

**WELCOME TO**



**FREEDOM  
THAT LASTS<sup>®</sup>**

**WINNING LIFE'S BATTLES THROUGH JESUS CHRIST**



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**WINNING LIFE'S BATTLES THROUGH JESUS CHRIST**

Freedom That Lasts® Welcome Book  
Jim Berg

All Scripture is quoted from the Authorized King James Version unless otherwise noted.

Design and page layout by Craig Stouffer

Published in Greenville, South Carolina, by Freedom That Lasts Ministries.  
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ISBN 978-1-60682-210-4

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# HAVE YOU FALLEN AGAIN?

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All of us face crises from time to time. Perhaps you are in a crisis—or in several crises—right now. Perhaps you have fallen again and feel that there is no use trying any longer. People in crisis often struggle with life-dominating sins like:

Gambling • Eating disorders • Cutting  
Drug addiction (including alcohol/tobacco/prescription)  
Stealing • Sexual sins (including pornography)  
Bad language • Laziness • Suicidal thoughts  
Addictions to electronic gaming, social networking, etc.  
Workaholism • Compulsive shopping, rituals, etc.  
Perfectionism • Obsessive thoughts

These life-dominating sins bind us like slavery. No matter what we try, we can feel that there is no way out. We can feel as if the future is not going to get any better. We can begin to lose hope.

These life-dominating sins can also tempt us to react in negative ways. We can be overcome with negative thoughts and emotions. You may have experienced feelings like:

Fearfulness/anxiety • Anger • Frustration  
Depression • Hurt • Bitterness  
Hatred • A Desire for Vengeance • Discouragement

Because God loves you, He *wants to* and *can* deliver you from these life-dominating sins and negative feelings. We want to help you find the answers you need to have a joyful, productive, and stable life.

# GOD'S PATH TO FREEDOM

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- How would you like to stop falling back into an addiction, a stubborn habit, a life-dominating sin, a bad mood, a critical attitude, or a bitter spirit?
- How would you like to develop the discernment that will help you to see trouble coming your way so that you can avoid it?
- How would you like to have lasting stability, joy, and usefulness?
- How would you like to have a celebrated entrance into heaven when you pass from this earth?
- How would you like to have a real, personal relationship with Jesus Christ—the source of true freedom?

These are all wonderful results from God for those who cultivate a certain kind of character—the character of Jesus Christ. This is why we say right up front . . .

## Freedom Motto

*Jesus Christ is the only source of freedom that lasts.*

While Freedom That Lasts® is a program, it works only because it teaches you how to know Jesus Christ and how to develop and display His character in your life. The Bible tells us what the character of Jesus Christ looks like.

According to 2 Peter 1:5–7, it includes such qualities as a commitment to develop and display the character of Jesus, a knowledge of God, self-control, endurance, brotherly kindness, and love. These qualities of character are called *virtues*. Here is what the apostle Peter says:

## 2 Peter 1:5–7

*And beside this, giving all diligence, add to your faith virtue; and to virtue knowledge; and to knowledge [self-control]; and to [self-control endurance]; and to [endurance] godliness; and to godliness brotherly kindness; and to brotherly kindness [love].*  
(2 Peter 1:5–7)\*

This entire program focuses on helping you to develop and display these qualities of Jesus Christ so that you can be a “living advertisement” of how great our saving God is!

But there is much more! Listen to what God promises you if you develop and display these virtues:

## 2 Peter 1:10b

*If ye do these things [that is, develop these Christlike virtues]  
ye shall never fall.*

That, of course, does not mean that you will be perfect, but it does mean that you won't be stumbling into sin and bondage as you might be doing now or have done in the past. This is great news!

We invite you to join many others who are finding that becoming more and more like Jesus is the only way to find *freedom that lasts*.

\*Throughout this book anytime you see a word surrounded with [brackets], it means that the word was either added or substituted for a word in the King James Version Bible text to make the meaning clearer.

# AN OVERVIEW OF THE FREEDOM THAT LASTS PROGRAM

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Each week that you attend a Freedom That Lasts class, you will meet with people who have been hurt by others, have been enslaved by their own choices, and at times have given up any hope that life can be different.

You will participate in large group teaching times where you will be taught from the Bible how God says that you can overcome the effects of others' sins against you and can overcome the temptations to make your own sinful choices. The large group sessions will often include testimonies from others who are seeing God work in their lives. They may also include times of singing praises to God and, of course, times of prayer, asking God for help and thanking Him for victories won.

