

"Far "

A new location, a new job, a new house, a new "toy." These are but a few of the activities or things to which people look to find a "renewal" in their lives somehow. Conflicts with your existing neighbors which seem irreconcilable erupts into only one possible solution—relocate geographically. Conflict and unrest in your job, resulting in having to drag yourself to work everyday with a lack of motivation, could easily be remedied by getting a "new" job. Feelings of dissatisfaction, stress or turmoil in life will be dissipated with a new thing to redirect your focus. Interesting how people in conversation speak about something in their life needing to change in order to be "renewed." However, when they make the decision to pursue a different direction they soon discover the same challenges when the "newness" wears off. They thought different would mean contentment.

Too often in life contentment may seem far, far away and you may believe the only way to obtain it is by moving far, far away from your current circumstances. The more distance you can put between yourself and that which you think is the result of your problems, the better off you'll be. Sound like anyone from the Bible? Absolutely! Beginning with Adam & Eve running from Yahweh, to those who felt

they could distance themselves from that troublemaker named Jesus by getting Him crucified, and into your own life, it describes every sinner. It describes you and me whenever we do not want to face our sins and run away from, rather than to, the only place where we can find peace—the cross of Jesus Christ.

You see, unfortunately, **you** cannot distance yourself from yourself. Your current sins are a presence with you and, even more deplorable is when your past sins, which the LORD says He *will not remember* (cf. Isaiah 43:25), are constantly replayed in your mind like a broken record that never seems to quit. You may feel like King David who said in Psalm 51:3 → *I know my transgressions, and my sin is **ever before me***. Despite your best intentions, you also have to face the fact that many of your same failings will be repeated in your life.

Paul described this in Romans 7:15,19 → *For I do not understand my own actions. For I do not do what I want, but I do the very thing I hate. . . . For I do not do the good I want, but the evil I do not want is what I keep on doing*. Such a reality in life moves one to exclaim with him: *Wretched man that I am! Who will deliver me from this body of death?* (cf. Romans 7:24) You have to deal with the presence of sin everyday and . . . you can't outrun it, move up beyond it, or uninvite it into your life. You cling in faith to God's promise of forgiveness and the eventual freedom from the presence of sin in the Person & Work

of Jesus at the bodily resurrection on the Last Day. We need forgiveness as the answer that moves our guilt far away while we cry out, “Make it go away, Lord! Take all the sins, the guilt and the ways I’ve messed up far, far away from me, O Lord!”

The LORD realizes this desire for your sins to be removed far away from you. You’ve been given the courage to gather at the cross, where your sins are fixed by the nails of Good Friday. You stand in faith that the decrees that stood against you are forever locked in place and rendered unreadable by the nails. You can’t even see the charges against you, and God has chosen not to read them because the one sign nailed to the cross that really matters is “Jesus of Nazareth, King of the Jews.” Your sins are in plain sight, but the nails of the cross have fixed them. Despite that, wouldn’t it be good to have your sins far away? While appreciating the bold reassurance that comes from the nails of the cross, the natural inclination is to put some distance between your sins and yourself.

After delivering His people from their slavery to the Egyptians in 1445 BC, Yahweh established them as *a people holy to Himself* as their *God* (cf. Deuteronomy 7:6; 14:2,21; 26:19). Their worship happened according to specific instructions given by Him. Those instructions included a specific action performed by the High Priest once a year on a day which you probably see on your wall calendars called “Yom

Kippur” (i.e. the Day of Atonement). On that day the High Priest was supposed to select two goats. One goat he killed as a sacrifice and sprinkled its blood over the altar to cleanse all Israel from their sin. Then he laid both his hands on the head of the live goat, confessed over it all the sins of the people of Israel, symbolically placing them on the head of the goat, and sent it far away into the wilderness.

Leviticus 16:22 says: *The goat shall bear all their iniquities on itself to a remote area, and he shall let the goat go free in the wilderness.*

This is what you wished could be done with your sins and their guilt: let them be put on another and driven far out of your sight. What a geographical cure! You don't have to move in an effort to be far away from that which torments you. Both the lamb sacrificed for the sins of the whole nation and the scapegoat which carried their sins far from them, gives meaning to John the Baptizer's words concerning Jesus: *Behold, the Lamb of God, Who **takes away** the sin of the world!* (cf. John 1:29)

Jesus came to cleanse you of your sins by shedding His blood on the cross as the perfect sacrifice **for you**. Taking your sin upon Himself, He covered you with His righteousness, and fixed all your sins, for all time in that one place on the cross. Trusting in His atoning work on the cross for you, God's promise of a blessed distance from your sins is a certainty. He says in Psalm 103:11-12 → *As high as the*

heavens are above the earth, so great is His steadfast love toward those who fear Him; as far as the east is from the west, so far does He remove our transgressions from us. Here is actually a wonderful separation! Your sins remain far from you in space and time, farther than you can even imagine!

But what about those times when those past sins seem to be so near to you again? Almost like “the goat came back” with all your sins. An experience, a smell, something which catches your eye, even the presence of a particular person . . . dynamics which seem to trigger thoughts of past sins and their accompanying guilt. It’s like you were right back there, going through the experience all over again. “What happened? I thought they were gone! Lord, have mercy!”

True to his name (“satan” means “he who accuses”), the devil uses such external stimuli to bring up those past sins and throw them in your face. He does so in an effort to accuse you of guilt for them so that you will be disabled, unable to function for the Lord Jesus because of the burden of guilt. Even worse, he wants you to doubt the atoning sacrifice of Jesus on the cross where those sins were already fixed for good, driven far away from you and remembered by God no longer. It is at this point you can confidently say, “Away from me, satan! Jesus has dealt with those sins once and for all, even stating on the cross, ‘It is finished!’” James 4:7 tells you to *submit yourselves*

therefore to God. Resist the devil, and he will flee from you.

Repentance—confessing your sins to God and trusting in His atoning work in Jesus on the cross—knows that God has geographically relocated your sins, removing them far from you. Jesus took every single sin far away to Mount Calvary on that dark day of His death. As He was buried, so was your sin. But when He rose from the dead your sins stay buried. Take heart; your sins are far, far away. No mere scapegoat, but the greatest of all time, God Himself, has carried them away. Their guilt and penalty will never return. *Thanks be to God, Who gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ.* (cf. 1 Corinthians 15:57) Amen.

Based upon the book, “Flowing from the Cross: Six Facets of God’s Forgiveness” by Daniel Paavola. © 2020 Published by Concordia Publishing, St. Louis, MO.

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