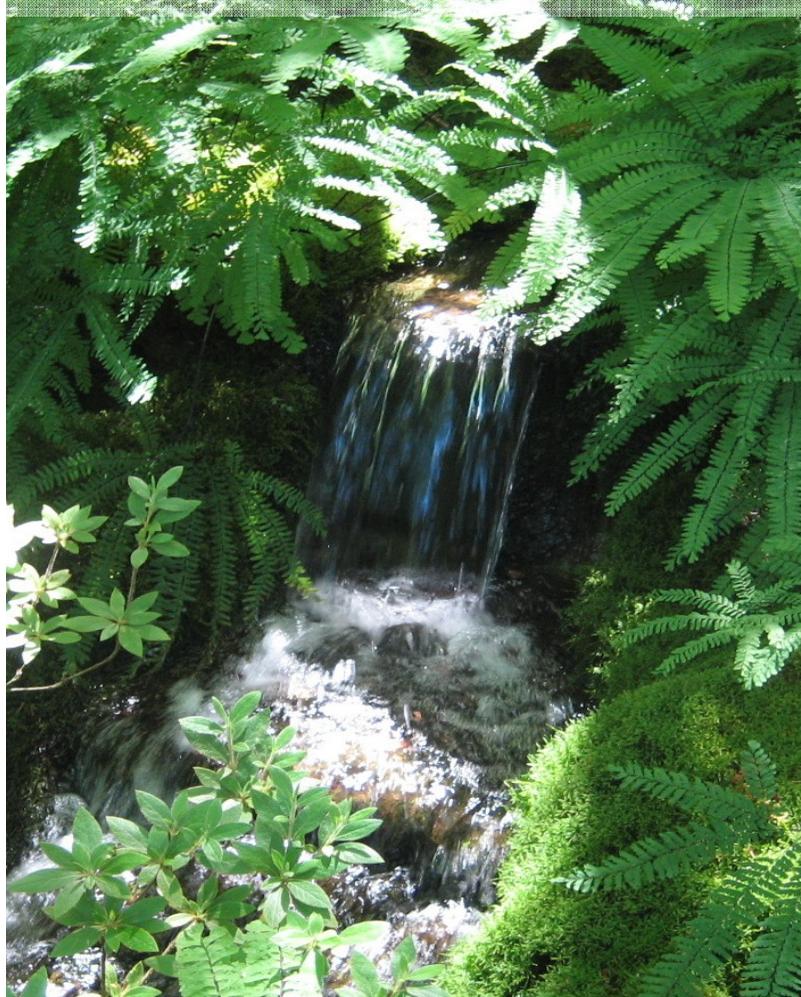


“The LORD will guide you continually,
And satisfy your soul in drought,
And strengthen your bones;
You shall be like a watered garden,
And like a spring of water,
whose waters do not fail.”

Isaiah 58:11



www.flbaptist.org

Text Copyright© 2015

CLEAR!

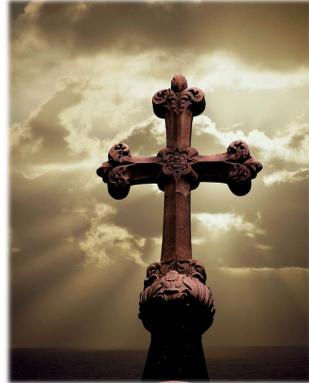
The Essentials of a Cleansed Heart, a Clear Conscience, and a Consistent Walk



“**Clear!**” We hear that word in many ways: simply “clear,” or “all clear.” Then, “the coast is clear,” “clear sailing,” “let’s clear out,” or “crystal clear.” Each one points to a single truth: nothing hindering.

We can move forward, get to work, tackle a task, continue the journey. We know which way to go or what to do next. God wants that for each of us as we walk *with* Him. When it comes to the individual, the heart needs to be “clear.” What does that mean for each of us? Let’ explore that.

A CLEANSED HEART—THE ISSUE in the Garden of Eden—hearts alienated against God because of hearts stained with the results of choosing self-will. The issue in the Garden was never food, but self-will against God’s will. Adam and the Woman needed a heart cleansed. How? Only by death can sin be paid for. In the Garden, God Himself slew animals, likely lambs, to give Adam and Eve animal skin coverings—their bodies and their hearts were covered (Genesis 3:21). Later, God instructed His people about observing the Day of Atonement, the day of covering sins, using the Hebrew word, *kaphar*, the word translated “covering” or “atonement.”¹ Jesus came “to give His life a ransom” and “to save that which was lost” (Matthew 20:28; Luke 19:10). He died, paying the death penalty for all our sins—yours and mine. On the cross, He cried out “it is finished,” the translation of a Greek word *tetelestai*, referring to complete payment of a debt or a crime—our sin debt, our crimes against Heaven (John 19:30).



