

Unshackled!

The Ed Baldwin Story

(narrator) "How do you do? Won't you come with us? We'll take you into the turbulent center of the life of a remarkable man. You'll see him at the moment of his most terrible despair."

(attendant at asylum) "This is your VIP suite Baldwin."

(Ed Baldwin) "You'd put me into a place like that?"

(attendant at asylum) "You agreed." You had your mother sign the papers. So the commitment is all legal."

(Ed Baldwin) "Alright. But I'm beginning to wish I hadn't been so willing."

(A woman screams in background)

(Ed Baldwin) "What in the world is that?"

(attendant at asylum) "Oh, you'll get use to it. She screams like that for hours."

(narrator) "The man that was, shaking in a solid steel room. You'll see him as he was. But you'll also see him as he is today. A peaceful, happy, triumphant man. For he, like so many others has at last been "unshackled."

From Chicago, crossroads of America, the Pacific Garden Mission presents "Unshackled." The unique dramatic program that tells the true life stories of actual people. For more than 97 years the men and women of the street have been coming to the Old Lighthouse in Chicago for help. The help includes food, clothing, shelter, medical and dental care and counsel. And all of these things are free. With counsel there often goes the assurance that if your life is empty it can be filled to overflowing. For more than 24 years that same assurance has been given on these programs and sent out around the earth in ever widening circles to be heard by people in almost every nation. The program is also translated and redramatized in several languages by nationals. This unexpected outreach has come to be as some of those who listen have made it their business to help make it possible for others to hear the program that makes you face yourself and think.

Ed Baldwin is one of my favorite people and I have known him for at least sixteen years. I rather think he is one of God's favorite people too. After all whom the Lord loveth he chasteneth. Ed has taken quite a bit of chastening. It's made him a remarkable man. In appearance he is small, wiry and bouncy in a relaxed sort of way. A deep scar runs halfway down his face and it would make most men ugly but the plain sweetness of Ed shines through the scar and you don't notice it. He has an easy smile and Arkansas drawl and a way with words. You'll meet him as we bring you the true story of Edwin J. Baldwin right now on Unshackled."

(Ed Baldwin) "That man talks too much. Listen, there is nothing about me that's different from anybody else except that I've been a bigger fool than most folks. And I know it better than some do. Well, I was born in central Michigan but I was just a little rascal about three years old when we moved to Arkansas. My mother had tuberculosis and we hoped the air in the Ozarks would be good for her. It was too. And after seven years in the hills we were able to move to Little Rock. Dad was a carpenter by trade and a Deacon in the church. And mom was a real praying woman. Me, I was a thief. By the time I was eleven I was a seasoned small-time shoplifter. I wanted to be a pint size Robin Hood by robbing Woolworth. And once after a big haul of balloons my conscience troubled me and I wondered just where I stood. I knew that my dad, being a Deacon, would know all about hell."

(Ed's dad) "What's got you to thinking about hell boy."

(Ed Baldwin - as a boy) "Oh, nothing much. I was just wondering that's all."

(Ed's dad) "Well son, the Bible I read tells me it's real enough."

(Ed Baldwin - as a boy) "Why do folks go there?"

(Ed's dad) "Lots of reasons. But I guess you could roll 'em all up in one ball and call it sin."

(Ed Baldwin - as a boy) "Stealing?"

(Ed's dad) "What about stealing?"

(Ed Baldwin - as a boy) "Well, would a person go to hell for stealing?"

(Ed's dad) "Son, you remember how Moses came down off the mountain with the Ten Commandments written on stone?"

(Ed Baldwin - as a boy) "Sure."

(Ed's dad) "Well, one of those commandments says, 'Thou shalt not steal.'"

(narrator) "Now it doesn't really seem like a small thing like that would be the starting point. Does It?"

(Ed Baldwin) "Well they thought about things a lot after that. It looked to me like hell or heaven was mostly a question of what a person did or didn't do. Then I got to thinking. As long as I was in trouble anyway I might just as well be shot for a sheep as for a goat. So I just sort of drifted into any devilment that came my way. And the devilment that appealed to me the most came in a bottle. I met liquor for the first time when I was in my early teens. And right from my first drink the jug and I went a long hard road together.

The doctors pretty much hold to the idea that alcoholics are made and not born. That it's an acquired problem. But I honestly believe that some men are born alcoholics. I think I was one.

