

OUR REMEMBERING GOD CHOOSES TO FORGET ONE THING

Jeremiah 31:1-3, 10-14, 31-37 and Hebrews 10: 15-17

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As we prepare to go next week to Psalm 32, I want to preach one more message on the magnitude of God's forgiveness. All of us are forgetful people, yet most of us struggle with the problem of forgetting what we desire and want to remember and remembering precisely what we need to forget and what God wants us to forget. We are living in a time when our country seems bent on forgetting our heritage and our constitution, while deciding to live by new mandates and newly accepted views we once thought were totally false and reprehensible.

Furthermore, we are living in a time when we are bent on documentation. Everything is being recorded. There are cameras and recording devices wherever we go. In many cities, if we run a stop light, it is documented on camera and soon a ticket will be mailed to us. For those of us who use an ATM machine, we are being filmed during the transaction. It is estimated that there are 30 million surveillance cameras throughout the U.S. to ensure that if we commit a crime, we will be filmed. There is no escaping it. We are caught in the act.

Romans 14: 10-12 is remarkably powerful in its words! "Why do you pass judgment on your brother? Or you, why do you despise your brother? For we must all stand before the judgment seat of God; for it is written, "As I live, says the Lord, every knee shall bow to Me, and every tongue shall confess to God." So then each of us will give an account of himself to God." Today God has placed on my heart and mind three truths about remembering and forgetting that we need to understand if we ever expect to understand the forgiveness of God. Perhaps the most neglected doctrine of theology that is rarely acknowledged is the doctrine of the divine forgetfulness of God. Yet, part of the good news of the Gospel is that God not only desires to forgive our sins if we will repent, believe and receive Him, but that once God forgives us, He divinely forgets. He remembers our sins no more. As I've meditated on this theme and Gospel doctrine, God has brought 3 truths to my heart, about sin and its remembrance that I want all of us to come to understand. What are they?

NO ONE SEEMS TO REMEMBER OUR SINS ANY MORE THAN WE DO!

(I.) This first truth is from the Word, but not from our text. It is a prefacing truth that contrasts our dealing with our sin from how God deals with our sins. The reason I must preach on this first truth is that you and I are always aware that our sins haunt us and testify in our conscience against us continually. Paul Tillich once said well, "It is impossible to have both a sensitive conscience and a clear

conscience at the same time, for a sensitive conscience is inevitably a guilty conscience.” Adam and Eve would testify to this as they disobeyed God and in guilt hid themselves from God in the Garden of Eden. David cried out in Psalm 51: 3. “For I know my transgressions, and my sin is ever before me.” When Isaiah saw the Lord, in the temple, he was instantly guilty and aware of his sin. He cried out, in Isaiah 6: 5, “Woe is me, for I am undone, I am lost, for I am a man of unclean lips, and I live in the midst of a people of unclean lips, for mine eyes have seen the Lord.” Beloved, every person who has ever understood the law of God or seen the Lord by faith, is a person who remembers his sin. I read about a man recently who sent \$100.00 to IRS with this note. “If I still can’t sleep, I’ll send more money.” So what do we do with our sin? **(1) We deny our sin and our guilt, even though we know we have sinned.** Do you remember when King Saul disobeyed God’s command through Samuel? (I Samuel 15: 13-15) He was supposed to destroy the Amalekites, the whole nation, even the animals, for opposing Israel on the Exodus from Egypt to the Promised Land. Amazingly, when Samuel understood King Saul had disobeyed the Lord, he heard King Saul say to him, “Blessed be you to the Lord; I have performed the commandment of the Lord.” We outright, deal with our sin by denying it. We turn our head away from what our heart full well knows we are guilty of doing.

