

JOKE: Bubba's boss was getting tired of him proclaiming that he "knew everybody" in the world.

"Okay Bubba" his boss said one day, "Prove to me you know everybody in the world. Do you know Tom Cruise?"

"Oh, me and Tom go way back," said Bubba.

So the boss bought airline tickets to Hollywood, and pretty soon Bubba was knocking at Tom Cruise's door, and was greeted by the butler. Tom rushed over to Bubba and invited him for lunch. They had a such good time catching up.

"Well, I'm impressed," said the boss when they left. "But I bet you don't know the President.

"Aw, sure do," said Bubba and with that they were off to Washington, and pretty soon, the White House guard was escorting the two men into the Oval Office.

"Hiya Bubba!" said the President, warmly embracing him.

After a nice visit and a chat with some of the Cabinet secretaries they left.

The boss was suitably impressed, but not giving up.

"Okay, Bubba, I'm going to ask you if you know the ultimate celebrity - the Pope."

“Why, for sure I do!” said Bubba, and pretty soon they were on a plane to Vatican City.

They found themselves in St. Peter’s Square in a crowd of thousands, and Bubba said, “Heck, I can’t see nothin’ from here,” and so he went right to the Swiss Guards and the doors opened to him.

The boss waited outside in the square. Pretty soon the door to the upstairs’s opened and out comes the Pope and Bubba. They began to smile and wave at the crowd, with their arms around each other. Shortly thereafter Bubba decided to return to the Square.

When he got there, an ambulance was loading his boss into the back.

Bubba rushed up and said, “what happened Boss?” The boss says, “I was doing fine until you came out on the balcony and the guy next to me says, “who is that guy on the balcony with Bubba?”

Good afternoon church.

Remember what we celebrated last week?. . . Easter.

I want to stay on that theme for one more week at least.

This morning I want to share one of the far-reaching effects of the resurrection.

One of the incredible results of our faith in Jesus is that we are given the power to move past our past.

I have found that one of the greatest obstacles to growing in our faith is the inability for us to truly believe that we are forgiven from everything. . .for everything.

For some reason many of us have a hard time receiving the forgiveness that Jesus died for.

But hear this church, our mistakes, our shortcomings, and failures do not have to be the last word or the final say over our lives.

Our Savior, the same one who rose from that grave, Jesus, is the one who has the last word and the final say.

And He said, "It is finished."

But the truth is so many still struggle with believing God cares, let alone forgives. He can forgive others of their past, but me.

Somehow I'm different.

But, when you read the Scriptures it doesn't take to long to see that many of the Biblical characters we read about, like many of us, find themselves struggling to reconcile their past.

One in particular is a man named Paul. Before Paul had an encounter with Jesus, on that road to Damascus his name was Saul. He was a persecutor of the Church an enemy of God's people.

As a matter of fact, when he had that encounter with Jesus he was on his way to wreck havoc on the followers of this one called Jesus.

And like many of us he did things that if he were to allow them to be his focus, would have brought a life long track of shame, guilt, and regret.

He addresses his approach to his past as he writes to the church in Philippi.

Philippians 3:13–14 (NIV): Brothers and sisters, I do not consider myself yet to have taken hold of it. But one thing I do: Forgetting what is behind and straining toward what is ahead, 14 I press on toward the goal to win the prize for which God has called me heavenward in Christ Jesus.

Paul acknowledges that he has not yet arrived.

The destination to which God has called him to is still before him. He is a work in progress.

So, he's committed to allowing God to finish his work in him by forgetting what is behind him.

All of the terrible things he had done to the early Christians, he was forgetting about. And I might add many were skeptical at first about his conversion as well.

So, he was trying to move on at the same time trying to show others his encounter was legit.

He was forgetting what was behind, not to somehow sidestep responsibility, but instead he was confident that he was fully forgiven and that God had a plan for his life in spite of his past.

He knew that if he spent his days focused on what had happened, he would not be prepared for what was yet to come.

STORY: Cora and I had gone to a Tigers game a couple years ago. We have for the last 15 or so years gone for a daddy daughter date to the stadium. But on that particular year we had a late start

getting out of the stadium and I wanted to get out of the area before we stopped to eat.

