

# NOT GUILTY!

✠ ROMANS 8:1-2 ✠

PASTOR JEFF SCHREVE



"THERE IS THEREFORE NOW NO  
CONDEMNATION FOR THOSE WHO ARE IN  
CHRIST JESUS." - ROMANS 8:1

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**Romans 8:1-2**

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*From His Heart Ministries*

*Unless otherwise specified, all Scripture quotations are from the  
New American Standard Version of the Bible.*



## **Our Mission: To Reach the World**

*From His Heart Ministries* is the broadcast ministry of Pastor Jeff Schreve. We began in 2005 with the mission to share hope from the loving heart of God. We believe that no matter how badly you may have messed up in life, God still loves you and still has a wonderful plan for your life. Our goal is to proclaim the Good News of Jesus with biblical preaching, practical teaching and encouragement for everyday living. Our prayer is that we will help people come to know Christ in a personal way and grow in a deeper relationship with Him. *From His Heart* is a viewer and listener supported ministry. We greatly appreciate your prayers and financial support.

**FROM THE AUTHOR:**

*Guilt. It is an ugly word and an even uglier feeling. As a Pastor, I have counseled many people over the years who have struggled terribly with a guilty conscience over past sins. Guilty people never seem to be able to really break free and enjoy their relationship with God. They cannot truly experience the abundant life because of the gnawing guilt inside. Can you relate? I know I surely have been there and done that.*

*Jesus said, "And you shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free" (John 8:32). One day, when reading the book **How People Grow** by Townsend and Cloud, I learned the biblical truth about guilt ... and it changed my life and set me free. I trust it will do the same for you also.*

*Ask the Holy Spirit to speak to your heart as you read the pages that follow. Let God's wonderful truth permeate deep into your soul and set you free so that you can fully enjoy your guilt-free relationship with Jesus.*

Love,



Jeff Schreve

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From His Heart Ministries

## NOT GUILTY!

She came to talk with me. Her life was not going well. Although she tried to walk with God, she never seemed able to get off the ground and soar with Him. What was holding her back? She had an abortion earlier in her life. Although she had confessed that sin to the Lord numerous times, she couldn't seem to get past the guilt, shame and condemnation over what she had done. She desperately needed help and needed to know the love and grace of Jesus Christ.

I am convinced that multitudes of people in our cities, in our churches, in our world, are suffering from a malady that eats them up inside ... GUILT. Like a heavy backpack, so many people carry the load of a guilty conscience wherever they go. You and I both know what guilt feels like—that terrible, horrible feeling you get when you have done something you know is wrong.

Maybe you are reading this today and you are really struggling with guilt. Perhaps you have sins from your past that are

constantly accusing and condemning you. Perhaps you have sexual sin that you committed last week, last month or last decade that continually drags you down. Or maybe your guilt is from a lie you told that really hurt another person. Or perhaps it is from your selfishness and self-centeredness that destroyed your marriage and family. Whatever your sin may be, have you asked God to forgive you but never seem to lose the guilty conscience? Be honest, do you feel haunted by the ghost of guilt?

### **The Good News**

If you just can't seem to get rid of that guilty feeling inside, I have good news for you! God doesn't want you to live life consumed with guilt! You might say, "*But Jeff, you have no idea what I've done!*" No, I may not know your sins, and you don't know mine, but God is all-knowing: "*And there is no creature hidden from His sight, but all things are open and laid bare to the eyes of Him with whom we have to do*" (Hebrews

**4:13).** To some, that Scripture is scary, because they don't know God's deep, merciful and unconditional love for them. They think, "*When God sees what I've done, He'll never forgive me. I'll have to walk around with guilt and shame forever.*"

Listen, my friend, God's aim for you is to become more like Him and to walk in close fellowship with Him. He doesn't want you to bury your shame-filled head in the sand and give up seeking Him because you messed up. Jesus knew you and I would sin and fall short of His standard of perfection, AND HE DIED FOR US ANYWAY! When we turn away from our sins and ask for His forgiveness, He forgives completely and forgets for eternity.

### **Believing the Lie**

Where you and I get tripped up is in believing the enemy, whose name is Satan. His cleverly disguised lie looks something like this: "*God will never forgive you for that. Or maybe He'll forgive you, but He'll never*

*forget. How could He ever love someone as rotten and disgusting as you?"*

Let's get something straight; God not only forgives, but He wipes away your sin and remembers it against you no more. The prophet Micah said, ***"Who is a God like you, who pardons sin and forgives the transgressions of the remnant of His inheritance? You will not stay angry forever, but you delight to show mercy. You will again have compassion on us. You will tread our sins underfoot and hurl all our iniquities into the depths of the sea"*** (Micah 7:18-19 NIV).

