

# FORGIVE YOURSELF

Sylvester Onyemalechi

To be forgiven is one thing, to receive forgiveness is another, both are important. God is willing to forgive every man who is willing to repent and turn from an evil way. It is also important that each person be willing to receive forgiveness and forgive self. Self forgiveness is a sign that one has accepted the forgiveness of the Lord and man. Guilt is the evidence that one has not received forgiveness, and this is very dangerous. Living with guilt of what one has done is a burden that if not lifted, crushes and imprisons. Guilt weighs heavily on the mind of the guilty that is yet to forgive self and saddens and makes life miserable.

Many are suffering from guilt of what they have done in time past, and are not willing to let go and receive forgiveness both from God and man. The process of recovery and healing demands that forgiveness be sort from the offended and forgiveness be received when released. If you ever wish to make it out of the valley, you must let go of the injury and guilt of the past and move on. You must forgive yourself for disappointing your God, family, spouse, loved ones and even your boss and those who look up to you. The deed is already done and you cannot reverse the clock, but you can prove you have turned a new leaf. Continuous mourning is not the solution, but repentance and proof of repentance is. Failure to forgive yourself will make you to continue to hurt, and this will imprison and limit you. Unforgiving of self makes it difficult for one to be at his best especially in that areas were one failed previously. It limits one's vision in the sense that one becomes perpetually afraid of failing again, and as a result cannot dream big. Refusing to forgive self is an oppression that every man should run from.

Forgiving yourself for all your failures frees you from:

1. Guilt,
2. Depression,
3. Inner pain,
4. Shame,
5. Fear of failure, punishment and a closed heaven,
6. Living a bitter life,
7. Seclusion from people and helps you to mix up with people again,
8. Gives you an opportunity to prove your repentance is genuine, and that you truly have turned a new leaf,
9. It frees you from mental oppression,
10. It helps you to live life to the fullest with a new sense of commitment.

Forgiveness is a healing balm that remolds a man's mind, heart and life. It reshapes one's life as it sets him free from guilt and brings him to the place where he can think freely and live life without a sense of guilt, fully focused on the plan of God for his life and making others happy.

I don't care what you have done in the past. I don't care how many times you failed to be faithful in your marriage before it finally collapsed. I don't care how much you stole or the losses you suffered from your drug habit. I don't care the mistakes that you made that you are paying for right now. What is important is that you are repentant and that God is willing to forgive you. Once you have asked for forgiveness and it has been given, you don't have any problem. Look

ahead of you. Continuous mourning will not help you at all. In fact it is destructive. Men make mistakes. The wise ones learn from their mistakes and move on with their life. The foolish ones let their mistakes stop them – they just lie there on the ground and refuse to get up and go on with their lives. What are you going to do with the years you have ahead of you? Are you going to sit there and just mourn the rest of your life? Definitely, no! Look at the sunny side of life. You can make a difference. Your mistakes and sufferings are supposed to enrich your life and make you an instrument in the hand of God to helping people who one day will take the path you have just passed through. Your experience will become a lesson for others and your testimony and counsel will become a source of encouragement and direction for many some day.

*1 Cor 10:6-11*

*6 Now these things occurred as examples to keep us from setting our hearts on evil things as they did. 7 Do not be idolaters, as some of them were; as it is written: "The people sat down to eat and drink and got up to indulge in pagan revelry." 8 We should not commit sexual immorality, as some of them did-and in one day twenty-three thousand of them died. 9 We should not test the Lord, as some of them did-and were killed by snakes. 10 And do not grumble, as some of them did-and were killed by the destroying angel. 11 These things happened to them as examples and were written down as warnings for us, on whom the fulfillment of the ages has come.*

*NIV*

*2 Cor 1:4-7*

*4 who comforts us in all our troubles, so that we can comfort those in any trouble with the comfort we ourselves have received from God. 5 For just as the sufferings of Christ flow over into our lives, so also through Christ our comfort overflows. 6 If we are distressed, it is for your comfort and salvation; if we are comforted, it is for your comfort, which produces in you patient endurance of the same sufferings we suffer. 7 And our hope for you is firm, because we know that just as you share in our sufferings, so also you share in our comfort.*

*NIV*

The bible is full of stories of people who lived righteously and pleased God, and the stories of those who disappointed God by living contrary to God's will. The consequences they suffered for their crime are recorded in the bible to serve as a reference and warning to all of us today and in the future. In the same way, my experiences will someday become a reference and a lesson for others to learn about life and walking with God. Your experience today will become a tool in helping others find direction and help in life. Do not despair, accept God's forgiveness and go on with your life.

### **Don't worry about what people say**

Don't worry about what people say or how they treat you as a result of what happened. Most of the guilt that people feel is as a result of fear of what people will say or how they will treat them as a result of what happened. Worrying about what people will say when they have not said anything is destructive. It is very clear that all men are entitled to their own opinion about you. Only God's opinion about you is final. Whatever man says does not matter when God himself has forgiven you and set you free through Jesus Christ as a result of your repentance and faith in Jesus Christ. It is also important that you understand the fact that no one will give you a pat on the back for the evil you committed, but rather will condemn you. Men will from time to time tell

you either out of love or in anger that you did the wrong thing and shouldn't have done what you did or lived the way you lived. This calls for preparation to face this kind of confrontations, rebuke or remarks, without feeling guilt. Guilt must be dealt with once and for all. When the subject of what you did or the life you lived comes up, don't be upset or withdraw again to guilt, self-pity and depression. Rather, explain that you have learnt your lessons from your mistakes and you won't repeat them again. Tell people that if any man is in Christ, he is a new creation, and that old things are passed away, and all things have become new. Tell them you are a new person in Christ, and that all that happened are all in the past now; and that you want to put them behind and live the life that is ahead of you successfully in partnership with the Holy Spirit.

