

“God’s Promise In the NAILS”

“He forgave all our sins. He canceled the debt, which listed all the rules we failed to follow. He took away that record with its rules and nailed it to the cross.”

Colossians 2:13-14

It was 3 ½ years ago, as Sue and I moved to Amherst, that we looked for a house. The one we selected to purchase had some obvious things that we knew had to be changed. So we made a list – a punch list. When a building is new, the punch list is several pages of details that the builder still has to finish up before the house is complete. For us, it was after we moved in that the list of things needing fixing grew and grew. Sure, there were rooms that obviously needed a fresh coat of paint. No more scarlet and grey walls for us. After we took ownership, however, I discovered the electrical outlets in the bathrooms needed changing; the mail box post had come loose and was leaning over, and the closer on the front door was broken. All the bathrooms needed towel racks on the walls, and a laundry tub need to be installed. There were many more jobs on the list. Home ownership means new problems are added to the list of flaws needing to be fixed with every passing year.

When we were looking at the house, I didn’t see them. But, then again, I didn’t live in the house. Once you take up residence in a place, you begin to discover a lot of flaws.

A punch list of things needing fixing on a house, makes me think about God knowing the list of all my flaws. After all, hasn’t God taken up residence in our hearts?

If God kept a list of your flaws, what would be on it? Would God’s list of things to repair in your life include: spitefulness, pettiness, dishonest, arrogance, maybe your bad temper? Would His list include your problem with gossiping? Your tendency to hold a grudge? You’re stingy with money, and stingier with sincere words of praise? Are you too quick to criticize, or too slow to listen when others are speaking to you?

Do any of those flaws sound familiar? Are any of them yours? If I asked your family members, or a close friend, could they list more?

See, **Everyone Has a LIST!** Everyone. God says, ***“All have sinned and fall short of the glory of God”*** Romans 3:23 “All” means ALL – you included. You’re not all God planned you to be and all He wants you to be. Its called sin.

How would you like God’s list of your flaws to be made public? Would you like a list of your flaws posted at your workstation or on the door of your office for all to see? No? Then how about on your name badge? In the school yearbook? Printed on a business card?

Would you like it if your neighbors or the people at your church didn’t call you by your first name? Instead of Jane or Joe, everyone knew you as Coward, or Gullible? People-Pleaser, or Mr. Backstabber?

Of course not! No one wants to advertise their list! No one wants to be known by their secret sins or public blunders! We try to keep those hidden. People can spend a life time trying to make others believe they are someone different than they really are. People can spend a lifetime trying to avoid revealing the truth about themselves, and trying to avoid honestly admitting and confessing those sins to God.

But here’s the problem: **GOD KNOWS YOUR “LIST.”** In the Bible, God guided David to come clean before God. He got real and honest when he wrote: ***“You know me inside and out; Before a word is on my tongue, You know it completely.”*** Psalm 139: 1-4 Your life is an open book to God. He knows you better than you know yourself! He knows it all – all the good and the bad; all the stuff others know about you and all the stuff only you know in secret. You CAN’T hide the honest, unvarnished truth about yourself from God!

What’s even more is that David recognized that the list of his flaws was not harmless to others. His flaws hurt God. He wrote: ***“Against You, You only, have I sinned and done what is evil in Your sight....”*** Psalm 51: 4 Your sins are personal attacks against Him! It’s not that you simply broke a list of rules. It’s that you’ve broken your

RELATIONSHIP with God! Broken relationships are always messy! They always hurt a lot of people! You have sinned against God and hurt HIM!

Maybe somewhere in your past you've had someone break their relationship with you. Maybe it was a serious relationship that you thought would develop into a lifetime commitment, but you were left heartbroken. Maybe it was a divorce that turned your life upside down. Maybe it was as innocent as the person you asked to the school dance responded, "I don't want to date you. Let's just be friends." At any of those levels a breakup can crush your heart. It can leave you emotionally wounded for years.

Somehow, however, most people figure God shouldn't feel heartbroken when our sins hurt Him. Most people figure God should have an armor-plated heart where our attacks just ricochet off without leaving a scratch. This is where we've figured wrong about God.

