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**Abortion Aftermath: Finding Freedom**

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No one leaves the planet without wishing they could go back in time. Returning to rethink a moment of weakness, a selfish decision, words that should not have been said, and actions we wish we'd never done. We're all stricken with the same affliction. It's called regret. Life's cruel companion. It nags us till we're numb and scolds us till we scream. She walked up to me in a crowded room of college students with the saddest face. At first, there was concern about what could have happened. Getting close, she whispered *“I'm pregnant.”* I stepped back and did some quick math. She's not lying. She is pregnant and believes it's my baby. She would know. My mind raced bummer. I can't do this. I don't want this. I shot back. It's not mine. She recoiled as if I had slapped her in the face. I turned and walked away. It was unspeakably cruel. She was going to mess up my life. What else could I do? I shook it off. Three years went by. I graduated from college and was doing a short jaunt as a mailman.

After doing drugs for a couple of years, my life was unraveling and becoming more emotionally fragmented. One day, I walked into a small retail shop. No one was there except the girl at the counter. To my shock, it was the girl who had been pregnant with my baby. We were both shocked to see each other. I dropped the mail off and practically ran out of the store without saying anything. Back on the street, I walked about 10 feet before I stopped, leaned against the building, and caught my breath, letting the impact of my past selfish actions sink in. It was an avalanche of regret. I'd abandoned her in her hour of need. I had no understanding or connection to her or the baby in the womb, but my rejection of her was palpable. I was still an atheist, rebelling against God and daily reaping the wages of my sin. But is there any humanity left in me? I knew I would never have that opportunity again. Feeling like the cowardly man I was, I walked back inside, shaking. What I'd done to her seemed unforgivable. I squeaked out. *“I’m so sorry for what I did to you.”* Tears ran down her face. She nodded. It was the most I could say and the best she could do. I crawled out. There was no making it right. Just a brief glimpse at what little character I had left. Sadly, my poor choices would be repeated within a few months.

I discovered the girl I'd been living with for the past year was pregnant. She begged me to get married and have the child. I callously told her I didn't believe in marriage or want children. It was the death blow to our relationship, the coward I was. I gave her a hundred dollars and let her walk into a building alone to abort our baby. My actions were despicable. Now, over 50 years later, these memories still bring a cloud of sadness. The only comfort is knowing I'm forgiven. My sins are covered, washed in the blood of Jesus, resting in the sea of forgetfulness, free from shame and guilt. Shame says, *“You're feeling bad, because you're inherently bad.”* Guilt says, *“You've done something wrong. But if you respond well, it will lead to freedom and victory.”* Shame leads to disgrace and death. Responding correctly to guilt leads to deliverance and life. Guilt can last a moment if we repent and ask Jesus to forgive our sins. Shame can smother us for a lifetime if we choose to believe the devil's lies about the essence of who we are. I choose to believe the only truth that will set me free: God's truth.

Seeing myself as a wounded victim or a scarred warrior is a choice I make every day. The saddest thing I ever did has become my most courageous admission. Many years ago, when I accepted that I would see these children in heaven, I realized I could no longer refer to them as abortion one and abortion two. It was then that God showed me my lost children were sons and gave me names for them: Noah and Caleb.

One day, my wife and I were hiking with two grandchildren in the majestic sequoias of northern California. That morning, we'd received word that a dear couple in our church had a recent abortion. I was crushed even though the day was beautiful. With the sun glistening off the largest living things on earth, my heart was broken. Since our walk was in the snowy off-season, no one was on the trail except one couple with two small boys trying to get out of my emotional funk. I started a conversation and found out the boys' names. You guessed it, Noah and Caleb. It was a miracle coming at just the right moment. Once again, God affirmed that we would see the children we have lost on Earth in Eternity.

Are you lamenting an abortion? My heart aches for you because God's heart aches for you. Not over the sin, but because he grieves for you to receive his complete forgiveness and to begin the healing process of rejecting denial and acknowledging that God's forgiving grace is sufficient to wash away all sin. If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.