I had a job in a furniture factory and one of the fellows did a little bootlegging on the side. We were working overtime one Saturday afternoon when he made a delivery into the shop. I invested a quarter in a half-pint of White Lightning and drew dividends in trouble for almost twenty-five years. That first half-pint went down just like soothing syrup and I didn't feel a thing. That's one of the marks of a guaranteed alkie, plenty of capacity and no sense. I bought me another half-pint. It took two half-pints of corn liquor to do the job. But that afternoon the boys in the shop carried me home. And from that minute on I drank everything I could get a hold of. Later on when I got me an old car I use to keep a jug handy and go cruising around looking for girls. When a visiting preacher held a series of revival meetings in a country school house, I figured that was as good a place to look as any. Lots of girls go to revival meetings. I was parked outside that schoolhouse one night full of whiskey and ambition when my dad spotted my car."

(Ed's dad) "That you Ed?"

(Ed Baldwin) "Yea, dad it's me."

(Ed's dad) "Kind of figured so. Listen son, you've got a job of your own and money of your own so it's kind of hard for me to be telling you what you can and can't do but there's a few things I'm going to be tough about and this is one of them."

(Ed Baldwin) "What's that?"

(Ed's dad) "Sitting out here waiting for the meeting to end."

(Ed Baldwin) "I'm not bothering anyone dad."

(Ed's dad) "No, and there's nothing bothering you either. But there ought to be. Now listen, don't sit outside the meeting. If you're going to hang around at all you sit inside and listen. You hear?"

(Ed Baldwin) "Ok, have it your way."

(Ed Baldwin) "Well sir, I paddled along into that schoolhouse and sat down. Once that preacher started to talk I forgot all about everything except what he was saying. That man had silvery, white hair and the glow of an angel in his face. And the longer he talked the more I knew I wanted to be like he was. I knew there were possibilities inside Ed Baldwin that had nothing at all to do with corn liquor and chasing after teenage girls. Suddenly, I knew I wanted those possibilities to have a chance to be real and later on at home I talked it over with my dad."

(Ed's dad) "Looks to me like that fellow kind of got to you son."

(Ed Baldwin) "He sure did."

(Ed's dad) "Gonna do anything about it?"

(Ed Baldwin) "Yep. I'm going to be baptized sure as anything."

(Ed's dad) "Well praise God for that. When?"

(Ed Baldwin) "Next week. He's going to have a big baptizing the last night of the meeting."

(narrator) "Looks as though Ed Baldwin is all set to straighten up doesn't it? Well guess again friend. Wasn't more then a day or so after that when something happened to upset the apple cart real good."

(Knock on the door)

(Ed's dad) "See who's at the door son."

(Ed Baldwin) "Maybe mom's coming back from shopping?"

(Ed's dad) "Nope, she's got her own key with her."

(Ed Baldwin) "Well, come in mam."

(woman) "I can't stay but a minute."

(Ed's dad) "Well, you seem upset."

(Ed Baldwin) "Well, it's a disgrace that's what it is."

(Ed's dad) "What's a disgrace?"

(woman - whispering and stuttering) "Well, I'd rather tell Zora about it then you but seeing as she isn't here and you being the Deacon and all."

(Ed's dad) "Sounds like to me it might be better if you did wait and tell it to my wife."

(woman) "No I can tell you I reckon."

(Ed's dad) "Well, alright. Sit down and start telling."

(woman) "Thank you. Well, it's about the preacher."

(Ed's dad) "Oh?"

(woman) "Him and that woman, the one who plays the piano for the meetings."

(Ed's dad) "Yes?"

(woman) "Of course he's away from home and she's away from home and he's got a wife and she's got a husband."

(Ed's dad) "I know."

(woman) "But I offered to let'em stay at our place, the both of 'em. I never thought. Well, I just never for one minute expected any such carryings on."

(Ed Baldwin) "Well, she had a good deal more to say of course. But that's the general notion. Later on when he'd got her out of the house and well on her way to spread the news I talked it over with dad."

(Ed's dad) "The devil never stops trying does he son?"

(Ed Baldwin) "Looks to me like he's doing pretty good."

(Ed's dad) "Well, those things will happen. A man needs to walk mighty close to the Lord if he's going to stay out of trouble."

(Ed Baldwin) "And I guess I'd just be wasting my time."

