

Enjoy Your Forgiveness

Presented by Mary Lowman

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Day One

Do you find it difficult to believe God has truly forgiven you? I think there are just too many people who carry around guilt even after they've asked God to forgive them. They still live in the "if onlys" of life and imagine what their lives would have been "if only" they had not made a wrong choice.

I want us to look on the other side of forgiveness today—when we have personally been forgiven and yet we don't seem to enjoy that forgiveness. This thought came to me in one of my daily prayer zoom meetings which we've been having with the women in my church since COVID shut us down. This dear woman asked God to forgive her because she knew she was forgiven by him, yet she wasn't enjoying her forgiveness. I immediately thought of many people I know who would fall into that category—including myself at times.

I remember a time many years ago now, when I had come back to full fellowship with the Lord after a long period of chasing my dreams and living my life my way. I was truly sorry for my wayward ways and had confessed them. I knew that God had forgiven me, but one day as I was praying, some of those past sins just came flooding back into my mind. I was once again ashamed and embarrassed and so regretful that I had allowed those sins into my life. I started asking God once again for forgiveness, specifically confessing them. And honestly, the voice of God's Spirit to me that day was almost audible, as I heard him say, "I don't know what you're talking about." Isaiah 43:25 says: *I, even I, am he who blots out your transgressions, for my own sake, and remembers your sins no more.*

Have you ever tried to erase something from your memory? We all have things we would like to forget, but we just can't totally erase things from our memories—at least not the things we'd like to erase.

Have you discovered that the things you'd like to forget are the things that hang around your mind, and at the same time you forget lots of good things that you should remember? It's a common human problem; we remember what we should forget and forget what we should remember. And who do you think aids and abets us in that process? The enemy of our soul, Satan himself. If he can keep us mired in the regrets from yesterday, in the guilt we insist on carrying with us even though God has forgiven us, then he steals our joy, robs our peace, and keeps us in bondage to the past.

So, that's why I want to encourage you to enjoy your forgiveness.

Day Two

Are you enjoying your forgiveness? When the enemy of our soul can't keep us from confessing our sins to our forgiving God, he'll try to keep us from enjoying the truth that when God forgives us, he remembers it against us no more.

But of course, in order to do that, you have to confess whatever sin is in your life, forsake it, and ask God to forgive you. And the good news is he is always willing to forgive us. 1 John 1:9 makes that very

clear. It says, *If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just and will forgive us our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness.*

I believe a Christian who is refusing to confess known sin and keeps hanging on—even if it seems small and not important—is more miserable than a person who is not a follower of Jesus Christ and indulging in the same sin. It's the Holy Spirit within us that becomes very uncomfortable—or offended or grieved—when we harbor unconfessed sin.

The first thing is to make sure you have confessed your sin, turned from it, and you know God has forgiven you. Make sure of that. But maybe you're thinking that you have done that, and yet, you keep asking God again and again to forgive you for what he has already forgiven. Does that describe you?

If so, I would remind you God has chosen to remember your sins no more once they are forgiven and forsaken. Therefore, who are you to keep bringing them up, living in regret, and refusing to enjoy the forgiveness you have received?

I understand God is probably the only one who can truly erase his memory if he chooses to. You and I in these earthly bodies with our sin natures, we just don't have that miraculous power to totally forget. I get that.

But we can do all things through Christ who strengthens us, so it is possible to enjoy your forgiveness instead of letting your past hang over you like a dark cloud, robbing you of peace and joy.

Day Three

I'm examining the forgiveness God gives us—forgiveness that is full and complete. Unlike most humans, he never holds our past sins over our heads, reminding us again and again of how badly we failed. People tend to do that, but not God.

I'm looking at God's forgiveness—the fact that he remembers our sins against us no more. But many times we just don't and won't let go of it. Have you been wallowing around in the regrets of your past sins? True, you may be living with some of the consequences, but there's no reason for you to let confessed sin hang over your head like a dark cloud.

When that happens, you are not enjoying your forgiveness. It's as though you've forgotten God has forgiven you, or you think he still intends to punish you for it. Perhaps you are just so sorry it happened that you can't put it behind you. God is not honored in that way, is he?

