

"Forgive and Forget"

Past hurts and offenses can haunt us and make us angry. Is there an answer? Hello, I'm Phil Sanders, and this is a Bible study "In Search of the Lord's Way." Today we're exploring what the Lord says about forgetting and forgiving.

Welcome to In SEARCH of the Lord's Way! We're here to search the Scriptures for God's will. When people count their blessings, the forgiveness of God always makes it to the top of the list. What Jesus did for us on the cross was deeply loving and gracious. We can be free from sin because of the price that He paid. The Scriptures assure us of the Lord's death, burial, and resurrection from the dead. This gives us hope for forgiveness and hope for eternal life. What a blessing to have God's message of hope! Thanks for taking time with us today. We want to be a part of your life each week.

Psalm 32 verses 1 and 2 says, "How blessed is he whose transgression is forgiven, whose sin is covered! How blessed is the man to whom the Lord does not impute iniquity, and in whose spirit there is no deceit!" Rather than hide our sins, God confronts us, calls us to repent, and forgives us. Forgiveness is not forgetting but "forgetting against." When God forgives us, He no longer counts our sins against us, so that we might be reconciled to Him (2 Corinthians 5 verses 19 and 20). Men can't change the past, but God can forget our past sins against us and no longer hold us guilty. Psalm 85 verses 2 to 3 says of God: "You forgave the iniquity of your people and covered all their sins. You set aside all Your wrath and turned from your fierce anger."

Justice is getting what we deserve, and God says sin deserves death. Mercy is not getting what we do deserve, and God's mercy removes the sin. Grace is getting what we don't deserve, and God's grace gives us life even when we deserved death. God offers humanity His forgiveness out of His abundant grace and mercy. He loved us in spite of our sins! Loving Him means leaving sin and living righteously.

Now we offer this study free on forgiveness and forgetting. And if you'd like a printed copy or a CD of our study and you live in the United States, mail your request to In Search of the Lord's Way, P.O. Box 371, Edmond, OK 73083 or send an e-mail to searchtv@searchtv.org. Or, you can call our toll-free telephone number. That number is 1-800-321-8633. We also have materials free on our website at www.searchtv.org.

The Edmond church will now worship in song, we'll read from Psalm 103 verses 8 to 13, and then explore the blessing of forgiving and forgetting.

Our reading today comes from Psalm 103. This is a psalm of David where he counts his blessings. And in the midst of it he talks about God and his grace. Verse 8 to 13.

The LORD is compassionate and gracious,
Slow to anger and abounding in lovingkindness.
He will not always strive with us,
Nor will He keep His anger forever.
He has not dealt with us according to our sins,
Nor rewarded us according to our iniquities.
For as high as the heavens are above the earth,
So great is His lovingkindness toward those who fear Him.
As far as the east is from the west,
So far has He removed our transgressions from us.

Just as a father has compassion on his children,
So the LORD has compassion on those who fear Him

What a great God we have. How gracious He is. Lets pray. Father we're grateful for all of Your love and Your grace and mercy and compassion. And Your willingness to forgive our sins. Father help us to be forgiving just as You have forgiven us. In Jesus name, Amen.

The Lord Jesus taught us to pray, "And forgive us our debts, as we also have forgiven our debtors" (Matthew 6 and verse 12). And then He explained in verses 14 and 15, "For if you forgive others their trespasses, your heavenly Father will also forgive you, but if you do not forgive others their trespasses, neither will your Father forgive your trespasses." Learning to forgive others is not simply a good thing; it will affect whether or not God forgives us. James 2 and verse 13 reminds us, "judgment will be merciless to (the) one who has shown no mercy; mercy triumphs over judgment."

The Lord Jesus taught in Luke 17 verses 3 to 4, "Be on your guard! If your brother sins, rebuke him; and if he repents, forgive him. And if he sins against you seven times a day, and returns to you seven times, saying, 'I repent,' forgive him." Well, it isn't impossible for someone to sin against you seven times in a single day. We're all imperfect; and as we grow, we continue to struggle and fail. We hope people will be patient with us, and we hope we can be patient with others.

Peter asked the Lord in Matthew 18 and verse 21, "how often shall my brother sin against me and I forgive him? Up to seven times?" Well, Jesus said to him, "I do not say to you, up to seven times, but up to seventy times seven." (Matthew 18 verse 22). Jesus isn't asking us to count to 490, but to stop counting altogether. We learn to forgive others, because the Lord has forgiven us. Ephesians 4:31 to 32 says, "Let all bitterness and wrath and anger and clamor and slander be put away from you, along with all malice. Be kind to one another, tender-hearted, forgiving each other, just as God in Christ also has forgiven you."

