

## **Chapter 4: A Mess by any Other Name is Still a Mess**

### **Life Application Verses:**

**Proverbs 3: 5-6.** Trust in the LORD with all your heart and do not lean on your own understanding. In all your ways acknowledge Him, and He will make your paths straight.

In the book, *Chicken Soup for the Soul: Billy Graham & Me: 101 Inspiring Personal Stories from Presidents, Pastors, Performers, and Other People Who Know Him Well*<sup>1</sup>, there is a section that details the following:

When involved in a ‘wreck’, it’s vitally important to not run away from our Heavenly Father, or try to hide from Him, or avoid Him, or deny our responsibility, or rationalize our behavior. We need to run to Him, throw our arms of Faith around Him, and confess our sin. Just pour out our hearts and tell Him about the trouble we are in and the mess we’ve made.

If you listen carefully, you will hear your Heavenly Father whispering to your heart: “I knew all along about your sin. I was watching you when it happened. I was just waiting for you to come tell Me. I love you. I can fix the mess you’ve made and turn the consequences into a Blessing if you will submit them to Me. And in the long run, you will be a better person because of this—more compassionate towards others and more trusting of Me” (p. 224).

Shakespeare once said, “A rose by any other name is still a rose.” So is a mess. You can call it a mistake, an oversight, a lapse in concentration, a deliberate act, or you can Flip Wilson it: *‘the devil made me do it’*, but it’s still a mess (Flip Wilson is an old reference, so you younger folks might need to look up the reference). How does Webster define a mess? I warn you, it ain’t pretty, so if this is going to be difficult, look away for a second and then read it anyway: a mess is ‘one that is disordered, untidy, offensive, or unpleasant usually because of blundering, laxity, or misconduct.’ I know what you’re thinking...not me, I did NOT blunder, I was NOT lax, and I did NOT conduct misconduct! Hmmm...same things I’ve said through the years. Let’s investigate this a bit and do our best not to make a mess of it.

We are made of dust of the Earth—God said so. ((Then the LORD God formed man of dust from the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; and man became a living being (Genesis 2:7)). We are living in an imperfect world as a result of sin. However, I am a born-

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<sup>1</sup> Posner, S, & Newmark, A. (2013). *Billy Graham & Me: 101 Inspiring Personal Stories from Presidents, Pastors, Performers, and Other People Who Know Him Well*. Cos Cob, CT: Chicken Soup for the Soul Publishing, LLC.

again, sincere believer in Jesus Christ, who is the Son of the Most High God. I believe that God Almighty is the Creator of All Things. I have always been and will continue to be an imperfect being, a Sinner Saved by Grace and Mercy through the Gift of Jesus Christ on the Cross, and His Death, Burial, and Resurrection. But I haven't made any mistakes since...let me think...since I had breakfast today. Can this be true? Mistakes have not been made since breakfast and it's now some hours since I broke the fast? Wait...I didn't mean to say mistakes...just slip-ups. Well, okay...maybe a little blunder...alright!!! I was maybe a little lax in my attitude on the way to work towards that driver who nearly improved the little dents in my car to make them big dents! I have not conducted any misconduct since...Okay, Okay, Okay...I get the point!!!! You might ask at this juncture in our investigation, 'what are you talking about?' Sorry, didn't mean to blunder by blabbering. I'm talking about being in a mess and Trusting God in Christ to help us out...

To be *Heavenly Minded, Earthly Good* is an ideal to strive for in this life. It is an axiom, a goal, a baseline, a worthy life to live, and unfortunately it is IMPOSSIBLE to be 100% 'messless.' The only individual who achieved 100% perfection in this life was the Lord Jesus Christ Himself. He alone is exempt from disordered, untidy, offensive, or unpleasant behavior because of blundering, laxity, or misconduct. The rest of us...well, we have been instructed in the Word of God to pray without ceasing, keep our eyes on Jesus, walk as sheep among the wolves and be wise, care for others, and OBEY! It's not that we are going to be free from making a mess in our lives, it's more that we understand that the mess we create—while unintentional—is still a mess. And who do we turn to in times of our messes--to our Heavenly Father, in repentance and seeking his forgiveness and restoration to fellowship, of course—in Christ Jesus!

