



## SAVED, YES. BUT SUCCESSFUL?

**KEY SCRIPTURES:** Psalm 103, Isaiah 61

Forgiveness is such a multifaceted thing to try and understand. We're taught so many things about it that sometimes it's hard to wrap it all up in a nice, neat package.

But maybe that's the point.

Maybe there is no nice, neat package for the concept of forgiveness. In fact, I'm beginning to believe that it's not nice and neat at all.

When Jesus purchased our forgiveness, it was far from nice and neat. It was messy. It was tragic. It was beautiful. It was undeserved. So that makes me wonder: When I am trying with all my heart to give forgiveness away, why do I try to keep it so neat and easy?

I was thinking one day, over and over again as I was trying to get through my morning, about two people in particular who had treated me unkindly. One person wouldn't leave my thoughts while I was adding in the chocolate chips to the muffins I was making for breakfast, and thoughts of the other person kept creeping in while I was waiting for the muffins to cool after I had taken them out of the oven.

It had been months since the latter person had wronged me, and over a year since the former had done the same. But still, there they were. And all I could think of was, *I thought I had forgiven them. So, why does it still hurt to think about them?* And the reply came quickly. "Because you're not praying for their success."

I instantly found my thoughts leaning toward an argument with God. Success? Are you kidding? I'm having a hard enough time just trying to want them to be saved. And I'm only doing that because it's the right thing to do. It sure isn't because I feel like it! Now you want me to pray for their success? One of them fired me because I refused to participate in his unethical office practices. The other one bullied me at the best job I've ever had to the point that I was afraid I was going to have a heart attack and had to leave. And now you're saying I have to pray for their success?

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"...so we can know our value, live with purpose, and make a difference...[In that order.](#)"



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I didn't expect that. And I didn't like it.

I thought it was "religious" enough if I just prayed something like this for them. "Oh, forgiving Father, please show Yourself to them so they will know they need You. (Because they really, really do. Did I say that out loud?) Please bring a pinch to their hearts so they will see their need for a Savior. (And can you make it a kind of painful pinch? Did I say that out loud, too?) Help them see the error of their ways. (And how mean they were to me.) Help them see Your glory. (Kind of like, can you make me successful so they'll know I didn't need them anyway?) Amen. Oh, and P.S. When they do get saved, and You start working on their mansion, could you just put it way across town from mine so I don't run into them in heaven? Thanks! Oh, and amen again.

I had prayed often for their salvation, but I had to admit that I had thrown in some bits and pieces that would have been beneficial to me as well. Their remorse would have been great, and a little touch of humility would have been even better.

Maybe that's where the messiness of praying for their success needed to come in. As long as I felt like they were still under my feet, with fewer blessings, I was fine with their forgiveness. But what if they got saved, and rose above me? What if it looked like they could do what they did and not suffer the consequences of it? What if they never thought of me with any remorse or humility? How would they learn anything from the whole situation? Praying for their success would have nothing to do with me, or my retribution, and everything to do with God's glory.

Isn't that something like Mom breaking up an argument between two brothers and giving the biggest piece of cake to the one who'd done the hitting instead of to the one who got hit?

And then God answered me with one word: "Exactly!"

Forgiveness is upside down and backwards when I receive it, so it's going to be upside-down and backwards when I give it. That's what makes it messy, but that's also what makes it the most beautiful thing in the world. I cannot fathom it. I cannot explain it. But, I also cannot deserve it or earn it.

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And the God who offers me my forgiveness is the same God Who will take care of my playing field no matter what other players are on it. There is enough blessing to go around, just like there is enough forgiveness to go around.

Forgiveness is a walk. And I believe with all my heart that it happens in sloppy, sometimes slippery stages. But God is faithful, and He is steady, and if I will walk that road with Him, I will eventually be left with nothing in my heart but love. And, I might even get to that beautiful, glorious point when I say, "God, when You build their mansion, put it right next door! I don't want it to have more rooms than mine, but it's OK if you put it next door. Amen."

OK. So I'm still growing.

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