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Daily Devotional

“The Harm Of Self-Deprecation” – Paul Smith

ANNCR: April 13th, “The Harm Of Self-Deprecation.” A pastor once said, “Humility is not thinking less of yourself, but thinking of yourself less.” What this statement describes is the often-misunderstood truth that a continual life of self-deprecation is not the key to a deeper walk with Christ. In fact, it is actually a subtle redirection from the path God has for us to one that could be our undoing. Today we’ll hear from a man whose self-loathing nearly led to destruction. He’s here to share with us his true story on this UNSHACKLED Daily Devotional.

PAUL: The first hug I ever remember getting came from my first-grade teacher at the end of the year. I could hardly believe someone cared about me. My parents didn’t. I’m Paul Smith, and I grew up abused, neglected and abandoned by my drunken parents. As the oldest, I became the main caregiver to my seven younger siblings.

I escaped – even as a child – into drugs. When I was 12, the school secretary took me into her home, and I prospered for a time; but I couldn’t seem to accept love, and my rebellion grew. At fifteen I

went back to my father. By then he and my mother were divorced. In the next few years, my drug use grew, I attended 15 different high schools, spent six months in the navy, and fathered a child. Then I became a Satanist and really went downhill.

Rituals, talismans, even animal sacrifice became routine for me as my self-loathing grew. I was arrested many times and became more violent and paranoid. I could not tell reality from hallucination. Wanting to die, I repeatedly overdosed on drugs. In desperation, I went to church, renounced Satan and asked God to forgive me. Then I served more than four years in prison for drug dealing and there I totally gave my life to Christ.

After I was released, I went to Bible college. By God's grace I was an honor student and was allowed to go to India on a mission trip, even though I was still on probation. I married a student named Vanessa, and today we serve the Lord in India as missionaries.

ANNCR: Psalm chapter 146, verse 8 says, *“The LORD openeth the eyes of the blind: the LORD raiseth them that are bowed down: the LORD loveth the righteous:”* Friend, when we gaze upon the majesty of our God, it is only right that we are “bowed down.” But the beauty of the gospel is that God, in His unfathomable grace, has raised us up! We have

been made righteous in Him. We may be tempted to focus only on our wretchedness and inferiority, and even wallow in it, but this is not the full gospel. Instead, the more loathsome we insist we are, the less we can truly receive God's love, creating our own separation from God, just as Paul did. And the more we focus on our infirmities, the less we can glorify what Jesus has accomplished – salvation that offers complete forgiveness and grace! Will you receive this truth today?

CREDITS: Unshackled Daily Devotionals are produced by Pacific Garden Mission along with our Unshackled Audio Dramas. To find even more true stories of God's saving, transforming power, visit our website, unshackled.org.

This episode was written by Kennetha Gaebler and Elizabeth Kupfershmid and narrated by Tim Gregory and Darren Stephens.

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