### **What do you do when you feel guilty?**

What if you sin ... and ask God to forgive you for that sin ... and you STILL feel guilty? What do you do then?

I believe there are three key truths you and I need to grasp in order to stamp out guilt and embrace God's love in our lives.



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## **TRUTH #1: REMEMBER THAT THE JUDGE HAS RULED.**

The judge of the entire universe is God. He sits on His throne, the judge's bench, and rules over every person's life. **Do you know what He ruled about your life the moment you put your faith and trust in Jesus Christ?** The judge slammed down His gavel and said, "*NOT GUILTY!*" Take comfort in knowing that your sins were no longer held against you when you became His child ... when you gave your heart to Jesus and trusted Him alone for your salvation.

Romans 8:1-2 says this: "*Therefore there is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus. For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus has set you free from the law of sin and death.*" There is not even a speck of condemnation on your ledger or mine when we are believers in Christ. He has declared us to be NOT GUILTY! When God looks at me, He doesn't look at my long list of sins. Instead, His attitude is, "*I have already ruled on Jeff Schreve. Because he is in Christ,*

*he is not guilty or condemned. He is completely forgiven and declared blameless and innocent in My sight.”*

The phrase “no condemnation” literally means “no judgment against, no penalty.” If you truly know Jesus Christ as Savior and Lord, there is no longer any judgment against you because the judge of the universe has found you NOT GUILTY. That is amazing ... and so wonderful!

### **Guilty and Condemned**

What God has done for you and me really begins to hit home when we realize how much we have been forgiven and how guilty and condemned we were before receiving Jesus. You see, prior to coming to Christ, you and I had no hope of salvation and eternal heaven. Before Christ came into your life and mine, we were locked away in Satan’s prison, bound by our sins, hopeless and in desperate need of a savior.

The Bible gives us even more proof of our destitute state before we were forgiven and freed by Jesus:

- ***“There is none righteous, not even one” (Romans 3:10).***
- ***“For all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God” (Romans 3:23).***
- ***“For the wages of sin is death” (Romans 6:23).***
- ***“The soul who sins will die” (Ezekiel 18:4).***

You and I were guilty before God ... we were sinners without hope, imprisoned in a dark dungeon of guilt and condemnation.

### **Unfathomable Grace**

Even in our state of being detestable before a Holy God, wallowing in our sin and rebellion, God showed us unfathomable, immeasurable grace. One of the most vivid pictures of God’s grace lavished on sinful man is portrayed in the Apostle Paul, a former persecutor of Christians. After his conversion to Jesus Christ, the very God he once hated,

Paul wrote the following in a letter to Timothy, a fellow disciple: “...*even though I was formerly a blasphemer and a persecutor and a violent aggressor, yet I was shown mercy because I acted ignorantly in unbelief; and the grace of our Lord was more than abundant, with the faith and love which are found in Christ Jesus*” (1 Timothy 1:13-14).

Some people erroneously think that Paul was always a great and godly apostle whose entire life was devoted to loving and proclaiming Christ. But before Paul met Jesus on the road to Damascus, he was Saul of Tarsus, the Osama Bin Laden of his day. His goal was to completely eradicate Christianity from the earth.

Looking back on his former life and his great awakening by grace, Paul goes on to say, “*It is a trustworthy statement, deserving full acceptance, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners, among whom I am foremost of all. Yet for this reason I found mercy, so that in me as the foremost, Jesus Christ might demonstrate His perfect*

*patience as an example for those who would believe in Him for eternal life” (1 Timothy 1:15,16).*

The chief of sinners found unfathomable grace in the Lord. Do you know the meaning and reality of grace? I’ve heard it explained before in an acrostic: G.R.A.C.E.—**G**od’s **R**iches **A**t **C**hrist’s **E**xpense. Jesus Christ took all of my guilt, shame, condemnation and penalty when He was nailed to the cross and crucified at Calvary. And He did the same for YOU!

