

you can see this whole arc of her story: the mystery of Weil's eating disorder, her stubbornness around grace, but also her desire to surrender to Jesus. Imagine her praying this poem with full attention and utter sincerity each day over the course of years. Her acute awareness of her need and her willingness to bring it to Christ are astonishing indeed.

## WEIL'S THEOLOGY OF THE CROSS

When I ponder Simone Weil's life, it's not her savant-level genius or radical activism that grips me. Rather, it is her real-life experience of the Cross. She reckoned the goodness of God and the affliction of humanity as a real contradiction and an infinite distance. Evil cannot be rationalized or justified without calling good evil or evil good.

*BUT, she says, the Cross of Christ spans that distance because right there, we see goodness and affliction intersect in the heart of Perfect Love as he hangs dying, forgiving, and loving.*

*And, she adds, at the Cross, our own afflictions act like pincers that grab us and arrest us before the Mystery of the crucified God.*

As we wait there (our gaze attentive to grace), healing love flows from Christ's wounds into us and through ours into this broken world.

Thus, I would argue, Simone Weil's astonishing vision of the Cross, the source of divine healing, is precisely what our afflicted world needs today. □

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# Everyone Is Forgiven

by Greg Albrecht

**T***o forgive somebody is to say... "You have done something unspeakable and by all rights I should call it quits between us. Both my pride and my principles demand no less. However, although I make no guarantee that I will be able to forget what you've done, and though we may both carry the scars for life, I refuse to let it stand between us. I still want you for my friend."*

*To accept forgiveness means to admit you've done something unspeakable that needs to be forgiven. And thus both parties must swallow the same thing: their pride.*

*—"Wishful Thinking"  
by Frederick Buechner*



**I**f you are anything like me, you have traveled the road of forgiveness many times, coming and going, in both directions. Ironically, the more I stand in awe of the imponderable beauty of forgiveness, the less I realize I actually know! You may say, "Well, if you don't know that much about forgiveness, what kind of a pastor are you anyway?" Funny you should ask such a question. It allows me to tell the story of the man who thought he was calling the liquor store. He made a mistake and punched in the phone number of his pastor instead.

The pastor picked up



the phone and didn't even have time to identify himself when the voice on the other end of the phone said, *"Send six cases of bourbon over to my house please... here's the address."*

The pastor had a small congregation and immediately recognized the voice on the other end of the phone as a member of his congregation. As gently as he could he said, *"You've made a mistake... I'm your pastor."*

There was a slight pause on the other end of the line, and then, perhaps out of embarrassment that his pastor knew how much alcohol he was planning on ordering, the man demanded, *"Well, what the heck are you doing at the liquor store?"*

So you might ask, *"Why on earth are you talking about forgiveness when you admit you are not an expert?"*

I know forgiveness because I've been forgiven.

I know forgiveness. I have seen the miracles and wonders it produces in people's lives.

I know the amazing and stupendous beauty of forgiveness—a spiritual reality so profound that it surpasses the glory of majestic mountains, the roaring waves of the ocean and the breathtaking magnificence of the sun setting over the desert.

Forgiveness is at the heart and soul of the gospel of Jesus Christ. Forgiveness is forever one of the great mysteries of who God is and what he is like. Forgiveness, as proclaimed by the gospel of Jesus Christ, means that all humans need forgiveness and it means that all humans are offered forgiveness. *Forgiveness is a divine gift, a gift we cannot pass on to others until we have fully*

*accepted, believed, embraced and experienced it.*

## **WE ALL NEED TO BE FORGIVEN**

*Everybody needs to be forgiven, and everybody needs to forgive someone else.*

God's forgiveness is not limited to just those who beg for it or those who qualify for it by proving to God that they are "worthy" of being forgiven. God's forgiveness is unconditional and when we understand, embrace and accept his forgiveness, *God's grace recalibrates our ingrained religious indoctrination that insists God limits his forgiveness.*

God does not dole out his forgiveness according to human standards of worth—God's unconditional and forever forgiveness means that he has

determined that every human being deserves, by his grace and because of and through the Cross of Christ, total and equal forgiveness. There are no limits to God's forgiveness—no human can draw a boundary around God's forgiveness and hem him in and restrict him.

God's grace is lavishly given without human distinctions of worthiness. It is not reserved for those determined by themselves or others to be virtuous and righteous. God's gracious forgiveness is provided to one and all because of God's own goodness.

No virtuous human behavior can ever qualify one to be forgiven by God and no evil human behavior can ever disqualify one from being forgiven by God. God unconditionally forgives—he always forgives—in fact, the entire world has already been forgiven by virtue of what happened on the cross of Christ.

When Jesus said *“Father, forgive them, they don't know what they are doing”* (Luke 23:34) he was not only talking about those Roman soldiers who carried out his crucifixion—he was talking about you, me, and everyone who has ever lived.

## WE ARE ALL FORGIVEN

God does not force us to accept his forgiveness. ***We are all forgiven, but we are free to reject God's forgiveness.***

Why would anyone refuse to be forgiven? Many refuse to be forgiven for the same reason as they reject God's grace in favor of Christless religion. They don't want to accept his free handouts. People reject God's forgiveness because they would rather live in some religious la-la land where they believe they can earn and deserve forgiveness the “old fashioned way”—the way of “old time religion”—of working and qualifying and proving to God they are worthy of forgiveness.

The fact that we are all forgiven does not mean anything and everything goes with God—the fact that he unconditionally forgives us, that he will always forgive us and that we are forgiven by the Cross of Christ does not mean God is a permissive heavenly Father who delights in all kinds of immoral behavior. The fact that we are all forgiven does not mean that everything we do pleases God.

We are forgiven yet we still stumble and fall.

God does not refuse to embrace anyone who wishes to accept his forgiveness. When God's forgiveness is the topic, refusal and rejection are not concepts that apply to him—they only apply to humans who refuse and reject God's freely given, gracious gift of forgiveness.

No one has had their “last chance” to be forgiven—no one can sink so low or travel so far away from God that they may not be forgiven—but they must embrace God's forgiveness, and yield to him, trusting in him, and of course that means changing... repenting... of a former way of life.

Jesus never made anyone beg to be forgiven—but Jesus did urge people to change and repent and believe the good news of the gospel of Jesus Christ. Jesus issued an invitation, and his invitation does not consist of scaring the hell out of people until they accept his overtures. Jesus extends a proposal, and his offer is not predicated on making anyone claw, scrape or agonize their way through religious obstacles, proving to him that they were worthy of his forgiveness.

God's forgiveness is one of the core elements of the gospel—the gospel of Jesus Christ is all about

No one has had their “last chance” to be forgiven—no one can sink so low or travel so far away from God that they may not be forgiven...

God's one-way, unconditional, no-strings-attached, forever love to people like you and me who cannot ever measure up to who they should be. No one can ever be so bad, evil and sinful that God will withdraw his freely given forgiveness from that person—but again, God does not force his forgiveness on those who reject and refuse it.

***The grace, mercy and kindness of God offers us forgiveness from anything and everything.*** It is the grace, mercy and kindness of God that forever forgives us all—all of us—may we accept and embrace his gracious invitation of healing and wholeness. □

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