

Volume 3 – Day 29: God Cannot Forgive Sin

The only pathway to intimacy with God is forgiveness of our relationship crimes (sins). Now to be sure, God does not forgive in the manner which most think. God cannot just let the perpetrator go free and still provide justice to the victim.

God's forgiveness is like the motor cyclists' saying, *Pay it forward*. God *pays forward* the sins to Jesus, so that the due penalty of our crimes is ***paid in full*** by Him. No sin goes unpunished by God. God declared emphatically, "Vengeance is mine, I ***will*** repay." God will either let you pay your punishment forward to Jesus, or He will allow you to serve your own sentence (separation from relationship with God). That is the singular message of the Gospel.

Many respected '*Christian*' teachers, proclaim from their pulpits and lecterns, the false teaching of moralism. The proper response to acknowledged sin is, "Thank You, Lord, that Jesus has paid for this sin already!" Then go about your Father's work again immediately. One sacrifice and one repentance is all that God required for all of the sins of anyone who in faith lets God ***pay their sins forward*** to Christ. But to give thanks in everything is the ultimate in freedom from guilt and shame.

When a Christian joyfully thanks God for the forgiveness already applied to their entire life, and instantly restores their communion with God through the Holy Spirit, they can immediately hear His guidance and walk in it. This is truly what the Bible calls walking in the Spirit. You cannot walk in the Spirit by simply not walking in the flesh. Walking in the Spirit is living in constant awareness of the presence of the Holy Spirit within and letting Him make your choices! His choices will always be laced with the unconditional love of God for you and for those in your present moment of influence.

Volume 3 – Day 30: What Is The Cross I Must Bear

So, what the cross is for Jesus, it cannot be for you. The cross was death for Him and it is life for you. The cross was punishment for Him and forgiveness for you. The cross was judgment on Him and it is freedom for you. So when we come to love the cross and to stand before the cross, the cross is not a symbol of our pain, it's a symbol of His.

When Jesus said, "Take up your cross and follow me," He wasn't talking about pain or suffering. That was His deal with the cross. It's not ours. He was punished so that I could go free. He suffered so that I didn't have to. The cross is a symbol of your freedom, your forgiveness, your acceptance, the love of God, the generosity of God, the kindness of God, the mercy of God, the beauty of God. When He said "Take up your cross," He said, "Take up everything that's beautiful about me and follow me." "Take up everything that's marvelous about my love for you and come and walk with me. Come follow after me." — Graham Cooke, 'Abiding - John chapter 15'

Don't we want to follow someone who loves us and cares about our future? Don't we want guidance from a competent leader? Don't we want to feel secure in someone stronger and more capable than we are? Well that's who God is! And to think, "He loves us on our worst day as much as on our best day."

Granted, when the enemy is shooting at our leader, God, the enemy's bullets are also coming at us. When people curse God, they are also cursing those who have faith and trust in Him. But, our Commander-in-Chief can never be defeated. So we can walk with our heads held high. We actually know that we have already won!

My Confirming Scripture: My Aligning Experiences:

Volume 3 – Day 31: The Bars of My Own Prison

The ultimate in frustration is to create unattainable goals or unrealistic expectations. It is our expectations which are not met that send us into fits of anger and animosity. Imagine your expectations of others as the bars of a prison which separate you from them. Also consider how awful your expectations of yourself, which cannot be realized, make you feel. You may place greater expectations on yourself than God does. Only you can take them down. You made them!