The Scriptures tell us more. In 1 John 1:7b, John testifies, “and the blood of Jesus His Son cleanses us from all sin.” First John 1:9 assures us that as we agree with God about our sins, He is faithful “to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.” In 1 Peter 3:18a, we read, “For Christ also died for sins once for all, the just for the unjust, in order that He might bring us to God.” We can have a cleansed heart. In the Beatitudes, Jesus spoke about the essential heart attitudes of a Kingdom citizen, beginning with absolute poverty of spirit, knowing none of us can pay for our own sin—we are spiritually bankrupt. In the list, He includes “blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God” (Matthew 5:8). The word “pure” is a translation of *katharoi* referring to being clean or cleansed, thus pure (*katharos*). We derive the English word “catheter,” something that drains away impurities. That’s what God has done for us in Jesus, in His death and resurrection (Romans 4:25; 5:1). Titus 2:14 speaks of Christ Jesus “who gave Himself for us that He might redeem us from every lawless deed and purify [Greek—*katharizo*] for Himself a people for His own possession, zealous for good deeds.” We are **cleansed** by Him and His work.



Stop and Apply—Do you have a heart cleansed by the Lord Jesus? If not, now is the time; here is the place. Thank Him for His gift and His cleansing work.

¹ Leviticus 16:6, 10, 11, 16, 15, 17, 18, 20, 24, 27, 30, 32, 33, 34



Avery Willis once shared three simple truths about being filled with the Spirit.

1. **Confess** any and all sin to God. Agree with Him about it; don’t argue about it (1 John 1:9). Clean out anything He shows you to confess. When we agree with Him we are walking in the fear of the Lord.
2. **Present** yourself to God to be filled and controlled by His Spirit (Romans 12:1-2). What fills you affects you—your talk and your walk. To surrender means to withhold nothing.
3. **Ask Him in faith** to fill you with His Spirit. He commanded us to be filled (controlled) in Ephesians 5:18 and so we know that is His will (1 John 5:14). He is not reluctant. (Don’t depend on feelings; depend on Him and His Word by faith.) Expect Him to fill you as you obey His Word.

Walk with Him moment by moment, trusting Him for **His** grace, empowering, and wisdom/insight. Keep short accounts of sins—deal with offenses to God or others quickly and trust Him for His filling (Acts 24:16). Ephesians 5:18 literally says “be being filled,” present tense, moment by moment. Walk in a lifestyle of Luke 9:23—die daily to self—and Galatians 2:20—allowing Him to live out His empowered life in you and through you. He will lead you and teach you about worship, guide you by His Word, give opportunities for witness, and direct you in prayer... it is a learning process, a walk of discipleship as a learner, follower.

The key is not a past experience, although everyone starts their walk with God at a starting point in time, a point of placing faith in Jesus as Lord and Savior. The key to assurance is the present experience—how am I living today? What is my nature like today? Can I see evidence of a new nature, new desires, an appetite and hunger for the things of God, like a baby longing for the pure milk of a mother? Just so, a believer longs for the pure milk of the Word of God (1 Peter 2:2-3). Again, this does not mean perfection. It means inclination and predictability. A new creation in Christ starts changing—God starts changing that person from the inside out (2 Corinthians 5:17). It is a day by day, moment by moment work. God is working out His “masterpiece” strategy of being “*created in Christ Jesus*,” mentioned in Ephesians 2:8-10. If there is no appetite for the things of God, then one should check to see if there is a spiritual sickness—unconfessed or undealt with sin dulls the spiritual appetite like physical sickness dulls the physical appetite. Soured relationships with others, unforgiveness, bitterness, envy, hatred... these things sideline us with a spiritual sickness. We are in need of the Holy Spirit’s medicine. What is that?

The Holy Spirit, the Spirit of Christ comes to form, grow, and empower us in the Image of Christ, to produce in us the fruit of the Spirit—love, joy, peace, a whole wondrous cluster of living in harmony within and with others (Galatians 5:22-23). He gifts us and empowers us to join Him in His work, within the Body of believers in a church, as a witness to non-believers in daily life, and as an encourager to believers. How can we know and enjoy and grow in this knowledge, this lifestyle, this fellowship, and this work? By walking in the fullness of the Holy Spirit.



