



Links Players

Forgiveness - The Ultimate Mulligan

...for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, and are justified [declared just] by his grace as a gift, through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus, whom God put forward as a propitiation by his blood, to be received by faith. This was to show God's righteousness [justice], because in his divine forbearance he had passed over former sins...so that he might be just and the justifier of the one who has faith in Jesus. (Romans 3:21-26, ESV)

Have you ever asked someone to forgive you during a round of golf? Maybe you accidentally stepped in their line. Maybe you unintentionally teed off first when your partner had the honor. Perhaps you forgot to rake the bunker.

Explaining forgiveness is much like trying to explain the concept of time; we know exactly what it is until we are required to explain it. St. Augustine famously quipped, "What is time then? If nobody asks me, I know; but if I were desirous to explain it to one that should ask me, plainly I do not know."

Similarly, we say, "God forgives." But knowing it and explaining it aren't necessarily the same thing. One error we make regarding God's forgiveness is to assume he forgives like we forgive. If that were the case, Jesus' death was unnecessary. Let's explore that a bit.

We often make the mistake of parroting cliches we've heard without thinking about them. Here's a couple to jog your memories: "Let go and let God," and my favorite, "God's love is unconditional."

Take the comment, "God loves you unconditionally." Is that true? If that were literally true, then everyone, including every atheist will spend eternity in the new heavens and new earth.

Why is it inaccurate to say that? Well, God is, indeed, love. But God is also entirely just. The cross of Calvary was as much about God's justice as it is God's love. It is impossible to over emphasize God's love. Yet, when we minimize or overlook God's justice, we end up distorting God's love. And, even if unknowingly, we evacuate the cross of its meaning.

God's justice—biblical justice—requires that the violations of his law are punished. God's justice must be satisfied if lawbreakers are to find forgiveness.

So, to receive God's love, there are conditions. First, God's justice must

be satisfied. Considering God's unwavering commitment to justice—a non-negotiable condition—someone must pay the penalty for your transgression, either you or a substitute. Jesus Christ's death is a "condition" for God's love to be encountered by anyone.

Furthermore, God, in unspeakable love, sent his Son to earth to live the perfect life, and die an atoning death. For anyone to receive his love and forgiveness, he must repent and trust God's truth about himself, about Christ's death, and about his own sinfulness. That's a condition. So, to say, "God's love is unconditional," is false.

Grace is free, but it is not cheap!

Prayer – Remind us to go beyond reciting platitudes. Teach us to walk with and worship the one who paid our ransom.

READING - Romans 3:21-26; 1 John 2:1-3; Romans 4:1-8

OPENING QUESTIONS: Have you played so poorly in a best ball that you find yourself asking partner your partner to forgive you? Share a few of those stories.

1. A. Paul's primary concern in **3: 21-26** is _____? Explain. 1-B. How does one become righteous before a holy God?

2. In **John 2:1-3** and **Romans 3**, what does it mean for God to put forth Jesus Christ as "propitiation?" In light of this, does Jesus persuade God the Father to love us, or is Jesus' "blood" at the cross, an expression of God's love. Discuss.

2. Glance at **Romans 4:1-8**. What two Old Testament men address the issue of forgiveness and righteousness? What do they say about it? Discuss.