### **Sinners Saved by the Shepherd**

Jesus came for one purpose – to save sinners. He came to snatch you and me from the throes of death and place us before His throne to worship Him for all eternity. You see, before Jesus we were dying in our sin. *“All of us like sheep have gone astray, each of us have turned to his own way; but the LORD has caused the iniquity of us all to fall on Him (Jesus)” (Isaiah 53:6).*

Sin is simply going our own way, blowing God off and ignoring His call for a close walk with Him. Sin basically says, “*Hey God, just to let you know, I’m doing my own thing here. I don’t need you or your advice. So if you’d just stay out of it and let me do my own thing, that’d be great.*” And like ignorant sheep, we walk away from the Shepherd who loves us and wants what is best for us. The end result for the wayward sheep is always tragic.

But here is the good news: even in our rebellious, self-centered, sinful way of life, Jesus took all our sin – past, present and future. It was all laid upon Him; and He paid for it all of it when He died on the Cross.

### **His Grace is Enough**

But do you know what is crazy? Some people, even though they see movies like *The Passion of the Christ* and view with their own eyes the bloodshed and pain Christ endured, think that somehow the price He paid was insufficient! They have this ludicrous idea

that they have to add their “good works” on top of the perfect work that Christ did for them on the cross.

Listen, you are not saved by your sweat; you are saved by His blood! It’s about His grace, not your works. ***“For by grace you have been saved through faith; and that not of yourselves, it is the gift of God; not as a result of works, so that no one may boast”*** (Ephesians 2:8).

We were guilty and condemned, but Christ took all of our sin and shame and showered us with unfathomable grace.

### Set Free

Let’s look again at Romans 8:1: ***“There is therefore now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus.”*** It’s important to emphasize here that if you do NOT know Christ Jesus, there is a lifetime of condemnation awaiting you. (You need to receive His grace and become a sold-out follower of Jesus before it is too late.) But for believers, for those who have repented of sin

and received Christ as Savior and Lord, God has ruled NOT GUILTY! How can that be? It is because you have been released from your guilt by putting your faith and trust in Jesus and the price He paid for all those sins. Therefore, you are declared righteous and stand blameless before Holy God.

You might say, *“Well, I may not be guilty today, but I might be guilty tomorrow. Jesus paid for all my sins up to this point in my life.”* Could that line of thinking be accurate? NO! People who think this way reason along these lines: *“I know Jesus forgave me for all my sins before I came to know Christ ... but now, as a Christian, if I fall back into sin, Jesus will kick me to the curb.”* These folks feel that their status can change from NOT GUILTY back to GUILTY. Can that really happen? NO!!

Think about it ... how many of us were alive when Jesus died on the cross? That's right, NONE OF US! How many of your sins did He pay for on the cross? Just the ones you've committed up to this point? NO! When Jesus died on the cross, every sin you



would ever commit was a future sin because you had not even been born yet.

So when God says, “*NOT GUILTY*,” it covers the entire span of your life ... past, present and future. Do you believe that? When you start to doubt and succumb to guilt, just remember that Judge Jesus has already ruled!

## **TRUTH #2: RECOGNIZE THAT THE ENEMY IS AT WORK.**

You have an adversary, and his name is the devil. The Bible says in 1 Peter 5:8: “*Be of sober spirit, be on the alert. Your adversary, the devil, prowls around like a roaring lion, seeking someone to devour.*” Jesus called the devil a thief, and declared, “*The thief comes only to steal and kill and destroy ...*” (John 10:10).

You and I have a real adversary out there. Does your adversary want you to know the truth that you are not guilty? Of course not! Can he do anything to change what has taken place in the Court of Heaven? NO! He

cannot reverse what took place when Christ came in your life and forgave all your sins.

You see, the day you put your faith and trust in Christ, you were born again, spiritually made brand new. Two things took place that day: you were placed in Christ, and He placed His Holy Spirit (the third person of the Holy Trinity) in you. In fact, you were SEALED with His Spirit. *“In Him, you also, after listening to the message of truth, the gospel of your salvation—having also believed, you were sealed in Him with the Holy Spirit of promise...”* (Ephesians 1:13,14). No one can take that divine sealing away from you, not even the devil himself.

### **Discerning the Voice**

The truth of the matter is that every TRUE child of God is not guilty. Even the devil knows that, and he works hard every single day to deceive and blind you from knowing that truth. In John 8:44, Jesus said that the devil *“does not stand in the truth because there is no truth in him. Whenever*

*he speaks a lie, he speaks from his own nature, for he is a liar and the father of lies.”*

The devil will try to make you still believe that you are guilty and condemned, even after God has ruled NOT GUILTY.