A CLEAR CONSCIENCE—With a cleansed heart, then, what part does a **clear conscience** play in the life of a believer? What does it take to maintain a clear conscience? The Apostle Paul testified before his Roman captors the essential of a clear conscience. Paul knew this mattered to God. He maintained a perspective that always kept in view the “*resurrection of both the righteous and the wicked*” and with that the evaluation or judgment of Jesus for each person.² Based on that fact, he stated to those listening a clear testimony of his life. “*In view of this, I also do my best [literally, practice myself] to maintain a blameless conscience both before God and before men.*” That perspective informed everything he did. “*A blameless conscience*”—What does that mean?

Paul gave another clue about his life perspective in that same testimony. In Acts 24:24-25, we find Paul speaking about “*faith in Christ Jesus*” which included the essentials of “*righteousness, self-control and the judgment to come*,” a discussion that caused Governor Felix some apparent fear and mental discomfort. Why is this so important?

“*Righteousness*” has to do with our relationship with the Righteous God. We are not ‘right’ and have no righteousness on our own. We must be given the righteousness of Christ if we are to have a relationship and fellowship with Him. Jesus Christ is the only one who can give that. This righteousness comes by faith, by believing and trusting God, as we read in Genesis 15:1-6 as well as in Romans 4:3, 20-22, Galatians 3:6, and James 2:23. John 1:12; 3:14-17, and John 20:31 confirm this truth. God’s ultimate goal is “*a new earth, in which righteousness dwells*,” every person, every relationship, every thought or action or word ‘right’ in His sight (2 Peter 3:13).

“*Self-control*” is part of the fruit of the Spirit mentioned in Galatians 5:23 and comes as the Holy Spirit controls the believer, guiding in motives, choices, and actions. With the foundation of a right heart, one makes right choices by the empowering and wisdom of the Spirit of God. That ultimately leads to our evaluation in the Presence of the Lord, “*the judgment to come*.” For believers in Christ, that evaluation will come at the *Bema*, the Judgment Seat of Christ at which each believer will be evaluated for his or her life and will receive matching rewards or loss of rewards—all believers saved, but not all rewarded equally (1 Corinthians 3:10-15; 4:5; 2 Corinthians 5:5-10). For unbelievers, the Great White Throne judgment is a sentencing to “*the lake of fire*” based on unbelief in line with the evidence of “*their deeds*” recorded in “*the books*” (Revelation 20:11-15).

² Acts 24:15; see Psalm 9:7-8; 96:13; 98:9; John 5:22, 27; Acts 10:42; 17:30-31

How can one have “a blameless conscience”? “Blameless” is a translation of *aproskopos*, a word which pictures the idea of not tripping or striking someone, not causing someone to stumble or sin. This can be pictured in the items found in the Ark of the Covenant in the Holy of Holies, which some see as a picture of the human spirit, the inner man (1 Thessalonians 5:23-24).

The Ark contained three items, the Tablets of the Covenant (representing the Law), the Golden Jar of Manna (representing God’s provision), and Aaron’s Rod that Budded (representing God’s authority).³ God instructed Moses to place each item in the Ark as a reminder of how the people acted—each pointed to some sin—**disobeying** the covenant law, **complaining** about the *manna* provision, **resisting** God’s choice of Aaron as high priest. Those three items were covered by the solid gold Mercy Seat on the Ark which the high priest sprinkled with blood each year on the Day of Atonement, covering all their sins, making atonement (Leviticus 16:2-22, 29-34; Hebrews 9:5-14). Jesus offered His blood to cover all our sins so that we could come before Him or “draw near” and stay near in fellowship, “cleansed from an evil conscience” and “from dead works” (Hebrews 9:11-14; 10:19-22).

What does this have to do with a “blameless conscience” or a life that does not cause others to stumble or sin, that leads others to honor God, to place faith in Him? There are three attitudes of the heart that must be in the believer’s heart—three matters of the heart for daily life and each is linked to one of the pictures in the Ark of the Covenant. **1)** First, a **clear conscience**, informed by the Word of God and the Spirit of God. He reveals what is right and what is sin—God’s **Standard** pictured in the Tablets of the Covenant (Psalm 119:1-18; John 16:8). Where there is sin, confess and agree with God about it (1 John 1:7-9). **2)** Second, **contentment**, giving **thanks** to the Lord for His provisions rather than complaining and grumbling—God **Provision** pictured in the Golden Jar of Manna (Romans 1:21; Philippians 2:12-15). **3)** Third, **submission** to God’s authority and those He puts in place, not resisting **Him and His ways**.⁴ We obey God first, honoring those He puts in place and speaking the truth He gives, ready to face the consequences of doing and saying what is true and right—God’s **Authority** pictured in Aaron’s Rod that Budded.

