

Forgiven by God's Sweet Grace

By God's grace and because of God's grace, I am forgiven for everything I have ever done against God—past, present and future. When I know I have been forgiven, it brings peace to my life, peace like I've never known before.

Understanding the depths of the word “forgiven” can set us free to follow God with all we are and all He made us to be. However, when we feel deep guilt, shame and regret, we become stuck and cannot move forward.

Forward motion on our transformation journey is what we want. The devil will continually remind us of our sin if we let him. He knows that will keep us spinning our wheels or taking one step forward and two steps back.

Waterfall of Grace

The moment we accept Jesus as our Savior, God forgives—that means all my flaws, mistakes, debts and sins. He wipes them away even though He could rightly hold me guilty for everything I've done wrong. Instead, in His grace, He chooses to forgive me, so I can have a right relationship with Him.

Ephesians 1:7b-8 (CEB) says it this way: “we have forgiveness for our failures [or sins] based on his overflowing grace, which he poured over us with wisdom and understanding.”

God's Sweet Grace

My salvation experience happened when I was seven and stole candy from the grocery store. When my dad found out, he took me back and had me tell the store manager what I'd done.

That entire process made me realize I was a sinner. Up until that point, I didn't know what it meant. I prayed and received Jesus. In that moment, my sins were forgiven—past, present and future. My eternal home preserved.

I belonged to God, but the incident really unveiled a weakness I had regarding sugar. That weakness eventually morphed into the sin of overeating foods with processed sugar, and it nearly took me under. It would have if not for God's sweet grace gently supporting me and calling me back time and time again.

God knew me before I was born; every day of my life has been written in His book. It tells me that in Psalm 139:16. The thing that led me accept Christ was a sin that I allowed to follow me for nearly 40 more years.

God Knows Me

From the moment I was conceived, God knew exactly what sins I would commit for the rest of my life. He saw all the times I would run to sugar to comfort me instead of the precious Holy Spirit.

In 1977, when I cried out to Him about how to lose weight and He told me to stop eating sugar, He was essentially telling me to put down my idol. Put down the thing I was relying on instead of Him. This was a sin because I was definitely putting a substance above God. He knew my addiction to sugar would eventually kill me if I didn't stop eating it, but I didn't listen for a long time.

Yet every single time I reached a desperation point again—where I had gone on a diet, lost weight but gained it back and would cry out to God confessing my sin—He would forgive me. Why? Because His grace had already covered that sin. He'd already seen it.

However, until I confessed my sin and repented of it, I was not at peace. After I did that, my connection with Him was restored, and I could feel His peace flood my soul, knowing our relationship was restored, mended.

Forgiveness Brings Peace

Romans 4:4-5 (NLT) explains forgiveness like this, " When people work, their wages are not a gift, but something they have earned. But people are counted as righteous, not because of their work, but because of their faith in God who forgives sinners."

Verse 6 continues, "David also spoke of this when he described the happiness of those who are declared righteous without working for it: 'Oh, what joy for those whose disobedience is forgiven, whose sins are put out of sight. Yes, what joy for those whose record the Lord has cleared of sin.'"

Then Romans 5:1-2 tells us, "Therefore, since we have been made right in God's sight by faith, we have peace with God because of what Jesus Christ our Lord has done for us. Because of our faith, Christ has brought us into this place of undeserved privilege where we now stand, and we confidently and joyfully look forward to sharing God's glory."

Sin Brings Separation

These verses are talking about peace, hope and joy. That all occurs when we are made right with God when we accept Christ as our Savior. However, even after that, when we sin, there is still a separation between God and us.

When I stole candy, I was still Rev. Ernest Shields' daughter. Nothing could make me not his, even if I went to jail for stealing four pieces of candy. However, there was not peace, hope and joy in our relationship until I confessed my sin. Then the relationship was restored, and I knew beyond a shadow of a doubt my daddy had forgiven me, and my heavenly Father had forgiven me.

1 John 1:9 (MSG) tells us: "If we admit our sins—simply come clean about them—he won't let us down; he'll be true to himself. He'll forgive our sins and purge us of all wrongdoing."

None of us are exempt from being human, and therefore, we will sin. Our goal should be to follow God in order to resist temptations and selfish cravings more and more. Then, when we fail, we shouldn't run from God or hide in shame. We need to confess our sin, come clean about it as the Scripture says.

Spirit-Led Transformation

Instead of confessing our sins, many times we try to pretend they aren't there. Part of that occurs because we think we have to be perfect. There's even a Scripture tells us to be perfect. Matthew 5:48 (AMP), though, explains what that means. "You, therefore, will be perfect [growing into spiritual maturity both in mind and character, actively integrating godly values into your daily life], as your heavenly Father is perfect."

One of the main godly values we need to incorporate into our daily lives is to admit it when we have sinned, confess it to God, repent and ask for forgiveness. We must do it the minute we know we have sinned. If we wait, we will be knee-deep in sin before we know it.

None of us like to admit our failures. I coach people because I have failed big time, and I kept trying to fix my failures myself by following a diet in my own limited self-effort. After many years of doing this, God helped me see that my self-effort was not what He wanted.

Give It to Jesus

When I fail, I am obligated by faith in Jesus to realize I've tried to step back into my old identity. That drags me down because it is like I am carrying the weight of my sins around with me.

We cannot step into transformation dragging all of that with us. We have to give it to Jesus. For several years after I lost 250 pounds, I kept confessing the sins of my past over

and over again to God. He kept asking me: What sin?

I had already confessed my sin, but He kept telling me that all of the weight, yes the literal weight of my sin, had been cast into the deepest ocean. He had removed it farther than a sunrise is from the sunset or the east is from the west.

That's hope. That's joy. That's peace.

That's grace.

Here's what I've learned in over 60 years of living since then, being forgiven by God is the sweetest thing, much sweeter than anything I've ever eaten.

For more on this topic, check out this episode, *Forgiven*, on *Sweet Grace for Your Journey with Teresa Shields Parker* on Charisma Podcast Network. {eo}

This article first appeared at .

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