

When we really, really MESS UP (God's Grace and Favor series)



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We all mess up. We all sin from time to time. But is there redemption for those who really badly mess up or whose life is in a total tailspin? Will they be accepted back to fellowship? Will God ever be able to use them if their sin is of the worst possible kinds?

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Do you all remember the 1974 song “Tie a Yellow Ribbon ‘round the old oak tree” in 1974 by Tony Orlando? This guy in the song has really messed up; has just gotten out of jail – but now he’s wondering if his wife will accept him back home or will his “loved ones” reject him forever now? He’s in a bus, going home. He asks his wife to put out a yellow ribbon if she still can accept him. He wonders if she still loves him after how badly he has messed his life up – and definitely hers too. Or is there unmerited grace and favor even for someone who has been as bad as he has been? He looks to his wife as proof he still has a future.



<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Vie94KQcRXY> Let's listen. It's just a couple minutes. I can't listen to this song without tears welling up in my eyes. I've felt rejection, and I understand the feelings in the song so well. Jesus certainly knew rejection. Maybe you've had rejection too –from your wife, husband, dad or mom, your children, or fellow believers – your brothers and sisters in the church. In the song he says, *“I'm really still in prison and my wife -- she holds the key; a simple yellow ribbon is what I need to set me free.”*

(Comment: We know God holds the key to us being able to go on, but God is in his family. So how we react to one another when we mess up really badly – helps us either heal or stay wounded. The family of God plays such an instrumental role. So yes, his wife – she “holds the key” when we look at it that way.)

God doesn't just call those who are basically OK, nice people, who never seem to get into any trouble, who mostly live a moral and good life. The fact is, we've all been sinners. But it's easy to recognize you've sinned, BUT not as bad as some others you know. And you know some who are total “scum of the earth”. People who have really done the worst of sins and messed up their lives big time! You don't see yourself having been *that* bad, ever!

Yes, God is calling people like you, in spite of the self-righteousness and superiority feelings you may have – *as well as people who have really badly messed up.* (And frankly, we all – compared to God's perfect holiness – have really messed up.) Today I'm focusing on those who have really messed up and wondering if they can have any future.

I've given a couple sermons on God's favor or grace recently. We all know what scripture says – that God's grace or unmerited favor are a gift from God to us, including *forgiveness for any and every sin we confess and repent of.* It includes reconciliation with God and the gift of salvation and eternal life to all who accept His gracious offer.

This teaching is as much for those who have really messed up – as it is for God's spirit filled children who, for the most part, live a good and moral life.

Welcome to Light on the Rock. I'm Philip Shields, a formerly broken man, now a child of God, loved by Him, and hopefully by some believers or spirit-led children of God as well. Remember to tell others about our website if you find our messages helpful. And remember to check out the blogs and Video sermons as well.

Today we talk about – “but what about when you or I really, really mess up? Is God really still there for me? And—will His CHILDREN – true believers – LET me come back?” I mean like, you're in jail. Or just got out of jail. Or maybe not jail, but you've ruined your marriage, maybe you're a minister who's blown it. Your life is gone – or so it seems – because of adultery, for example. Or something else. Now what?

I think just about all of us are broken people who need to experience not just God's forgiveness, and grace and favor, but to experience God's favor through other BELIEVERS believing in God's grace in you.

We see God through his family of converted, spirit-filled believers – who love and accept one another. *Broken people can heal more completely, joyfully, and BELIEVE it --when we experience profound loving acceptance from our brothers and sisters in Christ.* Since we're all “in Christ” – when you get a welcome-back HUG from a brother or sister after you've messed up – it's like Messiah himself hugging you. If you don't accept and love repentant sinners back, it makes it so much harder for those to really believe GOD has forgiven them and happy to have them back.

We're just before Passover and I thought this would be a good sermon especially for those who have messed up their lives big time – and for those of you who know people who have.

Are God's children supporting one another and being gracious, coming together as the one family we really should be? Are we demonstrating **John 13:34-35** – by THIS shall all people know YOU are my disciples BECAUSE of your profound visible LOVE you have for one another just as I (Jesus) have loved you?

John 13:34-35

“A new commandment I give to you, that you **love one another; as I have loved you**, that you also love one another. 35 By this all will know that you are My disciples, if you have love for one another.”

But God's children can't even worship together as one body! What's wrong with us?

We'll need all that favor for one another much more as times get rougher – so we children of God have to finally come together, loving one another and welcoming one another.

