

I want to go back into Hebrews 8 this morning and finish up the last new covenant blessing listed there, which is this: “I will be merciful toward their iniquities, and I will remember their sin no more.” The phrase “I will remember your sins no more” communicates something very important to us about God’s forgiveness. It’s a message we must understand, in our hearts, if we are ever to enjoy God and live a life of communion with God.

Relationships are not just two people talking at each other. We are people with hearts, and we connect (or do not connect) at the level of our hearts. What is going on in my heart toward you and your heart toward me affects EVERYTHING about the level of intimacy, enjoyment and security of our relationship. It is the same with God.

To have any kind of relationship with God, we must know what is in his heart, how he thinks about us, how he feels about us, what is on his mind when we come to him. We must know our status with him.

We might not put it in these words but I believe when we come to God, there is one big question in our heart, “Does God remember my sin?” God’s answer to this question of the heart is, “I will be merciful toward your iniquities and I will remember your sins no more”! This is amazing: we bring our sins and he brings his mercy! And in his mercy he promises to not remember our sins again.

This promise is quoted from two Old Testament scriptures: Isaiah 43:25 “I, I am he who blots out your transgressions for my own sake, and I will not remember your sins.” And Jeremiah 31:34 “I will forgive their iniquity, and I will remember their sin no more.” “This is what the LORD says, he who appoints the sun to shine by day, who decrees the moon and stars to shine by night, who stirs up the sea so that its waves roar-- the LORD Almighty is his name”. Note

the emphasis, that God HIMSELF promises to not keep track of our sins, to not remember our sins. When your sins rise up in your memory like a ghost from the past, to haunt you, and accuse you, and depress you, remember that God HIMSELF promised mercy and forgetfulness toward your sins.

*God's promise to not remember our sins is such a big deal because sin is what disconnected us from God. We were created to be the friends of God, to walk and talk with God as Adam and Eve did in the garden. But when Adam sinned, the communion with God for which we were created was shattered.

It is only through this blotting out of our sins from the mind and heart of God that we can be restored to fellowship with God!

God promised to never remember our sins to assure us that his heart is open to us, that he welcomes us, to assure us that nothing stands in the way of our intimacy, and communion with him!

The blood of Jesus is not mainly an escape from punishment and a ticket to heaven, but it opens the heart of the Father to us. It brings us to God! The blood of Jesus, creates a just and righteous way for God so say to us, as fallen, broken, sinful people, "I will not remember your sins!". The whole purpose of the cross is so that we can be brought back into a free, and friendly fellowship with God. We can come to God, KNOWING he is NOT mulling over our sins and our failures. Spurgeon said, "The Father's heart is not brooding over the injuries we have done". That is something we must know!!

*It is this complete blotting out of our sins that allows us to pray, to worship, to sing for joy, to enjoy God's presence, to dance before him, to shout praises to him. If God remembered our sins, we could

never ever even enter the presence of God! If you are NOT enjoying God, and drawing near to God, it MAY be because you have not really received this promise into your heart.

In one sense to have a close and enjoyable relationship with anyone, everything hinges on, do they remember my sins, my faults, my failures, or not.

You cannot have a close relationship with anyone when you know you are in their doghouse. When they blame and accuse you, or hold an offense against you, intimacy is destroyed. For me to be close to Cindy I have to know that she doesn't remember my sins. When a husband and wife keep a record of each others faults before long they are merely existing together in the same house.

Many of us have had a person in our lives who has seen us fail, stumble and sin. And they will not let it go, ever!! They always think of you in light of that sin, and failure. And your relationship with that person is always colored by this past failure.

God is saying, "I am not like that! I won't ever do that to you! I will not come to you with a list of charges! I gave my own son to perfectly blot out your sins, so I could bring you near to me!" We can draw near to God without this dark cloud of condemnation hanging over us! God himself removed all hindrance to our fellowship when he said, "I will remember your sins no more"!

For God to remember our sins or not remember our sins, really is the difference between heaven and hell, knowing God and not knowing God, enjoying God and not enjoying God, between loving God and hating God.

Martin Luther as a monk, only saw a God who held up his sins against him. He said, "I didn't love God I hated God". "I was.. driven to the very abyss of despair".. "I wished I had never been created". "My situation was that, although an impeccable monk, I stood before God as a sinner troubled in conscience, and I had no confidence that my merit would assuage him. Therefore I did not love a just and angry God, but but rather hated and murmured against him." When Luther finally saw God's righteousness given to him as a free gift, he said, "I felt that I had been born again and that the very gates of paradise opened up before me".

