



Worthy of Forgiveness

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The doctor confirmed it: miscarriage. At ten weeks, few people knew of the blessing that had been growing but, for some reason, did not continue. Her first thought was, “What did I do wrong?” She thought of the furniture she moved, the shrimp she ate, the day she forgot her vitamin. The doctor assured her nothing could have been done differently to prevent this, but after five years of infertility, there had to be something. One thought she couldn’t shake was, “Is my sin too great to be blessed with a child?” She had clung to stories like Hannah’s and Sarah’s, where God opened their wombs, and had prayed fervently for Him to do it for her. After countless hours of prayer, He finally said yes, only to (as she perceived it) strip it from her just to remind her of her trespasses. This tragedy was confirmation of the guilt she had felt for years. She convinced herself she was unworthy.

Unworthy! Unworthy to experience the joy a laughing child brings to the home. Unworthy to feel the pride of a newborn looking into her eyes after growing in her womb. Unworthy of birthday parties, late night snuggles, Disney trips, graduations, weddings, grandkids—all the things she had dreamed about. She was hurt but understood how God came to this decision. She had messed up, a lot. She grew up in the church. She was baptized at twelve and knew right from wrong but chose wrong too many times. The words Paul wrote in Acts 23:1 about having a clear conscience before God were definitely not her experience. She had apologized to people she had hurt, she had repented, she had vowed to seek righteousness daily, but, she thought, nothing could erase her mistakes.

She withdrew emotionally from her husband, ashamed that the one unique thing her body could do, it did not do as it was designed to. She felt she was not fulfilling her role. She stopped teaching Bible classes, because who would want to learn from someone who had sinned so much that God was withholding blessings from her? There was no way she could tell anyone of her internal struggles, because then she would have to tell them of her sins, and she was too ashamed. She decided to suffer in silence and let her infertility be a reminder of how God hates sin.

A beautiful soul in the church noticed the young woman’s light dimming through the facade she put up every day and approached her with love. “How are you?” It was a question the young lady had answered many times with a superficial smile and “Fine, how are you?” Not today—today felt different. The sincerity in the beautiful soul’s eyes was inviting to her heavy heart. She tried to hold back all of her emotions, but they raged through like the river after a heavy rain. Suddenly all of her

deepest thoughts spewed out for another person to stare at and judge. She braced herself for the ridicule, lecture, and gossip that were sure to start as soon as she could get a grip and close the floodgates. Instead, she was greeted by unexpected kindness and understanding.

The beautiful soul offered this wisdom: We believe God. We believe God cannot lie (Num 23:19), so why do we not believe Him when He says He forgives us and does not remember our sins, and there is no condemnation for those in Christ (Heb 8:12; Rom 8:1)?

Could it be that simple—just believing what God says is true? We make things complicated when they don't have to be. Our worth is not what we bring to the table; our worth is determined by the One who purchased us. God sees us as worthy enough to trade His most precious possession for us.

We make it complicated when we do not allow our past to do what it is meant to, which is to teach us if a behavior has a positive or negative impact. God gave us minds to analyze how our decisions change our course. Positive results (stronger bonds with friends and family, praise, reaching goals) motivate us to make similar choices. The bad feelings we get from negative outcomes remind us to choose differently. The problem arises when we let the negative impact from one occurrence stop any further experiences. If we applied the same logic to other parts of our lives, the first time we messed up at work, we would have to resign. We would get a new job, only to mess up again. No relationship would be sustainable, because if we said one wrong word, we could never talk to that person again. Mistakes are meant to keep us from repeating the past, not to eliminate the future.

God does not hold grudges. He is faithful and just to forgive us (1 John 1:9). He doesn't want to shame or punish us. He wants us to thrive in His light. God's forgiveness is the greatest grace we can ever be given, but it is not usually forgiveness from God that holds us back. Often it is forgiveness we withhold from ourselves. We must remember that forgiveness is God's gift to purify our iniquities (Titus 2:14), and who are we to refuse such a beautiful gift until we deem ourselves worthy to receive it? God made us worthy. If we are waiting or working our way there, we will wither without the Lord.

When we let guilt overtake us, we detour from a life we can use to glorify God. There are few stories in the Bible where the protagonist never made a wrong decision, nothing bad ever happened, and they had a nice, quiet life. We don't tell stories of the mundane. We tell stories of the extraordinary. God took imperfect people, our spiritual giants, and turned their setback into success. Everything in our lives can glorify God, whether we become a soft place to land for another weary soul burdened by bad choices or we are strengthened for the bigger fights with which Satan intends to destroy us.

So take courage, sweet friend. God has forgiven you for walking down the guilty road to make you worthy to walk down a beautiful path He has paved just for you.

Discussion Questions:

1. What does 2 Thessalonians 1:11 tell us about being worthy?
2. How can your past influence you to have a better future?
3. Why is it sometimes harder to forgive ourselves than it is for God to forgive us?