

What About Self-Forgiveness?

Is it biblical?

Psalm 32.1–5

Don Ruhl • Savage Street, Grants Pass, Oregon • January 21, In the year of our Lord, 2018

Scripture Reader and Reading: Michael Crisp – Psalm 32.1–5

Song Leader and Song Suggestions: Larry Amberg – Forgiveness, Salvation

Prelude:

I. Am I a biblical preacher if I do not challenge you?

- A. Should I not be challenging your thinking and your living?
- B. Truly, you agree that nothing challenges us like the Scriptures do.
 - 1. If that be the case,
 - 2. how can I not challenge you when I preach and teach the Scriptures?

II. Even if you do not agree with what I will show you today,

- A. please do not just write off what I say.
- B. Consider the biblical authority that I present to you,
 - 1. as well as the logical reasoning.
 - 2. Think on these things.

Persuasion:

I. Listening to Man Versus Listening to God

- A. If you had never heard of the concept of self-forgiveness, but
 - 1. you just read the word of your Creator,
 - 2. would you get the idea of self-forgiveness?
- B. The Bible is the authority on forgiveness.
 - 1. The Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit,
 - a) all who were involved in our creation,
 - b) including both our outward nature and our inward nature,
 - (1) know what we are and
 - (2) how we function best.

2. They know about sin.
3. They know the guilt that sin and the law produces.
4. They know of our desperate need for freedom from our sin.
 - a) In the Bible, they present everything
 - b) that we need to know about forgiveness.
 - (1) If not, what is the point of the Bible?
 - (2) Is not the Bible the message of salvation?
 - (a) What is salvation without forgiveness?
 - (b) Therefore, everything that I need to know about forgiveness,
 - i) I learn from the Book of God.
 - ii) From where then do I learn about self-forgiveness?

C. God put together the Holy Scriptures to lead us to freedom.

1. The Scriptures reveal to us the redemptive work of Jesus Christ.
2. Is that your belief?
 - a) Forgiveness comes only through Jesus Christ.
 - b) If you believe that,
 - (1) why do you believe in self-forgiveness?
 - (2) If self-forgiveness is truth,
 - (a) why did the Holy Spirit never utter one word of it in Scripture?
 - (b) John recorded Jesus as saying,

11 “These things I have spoken to you, that My joy may remain in you, and that your joy may be *full*” (John 15.11).

- i) If you want total and complete joy,
- ii) listen to the words of Jesus.
 - (1) Then tell me where He ever taught self-forgiveness.

D. I challenge you to search the entire narrative of the word of God

1. to see whether you can find any teaching whatsoever on self-forgiveness.
2. You can find plenty of teaching on forgiveness
 - a) from the levitical sacrificial system to the sacrifice of Jesus Christ, but
 - b) I do not believe you will find anything in Scripture
 - (1) where any prophet, any apostle, nor Jesus of Nazareth
 - (2) ever teaching people to forgive themselves.

E. Think on the Jews to whom Peter preached on the Day of Pentecost in Acts 2.

1. Those people persuaded a Roman governor to torture our Savior to death.
2. Do you think what they did tormented their souls?
 - a) Yet, nowhere in Acts 2, nor
 - b) anywhere else in the Book of Acts,
 - (1) do you find Peter, or any of the apostles,
 - (2) encouraging the people to forgive themselves
 - (a) for having killed not only an innocent man, but
 - (b) the Son of God!
3. Why do you suppose that is?
4. Here is what Peter did tell them
 - a) when they realized what they had done, and
 - b) it even cut them to their hearts,

38 Then Peter said to them, “Repent, and let every one of you be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins; and you shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. 39 For the promise is to you and to your children, and to all who are afar off, as many as the Lord our God will call” (Acts 2.38–39).

- (1) They needed to know
- (2) that *Jesus* forgave them.

II. Are Our Requirements More Stringent Than God's?

A. Think about this:

1. What do you imply
2. when you say God may have forgiven you, but
 - a) you just cannot forgive yourself?
 - b) That implies
 - (1) that your requirements for forgiveness
 - (2) are greater than God's!

B. Is our sin a greater offense against ourselves than it is against God?

III. Is the Crucifixion Enough?

A. Look at Jesus on the cross.

B. Why did He go to it?

1. From everything that I know in the Bible,
2. it was about securing the forgiveness of our sins.
 - a) Jesus shed His blood that we might have freedom from guilt.

C. Or do we say to God

1. that the horrible crucifixion of His blessed Son was enough for Him, but
2. it is not enough for us?

IV. We Are Not in the Place of God

A. Mark 2 shows the enemies of Jesus

1. charging Him with blasphemy
2. when He forgave people's sins,
 - a) saying that only God can forgive sin,

4 And when they could not come near Him because of the crowd, they uncovered the roof where He was. So when they had broken through, they let down the bed on which the paralytic was lying. 5 When Jesus saw their faith, He said to the paralytic, "Son, your sins

are forgiven you.” 6 And some of the scribes were sitting there and reasoning in their hearts, 7 “Why does this Man speak blasphemies like this? Who can forgive sins but God alone?” (Mark 2.4–7).

