**Sacred Cows**

**Part 3 of 6**

**“Forgive AND Forget?”**

**Colossians 3:13**

When you hear the title *Sacred Cows*, your first question may be, ‘*What makes me think I’m qualified to make the judgment on what constitutes a sacred cow?’* My main qualification is that I taught all of these traditions myself – before I began to experience a radical paradigm shift as I began to learn more and more about the meaning of grace. After 20 years of full-time ministry, I’ve come to know with certainty that I’m not alone in having taught the traditions addressed in this series.

The sacred cows I address in this series are traditions I taught as a pastor at a time when I was passionate about the truth. I believe that the overwhelming majority of pastors are sincere believers who love God, the Scriptures, and the church. I’ve often said of myself that my heart was in the right place. It was my head that was wrong. I think that many people are in that same condition.

Frankly, I’ve been so wrong about so much for so long that I don’t have any rocks in my pocket to throw at anybody. On the other hand, my concern and love for the church causes me to teach plainly and clearly.

Every week in this series, I intend to make a “shake ‘em up to wake ‘em up” statement. I’m calling a sacred cow out to make the point that there’s been a widespread – though admittedly unintentional – dilution of the truth. I was taught as a child that a half-truth is a whole lie. I think that applies here. When it comes to the gospel, diluted truth is polluted truth, and polluted truth is no gospel at all.

Some people will say that I’m making a big deal over nothing, arguing that my observations are nothing more than a matter of semantics. My response is that it’s “only semantics” to those who don’t see a difference between what I’m saying and the way it’s commonly said. Words do mean something, and when ideas are put into words in such a way that they lead to or reinforce erroneous notions, it’s appropriate to challenge the use of those words. Too much is at stake to risk faulty communication about the truth. *John 8:32 says it’s the truth you know* that makes you free.

The ultimate goal of this series is that all of us would embrace and express the pure grace of God. Pure grace points to Him, not us. It declares that whatever good may come to us is all because of His goodness, not because of anything we do or don’t do. It gives Him all the credit, and us none. With that viewpoint in mind, it’s my prayer that this series will cause your perception and appreciation of God’s grace to grow bigger than they’ve ever been.

So, on that note, another one of the most dangerous sacred cows in the body of Christ today is the belief that we must *forgive AND forget.*

Remember, a sacred cow always has an element of truth in it. In many cases, it has just enough “poison” to contaminate our minds with ideas that aren’t biblical. This mixture of truth and error often leaves people confused, and they sense that something isn’t right with their perspective. But they’re unable to identify where the problem lies, so they hang on to their sacred cow and keep on futilely attempting to apply it to their lives in hopes that they’ll produce a positive outcome. Poison, however, can never make anybody healthy, regardless of how small the dose may be.

The sacred cow we’re considering this weekend is a perfect example. On the surface, it sounds as though there couldn’t possibly be anything wrong with suggesting that we must forgive AND forget when it comes to offenses committed against us. After all, isn’t forgiveness “the Christian way”? How could anybody dispute that idea?

As is true with the sacred cows we’ve examined so far, this one has a number of underlying implications that undermine and negate the pure truth that it contains. The pure truth in this case is that when we know the forgiveness we’ve received from our Father through Christ; we’ll forgive those who’ve hurt us. It’s in our nature to do that, and we’ll realize that once we’ve come to understand our own complete forgiveness by Him.

Will we forget the wrong done to us? Of course not. It would be ridiculous to think that the Bible teaches us that we have to have amnesia regarding certain experiences in our lives. Forgiving somebody may mean a lot of things, but it certainly doesn’t mean that we literally forget what’s happened. Not even God does that.

Let’s consider three truths that will put this sacred cow down:

***1. Forgiveness is our CHOICE.***

2 Corinthians 5:7 says, “…*we walk by faith, not by* *feelings*.”

***2. Forgiveness is our [NEW] NATURE.***

Isaiah 43:25, God said, “*I, even I, am the one who wipes out your transgressions* *for My own sake*…”

2 Peter 1:4 says that we “*share God’s divine nature*.” Hebrews 12:15 says, *"See to it that no one fails to obtain the grace of God; that no 'root of bitterness' springs up and causes trouble, and by it many become defiled."*

Hebrews 9:17 says, *“For a testament is of force where there hath been death: for it doth never avail while he that made it liveth.”*

Colossians 3:13 says, *“…bearing with one another and forgiving one another, if someone happens to have a complaint against anyone else. Just as the Lord has forgiven you, so you also forgive others.”*

Ephesians 4:32, *“Be kind to one another, compassionate, forgiving one another, just as God in Christ also forgave you.”*

***3. Forgiveness is for our HEALING.***

Micah 7:19, *“He will again have compassion on us; He will tread our iniquities under foot. Yes, You will cast all their sins into the depths of the sea.”*

1 Corinthians 11:23-25 says, *“The Lord Jesus, on the night he was betrayed, took bread, and when he had given thanks, he broke it and said, ‘This is my body, which is for you; do this in remembrance of me.’ In the same way, after supper he took the cup, saying, ‘This cup is the new covenant in my blood; do this, whenever you drink it, in remembrance of me.’”*

Hebrews 10:17, “*Their sins and lawless acts I will remember no more*.”