Inside every Christ-follower is the Holy Spirit who resides to guide, direct and speak to us from the Father. But there is another voice that tries to weasel its way into our mind and heart ... the voice of the enemy, the father of lies. You might think it's easy to discern between God's voice and the devil's, but the problem is that the devil is crafty. In Genesis 3, he is described as a serpent that *“was more crafty than any beast of the field which the Lord God had made”* (Genesis 3:1). He is deceitful, cunning and sly and can speak to us with plausible reasoning, imitating our own voice in order to trick us into believing his lies. That is why it is so important to be on the alert, knowing that the devil is ready to pounce on you at any moment. The enemy is at work!

So how can we know if it is the devil speaking or the Lord? Notice with me three key differences.

**Difference #1: The devil *accuses* and the Holy Spirit *convicts*.**

The Bible says in Revelation 12:10, speaking of the devil, “... *for the accuser of our brethren has been thrown down, he who accuses them before our God day and night.*” The devil is the accuser. When he speaks, he speaks in the form of accusation. What does he say? He might whisper something like this, “*Look at you, Jeff. You lied, you lusted, and you were rude to your wife. You are scum, a bum, and a loser. You surely make God sick!*” The devil accuses and wants to pile condemnation on our heads.

But the Holy Spirit does not accuse. The Holy Spirit convicts and exposes things in our life. “*Jeff, you did \_\_\_\_\_, and you need to deal with that sin.*” One day, the Holy Spirit convicted me of cheating when I was playing Scrabble with my wife, Debbie.

## Scrabble

I pride myself on being a good Scrabble player, but on this particular occasion I was losing ... and losing to Debbie (horror of horrors)! My natural competitiveness went on overdrive. I conjured up the best word I could think of ... SINKINGS. (Now “sinking” is a legitimate word, but “sinkings” is not in the dictionary, and I knew that.) I threw that word out there anyway and said with confidence, *“Look at that, Debbie! It’s worth 50 points!”* And she trustingly replied, *“Wow, what a great play!”* I ended up winning the game, but toward the end, after the Holy Spirit had been working on me and my sin, I confessed to her that SINKINGS wasn’t in the dictionary. She gasped and said, *“Why Jeff Schreve! I can’t believe you cheated!”* Needless to say, it took some of the luster off the victory.

Although that story is a little light-hearted, it does illustrate the importance for us to be in tune with the Holy Spirit’s voice and the conviction He brings to our hearts when we sin. You might be thinking, *“Well*

*conviction sounds like the same thing the devil does—accusing you and pointing out things in your life that are wrong.” Let’s clear the air here as we look at the second big way that we can discern between how the devil works and how the Lord works.*

**Difference #2: The devil *condemns* us, and the Holy Spirit *draws* us.**

The devil *accuses* in order to *condemn*. He just wants to bring you down, tear you apart, and leave you hopeless and broken. The Holy Spirit *convicts* you so He can *draw* you back into a relationship with the Father. He will say, “*Jeff, you lied, and you need to confess your sin. You need to get that right so that you can walk with the Father and eliminate any division in your fellowship with God.*” Note: our legal standing before God never changes; we are NOT GUILTY the moment we receive Christ into our lives. But when we sin as Christians, it breaks our fellowship with God.

You and I cannot walk in darkness, continuing in sin, and still have fellowship with the Lord of light. ***“If we say that we have fellowship with Him and yet walk in the darkness, we lie and do not practice the truth; but if we walk in the light as He Himself is in the light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus His Son cleanses us from all sin. If we confess our sins, He is faithful and righteous to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness” (1 John 1:6,7,9).***

So the Holy Spirit convicts us in order to draw us back into a relationship of closeness with the Father. The devil accuses us in order to make us feel like second-class Christians and horrible people. Can you relate to that? Now that you know what it sounds like, can you remember hearing the voice of the accuser telling you how terrible and horrible you are? I know I can. Let’s look at the final difference between the work of the devil and the Lord.

**Difference #3: The devil wants us *guilty*.**  
**The Holy Spirit wants us *sorry*.**

In 2 Corinthians 7:10 (NLT), we read: *“For the kind of sorrow God wants us to experience leads us away from sin and results in salvation. There’s no regret for that kind of sorrow. But worldly sorrow, which lacks repentance, results in spiritual death.”* You see, the devil wants you to feel guilty although you have been forgiven and freed. He whispers, *“Guilt, guilty ... FEEL GUILTY!”* But you are not guilty before God. He has already declared you RIGHTEOUS, not guilty.

