

God Remembers ... God Forgets

The Unsurpassing Power of the All-Knowing, Compassionate, and Forgiving God

by Charles Curtis

In our human experience, memory is often viewed as a defining marker of identity, intellect, and capacity. We admire those with sharp minds who can recall dates, faces, and detailed occurrences from decades past. Conversely, we view forgetting as an imperfection—a sign of cognitive decline, distraction, or weakness. Yet, when we examine the divine character revealed in Holy Scripture, we encounter a profound mystery: the God who knows all things explicitly chooses to forget, while simultaneously holding every detail of creation in perfect remembrance.

"LORD, you have examined me and know all about me. You know when I sit down and when I get up. You know my thoughts before I think them. You know where I go and where I lie down. You know everything I do. LORD, even before I say a word, you already know it."

— Psalm 139:1–4

1. The Burden of Human Remembrance vs. Divine Omniscience

Consider the extraordinary case of Jill Price, documented in her memoir *The Woman Who Can't Forget: The Extraordinary Story of Living with the Most Remarkable Memory Known to Science*. Jill Price possesses an extremely rare condition called "hyperthymesia" which grants her brain total recall. Jill stated that she has a complete remembrance of every detail of her life from the age of seven years old.

While many assumed her ability was a magnificent gift, she described it as an agonizing, unbearable burden. Imagine being unable to escape the painful memories of past regrets, betrayals, errors, grief, and offenses; where every hurtful word spoken over you remains as vivid today as the moment it occurred. Jill carries this, and after reading her book, I consistently prayed for her, that God would do a deep work in her life.

For all of us, human memory is not equipped to carry the cumulative weight of uninterrupted recall. We need the grace of forgetting to mend and heal. But what about Almighty God? God's memory is not a biological function subject to fatigue or overload. As Isaiah 46:10 declares, God declares "the end from the beginning, and from ancient times the things that are not yet done." His omniscience is exhaustive, absolute, and eternal. It seems ontologically impossible for God to forget and, by extension, unable to remember. To assert otherwise is to deny His perfect omniscience.

2. The God Who Remembers: Care, Covenant, and Concern

Throughout Scripture, when God "remembers," it does not mean He previously forgot and suddenly had His memory refreshed. In biblical language, God "remembering" signifies His active, compassionate intervention on behalf of His people.

- **He Remembers His Creation:** *"And God remembered Noah, and every living thing ... and the waters receded"* (Genesis 8:1). His remembrance is protective and life-preserving.
- **He Remembers His Covenant:** *"God heard their groaning and he remembered his covenant with Abraham, with Isaac and with Jacob"* (Exodus 2:24). God's remembrance brings deliverance from bondage and oppression.
- **He Remembers Our Sorrows and Faithfulness:** Psalm 56:8 records, *"Put my tears in your bottle. Have not you recorded them in your book?"* Furthermore, Malachi 3:16 speaks of a "book of remembrance" written before Him for those who feared the LORD and honored His name.
- **He Remembers Us Individually:** *"Can a woman forget her nursing child... Even these may forget, but I will not forget you"* (Isaiah 49:15). God cares for our deepest needs and answers our cries.

3. The God Who Forgets: Covenantal Dismissal vs. Divine Amnesia

If God is omniscient, what does Scripture mean when it repeatedly asserts that God *forgets* our sins?

"For I will be merciful to their unrighteousness, and their sins and their iniquities will I remember no more."

— Hebrews 8:12 (cf. Hebrews 10:16–17)

DIVINE FORGETTING IS NOT AMNESIA

Forgetting in the divine sense is not a loss of information or a mental blank. God does not suffer from cognitive amnesia; He is incapable of ignorance. Rather, divine "forgetting" is an active, deliberate act of royal decree. It means that **the offense has been stripped of all legal power over the relationship**. God chooses never again to bring up our pardoned transgressions as grounds for condemnation or emotional distance.

As Psalm 103:12 states, *"As far as the east is from the west, so far has he removed our transgressions from us."* East and west never meet; it represents an infinite separation. In Isaiah 44:22, God promises, *"I have blotted out your transgressions like a mist, and your sins like a cloud."* When a cloud dissipates into the clear blue sky, it does not exist somewhere else—it is entirely gone. A cloud cannot reformulate itself in the same way it once was. A cloud disappears. If you are in

Christ, your sins likewise have disappeared by God's power of forgiveness. You cannot re-create them. They are gone.

4. The Source of Forgiveness: The Finished Work of Christ

The Magnanimous question is often asked - "How can a holy and perfectly just God simply choose not to remember sin without violating His moral justice?" The answer lies entirely in **The Finished Work of Jesus Christ** on the cross.

God does not sweep sin under a rug or pretend it never happened. Sin carries an infinite debt and a permanent stain—a stain Isaiah describes as scarlet and crimson (Isaiah 1:18). At the cross, Christ absorbed the full wrath and penalty for those sins. When Jesus cried out, *"It is finished!"* (John 19:30), the Greek accounting term used was *Tetelestai*—meaning "Paid in Full," because the debt has been completely satisfied by the blood of Christ, justice no longer demands payment. Therefore, God can legally, righteously, and eternally choose to "remember our sins no more." The record has been wiped clean by Christ's sacrificial death.

5. Jesus: The Divine Author of "70 Times 7"

In Matthew 18:21–22, Peter approached Jesus and asked: *"Lord, how often shall my brother sin against me, and I forgive him? Up to seven times?"* Peter believed he was being extraordinarily generous. But Jesus replied, *"I do not say to you, up to seven times, but up to seventy times seven."*

Jesus was not instructing believers to keep a tally up to 490 offenses and then hold a grudge on the 491st. Seventy times seven represents in idiom, which communicates a boundless, uncounted, unending grace. Crucially, **Jesus can only command believers to forgive 70x7 because He Himself is the Author and Standard of 70x7 forgiveness.**

God never commands us to walk in a level of love or pardon that He Himself refuses to exercise. If Christ requires flawed human beings to continually forgive one another without holding a record of wrongs, how much more does Almighty God—whose mercy is infinite—exercise endless forgiveness toward those who come to Him through Christ?

6. Cleansed and Restored: The Assurance of 1 John 1:9

For the believer who stumbles, the apostle John provides the definitive covenant promise:

"If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness."

— 1 John 1:9

Notice the two legal attributes attached to God's forgiveness in this verse: He is **faithful** and **just**.

- **Faithful:** God keeps His covenant promise. He will never reject a heart that comes in genuine repentance.
- **Just:** Because Christ already paid for that sin on the cross, it would be unjust for God to demand a second payment from the believer. Divine justice guarantees our pardon because the penalty was borne by our Substitute.

Conclusion: What Will You Do With Your Sins?

God's desire for every human heart is salvation, eternal life, and a secure, unbreakable relationship with Himself. He remembers your pain, your tears, your labor of love, and your prayers. But through the precious blood of Jesus Christ, He has decreed that your sins and iniquities He will remember no more.

The crucial question remaining for every soul is simply this: **What will you do with your sins?** Will you continue to carry the heavy, crushing burden of guilt and self-condemnation, or will you commit them to the God who blotted them out at Calvary? Return to Him, rest in the finished work of Christ, and rejoice in the God who remembers you in love and forgets your sins in grace.