(Ed's dad) "I don't get you?"

(Ed Baldwin) "Well, if that man, that preacher with a glow in his face, if he can't walk close enough to stay out of trouble, how in common sense is a fella like me going to make it?"

(Ed's dad) "Son, you can do it."

(Ed Baldwin) "I don't believe it. I put my faith in that man dad. And if that's Christianity I want no part of it."

(Ed Baldwin) "Well there was a flaw in that situation. See I'd been converted to a preacher not to a Savior. But I couldn't see it then. From that day on I went down hill just about as fast as a man can go. For years after that I lived for just one thing, my next drink. And chasing after it took me all over the country. A range from Little Rock to Detroit to California and back again. And in two years alone I held 18 different jobs, held them and lost them. I slept in jails and I lived in hobo jungles and I slept under bridges. And nobody who has not been an alkie himself will ever know what I went through. Everyday was a heartbreak. Everyday I hated myself just a little bit more. But even in those terrible days I sometimes found human kindness where I least expected.

I'll never forget a cold, rainy night when I was hitchhiking my way across Texas. I was so sick and cold and tired I desperately wanted to die. And in a barn I found an old wagon with a basket rack parked between the hay mounds and it was about half full of hay waiting to be moved away. Well I dragged myself up into the wagon or I dug myself a nest in the hay like a dog and went to sleep. And I cried myself to sleep like a baby."

(Barn animal noises)

(Ed Baldwin) "The thing that woke me up was the sound of the farmer pumping water. When I stood up in my nest in the wagon he saw me even before I saw him."

(farmer) "Morning friend."

(Ed Baldwin) "Good morning."

(farmer) "Reckon your soakin' wet." Why don't you come out here and let the sunshine warm your bones a little bit."

(Ed Baldwin) "I guess your right about it. I hope you don't mind me sleepin' in your barn?"

(farmer) "Didn't do me any harm, did it?"

(Ed Baldwin) "Well, some folks wouldn't like it."

(farmer) "Some folks easy put out. Figure maybe you could do with a bit of breakfast?"

(Ed Baldwin) "Oh, I sure could."

(farmer) "Yea, come on in. Ham and eggs are a pretty good way to start any day."

(Ed Baldwin) "Well, sometime after my meeting with that friendly farmer, I went through Little Rock and stopped a few days to rest up. I was in terrible shape. Mom stood it as long as she could, then she went to the phone and called the preacher by the name of Harvey Hicks. She knew he had once been an alkie himself and she thought maybe he'd be able to help me out."

(Ed's mom on telephone) "Reverend Hicks, if you'll take a little time to talk to my boy I'll just be eternally grateful. Right now? Thank you. I'll send him right over."

(Reverend Hicks) "Listen son, if you're having trouble with the booze you've got to have help. A man just can't win that battle single handedly."

(Ed Baldwin) "I know. I've found that out."

(Reverend Hicks) "So did I. But when I asked the Lord Jesus Christ to fight the battle for me he did."

(Ed Baldwin) "Isn't that a little too easy?"

(Reverend Hicks) "No, no. It isn't easy at all. Because you'll have to let Him take over all the way, not just your bottle but you. That's harder then it sounds. But if you do put your trust in Him you'll win."

(Ed Baldwin) "Thanks. I'll think it over."

(crossing a street, almost gets hit, vehicle honks, going into a bar)

(Ed Baldwin) "Well, just give me a bottle of beer."

(Ed Baldwin) "The next two years were worse then ever. Same as ever but worse. Then one afternoon in Little Rock I found myself talking to the drunk standing next to me at the bar. I've been thinking about something friend."

(drunk) "What's that?"

(Ed Baldwin) "It seems like a man could find something else to do besides spending all his time in these joints."

(drunk) "That's funny."

(Ed Baldwin) "What's funny."

(drunk) "You telling that to me. You want to quit?"

(Ed Baldwin) "Sure, but I can't. I've tried everything in the world."

(drunk) "Have you ever heard of AA?"

(Ed Baldwin) "What's that?"

(drunk) "Alcoholic's Anonymous. A club where a bunch of drunks stay sober."

(Ed Baldwin) "That's funny."

(drunk) "I mean it. I mean it. I'm a great guy to be talking. Ah, I just slipped yesterday but it's true."