I discovered a scriptural truth recently and was greatly blessed as I grasped the implications of it. Do you know the big difference between guilt and sorrow? Feeling guilty seems spiritual and godly, but it is not. It is actually rooted in SELF. *Feeling guilty* is a very self-centered, self-focused feeling.

Sorrow, on the other hand, is not rooted in self. Sorrow says, *“Yes, I did this terrible thing, and I feel sorry that I caused hurt to the*



*heart of God. I am so sorry that I sinned against You, Lord.*” True sorrow is focused on the one you offended, not on yourself. That is why godly sorrow leads you to repentance. It leads you to make things right.

If you are consumed by guilt and feel horrible about yourself as a person, you are experiencing worldly sorrow; and worldly sorrow lacks repentance and leads to death – death to all the good things God wants to do in your life.

### **The Example of Two Famous Disciples**

Judas and Peter are great New Testament examples of this truth. Both committed the worst of sins but with very different end results. Judas Iscariot, one of Jesus’ original twelve disciples, abandoned Jesus and contracted, for thirty pieces of silver, to work with the chief priests in planning Jesus’ betrayal and capture. He led them to the Garden of Gethsemane, the place where Jesus was praying, and betrayed the Savior with a kiss. It was a kiss from hell.

## Judas

When Judas saw they were going to put Jesus to death, he was overcome with guilt, worldly sorrow, and regret without repentance. We find in Matthew 27 how the story played out: *“He returned the thirty pieces of silver to the chief priests and elders, saying, ‘I have sinned by betraying innocent blood.’ But they said, ‘What is that to us? See to that yourself!’ And he threw the pieces of silver into the temple sanctuary and departed; and he went away and hanged himself”* (Matthew 27:3-5).

Judas felt so horrible about himself and was so overcome by guilt and worthlessness that he ended his life. I love what Dr. Adrian Rogers has said about Judas’ suicide: *“Trying to escape the hell within him, he hung himself, and stepped into the hell before him.”* That was what guilt-ridden Judas did. You see, he had the sorrow of the world ... and that sorrow produces death.

## Simon Peter

What about Simon Peter? Peter's sin was somewhat similar to Judas' sin in that he too denied the Lord, although to a lesser degree than the betrayer. Peter was given several opportunities to stand up for Jesus when He was being beaten and abused, but he denied knowing Christ. Ironically, before Jesus was arrested in the Garden of Gethsemane, Peter told His Master in the presence of the other disciples, *“Even though all may fall away because of You, I will never fall away”* (Matthew 26:33).

Is that right, Pete? Well, now is your time to follow through; now is your time to shine, Simon. Three times, Peter was asked if he knew Jesus, but each time he denied Jesus saying that he didn't even know Him.

After his third denial, the rooster crowed, and the Lord, brokenheartedly looked at Peter. With conviction that felt like a knife in his heart, Peter went out, weeping bitter tears. He was so sorry in his heart over what he had done ... and that godly sorrow led to genuine

repentance which produced restoration and transformation for Peter.

That is the difference. The devil wants you to **feel guilty** so that he can **destroy** you. The Lord wants you to feel **godly sorrow** so that He can **change** you. He wants to lead you to repentance so that He can bring about deliverance in your life. What do you do when you feel guilty? Remember that the Judge has ruled NOT GUILTY. Recognize that the enemy is at work. And thirdly, realize that God is your friend.

### **TRUTH #3: REALIZE THAT GOD IS YOUR FRIEND.**

This is such an awesome revelation for some people. They have always known in their head that God is their friend, but change really begins to take place when they believe that wonderful truth in their heart. *“WOW! You mean God loves me ... and even likes me? You mean He really will be my friend?”* Proverbs 18:24 says, *“A man of too many friends comes to ruin, but there is a friend*

*who sticks closer than a brother.*” Who is that friend who sticks closer than a brother? His name is Jesus! The Bible also says that the Lord is a friend of sinners (Matthew 11:19). Isn’t that GREAT?! I am a sinner, you are a sinner, and the Lord still wants to be our friend!