A photograph of a dog, possibly a husky, looking out from behind vertical bars. The bars are dark and run vertically across the frame. The dog is wearing a blue jacket. The background is a blurred outdoor setting with trees and foliage. To the right of the image, the text 'EXPECTATIONS / MY RIGHTS' is written in a bold, sans-serif font. Below this title is a list of expectations, each preceded by a right-pointing arrow. The list includes: 'Bars that separate me from you', 'Bars that I created', 'Bars fabricated of my opinions', 'Bars as strong as I choose', 'Bars you cannot remove', 'Bars you may not know exist', 'Bars that are based on culture', 'Bars which keep me from what I want most in life', 'Bars of relationship separation', 'Bars that GOD HATES', and 'see also: 10 Commandments'. The word 'EXPECTATIONS' is written vertically on the left side of the image, and the word 'RIGHTS' is written vertically on the right side of the image, both in a bold, sans-serif font. The word 'MY' is written vertically in the center of the image, between the two columns of bars.

EXPECTATIONS / MY RIGHTS

- Bars that separate me from you
- Bars that I created
- Bars fabricated of my opinions
- Bars as strong as I choose
- Bars you cannot remove
- Bars you may not know exist
- Bars that are based on culture
- Bars which keep me from what I want most in life
- Bars of relationship separation
- Bars that GOD HATES
- see also: 10 Commandments

Freedom from aggravation, animosity and self-loathing is only a few bars away! The saw for bar removal is the choice to accept others “as-is.” Just be yourself and let others be themselves.

My Confirming Scripture: My Aligning Experiences:

DEEPER Every Day -- John Henry Alan

Volume 4, Day 29: Elderly Spiritual Infants

I was visiting a large contemporary church a few years ago. Part of the service was dedicated to 'showcasing' spiritual maturity. The panel consisted of two elderly women who were interviewed by one of the pastors. One woman answered each question with a wisdom and insightfulness that compelled all to listen and learn. She obviously had memorized much scripture, knew Jesus well and loved Him dearly. The other woman was obviously spiritually ignorant. She lacked knowledge of scripture. And wisdom was obviously not in her. Yet both women had two things in common. One was old age. The other was relatively little evil being manifest in their lives. Consider this as well. If a glorious eulogy is given at an old woman's funeral, it is likely to be believed and appreciated. If a similarly great eulogy is given at an old man's funeral, it is highly likely that most of it will not be believed! And spiritual maturity is rarely even mentioned on such an occasion.

For some reason, we think that spiritual maturity comes with natural aging. This is like thinking that as rebellious young boy gets older, he will surely develop good behaviors. Yet, the truth be told, aging is a process of decay and decline and has little affect on behavior. So, why do we think that spiritual maturity accompanies aging? I believe that it comes from the false teaching that spiritual maturity is a matter of doing less evil and doing more kind deeds. Well, to be sure, most of us become less wicked when we get older, simply because our body cannot perform either rightfully or wrongfully in a particular activity (for example, sex). However, there is a correlation between less sinning and greater spiritual maturity. When one is truly in love with another they put the pleasure of the other ahead of their own. So, if one is spiritually mature, that is passionately in love with God, less selfishness and less relationally destructive behavior follow. Your behaviors either reveal your evil motives or confirm your pure ones. Spiritual maturity is selfless other-preferring expressions of unconditional love.

DEEPER Every Day -- John Henry Alan

Volume 4, Day 30: “I am a Christian but I still have my rights!”

I cannot count how many times I expressed those words. And worse yet, the number of times I acted on those words even when they were not verbalized. Maybe you know someone who also believes those words.

One day as I was screaming silently that I have my rights, the Holy Spirit brought to my remembrance that Jesus never expressed that thought. He also never acted as though He had any rights at all.

I began to reread the Gospels and ponder the actions and words of Jesus. I wasn't surprised to notice that Jesus gave up His rights the moment He entered our world. He emptied Himself of His rights, in order to become an example for us of serving His Father's purpose rather than His own. And that purpose is "...that none should perish, but that all should come to repentance." 2 Peter 3:9

The longer I meditated on the concept of giving up what is **rightfully** mine (rights given to me by God Himself), the more convicted I felt. Jesus, the Only Begotten Son of God, gave up the very thing each of us must give up in order to receive God's salvation. I repented of my wrong belief, that I could be a Christian and still have my rights. I gave up my rights (to be in control of my own destiny) and gave them back to God.

