**BIBLE TALK Radio Broadcast**

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**“Cut It Down And Forget It.”**

The civil war had not been over very long. The South had been devastated, because much of the fighting was in the South. The casualties had been high on both sides, in fact there had been approximately a million casualties in the civil war. Horrible battles had been fought, and therefore, deep feelings of resentment had formed on both sides. But since much of the fighting was in the South and the South had lost, there were especially some deep resentments on the part of many southerners. The story is told that General Robert E. Lee, now out of the service, was riding through Lexington, Virginia, and a lady beckoned to him to come over to her yard. She showed him a tree that had been planted in her yard many years before. She said, “General Lee, do you see what those Yankees have done to by tree?” Many shots from guns had torn into the bark, and shrapnel from cannons had torn the tree limbs off. She looked up at General Lee, expecting to get sympathy, and he looked down at her, and said, “Cut it down my dear lady, and forget it.”

In order for us to be what God wants us to be there are some things we need to cut down and forget. I want to talk about some of these things this morning on our program.

First, when we come to Christ for salvation we must cut down and forget our status and past accomplishments. We have a good example of this in Paul. Paul was a distinguished Jew. In Philippians 3:5-6 he says that he was *“circumcised the eighth day, of the stock of Israel, of the tribe of Benjamin, a Hebrew of the Hebrews; concerning the law, a Pharisee; concerning zeal, persecuting the church; concerning the righteousness which is in the law, blameless.”* As a Jew, Paul would have had a lot to be proud of. But in verse 7 he said, *“But what things were gain to me, these I have counted loss for Christ.”* In verse 13 he said, *“Brethren, I do not count myself to have apprehended; but one thing I do, forgetting those things which are behind and reaching forward to those things which are ahead.”* When Paul became a Christian he understood that what he had accomplished as a Jew meant nothing. He cut it all down and forgot it that he might gain Christ. One may have accomplished a lot in this world. He may have his PhD and be a well-known professor in a prestigious university. But when he becomes a Christian, in the church he is just a sinner saved by the blood of Christ, just like the rest. One may have been the mayor of the city, but when he becomes a Christian he cuts it down and forgets it for Christ.

Secondly, we must cut down and forget our sufferings and trials from the past. There are those in the church who have suffered in the past because of their faith. Others have suffered in other ways. Some have been abused as children. Some have had bad marriages and have been hurt by their mates. They can’t forget it and live it over and over again in their minds. They end up becoming depressed and leave the Lord. Sufferings we have experienced in the past must be cut down and forgotten. Paul again is a good example. In 2 Cor. 11:23-27 he lists some of his suffering: he had been put in prison, beaten with rods, once was stoned, three times he was shipwrecked, underwent many perils and dangers, etc. In 2 Cor. 12 he tells of a thorn in the flesh he had (some physical ailment) that he had asked the Lord to take from him, but the Lord said “no.” It would have been easy for him to become discouraged. He could have looked at all he had suffered and let it drag him down into a depression. But rather he cut it down and forgot it. He said, *“Therefore I take pleasure in infirmities, in reproaches, in needs, in persecutions, in distresses, for Christ's sake. For when I am weak, then I am strong.”* (2 Cor. 12:10) Rather than becoming discouraged and giving up, Paul looked at the benefits that came from his suffering.

I think of Joseph who was hated by his brothers. His brothers sold him as a slave into Egypt. Joseph suffered many hardships as a result of what his brothers did to him. Many years later Joseph was exalted to be a ruler in Egypt and had the opportunity to take vengeance on his brothers for the suffering they cause him. Joseph had come to realize that God had allowed this to happen for a good purpose. His brothers came to him and asked forgiveness. He said to them, *“‘Do not be afraid, for am I in the place of God? But as for you, you meant evil against me; but God meant it for good, in order to bring it about as it is this day, to save many people alive. Now therefore, do not be afraid; I will provide for you and your little ones.’ And he comforted them and spoke kindly to them.”* (Gen. 50:19-21) What a wonderful attitude. Whatever sufferings you have endured, cut it down and forget it. Go forward and serve the Lord.