Let's summarize Jesus' words another way: “By this shall all men know you are my disciples, for your incredible LOVE you have for each other, in just the same way I love you and died for each of you. That's the standard: the way I have loved you. And since we all mess up sometimes, you still love one another, realizing how much you yourself have been forgiven. Guys, HEY – I died for all of you. None of you is better than anyone else as you all needed me to DIE viciously for you!”

So this sermon is dedicated to those of us who've really messed up in our lives – or could, in the months and years ahead. Is God's gracious favor bubbling and overflowing in his children and so you'll KNOW God's love is certain, through THEM ... or will you have to look harder? Do you KNOW your God, your Father and Savior, does not love you conditionally? He may have to spank – and YOU might feel unloved – but it's to straighten you out so He can complete what He's started in you.

Here's an example:

When the Kingdom of Judah's sins rose to new record heights, God sent the Jews into captivity for 70 years to wake them up! To turn them back to the right path. He let the Babylonians destroy the temple they had dedicated to Him in the days of Solomon. **Now they were being sent away as slaves.** That's a low point, right? But even in the midst of all that, here's what our Great God said to the Jews (and remember these are written for our example; to teach US something).

You'd think his words would be furiously angry words, but here's what Jeremiah told the Jews God had told him to say... and as we read it, think of the Almighty -- your loving Abba/Father – saying these words to **YOU, yes, even after YOU'VE really messed up and feel you have no future or hope. Or maybe you feel you can't seem to overcome** some bad stuff in your life and feel God is down on you.

But look how God speaks to the Jews he was sending into captivity for their filthy sins – and apply it to yourself:

Jeremiah 29:10-14

“For thus says YHVH: After seventy years are completed at Babylon, I will visit you and **perform My good word toward you** and cause you to return to this place.

11 **“For I know the thoughts that I think toward you, says YHVH, thoughts of peace and not of evil, *to give you a future and a hope.*** 12 Then you will call upon Me and go and pray to Me, and I will listen to you.
 13 *You will seek Me and find Me, when you search for Me with all your heart.*

14 *“I will be found by you, says YHVH, and I will bring you back from your captivity; I will gather you from all the nations and from all the places where I have driven you, says YHVH, and I will bring you to the place from which I cause you to be carried away captive.”*

I’m giving this sermon because I want to nail down in your mind that **as we come to Passover in a couple months or so**, that you know that you know, you are accepted by God when you repent and seek him, no matter what you’ve been or what you’ve done. You’re loved by God. God wants to bestow his FAVOR on you. *And hopefully God’s other children love you too, in spite of you and your mess ups.*

Of course my favorite “Messing up story” and still showing God’s incredible love – the story of the **prodigal son**, and **how this was the day when GOD (the Father in the story) RAN out, no doubt with tears of JOY pouring down his face**, to hug and welcome his sinful son, now repentant, back home. No waiting period but right now. Immediately. And they all celebrated this wretched son who had come to his senses. This was the day GOD the FATHER RAN TO YOU to affirm his LOVE for YOU. Yellow ribbons galore. A big party. A feast. Redemption. Restitution. Acceptance. LOVE affirmed. Luke 15

But it’s SO bad too many of us would rather act like the older brother who did not want him back in their fellowship or want him in our home anymore. This older brother thought the younger brother had insulted, brought SHAME and dishonor on to the family.

So let’s review this topic of “When we really mess up”.

Must not take God’s Grace Lightly

Let me continue by stating that our Father wants us to take his Way, his GIFTS and his love very, very seriously. Though he gives us his Holy Spirit as an “earnest” or guarantee of his promises, *this guarantee excludes those who do not ever really repent but continue to live and practice the old way of unrighteousness as their way of life and practice (Gal. 5:19-21; 1 Cor. 6:9-11 and so many more).*

1 Corinthians 6:9-11

“Do you not know that the unrighteous will not inherit the kingdom of God?

Do not be deceived. Neither fornicators, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor homosexuals, nor sodomites, nor thieves, nor covetous, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor extortioners will inherit the kingdom of God.

11 And such WERE some of you. But you were washed, but you were sanctified, but you were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus and by the Spirit of our God.”

So I trust NOBODY watching my videos on God’s Saving Grace and living in the JOY of his grace, ever conclude I’m teaching “once saved, always saved.” If you have God’s Holy Spirit and have changed or are changing your way of life and *have* deeply

repented of all your sins – and continue to repent whenever you stumble in sin as Paul did (Romans 7) -- and turned your life around in Christ and by Christ, then you ARE assured eternal life.

But don't tell me or anyone, or tell God, that you've repented and turned to him if you still, as your common practice, live common-law, or get drunk regularly, or flirt or commit adultery seemingly "all the time" or continue to spread your hateful gossip that destroys others' reputation and attempts to "come back" to fellowship. Gossip so divides us.

