



# Links Players

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## Forgetting the Past

*But one thing I do: forgetting what lies behind and straining forward to what lies ahead, I press on toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus. (Philippians 3:12-14)*

How long does it take you to forget the previous hole? You had it going, but then disaster struck. Now you are walking to the next tee box, shaking your head, and replaying that triple bogey on that big screen television inside your head.

You try to shake it off, but your thoughts and emotions get the best of you. You do your best to regroup, but the image of the ball flying through the air like a boomerang curving dramatically left toward a cage of pine trees is vividly emblazoned in your mind's eye.

Forgetting a lousy hole is challenging; forgiving and forgetting a past sin can be enormously difficult, especially if the one who needs forgiveness is you. This is not nearly as "cut and dried" as one might think. Yet, getting the hang of this spiritual discipline is vital for your spiritual health.

Fixating on your past failures hardly makes for a healthy state of mind. Yet, failing to learn from your past missteps is a sure recipe for the "big repeat!" And how do you learn from past failures without giving them some thought?

Mentally acknowledging that Jesus freely offers forgiveness is easy to do. Learning to receive forgiveness from him is yet another matter altogether. To illustrate, a young man comes to Jesus, genuinely placing his trust in Jesus' finished work on the cross, yet lives under a chronic sense of guilt for specific moral failures from his past.

The record of his guilt has been expunged in the high court of heaven, but this young man struggles to appropriate Jesus' love and forgiveness. He knows all the Bible verses about his new legal status of justification (i.e., Jesus' declaration of righteousness). Still, he lacks the experiential knowledge that his forgiveness is real.

Day after day, this young man's conscience replays the failures of his past. Day after day, the enemy of his soul reminds him of his past transgressions, and with each assault, he musters up just enough strength to resist the devil's accusations, at least momentarily.

Forever rehearsing our past failures usually cripples us for the journey ahead. Living in the guilt of the past rarely, if ever, prepares us for today's battle. One thing is certain: dredging up failures from the abyss of your soul, again and again, to feel bad about it does not atone for sin.

The glorious good news of the gospel is this: Jesus' death on that old rugged cross two thousand years ago covers that sin and every sin, past, present, and future, for all who confess that Jesus is Lord.

Interestingly, what Paul forgets in this text is not only his past failures, though many; he forgets his former ethnic and religious pedigree in which he had placed his trust. His former life as a Pharisee and the law-keeping that went with it is now considered by him as "rubbish."

Paul writes about what is true for all Christians—the only righteousness accepted by the Father is the perfect righteousness of his only beloved Son. That righteousness is credited to the accounts of all who, like Paul, repent of their self-righteousness.

**Prayer: Jesus! Teach us all how to receive the gift of forgiveness and the corresponding gift of righteousness**

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