

“Many”

“Bigger is better!” “The more the merrier!” “If one is good, five must be great!” Such phrases express the concept that there are benefits to having more and more and more in life. The desire to acquire more stuff; the competitive drive to outdo those around you; the need for many options and choices—all attest to a common ideal that many is preferable to one.

What happens, though, when such a concept is placed into the lives of **sinners**. The lust of the flesh easily become insatiable, indulging in one form of sin upon another. Greed is never satisfied. The addictive behaviors discover that more and more is actually self-consuming and destructive. In fact, Ecclesiastes 6:7 says: *All man’s efforts are for his mouth, yet his appetite is never satisfied.* (NIV) In short order, sin breeds many more sins as people give *themselves over to sensuality so as to indulge in every kind of impurity, with a continual lust for more* (cf. Ephesians 4:19 NIV).

It is any wonder that people can be deceived into thinking they’ve done too many terrible things to be forgiven by God? And even hearing about forgiveness in the midst of so many sins is difficult. We have very selective hearing. We are acutely attuned to the words of

condemnation that remind us of our many sins and can hear the whispered accusations driving us away from, rather than to, the LORD. The many sins with their many voices seem to overpower the one voice which can silence them all.

That voice is the voice of Jesus. It is the voice which the woman who wet Jesus' feet with her tears in *her many sins* heard: *Your sins **are forgiven***. (cf. Luke 7:47-48) It is the voice which the paralyzed man heard when he was placed before Jesus for healing: *Take heart, My son, your sins **are forgiven***. (cf. Matthew 9:2) It is the voice which one of the thieves crucified next to Jesus heard as he confessed that he was *receiving the due reward of his deeds*, and asked Him to simply *remember* him when He would come into His kingdom. Jesus said, *Truly, I say to you, today **you will be with Me** in paradise*. (cf. Luke 24:41-43) Do you hear that voice?

Jesus' work is meant for many—the many sins of many people. It is interesting how the word “many” is used in the Scriptures to describe the extent of Jesus' atoning work. Let's look at a few examples:

- The prophet Isaiah, some 700 years before Jesus, prophesied many details of the crucifixion of Yahweh's suffering Servant, the Christ. In Isaiah 53:11-12 the LORD said that *by His knowledge shall the righteous One, His servant, make **many** to be accounted*

*righteous, and that He bore the sins of **many**.* It refers to the many people who would benefit from Christ's atoning work.

- Hebrews 9:28 says that *Christ, having been offered once to bear the sins of **many**, will appear a second time, not to deal with sin but to save those who are eagerly waiting for Him.* The many refers to *those who are eagerly waiting for Him* to come back on the Last Day and take them into the life of the world to come.
- Jesus said that *He came not to be served but to serve, and to give His life as a ransom for many* (cf. Matthew 20:28). His death was the perfect sacrificial payment to release you from being enslaved to your sin (cf. John 8:34). He still serves you the forgiveness of sins through . . .
- . . . His *blood of the covenant, which is poured out for **many** for the forgiveness of sins* (cf. Matthew 26:28). In the Lord's Supper Jesus still serves the many people who believe in His atoning work on the cross the forgiveness of their many sins. He serves them the forgiveness of sins there through His body and blood.
- After speaking a parable about people refusing the gracious invitation to a wedding celebration, Jesus made an interesting statement. He said in Matthew 22:14 → **Many** are called, but few are chosen. Here many refers to all the people for whom God accomplished salvation, that is, all mankind. The *few* refers to

those of the many who believe in God on His terms, that is, by repenting of their sins and trusting only in His atoning work accomplished by His Son, Jesus. You are chosen for eternal life only by faith in Jesus, *the way, and the truth, and the life* (cf. John 14:6).

No matter how many or great your sins, Jesus can silence the accusations of your guilt. He brings you out of the pit of darkness in sin into the light of His grace, forgiveness and love. He says: *I am the light of the world. Whoever follows Me will not walk in darkness, but will have the light of life.* (cf. John 8:12) The light of Jesus does not simply make you aware of your many sins with their toxicity in relationships so you can try to change your behaviors. That is the most that human counseling can do for you. Rather, the light of Jesus reveals that He has removed them far from you so you can chose to not let those sins control your life any longer!

This is why “many” is a wonderful facet of the diamond of forgiveness. Over and over again you get to hear repeated the words of God, Who tirelessly announces your forgiveness of your sins. You have His words, actually conveying the wealth of His sacrifice, which calms the furious guilt you so often hear in your heart. It’s called the Absolution. Through Christians God speaks the words, “I forgive you.” Those words spoken in Christ completely absolve you, that is, set you

free from the obligation or consequence of your sin before God (i.e. eternal damnation in hell).

This is why it is so important that you speak these words in the name of Christ Jesus to others **many times** and also that you seek them out in repentance and hear them **many times**. As they hit the ear, the Holy Spirit gives them root in your heart so that they produce fruit in your life. The words “I forgive you” spoken by spouses to each other can bring them to a new point in their relationship. The words “I forgive you” spoken by sibling to each other can absolve the broken relationships. The words “I forgive you” spoken by you to one another through the Absolution pronounced in Divine Service finds conflicts resolved in the conflict with your sins which Jesus encountered on the cross. You constantly look to *Jesus Christ Who is the same yesterday and today and forever* (cf. Hebrews 13:8).

Hearing and speaking these words many times over and over again is essential for Christian living. Why? Because your sins **are** many, but not too many that God’s forgiveness is unable to absolve them. Exodus 34:5-6 declares that Yahweh is *a God merciful and gracious, slow to anger, and abounding in steadfast love and faithfulness, keeping steadfast love for thousands, forgiving iniquity and transgression and sin*. That love is experienced in Jesus. Is your hearing is tuned to His voice as He says to you in your repentance:

*Your sins **are** forgiven* (cf. Luke 7:48)? Amen.

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