

# THE REDTHREAD

## GOD MAY SEE A KING

BETH REID | Reprinted from www.prisonfellowship.org

### THE GIFT OF SALVATION

Acknowledge to yourself and to God that you have sinned (Romans 3:23).

In sorrow for your sins, turn from them to God and ask His forgiveness (Isaiah 55:7).

By faith receive the Lord Jesus Christ as your Savior, believing that He died in your place on the cross (John 3:16).

### WHY & HOW

THE RED THREAD exists to be an encouragement to the men and women currently separated from family and friends in correctional institutions. It is published on the 15th of each month by **Crimson House Ministries** at **1616 North Robberson, Springfield, Missouri, 65803**. Please send all correspondence to that address. Subscription information is available online at: <http://readingroom.crimsonhouseministries.org>

John Jennings stood in the courtroom, looking into the eyes of the man who had murdered his son. This man had been his son's friend, but one night, this "friend" took John's son into the woods, demanded his money, and shot him.

Arrested and ashamed, he stood in the courtroom, facing his crimes and his best friend's family members, including John. Tears streaking his face, John said what he had come to say to this friend turned killer: "God told me to tell you He loves you, man, and the only way we win today is if you give your life to the Lord."

Swallowing hard, John knew there was one more thing God had told him to tell his son's murderer. "God

loves you," he repeated, and taking a deep breath, he continued, "and I love you, too."

John walked out. The entire courtroom was in tears. As he left the courthouse, John says he heard God speak to him once more. *Now, son, I can use you*, He said.

This tearful obedience to God was a long time coming. The road leading to this emotionally charged day in court was winding and unpaved, but

John says, "I am where I am today because of Prison Fellowship."

### POWER OF MONEY

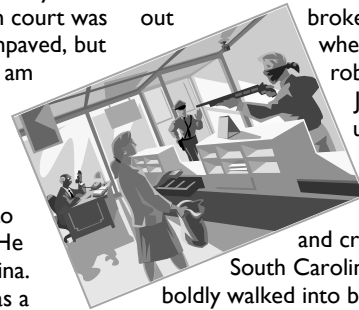
John started getting into trouble in his twenties. He grew up in North Carolina. Though he admits he was a "little wild," he was a smart kid and

went to college. He failed to "grasp what life was all about," though, and dropped out. He began doing and selling drugs. A whiz with numbers, he also earned supplemental income by preparing people's taxes for them, fudging the numbers so that both he and his "clients" received a hefty return from the IRS.

This ill-gotten wealth came quickly and went even faster. "I didn't know what I was doing," John says, "so I lost it all. I didn't want to go out

broke, so that's when I started robbing banks." John teamed up with his uncle, a "career criminal," and crossed into South Carolina where he boldly walked into banks with a toy gun he had bought his son.

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## PASTOR'S MESSAGE

"My little children, I am writing these things to you so

that you may not sin. But if anyone does sin, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous. He is the propitiation for our sins, and not for ours only but also for the sins of the whole world" (1 John 2:1-2 ESV).

In classical Greek the word *propitiation* means "to make prayers and sacrifices as a means to appease the gods." In the Hebrew language it stayed close to the same with the meaning "to cover" and was expressed in the Jewish rituals of sacrifices that would "cover sin from the eyes of God"; thus, see God's anger

turned to favor and was prevalent in the Day of Atonement, "And this shall be an everlasting statute unto you, to make an atonement for the children of Israel for all their sins once a year. And he did as the LORD commanded Moses" (Leviticus 16:34 KJV).

### THE DIFFERENCE

However in the Greek Scripture text, and contrary to its classical use, propitiation is very plainly used with the Holy One of Israel not being *made* gracious by the gift (satisfaction) offered Him; rather, in His very anger towards sin He is gracious in the appeasement He gives. There is wrath against sin in the Godhead; His absolute holiness burns everlastingly against the false and impure. But in wrath He remembers mercy. Beneath the fire of God's anger glows the fire of God's

love. Thus, it is not our offering that ultimately brings favor with God as in the classical sense; rather, it was His own offering given through His Son.

### GOD'S LOVE

"Herein is love, not that we loved God, but that he loved us, and sent his Son to be the propitiation for our sins" (1 John 4:10 KJV).

The Gospel brings the wonderful message that we, once dead to trespasses and sin, might have everlasting life. Under the Law the explicit command was [you] love the Lord thy God with all your heart, soul, and might (cf. Deut. 6:5) and while Jesus brings that command into the New Covenant it is tempered with the wondrous words 'the Lord thy God loves you!'

