

“Divine Amnesia”—Jeremiah 31:33-34

The text for this sermon, the theme of which is “Divine Amnesia”, is Jeremiah 31:33-34 → *This is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel after those days, declares the LORD: I will put My law within them, and I will write it on their hearts. And I will be their God, and they shall be My people. And no longer shall each one teach his neighbor and each his brother, saying, “Know the LORD,” for they shall all know Me, from the least of them to the greatest, declares the LORD. For I will forgive their iniquity, and I will remember their sin no more.* This is the text.

Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ Jesus,

Many have tried to convince me that when you get older your memory doesn't work as good as it used to. The idea of memory loss being connected to age is also relative to each person. However, no matter what the age, there are those things we wish we could remember better and some things we wish we could simply forget all together. I encountered a bumper sticker which jokingly said: “Of all the things I've lost, I miss my mind the most!” While some joke about their failing memory others are sad as they experience a loved one with Alzheimer's or dementia who can no longer remember who they are or even engage

in a logical conversation.

Desiring to remember the good things which you've experienced in life and forget the bad things is especially true in your relationship with the LORD. How many times have you tried to forget past sins you've committed or those committed by others against you only to find them creeping into your brain over and over again? It makes it difficult, if not impossible, as you strive to forgive yourself or others with the desire to "get over it and get on with it." It can even bring doubts of "truly" being forgiven or forgiving because you can't seem to forget. Ever heard anyone tell you the lie that you're not truly forgiving if you don't forget? These are the times when amnesia looks pretty appealing.

In our text, Yahweh gives His people the promise of making a *new covenant* with them, a covenant based upon His steadfast love and grace. It is a *new covenant* because it fulfills and seals your forgiveness of sins once and for all in the Person & Work of Jesus, the Christ. It is actually based upon the LORD's wonderful memory—remembering His promises throughout human history to deal with your sin and bring you into a right relationship with Him forever!

The old covenant with its many rules and regulations set down by God was based upon His peoples' obedience to His Law and failed to accomplish the good purposes for which He made it because of their sinful hearts. The prophet Jeremiah had described the heart saying, *the*

*heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately sick, even beyond cure. (cf. Jeremiah 17:9) Thus, the necessity for a **new** covenant was not the fault of God's Law under the old covenant but rather a fault within the sinful human hearts of people. (cf. Romans 7:7ff.)*

This **new** covenant will **completely** wipe out the power of sin in your life and empower you to continue living in service for Him! How? Listen to Yahweh's promise to you in verse 33 of our text: *I will put My law within them, and I will write it on their hearts. And I will be their God, and they shall be My people.* God's Word is described as that which permeates your whole being, where your relationship with Him permeates all the vocations of your life relationships, conversations and tasks! Being God's people is described by Paul in 2 Corinthians 3:3 as us being *a letter from Christ . . . written not with ink but with the Spirit of the living God, not on tablets of stone but on tablets of human hearts.* (cf. Ezekiel 11:19-20; 36:26-27) As Christ dwells in our hearts through faith (cf. Ephesians 3:17) we live as God's people empowered by His Spirit.

In this **new** covenant verse 34 tells us: *No longer shall each one teach his neighbor and each his brother, saying, "Know the LORD," for they shall all know Me, from the least of them to the greatest, declares the LORD.* When He says *they shall all know Me* it is not describing some kind of an intellectual, academic knowledge of the LORD but rather an intimate, personal faith relationship with Him based upon **His** steadfast

love for you and **His** gracious working of that love in Jesus.

This **new** *covenant* fulfills—it “fills to the full”—what was lacking in the old covenant because it is based on the Person and the accomplished work of Jesus, the Christ. (cf. Hebrews 8:6-7) In Him, God came to dwell amongst us, lived under the law of the old covenant perfectly for us and provided the perfect sacrifice for our sins. Thus, the **new** *covenant* also includes the promise given in verse 34 of our text: *I will forgive their iniquity, and I will remember their sin no more*. In effect, God is saying He now works in your life on the basis of His “divine amnesia!”

Through faith in Jesus you *know the LORD* in a whole new way. You know His disposition toward you as a **forgiven** sinner, declared perfect, holy, righteous and **completely** forgiven in His sight. Because Jesus fulfilled God’s law perfectly and went to the cross for your sin, God now condemns the sin in you, **not you!** This is the essence of forgiveness from God’s perspective. Through faith in Jesus and His sacrifice on your behalf, you get to experience God’s “divine amnesia”—not that He will forget about you but rather that **He will forget your sins!**

Just think how great it would be if we could do the same. In our struggle with the presence of the devil, the world and our own sinful nature we can continue to struggle with guilt even after God has reassured us of His total forgiveness. Why? Because the devil and the

sinful world strive to delude you into viewing forgiveness from your own perspective. Such delusion clouds over God's act of forgiving and forgetting to make you doubt the accomplished work of Jesus, Who *suffered once for sins, the righteous for the unrighteous, that He might bring you to God.* (cf. 1 Peter 3:18) Such delusion even strives to affect forgiveness on the horizontal level with others. Don't believe the lie which says that, if you haven't forgotten the sin, then you must not have forgiven the person. **Forgiveness is not based upon your abilities to deal with the sin but rather God's having dealt with it for you in Jesus, to Whom you cling to be forgiven and to forgive.**

Because of the LORD'S "divine amnesia" through Jesus you can live confidently as His people who desire to follow His ways. Therefore, you do not need to continue "rehashing" guilt over past sins in your inability to forget the sin. It is struggle enough to deal with your present sins just as Jesus reminds you: *Sufficient for the day is its own trouble.* (cf. Matthew 6:34) Such focus on sinful human ideas of forgiveness will lead away from Christ into despair, guilt and doubting God's new covenant promise and fulfillment. He has literally put His Spirit in you through baptism and the continual reading and listening to His Word to empower you to resist such temptations and clings wholly to His divine amnesia in Jesus.

So, in one sense, God has the same desire as you when it comes to

memory. He remembers the good thing—His **new** *covenant* of complete and total forgiveness in Jesus—and forgets the bad thing—your sin! He promises that He will never ever throw your sin “back in your face.” If that happens, whether in your relationship with Him or others, you can be sure it is the work of satan. When we don’t “feel” forgiven you go back to this **new** *covenant* and hear over and over again the wonder of God’s “divine amnesia” in Jesus Christ. That is your only hope in the midst of a hopeless perspective. Looking to God’s “divine amnesia” in His **new** *covenant*—that He forgives your iniquity and remembers your sin no more—gives confidence, strength and joy to the Christian life as the Holy Spirit empowers you to live in service to Him. Amen.

Hear the promise of the LORD from Isaiah 43:25 →

*I, I am He Who blots out your transgression for My own sake,
and I will not remember your sins.*

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