What is a blunder? Does it mean that we are blundering idiots? Not in the least. It means that we **WILL** make mistakes. Let me give you an example. We have a granddaughter who is an absolute gift from God. She is an angel in our family. She also had a bit of strong will at times (mostly outgrown those now). One day, my wife had made a decision that our angel did not need something for obvious reasons; well, TaterPop (what my granddaughter calls me) made the mistake of giving her the item in question. (Why, I still don't fully know.) Then, a problem occurred from the item and there was some time out needed—for the angel and the

blundering idiot—me! I learned something from that: God gave us a brain to think with. Thinking is an action verb, not a passive, emotional, lackadaisical event! Did I make a mess of the situation with my wife and granddaughter? Was I trying to rationalize it so that it came out right in my own mind? Yes, a bit I suppose. As simple as this event may sound, it created a situation between me and the two people I love so very dearly—I simply made a mess of the otherwise peaceful time we were having together. I realized very quickly that this was unacceptable to God because a mess between husband or wife or father and daughter or between you and God is not something that God desires in our lives. Our God knows every little mess we make and He sees every detail of it right down to the motives and our attitude. So I ask the question: How do we let these messes get started in the first place?

Sometimes we create a mess and wonder what happened? Like the old saying, “There are three kinds of people; those that make things happen, those that watch things happen, and those who don't know what's happening.” Just how do our messes take shape? In my own situation, what did I do that seemed not to be an error in judgment at that very moment? Or better, did my lack of attention to detail cause this mess to surface and allow it to take on a life of its own? Could it be that living life here on this Third Rock from the Sun requires diligence at all times? You see how this works? We can and must be Heavenly Minded in terms of studying the Word of God, actively applying it to our cognizant lives from the time we rise in the morning to the time we lay our heads down to sleep. This is a practice that is about being conscientious and intentional towards our relationship with our God and others. It requires us to be alert to His Word, as practicing prayer Warriors, committed to Him in all things—these are the things that constitute our effort to be Earthly Good. But Earthly Good is not a road to perfection; it is fraught with speed-bumps, stumbling, and yes—even some ‘blundering, laxity, or misconduct.’

Let me clarify one item here: misconduct doesn't need to be illegal to be misconduct. In the eyes of God, misconduct is an attitude, an action, or an avoidance of mistakes to say we have not ‘sinned.’ Like my example about the granddaughter in which I created a mess of things over a little item that caused the time-out problem. My attitude was that I thought she should have something; my action caused the mess; and my avoidance of the mistake was to rationalize what was already obviously not rational—to override my wife's decisions. Boy-oh-

boy, life's lessons are so hard to learn sometimes! **And God saw it all...** Lord forgive me for all my blunders (and I say this with the most profound sincerity) because sometimes I am a 'blundering idiot!' Sometimes, I am a mess looking for a place to happen!

In the Application Verse, we are instructed to trust the Lord with all our heart and to stop with the introspection to rationalize what we know is a mess that we made. It also says that we should acknowledge Him in ALL of our ways so that He will make our paths straight. Why do our paths need straightening? Well, think of it this way: when you are walking along a straight section of sidewalk and there are muddy-mud puddles (Peppa Pigg's favorite!!!) in the way, what do you do? Do you go around them or walk through them? When you walk around them, your path is no longer straight! Well, correlate the straight sidewalk and mud puddles to the messes we make. We tend to rationalize them, talk them away, make excuses, blame others, and avoid them when possible—in essence, our messes become mud puddles. What life-changing truth is being advocated in this example?

