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Yes, But I Love You

When some people hear that we have been forgiven all our sins they ask, "Well, if the Lord already has forgiven me everything, and if even the sins I haven't committed yet have been taken care of, why should I try so hard not to sin?"

Actually, they have a good point. God never meant us to fret and worry about whether or not we might sin.

When Paul dealt with this same question, he implied that we would have to be stupid to think that a person who died to sin could keep on living in it. He did not say, "Oh, be careful! That's dangerous. You had better really try hard not to fall into sin."

No. He said, "It is impossible for one who is dead to continue in sin."

The grace of God has two dimensions.

One dimension is the forgiveness of all our sins.

The other dimension is, "I will give you a new heart and put a new spirit within you; and I will remove the heart of stone from your flesh and give you a heart of flesh. And I will put My Spirit within you and cause you to walk in My statutes, and you will be careful to observe My ordinances" (Ezekiel 36:26-27).

We receive the Holy Spirit, and the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, self-control, and "against such things there is no

law" (Galatians 5:22-23).

Therefore, one who has the new heart doesn't need any law because the Holy Spirit makes the law unnecessary. This is why Jesus said that all the law and the prophets are fulfilled in one word, love.

Paul explained, "For this, 'You shall not commit adultery, you shall not murder, you shall not steal, you shall not covet,' and if there is any other commandment, it is summed up in this saying, 'You shall love your neighbor as yourself.' Love does no wrong to a neighbor; love therefore is the fulfillment of the law" (Romans 13:9-10).

The fruit of the Spirit causes us to do what the law aimed at, plus a great deal more. This makes the law unnecessary.

We receive a new heart to live in holiness, and to produce all of the fruit of the Spirit. We also have the forgiveness provided for in the blood of Jesus to be sure that we never, never, never lose this salvation that God has given us.

Have you ever been to a circus, or seen one on television?

One of the most spectacular acts is the trapeze. It is breathtaking to watch the performers swing from one bar to another, because they are so high up in the top of the tent. They throw one person to another, and you wonder, "What happens if they fall?"

Once I asked one of them, "How are you able to perform so perfectly? You never fall."

"Yes, we fall," this performer explained. "We fall in almost every show."

"But I have never seen you fall."

"Well, you saw us fall, but you didn't notice it because we learn how to fall and recover. When we fall we jump back up quickly and people think it is part of the show."

God gave us a new heart and the Holy Spirit so that we may live in the Spirit—like a trapeze performer on the trapeze.

We should be a display to all the world, especially to our neighbors, so that they say, "Look at those people. Look how they love one another. They never criticize anybody."

They love even their enemies. They are the best neighbors. No one has any complaint about them. And they are the best workers in the factory, the most loyal secretaries, the best lawyers. See how lovely their wives are, and how obedient their children are."

Of course, we are not yet perfect. But when we are living in the Spirit we can recover quickly because it is the life of Jesus that people see—not us.

If we slip and fall, there is a net underneath. The blood of our Lord Jesus Christ has provided forgiveness for all our failures. If we fall a thousand times, a thousand times He will push us up so long as our honest desire is to be up.

Now if you fall, then go to sleep on the net, I wonder if you would last in the circus. You would be an unprofitable performer.

But if you really want to live in holiness—to live (even fall and recover) on the trapeze—you need to know that there is a net underneath.

The trapezists can be relaxed because they know there is a net. If there were no net, they would be tense and afraid.

When we are tense and afraid, it is more likely that we will fall.

Those who are afraid to fall find that they fall continually.

Those who try hardest to live in holiness find that it is difficult to do so.

But those of us who aren't struggling to live in holiness are so relaxed that we are living in holiness! Because holiness is not something that comes from our own efforts, it is a gift of God—the Holy Spirit in us doing the work of Jesus.

Praise the Lord for His wonderful love! He forgave us all our trespasses; He provided us with a net so that we can relax. And He tells us to love one another as He has loved us.

Are we prepared to do that? Or do we try to pull the net out from under our brother? If he falls, "Bye, bye." We reject him forever!

