



I love the beach. I love to sit on the beach at the water's edge in my sand chair, hat on head, book in hand. There, in my spot, I people watch, read, nap, and daydream. One week at the beach, due to a strong and warm southwest wind, the ocean was rough and the tides especially high. When the water retreated, it left in its wake a treasury of shells. My interest was peaked and I spent quite some time each day searching the shells in quest of the most beautiful, colorful, and perfectly shaped shell to add to my collection. With every shell I was reminded of my God who designed and created it; The One, True God who gave the shells their shape, color, and purpose.

The dark-colored shells reminded me of my sin and my need for a Savior. Some of my favorite shells were white with red markings. They reminded me of Christ's blood which was shed for me and cleanses me from my sin and makes me white as snow. Some of the shells were brightly colored with orange and yellow. These shells reminded me of the sun that rises each day and the hope I have for the future because of Jesus Christ. With every shell, God spoke loudly and clearly with truths from His Word.

As I stepped over, on, and around the shells, my eyes zoomed in on the broken ones. In fact, most of the shells on the beach were broken and chipped, with jagged edges, evidence of wear and tear. They had been churned up, tossed about, thrown out and abandoned on the beach. If they could talk they might say, "I thought I was important. I thought someone loved me. I thought I had a purpose. But now I'm left out here. No one notices me, wants me or loves me. I'm not pretty or handsome anymore. I'm damaged goods. What good am I?" Sounds silly, doesn't it? But that's exactly what many of us say and feel too. We are like those shells. Life has been hard. It hasn't always been fair. We live in a sinful world. Things didn't turn out like we thought they would. We've made bad choices and mistakes and life has churned us up, tossed us about, and thrown us out. We feel abandoned and unnoticed. We think that no one could ever love us and we could never be "whole" again. We may feel we are undeserving of forgiveness and acceptance.

The good news is God loves us even when life doesn't. Even when we think we can't be loved. He loves the broken pieces and He takes each one and smooths the jagged edges. He notices us and knows every tear that falls. Through His Son, Jesus Christ, we have forgiveness and healing. God created each one of us for a purpose and He can use the bad choices and the mistakes to refine us for that purpose. God never wastes our suffering and our experiences in life. He weaves them all together, good and bad, to create something beautiful that reflects the image of Christ. God knew when He created us that we were going to mess up. He knew that we are sinners and we would disobey Him. And yet, He still made us and He still loves us. So much so that He gave His one and only Son Jesus for us. In Him, we are made new, we are made beautiful, we are a new creation. The broken shells on



the beach may not seem as pretty as the whole ones. But the broken shells remind us of God's love, forgiveness, healing, and restoration. In the cracks of our own broken pieces, Jesus shines through. I'm thinking those broken pieces are the loveliest of all!

***Therefore, if anyone is in Christ,
he is a new creation;
the old has gone, the new has come!***

2 Corinthians 5:17

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