In addition you will meet for a brief time in a small group setting – a Care Group – to discuss the lessons you learned from the exercises in the *Freedom That Lasts Student Manual*. This small group time is a time of accountability and a time of personal encouragement and counsel from your group leader and helpers.

At the core of this program is the Bible itself. Your *Freedom That Lasts Student Manual* will direct you to verses in the Bible that will help you understand the principles of freedom and will lead you into a growing relationship with Jesus Christ Himself.

Next to the Bible and God Himself, your greatest help will come from your faithful attendance at the services of a Bible-preaching church. There you will hear God's Word preached so that you can grow in your understanding of God and His ways. You will also find support from Christians who know and love God and who know and love His Word, the Bible.



## Student Manual

Each week you will work through several exercises in the *Freedom That Lasts Student Manual*. Through various exercises, the *Freedom That Lasts Student Manual* will acquaint you with the truths of God's Word that brings freedom that lasts and will require some sort of response on your part.

Begin working on these checkpoint exercises as soon as you can after your weekly Freedom That Lasts meeting. Make them a part of your daily routine—preferably, first thing in the morning.

Each week in your Care Group, your group leader or helper will sign off the work you have completed.

# ARE YOU A CHILD OF GOD?

The Bible makes it clear that if you are a believer you cannot continue in a life-dominating, habitual sin without conviction by God's Spirit and chastening from God Himself. Jesus said, "As many as I love, I rebuke and chasten." He then commands the believer to "be zealous therefore, and repent" (Revelation 3:19).

The Bible is also clear that those who continually practice sin without that conviction and chastening from God are not children of God. Look at his words in 1 John 3:9–10.

*Whosoever is born of God does not [make a practice of sinning]; for [God's] seed remaineth in him: and he cannot [keep on sinning], because he is born of God. In this the children of God are manifest, and the children of the devil: whosoever [does not practice] righteousness is not of God.*

John is not teaching that a Christian cannot sin. He is teaching that ongoing sinful habits should make a person stop and think about the true state of his soul before God. The Bible's teaching can be summarized in this way.

*A Christian may lapse into sin but will loath it, but an unbeliever will live in sin and love it.*

You need to honestly ask yourself which of these two categories describes you. Do not assume that by making a profession of faith in the past you were born again if you have lived a life dominated by addiction and have not experienced the conviction and chastening of God about your sin.

As you can see, this matter of being a child of God is the central issue to consider as you seek to overcome your sinful habits. Therefore, prayerfully and carefully consider the questions below.

## A Crucial Question<sup>1</sup>

Let me ask you a personal question. If you were to die today from a terminal illness or in some tragic accident and you were to stand before God, how would you answer God when He asked you this question: “Why should I let you into My heaven?”

Some people might feel that because they have been deeply religious and have obeyed the Ten Commandments<sup>2</sup> most of the time, God should let them into heaven. Others might feel that because they have lived by the Golden Rule<sup>3</sup> and have been honest and moral in their dealings with others, they should be allowed to enter. They are saying essentially that God should allow them to enter heaven because they have been good in some way.

Jesus predicted that many people would come to Him on that day and would say exactly those things. He says that His reply to them will be, “I never knew you: depart from me, ye that [practice sin]” (Matthew 7:23). You see, no matter how many good things we have done, the factor that will keep us out of heaven is our sin.

The Bible makes it clear that “all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God” (Romans 3:23). That means that all of us have lived as if *we* are important and that God doesn’t matter. We instinctively place ourselves first instead of God and turn to our “own way” (Isaiah 53:6).

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<sup>1</sup>Jim Berg, *When Trouble Comes* (Greenville, SC: BJU Press, 2002), 21–27.

<sup>2</sup>Exodus 20:3–17.

<sup>3</sup>The Golden Rule: “Do unto others as you would have them do unto you” is a paraphrase of Jesus’ statement in Matthew 7:12.

Even our effort to get to heaven by being good shows our rebellion against God because He said that there is no way any of us can be good enough to merit heaven.

Every one of us has broken God's Ten Commandments—and have done so, many times. He very clearly said that “the wages of sin is [eternal] death” (Romans 6:23). That means that all of us, because of our rebellion of going our own stubborn way in life, deserve the everlasting punishment of hell because of our mutiny against the Creator.