Why is it impossible for one who is truly in Christ to con-

tinue in a life of sin? Simply because Jesus dealt with the root of our problem. You and I are the roots of our problem; and when Jesus died on the cross, we also died with Him. It was not only our sins that were nailed to the cross, it was ourselves!

Now, because He had dealt with our problem He was able to do something else. The book of Colossians goes on to say that He "cancelled out the certificate of debt consisting of decrees against us and which was hostile to us; and He has taken it out of the way, having nailed it to the cross."

There is a file in heaven for every individual who ever has lived. We don't know how God does His bookkeeping. But in the days in which the Bible was written, they spoke of God keeping His accounts in books.

On the first page of my file it says, "Juan Carlos Ortiz. ..6,276 hairs on his head, etc."—all of the details so that there is no question who it is.

On the second page all of God's laws are written, especially the Ten Commandments. Next, pages are provided to register every time I transgress each commandment. My file is very thick!

On the last page is the certificate of debt.

It reads, "Because Juan Carlos Ortiz has transgressed the first commandment 8,322 times, the second 5,456 times, the third... the fourth... therefore Juan Carlos Ortiz goes right into hell."

Because I died with Him, Jesus got out my file, took a big rubber stamp and wet it in His blood, and stamped "cancelled" on every page of the file. Then He took that file out of the way because He didn 't want that garbage in heaven. So no one else could ever see it, the surest place He could find was to nail it to His cross. If anyone wants to see Johnny Ortiz's file, they have to pass over Jesus' dead body!

So now Cod goes to the files of heaven and says, "Let me see Johnny Ortiz's file. Why, it's not even here.. .There's

nothing at all against him. What a servant I have!"

Praise the Lord, this is the way He loves you and me. Now we have perfect peace with God. But although we sing these things in our hymn books and preach them from the pulpit, many of us do not live as though this were a reality. We sing, "I had a debt I could not pay..." and we live as if we still had that debt! We don't believe we are fully accepted.

People come to me and say, "Pastor Ortiz, could you pray for my husband?"

"Why don't you pray?" I ask.

"Oh no, the Lord hears you better. You are so saintly."

What does a person mean when he tells his pastor that the Lord hears him better? He means that perhaps he is not as accepted. This is because we put our trust in our behavior, in our performance.

Satan knows how easily we feel condemned, so he is quick to get us to look at our works. But if the Lord were to judge us by our performance, we would all be lost! It is because of the blood of Jesus that He accepts us.

In order to trick us, before Jesus raided the files of heaven Satan made photocopies. Of course, they are invalid; but he uses them to fool us.

He doesn't fool me any more. But be careful; he fools many people. Satan takes my file and shows it to you, and takes your file and shows it to me, trying to get us to judge each other.

Oh, Satan is so smart. He tried to make even Jesus doubt.

"If You are the Son of God. .."he kept saying.

He tries to sow a slight doubt in the back of our minds that perhaps God doesn't accept us as we have heard preached.

Once I accepted myself and forgave myself all my sins, as God had forgiven me, the Lord showed me that I was to accept my brothers and sisters as they are and forgive them all

their sins, too.

I was learning the meaning of Jesus' words, "Forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive those who trespass against us."

"Lord, how many times shall I forgive my brother if he trespasses against me?" someone asked Jesus.

His answer was 70 times 7, which is 490. From sunrise to sunset on an average day, that is one time every minute-and-a-half. That is a full-time job. And some students say that Jesus meant 7 to the power of 70, which is 2 numbers plus 54 zeroes!

If you forgave once every second, to forgive that many times you would need to live millions of years. Do you see how big "all" is? It means that we forgive every time.

Therefore, I have to accept my sister not because of her behavior, not because of her doctrine, but by the blood of Jesus. And I accept her because I forgive her all her sins.

Do you see how unity has been guaranteed by the cross?

On the cross, Jesus cancelled out everyone's debt. So when we accuse a brother or sister, we are accusing people whose debt already has been cancelled out. We are wasting our time finding fault with others. We who are true believers are all going to be in heaven together because of Jesus, so we had better begin to accept each other now, just as we are.