People treat being offended in many different ways. Some want to take vengeance. It was popular to say some years ago, well "I don't get angry; I get even." There are some religions that are surprised at Christianity's willingness to forgive. For them, offenses mean that you must take revenge. Such attitudes can easily evolve into ongoing feuds that last for centuries with no end in sight. Romans 12:19 to 21 teaches, "Never take your own revenge, beloved, but leave room for the wrath of God, for it is written, "Vengeance is mine, I will repay," says the Lord. "But if your enemy is hungry, feed him, and if he is thirsty, give him a drink; for in so doing you will heap burning coals on his head." Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good."

Now other people deal with being offended by writing off the person who offended them. One lady said that when she was offended by someone, she just decided that person was dead from that day forward. When someone says, "You are dead to me," I am thankful I know the Lord Jesus, who loved sinners in spite of their sins and was willing to forgive and build a relationship with us.

When we humble ourselves and are penitent, God sets us free from sin by forgiving our sins. Forgiveness is an amazing and a magnificent gift, given to us at the cost of His Son Jesus, who bore the punishment for sins that He did not commit. We must realize what sin does to us. The Lord Jesus said in John 8:34, "Truly, truly, I say to you, (that) everyone who commits sin is the slave of sin." Now no matter how much pleasure sin gives, sin isn't a blessing. Jesus, however, promises in verse 36, "So if the Son makes you free, you will be free indeed." God sets us free from sin when we're united with Christ in baptism. According to Romans 6 verses 3 to 7, "our old self was crucified with him, that our body of sin might be done away with, that we should no longer be slaves to sin; for he who died is freed from sin."

Now, forgiveness releases one from the debt that's incurred by sin. Sin makes us such debtors toward God that we can't repay Him. Romans 6 and verse 23 simply says, "For the wages of sin is death, but the free gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord." Without freedom from the penalty of sin, we will die spiritually and be lost forever. We cannot earn freedom from sin by our own merits. Only the blood of Jesus can forgive us. 1 Peter 1:18 to 19 says, "you were not redeemed with perishable things like silver or gold from your futile way of life inherited from your forefathers, but with precious blood, as of a lamb unblemished and spotless, the blood of Christ." Your redemption and salvation were not cheap. Jesus didn't pay your way out of sin with money, but with His precious blood. He paid with his life. The Lord's compassion for us causes Him to forgive us and to release us from the debt. When we are forgiven, God releases us from the debt of sin.

Forgiveness releases us from guilt, in spite of what we deserve. Guilt means that we're accountable to God for our sins. Because we've sinned, we become ashamed of ourselves. Now, there's nothing worse in life than a guilty conscience. When sin fills our lives, we know that we stand condemned. We also condemn ourselves and despise ourselves. When a person knows he's living outside the grace of God, he'll either harden his heart against God or seek to be back in God's favor. What are you doing?

When guilt-ridden David, who sinned against God by committing adultery with Bathsheba and then killing her husband Uriah to cover it up, well when he was that way, he, he repented and he cried out to God for forgiveness. He said in Psalm 51:7 to 9, "Purify me with hyssop, and I shall be clean; Wash me, and I shall be whiter than snow. Make me to hear joy and gladness, Let the bones which You have broken rejoice. Hide Your face from my sins And blot out all my iniquities."

He wanted something better than a guilty conscience and a break with the grace of God. He wanted forgiveness. And so he said in Psalm 51:10 to 12, "Create in me a clean heart, O God, And renew a steadfast spirit within me. Do not cast me away from Your presence And do not take Your Holy Spirit from me. Restore to me the joy of Your salvation And sustain me with a willing spirit." Forgiveness gives us hope! It frees us from sin and from the effects of a guilty conscience. It also opens the door to friendship and fellowship with God. We can come into His presence unashamed, because of the blood of Jesus Christ.

Now, don't confuse forgiveness with injustice, as when a guilty person escapes punishment through lies or bribes. Forgiveness is a pardon. The sin was real, but it no longer matters to God, because Jesus Christ paid the penalty for our sins. He "loves us and released us from our sins by His blood" (Revelation 1 and verse 5). God punished Him for your sins and mine, setting us free and bringing us back to God.

Forgiveness, unlike forgetting, creates the opportunity for a new beginning. 2 Corinthians 5 and verse 17 says, "Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; the old has gone, the new has come!" Forgiveness means God has blotted out the old record of sin. He now looks upon us as if we had never sinned. Our past no longer matters to God, for we have died to sin and have undergone a new birth. The old man of sin is dead, and we have newness of life. With the past buried by the love of God, God and man can now start a new covenant relationship, brought about by the blood of Jesus Christ. This new birth allows a man to start over with God. In this new relationship in Christ, he can think, act and speak like a child of God.

Forgiveness through Christ brings reconciliation. We can become friends again! 2 Corinthians 5 and verse 19 says, "that God was reconciling the world to himself in Christ, not counting men's sins against them." Now reconciliation brings an evil, sinful world back into friendship. Sin separates men

from God, so that God no longer hears our prayers. Forgiveness restores the relationship by removing the sin that caused the separation. With the sin gone, man can once again approach God through Christ.

