

HOW CAN I FORGIVE MYSELF?

By Pastor Greg Hooker

Most of us struggle with this question, 'How can I forgive myself?' While there is not a specific passage of Scripture that says, 'Thou shalt forgive thyself', there are Biblical teachings when we compare Scriptures with Scriptures that will shed some light on this prevailing question.

First we need to focus on the forgiveness of God. I John 1:9 states, *"If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness."* The Bible says simply by repenting and confessing to God our sins, He will forgive and cleanse us from – not just some – but ALL sins. I love that word 'all' because it means altogether inclusive. There is nothing that you and I have done, or can do that God will not forgive if we confess and ask Him – NOTHING!

Furthermore, Jesus Christ came to this earth, took upon Himself the form of a man and died on the cross to provide forgiveness to anyone who will receive His free gift. *"For this is my blood of the new testament, which is shed for many for the remission of sins"* (Matthew 26:28). *"For whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved"* (Romans 10:13).

While it is an absolute certainty that God forgives those who ask Him, it remains a problem for some to forgive 'themselves'. We believe and trust God to forgive us, so why can't we forgive that which God elects not to remember? Listen to these verses; *"As far as the east is from the west, so far hath he [God] removed our transgressions from us"* (Psalm 103:12). *"I, even I, am he that blotteth out thy transgressions for mine own sake, and will not remember thy sins"* (Isaiah 43:25). *"For I will forgive their wickedness and will remember their sins no more"* (Hebrews 8:12).

My friends, God has removed our sins ENTIRELY, never to be brought against us in judgment; why, because our sins were judged in Christ on the cross! Now my question is this, 'Why carry around the baggage of something that God doesn't even remember?!' What could possibly be gained by wearing a backpack filled with guilt that God has long forgotten?

Consider these things that happen when we refuse to forgive ourselves:

- 1) Our joy is gone.
- 2) Our peace is nowhere to be found.
- 3) Our usefulness for the Lord's work is rendered ineffective.
- 4) Our love for Christ, families and friends is lessened.
- 5) Our worship of the Lord is little to none.
- 6) Our service to the Lord's work is stagnate.

7) Our witness to our lost loved ones is not what it should be.

8) Our prayer life suffers.

9) Our life fails to bear good fruit.

Now I could go on and on with this list, but if you can relate to just one of the things I listed above, then you are sinning against a Holy God on a continual basis! For instance, let's take number nine, 'Our life fails to bear good fruit'. God commands us to live our lives in such a way as to yield fruit for His glory. If we refuse to forgive ourselves, then yielding becomes impossible! You see, God wants to set you free to live the victorious Christian life, but often we live in self-bound chains because we refuse to forgive ourselves! Every morning some people get out of bed, walk over to their dresser and begin wrapping themselves in chains of doubt and self-judgment – chains that God has long ago broken and discarded at the foot of the cross!

Now consider this (I saved the best for last), I want to share with you my life's verse. It's a Scripture that has delivered me from a lot of guilt and shame. Are you ready? Here it is, "*...this one thing I do, forgetting those things which are behind, and reaching forth unto those things which are before*" (Philippians 3:13)!

What did God just say? Go back and read it again! He said forget EVERYTHING in you past that is hindering your walk and fellowship with Christ – sins, failures, mistakes, times of guilt and sorrow – EVERYTHING! If you do not forgive yourself, you are almost useless in the service of the Lord. It is a tool used by Satan that will rob you of everything God has planned for your life! So why would you want to do that? Why would you give in to Satan and do his bidding, while at the same time deny God's awesome design for your life – to experience His victory, joy and fruitfulness?

If you were to die today and walk through the Pearly Gates, up to the Throne of Almighty God and say to Him, 'but God you don't know what I've done?' Do you know what He would say? He would look over at the Mercy Seat sprinkled with the blood of His precious Son and say, 'What sins are you talking about, I don't remember them anymore! The sins you talk about, I simply don't recollect' (This is a good place to pause and shout for joy)!

My friend, at the moment you trusted Christ as Savior, God forgave you completely – past, present and future sins! Not to forgive yourself for something that God has done for you is simply a slap in the face of Christ who gave His all to redeem and cast your sins in the sea of forgetfulness! Do not be a puppet attached to the strings of the Evil Puppeteer, the Devil is a liar and deceiver and will use your unjustified guilt to paralyze your Christian walk.

Would you pray this prayer with me: Dear Jesus, I know you died on the cross to give me victory over sin. I repent of my self-imposed guilt and blame that was paid for with your precious blood. I claim victory in your name and from this day forward I forgive myself of what you have already forgiven me for. In Jesus name, Amen!