When I forgave myself all my sins and accepted myself, I slept soundly that night. When I woke up the next morning the Lord explained that I needed to accept other people on the same basis as He had accepted me and I had accepted myself.

So the first person I accepted just as she is was my wife.

When you fall in love, you want to get married so that you are together. The person you love is the most wonderful person in the world. So you get married, and you go on the honeymoon.

But when you get back from the honeymoon you say, "Well, she will change—we have only just got married."

While you are thinking that she will change, she is saying to

herself, "I hope he will change."

But after you pass 40, she says, "He won't change!" And you also realize that since she hasn't changed yet, she isn't going to change either. That's why you have to learn to accept one another as you are.

Not only are we one in a marriage, we are one church as believers. We are all collectively one. And our oneness is based on the guaranteed forgiveness of all our sins. No wonder Paul said, "Who shall separate us from the love of Christ?" Who shall accuse the chosen of God? Who will condemn us? What an assurance..."Blessed assurance."

Since I came to understand this, I began to sing some of the words of our hymns in a new way.

I used to sing, "Amazing grace, how sweet the sound, that saved a wretch like me — " Now I have learned to sing, "Amazing grace, how sweet the sound, that saved a wretch like *him*. 'Twas grace that brought *him* safe thus far, and grace will lead *him* on."

I also used to sing, "Just as I am, without one plea____" Now I have learned, "Just as *he* is, without one plea____"

So I would like to give you some homework. You could do this with many passages, but begin with Ephesians chapter one.

Whenever we read this passage we each think of it as being for ourselves. But I would like you to think of it as being for someone else. I believe this will introduce you to a new dimension in your relationship with other Christians, just as it did for me.

Starting with verse 3, I want you to read the passage by putting in the specific name of another person where it says "us."

Here is how it would sound if you read it by putting in my name.

"Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed Juan Carlos Ortiz with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places in Christ, just as He chose Juan

Carlos Ortiz in Him before the foundation of the world, that Juan Carlos Ortiz should be holy and blameless before Him. In love He predestined Juan Carlos Ortiz to adoption as a son through Jesus Christ to Himself, according to the kind intention of His will, to the praise of the glory of His grace, which He freely bestowed upon Juan Carlos Ortiz in the Beloved. In Him Juan Carlos Ortiz has redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of his trespasses, according to the riches of His grace, which He lavished upon Juan Carlos Ortiz."

If you are having difficulty accepting someone else, read the whole chapter putting that person's name in.

Did you realize that this person was such an important individual? By substituting the names of other people we don't like too well, we would fall in love with many tremendous personalities.

I am not telling you something that I think would be nice; I am telling you something that became a real-life experience to me. This has become a part of me. I did this, and now it is easy for me to accept people as they are, even if they appear to be unlikeable.

Once I met a person to whom I said, "Oh, Brother, I'm so pleased to meet you. Praise the Lord!"

He said, "Get out. I don't like you."

I said, "Yes, but I love you."

He said, "You cannot love me, because I am your enemy."

I said, "Alleluia! Lord, thank you that I have an enemy right in front of me to hug."

You will never go wrong loving.

That is why Jesus said we are to love even our enemies. We are not to love because a person is lovable; we are to love even the unlovable. We are to love as God loved us. Those who are introverted, those who are shy, those who have complexes, those whom we would like to avoid—these are the people God loves.

Why don't we love them?

Because we too often love with the same love that the

world loves with. And Jesus said that if we love only those who love us, we are no better than the world because it does that, too. We have to love as He loved us, simply because He is love and dwells within us to love through us.

Once you have seen the depth of God's love for you, you will be able to love and accept yourself. And when you have accepted yourself, you will be able to love others. It will not be a struggle, it will come easily. Because Jesus, who is love, lives in you, you will not be able to stop yourself from loving.

No wonder God gave us a command to love as He has loved us, because Jesus lives within us to be that love through us.
Praise God for His boundless love!