



**H**e was really struggling. His marriage had ended ... and it was mostly his fault. She wanted to go to counseling, but he said, "No!" She wanted to work on their problems, he wanted to watch TV and blame her for all their problems. Eventually, she was done ... and so was the relationship. As my friend lamented his failed marriage and broken heart, he told me that he asked God everyday to forgive him for being such a terrible husband to his wife. He confessed the same sin over and over again, but he still felt so guilty and ashamed.

As a pastor, I talk to people quite often who are consumed with guilt. They have sinned greatly ... and feel so horrible and dirty inside. Although they have confessed their sins to God on numerous occasions, they still don't really think they can ever be forgiven for the terrible things they have done.

The devil works hard to beat us up with guilt. He constantly reminds us of what we did and how awful we are. Satan whispers, "Don't think you can come to God and be forgiven this time. You have crossed the line. God will not forgive you this time!" Have you ever heard those words? I know I have on more than one occasion.

#### WHAT IS THE TRUTH?

The truth of the matter is this: NO MATTER HOW DEEP THE SIN, GOD'S LOVE IS DEEPER STILL! The cross proves it! You are never too bad to forgive. You are **not** destined to live out your life as damaged goods ... as a second class citizen of the Kingdom of God ... as Hester Prynne with a scarlet letter on your chest. God is "the God of all grace" (1 Peter 5:10).

No matter what you have done, the Lord can and will cleanse and restore you **if** you will:

- 1. Humble yourself before Him.** Proud people cannot get to first base with God. God hates pride (Proverbs 6:16-17). "God

*is opposed to the proud, but gives grace to the humble"* (James 4:6). If you are ever going to get the monkey of guilt off your back, you must first humble yourself before the King.

- 2. Confess your sins to Him.** "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). Sins do not get forgiven without confession and repentance. To confess your sins literally means that you say the same thing as God about your sin. You agree with Him that what you did was wrong, awful, and hurtful ... and you turn away from those sinful actions that dishonor God and defile you.
- 3. Receive His forgiveness.** Here is the place where many people falter. They do the first two things, but then they fail to believe that God actually forgave them. Although He promises to forgive (see 1 John 1:9), many people erroneously think that because they still FEEL guilty, they still ARE guilty. Therefore they keep asking God for forgiveness for that act of sexual immorality, or that gruesome abortion, or that despicable theft, over and over again. Listen: if God says you are forgiven and cleansed when you humbly confess your sins, believe Him! Accept His truth and do not continue to believe the devil's lies. "What God has cleansed, no longer consider unholy" (Acts 10:15).

My friend, Jesus died and rose again so that you could live life as a first-class citizen of the Kingdom of God with all your sins forgiven and cleansed by his blood. Love, joy, peace and total restoration are yours for the taking if you will believe God.

What will you do? Will you live in the devil's lies or in God's truth? You can say goodbye to the ghost of guilt today if you will simply take God at His Word, do what He says, and trust Him.

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