

The Forgiveness of God

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I remember being taught that there is a recording angel writing down all my deeds, so that, when I confess a sin it is blotted out of the book of record by the blood of Christ. No doubt, this idea is a man's understanding taken from the Bible (cf Ex 32:32-33; Ps 56:8; 69:28). But, does it make sense that God has billions of angels recording all the deeds of every person that has ever lived? Or, does it make more sense that a book is a symbol for a mind, and Jesus is the book of life (Rev 13:8) from where we get our faith? Then, to be in the Father and Son (Jn 17:21) and them in us, is to be in their thoughts, and their thoughts in us?

Sin because of ignorance: Before looking at how God forgives, look at how we sin: **Ps 19:12:** *Who can [consider] his errors* ⁽⁷⁶⁹¹⁾? *cleanse thou me from secret (faults).* **Jer 17:9:** *9. The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked: who can know it?* [Hebrew] The Hebrew word *Shegiy'ah* ⁽⁷⁶⁹¹⁾ and its root, *shagah* ⁽⁷⁶⁸⁶⁾ have the same meaning as 7684 & 7683. These two roots are used parallel in: **Job 12:16:** *With him is strength and wisdom: the deceived* ⁽⁷⁶⁸³⁾ *and the deceiver* ⁽⁷⁶⁸⁶⁾ *are his.* Literally, we have - 'the one erring, and 'the one causing the error', which idea is in the New Testament as 'the blind leading the blind.' The human problem is faulty thinking. We do not come by righteousness thinking on our own. We must listen to the Spirit.

The main Hebrew word for sin is *chet'* ⁽²³⁹⁹⁾, whose verb root is *chata'* ⁽²³⁹⁸⁾. The basic meaning of the root is *to err, miss the mark, or miss the way.* How do we miss the way? **Pr 19:2:** *It is not good for a soul to be without knowledge, and the one rushing with his feet sins* ⁽²³⁹⁸⁾. (Hebrew Interlinear) In **James 1:19** it says, *...let every man be swift to hear, slow to speak...* Tie in with these two verses **Eccl 5:6:** *Suffer not thy mouth to cause thy flesh to sin* ⁽²³⁹⁸⁾; *neither say thou before the angel, that it was an error* ⁽⁷⁶⁸⁴⁾... Ultimately then, sin begins with the thoughts, resulting from a lack of knowledge and carelessness from rushing, which leads to error and missing of the way, or goal, God has for each of us. Jesus is the way (Jn 14:6), so it makes sense that we can only know the way of salvation when we base our understanding on his knowledge. If we rush, we are not listening carefully to the impressions of the heart, operating more on our own intellect and habits.

Forgiveness: Recently, when reading David's prayer in Psalm 51, I began to see a deeper meaning to the idea of forgiveness. Through Moses, God gave the law and system of sacrifices. I believe David and others came to realize that the ceremony had a deeper meaning to teach man about the sacrifice of God for mankind, and the need for humanity to change their selfish ways. *For thou desired not sacrifice; else would I give it: thou delighted not in burnt offering.* Hosea wrote from God's point of view: **Hos 6:4-7:** *4. O Ephraim, what shall I do unto thee? O Judah, what shall I do unto thee? for your goodness is as a morning cloud, and as the early dew it goes away. 5. Therefore have I hewed them by the prophets; I have slain them by the words of my mouth: and thy judgments are as the light that goes forth. 6. For I desired mercy, and not sacrifice; and the knowledge of God more than burnt offerings. 7. But they like men have transgressed the covenant: there have they dealt treacherously against me.* (cf Ps 40:6-10; 50:8-23; Isa 1:11-21; Jer 7:21-24; Amos 5:21-26)

