



MINISTÈRE DU PASTEUR CLÉMENT SALOMON · DEVOTIONAL #3

Forgiveness: Free at Last

The debt was paid years ago. So why are you still crossing the street?

For eleven years, Jean-Robert crossed the street. When his mother died, he had no money for the burial, so he borrowed from an older man in the neighborhood, a man everyone called Mèt Dorval. The amount went into a small blue notebook, on a line with his name on it. It took Jean-Robert six years to pay it back, a little at a time, some months nothing at all. And on the day he brought the last of it, Mèt Dorval did something he did not expect. He opened the blue notebook, tore out the page, held a match to the corner, and let it burn in a tin dish on the table while they both watched.

Jean-Robert went home free. And the next morning, coming up the road with a bucket of water, he saw Mèt Dorval walking toward him — and he crossed to the other side.

He did that for eleven more years. He crossed the street at church. He looked at his feet in the market. He never once sat down and drank coffee with that man again. The debt was gone. The shame was not.

Somebody reading this is doing the exact same thing with God.

The page God burns

Here is the verse most people can quote, and almost nobody believes all the way to the end:

"If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness."

1 John 1:9 (KJV)

Read it slowly, because there are two different gifts in that one sentence, and most of us only take the first one.

"Forgive us our sins" — that is the record. The page in the notebook. The legal debt, cancelled.

"And to cleanse us from all unrighteousness" — that is the stain. The dirt on the hands. The thing you still feel when the lights go out.

God does not stop at tearing out the page. He washes the man. If He only forgave, you would be a pardoned criminal — free, but still dirty. He does both, and He does the second one for the exact reason you are afraid of: because He knows you cannot live with yourself otherwise.

And look at the strangest word in the verse: *just*. Not only faithful — **just**. Fair. Right. Legally correct. How can it be *fair* for a guilty person to walk free? Only one way: because someone already paid. The debt was not waived. It was covered, at the cross, by Jesus Christ. That is why God can forgive you without bending His own law. The page is not missing. The page is *paid*.

Measure the distance He threw it

When God wanted to tell us how far He removes a forgiven sin, He did not use a number. He used a direction — and He chose His direction very carefully:

"As far as the east is from the west, so far hath he removed our transgressions from us."

Psalms 103:12 (KJV)

Ask yourself why He did not say *north from south*. Because north and south have ends. Keep walking north and eventually you stand on the top of the world, and your next step is south. There is a meeting place.

East and west have no meeting place. Start walking east and you can walk your whole life and never once begin walking west. The distance does not close. That is not poetry — that is the point. God picked the one measurement in creation that never runs out.

And notice who did the moving. Not you. **"He removed."** You did not carry that sin far enough away by trying harder. He took it out of your hands and carried it to a place with no return road.

The deepest water on earth

The prophet Micah saw the same thing and reached for a different picture. He is almost stammering with surprise:

"Who is a God like unto thee, that pardoneth iniquity, and passeth by the transgression of the remnant of his heritage? he retaineth not his anger for ever, because he delighteth in mercy."

Micah 7:18 (KJV)

Stop on that last phrase: **He delighteth in mercy.** Forgiving you is not something God does with a sigh, the way a tired parent finally gives in. It is the part He enjoys. Mercy is not His duty. Mercy is His delight.

Then comes the next verse, and it is one of the boldest sentences in the Bible:

"He will turn again, he will have compassion upon us; he will subdue our iniquities; and thou wilt cast all their sins into the depths of the sea."

Micah 7:19 (KJV)

Not the shallows, where the water is clear and you can stand up and look down and see everything lying on the sand. *The depths.* The place where light does not reach. The place no diver goes. God does not put your sin somewhere you can wade back out and retrieve it on a bad night.

Someone once said that when God throws our sins into the depths of the sea, He puts up a sign on the shore: **NO FISHING.** The sin is not the problem anymore. The fishing is.

The God who chooses not to bring it up

Now, if you have a good memory and a tender conscience, you have a question: *God knows everything. He cannot actually forget. So it is still there, in His mind, isn't it?*

Listen to how God says it Himself:

"I, even I, am he that blotteth out thy transgressions for mine own sake, and will not remember thy sins."

Isaiah 43:25 (KJV)

"For I will be merciful to their unrighteousness, and their sins and their iniquities will I remember no more."