Or if you continue to hate someone or continue to steal or shoplift or covet what is not yours all the time, as your way of LIFE, then you won't be in God's kingdom. Or - if when tempted – you still DON'T FIGHT BACK VICIOUSLY against sin and temptation but give in all too easily, every time, as your practice....then you're in trouble. At the very least, you may be Laodicean (**Rev. 3**) and will have to go through the purification by fire to turn you back zealously to God.

Let's attack the gates of hell, and the gates won't prevail (**Matthew 16:18**). Let's attack Satan, fight him, resist him. If we're not resisting sin, temptation, sin and Satan, maybe our practice of righteousness is lacking. God will complete what he's started in you - - but you or I may be seen as being in the kingdom "but as through fire" (**1 Corinthians 3:11-15**).

And even then, many times we still fail. But when we do sin now, we can honestly say, "I HATED it while I was doing that sin". ("That which I HATE, I do..." Paul said.) If we're still finding we enjoy sinning, we may go back to remedial classes on true repentance.

PROOF we're being saved by God reveals itself as a changed and changing life. Our lives are looking more like Christ's life. Scripture calls it becoming more and more in the image of Jesus Christ. I do not teach a loosey-goosey grace! Otherwise, we're lying to claim we know Him but don't walk as he walked, obediently. Please read **1 John 2:3-6**.

I acknowledge no one is perfect – yet – at least based on our own actions. And we all still stumble in sin, including me. We must confess those sins and repent of them quickly. But now, as a begotten child of God with his Holy Spirit, these sins we fall into after conversion do not leave us **condemned by GOD** anymore, as I've explained in the previous sermons. We're not **cut off from God** again. But some of God's children may still condemn you – to THEIR shame. We **don't come under the permanent 2nd death penalty** anymore. We **don't lose God's grace** covering us now. I covered all that and much more in the videos about God's saving Grace (part 1) and living the JOY of God's favor/grace.

ALL that sin was paid for by Jesus our Messiah/Savior.

But let's kick it up a notch now.

DO REALLY BIG SINS DISQUALIFY YOU from being used by God?

Now let's talk about when a spirit-led person who gets lax spiritually and really, really sins big time. (Could this be you and I?). This is a leader in the congregation. They've really messed up. They've committed adultery. Or killed someone after committing adultery. And at first, they've covered it all up and have confessed these monstrous sins to no one.

Surely this man is disqualified forever from ever teaching spiritual lessons ever again, right? Surely, he can't preach, write or lead, you might think! Surely! Or... does God have something else in mind? So has someone like that really ruined his entire life, his future and whatever God was going to use him for – all gone now?

Would you want someone like him attending church with you? Would you sit by him, or be happy to wash his feet? Would you reaffirm your confidence in God's grace even for someone as bad as he is by visiting with him in his home or inviting him to yours? Do you realize God's grace is **favor** – and includes the power of Christ living in us to utterly and dramatically make us a NEW CREATION!!?? In SPITE of anything in our past?

And this must be true also for anyone who has really, really messed up. I mean murderers, rapists, terrorists, prostitutes... all kinds of the most serious sins. Whether serious sin or just everyday sin – they all require the death of the sinless Son of God. So how much better is any one compared to the most serious sinners? The same penalty is required – death of Jesus Christ. So let's quit thinking we aren't as bad as some others when we come to Christ.

Remember, we just read **1 Cor. 6:9-11** – “such **WERE** some of you. But you were WASHED...SANCTIFIED, justified”.

People who hear the gossip might talk about how surely a certain person “**has fallen from grace**” or is “a **disgraced leader or minister**”. That's the word we use – “disgraced”. Unforgivable. He has committed these “unspeakable acts” and he surely must be “beyond redemption.” “Why, that's simply unforgivable”, you hear some say about this horrendous sin or others' sins. You've heard the gossip and gutter talk of people speaking evil of others like this. Maybe you've been a part of the gutter talk. You were a part of it if you listened. That must stop. We children of God should stop speaking about someone being “unforgivable” or “disgraced”.

Some of you may feel like that person's a “goner” – nothing and no one can help him now. But that's so ungodly thinking and not in scripture. Remember even the terrible sinner of **1 Cor. 5 came back in 2 Cor. 2** with Paul telling the congregation to show their LOVE for him. Don't leave him with too much sorrow...

Some of you may have recognized I was talking earlier about **King David** – the leader, who stole another man's wife while her husband was away defending his country. David got her pregnant, then brought her husband back to spend some time with her, so it could look like it was his baby, and that the baby had arrived a bit early, that's all. But the man refused the comforts of home, did not see his wife – and David had that man carry back a letter to JOAB, the Chief of Staff to plan a way to have him killed in battle.

