

“MY LOVE IS INEXHAUSTIBLE”

“I have not given up on you. Please do not give up on Me. No matter how condemned or hopeless you may feel, I can lift you out of your despair. Believe Me when I say, ‘You cannot exhaust My love’. My mercies are new *every* morning (Lamentations 3:23) and My hand has not been shortened that it cannot save (Isaiah 59:1). *For as high as the heavens are above the earth, so great is [My] steadfast love toward [you]; as far as the east is from the west, so far [will I] remove [your] transgressions from [you]*’ (Psalm 103:11).”

With Jesus in the custody of the religious leaders, it seemed there would be no opportunity to express their remorse for the mistakes they had made. The disciples had forsaken Him for fear of the repercussions. Peter had denied His name to protect himself. Judas had betrayed his “friend” for personal gain. Others maligned, misjudged, and mistreated Him, condemning Him to death. Faced with the gravity of their choices, they must decide whether Christ’s love could “*cover [the] multitude of [their] sins*” (1 Peter 4:8).

Do you tend to classify sin, deeming certain acts forgivable or unforgivable before God? Explain.

Have you ever felt that you’ve gone *too* far—that you have exhausted God’s mercy and forgiveness? How did you overcome your feelings? Share your experience. _____

Guilt

Confronted with the truth of his pride and weakness, Peter fled the scene weeping bitter tears of sorrow and remorse. He had done the very thing he vowed he would never do. “*I do not know the Man,*” (Matthew 26:74) he had asserted, only to find *the Man* staring into his eyes as the words left his lips.

Review Mark 14:72 and Luke 22:61-62.

Continue reading the account in Matthew 27:1-10. What caused Judas to feel remorseful? (v.3) _____

Was Judas convicted of sin? What did he state he had done wrong? (v.4) _____

What action did he take to “atone” for his sin? (vv.3, 5) _____

It is thought that Judas’ act of throwing the silver coins into the temple was an effort to implicate the priests in his crime. Will blaming others for your choices appease a guilty conscience? Explain.

Why do you think that Judas believed ending his life was his only option? _____

Describe what it means to be hopeless. _____

Without hope, Judas believed that ending his life was his only choice. He had no expectation of future good, no hope of forgiveness or redemption; no solution to remedy what he had done. He seemed to believe that his sin was unforgivable—he had exhausted God’s love.

Repentance

Both Peter and Judas were convicted of sin. Both men were sorrowful for what they had done. Both experienced feelings of regret, and yet Peter’s life would be restored, and Judas’ life lost. Why do you believe Peter was forgiven and Judas’ life ended in damnation (Matthew 26:24, John 17:12)?

Can one be sorrowful for their actions and fail to repent? Describe the difference between true and false repentance. _____

The Greek word for “*wept*” in Luke 22:62 reveals that Peter mourned over his transgressions. He went out into the night in intense pain and grief, lamenting over the condition of his heart.

The Greek word translated ‘*remorseful*’ referring to Judas in Matthew 27:3, indicates “not a sorrow for sin that leads to a change of mind and action, but a regret at being caught, a remorse that leads to despair.”¹

Who was Jesus to Judas? _____

Who was Jesus to Peter? _____

Based on their response to their sin, what did these men believe about Christ’s love for them? Their futures? _____

Do these factors make a difference in how one reacts to their failures? Why? _____

To further differentiate between true and false repentance, we will compare the actions of Peter and Judas to David and Esau. Read 2 Samuel 12:7-15. What was David’s sin? (vv.8, 9, 12, 13, 14) How does he respond to his iniquity? _____

¹ Wiersbe, Warren W.: *The Bible Exposition Commentary*. Wheaton, Ill.: Victor Books, 1996, c1989, Matthew 27:3 (KJV).

At the conclusion of the last lesson, we likened David’s remorse, as recorded in Psalm 51, to what Peter must have felt. Reread verses 1-17 of Psalm 51. Describe repentance according to this passage.

