

Forgiving Yourself?

One of the things that runs around the “Christian” world these days is the idea that one must forgive oneself before forgiving others can occur, or that one can grow spiritually. Frequently, one will hear ‘If I do not forgive myself, will God forgive me?’ or ‘If I do not forgive myself, how can God forgive me?’ The following two quotes are typical of what one sees in response to the expression ‘I can’t forgive myself.’

“I smiled, remembering my mother’s gift of honesty, and thought, I should have known. Accepting others is not next...for one simple reason. Accepting myself has to happen first. I had to accept God and his forgiveness before I could accept myself. And I must accept myself before I can move on to accepting others...”
(<http://www.balconypublishing.com/TIExcerpt.htm>)

“I AM NOT THE SAME as I used to be. I WOULD NOT DO the same things if I could do them over. I am more than sorry. I believe GOD HAS FORGIVEN ME and I’m going to live like it. I will SPEAK and THINK the truth about myself and God. I REJECT THE LIES of the enemy. And, I FORGIVE MYSELF. Say it louder, I FORGIVE MYSELF! Insert your name in here and say, “_____ I FORGIVE YOU!!” Now spend some time thanking Jesus for the new start He’s giving you.” ((But I Can’t Forgive Myself, By Melody Green))

In considering this whole idea of forgiving oneself, I have a question that ought to be seriously considered. The question arises out of this very issue, and was posed to the individual who also made the statement that he was having trouble forgiving himself for some of the things he had done. What I asked him was:

“Who made you judge and jury?”

That’s correct. I asked who it was that made him judge and jury of the action he could not forgive himself for. Why? Consider the following passage from the Book of Proverbs.

There is a generation that curseth their father, and doth not bless their mother.

There is a generation that are pure in their own eyes, and yet is not washed from their filthiness.

There is a generation, O how lofty are their eyes! and their eyelids are lifted up.

There is a generation, whose teeth are as swords, and their jaw teeth as knives, to devour the poor from off the earth, and the needy from among men. (*Proverbs 30:11-14*)

In the above passage from Proverbs, a generation of people arise that are utterly proud and arrogant, and think the world revolves around them. They think the world owes them a living (so to speak), and they are the determiners of what is right and what is wrong. Sound familiar? It ought to. Ever since the 1960’s in America, the vast majority of the young people have been just like the passage from Proverbs describes: proud, focused on self, disrespectful of authority particularly parental authority, and greedy to the point of destroying others for their own gain.

Now, go back and reread the quotes above. Please notice the focus of the above passages about forgiving oneself. Just what is that focus? Did you notice that it is self? No matter how much the rest of the discussion seems to talk about God and Christ, it always returns to self. Thus it is making the individual judge and jury of what is acceptable and what is not.

But, you say:

Isn’t it necessary that we reconcile in ourselves that we can

be forgiven and that we will accept forgiveness, and that if we will not forgive ourselves, then Christ will not forgive us?

To which I must answer:

If you think that Christ's forgiveness of your sins depends upon you first being able to forgive yourself, then you will never obtain forgiveness from the Lord Jesus Christ, no matter how much you are able to forgive yourself.

The reason for my answer is found in Psalm 51. What is contained in the following verse is a bit of doctrine that is essential for salvation, and for understanding our proper place before the LORD God. Before reading this we must remember that this is King David's confession of his sins of adultery and murder. Remember, he took another man's wife, and then had the man killed to cover up his transgression.

Have mercy upon me, O God, according to thy lovingkindness: according unto the multitude of thy tender mercies blot out my transgressions.

Wash me thoroughly from mine iniquity, and cleanse me from my sin.

For I acknowledge my transgressions: and my sin is ever before me.

Against thee, thee only, have I sinned, and done this evil in thy sight: that thou mightest be justified when thou speakest, and be clear when thou judgest. (*Psalm 51:1-4*)

Notice what David stated in the last sentence. In speaking to the LORD God, David states: "Against thee, thee only, have I sinned, and done this evil in thy sight:"

Now, no matter what sins you have committed, who is the injured party. Just whose will was transgressed that it is counted as sin and iniquity? Yours? Your friend's? Your unborn

child"s? Your parents? Etc., etc. According to Scripture, no matter what sin you commit, and no matter who appears to be the injured party, you have sinned against God and God only.

Now, just what right do you have in stating that you must forgive yourself? Would not that be usurping the place of the LORD God? Was it to you that the Father committed all judgment? Moreover, if you forgive yourself, just how much weight does that carry with God?

By the way, if you think that you must forgive yourself before you can move on with being a child of God, then you obviously didn't believe God when He said He would forgive you. Hence, you are still not forgiven as you are making your salvation contingent upon your forgiving yourself.