### **Jim’s Struggle**

When I was in college, I had a good friend who loved the Lord with all his heart. He felt the Lord was calling him to be a Pastor, and he was studying Greek at the University of Texas to prepare himself for the pastorate. My friend, Jim, was like so many other guys ... he struggled with his thought life. It was tough for him to keep his thoughts pure, and he often succumbed to lust. It would make him feel so terrible and rotten inside! He would think, *“What am I doing? Here I am, studying to be a Pastor, and I am struggling with lust and sensual thoughts.”* He walked around like he was wearing a heavy coat of guilt and condemnation. The

devil had pounced on him, and my friend was losing the battle.

I remember Jim reading a Bible verse from Judges that he felt summed up his life: ***“Wherever they went, the hand of the LORD was against them for evil, as the LORD had spoken and as the LORD had sworn to them, so that they were severely distressed” (Judges 2:15).*** Because the Israelites (God’s people) were arrogantly rebelling against God and refusing to repent, God’s hand of conviction was heavy upon them. Notice that their situation was much different from Jim’s situation. Jim was not defiant as the Israelites were; he was defeated by sin and desperately in need of God’s love and grace.

Unfortunately, Jim took that verse in Judges the wrong way. He began to believe the devil’s lie that God was going to be against him because of his continued defeats with lust. As you can imagine, this had a negative impact on his life.

## God - Our Friend

Listen, God is not against us; He is for us! Does He hold our sins over our head even AFTER we ask for forgiveness? NO WAY! Would you want a “friend” who did that? I know I wouldn’t. It would be miserable to have a friend whose hand was always against me.

I have a sneaking suspicion that my friend Jim is not the only one who feels that God is against him. Perhaps you yourself feel this way. If so, you are believing a lie straight from the *father of lies*.

In Psalm 56:9, we find a simple truth that will make a profound impact on your life if you will receive it and believe it: ***“This I know, that God is for me.”*** Do you KNOW this? HE IS FOR YOU! Isn’t that wonderful?! You can hold to the fact that God Almighty, the Creator of heaven and earth, is FOR YOU! As if it weren’t enough, God gives us even more proof of his unfailing love and friendship to us in Romans 8:31: ***“If God is for us, who is against us?”*** Oh, what a

wonderful way to live life—in the freedom of His forgiveness and in the promise of His faithfulness! God is a good God, He is our friend, and He wants to help us grow in the Christian life.

### God - Our Helper

We have seen that God is our friend and one who *“sticks closer than a brother”* (**Proverbs 18:24**). Building on that truth, we can have assurance that He wants to help us grow. He is our **HELPER**.

I love what the Scripture says in Hebrews 13:5: *“Make sure that your character is free from the love of money, being content with what you have; for He Himself has said, ‘I will never desert you, nor will I ever forsake you.’”* In the Greek construction of that sentence, the Lord is literally saying, *“I will never, never desert you, nor never, never forsake you.”* There are five negatives in that one sentence. In English, double negatives are a “no-no” (pardon the pun). Though multiple



negatives make for bad English, they, nonetheless, make for great theology.

God gives us the rock-solid promise that He will NEVER, NEVER, NEVER, NEVER, NEVER EVER leave us so that we can respond with confidence, ***“The LORD is my helper, I will not be afraid. What will man do to me?”*** (Hebrews 13:6). The Lord is my **helper**. Can you look at your life and see that the Lord is YOUR helper? When you are struggling with sin, do you see Him as your helper or as your condemner?

Let me assure you that He WANTS to come alongside you and help you in life. ***“Therefore let us draw near with confidence to the throne of grace, so that we may receive mercy and find grace to help in time of need”*** (Hebrews 4:16). God sits on a throne of *grace*, not a throne of *condemnation*. When you trust Christ, you become a child of favor, a child of the King of kings and Lord of lords.

## Helping my Children

When my middle daughter, Amy, was getting ready to graduate high school and go off to college, Debbie and I had been encouraging her to go after scholarship money. When it comes to college tuition, it is really important to mom and dad to get all the help we can get. If a scholarship is out there, let's go for it! Otherwise, I become the scholarship.

So to qualify for the scholarships, Amy wrote tons of essays. Knowing how I like to write, she would often come to me and say, *"Dad, I'm writing an essay on this topic and could really use your help putting it together."* Do you think I would take the time to help her possibly acquire a few extra bucks for the college fund? YOU BET!