³ Exodus 16:32; 25:16; 31:18; 32:15; Numbers 17:10; Hebrews 9:4

⁴ Romans 13:1-10; 1 Peter 2:13-25; Acts 4:18-20; 5:27-32

HOW THE HOLY SPIRIT FILLS A PERSON’S LIFE

God designed the human heart to be filled, controlled, and characterized by His Life, knowing His likes and dislikes, sensitive to the things that please or displease Him. It is not that way with a lost person. His or her likes and dislikes are full of “fleshly” ways. The lost person or the Christian who is not walking surrendered to the Lord moment by moment, who is “carnal” or “fleshly” is marked by the desires and striving of the flesh. That includes all the rotten fruit of Galatians 5:19-21, the deceit, guile, malice, envy, etc. of 1 Peter 2:1, the bitterness, wrath, anger, and unforgiveness of Ephesians 4:31, the striving, jealousy, envy, and self-seeking of James 3:16. That person is usually controlled by one or more of the Big 3 in 1 John 2:16, “the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the boastful pride of life”—sensuality, materialism, and arrogance or lust, greed, and pride. If a Christian is dealing with these things—and there are dozens of lists that could fit in with this garbage dump of attitudes, actions, thoughts and words—that Christian is miserable.

God has put His “seed” or His nature in the spirit of a believer and so he practices what is right in God’s sight (1 John 3:7-10). This does not mean perfection, but inclination, a heart desire toward God and the things of God. First John 3 speaks about those who continually practice a certain lifestyle of sin, not an every now-and-then stumble. It does not fit to have these things in the Christian’s heart. If a Christian is **practicing** these things and is never bothered by them, then it is close to 100% that this person does not have the Spirit of God living within and “if anyone does not have the Spirit of Christ, he is not His” (Romans 8:9). That person does not know Jesus as Lord and Savior—he or she is lost.

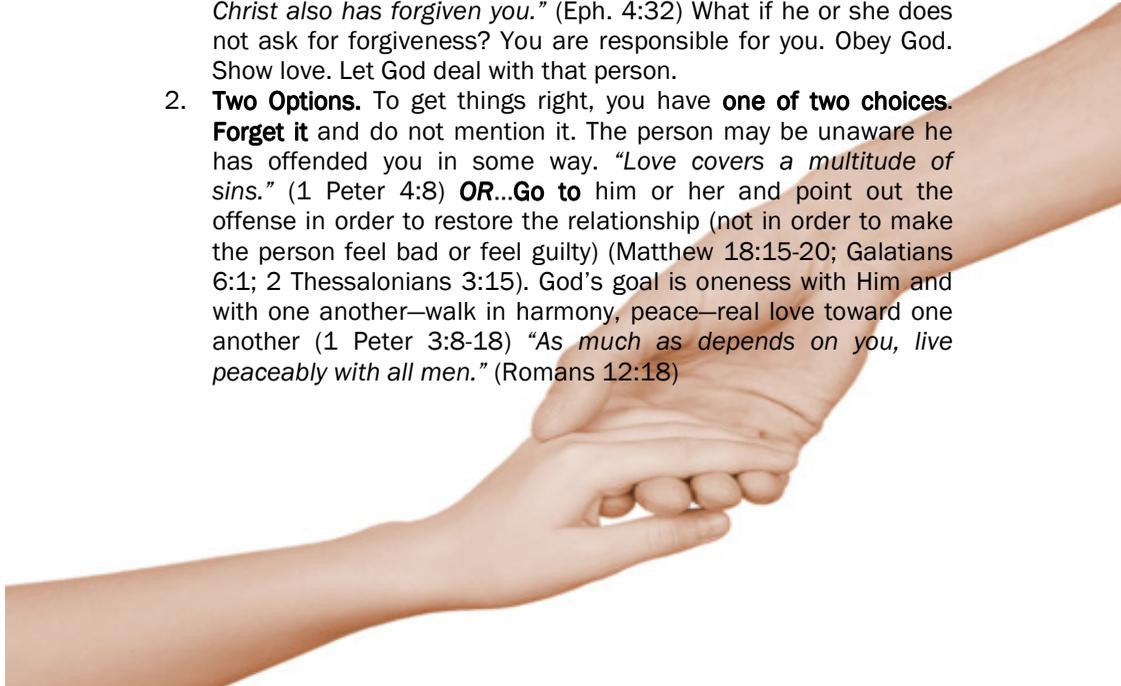
Peter talked about it this way—if a dog returns to its vomit and a hog returns to wallow in the mud, it is because that is the nature of a dog or hog. If a supposed believer’s spiritual ‘taste buds’ never change, but continually ‘feed’ on the ‘old’ ways, the old diet of sins or if that person returns to wallow in their old sin and is not uncomfortable, then that person’s nature has never changed (2 Peter 2:22). Paul urged the Corinthians to examine themselves to see if they were “in the faith,” knowing “that Jesus Christ is in you” (2 Corinthians 13:5, see also 1 John 5:11-13).

