

Jesus Can Save You From Your Christian Parents

Shooting *real* straight...

*'Don't let anyone look down on you
because you are young, but set an
example for the believers in speech, in
conduct, in love, in faith and in purity.'*
(1 Timothy 4:12)

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This is dedicated to you, the reader, **'born of God'**. I pray you see further, know deeper, step to the side and go beyond, in Jesus' name...

'Yet to all who did receive him, to those who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God - children born not of natural descent, nor of human decision or a husband's will, but born of God.' (John 1:12-13)

#1 Your parents do not own Jesus

Your parents do not own Jesus. What's incredible to think, is that your parents do not own themselves, either! We are told by Paul:

'You are not your own, you were bought at a price...'

(1 Corinthians 6:19)

Let's back it up a little further. People are made by God, in God's image.¹ Everything – the soul, the body, breath, thought patterns, associations, etc. – are so unique in every individual, so incredibly profound, and this 'life reality' comes from God, from his Spirit.²

Let's keep pounding here for a minute: *People don't make people*. People can't determine the formation of even one cell in another person. People don't actually make *anything* – we form things out of

¹ Genesis 1:27

² Acts 17:25

stuff already made. Like, we make sandcastles, not sand. We make wooden houses, but not wood. We mine gold, but we don't make gold. And we make love, not humans. Sorry to be blunt here, but honestly, when it comes to making a person, we have less than zero to do with it! Often, the 2 people that supposedly made a person, well, they weren't even trying to make a person when they... So you get my point. People don't make people. All people, in all their incredible, unfathomable complexity and spirituality, come from and belong to their one and only Father – Jesus Christ.³ Here's a powerful verse for your fridge:

'Every house is built by someone, but God is the builder of all things.'

(Hebrews 3:4)

OK, so you look like your parents. They must have something to do with who you are. And OK, we are called by God to honor our parents, so there is something deep, even spiritual in this connection

³ John 1:3; Col 1:16; Heb 1:3

between me and my dad.

Yes, God has made it that life and people multiply, connected to and in relationship with one another. It is so powerful, and so deep. We have DNA from our forefathers, speak, look and act like them. Yes, my friend, you are 'related' in human terms. This is true. No one is denying this. But you do need to understand, that life was never designed to have 'sin' and 'darkness' in the very bloodstream of people. No man or woman was designed or purposed to bring forth other men and women, with sin and suffering and mortality coursing through the veins even at birth. If you and I had been born to perfect and holy people, we would not be reading this booklet. We would have no issue with our parents, and no issue with God, and certainly no confusion regarding our relationship with our parents and God. None. So let's recognize it straight off the bat, so we can get past it to the real, deep and healing truths of God: People come forth from parents, and are 'related' in looks and character traits. And we say it now, and we say it loud: All things good in my parents, perfect, holy and beautiful, I

embrace and am grateful for.

Now, here's the other issue, though, and it is real, and we are not only 'allowed' by God to look at this, but called and compelled by God to step this way. Everything in my parents that is sinful (*anger, impatience, love of money, insecurity, fear...*) I reject as part of me. I reject it with the authority of Jesus Christ, and by the power of his blood.⁴ I reject it, even hate it, and in doing so I do not hate the man or woman. I hate what it did to them, and what it did to me. Here's a powerful verse that was written about Jesus – and can be yours, too!

'You love righteousness and hate wickedness; therefore God, your God, has set you above your companions by anointing you with the oil of joy.'

(Psalm 45:7 – and see Hebrews 1:9)

My father and mother are sinners who needed the forgiveness of Jesus Christ. And like all sinners who came to believe in

⁴ Revelation 12:10-11

Jesus, and even follow Jesus, my parents continued to wrestle with the ‘flesh’; in other words with their own sinful hearts and behaviors. And although they professed the name of Jesus, and sincerely believed in him, they continued to commit sin, to do wrong, and to misinterpret and misapply spiritual truths – as did the disciples! Check out how zig-zag, off-the-mark, the apostle Peter is in this exchange with Jesus:

‘After that, Jesus poured water into a basin and began to wash his disciples’ feet... He came to Simon Peter, who said to him, “Lord, are you going to wash my feet?” Jesus replied, *“You do not realize now what I am doing, but later you will understand.”*

“No,” said Peter, *“you shall never wash my feet.”*

Jesus answered, *“Unless I wash you, you have no part with me.”*

“Then, Lord,” Simon Peter replied, *“not just my feet but my hands and my head as well!”*

Jesus answered, *“Those who have had a bath need only to wash their feet...”* (John 13:5-10)

Now what if Jesus had not been there to correct and calibrate Peter’s thinking? For example, if this Peter were a pastor of a local church here today, he might be telling the whole congregation that they not only needed to wash one another’s feet, but to wash one another’s heads. (Or that it is not enough to just attend a Sunday meeting, but everyone must also – if they are serious about Jesus – attend a Wednesday meeting...) But the spiritual truth of this situation was that to ‘go for the head’ was too much. It wasn’t spiritual. It was off the mark, missing the point, getting all religious. Jesus sobered Peter up, got him back on track, and said that only the feet needed attention in this spiritual and prophetic act...

