

*Set Free from  
Religious Concepts*

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*All Scripture quotations, unless otherwise noted, are from the King James Version. Italics for emphasis are ours.*

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## INTRODUCTION

I once read a letter written by a man who committed suicide in prison. He said that every night after the last radio in the cell block was turned off, the memory of his crimes would bring on stifling guilt to his heart.

As long as there was noise, he could survive. But in the quiet, condemnation filled his soul. "When it is silent in the prison, my sins visit me," he wrote and then he took his life.

I wept as I read the story. I wept because this man never found out that Jesus Christ would have been his friend forever. Jesus paid for all of his sins and washed them away with His blood.

This story represents an extreme example of the power of failure and defeat in some people's lives.

The thing that worries me—and the reason for this booklet—is that some Christians are held under the weight of their failures and defeats. Some churches and organizations teach about

the Finished Work of the Cross of Christ, but then they go on to practice something quite opposed to it. Believers who fail are placed under a form of probation and are often restricted in the ways they can serve God.

These pages will reveal that even though people fail, the love of God never fails. My prayer is that these truths will set you free from concepts formed by men.

*Chapter One*  
**GOD USES THE USELESS**

“What shall we say then? Shall we continue in sin, that grace may abound?

“God forbid. How shall we, that are dead to sin, live any longer therein?” (Romans 6:1-2).

“For sin shall not have dominion over you: for ye are not under the law, but under grace.

“What then? shall we sin, because we are not under the law, but under grace? God forbid” (Romans 6:14-15).

I am weary with much of the way people represent Jesus Christ today on the earth. In Luke 15:2, the Pharisees said that Jesus “receiveth sinners, and eateth with them.” That is true. He did do that. They called Him gluttonous and maligned Him as a “friend of publicans and sinners” and a “winebibber.”

What these characterizations miss is the fact that while Jesus was a friend of sinners, He was also separate from them (Hebrews 7:26). He

knew no sin (2 Corinthians 5:21), yet He commended His love toward us “in that while we were yet sinners, He died for us” (Romans 5:8).

The projection and evaluation that Jesus Christ somehow excuses sin is wrong. He hated sin, so much so that He gave His life for us to save us from our sins. His death took care of the sin issue once and for all.

Therefore, the sin issue is settled between the Savior and those He has saved. This is what I want to focus on.

### *Remade by the Master Potter*

“And the vessel that he made of clay was marred in the hand of the potter: so he made it again another vessel, as seemed good to the potter to make it.

“Then the word of the LORD came to me, saying,

“O house of Israel, cannot I do with you as this potter? saith the LORD. Behold, as the clay is in the potter’s hand, so are ye in mine hand, O house of Israel” (Jeremiah 18:4-6).

There is a feeling among some Christians, especially certain leaders in various denominations, that those who have sinned are second-rate citizens in the plan of God. These leaders

actually think that because they have not sinned in a certain way, they are better than someone who has.

God loves righteousness and hates iniquity (Psalm 45:7). God never planned for a person to sin just so that He could bless him (see Psalm 5:4). Yet, in a mystical way, by His omniscience, omnipotence, and omnipresence, God will take every single thing that happens, and He will work it together for good for the Christian who fails (Romans 8:28). The Lord who is all knowing, all powerful, and everywhere present will make something good out of a bad situation yet without violating His justice.

This is an amazing truth.

### *Jesus Doesn't Throw People Away*

“Behold my servant, whom I uphold; mine elect, in whom my soul delighteth; I have put my spirit upon him: he shall bring forth judgment to the Gentiles.

“He shall not cry, nor lift up, nor cause his voice to be heard in the street.

“A bruised reed shall he not break, and the smoking flax shall he not quench: he shall bring forth judgment unto truth.

“He shall not fail nor be discouraged, till he

have set judgment in the earth: and the isles shall wait for his law" (Isaiah 42:1-4).

