



Letters About Forgiveness of Sin

Romans 3:23; 7:19; 1 John 1:9; Galatians 5:22-23

Safari Sam was the first counselor to arrive. The campers were already seated on the floor as he stepped up to the counter. The flaming logs crackled in the fireplace. Safari Sam leaned toward the campers and put a finger to his lips. "Shhhh! I have a secret. Guess what I did? I sneaked over to Camp Coconut and put itching powder in Ranger Drosselmeyer's sleeping bag. Then, I put ants in his lemonade! He's in for a surprise!" Safari Sam laughed. Suddenly, he heard footsteps and stood up straight. "Oops, here comes Ranger Reggie. Don't say a word!"

"Hello, Campers! Hello, Safari Sam!" Ranger Reggie greeted, as he set his hat on the mantle.

"Hello, Ranger Reggie," Safari Sam replied.

Ranger Reggie looked at the mailbox. "Did we get any mail today, Safari Sam?"

Safari Sam glanced at the box with a worried look. "Why? What did you hear?" he replied rather defensively.

"Nothing. I just heard it was Mail Time!" Ranger Reggie took the Bible from the mailbag. "Let's see what letters God has sent us today! Here we are. Let's read Paul's letter to the Romans. 'If we claim to be without sin, we deceive ourselves and the truth is not in us. If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just and will forgive us our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness.'"

"I didn't do it!" Safari Sam shouted, waving his hands in the air.

Ranger Reggie looked up. "What? Safari Sam, is something bothering you?"

"Who me? No, nothing, what? I didn't . . . it's just . . . why were you talking about sin?"

Ranger Reggie stared at Safari Sam. "Because, it's in the Bible. Do you want to read?"

Safari Sam cringed. "Do I have to?"

"What?" Ranger Reggie asked.

"I mean, um, sure . . ." Safari Sam coughed and took the Bible. He read, "I do not understand what I do. For what I want to do I do not do, but what I hate I do. I know that nothing good lives in me, that is, in my sinful nature. For I have the desire to do what is

good, but I cannot carry it out.” Safari Sam threw his hands in the air and yelled. “Okay, you got me!”

Ranger Reggie was beginning to get a little annoyed. “I’ve got you? Safari Sam, what is wrong with you?”

The campers, fully aware of why Safari Sam was upset, held their breath.

“You made me read this because you know what I did!” said Safari Sam.

“Safari Sam, I have no idea what you’re talking about,” Ranger Reggie insisted.

“You mean . . . you don’t know?” asked Safari Sam. “But, that verse described me perfectly. I want to do good things, but sometimes I do the opposite of the good that I want to do!”

“That verse describes all of us,” Ranger Reggie explained. “We all have done things that are wrong in God’s eyes. It’s called sin.”

“Well, that’s what I did. I put itching powder in Ranger Drosselmeyer’s sleeping bag!”

Ranger Reggie gasped. “Oh, Safari Sam, that was wrong.”

“And, I put ants in his lemonade,” Safari Sam continued.

Ranger Reggie shook his head. “Safari Sam, that’s not nice at all!”

“I know! I’m a wretched man!” Safari Sam cried.

Ranger Reggie waved his finger. “What you did was very sneaky and low, low, low.”

Safari Sam hung his head in shame. Suddenly, Wild William was there, standing in the doorway. Ranger Reggie realized it was past time for the Creature Feature. “Who is today’s featured creature?”

Wild William announced, “This critter’s covered up with scales and has a very noisy tail!”

Safari Sam said, “Thanks, Wild William. I think I know what it is! It’s a rattlesnake!”

Ranger Reggie yelped. Safari Sam heard the campers scream. He turned just in time to see a hissing snake drop onto Ranger Reggie’s shoulders.

“Ah! He’s got me! Get him off! Get him off!” exclaimed Ranger Reggie.

Safari Sam snatched the snake and tossed the wriggling creature into a burlap sack. “I’ve got him! I’ve got him! Wow, Ranger Reggie, animals sure are drawn to you.”

Ranger Reggie scowled, “Yeah? Well, I’m just glad this one didn’t hurt me!”

Safari Sam frowned and sat down on the bale of hay. “Ranger Reggie, I am so sorry. I think God is trying to teach me a lesson today. The serpent is a symbol for sin, isn’t it?” Safari Sam asked.

"Yes." Ranger Reggie nodded and looked at the campers. "Campers, which animal tempted Adam and Eve to eat the forbidden fruit?"

"The serpent!" the campers yelled in reply.

"That's right," Ranger Reggie turned to Safari Sam, "and remember what God told the serpent? Because of his sin, what did the serpent have to do the rest of his life?"

"He had to crawl on his belly all the days of his life," Safari Sam replied. He slid off of the bale of hay and laid face down on the floor. "That does it! I'm going to crawl on my belly because I'm a rotten sinner, just like the serpent!"

"Wait a minute, Safari Sam!" Ranger Reggie reached down and put a hand on his shoulder. "We are all sinners, but we don't have to crawl on our bellies to be forgiven."

Safari Sam looked up. "We don't?"

"No. Jesus died to pay for our sins. We who believe in Jesus are completely forgiven," Ranger Reggie reminded his friend.

Safari Sam nodded. "That's right! The punishment for our sins is to be separated from the Lord for all time, but once we believe in Him, He promises we will be with Him for all eternity!"

"And, if you sin again, but are truly sorry and admit your sin to Jesus, He will still forgive you. The best part is we have His Spirit living in us to help us choose to do the right thing," Ranger Reggie continued.

Safari Sam sat up and leaned against the hay bale. "We can choose to do what's right?"

"Sure!" Ranger Reggie looked up at the rafters. "I think my friend Orville can point us in the right direction. Campers, let's all shout, 'Hey Orville, come on down!' Ready?"

"Hey Orville, come on down!" everyone shouted. Orville swooped down from the rafters in a flash of gray feathers. Safari Sam caught the egg-shaped message as Orville dropped it.

"Orville laid an egg," Safari Sam joked. He opened the egg and removed the letter. "It's part of Paul's letter to the Galatians, 'The fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control.'"

Ranger Reggie pointed to the letter. "Do you see, Safari Sam? That's the fruit of the Spirit that lives in us."

Safari Sam stared at the letter for a minute. All the campers waited to see if he understood. "So, I don't have to do wrong things. I can choose things like love, patience, kindness, and self-control! I'm going to apologize to Ranger Drosselmeyer for all the sneaky things I did."

Ranger Reggie grinned. "That's the spirit! Campers, let's choose to do the right thing and say our Camp Venture Camper's Code together."

Safari Sam stood up. "Yes! Raise your right hand and recite our Camper's Code after me!"

Together, the entire camp chanted after their leader, "I will love God with all my heart. I will love my neighbor as myself. I will be a light wherever I go!"

"Great job, campers!" Ranger Reggie cheered. He walked toward the door and waved for everyone to follow. "Now, let's go and have a great day, making great choices!"