to be finished until they had stripped him of even his integrity. But we see that even through all the pain and shame, Jesus was still willing to muster up the strength to pray to his Father. "Father, forgive them, for they do not know what they are doing." (Verse 34a) How could Jesus say this? These people were not deserving of forgiveness. They deserved judgement, not forgiveness. They mocked him, flogged him, and crucified him. A more natural response would be to curse them. But Jesus prayed instead, "Father, forgive them, for they do not know what they are doing." It is a very unusual request for someone to ask on behalf of one's enemies. Even we as sinners, who are many times sympathetic to sin, can't even muster up the strength to forgive people much like us. How then could Jesus, who knew no sin, say to God, "Father, forgive them, for they do not know what they are doing." It is here that we are given a heavenly insight into the merciful character of God and what it is that God offers every one of us. Like everyone that surrounded Jesus, we must understand that we too are sinners before a Holy God. We are in need of many things, but above all, we need forgiveness. We see here Jesus' promise that God is a Forgiving God; a God that is willing to offer forgiveness to sinners, like you and me. The forgiveness we see God offering to us is first unconditional and given in spite of our arrogance. "Father Forgive them for they don't know what they are doing." Daniel 9:9 also says, "The Lord our God is merciful and forgiving, even though we have rebelled against him." Likewise, the forgiveness God offers is

restoring. Psalm 130:4, "But you offer forgiveness, that we might learn to fear you." His forgiveness also does not hover our past failures over us, but casts them far away. Psalm 103:12, "He has removed our sins as far from us as the east is from the west." He is a God that overflows in steadfast love toward his people. Our God's grace is so abounding, that even while he is being mistreated by the world, he is still willing to cry out for our forgiveness. This is not to confuse us to think that God is a God that tolerates sin, but rather he is a God that is willing to extend unlimited forgiveness and mercy toward sinners. His mercy is never ending and free for all the broken hearted, open for all and to anyone that comes humbly to Jesus. So, through Jesus' words to the Father, I am reminded that Jesus did not come to this world to condemn the world, but to save and forgive the world. "Father forgive them, for they do not know what they are doing." How precious is it to see Jesus call out to God on our behalf and ask for our forgiveness. How great is it to know that we have a God that is willing to offer us forgiveness, regardless of anything we have ever done. Amen.

Have you sinned against God? Do you hold on to a past of guilt or shame? Remember this; God is willing to forgive, all because of the forgiving and merciful heart of God.

Sadly, there were many people in the crowd that heard Jesus' beautiful words of forgiveness but were still unwilling to repent and believe. The people in the crowd and the religious leaders were still holding tremendous hatred for Jesus. They even sneered at him. They mocked Jesus and hurled insults at him. To them this was comical. All the people saw the sign that said, "The King of the Jews" and they thought it was all a big joke. Even one of the criminals mocked him and showed no compassion for Jesus. "Aren't you the Messiah? Save yourself and us!"

But there was one man, however, who heard the forgiveness of Jesus and saw that Jesus had compassion, even on those that crucified him and mocked him. He was one of the criminals dying next to Jesus. This criminal rebuked that mocker saying, "Don't you fear God, since you are under the same sentence? We are punished justly, for we are getting what our deeds deserve. But this man has done nothing wrong." Then he said, "Jesus, remember me when you come into your kingdom." And as we read this story, we see how it perfectly demonstrates what it means to know God and his forgiveness. The repentant criminal says, "Don't you fear God." This comment demonstrates that he could see the splendor and majesty of the Holy God. "We are punished justly, for we are getting what our deeds deserve." This shows that he doesn't only know God, but he understands himself and his sin in light of the Holiness of God. "But this man has done nothing wrong." This demonstrates his knowledge of the spotless work and person of Christ. Lastly, he says, "Jesus, remember me when you come into your kingdom." We see him pleading for acceptance, on no other basis than the unmerited forgiveness of God. This man had the right response that every child of God must have. Jesus blessed his faith in the forgiveness of God. Jesus answered him, "Truly I tell you, today you will be with me in paradise."

