

same direction: *“Don’t let him get away with that!”*  
*“It’s only right that you give him the same in return!”*  
Though we are tempted in such ways – *and*  
*sometimes we fall*, we are now DIFFERENT in Jesus  
Christ!

d. God is calling and empowering us to **be** and **live** who we are in Christ:

- i. Be → <sup>NAS</sup> **2 Corinthians 5:17** “Therefore if any man is in Christ, *he is* a new creature; the old things passed away; behold, new things have come.” We remain in this sinful world, but we no longer belong to this sinful world; *we are NEW and DIFFERENT in Christ!*
- ii. Live → <sup>NAS</sup> **2 Corinthians 5:15** [Jesus] died for all, that they who live should no longer live for themselves, but for Him who died and rose again on their behalf.” ***So how do we live for Christ?***  
The Bible says: **Forgive “each other, just as in Christ God forgave you.”** (NIV Ephesians 4:32)

**Conclusion:** Now, *rejoicing in our reception of God’s wonderful gift of full forgiveness in Jesus Christ*, let us go forth to offer that same wonderful gift of full forgiveness to ANYONE and EVERYONE who has ever sinned against us!

And all God’s people said: *Amen!*

# “Forgiveness is a Gift!”

*So the FIRST STEP is taken by the person who has the gift!*

Based on Various Passages – NIV

2<sup>nd</sup> Wednesday of Lent – 2010

February 24 → 11:00 & 7:00

**Introduction:** Dear friends, we have all sinned against God and others, so we are all in need of the gift of forgiveness – *both from God and from others!*

But first, *what is a gift?* A gift is “**something to show friendship, affection, support, etc.**” (Random House, 569) A gift is given from the HEART OF THE GIVER in connection with a NEED OF THE RECEIVER! For example:

- A person is hungry – *that is his need*, so a person with food SUPPORTS the person who is hungry by giving him food as a GIFT – *not because he earned it, but because he needed it!*
- A person has sinned against you – *so he is in need of your forgiveness*. He doesn’t deserve it but he needs it, *so you show him FRIENDSHIP by giving him the GIFT of forgiveness!*

In this sermon we will focus on **God’s gift of forgiveness to us** AND **our gift of forgiveness to others!**

1. **God’s Gift of Forgiveness to Us:** God’s gift to us is a PACKAGE of blessings! Some of the *most important*

contents of that package include ✦ the full forgiveness of our sins, ✦ spiritual life, and ✦ eternal salvation!

a. Those eternal blessings come to us by grace:

- i. **G** – God’s
- ii. **R** – Riches
- iii. **A** – at
- iv. **C** – Christ’s
- v. **E** – Expense

Even though we CANNOT earn them and can do NOTHING to deserve them, *we have received them by grace through faith!* GRACE is God offering them – *because Christ has fully paid for them!* While faith is also God’s gift to us – *which enables us to receive His eternal gifts!* As the Bible says: “It is because of him [God the Father] that [we] are in Christ Jesus...” (1 Cor. 1:30 NIV)

b. These passages will help us understand the grace – the undeserved love and goodness – of God’s gift:

- i. <sup>NAS</sup> **Romans 6:23** “For the wages of sin is death [since we have all sinned, we all deserve physical death and eternal punishment], but the free gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord.” We deserve the worst, *but God has freely given us the most wonderful GIFT in Christ Jesus our Lord!*
- ii. <sup>NIV</sup> **Ephesians 2:1** “As for you, you were dead in your transgressions and sins...<sup>3</sup> ...Like the rest, we were by nature objects of wrath [that is all bad news and we cannot escape].<sup>4</sup> But because of his great love for us, God, who is rich in mercy,<sup>5</sup> made us

alive with Christ even when we were dead in transgressions--it is by grace you have been saved.” In other words, *it is by God’s free gift of full forgiveness in Christ that we have been saved!*

2. **Our Gift of Forgiveness to Others:**

a. Should we wait to offer the GIFT of forgiveness until people are sorry? Our sinful nature says: “Yes!” But God says: “No!”

i. What did God do for us? <sup>NAS</sup> **Romans 5:8** “...while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us.”

(Rom. 5:8 NAS) *He didn’t wait until we were sorry!*

ii. In fact, offering the gift of forgiveness can lead a person to be sorry: “...God’s kindness leads you toward repentance...” (Rom. 2:4 NIV) In a similar way, *our offering of the GIFT of forgiveness can lead a person to be sorry! We should act FIRST!* Jesus even said: “And when you stand praying, if you hold ANYTHING against ANYONE, forgive him, so that your Father in heaven may forgive you your sins.” (Mark 11:25 NIV)

b. Our entire motivation for GIVING THE GIFT OF FORGIVENESS is based upon OUR RECEIVING OF GOD’S GIFT OF FORGIVENESS!

i. We wronged God, *so He gave us the GIFT of forgiveness through Jesus!*

ii. Now, as others wrong us, *God calls us to give them the GIFT of forgiveness!*

c. But the sinful world says: “Hold a grudge!” “Get revenge!” Even our own sinful natures draw us in the