The most amazing changes occurred in my soul each time I surrendered another right to God. Ultimately I realized that this is one of the keys to a life of peace. In retrospect, I could see how insisting on **having it my way (my rights)** had been, and always would be the source of conflict between me and others. My rights created expectations of others that were rarely met. And unmet expectations always made me angry.

As my beliefs changed, one by one, my love, joy and peace increased. As I began to move downward in order to lift others up on my back, I saw clearly how Jesus' humility saves.

Volume 4, Day 31: Making a Point or Making a Difference

For as long as I can remember, I have participated in Bible Studies. The vast majority of them were mostly sparring with others about who knew the most or best things. They were information packing meetings intended to make us better Christians. But they were sorely lacking in the main thing. The primary message of the Bible is **what to do** in relationship and **how to be in relationship**. It was the **how to** that eluded me for years.

For over 40 years after becoming a Christian at age 14, I did Bible Studies in this manner. Yet in reflection of the overall effect my faith had on others, I clearly saw that I had made hundreds of points, but almost no significant difference. It was almost as though I had become a stick of petrified wood. Putrefied might be a better way to describe it. And my humiliation stimulated me to seek better ways to live and better interpret Scripture.

I went back to the Old Testament which was packed with rules for living and the consequences of breaking those rules. It also contained myriad stories that reinforced the value in the rules and compliance with them. And certainly without rules, civilized communities could not exist. But is community meaningful with obedience to rules alone?

I purposed to engage with others in Relationship Studies based Biblical truth. As the content of the studies shifted to affection for one another rather than comparing notes, so did the affection. We become more caring toward each other. And we began to notice that the good things we did for each other made a significant difference in how we loved each other. Jesus taught us to do for others because we love them, not out of obligation or duty.

It is love that makes the difference in our eternal destiny and in life. People know when they are the object of a project (charity) rather than the object of true affection. "Love Like Jesus Loves" and you will most certainly make a significant difference.

Volume 4+ Mercy, Forgiveness and Grace: Expressions of Love

Reflecting on the stolen silver scene in Les Misérables where the Bishop offered not just mercy and forgiveness but added grace (more silver to the thief), I decided to reread the whole Bible with ‘fresh’ eyes. Reading the entire Bible from the perspective of God’s mercy, forgiveness and grace, which are byproducts of His unconditional love for every human being, changed many of my misperceptions of God. My new perceptions changed my lifestyle as well.

I discovered that the Old Testament was not just about sin, condemnation and judgment. It was about living in love. I found in story after story, especially the sordid stories, that God’s grace was at work. I began to see the entire Bible as the **most amazing love story** ever. Consider the stories of Job and Joseph who experienced enormous adversity and misery. Yet they knew and loved God in a deeply personal way. They didn’t shake their fist at God in complaint, like I was so prone to do. They saw God at work promoting the glory of His love and trusted Him despite their own personal pain and misery. They were confident in God’s purposes.

When God confronted the first murderer, Cain, He showed him mercy and withheld his due punishment which should have been death. God even placed a mark of protection on Cain’s forehead warning all that God would do seven times worse to them than they did toward Cain. It isn’t that God doesn’t get angry about things that humans do that are evil. It is that God made us to love us and for us to love each other. God loves us like we love even our wayward children,

Let yourself revel in the love that God has for you. He wants to release you from your feelings of guilt, shame and fear by continuing to pour His love upon you. Your parents may not have been good at all, but don’t consider God as an **imperfect** parent such as human parents maybe. By simply believing that God Himself in the person of His Only Begotten Son, Jesus, paid the penalty for you. Forgiveness is simply letting God “pay it forward”(the penalty for your sins, which are crimes against relationship) to Jesus who paid for all sin.

DEEPER Every Day -- John Henry Alan