Hebrews 8:12 (KJV)

"Will not remember" is not the language of a bad memory. It is the language of a promise. When a judge says "that will not be held against you," he has not developed amnesia — he has bound himself. God is telling you, in writing, that your confessed sin will never again be raised against you. Not in this life. Not at the judgment. Not ever.

And notice the four words that tell you why: **"for mine own sake."** He does not blot out your record because you finally deserved it, or because you cried the right amount, or because you put in enough good years to balance the bad ones. He does it because of who He is. Which means it cannot be undone by who you are.

Then why do I still feel guilty?

Because there are two voices, and they sound alike for about three seconds.

One of them is the Holy Spirit. When He convicts you, He is *specific* and He is *going somewhere: that word you said to your wife on Tuesday — go and make it right*. It has a name and a door out of it. It always leads toward Jesus.

The other voice is the accuser, and the Bible names him plainly:

"...for the accuser of our brethren is cast down, which accused them before our God day and night."

Revelation 12:10 (KJV)

His work is vague and endless: *you are disgusting, you have always been like this, don't bother praying*. No name, no date, no door. Just weight. And notice his schedule — **day and night**. He does not take a shift off. If you have been hearing it at 2 a.m., you are not going crazy and you are not uniquely wicked. You are being worked on by a professional.

But look who is standing in the room with you:

"...And if any man sin, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous."

1 John 2:1 (KJV)

An *advocate* is a defense lawyer. And here is the detail that should end this for you: your Defender is also the One who paid the fine. He is not arguing that you are innocent. He is holding up His own hands and saying *this has already been settled*.

"There is therefore now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus."

Romans 8:1 (KJV)

Say the small word in the middle out loud: **now**. Not after a probation period. Not once you have proven yourself for a year. Now.

A simple test for the voice in your head: **Conviction names one thing and points to Jesus. Condemnation names everything and points away from Him.** One of them wants you clean. The other wants you gone.

What you actually have to do

Everything above is free. But free is not the same as automatic, and the Bible is very plain about the one step that is yours:

"He that covereth his sins shall not prosper: but whoso confesseth and forsaketh them shall have mercy."

Proverbs 28:13 (KJV)

Covering is what we are all naturally good at. Explaining. Renaming it. Comparing ourselves to someone worse. And the verse says that road has no exit on it.

Confessing is simply agreeing with God about what it was — no softer word, no excuse attached. It is the shortest distance between a guilty man and a clean one. And if you are afraid of what will happen when you finally say it plainly, God went out of His way to tell you first what His answer will be:

"Come now, and let us reason together, saith the LORD: though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they be red like crimson, they shall be as wool."

Isaiah 1:18 (KJV)

Scarlet was the one dye in the ancient world everybody knew you could not wash out. God names the impossible stain on purpose — and then names snow.

Look also at the woman they dragged in front of Jesus with the evidence in their hands, guilty, with nothing to say for herself. He sent her accusers away, and then He said two things, and you need both:

"Neither do I condemn thee: go, and sin no more."

John 8:11 (KJV)

"Neither do I condemn thee" — that is the past, finished. "Go, and sin no more" — that is the future, opened. He never gives the second one as a condition for the first. He gives the first so the second becomes possible.

The other half of the gift

Now we come to the part of this devotional that will cost you something. Because Jesus, right in the middle of the prayer He taught us, attached a second door to the first one:

"For if ye forgive men their trespasses, your heavenly Father will also forgive you: But if ye forgive not men their trespasses, neither will your Father forgive your trespasses."

Matthew 6:14-15 (KJV)

Be careful here, because people have used that verse to frighten people, and that is not what it is for. It is not saying you earn God's forgiveness by forgiving. Nothing in the Bible is earned; the whole book says the opposite. It is saying something more searching than that: **a hand clenched shut around a grudge is not open enough to receive a gift.**

Jesus told a whole story about it. A servant owed his king a sum so large it could never be paid, and the king simply cancelled it. That same servant walked straight outside and grabbed a man by the throat over a small debt — and had him thrown in prison (Matthew 18:23-35). The

problem was not that the first man's forgiveness was too small. It was that he never let it reach his hands.

Peter thought he was being generous when he asked how many times he had to do this:

"Lord, how oft shall my brother sin against me, and I forgive him? till seven times? Jesus saith unto him, I say not unto thee, Until seven times: but, Until seventy times seven."