### **Part III "What Jesus Accomplished."**

After three hours on the cross, darkness came over the land. The earth groaned and the curtain in the temple that separated the Holy place from the most Holy place was split in two. Then Jesus called out to God and said, "Father, into your hands I commit my Spirit." From Jesus' final words

and the curtain being torn in two we now can see "What Jesus Accomplished." The atonement for our sins and our access to God was bought by the blood of Jesus. Amen. Isaiah 53 tells us that the future suffering servant was to come and be numbered with the transgressors. This suffering servant was to be led like a lamb to the slaughter and assigned a grave with the wicked. We know from God's word that this was all part of God's plan to restore humanity to himself. Through Jesus' suffering we are cleansed of our sins before God and are given free access to the Father. Jesus knew that the only way God could forgive us and allow us to enter his kingdom was through the blood of the spotless lamb. As John the Baptist said, "Look the Lamb of God that takes away the sin of the world." Praise Jesus for his death for our sins. Remember his words in John 19:30 where Jesus proclaims, "It is finished." Amen.

With that, Jesus breathed his last and gave up his spirit. A centurion soldier in the crowd was broken from what he saw, and he praised God saying, "Surely this was a righteous man." This centurion soldier would have seen many people die in his career, but no one died like Jesus. The crowd that saw Jesus' death beat their breasts and went away, but the women disciples stood at a distance and saw everything that had happened. These women had been with Jesus from the very beginning and were faithful to be with Jesus until the very end. After the death of Jesus, we are introduced to a man named Joseph. He was a good and upright man. Joseph was a Pharisee and who had not agreed to the sentencing of Jesus. He was very wealthy and seemed to have everything. But Joseph had one desire: to give Jesus a proper burial. Joseph gave up his tomb in honor of Jesus. Joseph was moved by the cross of Jesus, and he likewise was seeking after the kingdom of heaven. It is here that we see an example of the gospel's power to enable someone to honor and serve Jesus with everything they have.

Through today's passage we learned that Jesus suffered many things. We also learned that we too have sinned against God and deserve God's Holy wrath. We learned that God is willing to offer every one of us forgiveness. Lastly, we learned that the horrific injustice to Jesus on the cross was for a beautiful reason. Jesus' death was to pay for our sins before God so we could be forgiven and have a place with Jesus in paradise. The way we respond to this forgiveness of God is very important. You can choose to do one of two things. The first is to continue to live in ignorance of God's forgiveness and remain in your shame and sin. This is reminiscent of Judas, who betrayed Jesus for 30 pieces of silver. He later regretted betraying Jesus but could find no peace for his soul. He too willfully disbelieved God's promise to forgive and suffered a fate so horrid that it would be better to never have been born. Instead, let us run to the foot of the cross, confessing our shame and sins to God. Let us believe that he who said, "Father forgive them," is faithful to his Word, faithful to forgive all our acts of unrighteousness, and faithful to leading us to a new life in him. Like many of you know, Peter likewise betrayed Jesus. But unlike Judas, Peter knew the character and heart of Jesus. After being restored by his Lord, Peter reflected on the meaning of the crucifixion. He said in 1 Peter 2, "When they hurled their insults at him, he did not retaliate; when he suffered, he made no threats. Instead, he entrusted himself to him who judges justly. "He himself bore our sins" in his body on the cross, so that we might die to sins and live for righteousness; "by his wounds you have been healed." For "you were like sheep going astray," but now you have returned to the Shepherd and Overseer of your souls." I confess that I too have sinned against God and have gone astray. Before I was a Christian and even during my Christian life, I have followed my own heart and mind in acts of rebellion and unfaithfulness toward God. I

made idols of sex and success. I put my hope in people and not in God's unchanging word. Believing that I had strength to write my story and not humbling myself to my Creator's will for me. These sins have put me in times of shame and guilt. I felt so distant from God that I got lost in the loop of condemnation. But he who is faithful is always gracious to remind me that the Father has forgiven me. "Father forgive Curtis, for he does not know what he is doing." May God allow all of us to hear Jesus' plea for our forgiveness and believe that his promises are true. May God bless us to preach to the world the forgiveness of God and lead us to a new life in him.