

“I Cannot be Forgiven”

(Compiled by Paul R. Blake)

Introduction:

- A. Why is forgiveness such a difficult matter for people to understand, practice, and receive?
 - 1. Christians know that our salvation depends on our forgiving others.
 - a. Matt. 6:14-15 - Forgiving others may be the most difficult part of the faith
 - 2. It is difficult to forgive when we are hurting or suffering loss from a sin someone has committed against us - Luke 6:28
 - a. Wounded pride, pain, and anger make it very difficult to forgive.
 - 3. It is difficult to forgive when people intentionally do malicious things
 - a. Gossip, selfishness on the road, et al
 - b. When someone deliberately tries to hurt us, it is hard to forgive them. The natural instinct is to repay malice with malice.
 - 4. It is very difficult to forgive others when they harm people we love.
 - a. We are often incited to greater anger than when we are harmed
 - 5. Often the more we love and trust someone, the more challenging it is to forgive them when they hurt us
 - a. We seldom defend ourselves against those we love. We expect them to seek our highest good, to never to do evil to us.
- B. Who is the hardest person to forgive?
 - 1. When all is said, the most difficult person to forgive is one's self. Prolonged, unresolved guilt is the failure to forgive one's self.

I. GUILT IS SOMETHING EVERYONE MUST ADDRESS

- A. John 4:7-19, 39-42 - The Samaritan woman at the well hid from her guilt.
 - 1. Came to the well at a time when other women would not be there. We overlook the significance of this with our water on tap. Fetching of water was an essential chore, but also a social event in Bible times. Women would often gather there to socialize and talk in the early morning and late evening. Why would she wait until noon before going there? Guilt is the most logical reason for her avoiding contact with other women.
 - a. She had been married to five men who eventually divorced her, and she was living with a sixth to whom she was not married. Her awareness of her moral condition led her to avoid others who might remind her of it.
 - b. Her means of dealing with her guilt was to avoid it, to pretend that her sin didn't exist. Unresolved guilt by ignoring it
 - c. John 4:39 - She knew what she had done.
- B. Shame is the result of unresolved guilt that has been internalized.
 - 1. It is no longer associated with the transgression, but with the identity of the transgressor; it goes from "I have committed evil" to "I am evil"
 - 2. Shame is how we feel about ourselves when we have transgressed.
 - 3. Equating ourselves with what we did makes us feel bad about ourselves

C. Carrying unresolved guilt over un-repent sin in our lives has consequences.

1. Guilt destroys our confidence - Prov. 28:1
2. Guilt adversely affects relationships. Fear of being found out and confronted smothers openness.

D. We all have to deal with guilt or it will overwhelm us.

1. In 1976 while working for Cecil Allison, a local farmer, I was told to use the barn dolly to bring feed sacks from the upper barn to the milking parlor. I asked if I could use the old farm truck to save time and effort, but Cecil said no. So on days when he left the milking to me, I would use the old farm truck to haul the feed. One day, I backed out of the upper barn and didn't notice one of the barn kittens behind me and ran over it. Chagrined, I took it to the woods and buried it and said nothing, but never used the truck to haul sacks of feed again. About 15 years later when Cecil was in the end stages of Lou Gehrig's disease, I went to see him. I told him about the little cat and apologized for using the truck and not telling him. He was on breathing assistance at the time, but still managed to laugh through the machine and whispered, "I knew you did it, and I knew you would punish yourself more than I ever could."

2. There's likely no one here who doesn't have a kitten or two buried somewhere. Jesus told the woman at the well all that she had done. He did not condemn her, but offered her the means of ridding herself of the sin and guilt. He offered her forgiveness, a relationship with God, and peace of mind.
3. Jesus knows where we buried the kittens and He loves us anyway.
4. God's grace is greater than all of our sin and guilt - Psalm 103:1-18

II. WHY DO WE FIND IT HARD TO FORGIVE OURSELVES?

A. We struggle to accept personal failures. We know we could have done better, but didn't. Disappointment in ourselves causes us to replay the failure over and over in our minds.

1. Some find it easier to forgive and comfort others than ourselves.
2. Perhaps because we think we are stronger and more moral than others
 - a. 1Cor. 10:12
3. Perhaps because we know what was in our hearts at the time.
4. Perhaps we don't view ourselves as too evil to be forgiven.
5. Perhaps because we believe that we must pay for it in this world.

B. Christians must learn to stop resisting the grace of God.

1. To resist His grace is a form of resisting His sovereignty.
2. John 6:38-40; Matt. 18:14; 2Peter 3:9; Rom. 8:1
3. It is God's desire to forgive us when we meet the conditions of forgiveness. How can we refuse such a gift, such a will?

C. "Un-forgiveness that is self-directed will do more damage than any other form of un-forgiveness." (Paul Myers, "Forgiveness")

1. Insecurity over past failures interferes with present successes and future accomplishments.
2. Guilt is a barrier to spiritual maturity if not scripturally addressed.

III. GUILT CAN BE A GOOD THING

- A. Guilt in a healthy measure can protect us.
 - 1. It alerts us when we're straying from the path we know to be right.
 - 2. Guilt functions as a moral guardrail, as an extension of our conscience
 - 3. Psalm 38:1-11 - Secret sin can't be hidden in a peaceful heart.
- B. Guilt moves us to restore our relationship with God - 1John 1:8-9
- C. Guilt left unresolved is very unhealthy. The longer we live with guilt the more harm it does to our heart, mind and soul, and the less we feel it. It is like leprosy; eventually we don't feel it at all - 1Tim. 4:2; Eph. 4:19
 - 1. The most dangerous criminal of all is a sociopath; he feels no guilt.

IV. HOW DO I RESOLVE MY GUILT?

- A. Learn to distinguish between godly sorrow and unresolved guilt - 2Cor. 7:10
- B. Understand the source of our ongoing feelings of guilt - Zech. 3:1-4
 - 1. That accusing voice in our head comes from Satan (Adversary) or Devil (Accuser)
 - 2. Jesus role is not to accuse us, but to be our Advocate - 1John 2:1-2
- C. Come to view guilt as any other form of pain.
 - 1. Don't ignore it, or pretend it will go away on its own, or treat symptoms
 - 2. Find the cause and address it. Seek out the cure and apply it.
- D. When you have met the conditions of forgiveness and God has forgiven you, forgive yourself - 1John 3:19-21; Eph. 2:4-10