

## 2CH Sunday at 7.30

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Talks from the NSW Council of Churches

### Second chances

Presented by Graeme Best

The news headline read .. “Thanks for the second chance”. It was referring to a well-known footballer who had served two years suspension for drug taking who was then offered a chance to play top grade football with another club. And so he said .. thankyou. Thankyou for the second chance.

We all love second chances in life. Third and fourth chances as well because we all make mistakes. And continue to do so. But sometimes those mistakes .. sometimes the decisions we make in life .. leave us being cast aside by others.

Truth is, some people don't give us a second chance when we have let them down .. or done things to hurt them .. perhaps sinned in a way that others just cannot excuse. And that hurts. Can make us feel rejected and lonely. Feel useless.

But this morning, I want you to think about the fact, that when others think we are finished .. God never gives up on us. Our God is the God of second chances.

#### Song

One just has to look at Scripture to know that God is the God of second chances. Take the example of Peter. Peter was one of the best known of Jesus' disciples. In many ways he served as a kind of unofficial spokesman for the group.

And although Peter was brash and outspoken, he was intensely loyal to Jesus. And yet, Peter failed Jesus, right when Jesus needed him most. It was the night Jesus was betrayed, arrested and put on trial, Peter lingered around near where Jesus was being held, keeping himself warm by the fire.

As he stood there, trying not to be noticed, a young woman spotted him and accused him of being a follower of Jesus. But Peter, I'm sure out of fear, denied the accusation.

But then, Peter was accused a second time. Again, Peter denied any association with Jesus. But as he made his loud denial, his accent became obvious to those standing around. An accent that was a dead giveaway.

I have just been in Ireland and I never realised just how different the Dublin accent is, from say, the Northern Ireland accent. Same with Peter. Peter was not from that part of the country. He was from up north. And another then accused Peter of being a disciple of Jesus. And Peter cursed and swore and denied that he even knew Jesus.

And Peter betrayed his very great friend. If you had been there and heard Peter utter a stream of profanity to deny Jesus, would you have written him off? If a friend did that to you, would you forgive them?

That was a grim episode in Peter's life and when he realised what he had done he wept bitterly. He must have wondered if there was any hope for him. After all, he was no better in many ways, than Judas who had betrayed Jesus. Peter had denied and betrayed his friend, one he had sworn to protect.

And yet, following his resurrection, Jesus, the Son of the Living God, did not reject Peter. Instead, he went looking for him. You see, Jesus had died for Peter. He died so that his sins, just like yours and mine, could be forgiven.

And Jesus, not only forgave Peter, he gently restored him and set him free from his guilt. Jesus gave Peter a second chance. Others might have thought he was finished. Would never serve Jesus again. But no. Peter was still useful to God. God hadn't given up on him.

And God used Peter mightily to help build the first Christian church. When Peter preached, thousands came to Christ. He was the rock upon which Jesus would build that church.

Out of defeat. Out of despair. Out of sin. Peter learned a great lesson. He learned that our God is the God of a second chance.

### **Song**

King David in the Old Testament was another who learned that God was the God of a second chance. Children are often taught the story of David and Goliath. Perhaps David's finest hour. But the Bible also tells us of his lowest hour.

Enter Bathsheba into David's life. David noticed this beautiful woman from his palace roof one evening as she was taking her bath. And he was filled with desire. And that desire led David to not only commit adultery with Bathsheba but to then commit murder as he removed Uriah, Bathsheba's husband, from the scene. He then lied about it.

These were offences worthy of capital punishment. David was God's chosen servant as King of Israel. God could have killed him for what he did. At the very least, God could have removed David from his throne and never used him again.

But David didn't die. And God didn't remove him from the throne. For David begged forgiveness from God and God forgave him and continued to use him for his purposes.

David and Bathsheba together had a son, Solomon, who, like David himself, was an ancestor of Jesus. Later on God said of David. 'I have found David, son of Jesse, a man after my own heart; he will do everything I want him to do.' "From this man's descendants, God has brought to Israel the Saviour Jesus, as he promised."

