

I Can't Stop Hating Myself

Do painful memories of past mistakes ever come to your mind, weighing you down with guilt and shame? It's a common problem for believers and it shouldn't be so. Please read on to learn how the Lord makes right all the things you have done wrong.

Early one morning as I was walking in the park, I found myself thinking about hurting a friend when I was a teenager. We were competing for a boy's attention and, in an effort to secure his affection, I was very cruel to her. That was a long time ago, but the memory had surfaced, and I found myself filled with deep regret. I could barely restrain my tears in this public place. As I walked and prayed, I asked the Lord how was it possible to recover from such deep regret when there was absolutely no way to repay the debt I owe this person? He was silent on the subject that morning, but the next morning, as I walked in the park, He gave me this vision:

I saw the cross emerging from my heart, reaching into the sky. As it rose up, it branched like a tree and filled the heavens. Then, I saw the cross growing down through my feet and dividing into many roots that went all the way into the depths of the earth. As I clasped my arms around the cross, hugging it to me, the Lord taught me how to escape from the stranglehold of regret.

Justice Must Be Satisfied

Do you remember what you learned in the article *Somebody Help Me Forgive!?* (The article is available in Free Resources). Debt is any harm done to us or by us. Because we are made in the image of God, we are incapable of forgiving any debts unless justice is satisfied. This is because God is a just God and we are His image. Justice is built directly into the image of God. This means that this justice within us cries out for payment.

1. Is God a just God? *for the Lord is a God of justice* (Isaiah 30:18).
2. Are we made in His image? *for God made man in His image* (Genesis 9:6).

Since I owed my high-school friend a debt, I felt like I had to pay it. I had to somehow make things right, even though there is no way to turn back time and undo what I had

done. So, what is left for me to do? I punished myself by wallowing in self-hatred and regret.

Let's return to my vision of the cross.

What Did I Know About the Cross?

The cross of Christ is the place where He died for my sins so that I could be saved. That is what I knew. I did not understand that the cross has the power to restore the brokenness I have caused in the lives of others. Let me repeat. *The cross has the power to restore the brokenness I have caused in the lives of others.*

The Struggle

So, there I was in a public park, immersed in the vision of the cross filling the sky above and the earth below, extending well beyond what I am able to understand or express. In that moment, I knew that the Lord wanted me to give Him my regret. I knew if I gave Him my regret that He would make right the harm I had done to my friend. It was the answer and I had such a faith-filled reaction – *I didn't believe it.*

Why on earth would I have a problem with the Lord asking me to surrender my self-hatred? Why did I automatically reject His suggestion that I stop punishing myself and trust Him to fix what I had broken? What was this reluctant to give up hating and punishing myself for my sins?

This returns us to the issue of justice. I had come face-to-face with my innate God-given need for justice along with the sure knowledge that I could NEVER pay this girl what I owed her. The only thing I could do was hate and punish myself in an unending, unproductive loop of inescapable regret. I knew that God had forgiven my sins, but I did not KNOW that God was also willing to restore all the wreckage I had caused in my sinful foolishness.

Because I did not know this truth, I was caught in the ignorance of unbelief. Now let's duct tape the ignorance of unbelief to my innate need for justice and it becomes

impossible for me to accept that God Himself has not only forgiven my sins, He is willing to repair the damage my sin has caused.

So, when the Lord asked me to trust Him to make right the many hurts I had dished out to others, my hesitation wasn't abnormal. I was simply expressing my ignorance and my design. As I continued my walk in that sun-bright park, hugging the vision of the Lord's cross to my heart, He gently pressed me to make a decision. Would I please just believe Him? He would be so pleased if I would let Him take care of this for me. He told me that it was an act of faith to surrender my debt to Him. So, I walked and wept and surrendered.

Will You Give Him Your Regret?

As life has gone on, I have learned that unless I give my regret to the Lord, He will not (cannot) pay the debt I owe. This is because I am still trying to pay it by hating myself. But! If I give over my regret, He is then free to do the one thing I want the most: make it up to those I have hurt.

Once you have repented of your mistake or bad behavior, it is vital that you accept what the Lord has done for you. Let's give our self-hatred and regret to the Lord. In exchange, He will pay the debt you owe to others.

Here Are the Steps

1. Recognize that you owe a debt.
2. Approach the cross with that debt, asking the Lord to pay it. Remain at the cross (or return to it) until you know that He has taken responsibility for your debt.
3. Hand over your regret, asking Him to make you stop trying to pay your debts by punishing yourself with self-hatred and regret.

Now, the Lord is able to make the restitution that your apologies and regret are not able to make.

I encourage you to repeat the steps as often as necessary. I know that the habit of regret is especially difficult to give up. It takes practice. Just remember that you honor God when you refuse to indulge in regret, trusting instead that He will make right what you have made wrong.

And forgive us our debts, as we also have forgiven our debtors.

Matthew 6:12

God bless you!

Susan