I recently read a story that impressed me just how desperately people need to know this message of the new covenant:

In 1846 a large group of midwestern farmers headed west for a better life in California. This group became known as the Donner Party. On their way two men in their group James Reed and John Snyder got into an argument which ended with James Reed killing John Snyder. The rest of the party debated whether to hang Reed or wait to try him when they got to California. They ended deciding to banish him from the group with minimal provisions which was essentially a death sentence. One of the men who pushed for this decision was Franklin Graves. As winter came on and food supplies ran out the whole Donner party was facing starvation.

But Franklin Graves was suffering something worse than hunger. He was suffering under a heavy burden of guilt from his part in the decision to banish James Reed. He became convinced that God was irrevocably against him and told his family that he was sure he would not make it to California. He was sure that God would have him die along the trail, for his sins.

Here was a tough hardy pioneer, with a wife and 9 children. He was described as a “genuine backwoodsman and pioneer”. “He was a man of large frame, good-natured, hospitable and ever ready to do a kindness.” Yet he was crushed and tormented till death with guilt!

As I read this, I had such a compassion come over me for this man and his guilt! I said, “God, how I wish I could have been there to proclaim the grace and forgiveness of God to this man! How I would love to have proclaimed the better covenant of Jesus to him! How I would love to have proclaimed to him a God who shows mercy for our iniquities, a God who says, “I will remember your sins no more”.

Perhaps the reason I had such compassion for this man is because I have had times in my life when the heavy, dark cloud of guilt and failure oppressed me. And how I needed to hear this message of radical forgiveness and forgetfulness! Have you been there?

We all have things in our life we wish we could forget, that we wish had never happened. We remember that thing we did, or said, that was sinful toward God and hurtful to others. To have God tell us he will not remember these sins, comes as the sweetest promise a person can hear! And as we receive this word into our hearts it allows us to forget these things too and move on in hope and intimacy with God.

One of the ways the writer of Hebrews helps us understand this new kind of forgiveness, is by contrasting the constant reminder of sins under the Old with the putting away of our sins once for all under the New. Under the old covenant the sacrifices for sin had to be repeated again and again, day after day, year after year. These

constant sacrifices constantly reminded the people of their sin before God. But our sins have been forgiven once for all time, by the perfect sacrifice of Christ. That one time sacrifice of Jesus provides the basis for God to put our sins out of his mind and heart, and relieves our consciences of the continual weight of our sins.

A Christian writer named Ashley Possin with One Truth Ministries shared this story: “My husband and I were once traveling with a pastor and his wife on a long car trip, and this pastor, who we didn’t know well, kept trying to get us to tell him our worst sins. He continued to ask us to tell him what the worst sin is that we had done. My husband and I were looking at each other wondering if he was joking and finally my husband said to him rather seriously, “I don’t know about you, but as for me, my sins are forgotten – There is simply Nothing to discuss!” She said, she was “so blessed by her husbands response because it is ABSOLUTELY TRUE!!”

*It is important to keep in mind this New Covenant blessing is ONLY for those who draw near to God through Jesus. It is for those who know they have a problem before God and need forgiveness. This promises presumes a prior work of the Holy Spirit to make us aware of our sins and to see our desperate need for a Savior. Dick Staub, “Until we know we are broken we cannot be repaired; until we know we have fallen and lay shattered on the ground we cannot be put back together again.”

A few years ago I met with a young lady, raised in a Christian home who had went to a party, got into a relationship with a guy, got pregnant, got an abortion. I took the initiative to call this girl, because I imagined the guilt, the shame, the regret. I wanted so badly to assure this young lady of Christ's forgiveness, his love for

her, but the meeting went completely different than I had planned. She made light of hooking up with this guy. “I don't see that I am such a bad person for having sex with him, all the kids do it. I don't think God loves me any less now just for having an abortion.” There was no sorrow, no guilt, only a kind of defiant self-justification.

For God's promise to forget our sins to mean anything, a person has to see that they have sin that needs to be remove AND forgotten. The gospel, the GOOD NEWS, is that Christ took our sins upon himself. By his wounds we are healed of this terrible disease of sin. It is wonderful news, joyful news, it is a cause for celebration, get up and dance good news. But if we say we have no sin, this promise means nothing! Spurgeon said, “There can be no grace where there is no guilt”. BUT when we know we are guilty before a holy God, his promise to not remember our sins is wildly good news!

