

Jim Martin  
P.O. Box 291962  
Dayton, Ohio 45429

### January 2023 “Forgiving Me”

Dear Friends,

In Matthew chapter 18, Jesus was teaching about forgiving someone who has done something wrong to you. The Apostle Peter then asked an interesting question, to which Jesus gave a rather profound answer.

***21Then came Peter to him, and said, Lord, how oft shall my brother sin against me, and I forgive him? till seven times? 22Jesus saith unto him, I say not unto thee, Until seven times: but, Until seventy times seven. (Matthew 18:21-22)***

For years I wondered why Peter used seven as the maximum number of times to forgive someone. Was it just some random number he used to appear righteous before others, or was there a genuine reason he chose seven? After further research I discovered something very interesting. During that time, Rabbis taught that a man must forgive his brother three times for an offense, but from the fourth time on, there was to be no forgiveness. The basis for this teaching is found in Amos 1:3, 1:6, 1:9, 1:11, 1:13, 2:1, 2:4 and 2:6. In each of these verses, God says essentially the same thing about a particular nation and its sin,

***Thus saith the Lord; For three transgressions of Damascus, and for four, I will not turn away the punishment thereof; because they have threshed Gilead with threshing instruments of iron: (Amos 1:3)***

Though it is very clear that the teaching of the Rabbis was a gross misinterpretation of scripture, the Jews still believed it. Thus, when Peter spoke of forgiving seven times, he was honestly suggesting that they forgive beyond what was commonly believed and taught. The answer he got from Jesus wasn't just about forgiving 490 times (70x7), but about forgiving every time someone sincerely asks.

Unconditional forgiveness is a concept with which many Christians greatly struggle. Some feel the actions of another are so egregious that forgiveness is out of the question. But no matter how difficult the struggle, other Christians mature spiritually to the point that they realize forgiving people is not just a passive suggestion, but rather it is a commandment from God to His children. After all, no one can do worse to you than the good God can do to you.

As Christians allow the life and nature of Christ to grow and mature within, they reach the point of being able to forgive others no matter what has been done. Even so, many are still living with unforgiveness of a very unique kind: they struggle greatly with forgiving themselves.

A minister who works extensively counseling women who have had abortions shared that every woman expresses a variety of different problems after the abortion. But the one problem

common to all of them who come to him is forgiving themselves. The inner battle to forgive oneself is not restricted to women who have had abortions. Many Christians who have a past involving such behaviors as promiscuity, murder, adultery, robbery, homosexuality, alcohol or drug abuse, and so on often find it extremely difficult to forgive themselves even though they have no problem forgiving others.

Self-forgiveness is absolutely critical in pressing deeper into God. How can He effectively use us if we keep holding on to what the blood of Jesus removed? There is an old hymn we used to sing in the church wherein I was raised, and here is the first verse:

**There is a fountain filled with blood, drawn from Immanuel's veins  
And sinners plunged beneath that flood; lose all their guilty stains  
Lose all their guilty stains; lose all their guilty stains  
And sinners plunged beneath that flood; lose all their guilty stains.**

When we refuse to forgive ourselves, it's as though we are reaching into that fountain to pull out our old sins, shake off the blood of Jesus, and apply them again to our lives.

In the Jewish temple, a thick, heavy veil separated the inner part of the temple from the holy of holies, the place where the High Priest entered once each year to apply the blood of the sacrifice to the mercy seat for the sins of the Jewish people. Matthew 27:45-51 tells us that when Jesus died on the cross the veil was supernaturally torn from top to bottom, and Hebrews chapters 9 and 10 explain it represented that the way into the presence of God was now open to everyone who accepts Jesus as Savior. When Christians refuse to forgive themselves, it's as though they are trying to sew that veil back together, separating themselves from God.

Consider what God has said about the sins of those who put their faith in Jesus.

***For I will be merciful to their unrighteousness, and their sins and their iniquities will I remember no more. (Hebrews 8:12)***

This doesn't mean God can't remember, it means He chooses not to remember. In the Greek, this statement was a legal term which spoke of a person having been punished for a crime, and that after the punishment was fulfilled, the crime would never again be reckoned to the individual. Jesus suffered the punishment for our sin. The moment we accept Him as our Savior, God will never again recall our past sins against us. But when we fail to forgive ourselves, it could be described as standing before the throne of God, repeatedly reminding Him of what we did "back then," and wanting Him to come into agreement with us that we are still not forgiven.

By His grace, love, and mercy, God has chosen to let the sacrifice of Jesus and His shed blood be the full punishment for all our sin. There is no sin we have committed that cannot be forgiven when we call upon the Name of the Lord for salvation and forgiveness. Along with that, God declares we are accepted as a part of His family and welcome to dwell in His presence. Read closely what the Apostle Paul wrote to the church at Ephesus,

***6To the praise of the glory of his grace, wherein he hath made us accepted in the beloved. 7In whom we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of his grace; (Ephesians 1:6-7)***

The word “accepted” in this passage comes from the Greek word “charitōō” which means, “to highly honor, to greatly favor.” As used in the New Testament it indicates unique, divine favor and approval by God wherein there is not only the impartation of God’s grace, but also the full and complete adoption into the family of God.

We have full and complete redemption through the blood of Jesus, and God has opened the front door of His house declaring, “Welcome to your new home and family!” When we refuse to forgive ourselves, we are not only declaring ourselves unaccepted by God, we are also refusing to accept ourselves as being forgiven and born again as a child of God. We are declaring ourselves unfit for His use in any capacity.

