

# Forgiveness

In God's Decree:

Planned

Source

(forgiveness)

Can be called: forgiveness decreed

Num. 23:21; Rev. 13:8

(Note regarding terms: *Forgiveness* is one essential aspect of *justification*: God does *not* impute iniquity to us; the other aspect: God imputes Christ's *righteousness* to us)

Explanation: So crucial is God's decree for our forgiveness/justification that some call it "forgiveness," others "eternal justification" (Utrecht 1905: "Christ from eternity undertook to be the Surety of His people ...")

Caution: Putting all of justification or forgiveness here fails to see the vital importance of 1) the **cross** by which forgiveness must be *obtained*—the shedding of blood & the real death of God's Son, & 2) **faith**, by which forgiveness is obtained

(\*The 1905 Dutch Synod of Utrecht represents Reformed orthodoxy and is considered by PRCA theologians as reflecting the PRCA's views)

At the Cross of Christ:

Obtained

Basis

(forgiveness)

Called: satisfaction, atonement, payment

Rom. 4:25; 3:24; *Belgic Confession* 20-21

Explanation: So essential is Christ's cross for forgiveness, it is sometimes referred to as "forgiveness." By the cross, Christ "obtained" forgiveness (*Heidelberg Catechism*, Q. & A. 17; 37), so that "we *have* in Christ...the washing away of our sins" (Baptism Form)

(Utrecht 1905: "God's word ... and our confession ... speak ... of an objective justification sealed by the resurrection of Christ")

Caution: Putting all of forgiveness here fails to see that what Christ *obtained* for us must yet be *given* to us. What we "have" in Christ must now be "applied" to us (Baptism Form). What Christ obtained for us, we must receive by *faith* (*Heidelberg Catechism*, Q. & A. 76). Thus, the next column:

In Time, by Faith:

Granted

Received/Obtained

**Forgiveness**

Called: pardon, remission, blotting out, justification

I Kings 8:45-50; Ps. 32:5; Prov. 28:13; Matt. 6:12; Mark 1:4; Luke 1:77; 3:3; 24:47; Acts 2:38; 3:19; 5:31; 8:22; 10:43; 26:18; Rom. 8:30; James 5:15; I John 1:9

By faith: *Belgic Confession* 22-23; *Heidelberg Catechism*, Q. & A. 61, 84; Rom. 3:26, 28, 30; 5:1; Gal. 2:16; 3:8, 11, 24. We *seek & obtain* forgiveness. Thus, even though Christ obtained it in the past, forgiveness is future. God *will* forgive (*Heidelberg Catechism* Q. & A. 56, 115, 126; *Canons* 5:7; etc.)

In this sense, our forgiveness copies God's (*Heidelberg Catechism*, Q. & A. 126; Luke 11:4; 17:3; John 20:23; Matt. 18:21, 27) (Utrecht 1905: "... it must be maintained with equal firmness that we *personally* become *partakers* of this benefit *only* by a sincere faith")

Cautions: 1) Scripture and confessions *predominantly* refer to forgiveness in *this* category. 2) This blessing cannot come apart from *God's decree and Christ's cross*