****This is the end of a series of messages on the 4 new covenant blessings. Jesus died to bring us into a new and overwhelmingly better relationship with God, called the New Covenant. Hebrews 8:6 Christ has obtained a ministry that is “much more excellent than the old”, “the covenant he mediates is better, since it is enacted on better promises.”**

In Hebrews 8 we are given the essential four better promises!
First: God has placed in our hearts the desire and the power to live for him. The external laws of God were good but our hearts couldn't keep them. Now God writes his laws in our minds and upon our hearts by his Spirit!. We respond, “yes” to God, by his work in us.

Second: The God who created the universe, the God of the Bible, the almighty, holy and loving God, says, “I will be YOUR God”!

“And You will be MY people”. God has committed himself to you in a loving, faithful, eternal bond! He is yours! You are his!

Third: We have been given first hand experience of God. “They shall all know me, from the least of them to the greatest”. We are each one given the gift of personally knowing God.

Four: God has said, “I will be merciful regarding their wrong deeds, and I will never again remember their sins.” Through the blood of Jesus, God will never remember your sins against you!

These new covenant promises are bundled together! A person cannot say I want forgiveness of sins but I don't want a new heart. The grace that forgives our sin is the same grace that changes our hearts.

This New Covenant is God's full answer to all that is wrong with us; to all that is sinful, and broken about us. It goes to the core of our estrangement from God. It forgives our sins, and heals our sin-sick hearts, and restores us to intimacy with God. We are brought near to God, made the friends of God, we are transformed into people who love God, holy, unblemished and blameless in his presence.

Let these promises become the world you live in! Let this be the air you breathe, the meditation of your heart! Let these promises of God frame your whole attitude toward life.

***How does God's forgetfulness toward our sins, affect our lives?

*It frees us to resist and renounce sin, rather than wallowing in guilt about our sins and failures. I had a friend who struggled for years with thinking he had maybe committed the unpardonable sin.

Thoughts would come to his mind, questioning God's existence or God's goodness, then he would go into this long period of introspection wondering if God would ever forgive him.

When an evil thought comes to mind, sometimes we can get bogged down in this quicksand of mulling over what a disgusting thought, how could I think such a thing, how could God forgive me for that?". When we live in the promise of God's mercy toward our sins, we can mainly focus on kicking out evil thoughts.

*It allows us to focus on the incredible mercy God has shown us, instead of being obsessed with remembering our own sins and failures. We can forget what lies behind! If God does not remember my sins, I do not need to keep mulling over my sins and keep recalling the shame. In one sense we always are mindful that we have sinned, but we remember our sin in light of his GREAT mercy! Wonderful Grace of Jesus, greater than all my sin;
How shall my tongue describe it,
Where shall its praise begin?
Taking away my burden, setting my spirit free;
O the Wonderful Grace of Jesus reaches me!

Broader than the scope of my transgressions,
Greater far than all my sin and shame,
O magnify the precious name of Jesus,
PRAISE HIS NAME!

*God's forgetfulness toward our sins frees us to serve him as beloved sons without fear. "For you did not receive the spirit of slavery to fall back into fear, but you have received the Spirit of adoption as sons, by whom we cry, "Abba! Father!" There is a sense

in which we always fear God, but there is also a sense in which we are free as beloved children in the presence of God, without fear.

We are free to enjoy God and love God. God's promise allows us to praise him, to sing to him, to even dance before him with the delight of a child, without the fear of reproach and condemnation.

*Knowing God will not remember our sins draws us to the heart of the Father. It makes us want to run to him. We naturally gravitate toward people who accept us and do not condemn us or hold our sins and failures over our head. We like people who like us.

*Instead of being burdened with gaining our own acceptance with God we are free to care for others. (William Newell) Your entire energy can be spent on working your way to God. Even as a Christian, it can become all about fighting this inward battle to be accepted by God. Once you really know God will never hold onto your sins in his heart and mind, you can go bless others and reach others!

Prayer: Father, this is a blessing we can scarcely comprehend, that you would take our sins, and choose to not remember them! We are so thankful that you would put our sins out of your heart and mind and receive us as friends, and take us in your arms and love us and keep us near to your heart! We really needed this promise! Thank you!