The natural attitude of most people is this: "I may have my flaws, but everybody does. Nobody's perfect. I'm par for the course." "I may have messed up ... but I'm not toooo bad! Compared to others, I'm no criminal. So my list is no big deal!" Like I said, we've figured wrongly about God.

Max Lucado tells a story about when he was a boy. His mother would tell him to go, clean up his bedroom. He argued with his mother that he didn't need to. He would lead her by the hand down the hallway to his brother's room. Then he'd argue, "Look, Mom, his room is an absolute disaster. Compared to his room, mine is *already* clean."

His mother, however, wasn't buyin' it. She would take Max by the hand and lead him down the hallway to HER bedroom. Then she'd say, "THIS is what I can clean! And compared to MY room, your bedroom is a disaster. Now, go, young man and clean up your bedroom!"

His brother's room wasn't the standard. Mom set the standard of cleanliness in the house. Max was simply comparing himself to the wrong person.

Don't we do the same? "God, my list of sins is no big deal. I'm better than others." Their lives aren't the standard. God sets the standard. To God your list IS a big deal because you've wrecked your relationship with Him, and He loves you too much to not care. He never says your list is no big deal.

People may want God to just not care and get over it. But He can't. So how does God respond to your list? He promises **"I WILL MAKE YOUR LIST RIGHT."**

The way God deals with your list is to pay for it all, and make it right. God's Word in Colossians chapter 2 tells us: ***"Jesus forgave all our sins. He cancelled the debt, which listed all the rules we failed to follow. He took away that record with its rules and nailed it to the cross."*** *Colossians 2: 13-14* Read again what God promises you here. That list of all the rules you failed to follow – Jesus took it away and nailed it to the cross.

All the wrongs that you don't want made public, has been made public. Your list has been posted for all to see.

On Good Friday, Jesus was thrown to the ground on Mt. Calvary. The soldiers stretched His arms out against the cross beam. One soldier places a knee on Christ's forearm. In one hand he holds a spike. In the other he holds a mallet. The mallet rings. The skin rips. The blood begins to rush.

The crowd watching that day concluded that the purpose of the pounding was to skewer the hands of Jesus to a beam. But they were only half right. We can't fault them for missing the other half. They couldn't see it. But Jesus could. And heaven could. And you know too.

Between His hand and the wood was a list. A long list. A list of mistakes – yours and mine. Our lusts and lies and greedy moments and wayward years. The bad decisions from last year. The bad attitudes from last week. There, in broad daylight for all the world to see was nailed to the cross the list of your sins.

God has done with you what I did with my house. Only ***"He took away that record with its rules and nailed it to the cross."*** Could Jesus

have refused? Could His hands with almighty power have stopped the soldiers? Yes, absolutely. Except if the soldiers hadn't pounded the spikes, Jesus would have done it Himself. He, Himself chose the nails. He saw the list and knew it was yours. And since He couldn't bear the thought of eternity without you, He chose the nails!

Your list couldn't be overlooked. His holiness is the standard. So, instead of you paying for your list in eternal hell, He did it all on the cross. Amazing? Yes! True? Absolutely!!

When my kids were young and at home, we had a big conversion van to drive the family around. The dashboard of the van was beautifully finished wood with a clear plastic finish. Over the years the hot summer sun caused the finish to bubble and lift up from the wood. So I got a brilliant idea. I filled a hypodermic needle with super glue and injected the glue beneath the plastic to reattach it to the wood. But it didn't go as neatly as I planned. The super glue started to ooze up through small cracks. Glue was not just beneath the plastic coating, it was on top! In a careless second, my finger touched the surface, my finger got into the glue, and instantly became glued to the dashboard of the car. I was stuck. I was glued to my mistake. Thankfully, we had some nail polish remover in the house. Sue got it. In a few minutes the solvent worked. I was free from my mistake!

Isn't that like your list of sins? Your list was glued to you. Stuck on you. You needed a solvent to get it unstuck from you. That solvent is Jesus' love and His forgiveness.