Maybe you're wondering what it means to enjoy your forgiveness. Well, consider this. We know salvation is a gift from God. Ephesians 2:8–9 says: *For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith—and this is not from yourselves, it is the gift of God—not by works, so that no one can boast.* So, when you receive a gift, how does it make you feel? It's free—you didn't have to work for it or pay for it or earn it. You couldn't if you tried. It's a gift.

If I gave you a gift and you didn't enjoy it, how would that make me feel? I would be disappointed, right? I mean, when I choose to give someone a gift, the greatest joy for me is seeing that they like it, they want it, and they are enjoying it. God gives us the gift of forgiveness—without charge—even though we don't deserve it, and he loves to see us enjoy our gift of forgiveness.

It certainly does not please God when you don't let go of your regrets from the past. God wants you to enjoy his forgiveness and be thankful for it and go forward in your walk with him. Living under the cloud of your past sins steals your joy, robs you of peace, and makes you less effective in Kingdom work—less capable of doing the good works he planned for you to do.

Are you enjoying your forgiveness? That's the question, and I hope you will give it much thought and determine by God's grace to refuse to let the enemy keep you under a cloud of regret from confessed sins that have been forgiven.

Day Four

Think about this: We know from Scripture the joy of the Lord is our strength. If someone or something takes your strength away, what happens? Well, not much.

Not long ago I went through a medical procedure that took my strength. I had to pretty much do nothing for a few days because my strength was gone. No doubt you have experienced the reality that without strength, you pretty much can't do anything, right?

What do you think the enemy wants to steal from you? He knows when your spiritual strength is missing, you lose your ability to get things done for Jesus. You lose your joyful countenance, your joyful attitude—those things that testify to others about your faith. Therefore, if he can, he is going to steal your joy, because that is the source of your spiritual strength. And how does he do that?

Well, he has many ways of shooting that arrow that steals your joy. Honestly, it is one of his most effective weapons and one of his most subtle ones, because we often don't see he is behind our loss of joy. We don't recognize that flaming arrow he shoots at us.

And when you are living in regret, under a cloud of guilt from sins that have been confessed and forgiven, your joy is greatly diminished—stolen. And that debilitates you; it cripples you; it puts you on the sidelines; saps your spiritual strength and pretty soon you just want to quit. You feel unworthy and unlovable, and you've lost the joy of your salvation. The enemy is watching all this and patting himself on the back because that flaming arrow he shot got you, stole your joy, and kept you from enjoying God's forgiveness.

So, if that describes where you are lately, I'm hoping your take-away today will be that you will, with God's help, begin to enjoy your forgiveness. You will start to understand the enemy's tactics to keep you in regret and realize it dishonors the one who has purchased your forgiveness, Jesus Christ. He has given you the gift of forgiveness, just as he said he would, but you are not living in the joy and the peace and the strength that is your birthright as a child of God.

Day Five

I am examining what it means to enjoy your forgiveness—to live in the incredible truth that when you confess and forsake your sins, God freely forgives and furthermore, he remembers them against you no more. They are removed from you as far as the East is from the West—and of course, the East and West can never meet.

In 1 John 2:12, we read: *I am writing to you, little children, because your sins are forgiven for his name's sake.* Your forgiven sins have been forgiven for the honor of Jesus' name. This is all done for God's glory. Living in the joy of your forgiveness, testifying that God has forgiven you, enjoying your forgiveness is what God wants for his children—those who are born from above through faith in Jesus Christ.

I want to close with a quote from an article I read by Luke Roland:

The truth is, Christianity as a religion really has only one participant and that is Jesus. We are not participants, but recipients. We receive, and we receive the most amazing gift we could ever receive, which is forgiveness. This is why I believe it is important for us right now to understand our justification and to take our forgiveness very seriously, so we are not tossed around by a new false doctrine.

And that false doctrine is forgiveness is something you have to earn or work for. You have to pay for your sins, your mistakes, your wrong choices. And then of course, you can never enjoy your forgiveness, because you can never pay for it or earn it. So, it's a catch 22. But Jesus has come to set you free from that bondage. As Galatians 5:1 tells us: *"It is for freedom that Christ has set us free. Stand firm, then, and do not let yourselves be burdened again by a yoke of slavery."*

My prayer today is you will begin now to enjoy your forgiveness and keep learning to do that. You do that by bringing every thought into captivity—those thoughts of guilt and regret—grabbing them and replacing them with the truth that you are forgiven. Truth sets you free.