Anyway it got way to late and we had to settle for a McDonalds. I don't remember what time it was that I got in line but I was in line before closing time but when the 3 cars ahead of me finally got their food. Which by the way wasn't to fast, I arrived with order ready just to be told they were closed.

(Elaborate with discussion)

Anyway a car in front of me was blocking the way out and I couldn't go forward. Truck has reverse so I used it and as I started to back up I heard a honk from a horn from a car behind me.

Anyway I said all that to say this. . .a rearview mirror is far too small and leaves you with too many blind spots. I couldn't see the car through the rearview mirror. I have a backup camera now but didn't then.

Truth is we are meant to drive looking out of our windshields not our rearview mirrors.

And like driving a car, we were never meant to navigate life looking behind us, God created us to move forward.

Have you made mistakes, probably. Will you make more, most likely. Do you have some regrets where you wish you had done something different maybe.

But you and I can't afford to camp there. The price is too high to pay for overnight parking. And if the enemy can keep you living there on campus you will never reach your full potential or destiny that God has called you to.

Paul was choosing to live through the windshield of life rather than the rearview mirror.

Many of us find ourselves stuck in a rut because we cannot or will not receive the grace that God has for us, which in turn, makes it difficult to forgive ourselves and others.

But church the truth is that there is no way to rewrite history. What happened. . .happened.

When we relive our past by saying things like we would have, we could have, we should have, we are not bringing about any kind of change in the situation or our life.

Instead, we are robbing ourselves of the good work Jesus has done in our lives through his sacrifice on the cross and the good work he wants to do in our lives as he calls us heavenward.

We become like a sailboat on the water with no wind. Stagnant, with no source of power with which to move forward.

And the truth is God has made us new, but for us to receive being made new is not always easy?

We are often tempted to peek behind us and feel regret.

In order to take full advantage of the power available to us in the resurrection, we must align ourselves with Jesus' life, death, and resurrection.

Paul writes about this as well in the book of Galatians.

Galatians 2:20–21 (NIV): I have been crucified with Christ and I no longer live, but Christ lives in me. The life I now live in the body, I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for

me. 21 I do not set aside the grace of God, for if righteousness could be gained through the law, Christ died for nothing!”

According to Paul, our past mistakes, sins, shortcomings, and missteps must be crucified with Christ. They must be nailed to the cross and put to death. We must die to our old self in order to come alive to all of the new possibilities and opportunities that God has ahead of us.

The old self must be removed so that Jesus can take up residence in us and live through us.

Paul tells us that this is possible only by faith and the grace of God. In fact, Paul says that aside from the grace of God, there is no way to be made new.

ILLUSTRATION: Maybe this will help. *(Have a large see-through container filled with clean, clear water. As you work your way through this illustration have various food coloring droppers available and a small amount of bleach in a container.)*

We live in a world that is broken, with people who are broken. Simply put, we make mistakes.

(With each sin mentioned, drop a bit of food coloring into the clear container of water.)

And the truth is, our sin hurts God, others, and ourselves. How many have every lied? Truth is there are people that lie, cheat, steal, gossip, look at the wrong things on the internet, post mean things on Facebook, get mad at the driver that cuts us off on the road, and the list could go on and on,

The more that we add these sinful thoughts, those words, and actions to our lives, the more regret can grow and cloud our past, present, and our future.

Eventually, we need something actually we need someone to clean up our past so we can live unhindered and unashamed. Free and not frustrated. Right and not regretful. Loving and not lustful. Humble and not hurt.

That is what Jesus did on the cross.

1 Peter 2:24 (NIV): “He himself bore our sins” in his body on the cross, so that we might die to sins and live for righteousness; “by his wounds you have been healed.”

His blood is the payment for our sin. His sacrifice is the cleansing agent for us. His resurrection is proof of the power of the cross.

(At this point, pour in slowly the bleach from the container. Stir it around and watch the water become clear.)

When we put to death our past by nailing it to the cross of Christ, we are then released from its power over our lives. We are made new. We are made clean.