Then we go on by: **(2) We rationalize our guilt and our sins.** King Saul, in I Samuel 15: 14, 15 heard the prophet Samuel confront him specifically. Samuel replied to King Saul, “What then is this bleating of the sheep in my ears and the lowing of the oxen that I hear? And Saul said, “They, (his people, he blames) they have brought them from the Amalekites, for the people spared the best of the sheep and of the oxen to sacrifice to the Lord your God, and the rest we have devoted to destruction.” King Saul knew what he had done, disobeying the Lord, but what an in-genius rationalization! When denying and rationalizing doesn’t work, we can pull a Jonah way to deal with our stubbornness and guilt and sin. **(3) We run away from obedience to God and try to sleep it off.** That’s precisely what Jonah did, but he could not escape his sin and guilt and obedience to God. So he tried to further escape by asking the captain of the ship to throw him overboard to stop the violent storm God sent when Jonah ran away from Him. A second truth:

NO ONE TRULY REMEMBERS ALL A SINNER’S SINS MORE THAN GOD DOES. (II.) Again, I want to show this truth from the Word, but not from our text as I am saving our text for the last truth today. Never fool yourself. God is a remembering God. He doesn’t miss a thing. The first mention of God remembering is found in Genesis 8: 1.2. The setting was after sending the flood and Noah and his family of eight were in the ark with all the animals, one male and

one female. I read, “But God remembered Noah and all the beasts and all the livestock that were with him in the ark. And God made a wind blow over the earth, and the waters subsided.” God doesn’t forget His own. Neither does God forget that we are all hell-bound sinners who cannot on our own ever escape His wrath. Nahum 1: 2,3 is clear. “The Lord is a jealous and avenging God; the Lord is avenging and wrathful; the Lord takes vengeance on His adversaries and keeps wrath for His enemies. (That is short, for He cannot forget the sins of unrepentant sinners.) Nahum goes on to say, “The Lord is slow to anger and great in power. And the Lord will by no means clear the guilty.” God will not forget one sin we ever sin as unrepentant sinners.

We may forget many things, but God remembers. Hebrews 6:10 makes this clear: “For God is not unjust so as to forget (overlook) your work and the love you have shown for His Name in serving the saints, as you still do.” The first mention of God remembering in the New Testament comes in the words of Zacharias after he received back his voice after the birth of John the Baptist. Luke 1:68, 72,73 declares, “Blessed be the Lord God of Israel , for He has remembered/visited and redeemed His people...to show the mercy promised to our fathers and to remember His holy covenant, the oath that He swore to our father Abraham, to grant us that we, being delivered from the hand of our enemies, might serve Him without fear.” God is the Remember-er of the smallest things. Luke 12: 6,7 declares, “Are not five sparrows sold for two pennies? And not one of them is forgotten before God. Why, even the hairs of your head are all numbered. Fear not; you are of more value than many sparrows.” God remembers our frailness. Psalm 103: 14 declares, “For He knows our frame, He remembers that we are but dust.” Amazingly, even when we go deeply into sin, God doesn’t forget how we once were faithful to Him. When Israel went deeply into spiritual harlotry and idolatry, Jeremiah 2:2 declares, “I remember the devotion of your youth, your love as a bride, how you followed me in the wilderness, in a land not sown.”

This second truth about God’s remembering of our sins not repented of is no more plainly spoken of than by Job. Job declared in Job 14: 17, “My transgression would be sealed up in a bag.” Who has the straight story, the bare facts, the inside story on you and on me? Who has the skinny of each of us? God does. It is sealed up in a bag—Job’s way of declaring that God doesn’t miss a lick. If the first two truths I have preached on today were all there is, our future would be sealed as Hell-bound forever, forever lost, forever our sin would be abhorrent before our holy God. The thunder of Mt. Sinai would be the last word, that the soul that sins will die. (Ezekiel 18: 20) The utterance of our conscience would agree with the law that each of us is hopelessly lost and

without hope forever. Yet God wants us to know that the first two truths, though true, are not the last word He wants us to know. There is one more amazing truth and now we must look closely at the texts that Pastor Larry read for us. What is this last amazing and forever wonderful truth? What have we learned so far? We have learned: I. **NO ONE SEEMS TO REMEMBER OUR SINS ANY MORE THAN WE DO!** II. **NO ONE TRULY REMEMBERS ALL A SINNER'S SIN MORE THAN GOD DOES.** What is this last overwhelmingly amazing, wonderful, beautiful, magnificent, and merciful truth that is beyond our comprehension? It is this!