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He showed the tellers the butt of the realistic-looking Colt .45 in his pocket and left with duffle bags of cash.

When the law caught up with John, he was 37 years old and faced 165 years for armed robbery and aiding and abetting a criminal. "I realized this was not the life God created me to live," says John. "I asked God to give me one more chance so I could be the man He created me to be. He heard my prayer."

### FINDING SOVEREIGNTY

In prison, John learned that Prison Fellowship volunteers came in to lead Bible studies and talk with the inmates. John took an interest. "They started telling me about Christ and introducing me to the Lord," remembers John. "I knew they were telling me the truth."

Then one Christmas season, a Prison Fellowship volunteer named Bruce Williams sang a song. "I'll remember it my whole life," John says.



*When others see a shepherd boy, God may see a king. Even though your life seems filled with ordinary things, in just a moment He can touch you, and everything will change. When others see a shepherd boy, God may see a king.*

With tears in his eyes, John asked Bruce if he could get a copy of the inspiring song. Bruce promised he would mail him a cassette. Two days before Christmas, he received the cassette Bruce had promised. "That really touched my heart," says John.

The next week, Bruce wrote John to ask if they could meet one on one. John agreed. Soon, Bruce brought his family so they could meet and visit with John, too.

When John came up for parole, Bruce talked to the board on John's behalf. And when John was released, Bruce and his family offered him a room in their home, new clothes, and a job with their family business. "When he did this for me, I thought, Wow, I need to do this for someone else," recalls John. "So I said, 'Lord, if You give me what I need to do it, I'll do the same thing.'"

### POWER OF OBEDIENCE

John says God called him back to North Carolina, where he founded an organization that helps ex-offenders by meeting them at the



gates and providing the spiritual, physical, and financial support they need to begin anew.

"John is doing tremendous work," says James Murray, Prison Fellowship's field director in South Carolina. "I believe in the body of Christ, and this particular ministry impacts the least of

these. In God's eyes, the least of these are the greatest of these. I believe that John is one of the greatest of these."

More than a decade ago, John heard a song about a shepherd boy, who stood as a king in the eyes of God. John took that song to heart.

Once a drug dealer, a cheat, and a thief, John Jennings has become a Christian, an entrepreneur, and a fisher of men. And even despite losing his only son to a thoughtless and violent murder, he has found a renewed hope and purpose in his life. ■

*After this manner therefore pray ye: Our Father which art in heaven, Hallowed be thy name. Thy kingdom come. Thy will be done in earth, as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread. And forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors. And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil: For thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory, for ever. Amen. For if ye forgive men their trespasses, your heavenly father will also forgive you: But if ye forgive not men their trespasses, neither will your Father forgive your trespasses. (Matthew 6:9-15 KJV)*

## FORGIVENESS F.A.Q.'S

### Q. Is forgiveness a conscious choice, or an emotional state?

A. I believe forgiveness is a choice we make through a decision of our will, motivated by obedience to God and his command to forgive.

The Bible instructs us to forgive as the Lord forgave us:

*Colossians 3:13—Bear with each other and forgive whatever grievances you may have against one another. Forgive as the Lord forgave you. (NIV)*

### Q. How do we forgive when we don't feel like it? How do we translate the decision to forgive into a change of heart?

A. We forgive by faith, out of obedience. Since forgiveness goes against our nature, we must forgive by faith, whether we feel like it or not. We must trust God to do the work in us that needs to be done so that the forgiveness will be complete.

I believe God honors our commitment to obey Him and our desire to please him when we choose to forgive. He completes the work in his time. We must continue to forgive (our job), by faith, until the work of forgiveness (the Lord's job), is done in our hearts.

*Philippians 1:6—And I am certain that God, who began the good work within you, will continue his work until it is finally finished on the day when Christ Jesus returns. (NLT)*

### Q. How will we know if we have truly forgiven?

A. Corrie Ten Boom, a Christian woman who sur-

vived a Nazi concentration camp during the Holocaust, said, "Forgiveness is to set a prisoner free, and to realize the prisoner was you."

We will know the work of forgiveness is complete when we experience the freedom that comes as a result. We are the ones who suffer most when we choose not to forgive. When we do forgive, the Lord sets our hearts free from the anger, bitterness, resentment and hurt that previously imprisoned us.

Most times, however, forgiveness is a slow process.