- b) Were they right? Is it only God who can forgive sins?
 - (1) Yes, they were correct, but
 - (2) they were wrong
 - (a) for not knowing who stood before them and
 - (b) for charging Him with blaspheme.
- B. Yes, we can forgive someone who has sinned against us, but
 - 1. we cannot forgive the sins of a person’s life.
 - 2. Only God can forgive the sins of a person’s life.
 - 3. Hence, only God can forgive us of our sins.
 - a) If we can forgive our sins, why do we need God?
 - b) If we can forgive our sins, why do we need the blood of Jesus?
- C. Also, if we sin against someone, and
 - 1. he or she forgives us, but
 - 2. we claim that we cannot forgive ourselves,
 - a) we declare that their forgiveness was not enough.
 - b) And we announce that God’s forgiveness was not enough.

V. Remembering Our Sin

A. Psalm 51 shows the terrible agony

- 1. that David experienced as he remembered his sin,

**3 For I acknowledge my transgressions,
And my sin is always before me.
4 Against You, You only, have I sinned,
And done this evil in Your sight—
That You may be found just when You speak,
And blameless when You judge.**

(Psalm 51.3–4)

2. Does this picture a man struggling with forgiving himself?
3. No, he just let the Lord know that he had not forgotten his sin.
 - a) He knew what he had done.
 - b) He knew that he had given God’s enemies reason to blaspheme Him.
 - (1) David did not say anything about self-forgiveness, nor
 - (2) did he ask God to help him forgive himself.
 - (a) And the Lord never speaks in this Psalm
 - (b) that David just needed to forgive himself.
4. Listen to what David did do and what he did want:

**1 Have mercy upon me, O God,
According to Your lovingkindness;
According to the multitude of Your tender mercies,
Blot out my transgressions.**

**2 Wash me thoroughly from my iniquity,
And cleanse me from my sin.
(Psalm 51.1–2)**

**7 Purge me with hyssop, and I shall be clean;
Wash me, and I shall be whiter than snow.**

**8 Make me hear joy and gladness,
That the bones You have broken may rejoice.**

**9 Hide Your face from my sins,
And blot out all my iniquities.
(Psalm 51.7–9)**

**14 Deliver me from the guilt of bloodshed, O God,
The God of my salvation,
And my tongue shall sing aloud of Your righteousness.
(Psalm 51.14)**

- a) To David, inspired by the Holy Spirit, it was all about getting
 - (1) God’s mercy,

- (2) having God blot out of his transgressions,
- (3) asking God to wash him thoroughly from his iniquity,
- (4) pleading for God to cleanse him from his sin,
- (5) requesting that God purge him,
- (6) again asking God to wash him, and
- (7) having God hide His face from David's sin.

b) I just want to know where God ever

- (1) spoke to David directly,
- (2) or through a prophet
 - (a) anything about self-forgiveness.
 - (b) I do not claim to know everything in the Bible.
 - i) Although I read through it every year, and
 - ii) although I have taught or preached from every part of it,
 - (1) yet, I still discover things that I had not seen before.
 - (2) If I am missing something in the Scriptures, inform me.
 - (a) However, is it not the case
 - (b) that self-forgiveness is not appear
 - (c) a major theme or even minor theme
 - (d) in God's word?

5. Do you think that David's memory of his sin kept him from doing it again?

B. Second Peter 1 shows that if we forget our sin and that we were cleansed,

1. it will lead to an unproductive life spiritually.
2. It is actually a good sign that we remember our sin, for
 - a) it will keep us healthy spiritually and
 - b) it will keep us productive in the Lord.
3. First, notice that Peter revealed

- a) the Lord has given us everything we need
- b) for the inward person,

2 Grace and peace be multiplied to you in the knowledge of God and of Jesus our Lord, 3 as His divine power has given to us all things that pertain to life and godliness, through the knowledge of Him who called us by glory and virtue, 4 by which have been given to us exceedingly great and precious promises, that through these you may be partakers of the divine nature, having escaped the corruption that is in the world through lust (2Pe 1.2–4).

- 4. Because of what he said, Peter then told us what we should do,

5 But also for this very reason, giving all diligence, add to your faith virtue, to virtue knowledge, 6 to knowledge self-control, to self-control perseverance, to perseverance godliness, 7 to godliness brotherly kindness, and to brotherly kindness love (2Pe 1.5–7).

- 5. It is important to notice what Peter said next,

8 For if these things are yours and abound, you will be neither barren nor unfruitful in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ. 9 For he who lacks these things is shortsighted, even to blindness, and *has forgotten that he was cleansed from his old sins* (2Pe 1.8–9).

- a) Remembering what the Lord cleansed from our old selves,
- b) will lead us to be the kind of people that He wants us to be.

C. When we struggle with the memory of what we have done,

- 1. what we feel is guilt.
- 2. Our guilt torments us.
 - a) We are truly sorry for what we have done.
 - b) We wish that we could take it back.
 - (1) Guilt is supposed to be uncomfortable.
 - (2) By that uncomfortable feeling we seek the solution, and

(3) we don't repeat the offense.

D. Remembering our sin is good

1. that we might remember how the Lord has forgiven us, and
2. that we might not do it again!
 - a) Yet, the Lord has forgiven us.
 - b) Accept His forgiveness and live in joy.

Exhortation:

I. The real issue is whether God has forgiven us.

A. Some people, especially those who have not come to Christ,

1. may forgive themselves and
2. believe that they are free from their sin and its guilt.

B. However, they shall have a shocking and terrifying surprise at the Judgment.

II. If God through Christ has forgiven you,

- A. you are forgiven of your sin!
- B. Accept it.
- C. Enjoy it.
- D. Remember your sin and do not repeat it.
- E. Deuteronomy 9.7

III. We remember our sins, but

- A. we should not continue to wallow in the guilt of that sin.
- B. Bask in the sunlight of God's forgiveness.