Let me get to the point: Was David disgraced forever because of that? Oh, we still read about it all. God said the one matter that was truly so bad was “the matter of Uriah” (**1 Kings 15:5**). The sin with Bathsheba was uncontrolled temptation. The sin of murdering Uriah was premeditated. Much worse in God's eyes.

But did that sin mean God no longer will have David rule over all Israel in the kingdom? No – David WILL rule over Israel, under Christ. **Do you still read his Psalms?** Yes, of course even though he did such dastardly sins. God didn't scrap all the psalms or David's inspired teachings. We still highly regard David. Now apply that same standard to regular people today who have really messed up in sin.

I hope those of you who have really messed up – are listening. If you're in JAIL – literally or the jail of your mind -- LISTEN! If you've messed up, LISTEN. It's not over for you yet.

But some of you, if a leading man or minister did anything like David – minus any killing even – you think somehow God might let him be in the Kingdom of God as a spirit-born child of God, but you don't want him back in your church fellowship today. But David – OH, he's OK as a prophet, king, writer of psalms. That's not being consistent.

Let's kick it up a notch: Not only did God forgive David, but what else did God do, almost incredibly? DO you know where I'm going with this? God had a plan for David and Bathsheba apparently. Their horrific sin did not derail God's plan!

And to all of you who've messed up – God has a plan for each of you, if you will heed his call, repent and accept his gracious love. It matters not at all if you prior to accepting the gift of God, if you had been a prostitute, sex worker, terrorist, drug dealer, rapist – or any such thing. Where sin abounded, grace abounded much more (**Romans 5:20**).

God's got a plan for each of us. He is NOT ashamed to call you "Brother" or "Sister" – in spite of his perfection and your miserable mess-up! Jesus was friend of sinners, remember! And **everyone** on earth – really – were sinners. And you brethren, please don't be ashamed of brothers and sisters who repent and want fellowship and acceptance. Otherwise, YOU become the problem! Christ is not ashamed of any repentant sinner!! You should not be either.

Hebrews 2:11

"For both He who sanctifies and those who are being sanctified **are all of one**, for which reason He is not ashamed to call them brethren",

God CHOSE THAT UNION between David and Bathsheba to be the lineage through which Jesus Christ would be born, as a SON OF David/Bathsheba!! Our very SAVIOR comes from that line. Yes, THAT lineage of a man and wife who totally messed up.

The LESSON from that is for you and all of us. No matter how BADLY it seems we've messed up, God has a way of taking your heart shattered in a million pieces because you've been so HURT by what your spouse did, or someone else did – but God can give you a new heart.

In fact, it is THROUGH the anguish we go through with tests, trials and even SINS we repent of – that we learn huge lessons, and we GROW, and MATURE, and are being perfected. So many grow so powerfully after such horrible sins.

SO – no matter how bad our sin was, the blood of our Savior Yeshua/Jesus covers and washes away ALL sin. ALL sin. ALL SIN (1 John 1:7-9) – and continues to cleanse us.

So no matter how you feel now, maybe you feel completely a loser, in Christ you can be the victor again. *IN Jesus you can rise up from the ashes of defeat and have BEAUTY again.*

Look at Jesus' first sermon in a synagogue in Nazareth. He quoted from Isaiah 61. It was so encouraging. It was all about God bringing broken and hurting people back! That includes you and includes me. (**Luke 4:16-22**—account of Yeshua reading this in the synagogue, although in Luke's account, he stopped reading after Isa 61:1)

Isaiah 61:1-3

"The Spirit of the Lord God is upon Me,
Because the Lord has anointed Me

To preach good tidings to the poor;

He has sent Me to heal the brokenhearted,

To proclaim liberty to the captives,

And the opening of the prison to those who are bound;

2 To proclaim the acceptable year of the Lord,

And the day of vengeance of our God;

To comfort all who mourn,

3 To console those who mourn in Zion,

To give them beauty for ashes,

The oil of joy for mourning,

The garment of praise for the spirit of heaviness;

That they may be called *trees of righteousness.*

The planting of the Lord, that HE may be glorified."

So do you see, no matter what – God has a plan for you. Can God use you still?

Is there any hope for you? Have you ruined it for your entire life and eternity now because your sins are simply beyond the pale? CAN God have you in his family? I tell you – yes, yes, yes. CAN God still have a plan ... for YOU? Amen, amen and amen. Or is Jesus Christ so ashamed of you that he can't possibly call you his "brother"? No, no, no.