*Matthew 18:21-22—Then Peter came to Jesus and asked, "Lord, how many times shall I forgive my brother when he sins against me? Up to seven times?" Jesus answered, "I tell you, not seven times, but seventy-seven times. (NIV)*

This answer by Jesus makes it clear that forgiveness is not easy for us. It's not a one-time choice and then we automatically live in a state of forgiveness. Forgiveness may require a lifetime of forgiving, but it is important to the Lord. We must continue forgiving until the matter is settled in our heart.

### Q. What if the person we need to forgive is not a believer?

A. I have found that prayer is one of the best ways to break down the wall of unforgiveness in my heart. When I begin to pray for the person who has wronged me, God gives me new eyes to see and a new heart to care for that person. As I pray, I start to see that person as God sees them, and I realize that he or she is precious to the Lord. I also see myself in a new light, just as guilty of sin and failure as the other person. I too am in need of forgiveness. If God did not withhold his forgiveness

from me, why should I withhold my forgiveness from another?



### Q. Is it okay to feel anger and want justice for the person we need to forgive?

A. This question presents another reason to pray for the person we need to forgive. We can pray for God to deal with the injustices, for God to judge the person's life,

and then we can leave that prayer at

the altar. We no longer have to carry the anger. Although it is normal for us to feel anger toward sin and injustice, it is not our job to judge the other person in their sin.

*Luke 6:37—Do not judge, and you will not be judged. Do not condemn, and you will not be condemned. Forgive, and you will be forgiven. (NIV)*

### Q. Why must we forgive?

A. The best reason to forgive is because Jesus commanded us to forgive. We learn from Scripture, if we don't forgive, neither will we be forgiven: *Matthew 6:14-16—For if you forgive men when they sin against you, your heavenly Father will also forgive you. But if you do not forgive men their sins, your Father will not forgive your sins. (NIV)*

We also forgive so that our prayers will not be hindered: *Mark 11:25—And when you stand praying, if you hold anything against anyone, forgive him, so that your Father in heaven may forgive you your sins. (NIV)*

In summary and in closing, we forgive out of obedience to the Lord. It is a choice, a decision we make. However, as we do this "forgiving," we discover the command is in place for our own good, and we receive the reward of our forgiveness—freedom. ■

# PASTOR'S MESSAGE

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In his gospel John wrote, "Whoever believes in the Son has eternal life; whoever does not obey the Son shall not see life, but the wrath of God remains on him" (John 3:36 ESV). Again, in wrath God remembers mercy. Beneath the fire of His anger glows the fire of His love: for God so loved the world (cf. John 3:16); and while we were yet sinners Christ died for us (cf. Romans 5:8).

Thus, Christ our propitiation has appeased, through God's own design, His own wrath that abides on us as sinners. In Christ's death on the cross Jesus fully paid the penalty of that sin so we can say, as did Paul, "What shall we then say to these things? If God be for us, who can be against us? He that spared not his own Son, but delivered him up for us all, how shall he not with him also freely give us all things?" (Romans 8:31-32 KJV).

Some of 'those things' Paul references in that passage that the Father gives is not just the



initial forgiveness seen in our salvation, but a continued cleansing brought about from our daily confessions.

## FORGIVENESS

There is a noteworthy contrast between forensic and filial forgiveness. The difference is important because of John's 'family' theme throughout his letter. By definition forensic forgiveness means "court approved" while filial means "pertaining to or benefitting a son or daughter." Prior to conversion Christ the propitiation prepares a forensic forgiveness received upon repentance and brings peace between us and the Father. But as a son or daughter, His propitiation and advocacy brings a restoration of favor within the family with filial forgiveness!

Notice that John does not say that if anyone *repents*, he has an Advocate nor if anyone *confesses* his sins, he has an Advocate.... What he does say is that if any man *sin*, we have an Advocate with the Father. Before we even repent of that sinful action, in the very moment we did the sinful act, Jesus Christ was there at the throne of God to represent us. Then because of His faithful advocacy, the Holy Spirit brings

conviction to us, and we confess our sin to the Father. In that confession, we 'speak the same thing' as the Father and our filial forgiveness received.

## CONCLUSION

Sometimes sons and daughters forget the free gift of propitiation and advocacy by trying other things in an attempt to 'clear the air' with the Father—work harder, do more, self-denial, self-abasement—but there is nothing we can physically do, no gift to offer, that 'appeases' Him. He has already given the gift in Christ! What brought us in the family—confession—is what restores favor in the family by allowing Jesus to be both propitiation and advocate!