Now read of Esau in Hebrews 12:16-17. (See Genesis 25:27-34, 26:34-35, and 27:30-46 for further reference.) How does he respond to his iniquity? What was he truly weeping over?

Although Esau *“wanted to inherit the blessing, he was rejected, for he found no place for repentance, though he sought it diligently with tears”* (Hebrews 12:17). Esau treated his birthright—his identity and his inheritance—with disdain. Driven by fleshly wants and desires, he sacrificed his relationship with his father for temporal satisfaction. Faced with the consequence of his choice, he sought to restore his losses. At no point did he repent of his actions. Even so, “Esau could have come back to God. But he could not undo his act.”²

How are Judas and Esau similar? _____

First John 1:9-10 says, *“If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just and will forgive us our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness. If we claim we have not sinned, we make Him out to be a liar and His word has no place in our lives”* (NIV). What keeps individuals from confession? _____

How does John 3:16-21 apply? _____

When confronted with sin, are you remorseful because you have damaged your relationship with God or because you will suffer consequence and personal loss? Take a moment and record your motive for attaining forgiveness. _____

Charles Spurgeon has said, “Ah! But there are too many who make confession, having no broken hearts, no streaming eyes, no flowing tears, no humbled spirits. Know ye this, that ten thousand confessions, if they are made by hardened hearts, if they do not spring from really contrite spirits, they shall be only additions to your guilt as they are mockeries before the Most High.”

Forgiven

Judas and Esau’s rejection “[was] not a question of forgiveness. God’s forgiveness is always open to the penitent.”³ No matter how great an individual deems their sin to be, grace and forgiveness is available to anyone who cries out for mercy. Acts 2:21 says, *“Whoever calls on the name of the Lord will be saved.”*

² Morris, Henry.

³ Morris.

Previously, you were asked whether you placed limitations on God’s mercy and forgiveness. Identify those trespasses and explain the reason for your belief. _____

John 18:28-19:15 records the account of those who maligned, misjudged, and mistreated Jesus, ultimately putting Him to death—acts many would deem ‘unforgivable’. Read the passage, list the parties, and describe their sins against Jesus. _____

Put yourself in Christ’s place. If these acts were committed against you, could you continue to extend mercy and grace?⁴ Explain. _____

In what ways do *all* individuals share their sin? How do we share Judas’ sin? (Acts 2:36, Romans 3:23) _____

Psalm 32:1-5 describes the spiritual, mental, and physical state of a man who dwells in sin. What effect does unconfessed, hidden sin have on a believer? Does sin affect an unbeliever similarly? _____

History records that Pilate, like Judas, ended his own life in a state of hopelessness.⁵ Do you think his failure to heed his wife’s dream in Matthew 27:19 added to his torment? (Also consider John 19:6-8, 11.) _____

Return to Psalm 32. Describe the blessing of forgiven sin— “of whatever kind—whether against God or man, whether great or small, where conscientious or inadvertent, or whether by omission or commission”⁶—that is found in God. _____

Although the chief priests, elders, and people cried out, “*Away with Him, away with Him! Crucify Him! We have no king but Caesar!*” “*His blood be on us and on our children!*” (Matthew 27:25), some among them found forgiveness and bore fruits of repentance. Per Acts 2:36-42, what happened in their hearts? _____

Read Isaiah 55:7 and Micah 7:18-19. How does God treat the sin of those who acknowledge their sin and turn from their ways? _____

When you fail and you feel you’ve exhausted God’s mercy, when you feel unforgivable and unworthy, when guilt sets in, meditate on Lamentations 3:21-23.

In closing, read Psalm 103:8-12.

⁴ See Matthew 5:38-48.

⁵ According to Eusebius of Caesarea’s Ecclesiastical History, Pilate killed himself on orders from the emperor Caligula. (<https://www.britannica.com/biography/Pontius-Pilate>)

⁶ VanGemeren