

## **A Faithful God In An Unpredictable World**

*Steve McVey*

Jennifer and Paul were discussing personal problems they were having one day. Jennifer said, "I can't make sense out of life. You do your best. You trust that God will work everything out. Then life falls apart anyway. It seems like what I do makes no difference."

I understood her frustration. I've felt the same way at times. Believing that I've covered all the bases, I've found myself sometimes bewildered, sometimes depressed, and sometimes even feeling resentment toward God when things didn't unfold as I had expected. We often expect life to fit within our sense of human justice, but it often doesn't work out that way.

G. K. Chesterton said that one problem he had with Christianity has to do with cause and effect. He observed that ninety percent of the time life works on the basis of cause and effect, but the other ten percent it didn't. That troubled him.

When I read his comment, I thought how I'd be okay with the 90/10 percentages he observed. My life hasn't seemed to work that way. It has seemed to me that things haven't worked out according to cause and effect more often than they have. I've noticed the same with others.

A family I knew reared their children in the same way. One grew up to be a responsible Christian with a professional position. The other ended up in jail for selling drugs. One Christian lady I know prayed for her husband to trust Christ, and he miraculously was converted. Another friend faithfully prayed the same prayer for her husband. One day he came home and announced he wanted a divorce to marry the younger woman he had been having an affair with for two years. One friend I have was healed of a life-threatening disease. Another gifted friend who was an author, a preacher, and an intellectual, died far too young, in my opinion.

How are any of us supposed to get through such an unpredictable life? How do we remain at peace in a world where everything can suddenly change in a moment? Martin Luther embraced a verse that answers that question. It is the verse that ushered in the Reformation.

"The just shall live by faith." It's that simple. We must choose to walk by faith in God. We have reason to know that our Father is a loving God, so nothing happens in our lives that He doesn't permit. He is a sovereign God, so nothing happens that He can't control. He is an omniscient God, so nothing happens that He didn't already know about in advance.

The question is, "Will we trust Him?" Some Christians think that faith means if we believe hard enough, things will turn out the way we want. Their faith is in faith. It's an approach to problems that combines a mix of secular positive thinking with a religious flair.

Authentic faith isn't intense, religious positive thinking that is intended to produce a certain outcome. Biblical faith means that we trust in God. Period. Not in a particular result. Not in a happy ending. Faith simply means that we trust Him, knowing that whatever the outcome may be, life will still be okay because He is in control.

Are you facing situations that make no sense? If so, relax. God is in control. He loves you and will always work all things in your life together for good. Don't mistake wishful thinking for biblical faith. Faith means that we rest in the fact that we are one with Christ - that a loving *Abba* is our Father who controls it all - that the Holy Spirit will sustain us no matter what happens. Your life isn't a result of cause and effect. Your life is Christ. He has it all planned already. So let go of your attempt to control your own destiny and trust Him. He will guide you safely home.

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## Latin America Leadership Summit - Update

Thank you to all who prayed for us while we were in Mexico for our Grace Walk Latin America Leadership Summit. We met daily with over fifty of our Grace Walk Team from across Mexico, El Salvador and Argentina. It was a time of great encouragement for us all.

While there we celebrated ten years of ministry in Latin America together. Special appreciation and love to Bill & Sarah Stewart, who have enabled us to reach hundreds of thousands of Spanish speaking people over the past decade. Special thanks too to Gary & Diane Tjaden, Daniel and Rebecca Young, and Ashton Stokes for making the Latin American Summit possible last month. Finally, thank you so much to all who prayed for our meeting. Please keep praying for our team in Latin America as they share the message of the grace walk there. Lives are being transformed by grace because of how the Father works through you!

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## Forgive and Forget?

by Steve McVey

What about this matter of forgiving and forgetting? Are we really required to forget the wrong things others have done to us? That's not what the Bible teaches. Not even God does that. You may have raised your eyebrow in doubt about that statement, but it's true. The Bible doesn't say that He forgets our sins. It says that He doesn't remember them. Although many may think the two are the same thing, they aren't.

To forget means just that. It means we have no ability to bring to mind the forgotten thing. How

could we possibly do that with some of the terrible hurts we've suffered in life? It's not possible. What we can do though is to not remember. As I've said, there's a big difference.

What does it mean to remember? Look at the word itself. It is comprised of two words: "re" and "member." "Re" is a prefix that means, "to return to a previous condition" or "the repetition of a previous action." The word "member" means, "one of a group; one that belongs, a part of the body." So the accurate and literal meaning of the word "remember" is to return something to a previous condition by making it belong to or join again. If I cut off my finger, the doctor may be able to re-member it if I get to him with it in time.

The Bible doesn't say God forgets our sins. People sometimes talk about the "Sea of Forgetfulness" many have heard mentioned at times, but that phrase is not in the Bible. The idea was taken from Scripture and it is found in Micah 7:19 where it says: "He will again have compassion on us, and will subdue our iniquities. You will cast all our sins into the depths of the sea." That's probably where the idea of a "Sea of Forgetfulness" comes from, but note that's not what the Bible says. It says He will separate our sins from us forever. He doesn't forget but he does remember them no more. In other words, He will forever refuse to join our sins to us or our past guilt to Himself. He will not remember them!

To illustrate the literal use of the word in a positive way, think about what Jesus said at the Last Supper to His disciples. When they partook the meal together, He told them, "This is My body, which is for you; do this in remembrance of Me." In the same way He took the cup also after supper, saying, "This cup is the new covenant in My blood; do this, as often as you drink it, in remembrance of Me" (1 Corinthians 11:24-25, emphasis added).

What did He mean by that? He meant, "As often as you partake of this communion meal in the future, do it in a way that you are appropriating the reality of your connection to me." He wasn't telling believers that when we take communion, we are to think in our minds and pretend that we are there watching His crucifixion. He is telling us to re-member, to affirm by faith that we are inseparably joined to Him and we affirm that reality again and again when we partake of the elements. Again, we are affirming and yes, even experiencing, our union with Him on the cross, in His burial and now in His resurrection life.

So our Father does not remember our sin anymore. Being omniscient means He knows everything so He hasn't given up His omniscience and forgotten our sins. He simply refuses to ever "member them" to us or to Himself again.

That's what we are to do when it comes to forgiveness toward others. Do we forgive? Yes, but not because we must. We do it because we have been forgiven and now have the ability and the desire to forgive those who have hurt us.

Do we forget? No, but neither do we "remember." We release those who have hurt us from all obligation they have toward us and we refuse to join the offense to us again. Don't beat yourself

up because you haven't literally forgotten about it. We may never forget, but as we walk in ongoing forgiveness the event itself will have less and less emotional impact on us when we think about it. We will come to a place where, although we haven't forgotten, we don't feel the pain of the situation anymore because we have been healed.

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