

failure, when I tried to be a better person, told me that I **could not change myself**.

From the Parable of the Good Samaritan (Luke 10), I knew I needed to **love others and reach out to help them** (Luke 10). From the Golden Rule, I knew I needed to treat people the way I wanted to be treated (Matthew 7:12).

From the “Lord’s Prayer”, I knew, that as a Christian I would **not be perfect**; I would still do wrong things and when I did, I was to pray, “Our Father, forgive me of my sins.”

From the depths of my conscience and my sense of right and wrong, I knew about **heaven and hell**. Like 99.9 percent of the human race, I knew that the part of me that made me “me”, would survive death; and if I was a Christian I would go to heaven and if not, I would go to hell.

What I Didn’t Know (Luke 24:47)

“(Jesus said) repentance and the forgiveness of sins will be preached / to all nations.”

When I was thinking about being right with God, I felt like I had to change a few things. A man I admired, who worked for me, told me I had to stop drinking and give up profanity. I felt like there wasn’t anything wrong with moderate drinking and I had been trying to stop using profanity for as long as I could remember.

For a year or more, I held back from making a decision, because I knew I couldn’t change; and I did not want to be a “hypocrite”, so I kept on trying to change.

I went to see my Pastor and didn’t say anything about profanity or alcohol. I told him I have a temper, especially when somebody hurts me. I said there was no way I could turn the other cheek without feeling ashamed of myself. I said I didn’t want to be a hypocrite and commit to something I know I will not do.

That humble man said, “Bob, I’m not sure I can turn the other cheek.” I said, “Man, you have to -- you’re a Preacher.” He laughed and said,

“Bob, as a Christian, I want to be able to turn the other cheek, because Jesus wants me to; and when I am hurt or insulted, I would have to ask Him to help me do it. Let me ask you this. Would you be willing to ask Jesus to help you be that kind of person?”

When I said I would, he said, “That is all God wants from us. He knows we cannot change ourselves; and when we come to Him, He changes us in the new birth, and we receive the desire and power to live like He wants us to.”

The rest is history. That next week, I prayed and gave Jesus my sins to forgive and my life to change. In an instant I was changed, even though I didn’t feel anything. All I knew, was that I had the peace of believing I was forgiven.

In the weeks ahead, I felt a little different, but nothing exciting. The truth came out when I would go back to my home town and people would say, “Bobby, you sure have changed.” I wanted to say, “I didn’t change. I’ve been changed.” We don’t have to “clean up” our lives for God to love us.

In the 1800’s in London, a lady’s six year old boy was stolen by people who rented him out as a “chimney sweep”. Being small, he could get inside chimneys and brush out the soot. Twelve years later that lady was in the house of a friend having tea. She saw soot falling into the fireplace. In a few moments the chimney sweep came out. As he apologized and wiped the soot from his face, that lady’s eyes met his; and in an instant she knew it was her son and he knew she was his mother.

Do you think she said, “Honey, go clean up, I want to hug you.” No! She ran to him, threw her arms around him and hugged and kissed him, with no thought of her clean dress. This is how God welcomes us (Luke 15). Romans 5:6 says, “Christ died for the ungodly.” Adrian Rogers said:

“God does not change us, so He can love us; He loves us, so He can change us.”