The question is: What are you doing outside of repentance/confession to try and earn His favor? In essence, by doing such there is an attempt to replace Christ's advocacy by a work that you do. Let Him be everything that He is and confess any sin today that the Lord is already exercising His advocacy in.

—John Pace  
Pastor and Red Thread Publisher  
Springfield, MO

# FORGIVENESS

Jesus said to turn the other cheek  
He also said to forgive 7 times 70  
Easy for Him to say  
He was God  
Or at least the son of God

How do I get to the place  
Where I forgive those  
Who disrespect me and malign me  
Those who could care less about my feelings  
Yet I still care about theirs

Why is forgiveness so hard  
Why does it take so much out of you  
Why is it easier to hold on to a grudge  
Rather than to let it go  
Am I doing something wrong

If it is true that we are to love others  
As we love ourselves  
And we stay mad at ourselves  
For our misdeeds and misdoing  
Is it realistic to easily forgive someone  
If you extend the olive branch  
Of friendship and kindness and forgiveness  
And it is not returned

Should you really keep trying  
Even if you feel it is a lost cause

Or will persistence win the day  
With the honesty and sincerity of words  
Be recognized and acknowledged  
Followed by a reasonable attempt  
To let bygones be bygones

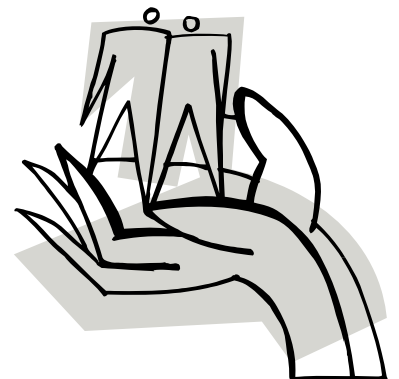
Is this one of the famous battles  
Between head and heart  
With both having opposing views  
But the same hold on your psyche  
Neither winning, neither losing

Sometimes I wonder  
If our lack of ability to forgive  
Is truly more rooted in our  
Bruised ego and hurt feelings  
Perhaps the pain we feel is comforting  
If I were to release my anger and my pain  
Only to be knocked again  
Who becomes the bigger fool  
Me for trying  
Or them for doing

I wish that such matters were as easy  
As a game of tic-tac-toe  
Or perhaps it is  
Sometimes you win and sometimes you lose  
Neither happens if you don't take a chance

So I resolve to forgive  
To be the bigger and better person  
Give of myself as I would want others  
To give to me  
And perhaps this time everyone will win.

—Chuck Smoot



## YOU SAID IT!

We love hearing from you and so do our readers. Please send your articles, poems, praise reports, testimonies, etc..., to  
The Red Thread, Crimson House Ministries, 1616 North Robberson, Springfield, MO, 65803.



1616 NORTH ROBBERSON  
SPRINGFIELD, MO 65803

## 10 FORGIVENESS QUOTES

"Forgiveness always seems so easy, when we need it, and so hard when we need to give it." —*Fresh Start Devotionals*

"Anger makes you smaller, while forgiveness forces you to grow beyond what you were." —Cherie Carter Scott, *If Love is a Game, These Are the Rules*

"Nothing in the Christian life is more important than forgiveness—our forgiveness of others and God's forgiveness of us." —John MacArthur, Jr., *Alone with God*

"We are to forgive so that we may enjoy God's goodness without feeling the weight of anger burning deep within our hearts. Forgiveness does not mean we recant the fact that what happened to us was wrong. Instead, we roll our burdens onto the Lord and allow Him to carry them for us."  
—Charles Stanley, *Landmines in the Path of the Believer*

"Forgiveness is the fragrance the violet sheds on the heel that has crushed it." —Mark Twain

"We are not bound to trust an enemy; but we are bound to forgive him." —Thomas Watson, *Body of Divinity*

"Forgiveness is to set a prisoner free, and to realize the prisoner was you." —Corrie Ten Boom

"The best way to get the last word is to apologize." —*God's Little Devotional Book for Women*

"Forgiveness does not change the past, but it does enlarge the future." —Paul Boese

"To be forgiven is such sweetness that honey is tasteless in comparison with it. But yet there is one thing sweeter still, and that is to forgive. As it is more blessed to give than to receive, so to forgive rises a stage higher in experience than to be forgiven." —Charles Spurgeon

