

Sixty Years Walking With God

BEGIN WITH FORGIVENESS

"The father ran to meet him." (Luke 15)

Read LUKE 15 Today is the first day of the rest of your life and all of us have things in our past that make us ashamed of ourselves. Shame is a heavy burden. Edgar A. Guest wrote:

I have to live with myself and so
I want to be fit for myself to know
I don't want to come to the setting sun
And hate myself for the things I've done

The wonderful truth of Christianity is that we can start every day, with a clean slate in the eyes of God. God wants to do two things for you – **forgive** you completely and **change you** so you slowly become the right kind of person, one you will not be ashamed of. Philippians 2 says **"God will be in you to give you the desire and the power to do it"**.

Walking with God begins with forgiveness. We have hurt ourselves and others with our actions. We have allowed some people to keep on hurting because we did not help them. You may have done worse, like David who committed adultery and murder (2 Samuel 11-12) and Peter who denied knowing the Lord (Matthew 26). It doesn't matter. Jesus said, **"Come to me all of you who are burdened down and I will give you rest" (Matthew 11)**. And this includes the burdens of guilt and shame.

The boy in Jesus' parable experienced the unhappiness wrongdoing brings, and Jesus pictured it as eating with hogs. To a Jew, that was like you and me eating with rats. The son decided to go home, hoping his father would let him work for him. He didn't feel worthy to be his son any more. The dad saw him coming, I think, because he was looking for him every day to come back. And he ran to meet him; threw his arms around him and threw a party for him.

To me, the people who deserve heaven the least were those around Jesus' cross who

mocked Him. They would not even let Him die in peace. And the two thieves crucified with Him, joined in. But after one of them heard Jesus offering forgiveness to the whole crowd, he asked Jesus to be his King. Jesus told him, **"Today, you will be with me in heaven – {Paradise}" (Luke 23)**.

Jesus' offer of forgiveness from the cross is how I found forgiveness. I said, 'Lord, I'm filthy from head to toe. But You forgave those who stripped You naked, beat You and spit on You; so I believe You will forgive me. Please forgive me and help me be the right kind of person.' He did!

LET GOD CHANGE YOU

**"Create a clean heart (character) in me,
O God /and a faithful spirit." (Psalm 51)**

This is what David prayed after God forgave Him (Psalm 32). When we ask our employer to forgive us for stealing money; it is assumed that we are going to stop stealing. Asking for forgiveness with no intention of changing is a waste of time. The problem is, we cannot change ourselves. Trying to change ourselves is like mopping a dirt floor. The harder we work, the dirtier we get. David knew this, so he asked God to do it.

The father, representing God, did not ask the boy to take a bath and wash the "hog smell" away before he hugged him. In the 1800's in England, children were often stolen and forced to work in shops and factories. Some ladies were having a flower club meeting in a member's home and were drinking tea and eating cookies. Suddenly a young boy, cleaning the chimney fell down into the room, covered in soot. As he wiped the soot from his face, a lady saw something in his eyes. Suddenly she recognized the eyes of her little boy, who had been stolen when he was four. She ran over, crying with joy and hugged him. God does this for us.

**"God does not clean us up so He can love us,
He loves us so he can clean us up."**

- Adrian Rogers