

## **PROGRAM 46 TEASER**

Who would you call a blessed person? That rich man? That famous athlete? That television, movie or rock star? Then how come so many of them end up divorced, addicted and even suicides? Like all of us regular people, the rich and famous have a problem. It's called sin—and the guilt of it only gets worse and heavier as time goes by. Just ask the woman Jesus met at the well. Or the one caught in adultery. Or the rip-off tax collector named Levi. They will point you to the sweetest word ever spoken—and to the only One who can say it to you “Forgiven!” God's sweetest word to sinners—today on More Than Talk.

## **PROGRAM 46 PAGE 1**

### **“FORGIVEN!” GOD’S SWEETEST WORD TO SINNERS**

#### **Page 1 The most blessed person in the world**

“I acknowledged my sin to You, And my iniquity I have not hidden. I said, ‘I will confess my transgressions to the Lord,’ And You forgave the iniquity of my sin.”  
Psalm 32:5

Very few of us ever fully realize that the most blessed person in the world is one whose sins are forgiven and covered by God. It's not that we don't appreciate being adopted into God's own family through the sacrifice of Jesus on our behalf. It's just that after once knowing how horrifying our sins were - and getting saved as a result - we begin to take the Lord for granted, fall out of first-love for Jesus, and no longer see the "smaller sins" as that bad. But sin - like cancer - is still sin in any size. It grieves the Holy Spirit, breaks the heart of God and brings sorrow to the Savior who never ceases to pray for us.

I have found that my only cure for carelessness toward sin is to look long at Jesus Christ hanging, crying, writhing, dying - nailed to a tree. What kind of love is this?! And all of that suffering to remove all of my sins!

A man took out his anger by hurling a stone at his dog and breaking his leg. The animal lay motionless for a while but then dragged himself to the feet of the master and licked the hand that had hurled the stone. For those who wounded Him - you and me - Jesus prayed, "Father, forgive them: for they know not what they do." When we see our sins - yesterday's evil before conversion and today's sins after salvation - in the light of His love and suffering, we will take inventory daily and quickly acknowledge when we sin so that we can know the faithfulness and freshness of God's forgiveness. The only sins He won't forgive are those we won't confess after being convicted by the Holy Spirit. Some Christians have a clean conscience only because they have a poor memory. Don't let that happen to you!

My prayer: "Father, make my heart so soft and sensitive that, should I grieve You through some sin, I will catch the Holy Spirit's conviction and repent fully and immediately.”

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**Page 2 When it feels impossible to forgive**

“And whenever you stand praying, if you have anything against anyone, forgive him, that your Father in heaven may also forgive you your trespasses.” Mark 11:25

Here is one theme that bears repetition as one of life’s most important scriptures - the lesson of forgiveness and releasing of any grudges, bitterness or resentments held against others. How wise we would be if every time we came to God in prayer seeking His forgiveness, we would also consciously check our hearts for any germs of unforgiveness against a loved one, friend, enemy or even politicians! (What if we prayed for people in the public eye as much as we have criticized them?!) After all, how arrogant and deceived we are if we expect a perfect and holy God to forgive us again and again for breaking His heart if we ourselves refuse to release our anger and animosity against a mere fellow human being. One forgiveness - God's - won't be attained without the other forgiveness -ours - being granted.

I read the story of a man who gave a golf ball the name of someone he disliked and then took a hearty swing. The ball landed in the rough. The writer added: "If you bear a grudge against anyone, you can't see straight or drive straight. The fact is this - you just cannot hurt another person without hurting yourself. As the Chinese proverb puts it: 'He who spits against the wind spits in his own face.'"

How true! How then can we more easily forgive another person whom we rightly or wrongly feel has done us harm? Look often at the wounds of Jesus caused by our sins and then look at His loving gaze as He says again and again, "I forgive you." When you do, the pain that others cause you will be like nothing in comparison!

My prayer: "I forgive anyone and everyone for anything that has ever hurt or harmed me. My Father, help me to always seek Your forgiveness by first searching my own heart to make sure I have forgiven others."

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**Page 3 Proof that you belong to God**

"If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness." 1 John 1:9

The longer I walk with Jesus the more aware I am of the importance of often and instant repentance and confession. I used to think it would be the opposite - that years spent in Christ should bring perfection, not confession. But the deeper one goes in Jesus, the more real, ugly and sinister sin becomes. As the Holy Spirit excites us more and more over the sheer ecstasy of being God's own child, He also takes us into new levels of that which causes Him pain, even though we were unaware of such in earlier days. Like the anonymous writer who recognized the human - and Christian - capacity for hypocrisy.

