

Forgiving Yourself

Psalm 32:1-5

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

Many Christians feel the nagging _____ of shame and guilt. They still _____ over sins that were long forgiven by God, but they don't know how to forgive themselves of their transgression. In today's study, we're going to _____ how to forgive ourselves. A troubled person once came to me with a serious _____.

The problem is not God's ability to forgive the _____ believer, but in the believer's willingness to forgive himself. God is willing to forgive, but some people don't _____ forgiven, or feel saved. A person who has never forgiven himself feels _____ in his heart every day. When David sinned with Bathsheba, he _____, "For I know my transgressions, and my sin is ever before me" (Psalm 51:3). David felt God's hand 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 shame and guilt.

Our reading today comes from a Psalm of David, Psalm 32:1-5.

When a person sins, he sins against God, but many ignore the _____ that sin causes to the person who commits it. Sin is an _____ against God, but it's also against one's self. The Bible personifies wisdom in Proverbs 8:36, "But he who sins against me _____ himself; all those who hate me love death." Wisdom is God's _____ will for our lives. When people go against God's wisdom and His will, they live with the _____ of guilt and shame.

Read what the inspired apostle Paul wrote in Galatians 6:7-8. Sin is the cause of the _____ heartaches of mankind. A person can't live for sin and self and expect to find the blessing of God.

The conscience is a God-given function of the _____. The conscience works as a _____ monitor praising us or condemning us. **Read how the Bible describes this function in Romans 2:14-15.** When a person sins, his conscience _____ his heart and that causes _____. This pricked conscience causes a person to be grieved at himself; he can lose all _____ for himself. The prodigal son no longer felt _____ to be called the son of his father. You might think the conscience is a bad thing, but it was the prodigal son's conscience and the terrible effects of his sin that 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 but don't realize 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.

Other people allow sin to _____ the conscience. **Read the Bible's warning in Hebrews 3:12-13.** I worry far more about the person whose conscience is past _____ than the person who feels great _____ for his sin. When a person gets past feeling _____, it's not likely that he will _____. If a person sees no need to repent or won't repent, he likely won't ever get _____ with God.

Of all of God's blessings, nothing is more _____ than forgiveness. Forgiveness is not the _____ as forgetting. Forgiveness is "forgetting against." When God forgives, He no longer _____ our sins against us (2 Corinthians 5:19-20). As part of the new covenant, God promises, "For I will be merciful toward their iniquities, and I will _____ their sins no more" (Hebrews 8:12).

David, by inspiration, wrote, "He (that is, God) does not _____ with us according to our sins, nor _____ us according to our iniquities. For as _____ as the heavens are above the earth, so great is his steadfast _____ toward those who fear him; as far as the east is from the west, so far does he _____ our transgressions from us" (Psalm 103:10-12). When God forgives, He no longer thinks of us in terms of our _____ iniquities. He removed the offenses from His _____, but He keeps us close to His _____.

Forgiveness _____ the shame and guilt by blotting out the offenses and settling the matter once and for all by the _____ of Jesus Christ (1 Peter 2:24). Forgiveness means putting to death the _____ man of sin (Romans 6:4-7) and making all things _____ (2 Corinthians 5:17). When you forgive yourself, you forget your _____ sins against yourself. You no longer hold those sins against yourself, and you will be at _____ with yourself.

You cannot forgive yourself until you have made a _____ in your heart and life. That is, you must _____. Many people seek forgiveness but they never _____ their sins behind. You'll never find peace if you're unwilling to _____. If you commit the same old sins over and over, you'll keep on having the same _____ and _____ over and over.

Read what the Bible says in Colossians 3:5-10.

Here are four things that you can do to forgive yourself. First, be sure that you have genuinely _____. Repentance is not only a turning _____ from sin; it's also a turning _____ 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 warns us about giving up sin but not filling our lives with _____ things. **Read Matthew 12:43-45.**

Second, to forgive yourself, focus your attention on what you have _____, not on what you were! The apostle Paul was _____ of terrible sins when he was Saul of Tarsus. He was guilty of violence, murder, slander, and blasphemy. He persecuted the church beyond measure and cast people into prison for their _____. 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 because I had 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 he didn't _____ on the past. 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 and what God wanted him to do. 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).

A person who forgives himself can say, “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. In doing this realize that no one is _____ but God. When you start living for God, you no longer have to be _____ of your past. You can be _____ that you serve Christ.

Third, trust _____ rather than your feelings. Feelings reflect perceptions, but these feelings are not always _____ to reality. Feelings accurately reflect how we *perceive* things to be but they don't always reflect reality. The brothers of Joseph _____ him to some slave traders, and Joseph went to Egypt. The brothers, however, _____ that a wild animal had 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 believed Joseph was _____ and he mourned, but Joseph wasn't dead. Jacob believed the brothers' report but he didn't know the _____. Jacob was _____ and so were his feelings.

People often feel unforgiven, even when God _____ in the Bible to forgive. So _____ God, not your feelings. Trust the Bible to tell you the _____. God doesn't _____. God can and He will keep His _____. 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 8:34, 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 life, when you choose to draw _____ to God and resist 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." The double-minded fellow who wants to be a friend to God and a friend to the world _____ finds peace or assurance. If you want a _____ conscience, "submit to God" (James 4:4). When you draw close to God and start resisting the devil, you'll find the _____ to live a righteous and holy life. You'll find that things that used to tempt you aren't _____ any more. You can forgive yourself, and God can _____ you.

People think they can get away with their sins, but there are always two persons who know how and when we have sinned no matter how _____ we make it. 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 forgives us so that we can forgive _____. We can _____ ourselves of the old self and be _____ again. God can do away with our _____ of sin. When we get right with God, we find peace with God and we find peace with ourselves. Forgiveness takes place in the _____ of God; it's a _____ of mercy. You can't _____ it. Mercy takes place when God does something for us that we're not _____ of doing for ourselves. Your _____, your forgiveness, is the gift of God.

But you have to _____ that gift. 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 _____ Jesus Christ as the Son of God and as our Lord before others; and we must be _____ in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of our sins. Baptism into Christ is an immersion in water of a penitent believer. If you need to do these things, why not contact a nearby church of Christ and get your heart and your soul right with God.