

Forgiving Yourself Psalm 51:10-17

Longer passages are not quoted in the study sheet, but they can be read in the accompanying transcript.

Many Christians feel the _____ of shame and guilt. They _____ over sins long forgiven by God and cannot forgive themselves. In this study we're going to _____ how to forgive ourselves. A troubled person once came to me with a serious _____. His problem wasn't God's ability to forgive the _____ believer, but in his ability to forgive himself. While God is very willing to forgive, some people fail to _____ forgiven. People believe what they _____ themselves, even if what they say is mistaken. A person who has never forgiven himself feels _____ in his heart every day. When David sinned he _____ it, "For I know my transgressions, and my sin is ever before me" (Psalm 51:3). David felt the hand of God upon him because of his _____. He felt that his sins were "a heavy burden" (Psalm 38:3-4). Your sins may be too heavy for you too, but there is a God-given _____ to a guilty conscience! There is an answer.

Our scripture reading today is a Psalm of David, Psalm 51:10-17.

Galatians 6:7-8 reveals an undeniable truth: "Do not be deceived, God is not mocked; for whatever a man _____, this he will also _____. For the one who sows to his own flesh will from the flesh reap corruption, but the one who sows to the Spirit will from the Spirit reap eternal life." Sin causes the _____ heartaches of mankind. A person can't selfishly live to please his flesh and expect to find the _____ of God. Every sin is a terrible _____ against God, but sin also _____ the one who commits it. Sin is both an offense against God and against one's self. Proverbs 8:36 says, "But he who sins against me _____ himself; all those who hate me love death." When people transgress God's will they _____ with the sting of guilt and the reality that they could do such a thing.

The conscience is a God-given function of the _____. The conscience works as a _____ monitor that praises us or condemns us. The Bible describes this function in Romans 2:14-15. God's Word says, "For when Gentiles who do not have the Law do instinctively the things of the Law, these, not having the Law, are a law to themselves, in that they show the work of the Law written in their hearts, their conscience bearing witness and their thoughts alternately accusing or else defending them." When a person sins, his conscience _____ his heart, causing him a lot of _____. This pricked conscience causes a person to be grieved at himself, and he can lose all _____ for himself by his sins. The prodigal son no longer felt _____ to be called the son of his father. You might think the conscience is a bad thing, but the prodigal son's conscience and the terrible effects of his sin were what brought him to his _____. God didn't give us a conscience to _____ us, but to keep us from doing what is wrong and to encourage us to do what is right. When we _____ to listen to our conscience, we end up hurting ourselves.

Everyone has a conscience, but not every conscience uses the Word of God as a _____ for what is right and wrong. Many people sin against God and don't even know that what they did was _____. They rely on their own experience or their own judgment rather than take the time to _____ the Scriptures and _____ what God says about the matter.

Over time, sin begins to _____ the conscience. The Bible warns, "Take care, brothers, lest there be in any of you an evil, unbelieving heart, leading you to _____ from the living God. But exhort one another every day, as long as it's called 'today,' that none of you may be hardened by the deceitfulness of sin" (Hebrews 3:12-13). I worry far more about the person whose conscience is past _____ than the person who feels great _____ for sin. When a person gets past feeling, it's not likely that he will want to _____. If a person sees no need to repent or won't repent, he won't get right with God.

Of all of God's blessings, nothing is more _____ than forgiveness. Forgiveness isn't the _____ as forgetting. Forgiveness is "forgetting against." When God forgives, He no longer _____ our sins or our transgressions against us (2 Corinthians 5:19). Yes, those sins happened; but they don't _____. God promised, "For I will be merciful toward their iniquities, and I will _____ their sins no more" (Hebrews 8:12).

David, by inspiration, wrote, "He does not _____ with us according to our sins, nor _____ us according to our iniquities. For as high as the heavens are above the earth, so great is his steadfast love toward those who fear him; as far as the east is from the west, so far does he remove our transgressions from us" (Psalm 103:10-12). When God forgives, He no longer thinks of us in terms of our _____ iniquities. He removed them from His _____, but He keeps us close to His heart. Forgiveness _____ the shame and guilt by blotting out the offenses once and for all by the _____ of Jesus Christ (1 Peter 2:24). Forgiveness puts to death the _____ man of sin (Romans 6:4-7) and it makes all things _____ (2 Corinthians 5:17).

Let's _____ from God about _____ to forgive. Forgiving yourself means that you will no longer hold your past sins against yourself, so you can find _____. If God can forgive you, and has forgiven you, then can't you forgive yourself.

Repentance always comes _____ forgiveness. You can't find healing from God until you _____ your broken ways. If you haven't made a _____ in your heart and life, you'll find it hard to forgive yourself. You must repent. Many people seek forgiveness, but they don't change. You'll not find peace if you're _____ to repent. If you commit the same old sins over and over, you'll keep on enduring the same old _____ and shame over and over. The Bible says, "Put to _____ therefore what is earthly in you: sexual immorality, impurity, passion, evil desire, and covetousness, which is idolatry. On account of these the _____ of God is coming. And in these you too once _____, when you were living in them. But now you must put them all away: anger, wrath, malice, slander, and obscene talk from your mouth. Do not lie to one another, seeing that you've put off the _____ self with its practices and have put on the _____ self, which is being renewed in knowledge after the image of its creator" (Colossians 3:5-10).