DEALING WITH YOUR PERSONAL SINS AGAINST OTHERS

1. **When Someone Has Something Against You.** First, if someone has something against you, you need to go to that person (or persons)—face to face if possible, by a phone call if not face to face (Matthew 5:23-24). If you cannot reach them either way, seek the next best way, the fastest way possible. Ephesians 4:26 says, “Do not let the sun go down on your anger.” In other words, deal with any sin, especially anger, on the day you face it. It is like household garbage; the longer you wait to get rid of it, the worse it stinks. What if he or she does not receive you or your attempt to get things right or does not forgive you? You are responsible for you. Let God deal with that person.
2. **The Circle of Confession** is as big as the circle of offense. If your sin is against God, confess it to Him. If you have sinned against an individual, go to that individual, confess, and make it right. If you have sinned against a group, make it right with the group.
3. **Restitution.** If there is need for **restitution**—financial, material, property lost or stolen, whatever—make it right as much as is possible. The burden may seem heavy now, but making it right makes the burden on your heart turn into wings for your soul.

DEALING WITH OTHERS WHO HAVE SINNED AGAINST YOU

1. **When Someone Sins Against You,** first have a forgiving, kind attitude toward that one, “forgiving each other, just as God in Christ also has forgiven you.” (Eph. 4:32) What if he or she does not ask for forgiveness? You are responsible for you. Obey God. Show love. Let God deal with that person.
2. **Two Options.** To get things right, you have **one of two choices.** **Forget it** and do not mention it. The person may be unaware he has offended you in some way. “Love covers a multitude of sins.” (1 Peter 4:8) **OR...Go to** him or her and point out the offense in order to restore the relationship (not in order to make the person feel bad or feel guilty) (Matthew 18:15-20; Galatians 6:1; 2 Thessalonians 3:15). God’s goal is oneness with Him and with one another—walk in harmony, peace—real love toward one another (1 Peter 3:8-18) “As much as depends on you, live peaceably with all men.” (Romans 12:18)



God knew no one could obey His law and He knew how each heart would express itself in various forms of disobedience, grumbling, and rebellion against authority. That’s why He provided a Mercy Seat to cover those symbols of our sin and why each year the high priest sprinkled sacrificial blood over that covering. In the new Testament or the New Covenant, we read of God’s full salvation—we were “redeemed” by our High Priest with His own “precious blood, as of a lamb unblemished and spotless, the blood of Christ” (1 Peter 1:18-19; Hebrews 2:14-18). As our High Priest, Jesus calls us to come today to His “throne of grace” to receive “mercy” and His “grace to help in time of need” (Hebrews 4:14-16).



Stop and Apply—So, how should we apply these truths today? Make sure you have **come** to God by faith, calling on Jesus as Lord and Savior, confessing your sins, and receiving Him, His forgiveness, and His eternal life.⁵ He gives new life and with it a **cleansed** heart.

What about maintaining a **clear conscience** and a **consistent walk** with Him? The Christian life is a walk, step by step. That means there can be some slow times, some stumble times, even some stop times during which we need to regroup—perhaps rethink, repent, and refresh. There are three sections that follow—walk through each with the Lord as your Guide and His Scripture speaking to you. First, is the section “**SWEET REVENGE**” or “**BITTER**” FORGIVENESS? That addresses the issues of unforgiveness that we sometimes struggle with. Second is the section **HOW TO DEAL WITH SIN** that looks at the different ways we may face sin—in our own hearts, when we sin against others, or when others sin against us. The third section looks at **HOW THE HOLY SPIRIT FILLS A PERSON’S LIFE**. Each of these is designed to help us day by day—living with a **cleansed** heart, a **clear conscience**, and a **consistent walk with** the Lord.

