

Biblical Counseling Center publishes eCounselor's Weekly guide, to encourage counselors and all believers in discipleship and daily growth

His Grace is Enough

By Karen Coulter, M.A.

Counselees often come burdened down by a sin that God has already forgiven. They have confessed the sin and turned from it, but keep reminding themselves of the sin. They still feel ashamed, especially of sexual sin. Their focus stays on the past, which prevents them from moving forward in serving, believing they are not good enough or as godly as others. They believe God is still looking at them sternly and is upset with them.

However, let's look at how Jesus responded to sinners.

The Woman Caught in Adultery



A woman was brought to Jesus at the temple, along with her accusers (Jn 8:1-11). They tested Jesus by asking if they should stone her. Jesus replied, "Let him who is without sin among you be the first to throw a stone at her." They all eventually left. When it was just Jesus and the woman, His perfect opportunity to tell her off and berate her for her sin, He simply asked, "Where are your accusers?" When she told him they had all gone, He responded, "Neither do I condemn you; go, and from now on sin no more." He didn't tell her to sit in a corner and remember her sin, but to repent and forsake it. Move on!

The Woman at the Well

In John 4, Jesus met a woman at Jacob's well. She was not married, but living with a man. Though this is culturally accepted in our day, it was not in her time. She came in the heat of the day to draw water instead of morning, probably due to her shame to not listen to the jeers of the other women. Jesus knew her status. Again, He did not beat her up with a tongue-lashing. He talked to both a woman and a Samaritan. Women and Samaritan's were looked down upon in that culture. He asked for a drink of water and then offered her living water. Then He replied with a convicting statement, "Go, call your husband, and come here." She merely said, "I have no husband." She does not lie but does not come out with the truth that she is living with someone and has had many other husbands. Jesus responded, "You are right in saying, 'I have no husband'; for you have had five husbands, and the one you now have is not your husband. What you have said is true." Surely now Jesus would tell her what a filthy person she was. Instead, His focus again was not on her sin but on offering her living water. She gained value and hope in her shameful situation. She believed Him!

The Woman who was a "Known Sinner"

Again in Luke 7:36-50, a woman knelt before Jesus, weeping and washing His feet with her tears and precious ointment. The Pharisee thought Jesus couldn't possibly know who she was and announced her sin. Jesus let him know she has been forgiven much - He knew her history. Jesus didn't say to the woman, "Even though your sins, which were many, are forgiven, go and remember your sins for the rest of your life and feel terrible about how rotten you are!" NO, he said, "Your faith has saved you, go in PEACE."

Jesus gave a much different response to those who considered themselves to be righteous but were not. To the self-righteous Pharisees and Sadducees, Jesus called them serpents, a brood of vipers, hypocrites, the blind leading the blind, and liars like their father, the devil. Jesus was gentle with those who listened with an open heart and He encouraged them to repent. Jesus said, "For I did not come to call the RIGHTEOUS, but sinners, to REPENTANCE" (Mt 9:13).

Thankfully, if we confess our sin, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sin, and cleanse us from ALL unrighteousness (1Jn 1:9). Our sin is removed as far as the east is from the west (Ps 103:12), He washes us white as snow (Isa 1:18), and remembers our sin no more (Jer 31:34)!

What about You?

For those of you who are caught in the trap of self-condemnation, meditate on Romans 8:1. If you have confessed your sin and repented of it, remember that God remembers your sin no more! No, He doesn't have amnesia and neither do you. Instead He CHOOSES to not think about it ever again or hold it against you in judgment. Jesus already paid the price for your sin (His shed blood and death on the Cross) and there is nothing you can do to add to that perfect sacrifice! So where is the condemnation coming from? Satan is the accuser of all believers (Rev 12:10), trying to beat us down and render us ineffective. Who will you choose to believe, God's declaration of your forgiveness and righteousness in Christ, or to get caught in Satan's trap of self-condemnation?

You may not FEEL forgiven, but the TRUTH is, you ARE forgiven. God declares you not guilty (Rom 8:1). You must by faith TRUST that God has cleansed you from your sin. Respond in gratitude for His grace and mercy and let this drive you to love Him deeper and passionately serve Him forevermore! No matter what your sin, there is forgiveness and freedom in Christ; His grace is enough for you!

*Who, oh Lord, could save themselves,
Their own soul could heal?
Our shame was deeper than the sea
Your grace is deeper still
(You Alone Can Rescue by Matt Redman)*

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