

Glad Tidings

“And we bring you good tidings of the promise made unto the fathers...” (Acts 13:32)

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Do You Limit God?

(Jerry Fite)

If the person you are trying to reach told you they have committed so many horrible sins and lived so dark a life that God could not possibly make them clean, how would you respond? Some Scripture would help: “*If we confess our sins, he is faithful and righteous to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness*” (1 John 1:8). By not ignoring our sins, but confessing them, we stand before a righteous God who is able and ready to cleanse us from all unrighteousness, not just some of them. Might we gently suggest to our guilt ridden prospect that he or she is limiting God?

The blood of Christ cleansed Saul who was guilty of murdering Christians (Acts 22:16). Fornicators, drunkards and extortioners in Corinth were washed clean of their iniquities (1 Corinthians 6:9-11). If God through Christ forgave such people of these sins, He surely can forgive you of your sins (cf. 1 Timothy 1:15-16). It is understandable that guilt can make us feel unforgivable and doomed to the depths of darkness, but we

must not let our dark thoughts cloud the light found in Scripture. There is not a sin that cannot be washed away in baptism when coming to Christ, and there is not a sin that cannot be forgiven in prayer for the penitent Christian striving to remain in Christ (cf. Acts 2:38, 8:22-24).

Are we limiting God’s forgiveness when we say two people who are in an adulterous marriage must separate when they become Christians? Some say so.

God forgives our sins conditionally. Repenting and being baptized along with forgiving others who repent of their sin committed against us are conditions of God’s forgiveness (Acts 2:38, Matthew 6:13-14). Are we guilty of limiting God’s forgiveness when we say these conditions must be met or one will not be forgiven of God?

True repentance is the change of mind toward sin prompted by godly sorrow which results in the turning away from sin (2 Corinthians 7:10, Matthew 3:8). When an unscripturally divorced person marries another,

they both commit sin. The sexual union is adultery, because the marriage is unlawful (cf. Matthew 19:9, 5:32, Romans 7:3). If one repents, God forgives. One repents of an adulterous union when he or she turns away from the sinful marriage.

Surely no one would accuse God of limiting forgiveness when He demands repentance before He forgives. Therefore, no one should accuse people of limiting God’s forgiveness when believing two in an adulterous marriage should end their marriage.

God in forgiveness does not cleanse adulterous unions; we in repentance turn from adulterous relationships. Herod had no right to have Herodias as his wife (Matthew 6:17-18). Could he have been forgiven of his adulterous relationship while remaining in the unlawful marriage? Was John executed because he did not think of this angle, and consequently limited God’s forgiveness? God’s forgiveness is limited in accordance with the constraining conditions for forgiveness set forth by our gracious and holy God.