Thirdly, we must cut down and forget our failures in life. You may remember the story of Roy Riegels who ran the wrong way in the 1929 Rose Bowl. He played for the California football team and they were playing Georgia Tech. A Georgian Tech running back fumbled the ball on the Tech 30 yard line. Riegels scooped up the ball and took off. He later reported, “when I picked up the ball I started to turn to my left toward Tech’s goal. Somebody shoved me and I bounded right off into a tough tackler. In pivoting to get away from him, I completely lost my bearings.” Riegles headed at full speed the wrong way, toward his own goal line, his teammates and Tech players in pursuit. One of his teammates spun him around at the 1-yard line. Instantly Riegels was tackled by Tech players. Cal, unable to advance the ball, had to punt. The kick was blocked out of the end zone for a safety. The two points were the difference between winning and losing. This incident occurred in the first half. At halftime, Riegels put a blanket around his shoulders, put his face in his hands and cried. After several minutes, coach Clarence Price announced that the second-half starters would be the same as those in the first half. All but Riegels began heading toward the field. “Coach, I can’t do it,” he said. “I’ve ruined you. I’ve ruined my school. I’ve ruined myself. I couldn’t face the crowd in that stadium to save my life.” Price told him, “Roy, get up and go back. The game is only half over.” According to accounts of the game, Riegels played a brilliant second half. However, they lost by one point.

We all have failures in life. We all have sinned. When we have done all we can do to be forgiven, we must cut it down and forget it and move forward. Peter failed. You remember, he denied the Lord three times. How do you think this made Peter feel? A few hours before this he had said he would not deny the Lord, but he was willing to die with the Lord. After Peter denied Him it says that *“Peter went out and wept bitterly.”* (Luke 22:62). Peter could have gotten discouraged and quit. But the Lord forgave him and encouraged him. Peter became one of the Lord’s most dedicated servants.

Being a Christian doesn’t mean you don’t have any failures, but it means the Lord has equipped you with the ability to turn your failures into victories. We cannot change the past, but we can refuse to allow our failures in the past to hinder us from being productive servants in the present.

Fourthly, we must cut down and forget our guilt when we are forgiven of our sins. Paul viewed himself as the chief of sinners. (1 Tim. 1:15) Paul had been party to killing innocent Christians. He had imprisoned them and beaten them. How would you like to live with having done that? Paul obeyed the gospel of Christ and was forgiven. Ananias said to him, *“And now why are you waiting? Arise and be baptized, and wash away your sins, calling on the name of the Lord.”* (Acts 22:16) Paul did that and his sins were washed away. God forgave him. All indications are, Paul cut it down and forgot it. Of course he remembered what he had done, but he did not allow feelings of guilt take away his joy in the Lord nor hinder him in his service. He said in 1 Cor. 15:9-10, *“For I am the least of the apostles, who am not worthy to be called an apostle, because I persecuted the church of God. But by the grace of God I am what I am, and His grace toward me was not in vain; but I labored more abundantly than they all, yet not I, but the grace of God which was with me.”*

Whatever our sins may have been, we who are Christians are what we are by the grace of God. It doesn’t matter what we have done, God forgives. He has promised that when He forgives us of our sins He remembers them no more (Heb. 8:12) We can put those sins in the past and the guilt of those sins in the past and move forward. We must cut it down and forget it. There was a brother in the church who received a letter from a sister in the church who said that she had committed fornication before she was married. She said she was so ashamed, and felt awful about it. She had repented and asked God to forgive her. She told her husband before they married and asked him to forgive her, which he did. But she said in the letter, “What can I do? I feel so guilty.” He wrote back and called her by name and said, “you don’t relieve guilt by doing more and more things. You relieve guilt by coming to Christ on His terms, and trust Him.” When God says He forgives and remembers our sins no more, we need to believe Him. We need to cut it down and forget it. Someone might say, “But you don’t know the terrible things I have done.” Let me ask you, have you committed adultery with another man’s wife, and then killed the husband and took her to be your wife? King David did. He repented and God forgave him (2 Sam. 12:13). God will forgive us of whatever sins we may have committed.

But we need to make sure we cut it down properly before we forget it. Here is someone who sins and does nothing about it. There is no repentance, no seeking God’s forgiveness. Some years later his sin is brought to his attention and he says, “Oh, that was a long time ago. I’ve already forgotten about that.” Remember, God does not forget until He forgives. And He does not forgive until we come to Him on His terms. Jesus is the author of eternal salvation, but it is only to those who obey Him (Heb. 5:8-9). For the sinner who has never become a Christian, he must believe in Jesus (John 8:24), repent of his sins (Acts 3:19), confess his faith in Christ (Rom. 10:9-10) and be baptized in the name of Jesus (that is be immersed in water) for the remission of sins (Acts 2:38). For the one who has become a Christian who sins, he must confess his sin (1 John 1:9), repent of his sin and pray for forgiveness (Acts 8:22). Someone says, “I thought time healed all wounds.” It does, but it doesn’t do a thing for sin. Only the blood of Jesus will wash away sin. We must come to Christ on His terms to be cleansed by His blood. Then and only then will you be able to cut it down and forget it and move forward.

Our time is gone for today. We thank you for listening.

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