



Thrills and Spills

Because I was a fairly typical, red-blooded American boy, the brand new bike I received on my 12th birthday did not long remain in its pristine state. Young boys where I come from like to *customize* things, so it wasn't long before my shiny bicycle had been modified beyond all recognition.

The angles of the seat and handlebars were changed for a more racy profile, and many-colored plastic streamers were attached to the holes in the grips. An odd assortment of do-dads was added to the wheel spokes for noise and flash. Lights and buzzers, whistles and horns were added and subtracted on a regular basis for both safety and social status. The red factory finish was eventually improved upon with random blotches of spray paint: metallic green, silver and gold.

Then the fenders were modified—and eventually removed. Factory handlebars were exchanged for those of a slightly more radical design. The shape of the seat became more of an artistic statement, rather than just a perch for my posterior.

Also typical, with modifications to

the appearance of my bike came modifications to my riding habits. On the first day with my new bike, I remained conservative and obedient to my parents, riding in genteel circuits on the sidewalk circling our block. But soon I was jumping the curb, launching myself off graded slopes and banks, careening dangerously close to vehicles both stationary and moving. In no time, instead of obeying my father to use the kickstand when dismounting, I had adopted the habit of leaping from my trusty steed while still moving, thereby letting it slam and scrape into the ground with a most satisfying crash.

Curiously, as my reckless riding habits increased, so did the cuts and scrapes and bruises upon my person. When I rode sensibly, I remained astride the seat in an upright position; when I rode

with reckless abandon, I paid a price for my antics—usually with physical pain, blood, and scars.

Now when evening came David arose from his bed and walked around on the roof of the king's house, and from the roof he saw a woman bathing; and the woman was very beautiful in appearance. So David sent and inquired about the woman. And one said, "Is this not Bathsheba, the daughter of Eliam, the wife of Uriah the Hittite?" David sent messengers and took her, and when she came to him, he lay with her; and when she had purified herself from her uncleanness, she returned to her house.

2 Samuel 11:2-4

The curse of free will is that we are free to do really stupid things. Sometimes we fall down purely by accident. More often, however, we fall down because we have purposefully put ourselves into a position where falling down is likely.

Then the Lord sent Nathan to David. And he came to him and said,

"There were two men in one city, the one rich and the other poor. The rich man had a great many flocks and herds.

But the poor man had nothing except one little ewe lamb Which he bought and nourished;

And it grew up together with him and his children.

It would eat of his bread and drink of his cup and lie in his bosom, And was like a daughter to him.

Now a traveler came to the rich man, And he was unwilling to take from his own flock or his own herd, To prepare for the wayfarer who had come to him;

Rather he took the poor man's ewe lamb and prepared it for the man who had come to him."

Then David's anger burned greatly against the man, and he said to

Nathan, "As the Lord lives, surely the man who has done this deserves to die. He must make restitution for the lamb fourfold, because he did this thing and had no compassion." Nathan then said to David, "You are the man!"

2 Samuel 12:1-7a

Our selfish desires can blind us to the fact that we have even fallen down in the first place—especially when we have grown accustomed to the spills.

[Thus says the Lord God of Israel,] 'Why have you despised the word of the Lord by doing evil in His sight? You have struck down Uriah the Hittite with the sword, have taken his wife to be your wife, and have killed him with the sword of the sons of Ammon.

Now therefore, the sword shall never depart from your house, because you have despised Me and have taken the wife of Uriah the Hittite to be your wife.'

Thus says the Lord, 'Behold, I will raise up evil against you from your own household; I will even take your wives before your eyes and give them to your companion, and he will lie with your wives in broad daylight. Indeed you did it secretly, but I will do this thing before all Israel, and under the sun.'"

Then David said to Nathan, "I have sinned against the Lord." And Nathan said to David, "The Lord also has taken away your sin; you shall not die. However, because by this deed you have given occasion to the enemies of the Lord to blaspheme, the child also that is born to you shall surely die."

2 Samuel 12:9-14



Living under grace—under the blood of Christ—means that we will not die because of our foolish decisions to sin, but living under God's justice means that we will forever bear the scars of our sin.

God's forgiving grace does not nullify the lingering effects of our wrong decisions.

(Continued...)

The same sins which put our Lord to death will put us to death if they can. O child of God, you never sin without injuring yourself. The smallest sin that ever creeps into your heart is a robber seeking to kill and to destroy. You never profited by sin, and never can. No, it is poison, deadly poison to your spirit. You know that it injures your faith, destroys your enjoyment, withers up your peace, weakens you in prayer, and prevents your example being beneficial to others.

Charles Haddon Spurgeon