Matthew 18:21-22 (KJV)

Jesus was not handing out a quota of 490. He was saying: *stop counting*. The moment you are keeping a number, you are back in the blue notebook — and now you are the one holding the pen.

And here is the measuring stick Paul gives, which is the only one that finally works:

"Forbearing one another, and forgiving one another, if any man have a quarrel against any: even as Christ forgave you, so also do ye."

Colossians 3:13 (KJV)

"Let all bitterness, and wrath, and anger, and clamour, and evil speaking, be put away from you, with all malice: And be ye kind one to another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, even as God for Christ's sake hath forgiven you."

Ephesians 4:31-32 (KJV)

Even as. Not "as much as they deserve." Not "once they apologize properly." The same way He did it with you — while you were still in the wrong, before you asked, at His own cost.

And if you want to see what that looks like with the nails actually going in, listen to what He said from the cross about the men holding the hammers:

"Then said Jesus, Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do."

Luke 23:34 (KJV)

Nobody had apologized. Nobody had even stopped.

Four things forgiveness is not

This is where sincere people get hurt, so let us be very clear. Forgiveness in the Bible is strong, but it is not any of these four things:

- **It is not saying it didn't matter.** If it had not mattered, the cross would not have been necessary. God never asks you to call evil "nothing." He asks you to hand it to the only Judge who can carry it — "Vengeance is mine; I will repay, saith the Lord" (Romans 12:19). Forgiving is not dropping the case. It is moving it to a higher court.
- **It is not a feeling you sit and wait for.** It is a decision you make, usually before the feeling shows up, and often more than once. Some mornings you will have to make it again about the same person. That is not failure — that is "seventy times seven" happening inside your own chest.
- **It is not the same as trust, and it is not the same as staying.** You can forgive a person completely and still not hand them your money, your children, or your address. Forgiveness is something you give. Trust is something a person rebuilds. And if someone is hurting you or your children, **forgiving them does not mean staying where the harm is** — get to safety, tell a pastor and a trusted person, and involve the proper authorities. In an emergency, call 911.
- **It is not forgetting.** You are not God; you cannot promise not to remember. But you can decide, every time the memory arrives, not to pick it back up and use it — against them, or against yourself. That is the "no fishing" sign, and you are the one who has to obey it.

How to actually put it down

Practical, and small enough to do tonight:

- **Name it once, out loud, to God.** Not the softened version. "Lord, this is what I did." Or "Lord, this is what he did to me, and this is what it cost me." Honesty is where this always starts (Psalm 62:8).
- **Then say the sentence that ends it:** "I release him. I am not collecting this debt anymore. You deal with him, and be merciful to him."
- **Expect it to come back, and have your answer ready.** When the memory returns, say it out loud: *that is paid*. Micah 7:19. No fishing.

- **Make right what you can still reach.** If your name is in someone else's blue notebook, go. A phone call, a word, whatever restitution is in your power — "first be reconciled to thy brother" (Matthew 5:24).
- **Do not do the hardest ones alone.** "Confess your faults one to another, and pray one for another, that ye may be healed" (James 5:16). Deep wounds — betrayal, abuse, violence — usually need a pastor, a trusted friend, and often a qualified counselor. This devotional is spiritual encouragement, not medical or psychological treatment. Asking for help is not weak faith.
- **Forgive yourself last, and hardest.** If God is not holding it against you, you are the only one still holding court. "For if our heart condemn us, God is greater than our heart" (1 John 3:20).

Free at last

Eleven years is a long time to cross a street you were allowed to walk down.

Someone finally told Jean-Robert a small thing that changed everything: *Mèt Dorval was not avoiding you. He has been waiting for you to come and drink coffee.* The old man had burned that page precisely so the two of them could sit down together. Every single time Jean-Robert crossed the road, he was not protecting himself from a debt collector. He was refusing a friendship the debt collector had already paid to make possible.

That is what an unbelieved forgiveness does to a person. And it is what your Father has been waiting through, all these years, while you stayed on the other side of the road, still paying on a page that is ash.

"Blessed is he whose transgression is forgiven, whose sin is covered."

Psalm 32:1 (KJV)

The page is burned. The sea is deep. The sign says no fishing. Come and sit down.

Before you close this — one prayer

Pray it out loud, in your own words: *"Father, here it is, with no excuse on it. Forgive me, and wash me. And the one I have been carrying — I release them today. I am not*

collecting anymore. Help me believe that the page is really burned." That prayer has never once been refused.