By the river Jordan, all kinds of reeds grow. In the past, shepherd boys would take reeds, poke holes in them, and create pipes. They would play notes and the sheep obeyed the sounds of the music. If a reed was bent or bruised, the shepherd would throw it away.

During those days, people would use a piece of flax placed in a bowl of oil to provide light in the house. Sometimes the oil would run dry, and the smoking flax would create an unpleasant odor and fill the house with thick smoke.

These two illustrations indicate that Jesus does not get discouraged with people's lives, and He never wants to throw them away. Jesus does not fail people who seemingly have failed beyond repair.

Christ paid for everyone's sins, and He was judged by God the Father. Instead of judging us, God the Father judged the Son for our sins. God hates sin, and He cannot look upon it, but He died for sinners. Every one of our sins was placed upon the Lord Jesus.

We will not take up that bruised reed and use it again.

But Jesus can.

We will not use that smoking flax.

But Jesus will.

We might say, "You can never be used as you were because of what you have done."

Is that something Jesus would say? No! Some preachers may say this, but Jesus never will.

The Pharisees hated Jesus because He always hung around sinners. But Jesus wasn't excusing their sins. No, He wanted to forgive them and make them brand-new.

When a Christian fails, Jesus doesn't say, "You are a backslider, therefore you will never be the same again. You cannot do the things you used to do."

You cannot find this in the Bible, because that does not represent the character of God.

*Chapter Two*

## HOW GOD MAKES A CHRISTIAN GREAT

“The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he hath anointed me to preach the gospel to the poor; he hath sent me to heal the brokenhearted, to preach deliverance to the captives, and recovering of sight to the blind, to set at liberty them that are bruised,

“To preach the acceptable year of the Lord” (Luke 4:18-19).

In 2 Samuel 11 and 12, we find the story of David’s terrible sin with Bathsheba. The first child born to them died. But then came another child. “We will call him Solomon,” David said. But God said, “Solomon is a good name, but I want you to call him Jedidiah.” That was a much better name—Jedidiah means “most beloved of God.”

Imagine what must have been going through David’s mind. “I do not comprehend

this. Lord, do You mean You are going to make this child king, even after my sin with Bathsheba and Uriah, her husband? You want this child to be known as most beloved of God?"

Everything that went on in David's life was the Father's business. It was between David and the Lord.

The Lord Jesus Christ wants to be known as a friend of sinners, not a friend of religion. There are a lot of religious folks out there, and I know a few of them. They preach a message they cannot live up to. They legislate righteousness in the flesh, and they cannot understand the principle of the bruised reed and the smoking flax.

Please do not misunderstand this. We have established the fact that God hates sin. Still, the people who have failed the most are the ones who have received forgiveness and have accepted the grace of God for their lives. These are the greatest Christians today.

We are not to go out and sin just so we can be redeemed and be called "great." That would be presumptuous, and that is the great transgression (Psalm 19:13). That is never in God's plan.

What is in God's plan, however, is mercy.

He deals with us according to mercy (Psalm

119:124). His mercy satisfies us (Psalm 90:14). With mercy He will lead us (Isaiah 49:10). He desires mercy to be at work in our lives (Hosea 10:12). Mercy rejoices against judgment (James 2:13). Mercy follows us all the days of our lives (Psalm 23:6). And twenty-six times in Psalm 136, the psalmist wrote that His mercy endures forever.

The thing that breaks a sinner's heart is when he finally understands that when he is down, God is with him.

### *Commit to Restoration*

"Rejoice not against me, O mine enemy: when I fall, I shall arise; when I sit in darkness, the LORD shall be a light unto me" (Micah 7:8).

"Let your conversation be without covetousness; and be content with such things as ye have: for he hath said, I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee" (Hebrews 13:5).

Several years ago, a woman came to my office and said that she was a lesbian. She cried and cried because she could not get herself out of her sin.

