

us to scar each other and in heaven there will be no sins and no scars.

GOD'S WONDERFUL FORGIVENESS

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

Our walk with God begins when we ask Him to forgive us. All of us have things in our past that make us ashamed and 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

Few of us have been extremely bad or cruel people, but there are some people we have hurt and far more that we have seen hurting and did nothing to help them. John 3:16 says God loves people like you and me and he wants to forgive us.

We have hurt ourselves and others with our actions. You may have done something extremely bad 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.

Jesus pictured this in the parable of the prodigal son. He compared the unhappiness sin brings with 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.

The father (representing God) saw him coming, I think, because he was looking for him every day hoping he would come back. 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. [Matt. 27:44] 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!

The forgiveness *we* receive at conversion is *complete*. It covers our whole life, past, present and future. First John says as we walk with God in the Christian life, "The blood of Jesus His Son keeps on cleansing us from all sin." (1:7)

It covers every sin we have ever committed. It is like a criminal being pardoned. The NT word for this is *justification* (Romans 3:20-27) a courtroom term that means "to be found not guilty". God, the moral ruler of this universe looks at us as though we never did one thing wrong. Words aren't enough so God uses word pictures:

God, remembers our sins no more (Heb. 10:17) / *covers them* (Ps. 32:1) / *blots them out* (Isa. 44:22) / *will never mention them again* (Ezek. 33:16) / *puts them behind His back* (Isa. 38:34) / *throws them to the bottom the sea* (Mic. 7:19) / *erases them* (Acts 3:19)

A teacher asked her Sunday School class to name some things God could not do. They listed things like – not tell a lie. Then one little boy gave the perfect answer, "He can't see my sins after He forgives me."