Would you like to know more about Jesus, start a free Bible study, or talk to someone about what you just read? If there is a name you have been carrying for years, we would be honored to pray over it with you — privately, and with no judgment. Reach us today:

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Or leave a comment, send us a direct message, and **subscribe + follow + share** on YouTube and Facebook.

What should we study next? This devotional completes the current series — and the next topic will be chosen from what you ask for. Reply, comment, or write to us with the question you most want answered from the Bible, and watch for it in the free library at **pasteurclementsalmomon.org**. Subscribe now so it reaches you the day it comes out — if you wait, you will have to go looking for it. 🔔

SEND THIS TO SOMEONE WHO HAS BEEN CARRYING IT TOO LONG

Viewer Handout

Forgiveness: Free at Last — pocket version

5 truths to remember

1. God does two things, not one: He forgives the record *and* cleanses the stain (1 John 1:9).
2. He removed it as far as east is from west — a distance that never closes (Psalm 103:12).
3. He casts it into the depths of the sea, and He delights to do it (Micah 7:18-19).
4. "I will remember no more" is a promise, not a memory lapse — it will never be raised against you again (Isaiah 43:25; Hebrews 8:12).
5. Forgiveness received must become forgiveness given — "even as Christ forgave you" (Colossians 3:13; Matthew 6:14-15).

Memory verse

"If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness."

1 John 1:9 (KJV)

Think & pray about it

- Is there a sin I have confessed to God that I am still punishing myself for? What would change today if I truly believed the page was burned?
- Whose name is in my notebook — and what exactly am I still hoping to collect from them?
- Who could I call, write, or go and see this week to make something right that is still within my reach?

Presenter Bullet Sheet

- **Open with the story** (the blue notebook, the burned page, eleven years of crossing the street). Ask the room: "Has anyone here ever kept paying on a debt that was already settled?" Let it sit.
- **Point 1 — Two gifts in one verse:** 1 John 1:9. "Forgive" = the record; "cleanse" = the stain. Then unpack *just* — forgiveness is legal because Christ paid, not because God ignored the law.
- **Point 2 — The distance:** Psalm 103:12. Why east/west and not north/south: north and south meet at a pole; east and west never do. And *He* removed it — not us.
- **Point 3 — The depths:** Micah 7:18-19. "He delighteth in mercy" — mercy is God's joy, not His duty. The sea is deep on purpose. Use the "NO FISHING" illustration.
- **Point 4 — Remember no more:** Isaiah 43:25; Hebrews 8:12. A judicial promise, not amnesia. Note "for mine own sake" — it rests on His character, so our failures cannot reverse it.
- **Point 5 — Two voices:** Revelation 12:10 (accuser, "day and night") vs. the Spirit's conviction. Give the test: conviction names one thing and points to Jesus; condemnation names everything and points away. Then 1 John 2:1 (our Advocate paid the fine) and Romans 8:1 — stress the word *now*.
- **Point 6 — Our one step:** Proverbs 28:13 (covering vs. confessing); Isaiah 1:18 (scarlet is the unwashable dye — and God says snow); John 8:11 ("Neither do I condemn thee" comes *before* "go, and sin no more").
- **Point 7 — The other half:** Matthew 6:14-15 — handle gently; not earning, but a clenched hand cannot receive. Tell Matthew 18:23-35 (unforgiving servant). Matthew 18:21-22 — "stop counting." Colossians 3:13 and Ephesians 4:31-32 — the standard is "even as." Luke 23:34 — He forgave before anyone repented.
- **Point 8 — What forgiveness is NOT:** not calling evil nothing (Romans 12:19 — move the case to a higher court); not a feeling; not the same as trust or as staying somewhere unsafe; not forgetting. **Say the safety line out loud:** forgiving an abuser does not mean staying in danger — get to safety, involve a pastor, a trusted person, and the proper authorities; in an emergency call 911.

- **Point 9 — Practical steps:** name it once out loud; say the releasing sentence; answer the returning memory with "that is paid"; make restitution where you still can (Matthew 5:24); do not carry the heaviest ones alone (James 5:16), and encourage qualified help for deep wounds.
- **Appeal:** Invite each person to write one name (or their own) on a slip of paper, pray over it silently, and release it to God. Offer personal prayer and a free Bible study. Make it clear that anyone who wants to talk privately can call or write today.
- **Close:** Memory verse (1 John 1:9) + Psalm 32:1, and invite the group to send in the Bible question they most want answered in the next study.

