



The next gleaming facet belonging to the 'Jewel of our Faith', the Cross, is 'forgiveness'. For the last two weeks we have been thinking about the way in which Jesus' sacrificial love was bringing the whole of estranged humanity back into unity, or 'at-one-ment' with God. His death dealt with our unrighteousness by graciously and undeservedly justifying us. Justification is inextricably bound up with the concept of forgiveness. **Read Job 7: 17-21; Ephes. 1: 3-10.**

1. Job's Question to God. Job 7: 17-21.

- All we know about Job is that he feared God, lived an upright life and was extraordinarily wealthy. During one dreadful, traumatic day he suffered a cataclysmic tragedy which robbed him of his livestock, his wealth, his family and his health. It all happens because of a spiritual battle between God and Satan.
- During his suffering, he asks God, 'Why are You so intimately concerned with every detail of our lives? Why do You examine and test me all the time and never let me alone? If I've sinned, why not just forgive me?'

2. The Question of Justice

- What is 'justice'? Justice is receiving what is owed us, it is receiving our due, whether in material things like food, housing, sanitation or in rendering other humans dignity, honour and respect. A team owes a leader respect and submission as a common object is pursued, if it is withdrawn, there is injustice and equity is lost.
- Where is equity in the face of injustice? Hammurabi's Law (an eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth) seems harsh but the truth is the value of the 'eye' needs to be determined & restored: until then something is owed.

3. Justice towards God.

- What is God's rightful due, what is He owed? Surely he is owed honour, dignity, love, respect, loyalty, obedience, submission and worship because He is holy and just, the creator God and the source of life.
- Every time I neglect my neighbour or am angry, greedy, lustful or manipulative, I am not only unjust toward my neighbour, but disobedient and dishonouring towards God Himself. I am not giving Him His rightful due.
- If God is the source of all life and Jesus is the Way the truth and the life, then injustice against God is injustice against life itself. It is bringing death to God's door. Sin is an attack on life, which is an attack on life's source. St Paul is not over-stating the case when he says 'The wages of sin is death'. **Romans 6: 23.**

4. How does God forgive us – what does God's forgiveness mean?

- I forgive (Greek *aphiēmi*) means 'You don't owe Me any more': God receives our offences, our injustices, and is willing to set aside His rightful claim for equity from us. God Himself absorbs the inequity created when we sin. He receives death from us and does not re-pay us in kind: He says we don't owe Him – He dies instead.
- But: How can God die? How can I be sure this is true and not a clever theological or philosophical construct?

5. In steps the Lord Jesus Christ. Ephesians 1: 7

- God becomes man and lives among us. Rather than punishing us, He receives all the injury we do Him, the insult we afford Him, the sins we commit, the rejection and denial of all we owe Him – and dies instead of us.
- Jesus reveals to us that **God exists**:
 - He has received our sin, forgiveness is available.
 - He won't treat us as we deserve or reward us according to our iniquities.
 - He treats us with mercy and grace; we don't owe Him anything anymore.
- God's justice is merciful and gracious. Jesus endures the injury we do Him to extend forgiveness to us all.

6. Our response is to live life through the Cross.

- **Receive forgiveness.** Accept that we haven't honoured and obeyed God as we should and **name** our offences.
- **Live a life of forgiveness.**
 - Be as forgiving to others as He is to you. Remember the forgiveness bit in the Lord's Prayer.
 - Remember our Lord's stern words about forgiveness: **Matthew 6: 14-15.**
 - Don't live storing emotional debts against people, let them off their debts to you, as God does yours.
 - As we live life through the cross, we extend the boundaries of Christ's Kingdom and give Him His honour.

Points to Ponder

Maybe we, like Job, feel oppressed with so much Divine attention and think that a God of love ought to 'just forgive' The wonder of God's love and mercy. God is so much kinder than the kindest human being. Try reading Ephesians 1: 3-10 again and see if you understand it better after Peter's sermon.