(Ed Baldwin) "Let's go."

(man at AA) "Now maybe we can talk a little."

(Ed Baldwin) "What did you do with my pal?"

(man at AA) "The guy you came in with? Some of the boys are talking to him like I am to you."

(Ed Baldwin) "Ok, I'm listening."

(man at AA) "We admitted we were powerless over alcoholic. That our lives had become unmanageable."

(Ed Baldwin) "That's me friend."

(man at AA) "It's all of us. Next step, we came to believe that a power greater than ourselves could restore us to sanity."

(Ed Baldwin) "Hold on a minute."

(man at AA) "What's wrong?"

(Ed Baldwin) "Is this religion?"

(man at AA) "Sure. We don't care what kind of religion. If you want to worship a totem pole that's ok with us."

(Ed Baldwin) "I don't care. If it's religion I don't want it. Let me out of here."

(Ed Baldwin) "Well, that was that. Three months went by worse then ever. Then one night I was drinking in a tavern right across the street from the AA club. I got to watching one of those customers. He was a filthy old bum with a trickle of tobacco juice drooling down his chin. And I said to myself, that's me sooner or later, maybe sooner. I was drunk enough to stagger but I was unhappy enough to stagger out the door across the street and up to the AA club room."

(man at AA) "Well I didn't expect to see you again. What can we do for you?"

(Ed Baldwin) "I want to quit, now!"

(man at AA) "I never saw a man shaking any worse then you are. How bad do you want to quit?"

(Ed Baldwin) "I'll do anything, anything at all, but I've got to quit!"

(man at AA) "Do you want to quit bad enough to be committed to an asylum?" A mental institution?"

(Ed Baldwin) "If that's what it takes then I want it."

(man at AA) "You mean it?"

(Ed Baldwin) "Let's go."

(Ed Baldwin) "My mother signed the papers and inside of an hour I was locked in a solid steel room. They took my clothes and left me there with nothing but a mattress and the four steel walls. I was as far off balance as anyone in that hospital. Somewhere in the distance I could hear a woman scream."

(woman screaming)

(Ed's conscience) "You're not so smart Ed. You're a rummy and you're no good and now you're right where you belong. The world wasn't made just for you Ed. Wise up kid, wise up."

(Ed Baldwin) "Somehow I came out of that one fast enough so the fellows from the AA could come and take me out six days later. It was Sunday I remember. And back at the AA club room they took me slowly and carefully through the twelve steps of Alcoholic's Anonymous and at the third step I came to a problem."

(man at AA) "We made a decision to turn our will and our lives over to the care of God as we understood Him."

(Ed Baldwin) "That means nothing."

(man at AA) "Why?"

(Ed Baldwin) "Cause I don't understand God at all. What am I supposed to do, go to church?"

(man at AA) "If it helps, sure. Some do, some don't."

(Ed Baldwin) "What church? I've been fooled before you know."

(man at AA) "That's up to you Ed."

(Ed Baldwin) "Well I made a list of seven churches and started out to cover them all. When I got to the fourth one I found out it was pastored by Harvey Hicks, the man my mom had sent me to see more than two years before."

(Reverend Hicks) "Sure I remember you Ed. What's on your mind now?"

(Ed Baldwin) "Well the third step in AA says I'm supposed to turn my life over to God. How do I do it?"

(Reverend Hicks) "Use horse sense. Do you believe there is a God?"

(Ed Baldwin) "Yea, I see the sun shine and I see things grow."

(Reverend Hicks) "Alright. You can start from there. Do you believe the Bible is the Word of God?"

(Ed Baldwin) "Maybe, maybe some of it's true. I guess. Not all of it."

(Reverend Hicks) "Ed, take this Bible. Take it in your hand."

(Ed Baldwin) "Ok."

(Reverend Hicks) "Now, I want you to tell me what part you'd be willing to cut out of it."

(Ed Baldwin) "I guess I couldn't do that."

(Reverend Hicks) "Well, neither could I. Anything you'd like to add to it?"

(Ed Baldwin) "Me?"

(Reverend Hicks) "That's right."

(Ed Baldwin) "I'm not man enough for that."

(Reverend Hicks) "Neither is anyone else. Now then, can you believe all you can and leave the rest?"

(Ed Baldwin) "Sure."

(Reverend Hicks) "Do you believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God?"