Yes, there were ongoing consequences for David's actions, like there is for all of us when we sin. But David learned that God was the God of a second chance.

But so did others in Scripture. People like Jacob who stole his brother's blessing. Who made deals with God. And was a bad husband at times and a bad father. But God didn't reject him. In fact, he changed his name from Jacob that means deceiver, to Israel .. the ancestor of the people of Israel.

In fact, God demonstrated, through his chosen people of Israel, over and over again in the face of their constant rebellion, that he is the God of a second chance.

The apostle Paul is another example. From Christian hater and killer, God gave him a second chance and he was wonderfully used by God to not only take the gospel to the Gentiles but also write so much of our New Testament.

Have you ever thought, God could never forgive me? Or God could never use me again? Not after the things I have done.

Have you thought those kind of thoughts, especially when others were finished with you. When others walked away from you, perhaps criticising you, leaving you feeling rejected. I know what that is like. I have experienced what it's like when others think you are finished. I'll share more on that in a moment.

### **Song**

As I mentioned, I personally know what the rejection of others is like. Following my separation, divorce and remarriage, many people, many who had been close friends, totally rejected me. They judged my actions and cut off all contact. Or if they contacted me, it was only to criticise.

Yes, I had disappointed and hurt people .. but for many .. I was finished. A sinner to be cast aside. But God didn't abandon me. He hasn't rejected me. On the contrary, he offered forgiveness and love. Yes, like David, there are always consequences in life for our actions. But God offered me .. like he offers you .. a second chance.

But, how is it, that God, who hates sin, could offer us sinners such second chances to love him. To serve and obey him. Well, let me share with you a few reasons.

Firstly, God, through his Son Jesus, understands our humanity. "Jesus", as Paul wrote in the book of Philippians, "Did not consider equality with God something to be grasped, (to be held on to), but made himself nothing, taking the very nature of a servant, being made in human likeness, being found in appearance as a man."

Jesus was both fully God and fully human. And so understands us as humans. He relates to our struggles. The temptations that face us every day. Yes, he'd love us to be like him all of the time, but he also knows that this side of heaven, we will always be sinners. Jesus understands what it means to be human. He knows our every weakness.

Secondly, God is a god of love. Yes, God is a righteous and just God. He does and will judge all sin. God never treats sin lightly or as unimportant. He certainly never ignores our sin. But God is love. That is his character. And his love for us, as his creation, is seen in his incredible mercy and amazing grace.

God's saving grace and forgiving love gives us chance after chance in life. In short, God does not treat us as our sins deserve. David wrote in Psalm 103, "The Lord is compassionate and gracious, slow to anger, abounding in love. He does not treat us as our sins deserve or repay us according to our iniquities, for as high as the heavens are above the earth, so great is his love for those who fear him."

But of course, this is where we need to understand what the cross is all about.

By his death on the cross, Jesus did what was necessary to take the penalty of our sin on himself and set us free. God has the grounds for forgiving us the sins that all of us have committed.

Truth is, none of us can ever live up to God's standards. But God isn't setting the standard that if we fail, there is no hope for us. Jesus' death on the cross is all about the fact that we cannot live up to God's standards.

And so, apart from rejecting God and his Son Jesus, there is no sin that God cannot and will not forgive .. if we ask for his forgiveness.

### **Song**

There are consequences in this life for our sin, but God is gracious and will forgive. And, can use us again in his service. He is the God of second chances. Perhaps you need to seek God's forgiveness today and walk with him into a brighter future. He is just waiting for you to talk to him in prayer.

But in conclusion, can I urge you to be like God. To be an imitator of God as Paul urges us, and be a compassionate, gracious, forgiving person. One who will give others a second chance. I have been so blessed by those who have demonstrated such love to me. We are called to love one another, whoever they are. Whatever they've done.

God wants to use you to bless others. And so, if you know someone that you, or others, have walked away from, because of something they did, why not give them a call. Show them love and compassion, just like God has to you.

Remember, God loves you. He died for you. What will you do for others as a response to His love for us? Thanks for listening this morning. God bless.