"When the other fellow acts that way, he's ugly. When you do it, it's nerves. When he's stubborn, he's obstinate. When you are, it's firmness. When he doesn't like your friends, he's prejudiced. When you don't like his, you are simply showing good judgment of human nature. When he tries to be accommodating, he's using flattery. When you do it, you're using tact. When he picks flaws, he's cranky. When you do, you're discriminating."

Sound familiar? Isn't God wonderful to point out our sins - whether hypocrisy, pride, judgmentalism or whatever He sees buried that must be uncovered if we are to grow more like Him? So don't run from the Holy Spirit when He convicts you. Unlike the devil who is the accuser of the brethren and loves to condemn us with generalities, the Spirit loves you and convicts with specifics. Welcome His correction. It is a sure proof you belong to God. Do one thing and God will do two. Confess any sin humbly and without justifying it. The moment you do, the Lord instantly forgives you and cleanses you from every trace of sin. With such a Savior whose own blood does the cleansing (v7) and who pleads our case before the Father (2:1), you can be sure of not only forgiveness but also His power to move beyond that sin rather than wallow in it.

My prayer: "I come to You now, dear Father, for a fresh cleansing of any sins of thought, word or deed. Make me - keep me - aware of sins of commission and omission so that I will be instant in my repentance and confession."

## **PROGRAM 46 PAGE 4**

### **“FORGIVEN!” GOD’S SWEETEST WORD TO SINNERS**

#### **Page 4 Pain-free, death-free, tear-free**

“But I do not want you to be ignorant, brethren, concerning those who have fallen asleep, lest you sorrow as others who have no hope.” I Thessalonians 4:13

It is the one appointment none of us will miss nor be late for. Only Enoch and Elijah escaped its embrace by being snatched away by God. And only those alive when the Lord returns will experience an instant transformation without their clothes being removed. Of course, I'm speaking of death and our clothing as our physical bodies.

"It is appointed unto men once to die." (Hebrews 9:27) However, it is our perspective of death that is to make a great difference between the lover of Jesus and those without Him. For the believer, it is merely moving from one house to another -from a tent made of dust to a Kingdom made of love - from the wrinkles of time to the wonders of eternity. Each of us, if we live long enough, will see more and more loved ones and dear friends taking leave of us in order to be welcomed by the Father Himself. Tears will fall. Lots of them. Hearts will break, yet not be shattered. We who love our Jesus are guaranteed the joy of seeing Him - and each other - "in the morning."

And what a morning it shall be when we behold each other in new and lasting bodies in a new and beautiful home that is pain-free, death-free and tear-free. Yes, we will grieve as loved ones leave us for their graduation to glory. But ours will not be like the hopeless grief of others who see only a six-foot hole. We see Jesus! Alive! Coming again! And planning a glorious reunion that is out of this world for all who love Him! No wonder we can comfort and encourage each other - even when our tears are falling!

My prayer: "Let me so see You, Lord Jesus, as the Resurrection and the Life, that I will view death of loved ones from heaven's victorious perspective and Your own guarantee of a glorious reunion."

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**Page 5 When death holds no terror**

“Then I heard a voice from heaven saying to me, Write: Blessed are the dead who die in the Lord from now on. Yes, says the Spirit, that they may rest from their labors, and their works follow them.” Revelation 14:13

We have a choice. Live for the things of time and those things will be forgotten. Live for the things of eternity - to please God through our thoughts, words and actions - and those works of righteousness will follow us into eternity. Look closely at our scripture which takes us to that point which the wise focus on long before they arrive there - death.

1) Those without Christ die cursed; those who die in the Lord die blessed. Beware, though, of "easy believism." Salvation is more than a moving of the mouth. It is a belief in the heart that results in a change in the life that leads to a change in the goal - to please the Father, not the self.

2) A life of laboring for the Lord is no picnic. It's not supposed to be. That's why we're promised rest from our toils on earth when we arrive in heaven. All who live long enough will get tired and worn - the evil as well as the righteous. Hitler died at 56, worn out carrying out Satan's bidding. He will know no rest throughout eternity. Dietrich Bonhoeffer, murdered by Hitler, died still a young man though worn out by resisting evil and enduring torture. He has found rest in the presence of His Lord.

3) There are at least two facets to the words "and their works do follow them." First, everything we have ever done to bring glory to God will "follow (attend, accompany)" (v 13 Amplified) us in our death and our being welcomed into His presence. Second, those whom we have introduced to Christ or whom we have blessed and strengthened, though left behind, will continue to do further works for God. Those lives will also follow us into the Kingdom of love and light where the "Hallelujah Chorus" will never end!

My prayer: "My Father, if I am to 'die in the Lord' I know that I must 'live in the Lord' drawing my life from the Savior and living to please Him through every

thought, word and action. I cry for You to have total ownership of me now and for eternity.”