Now, think about your situation. Maybe growing up there were some times or seasons where you were told this or that was really serious and showed if you were serious about Jesus Christ, etc. Maybe

people judged you for this or that thing in your life (*Secular music? Dancing? Smoking? Cussing? Tattoo? Not going to church – or not wanting to go?*) **And maybe they were wrong about your actual heart towards God!** Maybe, although you were ‘*eating and drinking*’ (like Jesus, see Mt 11:18-19) your heart was very tender towards Jesus. Maybe, although you were doing something ‘fun’ on Sunday (like the disciples, see Mt 12:1-8) Jesus meant a lot to your heart in a deep and personal way. Maybe even when you were quite deep in sin, the messages of Jesus and even of repentance were touching and drawing your heart, more than they were touching the heart of your parents or your pastors (like the prostitutes and tax-collectors in Mt 21:31-32). And maybe you felt deeply misunderstood? Your outward steps and actions might have been off the beaten trail of the church-goers, but maybe your heart was tender towards God?

It is so interesting that Jesus constantly spoke to the heart, and said that the heart was the ‘*heart of the matter*’, so to speak. Check out this exchange:

‘One of them, an expert in the law, tested Jesus with this question: ‘Teacher, which is the greatest commandment in the Law?’ Jesus replied: **‘Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind.’** This is the first and greatest commandment. And the second is like it: ‘Love your neighbor as yourself.’ (Mt 22:36-39)

Even the prophet, Samuel, a truly mighty man of God, misjudged people, by judging a man based on what he – Samuel – could see with his human eyes and understand with his human heart, rather than seeing how (and what) God sees. So the Lord said to Samuel:

‘The Lord does not look at the things people look at. People look at the outward appearance, but the Lord looks at the heart.’

(1 Samuel 16:7)

The disciples got it wrong - a lot, in fact! I love this example, because in it the disciples are not only misjudging the woman and what she is doing, but they are also putting good, religious reasons on why... and they were wrong! So very wrong! In fact, Jesus said of this woman that what she did would be told wherever the gospel message was preached, in memory of (not of God, not of the gospel, but.... drum roll...) in memory of her! *(Take a minute, look up and read these 9 verses: Mark 14:1-9)*

So do you think 2000 years later, people in the church are, on occasion, misjudging people? I think so! And it could be, my brother, my sister, that you experienced some 'misjudging', and also misrepresenting of what it is to believe in Jesus.

You can disagree with what other Christians think, and what they do, and how they do it. In the same way no two children are the same (and honestly, they are nothing alike in the deep things of spirit, gifting, destiny, etc.), no two Christians are 'related' – not even you and

your parents. The verse I include under the 'dedication' page of this booklet is John 1:12, which says that anyone who has believed on Jesus, they are *'born of God'*, and not in any way a part of this spiritual family based on 'human' or parental decision.

You have been made by God and in his 'image' (Gen 1:27), and if you believe in Jesus Christ, you are *'born of God.'* ***You are 'related' to other believers insofar as they believe in Jesus, and are part of this 'new humanity'. (Eph 2:15)*** In Jesus Christ, the only 'real' brothers and sisters (family) that you have, are others who truly believe in Jesus Christ. This is serious business! Look at what Jesus said when his own mother and siblings came looking for him:

'While Jesus was still talking to the crowd, his mother and brothers stood outside, wanting to speak to him. Someone told him, *"Your mother and brothers are standing outside, wanting to speak to you."* He replied to him, *"Who is my*

mother, and who are my brothers?" Pointing to his disciples, he said, *"Here are my mother and my brothers. **For whoever does the will of my Father in heaven is my brother and sister and mother.**"* (Matthew 12:46-50)

So your biological relationship with your dad or brother, well, that's one thing. But your 'faith' relationship with them is a totally different thing. It is a totally different 'family' relationship and reality. You might be biologically related to your father, but not spiritually 'related' to him. Or your brother in the flesh, might not be your brother in the faith. My friends, not only 'relationships' are redefined in Christ, but your very 'reality' and person is redefined in Christ. Once you are in Christ, you are no longer 'male or female', slave or free, Jew or Greek (American or Russian) educated or uneducated. (Gal 3:28; Col 3:11) You have gone through the door of Jesus Christ (John 10:9) and you are now a 'new creation' (2 Cor 5:17), part of a 'new humanity' (Eph 2:15), and no one owns you – not your parents, your country, your educational heritage, your gender,

your employer, nothing and no one – not even you!:) How can your parents or heritage claim you, if you can't even claim yourself?