So she would write it out and say, *"Will you read this and tweak it as needed?"* Well, what did I do when I read her paper? Did I read it and say, *"Amy, this is terrible! I'm so disappointed in you. This verb is wrong and the entire last paragraph doesn't make sense."*

*You make me sick!*” Does a good dad respond like that? Of course not! I would read a sentence and suggest that she add something to round it off. I would read another section and encourage her to reword a phrase or two. I would get excited about precise phrasing, and she would get excited, and we would have fun working *together* to reach our goal.

Sometimes with school English papers, my daughters and I would collaborate on them. They never put my name on the paper, but I would always ask, “*Hey, how did we do on our English paper?*” I always thought of it as “our paper” because we worked together. That is how God works with us. He is our Father who loves us ... and our *helper* who helps us.

He wants me to grow, so He comes alongside me and helps me. He knows that I struggle with greed and envy because there is nothing hidden from His sight (Hebrews 4:14). Since He knows all my faults and sins, do I wall off and think that I just have to do it on my own because He is so disgusted with me? NO! The Lord says, “*Will you please let*

*Me help you. I am your HELPER. Bring those things to Me, and let's work on those things together.*" He is our friend; He wants to help us grow. And finally, He wants us to be in fellowship with Him *continuously*.

### **Walking with God**

What is the Christian life about, anyway? Is it gritting your teeth and trying hard not to sin? Is it getting on a performance treadmill and thinking that if you do X, Y and Z, God will be pleased? "*Maybe then I won't feel so condemned, and my good works would cause God to say, 'NOT GUILTY.'*" He has already declared you to be forgiven and freed! What is the Christian life about? It is about walking with God.

Do you remember the story of Adam and Eve in the Old Testament? God placed them in the garden, and they were naked and not ashamed. They had never experienced sin, and because of that, they enjoyed incredible fellowship with the Lord. He would come down in the cool of the day and walk with

Adam and Eve. And God LOVED that time with them!

But when Adam and Eve sinned, they realized they were naked and hid from Him in shame. When God came walking to meet them, they heard the sound of His footsteps, but they didn't run to Daddy as they had before. They ran away from Him. God's heartbroken cry was, "*Adam, Eve, where are you? I want to walk with you and have a relationship with you because I love you.*" God says the same thing to you and me. He *wants* us to walk with Him.

### **My Struggle as a Pastor**

I can get so caught up in trying to be the perfect Pastor – trying to meet everyone's needs, preparing sermons and planning the next big event. If I am not careful, I can easily start to feel burdened and pressured! But God's reply is, "***You are worried and bothered about so many things; but only one thing is necessary...***" (Luke 10:41,42).

JESUS is my ONE thing! The church where I serve is *God's* church, and the people whom I minister to are *His* people. He just calls me to walk with Him and abide in Him. He is the vine and we are the branches (John 15:5). We are not called to somehow, someway produce fruit on our own. We are simply called to abide in Him and stay connected to Him. When we are plugged into the vine (Jesus), the Lord's life begins to flow through us. We will experience the fruit of the Spirit when we walk with Him. (Galatians 5:22-23)

1 John 1:7 says this, ***“But if we walk in the light as He Himself is in the light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus His Son cleanses us from all sin.”*** Don't run off with Adam and hide in the bushes because you have sinned. The Lord is your friend and your helper. The Holy Spirit will point out areas of sin so that you can confess it, get right with God, and walk closely with Him once again. Bring your sin to the cross so that it can be covered with His

forgiveness, and you can *“walk in the light, as He Himself is in the light.”*

### **Are you sure?**

Look at Romans 8:1 again: *“Therefore there is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus.”* Now here is the big question. Are you in Christ Jesus? If you are reading this today, and you have never trusted Christ as your Savior and surrendered your life to Him, the time is NOW! Maybe you whispered a prayer through a keyhole in your heart because someone told you there was a magical salvation prayer. The way to true salvation is not found in whispering a prayer through the keyhole, but it is found in opening the door of your heart and giving your life to Christ.

I talked to a man in his 30's who told me, *“Jeff, I got saved when I was 13, but there was no change. In the last few weeks, however, I've felt so different inside.”* I said to him, *“You know, probably what happened when you were 13 is that you just whispered a*

*prayer through the keyhole. But a few weeks ago you really opened up and gave your heart to Christ. That is why your life is so different now.”*

Listen, if you are not certain that you are in Christ, NOT GUILTY may not apply to you. If you haven't received Jesus, you are guilty, and one day you will stand before God at the Day of Judgment. He will open a book and read the long list of sins you have committed. **You will be judged “GUILTY,” because you never placed your sins on Jesus.** You rejected the Lord's righteousness, so you have to stand in your own filth. God doesn't want that for you! Standing in your own righteousness and being judged according to your own works doesn't have a good ending. Everyone who goes that route ends up in hell.

