

## PASSING GRACE TO THE UNDESERVED

Acts 7:54-60

V. 60: [While they were stoning him, Stephen] "... fell on his knees and cried out, 'Lord, do not hold this sin against them.' When he had said this, he fell asleep."

In this Scripture, "he fell asleep" means that he died. Whoa--what happened?

Elders and people from the Synagogue, with the Sanhedrin's (san-HEED-rin, meaning Jewish religious council) approval, argued heatedly with Stephen. Stephen just counter-charged their blasphemy (BLAS-fem-ee, meaning disrespectful irreverence) accusations against him by charging them with murdering their Messiah! (Acts 6:8-14). Before he could assure them of Jesus' resurrection and ascension to heaven, they stopped listening. Instead, they hurled stones at the man.

Free will is a curious thing, isn't it? Coming to Jesus wasn't our choice, but accepting Jesus and believing that He's God's Son **IS** our choice. (See *Father-Initiator* devotion).

We chose to believe that Jesus died for our sins, including God's gift of salvation. Immediately, we also received the gift of the indwelling Holy Spirit. Then we learned how another gift—Grace—covers our current sins so that we're able to approach the father. We didn't earn any of these gifts, and are totally undeserving of them. We receive these unrequested, but necessary gifts, because God loves us enough to give us a second chance.

Free will allowed a mob to stone Stephen to death. In turn, Stephen—a man full of the Holy Spirit and wisdom (Acts 6:5)—extended God’s grace to them. He asked the Lord to not hold them responsible for their actions. As Stephen lay dying, evil free will stared into God’s free will love.

Did the mob deserve Stephen’s forgiveness?

**No one deserves grace.** Because we continue to sin, we remain liable for eternal death. But grace halts that condemnation. When Jesus died for our sins, (including all past, present, and future sins), our salvation is guaranteed. It is grace that preserves our acceptance to the Father.

Realizing how mind-blowing grace is, we’re amazed that we can pass it on to others. All kids enjoy sharing gladness. We can literally share our grace, by forgiving others when they hurt us. Grace can spread *through* us to others—as undeserving as we!

When cruelty meets forgiveness face-to-face, your enemies will wonder what you’re up to.

### **Take Home Nugget**

Forgiving the undeserved is impossible to do on our own strength. It can only be accomplished by yielding to the Holy Spirit. His work draws out the poison of hurt, betrayal, and anger, replacing it with mercy.

*Spreading grace to others also spreads God’s second chance.*

J.D. Griffith