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A CLEAN SLATE

All of us have times when we regret the wrong things we have thought, said or done. We may analyze and rationalize, but we can't erase the feelings, the guilt. We need forgiveness, we need to have the slate wiped clean.

The Bible tells us God is holy, that He is totally pure, totally free, totally clean from any contamination of wrongdoing, of sin. The prophet Isaiah saw a vision of angels above the throne of God calling out, "Holy, Holy, Holy is the LORD of armies. the whole earth is full of His glory" (6:3).

On our own we are not holy and never can make ourselves holy. God tells us through the apostle Paul, "all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God" (Romans 3:23). So then, we are not acceptable to God. Paul goes on to tell us the only way we can have forgiveness and be holy is by God's "grace through the redemption which is in Christ Jesus" (verse 24).

The story is told of a Sunday school teacher trying to explain to six-year-olds what someone has to do in order to go to heaven. He approached it by asking them questions. "If I sold my house and car, had a big garage sale and gave all the money to the church, would that get me into heaven?" They all answered "No!" "If I cleaned the church, mowed the grass and kept everything neat and tidy, would that get me into heaven?" Again they all agreed, "No!" "If I was kind to animals, gave candy to all the children and loved my wife, would that get me into heaven?" They all shouted, "No!" "Well, then," he asked, "How *can* I get into heaven?" A boy in the back shouted, "You gotta be dead!" Whether the kids got the point or not, it was that none of us are, can be good enough on our own to have the slate wiped clean.

God has provided the way to have the slate wiped clean. In fact, He is the One who does it. Paul tells us that forgiveness and salvation is by God's grace through faith in Jesus, "not of yourselves", "not as a result of works" (Ephesians 2:8-10). Again, that "the wages of sin is death, but the gracious gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord" (Romans 6:23).



When God forgives, wipes the slate clean, He does that completely. He forgives all our sin, not just some of it. All our sin, past, present and future. God's word gives us some beautiful statements about this. Psalm 103 verse 12, "As far as the east is from the west, so far has He [God] removed our wrongdoings from us." In Isaiah chapter 43 verse 25, God says, "I, I alone, am the one who wipes out your wrongdoings for My own sake, and I will not remember your sins." He tells us through Jeremiah, "I will forgive their wrongdoing, and their sin I will no longer remember" (31:34). The prophet Micah wrote, "You [God] will cast all their sins into the depths of the sea" (7:19). Yes! "God *wipes the slate clean!*"

This leads to the question of how we should respond to God's offer of forgiveness. The starting place is to accept it. We cannot overcome our sinfulness on our own. We cannot bridge the great gap sin creates between ourselves and God. We have to accept God's free, gracious gift of His grace in Jesus Christ. As Jesus told us, recorded in the third chapter of John's gospel, "God so loved the world, that He gave His only Son, so that everyone who believes in Him will not perish, but have eternal life." If you have not done that, Jesus is calling you, waiting for you to do that. Do that now.

When we accept Jesus Christ and His salvation we begin a journey of walking with Jesus, walking in the light, in the truth. Yes, we still sin. As the apostle John tells us, we who are believers, "if we claim we have no sin, we are only fooling ourselves and not living in the truth" (1 John 1:6). While God holds us securely forever, sin affects our fellowship with Him. John continues with how to get a clean slate, "If we confess our sins to Him, He is faithful and just to forgive us and to cleanse us from all wickedness" (9).

You don't have to be bound by the guilty feelings, weighed down with wondering if God really has forgiven you, or will forgive you. Face and clear up anything with God that is outstanding. Then you can experience what king David did, "You [God] will make known to me the way of life; in Your presence is fullness of joy; in Your right hand there are pleasures forever" (Psalm 16:11). Yes, walk in the light of His love and truth with confidence because God has wiped the slate clean.

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