***As far as the east is from the west, so far hath he removed our transgressions from us. (Psalm 103:12)***

Our transgressions, sins and trespasses have been removed from us. God, through Jesus Christ, is the One who removed them. Not accepting God’s forgiveness is like going on a journey to try and find our sins and bring the accountability for them back into our lives.

***All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned every one to his own way; and the Lord hath laid on him the iniquity of us all. (Isaiah 53:6)***

***For he hath made him to be sin for us, who knew no sin; that we might be made the righteousness of God in him. (2 Corinthians 5:21)***

When Jesus was on the cross, God not only laid our sin on Him, He made Jesus to **BE** our sin. When we do not self-forgive, it’s like standing at the foot of the cross and reaching up to pull our sin off Jesus and put it back on our own shoulders.

***6Even as David also describeth the blessedness of the man, unto whom God imputeth righteousness without works, 7Saying, Blessed are they whose iniquities are forgiven, and whose sins are covered. 8Blessed is the man to whom the Lord will not impute sin. (Romans 4:6-8)***

When Christians do not forgive themselves, they have a tendency to see themselves as being unworthy to receive anything from God. But God declares those who are forgiven are blessed. If we don’t believe we are forgiven, then we will not believe for any of the blessings God has promised to His children. I am firmly convinced this is a major reason many Christians are struggling in life.

When preachers talk about God forgiving us, they typically speak in depth about His love, mercy, and grace that He has for all humanity. But there is another reason for His unfettered love and forgiveness, one many do not often stress.

***I, even I, am he that blotteth out thy transgressions for mine own sake, and will not remember thy sins. (Isaiah 43:25)***

He willingly blots out our sins **FOR HIS OWN SAKE!** God loves us so deeply that if He didn't blot out all our sins and refuse to hold them against us, He would never be able to have the kind of fellowship with us as He originally intended as revealed in Genesis chapters one and two. God does not want us living with self-condemnation over a past He no longer acknowledges. He wants us living daily in the joy of our salvation. Even if we sinned yesterday, He is quick to forgive the penitent Christian.

***If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness. (1 John 1:9)***

Someone may ask, "But how do I do it? How do I forgive myself for all the horrible things I've done?" That's a very fair question, and the answer is found in the Bible.

***But he answered and said, It is written, Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God. (Matthew 4:4)***

If we're going to obey what Jesus said in the above verse, then we choose to accept and live by what the Bible declares about our forgiveness.

***<sup>17</sup>Therefore if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature: old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new. <sup>18</sup>And all things are of God, who hath reconciled us to himself by Jesus Christ, and hath given to us the ministry of reconciliation; (2 Corinthians 5:17-18)***

In Christ, we are reconciled to God and forgiven. We are no longer defined by our past sins. Our identity is in Christ as a child of God.

***<sup>6</sup>As ye have therefore received Christ Jesus the Lord, so walk ye in him: <sup>9</sup>For in him dwelleth all the fulness of the Godhead bodily. <sup>10</sup>And ye are complete in him, which is the head of all principality and power: (Colossians 2:6, 9-10)***

We are complete in Christ. Included in that is the fact we are completely forgiven. If we were not completely forgiven, we could not be in Christ. God would not tell us to walk (live) in our completeness if it were not possible. We must choose to accept our permanent, eternal forgiveness.

***<sup>6</sup>Knowing this, that our old man is crucified with him, that the body of sin might be destroyed, that henceforth we should not serve sin. <sup>7</sup>For he that is dead is freed from sin. <sup>18</sup>Being then made free from sin, ye became the servants of righteousness. (Romans 6:7-8, 18)***

At the moment of salvation, the "old man" of the sin nature is destroyed and we are no longer

under its dominion. We are free from not only the old sin nature, but also from all the sins of our past. They are never to be an anchor in our life as we grow and mature spiritually.

*Casting down imaginations, and every high thing that exalteth itself against the knowledge of God, and bringing into captivity every thought to the obedience of Christ; (2 Corinthians 10:5)*

Memory triggers are unique and unpredictable. A song, a movie, an article of clothing, a fragrance and more can reach back into the archives of our memory and recall a past transgression. While lying in bed to fall asleep, a forgotten sin can suddenly be at the forefront of our mind. When this happens, immediately think on the verses I've placed in this letter and cast down those condemning memories with the truth of your forgiveness. Give them no place in your thinking! Your past is your past, you are eternally forgiven by an eternally loving God. Live daily in the joy of your salvation and in fellowship with your glorious Father!

In His Grace,

*Jim*

P.S. – There is so much more about self-forgiveness that I did not cover in this letter. To help, I am making available a CD of my sermon, *Forgiveness Beyond Comprehension*. To receive a CD of this sermon, use the order form below.

**2023 REVIVAL NOW! CONFERENCE**

Our Revival Now! Conference will be held Sunday, April 23 – Friday, April 28. Services will be held morning and evening. There is no charge to register or attend. All services will be held at our church. I'll be sending more information in future letters. If you have any questions, email me at PastorJimGCC@gmail.com.

-----  
\_\_\_\_\_ Check here to receive a CD of the sermon, *Forgiveness Beyond Comprehension*.

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_

City \_\_\_\_\_ State \_\_\_\_\_ Zip \_\_\_\_\_

Country \_\_\_\_\_ Email \_\_\_\_\_

If you would like to make a donation to this ministry, make checks payable to “Jim Martin Ministries” or use the ‘Make a Donation’ feature at our website to give through PayPal.

JIM MARTIN MINISTRIES • P.O. Box 291962 • Dayton, Ohio 45429 • USA  
www.jmmgrace.com • PastorJimGCC@gmail.com