I made a commitment to pray with her morning, noon, and night for a week. She often called me on the phone and we would pray for

her deliverance. "Thank God that you are able to be honest with me," I told her, "because now you are serious about deliverance." Within a week, she was brand-new. Today, she is a precious woman of God, serving on the mission field with her husband and family.

What happened? She found that Jesus was the friend of sinners. Those old temptations do not come back to her. She is madly in love with Jesus and madly in love with her husband.

### *How We Can Help God*

Another woman found out that her husband was having an affair. She moved into a separate bedroom and filed for divorce. God woke her up at the three o'clock in the morning and spoke to her heart, "I am restoring your husband."

She didn't like that at first. "You can restore him all you want, but I am not going to take him back."

"Really?" God whispered to her. "I thought you might like to help Me. I am going to restore him with you or without you. I just thought you might like to help."

That last part really got to her. Oh, did it get to her! She fell to her knees and received the power of the Holy Spirit for forgiveness. She

went right to her husband, woke him up, and said, "I am joining God in His plan to restore our marriage."

Today, this couple is on the mission field. He is a pastor of a great church, all because his wife joined God in the restoration business.

"For I will restore health unto thee, and I will heal thee of thy wounds, saith the LORD; because they called thee an Outcast, saying, This is Zion, whom no man seeketh after" (Jeremiah 30:17).

### *Chapter Three*

## GOD'S RESTORATION BUSINESS

"But to him that worketh not, but believeth on him that justifieth the ungodly, his faith is counted for righteousness

"Even as David also describeth the blessedness of the man, unto whom God imputeth righteousness without works,

"Saying, Blessed are they whose iniquities are forgiven, and whose sins are covered.

"Blessed is the man to whom the Lord will not impute sin" (Romans 4:5-8).

Here is a pastor who fails and then admits that he had failed. He did not have to admit his sin, but he did, and he was kicked out of his church. "You can come back and maybe we will let you drive the Sunday school bus," the leaders told him. That was wonderful, right?

No. That is *wrong*. That is not forgiveness.

God makes a Christian into a brand-new vessel just as much as He does when a person

first gets saved. A Christian who fails doesn't have a record.

Read over and ponder Romans 4:5-8.

A Christian who fails doesn't have a record that follows him after his failure. God is after men and women who will receive a gift of repentance and restoration. He desires that I would let His love flow through me, so I can have the same love He has for the one who has failed. He wants me to join with Him in the process of restoration—quietly, meekly, and graciously (Galatians 6:1).

### *Forgiven Much, Loving Much*

"And he turned to the woman, and said unto Simon, Seest thou this woman? I entered into thine house, thou gavest me no water for my feet: but she hath washed my feet with tears, and wiped them with the hairs of her head.

"Thou gavest me no kiss: but this woman since the time I came in hath not ceased to kiss my feet.

"My head with oil thou didst not anoint: but this woman hath anointed my feet with ointment.

"Wherefore I say unto thee, Her sins, which are many, are forgiven; for she loved much: but

to whom little is forgiven, the same loveth little” (Luke 7:44-47).

Oh, when we get to heaven, how I want to see this story replayed.

Simon the Pharisee invited Jesus to dinner. A prostitute came in crying and fell at Jesus’ feet. She washed His feet with her tears, dried them with her hair, and anointed them with oil.

Simon did not understand the love of God toward the sinner, and he began to judge Jesus for letting a sinner touch Him. The end of the story is that Jesus declared, “She loves much because she has been forgiven much.”

Those who have been forgiven much, love much. Oh, how they love Jesus!

There are many churches where godly men who have served God faithfully but who have been divorced are not allowed to serve as pastors. We teach what the Bible says—that married people ought to stay married (1 Corinthians 7:10-11). We want troubled marriages to make it, by the mercy and grace of God. Each week, we have a class on relationships, teaching people how to make them work and how to keep their commitments.