### **Mount Calvary**

Let me close by telling you about something that happened 2,000 years ago that has changed my life. The place was Mount



Calvary. At Calvary, the perfect, sinless Lamb of God was nailed to a cross for all our sins. The song says it best:

*“Mercy there was great and grace was free;  
Pardon there was multiplied to me.  
There my burdened soul found liberty,  
At Calvary.”*

I want to invite you today to come to Calvary and receive God’s grace, mercy and forgiveness. If you are a Christian, and you have been beating yourself up over your sin, remember that God has ruled NOT GUILTY over your life! Even believers may need to climb the hill of Calvary anew and afresh and experience the Lord’s grace. For mercy there is great, and grace is free.

## *Other Resources from Jeff Schreve*

### **AUDIO CD and VIDEO DVD\* Series**

- A10** Why On Earth Am I Here: Vol. 1
- A20** Why On Earth Am I Here: Vol. 2
- A30** Guess Who's Coming for Christmas
- A40** Get Real
- A50** Wise Up!
- A60** Miracles! Then and Now
- A70\*** Before You Say, "I Do"
- A80** Voices from Beyond the Grave
- A90** Back to the Future
- A100** Family Matters
- A110** Basic Training
- A120** The God of Second Chances
- A130\*** Making the Grade
- A140\*** The Recovery Room
- A150** Public Enemy #1
- A160** Your Life-No Limits
- A170** God's Amazing Grace
- A180\*** It's a Wonderful Life
- A190** Behind Closed Doors
- A200\*** 24: Living in the Last Days
- A210\*** Christmas Presence
- A220** Unleashing the Power of God
- A230** Dr. Jekyll & Mr. Christian
- A240\*** The Best is Yet to Come
- A250** Bad Boys of the Bible
- A260\*** You've Got Mail- The 7 Letters of Revelation
- A270\*** Cross Examination
- A280\*** Heart Beat
- A290\*** Desperate Households
- A300\*** Braveheart
- A310\*** The Fourth Quarter
- A320** Satisfaction Guaranteed
- A330\*** The Gift

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- A340\* Take This Life and Love It**
  - A350\* Believing God...Expecting Miracles**
  - A360\* Missing in Action**
  - A370\* Pit Falls-From the Depths to Deliverance**
  - A380\* And They Lived Happily Ever After**
  - A390\* There Is No Place Like Heaven**
  - A400\* Breaking the Chains of Religion**
  - A410\* Rising Above Mediocrity**
  - A420\* Facing the Giants**
  - A430\* Defending the Faith**
  - A440\* The Power of Giving**
  - A450\* Lets Adore Him**
  - A460\* A New Lease on Life**
  - A470\* Right on the Money**
  - A480\* The Shadow of the Almighty**
  - A490 Now That's a Tough One**
  - A500\* Let It Rain!**
  - A510 Beyond the Glory**
  - A520\* Home Field Advantage**
  - A530 God's Answers for Your Fears**
  - A540\* Strong Faith for Tough Times**
  - A550 Rock Your World: Unleashing the Power of Prayer**
  - A560\* What is His Name?**
  - A570\* Walking with the King**
  - A590\* Making a Difference**
  - A600\* Countdown to Armageddon**
  - A610\* I Shouldn't Be Alive!**
  - A620\* How to Win at the Game of Life**
  - A630 Welcome to the Feast**
  - A650\* All I Want for Christmas**
  - A660\* Arise and Build: Vol. 1**
  - A670\* Arise and Build: Vol. 2**
  - A680\* LOST: The Parable of the Prodigal Son**
  - A690 Will God Bless America?**
  - A700\* Ready to Rumble**

**BOOKLETS**

**GOD'S ANSWER TO YOUR ANGER**  
**HOW TO BE SURE YOU'RE GOING TO HEAVEN**  
**WHEN VICTIMS MEETS VICTORY**  
**WHEN FEAR MEETS FAITH**  
**I STILL DO**  
**STICKS AND STONES: What to Do When the Going Gets Tough**  
**HITTING THE BULL'S-EYE: Knowing and Doing God's Will**  
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