*2 Cor 5:16-18*

*16 So from now on we regard no one from a worldly point of view. Though we once regarded Christ in this way, we do so no longer. 17 Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; the old has gone, the new has come! 18 All this is from God, who reconciled us to himself through Christ and gave us the ministry of reconciliation:*

*NIV*

If God forgives, no one can condemn. If you have truly repented and accepted Jesus Christ as your Lord and Savior, no one can condemn you. Jesus is the judge and not man. If the judge sets you free who will annul your freedom and commit you again to prison.

*Rom 8:31-35*

*31 What, then, shall we say in response to this? If God is for us, who can be against us? 32 He who did not spare his own Son, but gave him up for us all-how will he not also, along with him, graciously give us all things? 33 Who will bring any charge against those whom God has chosen? It is God who justifies. 34 Who is he that condemns? Christ Jesus, who died-more than that, who was raised to life-is at the right hand of God and is also interceding for us. 35 Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall trouble or hardship or persecution or famine or nakedness or danger or sword?*

*NIV*

Don't let what people say disturb or harm you. Receive forgiveness and don't fear what people will say or do to you. Only prove your repentance – that you have learnt something from all that has happened in your life, family, marriage, business and career as the case may be.

### **Live with things you cannot change**

When mistakes are made and consequences are suffered, lessons are learnt, corrections made and repentance and change of life follows. There are some things that just don't go away. They just refuse to change. When wounds heal, the scar remains. The stigma of a bad life doesn't go away – it becomes path of one's life history, and in some cases, an identity. People may not forget easily, but with time, they will forget as your new life with time overshadows your bad past. Let the healing take place and don't border about the scar.

Change what you can change and leave the one you cannot change. Change your character and lifestyle and leave the issue of how people see you or what they call you alone. Let God and your new life in Christ take care of that. Let the scar be, but let your life take on a new meaning.

### **Prepare yourself for the challenge**

They may not accept you as a changed person. The world may still see you as a drug addict, though you are no more. The world may still look upon you as a criminal or a drunkard, refusing to acknowledge the fact that you have accepted Jesus and changed your ways. Whatever your former life was, I want you to know that out there in the world, even in the church, there are people who will continue to see you as you used to be refusing to acknowledge your change and repentance. You must not allow what they think and say of you to push you back to evil and your past life. Many have gone back because they were not accepted back. You must not go back.

Accept yourself if they don't accept you. Understand that they are not sure of your change, and it will take you to prove to them that you have truly changed. Do not allow their attitude to drive you back to where you are coming from, but determine to show them by your lifestyle that you have truly changed. Prepare for this kind of treatment.

Prepare also for constant reference to your bad past from time to time by the people you love and trust and even distant people. This they will do especially when you seem to be showing sign of not going according to their expectation and when they are angry with you for any reason. They may use it every now and then to curse or insult you. They may use it just to provoke you to anger. Prepare for this ahead of time. The purpose of preparation is to help you absorb the offence and not be shattered by it. If you do not prepare, you will be disappointed. Know that the devil will want to do anything to take you back to the pit. So, he will use any body without them knowing it to provoke you to anger or discourage you from living free from your past life. He will want to drag you back to your old life. You must not let him do that. Expect to be tempted in this area, and prepare to win over the devil and all that he will use. Toughen yourself in your mind about this, so that when it does happen, you will be ready and win.

### **Never believe:**

1. Never believe that you will not be accepted back into the society or your family. It may have happened to some. That it happened to some does not mean it will happen to you.
2. Never believe you will suffer rejection from those you love.
3. Never believe you will never make it again in life.
4. Never believe that the society or your family or those you hurt directly will not forgive you for what you did. You will never know until you truly ask for forgiveness from your heart.
5. Never believe that you will not get a job because of the stigma of your past. It is said that ex-convicts never get good jobs. Don't believe that, for your case is different.
6. People may say you are no good. Don't believe that. Believe what God says about you – you are God's son. God has faith in you, therefore have faith in yourself.
7. Don't believe that any and every step you take will end in failure. You may be living with someone who has seen you fail before who does not have a single faith in you, don't let the person's words get to you. Never let anyone transfer his or her unbelief

- into you. Always believe you will make it – you will succeed. No one can believe it for you. You are the only one who will believe unto success.
8. Never believe you can never rise again because of your previous fall. If you believe, it will happen. Jesus taught that **“According to your faith shall it be done unto you”** and **“All things are possible to him that believes”**. If you believe your case is closed and you are finished, so will it be. If you believe that with God on your side, you will make it again to the top despite your woeful fall in the past, you will rise again and get to the top.

*Ps 145:14-20*

*14 The LORD upholds all those who fall and lifts up all who are bowed down.*

*15 The eyes of all look to you, and you give them their food at the proper time.*

*16 You open your hand and satisfy the desires of every living thing.*

*17 The LORD is righteous in all his ways and loving toward all he has made.*

*18 The LORD is near to all who call on him, to all who call on him in truth.*

*19 He fulfils the desires of those who fear him; he hears their cry and saves them.*

*20 The LORD watches over all who love him, but all the wicked he will destroy.*

*NIV*

God our Father will lift you up again. Believe and always confess your faith in him and he will not disappoint you.