

R12.2 January 2026 Blog

Repentance & Forgiveness: A Catalyst for New Beginnings

Chances are that every person reading this is afflicted by at least one broken relationship in his/her life. It is especially tragic when the relationship is among professing followers of Jesus Christ. The mature in the faith recognizes that such conflict must grieve the Holy Spirit because it is incongruent with the fruit of the Spirit (Gal. 5:22-23) and it is the antithesis of love (see John's Gospel and his epistles). Conflict with unbelievers is to be expected, but unresolved conflict between brothers and sisters in Christ – God forbid!

So, what are the faithful to do? God forgives and He forgets – is this not a model for His followers? Let's begin with an excerpt from *Thoughts from the Diary of a Desperate Man*¹, then consider some observations based on God's Word, and finally, conclude with application.

Repentance

“Then He began to reproach the cities in which most of His miracles were done, because they did not repent.” Matthew 11:20

You must repent of your sin, not to restore your relationship with the one offended, but in order for you to have a relationship with God. Repentance and forgiveness are two separate, unlinked transactions. Also, others need not repent of their sin against you for you to forgive them. There are at least three reasons for this: First, all sin is ultimately against God. Therefore you must repent before God prior to asking others to forgive you. Second, true repentance comes from the heart and only God knows the heart. Third, you forgive others, irrespective of their repentance, for you believe, “Vengeance is mine, I will repay, says the Lord” (Rom. 12:19).

All people naturally want to be forgiven, but don't want to forgive. When we do wrong we desire forgiveness from both God and the person transgressed. But when we are afflicted with extremely hurtful acts from others, we tend to be more interested in justice than forgiveness. A friend's wife, through negligence, accidentally killed a Christian girl. The family, although professing faith in Christ, refused to forgive the wife. Jesus links forgiveness with repentance; He will not forgive if we do not forgive (Mat. 18:21-35).

Although He tells us that we must forgive in order to be forgiven, we can easily conclude that if we forgive we will be forgiven. For example, a man said, “I know God doesn't want me to perjure myself, but I know He will forgive me.” When asked about the link between forgiveness and repentance, he said, “I forgive others without their repenting so also God will forgive me.” Nothing could be further from the truth; God will not forgive without repentance, and as already noted, He knows the heart.

¹ Day 358 of Walter A. Henrichsen's Daily Devotional, *Thoughts from the Diary of a Desperate Man*

Observations:

Can God actually forget a sinner's transgressions once the person has truly repented and asked God for His forgiveness? If He can forget, can I? Well, it is probably more accurate to say, "He remembers not" rather than suggest the Omniscient forgets anything. Let's look deeper through some passages of scripture to garner a better understanding.

Note: The word, "remember" as used in the following three passages is "Zakar" (Strong's H2142) = remember, mention; to remember, recall, call to mind. A different word for "remember" is used in the fourth passage.

- Isaiah 43:25 "I, even I, am he who blots out your transgressions, for my own sake, and **remembers your sins no more.**"
- Jeremiah 31:33 "This is the covenant I will make with the people of Israel after that time," declares the LORD. "I will put my law in their minds and write it on their hearts. I will be their God, and they will be my people. No longer will they teach their neighbor, or say to one another, 'Know the LORD,' because they will all know me, from the least of them to the greatest," declares the LORD. "For I will forgive their wickedness and **will remember their sins no more.**"
- Hebrews 8:12 "For I will forgive their wickedness and **will remember their sins no more.**"
 - The writer of Hebrews quotes Jeremiah 31:31-34 in Hebrews 8:7-13 as he tells the reader about the superiority of the new covenant.
- Hebrews 10:16-17 "This is the covenant I will make with them after that time, says the Lord. I will put my laws in their hearts, and I will write them on their minds." Then he adds: "**Their sins and lawless acts I will remember no more.**"
 - Again, the writer of Hebrews quotes from Jeremiah 31 as he writes about Christ's once for all sacrifice
 - "Remember" as used here is "mimneskomai" (Strong's G3403) = be mindful, remember; to remind; to be recalled or to return to one's mind

The Point: Once a person has repented and turned from their sin to God, recognizing that Jesus has already borne the punishment in their place for their sin, God no longer counts the sin against the person because He has counted that sin against His Son (propitiation). It is not that God has developed amnesia, but rather He no longer counts the sin against the repentant person. The beautiful hymn, *Amazing Grace* comes to mind.

Application:

- ⇒ If God can forgive and forget (not remember/not add the debt as if to a ledger of rights and wrongs), how can I justify holding a debt against another person, especially if they have asked me to forgive them? If I refuse to treat another

person the way God has so graciously treated me, am I not placing myself above our Creator? God forbid!

- ⇒ As Jesus taught the disciples to pray in Matthew's Gospel (6:9-15) – “This, then, is how you should pray: ‘Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name, your kingdom come, your will be done, on earth as it is in heaven. Give us today our daily bread. And **forgive us our debts, as we also have forgiven our debtors**. And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from the evil one.’ For **if you forgive other people when they sin against you, your heavenly Father will also forgive you. But if you do not forgive others their sins, your Father will not forgive your sins.**”
 - I do not want to step into eternity holding anything against another person on this earth. God will handle every single injustice without fail; there is no need for me to be concerned that justice will not be done – it is not my role to pursue justice on my own behalf. (Hebrews 10:30 – Vengeance is the Lord's)
- ⇒ Matthew 18:21-22 “Then Peter came to Him and said, ‘Lord, how often shall my brother sin against me, and I forgive him? Up to seven times?’ Jesus said to him, ‘I do not say to you, up to seven times, but up to seventy times seven.’”
 - Jesus is not giving a specific number or establishing a limit but rather making the point that you never reach a point where you refuse to forgive. Jesus treats us in the same manner, “As far as the east is from the west, So far He removed our transgressions from us.” (Psalm 103.12).
 - His grace, mercy and forgiveness are without limit. Thank You, Jesus!!! Lord, help me to model this in the way I live for You.
- ⇒ *Word of Caution:* Remember that 2 Corinthians 5:10 applies to all Christ-followers (a blog for another day). Forgiven ≠ No Consequences.
- ⇒ If you are entering the new year with unresolved conflict with a brother or sister in Christ, examine your heart and consider what God would have you do – for His glory and for your good. Chances are that the unresolved conflict bleeds over into other relationships – consider how it may be harming others in your midst.
 - “Do not let the sun go down on your anger” (Eph. 4:26) and risk a root of bitterness growing into a forest of discontent.