Now, forgiveness is better than merely forgetting, for by forgiving us God demonstrates His love to us by sending Jesus to die for us. When Jesus died on the cross, we were powerless, ungodly, and sinful according to Romans 5 verses 6 to 8. But, God demonstrated His love in Christ anyway, because He wanted to draw us close and make to friends with us. And God has done everything possible to make a way for you to live with Him eternally.

I've known some people who felt so guilty, they couldn't believe God would forgive them. Don't let the devil convince you of that. The devil knows that if you think salvation is impossible, you'll never come to God. 1 Peter 3 and verse 18 says, "For Christ also died for sins once for all, the just for the unjust, so that He might bring us to God." God went to great lengths to give you hope and to open a door for you to be reconciled. God wants your heart and soul.

Now, if God could love you so much, even when you do not deserve it, you can forgive the one who has hurt you. Forgiveness is not merely a blessing to the one forgiven; it also blesses the one who forgives. Micah 7 and verse 18 asks, "Who is a God like You, who pardons iniquity And passes over the rebellious act of the remnant of His possession? He does not retain His anger forever, Because He delights in unchanging love." God takes no delight in condemning the people that He loves. He wants to forgive them, and He wants them to come to Him in repentance and obedience.

The prophet and king David wrote in Psalm 103:8 to 13, "The LORD is compassionate and gracious, Slow to anger and abounding in lovingkindness. He will not always strive with us, Nor will He keep His anger forever. He has not dealt with us according to our sins, Nor rewarded us according to our iniquities. For as high as the heavens are above the earth, So great is His lovingkindness toward those who fear Him. As far as the east is from the west, So far has He removed our transgressions from us. Just as a father has compassion on his children, So the LORD has compassion on those who fear Him."

Nor should we take delight in anger when people sin against us; we should fill our hearts with loving kindness toward other people. When people ask for forgiveness, let's be compassionate and loving. Let's open the door for friendship and fellowship once again. Let's be sons of our Father in heaven. You remember the Lord Jesus said in Matthew 5:43 to 45, "You have heard that it was said, 'You shall love your neighbor and hate your enemy.' But I say to you, love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you, so that you may be sons of your Father who is in heaven; for He causes His sun to rise on the evil and the good, and sends rain on the righteous and the unrighteous."

God calls His children to a higher standard, a nobler life. Oh, it's easy to get angry and to be hateful. James 1 and verse 20 simply says, that "the anger of man does not achieve the righteousness of God." We must learn to grow beyond anger, hatred, and vengeance. You must be willing to forgive others, and looking to God's example in Christ will help you forgive others the way that He has forgiven you.

Let's pray together. Oh Father help us to be more forgiving towards others the way that You have forgiven us. And may Your will be done on earth as it is in heaven. In Jesus name, Amen.

God does not ignore or tolerate sin. Many people think that because something happened a long time ago, that God won't remember. Many people who live immoral lives think God's love means that He should ignore their behavior and tolerate their sin. God won't do that. Paul told the Athenians in Acts 17:30 to 31, "Therefore having overlooked the times of ignorance, God is now declaring to men

that all people everywhere should repent, because He has fixed a day in which He will judge the world in righteousness through a Man whom He has appointed, having furnished proof to all men by raising Him from the dead.”

God is loving and gracious; but do not imagine that He will ignore or tolerate your sin forever. He expects you to respond. He will forgive your sin, when you repent and obey the Lord Jesus. God will judge us, yes. He gave proof to us by raising Jesus from the dead. My question is have you responded to His love? Are you reconciled to God, or are you carelessly continuing to live in sin?

To be free from sin, you have to respond to God’s offer of forgiveness. Believe with all your heart that Jesus Christ is the Son of God and confess Him. Turn from sinful ways and start honoring Christ by the way you live. That’s repentance! And then you must be baptized into Christ for the forgiveness of your sins (Acts 2 and verse 38). Now, when you’re immersed in water, God washes away your sins (Acts 22:16). And when you’re baptized, God gives you newness of life, makes you His child, and adds you to His church. From that time forward you are united with Christ and free from sin. Now, as a new Christian, you must stay faithful to the end. Don’t quit the Lord, go back, or go back into the world, and lose your soul. No, don’t do that. Keep your faith keep your soul.

We hope that today’s study about the sacrifice of Christ has stirred you to consider the price paid for your soul. If you live in the United States and want a free printed copy or a CD of this message, mail your request to In Search of the Lord's Way, P.O. Box 371, Edmond, OK 73083 or send an e-mail to searchtv@searchtv.org. Or, you can call the Search office, it’s toll-free, 1-800-321-8633. Now, you can download these lessons or a newsletter online at our website: www.searchtv.org. There’s also a schedule of our programs and a map with the location of churches in your area. Now, you can watch SEARCH anytime on YouTube!

And as always, we say to you, God bless you and we love you from all of us at In Search of the Lord’s Way.