⁵ Romans 3:23; 6:23; 5:8; 10:9-13; John 1:12; 3:16



“Sweet Revenge” or “Bitter” Forgiveness?

Have you heard of “sweet revenge” or “sweet vengeance”? Based on the stories of many, we could summarize personal “vengeance” and “revenge” this way—“Revenge is sweet to the taste, but bitter to the soul.” Each of us wants to have a ‘good life,’ but often someone or something gets in the way. Whoever or whatever gets in the way, often receives our anger or frustration, sometimes our vengeance and wrath. Not smart. Someone has wisely stated, “Spewing bitterness out of one’s heart is like drinking personal poison and expecting the offender to die.” Unforgiveness can be deadly!

On the other hand, how could forgiveness be labeled “bitter”? It should not be, but often forgiveness can be a “bitter pill” to swallow; it can be difficult; it can seem unjust or “unfair.” The reality is that the supposedly “bitter pill” of forgiving someone else, may at first seem “bitter” to the taste, but it



becomes sweet to the soul. That which seems like a burden almost too heavy to bear, becomes like wings ready to soar when one forgives another. God pours out grace on that humble, obedient action, and His grace brings new strength and joy. How can this be?

What does God say about these matters, for certainly He understands them? He Himself has been offended... often. He has reasons to be vengeful. He has never done anything wrong. He has never had a wrong motive or made a questionable choice. Yet, many have derided Him, disobeyed Him, failed to honor Him as God, not loved Him as He is and as He deserves. Evil does not dwell with Him. He is ever good and He willingly forgives. So, whatever He would say about forgiveness would be very important for each of us.

Scripture reveals two kinds of people, exemplified in two persons. Lamech, the seventh generation in the line of Cain boasted of his vengeance in a poem/song in Genesis 4:23-24. He spoke of being avenged seventy-sevenfold, translated “seventy times seven” in the Greek Old Testament—a life of **unforgiveness, vengeance, and death**. When Jesus spoke of people sinning against one, He said forgive “seventy times seven,” a life of **forgiveness, kindness, and life** (Matthew 18:21-35). What a difference!

How to Deal with Sin

DEALING WITH YOUR PERSONAL SIN

1. **God is Faithful to Convict.** As you read the Word of God, study with a small group, or listen to a message being preached or taught, God will often convict of some sin. He wants us to come to Him, agree with Him about the sin, agree to turn from that sin, agree to turn to what is right in that area or in that relationship, and by faith receive His forgiveness and cleansing for that sin (1 John 1:5-9).
2. **Ask God.** If you think there is a fellowship break between you and the Lord, go to Him in prayer asking Him to show you what is displeasing to Him. Ask Him to reveal anywhere you have stepped over the line of His Word, anywhere you have grieved or quenched His Spirit. He promises to show us where there is sin (John 16:8-11).
3. **Watch Out for False Guilt and Lies.** The enemy, the evil one is also called the adversary—he is against God, against God’s people, and against God’s purposes. He is also the accuser against God and “*the brethren*”—all believers (Revelation 12:10). He is the father of lies and spreads untruth anywhere he can—lies about God, about God’s Word, about God’s people, about anything—to create division, discord, and distrust. When it comes to the lives of individual believers, he shoots “thought darts” to accuse—either of sin we have committed or even of sin which we have faced in temptation but have not committed—anything to confuse, frustrate, condemn, and make us feel guilty. Remember, to be tempted is not a sin, to have a tempting thought is not sin. It is not a sin until we act on that temptation, or continue to cradle a thought such as lust or anger. When we do, we need to confess it and make it right.
4. **The Spirit is Specific.** When the Holy Spirit convicts of sin, He is specific so we can confess specifically—“Lord, here is what I did, when I did it. I was wrong. I turn from it. I want to do the right thing. Thank You for forgiving me.” Satan is often general, condemning and confusing—“you are bad, weak, foolish, etc.” Trust God to guide in truth. “*The wisdom from above is first pure, then peaceable, gentle, reasonable, full of mercy and good fruits, unwavering, without hypocrisy*” (James 3:17)
5. **God Does Not Remember Sins so as to Use Them Against Us.** The Holy Spirit does not bring up old sins. Those are removed, forgiven and forgotten. Satan uses instant replay to remind us, hassle us, depress us, defeat us. He nags at us—“Remember how many times you’ve done that. You will never change. You cannot do anything right. Remember.” Simply remember the promises of the Word of God and hold to them. (Hebrews 10:17-18)
6. **Receive Forgiveness by Faith Not Feeling.** Trust the Word of God to be true, as true as the God of the Word. Deal with bedrock facts, not shifting-sands feelings. Jesus died to forgive, not condemn.

