“God could never forgive me. I’ve done some awful things in my life.” How often have we thought that? How many people, because of their guilt over past sins, believe and say things like this: “Woe is me, I’m done for, I’ve had it, I’m through, there’s no way God could ever love me or forgive me.”

Our struggles in life can be very discouraging, and our guilt and inability to forgive ourselves can be debilitating. If we don’t understand the whole story, we can get so discouraged that we can drift away from God forever!

The private thoughts of the prodigal son in a pig pen gives us some hope (Luke 15:17 – “But when he came to himself, he said, ‘How many of my father’s hired servants have bread enough and to spare, and I perish with hunger’”).

That hungry prodigal knew that his rich father would not go to bed without supper that night. The more he thought of it, it dawned on him that nobody on his father’s farm would fall asleep with a growling stomach. He would!

Since the father in the story represents God, we can draw some interesting conclusions from the phrase – “bread enough and to spare.” God has never been stingy with His blessings:

Matthew 5:45 – “...He gives his sunlight to both the evil and the good, and he sends rain on the just and the unjust alike.”

Romans 8:32 – “Since He did not spare even His own Son but gave him up for us all, won’t He also give us everything else?”

Psalm 84:11 – “For the Lord God is our sun and our shield. He gives us grace and glory. The Lord will withhold no good thing from those who do what is right.”

God freely gives His children everything they need to live. But what about mercy and forgiveness and grace?

With God, there is always “grace enough and to spare.” Is your case a difficult one? Do your sins shock you? Do you have a tough time saying no to temptations? Are your particular spiritual struggles strange and complex? Do you struggle with guilt over something you did in the past? Consider God who made the earth, stretched out the heavens like a tent to dwell in, Who has unlimited power, knowledge, and presence.

In all of creation, God has never failed at anything – do you think His first failure will be to save you? Is your case too strong for His omnipotence, are your problems so complex that God’s omniscient mind can’t figure it out; do you think you have been so bad as to be unlovable by God’s omni-benevolence?

If God made you (Genesis 1:28), He can remake you (2 Corinthians 5:17). If He claims you (2 Corinthians 6:18), He can cleanse you (Acts 22:16).

Isaiah 59:1 – “Listen! The Lord’s arm is not too weak to save you, nor is his ear too deaf to hear you call.”

No matter what you have done, no matter how long you have struggled, there is still grace enough and to spare on God’s table of grace?
Isaiah 55:7 – “Let the wicked change their ways and banish the very thought of doing wrong. Let them turn to the Lord that He may have mercy on them. Yes, turn to our God, for He will forgive generously.”

Psalm 86:5 – “O Lord, you are so good, so ready to forgive, so full of unfailing love for all who ask for your help.”

Romans 5:20 – “God’s law was given so that all people could see how sinful they were. But as people sinned more and more, God’s wonderful grace became more abundant.”

2 Corinthians 4:15 – “All of this is for your benefit. And as God’s grace reaches more and more people, there will be great thanksgiving, and God will receive more and more glory.”

Hebrews 7:25 – “Therefore he is able, once and forever, to save those who come to God through him. He lives forever to intercede with God on their behalf.”

Let’s put this abundant grace to the test in a real world of really bad sinners. Does God really live up to His promises?

David and Bathsheba: 2 Samuel 12:13 – “Then David confessed to Nathan, “I have sinned against the Lord.” Nathan replied, “Yes, but the Lord has forgiven you, and you won’t die for this sin.”

The publicans and sinners were notorious transgressors of God’s law. Yet when they came to Jesus, they always found grace enough and to spare:

Mark 2:15-17: “Later, Levi invited Jesus and his disciples to his home as dinner guests, along with many tax collectors and other disreputable sinners. (There were many people of this kind among Jesus’ followers.) But when the teachers of religious law who were Pharisees saw him eating with tax collectors and other sinners, they asked his disciples, “Why does he eat with such scum?” When Jesus heard this, he told them, “Healthy people don’t need a doctor—sick people do. I have come to call not those who think they are righteous, but those who know they are sinners.”

Take the case of the sinful woman in Luke 7:36-50 who Simon called a sinner, and the woman caught in the act of adultery in John 8:1-11. Could God’s grace cover the scandals of their lives? Yes!

What about a traitor – one of the inner circle who forsook the Lord with his eyes wide open, even after he had been warned (Matthew 26:34)? Peter was all these; he denied Jesus three times, he cursed and swore that he did not even know the man (Matthew 26:72). When he realized what he had done, “…he went out and wept bitterly” (Matthew 26:75).

Could grace cover such a horrible sin? Yes! Jesus forgave Peter. But surely he was on probation; surely God considered him second-rate, damaged goods. No, less than two months later, Jesus tapped him to be the keynote speaker at the greatest revival of all time (Acts 2). Jesus featured Peter as the key character of the first half of the Book of Acts, used him to write two Bible books, and placed him as an elder in a local congregation (1 Peter 5:1-2).

It would be hard to imagine anybody today that could be worse than someone who killed Jesus! Yet the very people who killed Jesus were told to “Repent, and let every one of you be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins; and you shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit” (Acts 2:38). 3000 did, and the Bible says “…the Lord added to the church daily those who were being saved” (Acts 2:47).
What about sexual perverts and child molesters and murderers, etc., are they welcome at the Father’s table? Yes, provided they obey the gospel. **1 Corinthians 6:9-11:** “Do you not know that the unrighteous will not inherit the kingdom of God? Do not be deceived. Neither fornicators, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor homosexuals, nor sodomites, nor thieves, nor covetous, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor extortioners will inherit the kingdom of God. And such were some of you. But you were washed, but you were sanctified, but you were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus and by the Spirit of our God.”

Saul of Tarsus was public enemy #1 in the kingdom of heaven — without a doubt he tested the **grace enough and to spare** principle like no one else ever has. He was a blasphemer of God and murderer of innocent Christians. He was involved in the mob killing of Stephen (Acts 7).

Surely, Saul would find that grace could cover only so much — and that he had long ago crossed that line, the point of no return! No, he too found **grace enough and to spare**. Years later he described himself as the chief of sinners:

**1 Timothy 1:13-15:** “I thank Christ Jesus our Lord, who has given me strength to do his work. He considered me trustworthy and appointed me to serve him, even though I used to blaspheme the name of Christ. In my insolence, I persecuted his people. But God had mercy on me because I did it in ignorance and unbelief. Oh, how generous and gracious our Lord was! He filled me with the faith and love that come from Christ Jesus. This is a trustworthy saying, and everyone should accept it: “Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners”—and I am the worst of them all.”

Is it any wonder that Paul wrote more about grace than all the other New Testament writers combined (75/131)?

“I don’t deserve God’s grace — it will take me my whole life to make up for what I’ve done to Jesus! What I did was unforgivable!”

No - what Jesus did on the cross was meant to take what was unforgiveable and make it forgivable. It’s not about you, it’s not about me! It’s always about Jesus! That’s God’s grace!

Can God forgive you? Yes! Will God forgive you? Yes! The only question that remains is, **“Do you really want to be forgiven?”** Are you willing to come to God on his own terms?