Omitting the details of the sacrifice, here is how sin was handled in the Levitical system: **Lev 4:2, 26:** *Speak unto the children of Israel, saying, If a soul shall sin* ⁽²³⁹⁸⁾ (errs, misses the way) *through ignorance* ⁽⁷⁶⁸⁴⁾ *against any of the commandments of the Lord concerning things which ought not to be done... 26 ...and the priest shall make an atonement* ⁽³⁷²²⁾ *for* ⁽⁵⁹²¹⁾ *him as concerning his sin, and it shall be forgiven* ⁽⁵⁵⁴⁵⁾ *him.* The idea of doing things we ought not, is called 'ignorance.' The word *shegagah* ⁽⁷⁶⁸⁴⁾ whose root is *shagag* ⁽⁷⁶⁸³⁾ which means 'to go astray, to err', and the verse in Ecclesiastes indicate that sin ⁽²³⁹⁸⁾ is error ⁽⁷⁶⁸⁴⁾. So, we can conclude that what we do is called sin, and sin is error caused by bad knowledge, or lack thereof.

Another phrase worth mentioning is *shall make an atonement*⁽³⁷²²⁾ *for*⁽⁵⁹²¹⁾, which when translated literally is make a cover over, pointing to the solid gold lid, or mercy seat on the ark as a metaphor of *to make reconciliation concerning*, or *make reconciliation in behalf of*. The way a person is reconciled to God is by the faith (understanding) of Christ (Heb 12:2), of which the lid is a symbol. The word rendered shall be forgiven is the Hebrew word *calach*⁽⁵⁵⁴⁵⁾. This root word and its derivatives pertain only to God's forgiveness. Gesenius gives it a meaning of 'to be merciful', along with the idea of 'lifting up, lightness.' So, we can see why the lid would be called 'mercy seat.' (Ex 25:17; Heb 9:5)

The concept of the mercy seat is in the New Testament, but somewhat perverted because of the way certain words are translated. **Rom 3:24-25:** *24 being made righteous*⁽¹³⁴⁴⁾ *freely by his grace through the redemption which is in Christ Jesus; 25 whom God did set forth a mercy seat, through the faith in his blood, for the showing forth of His righteousness, because of the passing over of the bygone sins in the forbearance of God.* (Greek Interlinear - cp Young's literal translation) The Greek word *dikaioo*⁽¹³⁴⁴⁾ is translated 'justify' most of the time, a word taken from the Latin Vulgate, and which is considered to be a legal term. This perverted mind-set permeates the entire Bible because the Hebrew word *towrah*⁽⁸⁴⁵¹⁾ is translated 'law' instead of 'instruction' or 'teaching.' Jesus is not a legal defense attorney, defending us from an angry God; he is consulting with a loving God in our behalf. The 'mercy seat' is a symbol of the righteousness of Christ with which God covers us by giving us an understanding of His ways. When we deviate from God's way, it is called sin in the Bible, which is error committed because of being ignorant of God's way. (It can be intentional)

Here is one place where Paul could have gotten his understanding: **Num 15:24-25:** *24. Then it shall be, if ought be committed by ignorance*⁽⁷⁶⁸⁴⁾ *without the knowledge of the congregation, that all the congregation shall offer one young bullock for a burnt offering, for a sweet savor unto the Lord, with his meat offering, and his drink offering, according to the manner, and one kid of the goats for a sin offering. 25. And the priest [make a cover*⁽³⁷²²⁾ *over*⁽⁵⁹²¹⁾ *] all the congregation of the children of Israel, and it shall be forgiven*⁽⁵⁵⁴⁵⁾ *them; for it is ignorance*⁽⁷⁶⁸⁴⁾ *...*

Verse 24 is key to seeing that sin is based on lack of understanding. The phrase *without the knowledge* is literally *on account of the eyes*, or 'on account of the understanding' of the congregation being faulty. Make yourself the person in all of this: The animals are symbols of thoughts God gives you, and as a priest of God, you minister the understanding (sprinkling) of the blood which helps you to realize how your ignorance of God caused the death of the Son, and that his death was needed to prove God's love for you, so that you would repent of your errors.

