

Grace

Forgetful God

“God doesn’t know everything.” That is the first sentence I started with a couple of times when talking to a group about God. It’s an attention getter. I’ve had some rather pointed responses such as “You know that God is sovereign, right?” Yes, God is sovereign. He is all-knowing. A more correct statement would be “God, doesn’t remember everything.”

What does this have to do with grace? Am I out of my mind? Stay with me, Christians. Read the following scenario:

Ryan got his haircut two days ago. On his way out, he saw some hair gel on the shelf for sale. He slyly slipped it in his pocket and walked out the door. Yesterday, he used the hair gel for the first time and immediately felt guilty. He was truly sorry for his actions and asked God to forgive him. God forgives, Ryan goes back, confesses what he did, pays for the hair gel, and the day goes on. That night, Ryan opens the drawer and sees the gel again. He immediately feels the same guilt and asks God to forgive him again. At that point God speaks audibly to Ryan and says, “I have no heavenly idea what you are talking about.”

“For I will forgive their wickedness and will remember their sins no more.” - Hebrews 8:12, NIV

“I, even I, am he who blots out your transgressions, for my own sake, and remembers your sins no more.” - Isaiah 43:25, NIV

“As far as the east is from the west, so far has he removed our transgressions from us.” - Psalm 103:12, NIV

Get this point: God has the absolute ability to no longer remember your forgiven sins. So, the next time you are beating yourself up over something for which you’ve repented—stop it. Learn from your mistakes but quit living like you aren’t forgiven. Because you are, and it’s forgotten about.

What past mistake are you still beating yourself up over? Have you asked God to forgive you?

Back to our story:

A few weeks later, Ryan goes to get his hair cut again. On his way out, he sees the hair gel and is again tempted to steal it. He is immediately guilt-ridden.

“For we do not have a high priest (Jesus) who is unable to empathize with our weaknesses, but we have one who has been tempted in every way, just as we are—yet he did not sin.” - Hebrews 4:15, NIV; parenthesis mine

Remember—to be tempted is not a sin. Jesus was tempted to steal too, because the Word says that He was “tempted in every way”. He doesn’t sympathize with us. He “empathizes” with us. That’s an important distinction, because empathy means he’s been there, and He completely understands. Ryan shouldn’t feel guilty for being tempted, and neither should you. Quit beating

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yourself up over (insert your forgiven sin here)! Give yourself some grace. God did! Learn from it. Move on.

Let go of the guilt. Sure, you've given in to the sin in the past. Sure, the temptation is ugly, dirty, and unholy. But define it for what it is—a temptation. Overcome it. Then, you'll be the one empathizing with others, encouraging them to forgive themselves of past sins and lean on Jesus when temptation comes, knowing He completely understands. Have sympathy and compassion on those being tempted. Empathize with them if you've been through the same thing. Because temptation is not a sin!

Once you've learned to not condemn yourself for temptation, and you've learned to forgive yourself of forgiven sins, then you can:

“Approach God’s throne of grace with confidence, so that we may receive mercy and find grace to help us in our time of need” - Hebrews 4:16, NIV

Get this: God is not out to get you. He has a plan for you that is both perfect and fulfilling. Approach Him with repentance, and you'll receive mercy. Approach Him with your frustrations, and you'll find grace. I have done this recently. I was frustrated at Him about not answering a prayer when I thought He should. Instead of striking me down dead at that instant, He graciously reminded me that His will and His timing are perfect.

One last point: Your doubts and fears do not disappoint God! Remember, Jesus completely understands fear. Doubts crept in His mind. He empathizes. Fear and doubt are not sins unless you give in to them allowing them to turn to worry. They aren't sin unless they keep you from doing the work that you know the Lord commands you to do. So, to think you can't approach God because you are fearful is not true. In fact, the opposite is true. God is a God of Love. It is at His Throne that you find the grace and mercy to overcome those doubts and fears.

- **Have you been afraid that God is disappointed in you?**
- **What doubt or fear do you need to address with God?**
- **Do you believe that God is good enough and wise enough to answer your prayer perfectly?**



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