Are we Heavenly Minded enough to unconditionally trust God? Is our trust so deep that we **lovingly expect** our Heavenly Father to help us avoid the messes that our enemy lays before us like snares for unknowing prey? I don't know about you, but I would have preferred to not have created the mess with my wife and granddaughter because it took a few days for us to discuss the situation and agree on how we should guide our little angel in future situations similar to the one I messed up. I believe with all of my being that the devil desires for us to mess things up so that we forget to tell God about it and then our fellowship suffers—with him, each other, our children, and so on. Any time we are out of the will of God or lose our fellowship with Him or our family members—it is a terrible thing! When our children do something that creates a mess, we don't throw them out like the proverbial bath water that cleaned the baby! No! We love them still and we do whatever is necessary to help them straighten out the mess and restore them to ourselves in the Love and Grace of God in Christ.

In Isaiah 30:21, (NIV), "Whether you turn to the right or to the left, your ears will hear a voice behind you, saying, 'This is the way, walk in it.'" If we listen to this voice, we will be following God's desire to "make our paths straight" and avoid the traps, snares, and messes our enemy so desperately wants us to fall into. A mess by another name is still a mess and it brings

with it the potential to create situations between us and others that may not be necessary or desired. Let me reiterate the following: strive diligently to remain Heavenly Minded all of your life, no matter what. There are going to be times when you will fall down but get back up just as soon as you can. But, while you are down from the fall of the mess, never stop praying. **And when you (and I) make a mess of things, remember:**

When involved in a ‘wreck’, it’s vitally important to not run away from our Heavenly Father, or try to hide from Him, or avoid Him, or deny our responsibility, or rationalize our behavior. We need to run to Him, throw our arms of Faith around Him, and confess our sin. Just pour out our hearts and tell Him about the trouble we are in and the mess we’ve made.

If you listen carefully, you will hear your Heavenly Father whispering to your heart: “I knew all along about your sin. I was watching you when it happened. I was just waiting for you to come tell Me. I love you. I can fix the mess you’ve made and turn the consequences into a Blessing if you will submit them to Me. And in the long run, you will be a better person because of this—more compassionate towards others and more trusting of Me.”

#### **A Question of Curiosity:**

The next time you find yourself in a mess of a situation, remember to run to God, not away from Him, as soon as you realize that you are in the mess—right then, go to God. For when you think about it, you can’t run from God. If you go to the farthest corners of the Earth, He is there; if you could swim to the Mariana Trench (lowest place on Earth @ 36,201 feet), He is there; and if you go to the highest place on Earth, Mount Everest @ 29,035 feet, He is there. So, save yourself the anguish of running and confess to God in Christ your mess. He is Faithful and Just to Forgive us if we confess our sins (1 John 1: 9).

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**"The greatest way to witness is by walking that straight and narrow road and also realizing that you're going to mess up. That's what grace is for. We're going to fall, but we've got to get back up. And you've got to improve. And that's what I'm all about."** ~ Tim Tebow ~

**"Status quo, you know, is Latin for 'the mess we're in'."** ~ Ronald Reagan ~

**The meaning of life. The wasted years of life. The poor choices of life. God answers the mess of life with one word: 'grace.'** ~ Max Lucado ~

**"Even little babies don't like the mess they're in..."** ~ Unknown ~

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**Read it again...but this time, read it Heavenly Minded to achieve Earthly Good**

*When involved in a ‘wreck’, it’s vitally important to not run away from our Heavenly Father, or try to hide from Him, or avoid Him, or deny our responsibility, or rationalize our behavior.*

- Heavenly Minded Truth: God never leaves us to fend for ourselves if we seek His face in all things as Christian Children of God, in Christ Jesus.
- Earthly Good Truth: Like the slogan of Nike—just do it! Seek His Face, be Faithful in all things, and Pray to understand the true meaning of God’s Gift in Jesus Christ. No mess is bigger than our God.

*We need to run to Him, throw our arms of Faith around Him, and confess our sin. Just pour out our hearts and tell Him about the trouble we are in and the mess we’ve made.*

- Heavenly Minded Truth: He is Faithful to Forgive us—in every mess we make.
- Earthly Good Truth: We cannot hide from God and we have no secrets from Him. He knows all of our thoughts, intents, and deeds. So why try to hide from God when he knows all things? Confess to Him fully our messes and allow Him to work it out for His good in and through us. This is life to the fullest in the Love of God and the saving power of Jesus Christ.