What happened to your list? Jesus had it glued to Him. The Bible promises you: ***“God made Him [that's Jesus] who had no sin to be sin for us, so that in Him we might become the righteousness of God.”*** 2 *Corinthians 5:21* Jesus took your list on Himself and had it nailed with Him to the cross to put right every last flaw. In love so deep we can't comprehend, He chose the nails.

About 25 years ago, a popular movie was “The Breakfast Club.” It's a story about a group of high school students who have to spend Saturday morning together in detention. The kids are all very different from one another. They have different groups of friends, dress

differently, and act very differently from each other. But over the course of the morning spent in detention together, their differences help each of them see themselves much better for who they really are. They each come to face some pain in their lives and find acceptance in this odd bunch thrown together that morning.

One of the boys there is on the wrestling team. He is in detention because he assaulted and humiliated another boy in the locker room. He felt bad about humiliating the boy. But when these kids press him why he chose to do this, some real raw emotions come out. He did it because of his dad. You see the wrestler's dad only approved of his son if he won, wrestled, was tough. And this boy heard stories of his dad cutting up when dad was in high school. The wrestler wanted his dad's approval so much that he came to think that if he acted like the stories he heard of his father getting in trouble in high school, then his dad would finally approve of him.

Seeking our parents' approval can be a powerful motivating force inside us ... even into adulthood.

And this leads me to wonder, what if the storyline in this movie had been turned around? What if that young high school wrestler had felt and known that he was secure in his father's love and acceptance and approval of him? If he had the approval of his dad, this boy wouldn't have sought to win that affection by hurting another student. If this young wrestler had his father's approval, this boy probably would have been kind, and compassionate, and helpful to the other guy, instead of striking out to humiliate him.

Friends, you have the unconditional approval of your Heavenly Father. He loves you! He gave His best for you! He has removed and taken away your list of flaws! He sees you as lovable, and perfect, and forgiven.

Having your Heavenly Father's approval, how will you now treat others? Let me ask that again. Let this question sink in: Having your Heavenly Father's approval, how will you treat others?

In choosing the nails, Jesus did something *active* and *costly* to forgive you of your "list" of flaws. **Will you, because of what Jesus has**

already done for you, do something *active* and *costly* to forgive others of their “list” of flaws?

Whose list of flaws are you holding onto? Whose list are you brooding over? Who has wronged you, and hurt you, so that you are unwilling to release them of their wrongs against you?

The list you hold of others' flaws is small and miniscule compared to the list God holds of your flaws. Since God forgave your huge list, shouldn't you be willing to forgive others of their short list? Let Jesus take it. Let Him alone take all lists with Him, and nail them all to His cross.

Corrie TenBoom grew up in Amsterdam, Holland. Her father was a Dutch watch maker. Along with her sister, Betsy, the three TenBooms were deeply devoted Christians. When the Nazi's invaded Holland in World War II, the family did a very dangerous thing – they took in Jewish families to hide in their house.

In time, a friend betrayed the TenBooms to the Nazi's. They were arrested, loaded into train cars and sent to the concentration camps. Only Corrie survived.

Years after her release, Corrie TenBoom met face to face the most cruel and heartless of the German guards. He had humiliated and degraded her and her sister. He had abused and visually raped them as they stood in the delousing shower. Now, years later, he stood before her with his hand outstretched, and said, “Will you forgive me?”

Corrie writes: “I stood there with coldness clutching at my heart.... I prayed, Jesus help me!

“Woodenly, mechanically I thrust my hand into the one stretched out to me, and I experienced an incredible thing. The current started in my shoulder, raced down into my arms and sprang into our clasped hands. then this warm reconciliation seemed to flood my whole being, bringing tears to my eyes. ‘I forgive you, brother,’ I cried with my whole heart.

“For a long moment we grasped each other’s hands, the former guard, and the former prisoner. I have never known the love of God so intensely as I did in that moment.”

Friends, to forgive is to set a prisoner free ... and discover the prisoner was you.

Let Jesus take your list of flaws to the cross and pay for it all. And give Him that list you hold of other people’s flaws. Give it to Him. His love will transform your heart. You’ll be glad you did.

Amen.