Symptoms of Bitterness and Unforgiveness... Here are a few symptoms that need attention... immediate attention. Angry outbursts (verbal, physical). Inner boiling of wrath, “Stuffing” or holding feelings of anger within—they can erupt in many ways. Vengeance attitudes (sometimes taking it out on someone different to cover for what someone else did or said). Pay-back thoughts, motives, actions. Avoiding others. The “silent treatment” to someone or to several. Physical drain and fatigue.



Here is one example. In Psalm 32, David spoke of when he ‘hid’ or “kept silent about my sin,” speaking of his clear physical symptoms. He grew weaker, had more pains, felt God’s heavy hand of conviction on him. Even his “vitality was drained away as with the fever heat of summer” (Psalm 32:3-4). What did he mean? Summer heat in the Judean wilderness

can be over 100 degrees Fahrenheit and it can drain one physically. Ever had a fever of 101, 102, 103 and felt empty, weak, or physically drained? That’s what unconfessed sin can do and that’s what undealt with unforgiveness can do. David dealt with his sin and found forgiveness, as well as freedom in his conscience, and God’s joy returning (see also Psalm 51).

What’s the **Answer**? Check for **symptoms**. Go to God in **prayer**. Ask Him to search your **heart** (read and pray Psalm 139:23-24). **Confess** anything He shows you as sin. **Agree** with Him that it is wrong. Agree to **turn** from that wrong. Do **whatever** He says to make restitution if needed. **Believe** that He really does remove that sin “as far as the east is from the west” (Psalm 103:12). He does not remember our sins **against** us. We should not remember sins so as to hold it (or them) against others (or against ourselves)—don’t keep a list or record in your heart (Jeremiah 31:34; Hebrews 8:12; 10:17; 1 Corinthians 13:5; 1 Peter 4:8).

A Final Word

Remember, forgiveness is a choice, not a feeling. Feelings come and go. Choices and actions stay. One who chooses to repent of unforgiveness often finds relationships restored (though some may not respond in a restorative way). One can put away bitterness and anger, walking in the peace the Holy Spirit gives, and knowing personally the freedom, love, and joy God intended.

Jesus **came** forgiving and **calls us** to forgive. Ephesians 4:31-32 and Colossians 3:13 express His commands (see item #11 in the “**How Do I...**” section that follows). Jesus **can empower** us to forgive. His life within is a life of trust in the Father and love to others. Though being severely mistreated, unjustly tried and condemned, “reviled” and “suffering,” Jesus “uttered no threats, but kept entrusting Himself to Him who judges righteously” (1 Peter 2:23). Do you utter “threats” to others (Ephesians 6:9)? Jesus said while on the cross, “Father, forgive them; for they do not know what they are doing.” (Luke 23:34). We, too, when doing the will of God and when sometimes unjustly treated, can “entrust [our] souls to a faithful Creator in doing what is right” (1 Peter 4:19).

God puts us in place for His purposes, for our best opportunities, and for His ultimate glory. Acts 17:26 states,

“And He has made from one blood every nation of men to dwell on all the face of the earth, and has determined their pre-appointed times and the boundaries of their dwellings” (NKJV). Another translation states, “having determined their appointed times, and the boundaries of their habitation” (NASB).

Each of us is in place on purpose.

HOW DO I GET OUT OF THE VENGEANCE TRAP, THE UNFORGIVENESS MINDSET?

Some **practical** steps...

1. First, recognize **the Lord is God**. He is holy (unique, set apart, unlike any created being), powerful, loving, and able to take care of each of us. He has made us and given us life. Daily, He provides for and takes care of us (Acts 14:17). We could not be, do, or have anything apart from His loving watch-care.
2. Second, recognize **‘I—me’**—as a created being. We had a beginning—as a helpless infant in the womb, as a newborn baby in the arms of a mother. We are little and limited in the scheme of things on planet earth. God is able. **Surrender** yourself and your situation to the Lord, **asking** Him to heal and fill you.
3. Third, recognize the incredible **worth** of each person created. The value of priceless art is based on the artist. God formed and made you. He is of inestimable worth. When He came to redeem, He did not pay silver and gold, but the “*precious blood*” of Christ, the Lamb of God (1 Peter 1:18-19; John 1:29, 35).