How God's forgiveness works: **Psalm 51:1-2, 6-10:** *1. [Be gracious] unto me, O God, according to thy loving-kindness*⁽²⁶¹⁷⁾; *according unto [the abundance of your compassions] blot out my transgressions. 2. Wash me thoroughly from mine iniquity, and cleanse me from my sin... 6. Behold, thou desired truth in the inward parts; and in the hidden part thou shalt make me to know wisdom. 7. Purge me with hyssop, and I shall be clean: wash me, and I shall be whiter than snow. 8. Make me to hear joy and gladness; that the bones which thou hast broken may rejoice. 9. Hide thy face from my sins, and **blot out** all mine iniquities. 10. Create in me a clean heart, O God; and renew a right spirit within me.* [cp Lam 3:2] We know from Ephesians 5:26 that we are 'washed by the water of the word.' So the blotting out of transgressions is NOT out of a literal book, but out of our way of thinking, thoughts recorded in our own mind. Knowing this makes us realize that all humanity has the same problem, thereby enabling us to let go our resentment toward others, or by helping them to understand these things.

Summary: Having a literal book with all our deeds recorded lends to the idea that each act of sin must be confessed in order to be removed from the book, which leads to self works. But, when the book is understood to be a symbol for the mind, we can visualize God replacing the pages of our book with pages from the book of life - Jesus. In actuality, our thoughts (mind-set) are replaced by the Father through the Son. The end result is that our outward actions change. This concept can be seen in a different way, when 'heaven' and 'earth' are understood to be levels of thinking: **Heb 12:22-24:** *22. But ye are come unto mount Zion, and unto the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, and to an innumerable company of [mighty ones], 23. To the general assembly and church of the firstborn, which are written in heaven, and to God the Judge of all, and to the spirits of just men made perfect, 24. And to Jesus the mediator of the new covenant, and to the blood of sprinkling, that speaks better things than that of Abel.* Paul is using the 'heavenly Jerusalem' in the same figurative sense as he did in Galatians. (Gal 4:25-26) Notice the words of Jesus to his disciples right after they came back from preaching the gospel, healing the sick and raising the dead: **Lk 10:20:** *Notwithstanding in this rejoice not, that the spirits are subject unto you; but rather rejoice, because your names are written in heaven.* i.e. their characters are written by the finger of God with spiritual understanding. Here is the opposite: **Jer 17:13:** *O Lord, the hope of Israel, all that forsake thee shall be ashamed, and they that depart from me shall be written in the earth, because they have forsaken the Lord, the fountain of living waters.* Those refusing to enter God's way, have man's understanding, which is earthly, sensual, devilish (Jam 3:14-15).

Ps 51:4: *Against thee, thee only, have I sinned, and done this evil in thy sight...* Had David not sinned against God, he would have never committed adultery and murder. He manifested his sin by acting on lustful thoughts. When we have thoughts contrary to God, we manifest those thoughts by how we treat others. So, it is an internal cleansing and a new spirit we need in order to stop sinning because our errors are based on our lack of correct knowledge, i.e. God's wisdom. *For by grace are you saved through faith; and that not of yourselves, it is the gift of God* (Eph 2:8). God's forgiveness is His influence on the heart, by which He gives those with hearing ears instruction and wisdom to stop living in spiritual ignorance, so that we can stop doing what we do naturally, which we call sin.

A metaphor of sin is that of 'debt', a debt we cannot pay (Mt 18:23-35). The remission of that debt is an unconditional gift based on God's desire to have a perfect people. To receive the gift, we must desire to change our way of life and conform to God's way of doing things, so that we can obtain total peace and immortality. To forgive another is to let go the resentment we have toward them, realizing that the other is in the same bondage, out of which God is delivering us.

Heb 13:15-16: *15. By him therefore let us offer the sacrifice of praise to God continually, that is, the fruit of our lips giving thanks to his name. 16. But to do good and to communicate forget not: for with such sacrifices God is well pleased.* Corrupted thoughts must be removed by the roots so that good fruit can come from right thinking. Amen!