

Almighty God of the universe. God says we are innocent before Him.

Before a battle, a young French Private saw Emperor Napoleon beginning to fall from his horse. He ran over and grabbed him, just before his head hit a large rock. Napoleon said, "Young man, you are now a lieutenant". The man did what I would do. He went over to a fire, surrounded by officers staying warm; pushed his way in and started warming his hands.

A Captain grabbed his arm and said, "What do you think you are doing you stupid private?" The young man said, "I am not a private, I am a lieutenant in the Emperor's army." The Captain said, "Why in the world do you dare call yourself an officer?" The young man pointed to Napoleon, on his horse in the center of camp and said, "He told me I am."

We may not *feel* forgiven, and at times we may even wonder if we are forgiven. But the reality is, we ARE forgiven because God, in His Word, says we are. We may not feel married but we are; and our husband or wife and the court house have papers to prove it. Our "paper" is the Bible, the Word of God Himself (Like 8:21). When we truly believe it - take it by faith - it is the most joyful "feeling" in the world. It is true, not because we feel it or don't feel it. It is true because God says it.

Do You Want to Change?

Ezekiel 36:26

"I give you a new heart (the inner person we are - Mark 7:21) and a new spirit within. I will put my Spirit within you and cause you to walk in my statutes / I will deliver you from all your uncleanness."

1 John 3:1

"Look at the great love the Father has bestowed on us; that we can be *called* the children of God. And that is what we ARE!"

2 Peter 1:4

"God has given us all we need to live a godly life / as **partakers** (sharers) of the divine NATURE who escape the corruption in the world caused by evil desires."

The moment we are forgiven, God, the Holy Spirit, works a miracle change in us. Jesus says it is like a new birth (John 3). We have a new nature (heart) - the nature of God Himself.

After it happens, most of us still feel the same. We have the same temptations and when we give in; we want to give up because we feel like nothing has happened. This is why Billy Graham says we should wait a year before we judge the sincerity of people who make decisions in his crusades.

The first changes we notice are our new DESIRES to do what is right and a new DISLIKE for the bad things we once loved. Paul, after being changed from a murderer of Christians to a missionary for Christ (Acts 9), said; "I do not do the good that I want to do. I do the thing I hate." Then he told how miserable this made him feel and how much he wanted to be delivered (Romans 7:14-25).

The third thing most of us notice is a new POWER, in our struggles against temptation and in our asking our heavenly Father to forgive us and help us be and do better (1 John 1:8-10). We slowly discover "God *has* given us all we need to live a godly life" (2 Peter 1).

One of the greatest scholars in church history was Augustine, who lived in the 400's AD. Before he became a Christian, he lived a lawless, carefree and immoral life. Many years after his conversion, he was walking down a city street and a prostitute walked up and called his name.

When He kept on walking, she said, "Augustine, you know me. This is Mary." Augustine said, "Yes, I know you, but you do not know me. The Augustine you knew is dead." Then he shared with her how coming to Jesus had made him a new person.

"Putting all this together: The instant we accept Christ, we receive a new start and a new heart. Do it now! Give Jesus your sins to forgive and your life to change."