

THE GIFT OF FORGIVENESS
“Forgiving Ourselves”
PSALM 103:10-14

Do you have trouble forgiving yourself of sins of the past? The reality in the lives of so many is this...there is the belief that their sin is so great and vast that God will not forgive them. While nothing is further from the truth, nonetheless, the deceptive tactics of Satan are such that he desires for us to live in defeat and guilty all through our lives. Therefore, He will continually throw our lives and our past up to us, if he possibly can!

However, the reason for so much pain and agony in our lives is not because God has not forgiven us, but rather because we forget a basic principle to living in total freedom. We fail to forgive ourselves of what we have done in the past! It doesn't matter what sins of the past have been committed, if you fail to forgive yourself for having that “sin”, then there will remain in your spirit a sensing of unforgiveness that will never be removed until you forgive yourself, based on the shed blood of Christ.

The sobering reason that so many are currently living in “guilt” is not because God doesn't have the power to forgive, but rather because of some “sin” that the person will not forgive himself or herself of. As a result, His Christian life is still somewhat a life of bondage. Your life may be a life of guilt because of:

- 1) A sin that you committed as a teenager that you can't forgive yourself of that only you and God know about.
- 2) Maybe a friendship was severed with someone and you still can't forgive yourself of that.
- 3) Maybe you have hurt your children or spouse and still you can't forgive yourself.

The truth is, God knows there are literally millions of things that we say and do, that after the fact, we would pay money if we would not have said what we said or done what we did. But the fact is we are human and there are going to be things that happen to us all throughout this earthly life.

Peter is a wonderful example of how something can happen in the heat of the moment, that can last for years and even generations! In the heat of the moment, when the pressure was on him about his relationship with Christ, he quickly denied it. Afterwards he remembered what Jesus said about him, and he went out, and cursed, and for all practical purposes he may well have thought that his life was over as far as of being any use. But that was not the case!

God revealed to Peter that He desired to use him. Yet, for Peter to be used greatly of God, he had to deal with his sin, and he had to forgive himself. When Peter forgave himself, God used him mightily to pen two

books in the New Testament. You may be where Peter is! You may feel that there are certain sins that you have committed that completely remove you from being used by God, but that is not at all consistent with Scripture.

There are some tragic consequences that occur when we don't accept God's forgiveness and forgive ourselves. The sad truth is that we have difficulty forgiving ourselves, based on what society says is or is not forgivable. Society has such of an effect on us, that often times what society says is forgivable then we accept as forgivable, and what society says is unforgivable, we say is unforgivable. The only problem with that is that societies and times change.

God makes it abundantly clear in Psalms 103:10, "He doesn't treat us as our sins deserve." God has not changed, neither will He ever change. It is He whom we are accountable to and no one else. And the marvelous truth about our Father is that He is not going to respond to us according to our sins. Because of His Greatness and Goodness, He doesn't treat us as our sins deserve. If we are to learn to forgive ourselves of sins of the past, these truths are vitally important to learn.

1. WE BASE FORGIVENESS ON THE SIZE OF THE SIN BUT GOD DOESN'T. Often our approach to person sin goes something like this, “The bigger the sin, then the less you can be forgiven, however, the smaller the sin, the more you can be forgiven”. However, there is one great problem with that line of thinking...it is flawed and flows from the minds of corrupted mankind. The fact is “only one sin” is an eternal offense before Holy God. Only “one sin” affects Holy God. One sin on the part of Adam and Eve, altered the entire universe...that is a sobering picture of what one sin of disobedience does before Holy God. Therefore “size” has nothing at all to do with forgiveness.

The sobering truth of Scripture is that “size” has nothing to do with the degree of God's forgiveness. As a matter of fact, 1 John 1:9 declares, “If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness. In that one single verse, God declares nothing about the size or degree of sin. Why? Because ever act, and one single act of disobedience is “sin” in the sight of God. The truth is, God never has a daily limit on what He will and will not forgive. Even the very number “seventy times seven” in Matthew 18 was not a reference to 490 times, but rather a reference to complete forgiveness.

While we may hold “unforgiveness” toward ourselves over committing some ungodly act, activity or deed, the fact stands that God never has to think about forgiving us when we sin, that is a settled issue that was taken care of, when Jesus Christ died on the cross and shed his blood for the totality of all mankind's sins. In Jesus death, is the death of God the Son

clothed in humanity dying for the sins of all man for all time. The question stands...if Jesus died on the cross and settled forgiveness for us for all time, what right do we have to withhold forgiveness from ourselves? Since Jesus Christ died for your sins, and dealt with all, past, present, and future, why should you withhold forgiveness from yourself?

2. WHEN WE REFUSE TO FORGIVE OURSELVES THEN WE PUNISH OURSELVES. The reality is, when we fail to forgive ourselves, the next think that takes place is that, we re-live the painful incident over and over again. It plays in the fabric of our minds, until we deal with it, or until we die. The saddening part is, we may confess our sin to God, but there will be torment in our souls until we choose to forgive ourselves, and claim God's forgiveness in our own lives, based on the shed blood at the cross.

This is the reason that many individuals pray and feel as though God has not forgiven them, when in truth, God has forgiven them, but they have refused to forgive themselves of sinful activities of the past. When David had sexual relations with Bathsheba, it wasn't enough for him to ask God to forgive him, he had to forgive himself of his personal act of disobedience to God's will. Sadly, many people live and feel far less than what God desires based on one single reality in their lives "unforgiveness toward self". For example, a parent will live in shame and struggle with his or her self image if they committed a sin in their youth that they have not forgiven themselves of.