10 Myths vs. Facts

Myth	Fact (with Bible)
1. Some sins are too big for God to forgive.	God names the worst stain He can think of and promises to make it white: "though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow" (Isaiah 1:18). Paul, who persecuted and consented to killing believers, was forgiven and used (1 Timothy 1:13-15).
2. You have to earn forgiveness back with enough good behavior.	"Not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to his mercy he saved us" (Titus 3:5). God blots out sin "for mine own sake" (Isaiah 43:25) — it rests on His character, not our performance.
3. God forgives, but He still holds it over you.	"Their sins and their iniquities will I remember no more" (Hebrews 8:12); He removes them as far as east from west (Psalm 103:12) and casts them into the depths of the sea (Micah 7:19).
4. If I still feel guilty, I must not really be forgiven.	Forgiveness rests on God's promise, not on our feelings. "There is therefore now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus" (Romans 8:1), and when our heart condemns us, "God is greater than our heart" (1 John 3:20).
5. The guilty voice that never stops must be God speaking.	Scripture calls Satan "the accuser of our brethren... day and night" (Revelation 12:10). God's conviction leads to repentance and life (2 Corinthians 7:10); endless accusation does not come from our Advocate (1 John 2:1).
6. Forgiving someone means saying what they did was not serious.	The cross proves sin is deadly serious. God still holds justice: "Vengeance is mine; I will repay, saith the Lord" (Romans 12:19). Forgiving moves the case to God's court; it does not close it.
7. Forgiving means going back and trusting them again.	Scripture commands forgiveness (Colossians 3:13) but also wisdom and prudence: "A prudent man foreseeth the evil, and hideth himself" (Proverbs 22:3). Forgiveness is given; trust is rebuilt over time.

8. A Christian must stay in a home or relationship where they are being harmed.	The Bible never commands anyone to remain in danger; Jesus Himself withdrew from those seeking to harm Him (John 8:59; 10:39), and God defends the oppressed (Psalm 82:3-4). Forgive — and get to safety, tell a pastor and a trusted person, involve the proper authorities; in an emergency call 911.
9. If I have not forgotten it, I have not forgiven it.	Only God promises to "remember no more" (Isaiah 43:25). We are told to put away bitterness and stop repaying (Ephesians 4:31-32; Romans 12:17) — a choice repeated as often as needed, "until seventy times seven" (Matthew 18:22).
10. I can hold one grudge and it will not affect anything.	Jesus tied the two together directly (Matthew 6:14-15; Mark 11:25) and told the parable of the servant forgiven a fortune who jailed a neighbor over a coin (Matthew 18:23-35). Bitterness "springs up" and defiles many (Hebrews 12:15).

Where this comes from (Sources)

This devotional is built on the Bible and reflects the published beliefs of the Seventh-day Adventist Church. Verify everything for yourself:

- The Bible — passages on forgiveness, confession and release: Psalm 32:1-2; 51:1-2; 62:8; 82:3-4; 103:12; 130:3-4; Proverbs 22:3; 28:13; Isaiah 1:18; 43:25; Micah 7:18-19; Matthew 5:24; 6:14-15; 18:21-35; Mark 11:25; Luke 23:34; John 8:11, 59; 10:39; Romans 8:1; 12:17-19; 2 Corinthians 7:10; Ephesians 4:31-32; Colossians 3:13; 1 Timothy 1:13-15; Titus 3:5; Hebrews 8:12; 12:15; James 5:16; 1 John 1:9; 2:1; 3:20; Revelation 12:10 (King James Version, public domain).
- Seventh-day Adventist Fundamental Beliefs — see especially #10, "The Experience of Salvation," and #11, "Growing in Christ": <https://adventist.org/beliefs>
- 28 Fundamental Beliefs (2020 edition, PDF): <https://adventist.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/06/ADV-28Beliefs2020.pdf>
- General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists: <https://gc.adventist.org/>
- Ellen G. White, *Steps to Christ* (chapters on confession and repentance) and *Thoughts from the Mount of Blessing* (public domain): <https://whiteestate.org/> / <https://m.egwwritings.org/>

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