

COVER STORY: Too Far Gone? Not for Jesus

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This fallen world often measures people by their failures, keeps score of sins and counts some souls as beyond saving. Yet there is a truth still ringing clear through the ages—no one is too far gone for the love of God.

Don Dickerman knows this better than most.

For more than four decades, Dickerman, a Texas pastor-turned-prison evangelist and deliverance minister, has walked the long, echoing corridors of some of the most notorious penitentiaries in the world. He's sat face-to-face with death row inmates, hardened gang members, serial killers, and drug lords. And through tear-filled eyes and Spirit-filled encounters, he's seen them come undone—not through fear of judgment, but through the overwhelming love of a forgiving Savior.

"I knew 40 years ago I would be writing this book," Dickerman shares in his newest release, *Death Row Redemption*. "I was meeting so many notorious inmates, and it was not because I was seeking them. It seemed as though God was putting me in contact with the meanest of all inmates. I knew then as I know now that no one—not you, not me, not a drug dealer, not a serial killer on death row—is too far gone for Jesus to reach them and set them free."

This message, as old as the Gospel itself, might seem out of reach to a culture that delights in canceling the

irredeemable. But in prisons across America and beyond, the Holy Spirit is moving in power, reminding us all of this unfathomable truth: the grace of God is greater than the worst of human sin.

“God Tricked Me”

In his early ministry years, Dickerman had other dreams. “I was valedictorian of my graduating class, and I was ready to be the next Billy Graham,” he laughs. “Just rent me a stadium and turn me loose.” He never envisioned himself casting out demons or preaching in prisons—two assignments that would’ve been last on his list. But God had other plans.

It all began unexpectedly when he accepted an interim pastoral role at Shady Oaks Baptist Church in Hurst, Texas. God blessed the church’s growth—so much so that they led the county in baptisms. Everything looked like traditional ministry success. Until one night, the phone rang.

It was a young woman from the congregation: “My husband just shot a man!”

That crisis call led Dickerman into the Ferguson Unit in Midway, Texas. He agreed to accompany the distraught wife to visit her husband behind bars.

“I already thought I knew what the inmates were like—hard-faced and scarred with cold, uncaring eyes,” he recalls. “Instead, I saw guys who looked like me and my two boys. I saw parents visiting their children. What a surprise!”

The inmate, Kenny, asked Dickerman if he would come back to preach in the prison chapel—a chapel he hadn’t even known existed. That invitation would change the trajectory of his life. Soon, he was preaching regularly at Ferguson, and doors began opening in prisons across Texas, then across the country and eventually across the globe.

“I eventually went there to preach, and that led me to preach in more than 850 different prisons in the Caribbean, Europe and all over the United States and Canada, some as many as a hundred times.”

His response? “I wouldn’t change anything.”

Grace in the Shadows

Over the years, Dickerman has watched miracles unfold in the most unlikely places. Hardened men have wept under conviction. Murderers have cried out for mercy. Satanists have renounced the darkness and embraced the light.

He tells story after story—of gang leaders laying down their power, of men with nothing left but rage and regret falling to their knees in surrender, of inmates who once lived for evil now living for Christ behind bars.

“I see things at the hand of God that I never saw in the local churches,” he admits. “I see the truth that no one is so far gone they can’t be redeemed by the Savior.”

The backdrop is often bleak. Many of the men Dickerman ministers to will never step outside the prison gates again. Some are on death row. Some will die behind bars. And yet, the eternal destinies of these men are being rewritten—not with chalk or ink, but with the blood of Jesus.

“When I shared their stories with friends, I always got the same response: ‘You need to write a book,’” he says.

After much prayer, he heard seven clear words from the Lord: “Write the book; I will bless it.”

Memoir + Testimony = The Good News

Death Row Redemption is more than a memoir. It’s a testimony to God’s mercy in the most hopeless places. It’s an unapologetic declaration that Jesus saves—even still, even

now, even there, through gut-wrenching stories of inmates whose lives were radically transformed by the love of Christ. But the real message is not just about changed lives behind bars—it's about the limitless reach of the Gospel.

One such story involves a man who had killed multiple people. He was notorious within the prison system. Dangerous. Cold. Untouchable. But when Dickerman met him, he sensed the Spirit prompting him to speak—not of wrath, but of mercy.

That inmate, through tears, repented and gave his life to Christ. Days later, he wrote a letter thanking Dickerman for seeing him as more than the sum of his crimes. He died shortly afterward, executed by the state—but not before being born again by the Spirit of God.

“This is what the cross is all about,” Dickerman says. “Jesus didn’t die for perfect people. He died for the broken, the vile, the lost. He died for murderers and liars and thieves—and for religious people who think they don’t need saving.”

What the Church Needs to Hear

While *Death Row Redemption* highlights the dramatic salvations of death row inmates, Dickerman hopes its message reaches far beyond prison walls.

“Too many Christians live like they believe in a limited Gospel,” he warns. “They think grace is for the ‘good sinners’—the ones who made a few mistakes but cleaned themselves up. But the gospel isn’t for cleaned-up sinners. It’s for the spiritually dead.”

That’s why Dickerman is passionate about reminding the church that the power of the cross is still the only hope for humanity—whether behind bars or behind church pews.

“God is not afraid of your past,” he says. “He already knows

every dark thing you've done. He's not shocked. He's not retreating. He's running toward you, arms wide open, with a forgiveness that you can't earn and could never deserve."

It's the same message found in John 3:16–18, which Dickerman shares prominently in his book: "For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life. For God did not send His Son into the world to condemn the world, but that the world through Him might be saved. He who believes in Him is not condemned," (MEV).

The Gospel Still Works

In a society that often recycles outrage and amplifies judgment, *Death Row Redemption* is a bold reminder that the Gospel still works. It still saves. It still breaks chains. It still speaks life where there was only death.

If God can reach a serial killer on death row, what excuse do we have to give up on anyone?

If He can take a gang leader and turn him into a worship leader—behind prison bars—what sin do we think is too great for Him to forgive?

And if God can take a pastor who once dreamed of stadium revivals and call him into the darkness of death row, where light now shines through every sermon, then surely He can use any of us in unexpected places for unimaginable purposes.

"Meeting these notorious inmates and seeing their lives changed by the power of God began to be almost commonplace," Dickerman writes. "I knew then that I would be writing this book."

He hopes that those who read it will walk away with one undeniable truth—no one is so far gone they can't be redeemed by the Savior.

A Call to Remember

The stories may be dramatic. The conversions may feel extreme. But at the heart of *Death Row Redemption* is a message that applies to every reader: Whether you've spent your life in a pew or a prison, your only hope is Christ. And the same blood that washed the worst of criminals clean is the same blood offered to you today.

There is nothing you've done that disqualifies you from the love of God.

There is no place so dark that His light can't find you.

There is no heart too hard, no past too painful, no failure too final.

God's forgiveness is not portioned out in doses—it is poured out in full. That is the message of Don Dickerman's life. That is the promise of the Gospel. That is the hope of *Death Row Redemption*. And it's available to you—even now.

Don Dickerman, an ordained Southern Baptist minister, has led a prison evangelistic ministry since 1974, bringing deliverance and healing to countless lives. Spirit-filled and anointed, Don's ministry impacts both prisons and churches, sharing transformative messages of freedom and hope. His new book, *Death Row Redemption*, is available now at .