(Ed Baldwin) "Yes."

(Reverend Hicks) "Do you believe He was crucified?"

(Ed Baldwin) "Yes, of course."

(Reverend Hicks) "Do you believe He died for you Ed Baldwin?"

(Ed Baldwin) "I don't believe that. No."

(Reverend Hicks) "That He died to save you to pay for your sins so that you can look forward to heaven?"

(Ed Baldwin) "I figure you get to heaven depending on what you do."

(Reverend Hicks) "That isn't what He says Ed. He says, 'I am the way, the truth and the life. No man cometh to the Father but by me.' You don't get to God through what you do Ed. He says you get to God through Him."

(Ed Baldwin) "That'd be good news if it was true but, but I don't believe it."

(Reverend Hicks) "Will you give Him a chance to prove it Ed?"

(Ed Baldwin) "How?"

(Reverend Hicks) "He says, 'Whosoever therefore will confess me before men, him will I confess also before my Father which is in heaven.' You can make a public confession of Christ and then your part of the bargain is complete the rest is up to Him."

(Ed Baldwin) "Maybe your right. I guess I've got nothing to lose."

(Reverend Hicks) "Fine."

(Ed Baldwin) "Wait though, I've got three more churches to look into. I'll be back later."

(Ed Baldwin) "Well, I shopped the other churches. Then I told my mom and dad that I was going back to Harvey Hicks church and settle things. That was quite a day for them. While I paddled down the aisle, they stood with tears pouring down their faces."

(Reverend Hicks) "Glad you're here Ed."

(Ed Baldwin) "Preacher, I want to go all the way."

(Reverend Hicks) "You want to receive Christ as your personal Lord and Savior?"

(Ed Baldwin) "That's right."

(Reverend Hicks) "And be baptized?"

(Ed Baldwin) "Yes."

(Reverend Hicks) "And do whatever else he'd have you to do?"

(Ed Baldwin) "Yes sir, I want to go all the way."

(Ed Baldwin) "Maybe I expected harp music and angels singing and lightning flashing, but nothing happened at all. I didn't feel any different. All that week sitting around the AA club and drinking vegetable juice, I wondered if God had failed. Then I decided everything would change next Sunday when I was baptized. Well, there were ten baptized that night and the only thing different was I was wet. I decided then and there that God had turned Ed Baldwin down. And as soon as I had changed into dry clothes I slipped out the back door and I went home. There going on the one little grain of faith I had left I got down on my knees. Lord, Lord, I'm beat! I've done all I can do. Now, if anything good happens in my life you'll have to do it.

That night I got the first really peaceful sleep I'd had in years. I woke up in the morning to find myself in a whole new world! It was different and so was everyone else. It was like a steam shovel had lifted a heavy load off my shoulders. And I felt like I wanted to run outside and tell everyone I met that I was a new man. No lightning. No harp music. But a brand new life!

(narrator) "And that's it Ed?"

(Ed Baldwin) "Almost. For two years I prayed that God would let me help someone else. And then the flood gates opened. I had a chance to begin working with the prisoners in the La Porte, Indiana Jail. Later I began visiting the men in the Indiana State Prison in Michigan City. Now I'm there five hours a day, five days a week as a volunteer."

(narrator) "One man first dealt with by Ed in La Porte went on to serve a number of years in prison. But because Ed Baldwin had led that man to Christ and later was willing to make special efforts in that man's behalf the man was released, came to live and work at Pacific Garden Mission. Now has a good job, owns his home and he and his wife whom he met here at the Old Lighthouse provide a home for children from problem families. So shines a Christ-filled man in a naughty world. "

"Ed you deal with men in jail regularly, any problems?"

(Ed Baldwin) "None that the Lord can't handle. One prisoner kept asking, "If God is so good and so powerful why did he create Satan?" And I struggled with that question and asked the Lord about it. And you know what he told me?"

(narrator) "No, but I'd like to."

(Ed Baldwin) "He said, 'Little man don't you know I created Satan so you could know how much I love you.'"

(narrator) "A wonderful answer."

(Ed Baldwin) "From a wonderful Lord. A man can start towards God in many ways but the door, the final way, is only through his Son, Jesus Christ. I know, because I have gone that way."

(narrator) "Ed is telling the truth, I know. You may want to make the same discovery. To counsel with someone who is concerned about you get in touch with:

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