## Good News!

The good news for us is that eternal life—life in heaven with Jesus Christ forever—is not something we have to earn. It is a gift! Though “the wages of sin is [eternal] death . . . the gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord” (Romans 6:23). That is good news because the Bible also tells us that it is “not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to his mercy he saved us” (Titus 3:5). God is willing to mercifully give us a gift we cannot earn. He wants to give us eternal life. But that gift must be personally received by us.

Many public meeting halls operate a lost and found area for those who use the facilities. The lost and found staff holds the property until someone comes by, identifies himself as the owner, and claims the item.

Salvation from the eternal punishment of our sins is available to everyone, but we too must personally claim it.

How can salvation be a free gift? Though it is free to us, it cost Jesus Christ everything. You see, our sins against God require that a penalty be paid. Sinning against our Creator is such a great offense that the only just penalty is eternal suffering and separation from God Himself in hell. Hell is the result of God's granting a man his request—“God, leave me alone.” We may not realize it, but that is essentially what we say to God every time we reject His way and live life our own way. That is the bad news for the sinner.<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>4</sup>Jesus Himself speaks of hell as a place of literal torment (Luke 16:19-31).

The good news is that God loves us and arranged for His own Son to live on this earth to pay the penalty for us. Though Jesus lived in a body like ours, He did not share our sinful and stubborn nature. He lived a sinless life in complete obedience to His Father while on the earth. He qualified—as a perfect sacrificial lamb—to die in our place. Look at these chilling but wonderful words from the Old Testament, which predicted the sacrificial death of Jesus Christ on the cross for us:

*He was wounded for our transgressions, he was bruised for our iniquities: the chastisement [for] our peace was upon him; and with his stripes we are healed. All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned every one to his own way; and the Lord hath laid on him the iniquity of us all (Isaiah 53:5–6).*

The apostle John states the same thing this way:

*For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life . . . He that believeth on him is not condemned: but he that believeth not is condemned already, because he hath not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God. (John 3:16, 18)*

Jesus' sacrifice of His own blood as the eternal payment for anyone who would believe on Him satisfied the righteous anger of God against our mutiny. All that is left for us is to admit to God that we are indeed hell-deserving sinners, to realize that Jesus died in our place and arose from the dead, and then to accept the gift of eternal life from God. It is a simple plan—one that even a child can understand. A child will cry out for help to the person he believes will help him. A sinner who wants the gift of eternal life can come to Jesus Christ by praying a prayer like this:

*Lord Jesus, I realize that I am a sinner. I have not obeyed You. I have gone my own way many times. Since You are perfect and Your heaven is perfect, I realize that even one sin would disqualify me from heaven.<sup>5</sup> I repent of my sin and ask Your forgiveness. I accept Your gift of eternal life. I want Your substitutionary death to be applied to my sin account.<sup>6</sup> Cleanse me from my sin and make me one of Your own children.<sup>7</sup> Thank You for loving me and for saving me.*

It is our prayer that if you do not know Jesus Christ as your personal Savior from sin, you will repent of your sin and come to Christ today. He is waiting to hear from you.

If you want to know more about how to become a child of God and how you can have your sins forgiven, please see your group leader, *Freedom That Lasts* director, or your pastor.

*For whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved (Romans 10:13).*

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<sup>5</sup>James 2:10.

<sup>6</sup>2 Corinthians 5:21.

<sup>7</sup>John 1:12.

# WHERE DO YOU GO FROM HERE?

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Each week at Freedom That Lasts you will use the Bible to discover what God has done in your behalf to make you a free person—a person who brings honor to Him and who lives joyfully and fruitfully before others.

We would love to have you as a regular participant in our Freedom That Lasts program. We want you to have a growing personal relationship with Jesus Christ—the only true source of freedom.

Join us weekly for Bible study, testimonies, encouragement, personal counseling, prayer, and times of singing and fellowship. We would be honored to have you as a family member in our church fellowship, where you will learn more about our great God and His great love for you. We hope we will see you again soon!





## BEGINNING YOUR JOURNEY TO FREEDOM THAT LASTS

This welcome book is your first step on a wonderful journey to freedom from life-dominating sins! It introduces you to the Freedom That Lasts® program and lets you know what to expect from the classes, discussion times, and exercises.

You will probably find this program different from any you have experienced before. This program will show you that Jesus Christ is the only source of freedom and that through Him you can win life's battles.

As you journey through the program you may become weary and suffer setbacks, but in the end you will win your battle if you will allow Jesus Christ to develop His character in you. So get started immediately, and let's see what God can do!

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RELIGION/CHRISTIAN MINISTRY/COUNSELING & RECOVERY



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