4. Fourth, **balance** the worth of each person with **“humble yourselves, therefore, under the Mighty Hand of God...”** (1 Peter 5:6). Recognize His greatness and worth. Each of us needs to **recognize our sin**—how much He has forgiven and how ‘little’ we are, that we are **less than** we think or brag about. We **deserve** nothing but judgment and wrath. God promises the humble His abundant **grace**, while the proud find Him resisting, even warring against them (Proverbs 3:34; James 4:6-7; 1 Peter 5:5-7).



5. **Thank God.** Thank the Lord for all **He has done**, all He has given you, all He has protected you from. And thank the Lord for the **challenges** in your life—the people, the circumstances, the limitations (they may be very good boundaries the Lord knows are best for you). An attitude of gratitude is essential to seeing life as it really is. To do otherwise is to walk away from God and His multi-faceted provision (see Romans 1:20-21).
6. **Think correctly—See clearly.** Someone has wisely stated, **“We do not see life as it is, but we see life as we are.”** Our own hearts and circumstances color our perspective—how we view life, others, God, and the world. **Ask** God to **change** your heart, to give you a **true view** of Him, of life, of yourself.
7. **Tell God.** Bring whatever wrongs have been done to you to Him. Lay them at His feet. Tell Him what is on your heart (He knows this already, but it is vital for you to know that He knows and for you to know what is in your heart). Expressing to Him what is in your heart may surprise you—you may not realize just how much bitter poison was in your soul. **Ask** Him for the refreshing, healing oil of His Spirit.

8. **Trust God.** Let go, don't hold on to the hurt. Don't try to exact your own vengeance. **Romans 12:17-21** commands us to **“never pay back evil for evil,”** but entrust our situation to God—If vengeance is needed, let God deal with that. **Ephesians 4:31** adds insight and commands us to **let go** of personal vengeance and all that goes with it (**“bitterness [being irritable, harsh, unloving over hurts, injuries, or insults] and wrath [deep-seated burning or boiling] and anger [wrath expressed, spewing out] and clamor [outcry, noise, shouts, exclamations, yelling] and slander [put-downs, reviling others]... along with all malice [evil that injures, the multi-faceted desires and designs to exact revenge, to hurt in return].”**) **Trust** God with your life and your hurts. He can handle them and heal you.
9. **Forgive God—What!?** Forgive God? Yes, you are most likely mad at Him first—for not giving you more of what you thought you needed, for withholding from you what you thought was ‘best,’ for not stopping someone from what they did or what they withheld.
10. **Forgive them—Who?** Whomever you are offended with, whoever has hurt you or sinned against you.
11. **HOW? Ephesian 4:32** gives the remedy of **how to** forgive, **how not** to express bitterness and all the malice that goes with it. **Three** things—**1)** **“Be kind,”** the word denotes being useful or helpful to another—that's loving others. **2)** Be **“tender-hearted,”** the idea of being sensitive to the needs of others, compassionate toward another. **3)** Then, **“forgiving each other, just as God in Christ also has forgiven you,”** meaning **first**, releasing the wrong, the sin, letting go of it, and **second**, not looking for ways to exact vengeance or ‘my’ ideas of ‘justice.’ Jesus absorbed the sting of sin and wrong in His death on the cross—He forgave. **Ask** the Lord to **fill** you with **His** Spirit and **His** fruit (Ephesians 5:18-21; Galatians 5:22-26). Look for ways to bless and curse not—starting with praying for the person (Matthew 5:44; Luke 6:27-28; Romans 12:14). This takes **humbling** ourselves under God's hand—**Then**, God will pour out **His grace—His desire and empowering**—where this action of humility is found. God gives the ability to be more tenderhearted and kind to others—it's His grace at work, more than what we could ever do on our own. Colossians 3:13 expresses a similar action—**“just as the Lord forgave you, so also should you.”**
12. **WHEN? Now.** Too many people bear grudges for weeks, months, years, even decades, always looking for ‘pay-back’ time. Instead, deal with it now or it will fester and cause decay—decay within, decay with others, decay in relationships, decay with your walk with God. It's not worth it... and it is wrong.