



Forgiveness

God declares of himself:

(Psa 103:3) Who forgiveth all thine iniquities; who healeth all thy diseases;

Yet, almost no one believes that he is forgiven of his sins. History is impregnated with man's feeble attempts to right himself in the midst of chaos and unparalleled wrong doings. How often do you feel unforgiven? *What would your life be like if you truly believed in forgiveness of sins through the acts of Jesus Christ?*

Paul was well known for his road was dirty and dusty. Paul



tortuous acts against Christians. He pursued them to all ends.

(Acts 26:12ff) Whereupon as I went to Damascus with authority and commission from the chief priests,

During one such time, on his way to Damascus, fully empowered by the religious authorities of his day and time, he met the resurrected Jesus. I don't know if you can imagine what Paul went through, but try to imagine. The

had the grit of the earth between his sandaled toes. Sweat neatly glazed his brow while thoughts of evil and destruction filled his mind. He had already tasted of the power to end men's lives; many Christians had already died at this hand by crucifixions, brutal wild beast attacks, imprisonment, as well as the sword. He gloated at his successes and was primed for more. He was feared by all; he walked with a confidence that only a man of his esteemed stature could possibly maintain, no matter how evil. His walk, that day, was unstoppable, that is until Jesus showed up.

Jesus doesn't show up to everyone, in fact nearly no one. You can't call Jesus to you and

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then have him appear. If he's ever going to show up, it will be his own choosing, not yours. You are never instructed to talk to Jesus; the Bible never says that he talks to you. Prayer is only and always to be to God. God can and will talk to you if he chooses. Paul was a Jew. He believed in one God and was well-versed in Jewish law. He left the discussions to and from on high to the priests. Sadly, though, these men didn't hear from God—they rejected God's son, Jesus Christ. Jewish godliness was a thing of the past, a solid over 400 years past. Malachi was the last recorded prophet before John the Baptist and the world was consequently spiritually black until John appeared on the scene. Judean culture and beliefs had long been infiltrated by this darkness, giving way to the likes of evil not known on the earth since the fallen sons of God. Paul was stone cold. He embraced no

man, trusted himself and his chosen way of 'godliness' and wouldn't stop for anything in his quest to 'right' the wrongs being promoted by Christians. He hated them, what they stood for, and what they promoted. He chose to take a violent stand against them. Why not? There was no God present in Israel anymore. There were no signs, miracles, and wonders done by the hands of the Jewish leaders, and hadn't been for centuries. His frame of reference was the world, the world powers, and the world's spirituality. If the chief priests sanctioned him and his actions, he needn't go further. That was the top of the ladder and he had nowhere to look but down.

The dirt between his toes gnawed at his skin for another moment, easily ignored by his smugness and prowess as each step claimed a certain victory just moments away. The last thing on his

mind was having to deal with contentions, any contentions. No one was stupid enough to stand in his way. If they did, they would join the rest of the dead men, women and children in his wake. This, every man knew and feared. Well, almost every man—except Jesus Christ.

{13} At midday, O king,
I saw in the way a light
from heaven, above the
brightness of the sun, shining
round about me and them
which journeyed with me.

The light of the world focused his beam directly on Paul and his traveling group. They didn't have cars with bright headlights back then. They had no way to manufacture such brilliance. Such brilliance was simply unknown. It was stunning. It captured their attention. If forced them to the ground—flat onto the ground.

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{14} And when we were all fallen to the earth, I heard a voice speaking unto me, and saying in the Hebrew tongue, Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou me? it is hard for thee to kick against the pricks.

Paul's face was buried in the dirt. It clung to his beading forehead. It stung his eyes. It smattered his lips. It became a part of his body and covered him in time to his shaking fear on the inside. His ears burned hot with the words of the lord Jesus Christ. Those words commanded him and drove themselves deep within him, far deeper than the frail authoritarian garble from the chief priests.

{15} And I said, Who art thou, Lord? And he said, I am Jesus whom thou persecutest.

Jesus didn't come to destroy the evil man, Paul. He came for a far

different reason:

{16} But rise, and stand upon thy feet: for I have appeared unto thee for this purpose, to make thee a minister and a witness both of these things which thou hast seen, and of those things in the which I will appear unto thee; {17} Delivering thee from the people, and from the Gentiles, unto whom now I send thee, {18} To open their eyes, and to turn them from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan unto God, that they may receive forgiveness of sins, and inheritance among them which are sanctified by faith that is in me.

No matter how you slice it, you are forced to come up with a wellspring of amazement. Paul, of all people, didn't deserve this kind of treatment. He was a murderer. He had committed

unrighteous atrocities, probably far greater than you have ever considered. Yet, Jesus Christ stepped across the expanse and planted himself directly in Paul's path—to inform him of his unique calling.

No wonder Paul thrilled at the first words in Ephesians:

(Eph 1:6-7) To the praise of the glory of his grace, wherein he hath made us accepted in the beloved. {7} In whom we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of his grace;

And, no wonder he continued to propound forgiveness as one of the greatest acts of God ever known to man.

(Col 2:13-14) And you, being dead in your sins and the uncircumcision of your flesh,

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hath he quickened together with him, having forgiven you all trespasses; {14} Blotting out the handwriting of ordinances that was against us, which was contrary to us, and took it out of the way, and nailed it to his cross [stake];

If any man needed forgiveness, wouldn't it have been Paul. Either he lied to the masses as he continued to teach the gospel of Jesus Christ and forgiveness of sins, or he told the truth. I'll go with the later. *He taught that we have been made alive and that we have been forgiven all trespasses, so much so, that they were totally blotted out and sentenced to the same death that Jesus had faced.*

(1 John 1:9) If we confess our sins, he is faithful

and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.

The next time you forget that you have been forgiven, take a few moments to ponder Paul, but especially the works of Jesus Christ. Talk to God. Ask him to help you and to forgive your weaknesses. He will help you and he, most certainly, will forgive you. Stop what's causing your conflict; learn to walk away—into God's welcoming arms.

And never forget what John taught:

(1 John 2:12) I write unto you, little children, because your sins are forgiven you for his name's sake.

Much love in Christ,

Jerry D. Brown