NO ONE BUT GOD ALONE CAN AND DOES FOREVER FORGET THE SINS OF A REPENTANT SINNER. (III.) William Cowper, born back in 1731, wrote a hymn I love that states, "God moves in a mysterious way, His wonders to perform." That was the hymn-writer's way of saying, "God deals with our sins in a different way than we do." In our Jeremiah text quoted in Hebrews we read (Jer. 31: 34, "For I will forgive their iniquity, and I will remember their sin no more." Paul wrote in Colossians 2:13-15 about how God chooses to deal with our sins. He wrote, "And you, who were dead in your trespasses and the un-circumcision of your flesh, God made alive together with Him, having forgiven us all our trespasses, by cancelling the record of debt that stood against us with its legal demands. This He set aside, nailing it to the cross. He disarmed the rulers and authorities and put them to shame, by triumphing over them in Him." God forgives and forgets by having nailed our sins as repentant before Him, having nailed them to His cross. So how does God deal with our sins, so He forgets them?

First, He does something we are not willing to do easily. **(1) God faces our sins.** The awesome truth is that Jesus came to die for our sins, and He bore our sins in His own body on Calvary's tree. Paul declares in II Corinthians 5; 21, "For our sake, He made Him to be sin who knew no sin, so that in Him we might become the righteousness of God." Christ's death at Calvary put a period at the end of our hell forever death sentence. So how does God forgive and forget and never again remember the sins of us who repent, believe and receive Him? **(2) Jesus laid down His life willingly for our sins to atone for us as sinners.** Picture the scene for it happened for you and me. It was a day settled before the foundation of the world, but it happened in history. Pilate sealed the fate of Jesus that was sealed before Pilate was born. Pilate took a bowl of water and declared, "I am innocent of this man's blood." (Matthew 27: 24) Jesus carried my sins and yours on His back then with the cross to the place of the Skull, Golgotha. Stumbling under the weight of my sin and yours, Jesus fell and Simon of Cyrene was at spear point, ordered and

commandeered to carry the physical cross of Christ. Nevertheless, that was the light load. The heavy load Jesus kept on carrying. Jesus shouldered our sin on His back in Gethsemane when He prayed, “Not my will but Thine be done.” The soldiers removed Jesus’ clothes the third time and forcefully laid Him on crossed pieces of wood, a wooden cross. First one spike was pounded into one of His loving, quivering hands, and then another spike ripped through the other precious hand. They then placed His feet together and fastened His feet to the wooden cross with one huge 12-14 inch long spike. Then they raised the cross up and it slid into the hole in the ground as Jesus’ body jarred, leaving Him hanging there for six hours carrying my sins and yours. There nakedly facing the ridiculing and mocking mob, the guilt of the sins of the whole world were resting on Jesus’ shoulders. How does Jesus forgive and then forget?

The answer is—as the earth trembled and quaked and the sky turned black and the veil in the temple split from top to bottom, the One who knew no sin, became sin for me and you until He cried out in John 19: 30, (34) “It is finished!” This was not the cry of a despairing man whose dreams were crushed. This was the eternal declaration of the God-Man who met every divine condition of the Father to forgive us as the spotless Lamb of God, and now His words were the cry of victory—I have done it; It is finished.” What was finished? God’s eternal plan to deal with our guilt was complete. Jesus faced it and nailed it to His cross. He never denied it, but He faced it. He never rationalized it, but He faced it. He never ran away from the cross but He willingly laid down His life for you and me. God the Father faced our guilt in Jesus’ sacrificial death and nailed it to the cross.

Somehow Job understood this long before Calvary. Remember what I read in Job 14: 17 about God sealing up all our transgressions in a bag? Job knew that wasn’t the end of the story. Job 14: 14-17 tells the story that Job actually was beginning to know God was a God who forgets our transgressions. Read it. David knew this in Psalm 103: 12 as he declared, “As far as the east is from the west, so far has He removed our transgressions from us. The prophet Micah in Micah 7: 19 knew as well. He declared, “He will again have compassion on us; He will tread our iniquities underfoot; You will cast all our sins into the depths of the sea.” So what does this mean for us.? It means the Father remembers the payment paid for all my sin by His Son, when He sees me repent, believe and receive Jesus. It means Jesus remembers His death sentence for my sin and He still cries out over my sin, “It is finished!” It means the Holy Spirit remembers the cross that bought my freedom, so He seals us until the day of redemption. Will we let God be to us as good as He wants to be or will we believe the lies of the whisperer who reminds us of the awfulness of our past sins? Will we load up our sins on our backs and quietly slink

away? Give your sin and your guilt to God. Lay it down at His feet and experience the true forgiveness and forgetfulness of God today. Amen.