

Fresh Start

By Jerry Bader

Shake It Off, Kid

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If you're a baseball fan, you probably wouldn't be surprised to learn that superstar sluggers Reggie Jackson, Sammy Sosa, Alex Rodriguez, Jose Canseco and Willie Stargell are all in the top ten in any hitting category. You might be surprised to learn that I've just named the number 1st, 4th, 5th, 7th and 8th ranked players on the all-time strikeout leaderboard. Jackson, known as Mr. October for his stellar playoff performances, leads the way with 2,597 strikeouts. Any self-respecting Packers fan can name the Hall of Famer atop the list of interception tossers (Hint: he wore number 4). In fact, Brett Favre is one of five Hall of Fame inductees in the top ten. That includes Dan Marino and Johnny Unitas, who are in just about any discussion of the greatest quarterbacks of all time, along with Favre. The point; these players all made lots of mistakes, but it's not what they're famous for. Their mistakes don't define them. What an important lesson for Christ-followers.

When we are saved, all our sins are forgiven; past, present and future. Yet, the enemy is skilled at deceiving us about our mistakes. He's great at trying to dredge up our pre-saved past, reminding us of who we were versus who we are today. There's nothing like living in a very flawed past to fill us with regret and question our faith. And who hasn't heard the whispers of doubt he plants when our new selves falter: "See, you're not really saved; nothing's changed. It's the same old you."

Athletes have coaches and managers to remind them they need to have a short memory about their mistakes. Christ-followers have something much more valuable than that; God's word: *"Therefore, there is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus, because through Christ Jesus the law of the Spirit who gives life has set you free from the law of sin and death."* Romans 8:1-2

As a friend of mine puts it; "when you're saved, you're not sinless, you sin less." God is far more concerned with who you are than what you do. He knows your heart well; if you've accepted Jesus into your life He lives there. If you haven't, no mistake or mistakes are too big to keep Him from welcoming you home. When we confess sin and ask for forgiveness, Jesus has a memory shorter than any star quarterback or home run king. So, don't let anyone tell you that your mistakes can keep you from being on Jesus' team, or being worthy of the ultimate honor that no hall of fame could ever match.