

Forgiveness

FYI: Every summer I make sure to make time to do what I love best: get into physical shape and turn my mind to Godly things as opposed to work. One way I do this is by cutting five acres of grass weekly. I also enjoy bicycle riding. During the summer months, I work up to a limit of approximately one hundred miles. Being over the age of fifty, it is both pleasure and work at this point.

It was July 4, 1993 and halfway through the northern Illinois bicycling season. I was twenty-three miles into a planned fifty-two mile trip. The plan, Lord willing, was to visit my wife's cousin's husband Al Tenuta. He lived one half of a block from Christ Hospital in Oak Lawn, Illinois. The trip would end with me returning to Frankfort, Illinois before dark.

I had just had three draft beers at Westgate Country Club. I was at the intersection of Ridgeland and 114th Street in Worth, Illinois. I was on the east side of the street and heading northbound. At this intersection, the Illinois Toll way (I-294) bridge casts shadows on sunny days. From the top of my head to the ground I measured at least six feet, seven inches. I rode with the seat almost fully extended. The bike and I weighed nearly three hundred pounds.

I was riding on the sidewalk and I had a green light, along with all of the traffic moving north and south. As I slowly entered the intersection I could see a black Pinto coming toward me. I could see that the driver was looking at me and so I continued to cross the street. As I was increasing my speed, she finally decided to brake. Too late! I knew she was going to hit me! I tried to dismount the bike instantly.

The impact drove the bike into the cement street and under the car. I went over the top of her hood. The glass in her windshield cracked. My left leg took off her right windshield wiper and radio antenna. When I fell on the ground, I landed on my face and right elbow. For a moment I thought: "If I could get up, I would kill the driver." I took stock of the situation after getting up and shaking all of my body parts. I was bleeding from my left knee, face, hands and my right elbow was not moving too well. I remember thanking God for being alive and then falling to my knees in thanksgiving (or maybe it was shock—I can not say for certain). I knew that I did not want to go into shock. In a few minutes, the elbow was so large that it had lost its original shape. The swelling was so great that my left fingers could not even feel the elbow. It was as large as my knee.

Several people stopped and called the police from their mobile phones. Twelve minutes later there were sirens and police all around me. My bike was no longer useable, as the front wheel and fork were a twisted mess. When I stood up the jerk that hit me smiled and asked: "Is it OK if I leave?" I answered: "No, not unless you want me to hunt you down and kill you." At that moment I

was very upset and wanted her to suffer somehow. She was now very upset indeed, shaking and crying. I was pleased greatly at the time.

All of a sudden I realized how blessed I was to be alive. I remember thinking of Jesus—He forgave in the face of pain, rejection and death. I really did not want the jerk to cry after all. I thought that she had no brains and only good looks. (I kept in mind a statement from Billy Graham: “The first look is free. After that it is a sin.”) All I wanted to do was see my wife again and forget that this accident had ever happened.

As I watched the cops give her a ticket, I felt sorry for her. I forgave her one hundred percent. When I reached for my elbow again, it was back to being a normal size. It continued to get smaller with each passing minute. I used a stranger’s cell phone to call Al and have him come pick me up. We went to his house where I rested and washed all of the dirt and pebbles from my wounds. By the time Al drove me to Frankfort, my elbow was completely normal and all the open wounds had scabbed over. There was never any infection or bruises either.

The following Sunday morning I gave this testimony to Peace Community Church in Frankfort. This story made many people laugh out loud during worship service.

AFTERTHOUGHTS: I was given a great amount of grace that day, right when I needed it. That was one of those times when character was built by my being able to practice what I learned throughout my life. This experience inspired me to share the truth of the Lord’s power. I want people to see what is available to them if they believe in the Lord.