The reality is, many are living with a poor self image today, who are sons and daughters of the most High God, not because He wants them to, but because some act of disobedience in the past that has been confessed to God, but "self has not forgiven self".

When we refuse to forgive ourselves of past actions, then we live daily, weekly, monthly with a burden that God never intended for us to carry on us. In the life of Peter, until he dealt with his actions of denying Jesus, he lived with a burdened heart, and spirit. It was when Peter chose to forgive himself that life became exciting and joyful once again. And the same goes with us. Until you "CHOOSE" to forgive yourself of past sin, acts of rebellion, disobedience, you will be living life that is best characterized as a "life of bondage" and a "life of invisible chains".

While God never saved us to sin, He desires that we live realizing that "the blood of Jesus" is sufficient to free us of all our sins, regardless of what they may be!

3. WHEN WE REFUSE TO FORGIVE OURSELVES, WE LIVE WITH UNCERTAINTY IN OUR LIVES. "Living in uncertainty" is the life of all who refuse to forgive themselves. A person will pray and ask God to forgive...but there is uncertainty, as long as there is unforgiveness toward

self. Sadly, there are countless thousands of true believers, living as though God will not forgive them...all because there is unforgiveness.

When we refuse to forgive ourselves, we are "uncertain" about our spiritual life. We are "uncertain" that God loves us. We are "uncertain" that God hears and answers our prayers. We are "uncertain" that God will come to our rescue. We are sometime even "uncertain" that we may be saved. Why? Because of guilt that is in our heart...which is there all because we will not forgive ourselves. Sadly, there are countless thousands of believers that are "uncertain" of God's love, power, strength, not because God has changed, but because of unforgiveness that remains in the human heart.

When we retain unforgiveness toward ourselves, we discontinue prayer, Bible study, and possibly even church...because we feel as though it doesn't work!

4. WHEN WE REFUSE TO FORGIVE OURSELVES WE LIVE WITH A SENSE OF UNWORTHINESS. Are you important to God? The person who has unforgiveness says "not really!" When we refuse to deal openly about personal unforgiveness, we feel as though we are second class saints, or even stepchildren to God. Sadly, the way we feel, is the way we act, the way we pray, and the way we even "expect" from our Heavenly Father. The truth is, when we were saved, He gave us "the right" to be called children of God, through the blood of Jesus Christ. Being God's child is a legal act, given to all who have faith, believe and ask Him to save them. Though we will sin from time to time, that never removes our "right" as a child of God. However, unforgiveness toward ourselves results in our: asking little, receiving little, believing little, all because we are constantly focusing on "our unworthiness" over and above the wonder and forgiveness of God. In the end we live this life missing the wonder of God's best because of our "unforgiven spirit" toward ourselves.

5. WHEN WE REFUSE TO FORGIVE OURSELVES WE HAVE EXCESSIVE BEHAVIORS. When Peter denied Jesus Christ, his first excessive action was one of anger and hatred toward himself. Literally, speaking, Peter made his own life hard on himself. Why? Because of the legalism he had been raised with. When we refuse to forgive ourselves, we unconsciously make life difficult for ourselves. A person may take on 10 jobs in order to pay for areas of disobedience years ago. While accepting responsibility is pleasing to God, He knows our motivations, and desires pure service. When we have unforgiveness toward ourselves, we will do our best to perform in order that we can accept ourselves.

6. WHEN WE REFUSE TO FORGIVE OURSELVES THEN WE DEPRIVE OURSELVES. There are only two approaches to forgiveness. First, Christ has paid for our sins, and has set us free. Second, we must pay for our sins ourselves. Tragically, many saints refuse to accept Jesus payment, and thus live a life trying to “pay God back” or deprive themselves. When we live in a state of “unforgiveness”, we are living in unbelief, and we are failing to realize that Jesus paid the price “in full” at Calvary for all our sins. The truth is, God in Jesus died on the cross that we could enjoy one life that he has given us to the full.

7. WHY CAN'T WE FORGIVE OURSELVES? First, there is the belief in performance based forgiveness. Because we are human we “feel” like we must measure up. But the truth is not found in “feelings” but in the facts. The fact stands, Jesus died on the cross. The fact stands, our sins have been dealt with in one act at the cross. The fact is, we stand forgiven, it is never an issue of “feeling” forgiven.

Second, we disappoint ourselves. We believe that we won't commit “that same sin” again, and in truth, before the week is over, we have blown it. While God does cleanse us of all sin, it is never a license to commit any act of ungodliness. However, in our human frame we remain mortal till death.

Third, we expect to repeat the same sin again. Before our birth, God knew every single sin that we would commit, and He knew how many times we would repeat the same sin, yet He still chose to declare His Word in 1 John 1:9. The fact is, God's forgiveness is the wonderful demonstration of His love toward us. While we cannot escape the consequences, we have been forgiven. However, we must never allow ourselves to believe that “forgiveness” means that nothing comes of our actions. Actions always carry consequences. That is an eternal fact.

8. HOW TO FORGIVE OURSELVES. It is God that gives us the gift of forgiveness. It is God that desires us to live this one earthly life to its height. There are five crucial facts that we have to face in order to forgive ourselves: First, we must recognize and admit to God there is difficulty in forgiving ourselves. Second, we must repent of the sin of an unforgiving spirit toward ourselves. Third, it is vital to reaffirm and admit that the blood of Jesus is the only payment necessary for any and all sin. Fourth, we must choose to trust the Word of God over and against any feeling that we have. While we have feelings, feelings are human, and God's Word is eternal. Fifth, we must choose to receive the forgiveness of God and live in it on a daily basis.