*If you listen carefully, you will hear your Heavenly Father whispering to your heart: “I knew all along about your sin. I was watching you when it happened. I was just waiting for you to come tell Me. I love you. I can fix the mess you’ve made and turn the consequences into a Blessing if you will submit them to Me. And in the long run, you will be a better person because of this—more compassionate towards others and more trusting of Me.”*

- Heavenly Minded Truth: The Voice of God through the Holy Spirit is real. Never doubt this and ask God, in Jesus, to allow you to hear The Spirit’s still small voice in your life so ‘loudly’ that it overshadows the whispers of the Enemy. As you seek His will and pray in earnest, He will move in your life as you cannot imagine. He can fix the mess, the broken heart, the split in relationships, and all things—if we would just tell Him all about the problem and let God WORK in our lives.
- Earthly Good Truth: God is real; Jesus Christ is real; the Holy Spirit is real. His Word is Truth and life changing and we will be a better person if we Seek His Will through our Savior, Jesus Christ. Do you doubt this? Then read the passage and relate scripture to it—I promise you that it will change your life forever and in ways you least expect! A mess by any other name is still a mess—until we confront it, confess it, and conform not to the mess! “Trust in the LORD with all your heart and do not lean on your own understanding. In all your ways acknowledge Him, and He will make your paths straight.”

### **My Prayer For You (A Prayer for Myself):**

Father God, I am sometimes my own worst enemy. I get so focused on the things of this world, that I lose sight of Your Love and our Fellowship. I am so prone to make a mess of things at times and I am so sorry for not being Faithful in all things. It is my responsibility before You to do what is right in Your sight; I stand before Your Throne of Grace and Mercy and ask forgiveness as I confess my sin and my error in judgment. Grant me a restored Fellowship that is more important than even my very life. Oh Lord God, I am but a sinner saved by Your excellent Mercy, Grace, and Love, and yet sometimes, I feel like a bumbling idiot because I lose sight of You in my waking hours and decisions in life. Without You and the gift of Jesus as my Lord and Savior, life has no meaning. When I make a mess of things, from little things to more serious issues, I confess to You my bad decisions and actions. I need you my God and I need Your direction and guidance for every decision that I make. I pray that the Holy Spirit will guide my thoughts before I act so that what I do will be pleasing in Your sight. Holy are You oh Lord and Merciful towards us. I humbly lift up these concerns before Your Throne of Grace and Mercy; In the name of the Risen Son of God, Christ Jesus, I pray. Amen.

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Albert Einstein has given us a bit of wonderful wisdom, and I paraphrase: “How can we get out of the mess we’ve made if we keep doing the same things that caused us to get in the mess in the first place?” [Famous Quote is: “We can’t solve problems by using the same kind of thinking we used when we created them.”] Simple solution: Think as God in Christ Jesus wants us to think, act, and live. Jesus thinking is thinking with clarity of thought, action, and

motive. The image here is a maze. Have you ever been in one of these? Several years ago, our family went to a cavern in upstate Alabama. We spent time in the cave, hunted for ‘jewels’ and decided to try the maze. The walls of the maze were some 12 feet high and looking over them or through the cracks proved helpful to nothing. That maze is like being in a mess. You are inside the mess, you seek a way out, but your thinking about how to get out is confused, blocked, and distorted by Satan. Jesus offers a way out. He is the Light and while in the maze or the mess, seek the light and walk towards that Light. Don’t take your eyes off that Light, nor get distracted by other ‘lights’ that seem to be attractive or engaging. When our family members were in the maze, it was like being in a mess and we had to shout at the end of the maze to help them escape. You can’t think your way out of the mess because it was out wrong thinking and actions that got us there in the first place. Einstein was right! And our God is RIGHT to guide us in His Word and give us



Christ to be our Savior and Guide in life. Don’t let the mess keep you from God’s Salvation and Glory. Follow Jesus and He will take you out of the mess, maze, and mysteries of life. Listen to His teachings, Truths, and remember that Jesus said: “If you have seen Me, you have seen the Father.” There is no maze or mess that can change that Glorious Truth and Hope!