Paul gives us the secret to how we are to live in light of the forgiveness of God. In the Galatians passage we read earlier; he says that he now lives his life by faith in the Son of God.

However, just because our past has been forgiven, does not mean that we will not make mistakes in our future. In order to live into the newness of life that Jesus offers us, we have to move forward in faith.

The kind of faith that gives us confidence that it is because of God's love that we have been forgiven, and it is because of God's love that we can receive forgiveness for the things you have yet to mess up.

The cross was enough for your past, but it still holds the power to forgive today as well.

Romans 8:1–4 (TPT): So now the case is closed. There remains no accusing voice of condemnation against those who are joined in life-union with Jesus, the Anointed One. 2 For the “law” of the Spirit of life flowing through the anointing of Jesus has liberated us from the “law” of sin and death. 3 For God achieved what the law was unable to accomplish, because the law was limited by the weakness of human nature. Yet God sent us his Son in human form to identify with human weakness. Clothed with humanity, God's Son gave his body to be the sin-offering so that God could once and for all condemn the guilt and power of sin. 4 So now every righteous requirement of the law can be fulfilled through the Anointed One living his life in us. And we are free to live, not according to our flesh, but by the dynamic power of the Holy Spirit!

I love this. . .

2 Corinthians 5:17–21 (NLT): This means that anyone who belongs to Christ has become a new person. The old life is gone; a new life has begun! 18 And all of this is a gift from God, who brought us back to himself through Christ. And God has given us this task of reconciling people to him. 19 For God was in Christ, reconciling the world to himself, no longer counting people's sins against them. And he gave us this wonderful message of reconciliation. 20 So we are Christ's ambassadors; God is making his appeal through us. We speak for Christ when we plead, “Come back to God!” 21 For God made Christ, who never sinned, to be the offering for our sin, so that we could be made right with God through Christ.

He treats us with compassion. He addresses our brokenness with love, care, and kindness.

Psalm 103:8-12 (TPT): Lord, you're so kind and tenderhearted and so patient with people who fail you! Your love is like a flooding river overflowing its banks with kindness. ⁹ You don't look at us only to find our faults, just so that you can hold a grudge against us. ¹⁰ You may discipline us for our many sins, but never as much as we really deserve. Nor do you get even with us for what we've done. ¹¹ Higher than the highest heavens—that's how high your tender mercy extends! Greater than the grandeur of heaven above is the greatness of your loyal love, towering over all who fear you and bow down before you! ¹² Farther than from a sunrise to a sunset—that's how far you've removed our guilt from us.

God is abounding in love. It is because of this love for you and for me that our past is covered.

I want you for a moment imagine in your mind the face of God before you. You are looking face to face.

What do you see?

Some see disappointment on His face. We imagine him to be tremendously frustrated by our sins.

However, the Bible tells us that God's countenance toward us is approval, acceptance, forgiveness, and affection.

Not because of anything we have done, but because of what Jesus has done on our behalf.

I love this quote not sure who its from but it says this, "*Grace is the face that love wears when it meets imperfection*".

You can move past your past because of the grace of God. You may need to seek forgiveness for something that happened.

That's called repentance.

You may need to put boundaries in place. You may need to choose to live differently in the future. What you don't need to do, however, is to carry around guilt and shame.

You may have visited the camp but don't pitch your tent.

The cross allows you to move past your past.

Let me close with this. God never said stop cursing, smoking weed, drinking, or anything like that before you come to church, but yet how many times have we heard people say, I need to do better before I can go. . .

The problem with religion is that it tries to change you from the outside in. But God wants to change you from the inside out.

He doesn't need your behavior to change before you get here, He wants your heart to change while you're here. Because when your heart changes the behaviors will follow.

Listen and this is important I'm not saying keep sinning because you can. I'm saying encounter Jesus and you won't.

But in the mean time realize that His grace is sufficient. The cross is enough.

Don't allow the enemy to shame you into thinking your not good enough, smart enough, spiritual enough, or anointed enough,

Because the cross was enough.

Stop camping in regret and give your past to Him. Lay aside the weights that drag you down, and hold you back.

Stop looking in the rearview mirror of life so that you can go forward and live the abundant life Jesus has for you.

Prayer