But please understand that a divorcee is not a second-rate citizen in the Kingdom of God. He

or she is just as much a new creature as anyone else. The old things in their lives have passed away. People who judge them slander with gossip against the divine supernatural forgiveness of the love of God.

### *Failure Is Never Final*

“Now when Paul and his company loosed from Paphos, they came to Perga in Pamphylia: and John departing from them returned to Jerusalem” (Acts 13:13).

“And Barnabas determined to take with them John, whose surname was Mark.

“But Paul thought not good to take him with them, who departed from them from Pamphylia, and went not with them to the work.

“And the contention was so sharp between them, that they departed asunder one from the other: and so Barnabas took Mark, and sailed unto Cyprus” (Acts 15:37-39).

John Mark was a young man related to Barnabas. He started off traveling with the apostle Paul, writing things down and copying letters for the group. He could not handle the pressure, so he left. Paul was displeased with Barnabus' decision to take John Mark with him, so much that there was an argument between Paul and

Barnabas.

Barnabas, whose name means comforter, wanted restoration for Mark, but Paul would not restore him at that time. This opened the door for Mark to spend time with Peter.

Barnabas suggested that Mark go see Peter. *A Dictionary of the Bible*, by Hastings, says that Mark was a companion to Peter toward the end of the apostle's life and he wrote the Gospel of Mark to preserve his master's teaching.

Think of some of the conversations Peter and Mark could have had.

"Mark, I cursed and denied Jesus and kept right on disbelieving," Peter may have said. "Still, the Lord restored me to preaching (John 21:15). I preached the first sermon at Pentecost (see Acts 2:14). Yes, I did curse him, and I wept bitterly. Still, He brought me back, restored me, and used me. Young man, you are going to be mightily used for God. Take careful notes from me as we minister together."

The Gospel of Mark was written by the same young man that Paul did not want around. He thought that he could not trust Mark, but God would change Paul's heart. In 2 Timothy, Paul was in jail and facing his execution. In this difficult time, Paul asked for John Mark to come and

comfort him (2 Timothy 4:11).

John Mark was mightily used of God, because God did not hold his failure against him.

### *Just Come unto Jesus*

“Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest.

“Take my yoke upon you, and learn of me; for I am meek and lowly in heart: and ye shall find rest unto your souls.

“For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light” (Matthew 11:28-30).

“Labor” speaks of someone who has failed repeatedly. “Heavy laden” refers to people who been burdened because of the guilt trips that others have piled upon them.

None of that matters to Jesus. He is in the business of taking you just as you are. Yoke up with Him and find rest. Take His yoke upon you. Learn of Him. His burden is light and His yoke is easy.

Jesus is in the business of making you something you have never been. It is not His business to remember the things you have done.

“I have forgiven and I have forgotten,” Jesus says to us. “On the Cross, with my blood, I paid for what you did, and I have done away with it

so that it never comes back.”

The truth is that Jesus Christ takes a broken and bruised reed and a smoking flax that appears to be useless for anything, and He restores them both. “I am in the business of blessing you and using you because I have forgiven you forever.” This is Jesus’ word to us. “Just come to me. Come on! Come to Me.”

## CONCLUSION

Let me ask you a question: Does this type of message make you want to sin? You will fall, but it is not this message that will make you fall. This message makes you want to follow after God and to rest in His process of making you grow.

I am tired of hearing about churches that relegate people to second-rate status when they have failed. Oh, this kind of activity makes me so mad. These are citizens of heaven; people bought and paid for by the blood of Jesus Christ—my Savior and your Savior. God, however, will see to it that redeemed men and women cannot be made less than they are.

Jesus is the friend of publicans and sinners; but He is not the friend to the self-righteous Pharisees.

Worship the Savior who forgives, forgets, restores, and renews, again and again. Jesus Christ is our Head, and He loves it when we

Speak the truth about who He is and how He loves. Love Him with all of your heart, and thank God that this is the message that has changed lives forever, everyday, all over the world.