

Hebrews 10:17

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

And their sins and iniquities will I remember no more.

Analysis

And their sins and iniquities will I remember no more. This verse represents the climax of the new covenant promise and provides the theological foundation for the finality of Christ's sacrifice. The statement "I will remember no more" (οὐ μὲ μνησθῶ ἐτι, οὐ μὴ μνησθῶ ἔτι) uses the strongest possible Greek negation—absolutely, categorically, definitively God will not remember believers' sins. This is not divine forgetfulness (God is omniscient) but covenant commitment to treat believers as though their sins never occurred.

The distinction between "sins" (hamartiōn, ἁμαρτιῶν—missing the mark) and "iniquities" (anomiōn, ἀνομιῶν—lawlessness) encompasses all forms of moral failure. Whether sins of weakness or willful rebellion, ignorance or defiance, all are covered by this promise. God's commitment to forget encompasses the totality of human guilt.

This divine "forgetting" is based on Christ's atoning sacrifice. God can righteously not remember sins because they have been fully punished in Christ as our substitute. Divine justice has been satisfied; the penalty has been paid; God's wrath has been propitiated. Therefore, there remains no legal basis for God to charge believers with sin—it would be unjust to punish twice what has already been punished in Christ.

This promise demolishes all notions of purgatory, ongoing penance, or gradual payment for sins. If God remembers sins no more, they require no further purification or punishment. It refutes works-righteousness, which assumes we must somehow make satisfaction for our sins. It provides assurance—if God has

committed never to remember our sins, no accuser (including our own conscience) can successfully bring charges against us (Romans 8:33-34).

Historical Context

The promise that God would remember sins no more represented a radical departure from the old covenant system. Under the Law, the Day of Atonement sacrifices provided covering (kippur) for sins, but the yearly repetition demonstrated that complete removal had not been achieved (Hebrews 10:1-3). The sacrifices reminded Israel of their guilt; they didn't permanently erase it.

Jeremiah's prophecy that God would remember sins no more awaited fulfillment in Christ's once-for-all sacrifice. Jesus Himself connected His death to this new covenant promise at the Last Supper. When He said "This is my blood of the new covenant, which is shed for many for the remission of sins" (Matthew 26:28), He was claiming to accomplish what the old covenant sacrifices could never achieve—permanent, complete forgiveness.

The Reformation recovered this glorious truth after centuries of medieval theology that emphasized ongoing penance, purgatory, and indulgences. Luther's discovery that "the righteous shall live by faith" included recognizing that Christ's atonement fully satisfied divine justice, leaving no debt for believers to pay. The Roman Catholic Council of Trent (1545-1563) explicitly rejected this understanding, insisting on the necessity of ongoing satisfaction for sins. Protestant theology maintained that such teaching denied the sufficiency of Christ's atonement and contradicted this very verse.

Related Passages

Romans 10:9 — Confession and belief for salvation

John 3:16 — God's love and salvation

Revelation 20:12 — Judgment according to deeds

Matthew 25:31 — Final judgment

Study Questions

1. How does the promise that God will never remember your sins change your approach to prayer, especially confession?
2. What practical difference should it make in your daily life that God has committed never to remember your sins?
3. How can you combat feelings of guilt or unworthiness when God Himself has promised to remember your sins no more?

Interlinear Text

καὶ	τῶν	ἁμαρτιῶν	αὐτῶν	καὶ	τῶν	ἀνομιῶν	αὐτῶν	οὐ
And	G3588	sins	their	And	G3588	iniquities	their	G3756
G2532		G266	G846	G2532		G458	G846	
μὴ	μνησθῶ	ἔτι						
G3361	will I remember	more						
	G3415	G2089						

Additional Cross-References

Hebrews 8:12 (Sin): For I will be merciful to their unrighteousness, and their sins and their iniquities will I remember no more.

Jeremiah 31:34 (Sin): And they shall teach no more every man his neighbour, and every man his brother, saying, Know the LORD: for they shall all know me, from the least of them unto the greatest of them, saith the LORD: for I will forgive their iniquity, and I will remember their sin no more.