

## A Message from a Fellow Sinner

This letter is to you, if you are tired of your life as it presently exists now. If you need help to walk out of your darkness and into the light of a new and better life.

Hi, my name is James. I am a serial sinner. I walked in a very dark world for many years. My sins were many, and with each one my distance from God grew and my destructiveness increased. Why am I interested in you? Because I learned of God's acceptance of me when I decided to repent (to re-adjust my way of living in order to please God) and be baptized into the family of God.

Faith in God, not man, is the key. I attempted to get my life straight by myself. I would set out to do better. That's where my spiritual effort would hit a snag. The basic problem had to do with who was in control of my life – I was. And it wasn't working. God was not allowed to be Chief Architect.

Every time my halfhearted repentance failed, I grew more deeply ashamed. Does this cycle sound familiar? Until we overcome the sin that enslaves us, we will be powerless to effect positive change in our broken lives. The fact that you are reading this demonstrates one thing: you have a desire to change. Somewhere in your heart is the longing to come home. Relationship with God is what you are longing for. He is calling you to be part of his kingdom. God wants you to come home. The question is how? It's easy to feel defeated. This feeling of being defeated comes from Satan's influence. He wants you on ice, helpless under his control. But you must not let what other people think keep you from pursuing a relationship with Jesus Christ.

***The first step*** is to realize that “all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God” (Romans 3:23). The reality is we are all sinners, and salvation (deliverance from destruction and sin) is offered to all of us.

***The second step*** is the recognition that we are helpless. No matter how much we want to be better, we can't in our own strength. What can we do? We can claim God's redemptive power and love and rely on His Spirit to help us change our lives.

***Step three*** is the tough one: repentance (remorse, to re-adjust my way of living in order to please God). The Samaritan woman at the well (John 4) and the woman caught in the act of adultery (John 8) were both made whole through faith in Christ. The departing words of Jesus to one woman still ring in my ears: “Go and sin no more.” But that is so tough. Whether your habit is alcohol, drugs, sex, pornography, workaholism, or just plain laziness, God and only God can lift it. The miracle of salvation does not protect us from future temptation; that is the daily battle. To win, we must arm ourselves with God's words, surround ourselves with fellow believers, and pursue God with greater enthusiasm than we pursued evil. We must walk away from the activities, life-styles, friends, and habits that led to sin. This distancing of ourselves from these things is a crucial element in beginning to becoming who we really want to be.

Does this guarantee success? No. Am I holding myself up to say, “Look at me”? Hardly! I live in shame of my past and in hope of my future. God has promised salvation from my sins, but not the absence of consequences in this life for my sin.

I love Jesus and you can too. I truly believe he has come into my life and has changed me. God accepts us as we are: dirty, hopeless, scared, and alone. He has the power to change death to life. The path is simple: confessing your sins, ask the Lord of lords to make His home with you, repent of your sins, and die to yourself in the grave of baptism. Then work harder for you than you ever have at anything before. Strive for the goal of Christ-likeness.

I have wasted years serving selfish impulses and being a member of Satan’s army. I hope that reading this gives you the courage to walk toward Jesus, taking those you love with you. No one person alone has the power to effect lasting change. Our belief and hope must be in God. He alone has the power to bring hope out of your hopelessness, life out of death, and light into your darkness. God has been reaching out to you with love and care for all these years. God has not placed limits on His ability to forgive; man has done that. God is waiting to forgive and to build something special inside every human being – even you! A fresh start is available to each of us. God is with you in the journey.

*James Caldwell*