A lot of the answer depends on whether you believe in God's love or not and whether or not you can get back up and obey God's lead now, going forward.

God has a way of turning things around mightily to his glory – and redeeming the disgraced (a term PEOPLE use, but not God) and making them pillars and champions of Faith! He has a guaranteed commitment to you! So listen to Him. And hear the 2 sermons on God's grace/favor I recently gave.

First, God chooses the nobodies, the weak of the world, so we can't boast.

David was a middle-teen almost-forgotten shepherd from a nobody family in a dinky village called Bethlehem. He became the king of Israel, whom God loved so much because David was "a man after God's own heart" – and brought Jesus through THAT lineage!

Moses was a felon on the run for 40 years when God called him, revealed to Moses his name as Moses did not know this one true living God. Look how HE ended up!

Peter vehemently denied his Savior three times after assuring Him that he would never leave Him or deny Him. But Peter was among the first of those Yeshua met with personally. We don't have a record of what was said, but it must have been heart-warming. (**1 Corinthians 15:1-5**). **What was it like?**

Something about Hebrews 11 folks, the great pillars of faith in the Bible: we don't read at ALL, in that summary, of all their sins. Did you realize that? God just enumerates for us how they end up! Pillars of FAITH awaiting a great reward!

IN Hebrews 11, for example: we read of **Abraham's great faith** – but we're not told in Hebrews 11 of his total faithlessness with Sarah and how he gave up his wife to be part of a king's harem, out of fear for his own life. She was so beautiful Abraham believed they'd kill him to kidnap her, so they both agreed to say she was in fact his sister. And TWICE, in his lack of faith, he gave her up!

GENESIS 12:13-20 – with Pharaoh in Egypt

Again, in **Genesis 20** – with Abimelech. Sarah was in on it – called Abraham her brother. But my point is: we don't read of any of this in the summary of how they ended up.

So God sees HOW WE END UP. That's what counts. We will be judged by the way our lives are being lived at the end of our lives. I want you read Ezekiel 18:21-32. So you – whoever you are, answer God's high calling, his special invitation to be with God on the heavenly Sea of Crystal or Glass someday and be welcomed into his wonderful family. Answer God! He may be goading you, even in this sermon.

So are you a woman God is goading to repentance, but you think your position as a sex worker or exotic dancer or harlot – ruins your future forever? Think again. God can forgive ALL sin when you turn in repentance to him, and GOD has a plan for you too.

So no matter how low you've fallen in sin, God still has a plan for you. Your Father wants you, regardless of your past. He's not willing that ANY should perish.

2 Peter 3:9 NIV

"The Lord is not slow in keeping his promise, as some understand slowness. *He is patient with you, not wanting ANYONE to perish, but everyone to come to repentance.*"

Some will perish. Those will be the ones who won't come to repentance.

THAT'S the God I serve. That's the Jesus I have as Savior. God wants you in the family!

In spite of my past sins, I know confidently I have been forgiven and I am confident I will be in God's kingdom (2 Timothy 4:8) because God will finish what he started in us (Philippians 1:6). No matter what you've been or done, will you join me and BE in God's kingdom by total surrender to Jesus Christ as your Lord and Master? It's how you end up that counts. It starts by repentance and accepting Jesus as your Savior and turning from your sinful way. God wants you home.

I get emotional over this because The Prodigal son story is my story. It's really your story too, and I hope you come to see that. And please – I pray NONE of you hearing this will be like the older son refusing to celebrate the repentance and return of his younger brother.

Once you repent and are forgiven and accept Jesus as your Savior – out loud and in your new life – you are no longer condemned by God (**Romans 8:1; John 3:17-18; 3:36**). NO matter what you've BEEN or what you've done before. Don't give up on God. Don't reject the offer of reconciliation and favor. If you don't accept his offer, you remain in his wrath. Don't do that. Come to your God and Savior. Come home. He is looking for you to respond.

BROTHERS and sisters in God's Household: when you see someone so bad as a drop-down DRUNK or sex worker or other "undesirables" come to God and start attending with you – YOU be the face of Jesus Christ to them. **YOU speak life and hope** to them, and ACCEPTANCE – and then let's all, together, get back into the fray against sin and Satan! Join us in attacking the gates of HELL itself, and Satan and his hell stand no chance.

COME to Jesus, whoever you are listening to this message. Come to start to know your heavenly father. He has a hope, a plan and a wonderful future for you with Him. I'd like to see you there. I'll be there. Please join me. Let's celebrate your victory in Christ – together – along with lots of other new brothers and sisters in Christ that you'll have. OK?

Closing prayer.