There are four things that you can do to forgive yourself. First, be sure you've genuinely _____. Repentance is not only a turning _____ from sin; it's also a turning to and _____ God. The Thessalonians turned from _____ to serve the living God (1 Thessalonians 1:9). You'll have a hard time forgiving yourself if you fail to _____ your life up with God. The Lord Jesus taught, "When the unclean spirit has gone out of a person, it passes through waterless places seeking rest, but finds none. And then it says, 'I will return to my house from which I came.' And when it comes, it finds the house _____, swept, and put in order. And then it goes and brings with it seven other spirits more evil than itself, and they enter and they _____ there, and the last state of that person is worse than the first. So also will it be with this evil generation" (Matthew 12:43-45). If we fail to fill our lives with _____, we'll fall victim once again to sinful ways.

Second, if you wish to forgive yourself, focus your attention on what you have _____, not on what you were! The apostle Paul was _____ of a number of terrible sins before he became a Christian. He was guilty of violence, murder, slander, and blasphemy. He persecuted the church beyond measure and cast people into prison for their faith. In 1 Timothy 1:12-16 Paul said, "I thank him who has given me _____, Christ Jesus our Lord, because he judged me faithful, appointing me to his service, though formerly I was a blasphemer, persecutor, and insolent opponent. But I received mercy, Paul says, because I acted ignorantly in unbelief, and the grace of our Lord overflowed for me with the _____ and _____ that are in Christ Jesus. The saying is trustworthy and deserving of full acceptance, that Christ Jesus came into the world to _____ sinners, of whom I am foremost. But I received mercy for this reason, that in me, as the foremost, Jesus Christ might display his perfect patience as an example to those who were to believe in him for eternal life."

Paul couldn't change his past, but that was not his _____. Paul said he was "forgetting what lies behind and straining forward to what lies ahead, I press on toward the _____ for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus" (Philippians 3:13-14). He focused on what God was _____ in his life. Knowing God's forgiveness, he could put his _____ behind and focus on the will of God. He could say, "For I am the least of the apostles, unworthy to be called an apostle, because I persecuted the church of God. But by the grace of God I am what I am, and his grace toward me was not in vain" (1 Corinthians 15:9-10).

My favorite saying is this: "I'm not all I'm _____ to be; I'm not all I _____ to be; but, thank God by His mercy and grace, I'm not what I _____ to be." God is more interested in what you are _____ in Christ than in what you used to be. You can't change the past, and it's not necessary for you to do so to forgive yourself. What you can do is change yourself and your _____ toward the past by becoming the person God wishes you to be.

Third, trust _____ rather than your feelings. Feelings accurately reflect how we perceive things to be, but not always do they reflect _____. The brothers of Joseph _____ him to some slave traders, and Joseph went to Egypt. The brothers, however, _____ a wild animal killed Joseph and they dipped his coat of many colors in blood. The brothers _____ to their father, Jacob. Jacob

refused to be comforted (Genesis 37:35). Jacob thought Joseph was _____, but Joseph hadn't died; he was very much alive. Jacob believed the brothers' report but he didn't know the _____.

People often feel unforgiven, even when God _____ to forgive, and that's in black and white in the Bible. So _____ God, not your feelings. Trust the Bible to tell you the _____. God never _____. God can and will do what He has _____. The Lord Jesus said, "Truly, truly, I say to you, that everyone who commits sin is the _____ of sin." But he also said, "So if the Son makes you _____, you will be free indeed" (John 8:36).

Fourth, draw _____ to God. If you wish to be at peace with God, don't _____ with the sins of the world. The Bible says, "Submit therefore to God. Resist the devil and he'll flee from you. Draw _____ to God and He'll draw near to you. Cleanse your hands, you sinners; and purify your hearts, you double-minded" (James 4:7-8). When God _____ in your heart and your life, when you choose to draw _____ to God and you say no to the devil, you'll find your life growing better and better.

The Bible says, "Therefore whoever wishes to be a _____ of the world makes himself an _____ of God" (James 4:4). It's the double-minded fellow who wants to be a friend to God on one side and a friend of the world on the other, but who _____ finds peace or assurance. If you want a _____ conscience, "submit to God." When you draw close to God and you start resisting the devil, you'll find the _____ to live a righteous and holy life. You'll find the things that tempted you aren't as _____ as they used to be. You can forgive yourself, and God can _____ you.

People think they can get away with their sins, but there always are two who know we have sinned no matter how _____. God knows and we know. David thought he had hidden his sin with Bathsheba, but it wasn't hidden from his own _____. David said, "When I kept _____ about my sin, my body wasted away through my groaning all day long. For day and night, Your hand was heavy upon me; My vitality was drained away as with the fever heat of summer. I acknowledged my sin to You, and my iniquity I didn't hide; I said, 'I will _____ my transgressions to the LORD'; and You _____ the guilt of my sin" (Psalm 32:3-5).

God does indeed forgive us so that we might be _____ to forgive ourselves. Forgiveness takes place in the heart of God, and it is an act of mercy and grace—it's a _____; you can't earn it. Mercy takes place when God does something for us that we're not _____ of doing for ourselves. So your salvation, your forgiveness, is the gift of God.

But you have to _____ that gift from Him. That means being honest with yourself and honest with God in _____ the sin. To become a Christian, we must trust God and _____ in the Lord Jesus Christ. We must turn from sin and turn to God; that's _____. We must be willing to _____ Jesus as Christ and Lord before others; and we must be _____ in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of our sins. Christian baptism is an immersion in water of a penitent believer. And if you need to do these things, why not contact a nearby church of Christ and get your heart right with God.