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A DIFFERENT KIND OF ARTICLE

It has been a year since preacher invited me to write an article for Free Riders Press, and there are a couple of things I would like to say, which make this article a little different from past articles. I usually try to tell a story or relate an experience that illustrates the point of what I am trying to say. Sometimes that works well; other times, it falls flat. What I want to say this month doesn't really need much of an illustration, so I will just jump right to it.

First, I want to thank preacher and Lorie for letting me do this article in Free Riders Press every month. I know that preacher is wanting the rag to be first class and reach out to as many as possible in the biker community with relevant and interesting information, but he lets me write here anyway. What I really appreciate is that the Free Riders Press folks really care about the community, not just about making money off us. I thought that it was really great for preacher to sponsor the Tuesday feeds around the area, and to know he is at the many events week by week. He's not just interested in your money, he's interested in you and what you think. That's why he lets me and others like me write about what we like. He wants this paper to reflect the varied interests of a diverse readership made up of unique individuals such as yourself. That's why we should all render our thanks and support for Free Riders Press. Thanks, man, for your consideration and friendship.

Second, I would like to address something that I have found out while talking to many of you over the past year. Many of you have told me that you do not feel welcome around church type religious people. I know that this is true in many cases. Even as a pastor, I know that I am not welcome around many church type people. A friend and I went by a large church a couple of weeks ago. We actually rode into the parking lot, to see if the pastor might be there. People around the building paused to look at us as we rode in, then scurried in doors or around corners to avoid having to speak with us. One poor lady was there to drop off her kid for an activity, but didn't want to let the kid out of her SUV until the "dangerous" element left. I felt real sorry for her. Even though we were wearing Christian Motorcyclist Backpatches, and were unarmed (at least I was), these people were scared to get close to us. We have learned to not take it personally. We may get the same response at the grocery store and the restaurant, it's not just the religious people. They fear what they don't know or understand. I agree that

church people should be more accepting, but, then again, we are talking about people. There are some churches that are accepting of others, regardless of differences. Keep looking; don't get discouraged; you'll find people who will share the love of God with you. Remember, you are people, too.

That brings me to the third point I wanted to make. I have talked to many bikers over the past year, and most of them readily admit that they know they are bad. Many will even acknowledge that they are sinners, using a religious term from their childhood. The ones I am concerned about are those who seem to think they are too far gone for God to care about them. They believe that they have crossed a line, a point of no return, and that there is no way that they could ever be accepted by Christians, or God for that matter. I want you who think those things to know that this is not the case. As long as you are still alive at this moment, there is hope. The Bible tells us that "all have sinned." That means that the religious people going to church down the road are in the same boat with you. Of course, there are some sinful acts that are much worse than others, and there are some people who sin more than others do, but from God's point of view, a sinner is a sinner no matter how much or how little he has sinned. From the lofty height of God's throne, the petty liar and the gross murderer stand equally small. Both deserve "eternal damnation" according to the Word of God. The point is that all sin carries equal weight with God, and mercy and grace are available to all sinners, no matter how sinful.

All sin carries the death penalty, no matter how big or small, because the root of all sin is rebellion against God and His Word. But God stands ready to exercise mercy and grace toward those who come to Him through Jesus Christ. In mercy, He determines not to give us what we deserve, death, but to forgive us our sins. By grace, He promises to give us eternal life, which we do not deserve, through faith in Jesus Christ, who died for us on the cross. Trust Him when He says that Jesus died for you, too. There is still hope even for you. I will be writing more about this in months to come. Thanks for reading.

Pastor Sam

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