'You are not your own.' (1 Cor 6:19)

Now, let's look at characteristics (and then faith): Just because your brother or sister express their opinion about something with some venom and arrogance, does not mean that you cannot hold that same opinion. You can agree with the opinion, and sidestep the venom and arrogance. Don't let one person's personal character, attitude, etc., disenfranchise you from a good opinion. Hold the same opinion. But maybe distance yourself from the angry person? Look at what Paul says about the believer who won't repent of sin in their life:

'If your brother or sister sins, go and point out their fault, just between the two of you. If they listen to you, you have won them over. But if they will not listen, take one or two others along, so that 'every matter may be established by the testimony of two or three witnesses.' If they still refuse

to listen, tell it to the church; and if they refuse to listen even to the church, treat them as you would a pagan or a tax collector.’ (Matthew 18:15-17)

I don't think this has to be a noisy or gossipy affair. But it does map out for us a real and healthy path. So you have had issues, not with your parents understanding of, and belief in, Jesus Christ; you don't have issues with this because you, too, look at Jesus, and believe in him. He has 'enlightened' you to see that he is true. (see 2 Corinthians 4:6 and Psalm 36:9) ***You don't have issues with your parents' faith. You have issues with, maybe, some legalism that had a stronghold in their life, and was put on you.*** Times they made you feel like you were breaking God's commands, or breaking his heart, and you weren't. They were sucking the joy right out of your faith and your experience of church. They were 'exasperating' you, as they are told not to do (Eph 6:4; Col 3:21); they were making you 'sin' with anger and hate in your heart, which they are told not to do. (Mt 18:6) ***You have issues with how they used Christ against you, because of their***

own anger, pride, misunderstandings, insecurities.

And now you find it really hard to see and believe in Jesus, without feeling that to do so, to *be* so, you are falling in step with their spirit – that of your parents, your pastors, that person... And on an even more nuanced, subtle level, you feel that you cannot, in a healthy way, incorporate any of the Lord's commands or 'discipline' into your life, or shepherd it in others', because you feel it is all bound up in a spirit of legalism that sucked the life out of you. So now you feel the very important areas of 'rules' and spiritual discipline and spiritual authority are like no-go areas for you, and yet your soul also needs these truths, principles and winds of God's Spirit. But you need them in the pure and holy wind of the Holy Spirit, not in the deceptive winds of legalism. How can you redefine the very winds of the Spirit that blow through your soul? How can you be your own person in Jesus Christ, fully, free, strong, true, without giving in to your childhood experience, or without fully breaking free from *everything* it was? You feel caught in the middle – can't 'give in to

it', and yet can't fully walk away from it.

Your parents do not own Jesus! Your pastors do not own the Holy Spirit. 'Christianity' does not define a Christian, etc. My friends, Jesus was almost violent in his language against people that stood in the way of other people seeing the true light. Check out these 2 exchanges:

'If anyone causes one of these little ones - those who believe in me - to stumble, it would be better for them to have a large millstone hung around their neck and to be drowned in the depths of the sea.' (Matthew 18:6)

'Woe to you, teachers of the law and Pharisees [Pastors? Parents?], you hypocrites! You shut the door of the kingdom of heaven in people's faces. You yourselves do not enter, nor will you let those enter who are trying to.' (Matthew 23:13)

Just because people 'name' the name of Jesus, and do things in his name, and preach to you in his name, this does not mean they own him! This does not mean, in some cases, they even know him! (see Matthew 7:21-23) Anyone and everyone is allowed to bow and worship Jesus, but no man defines how a follower of Jesus looks, thinks, acts. Jesus determines that! No man can say that if you follow Jesus, you will go this or that way. Only Jesus does that! And here we see Jesus sending Peter on one path, and John on another, and Peter questions why John has a different path to him. Jesus, says:

'What is that to you? You, follow me!'
(John 21:22)

Your parents and your pastors do not 'own' the interpretation and application of the 'laws' of scripture, as applied to your every day, and your faith. They can certainly say, quoting Galatians⁵, that the sinful nature seeks to satisfy the flesh, but they can't say that for you this means '*not listening to secular music*' etc.

⁵ Galatians 5:16

I hope you're feeling some chains start to strain and even break in your soul. Let them. Don't fear it. You won't be lost in outer space. In fact, the ultimate purpose of 'false knowledge'⁶ breaking in your soul, is not to distance you from Christ and people, but to open the way for you to come to Christ – in '*spirit and in truth.*' (John 4:24) And we're not finished here. We're not breaking chains just for the sake of it. This booklet is not just to go around breaking things; its so that we come boldly, maybe as never before, into a face-to-face encounter with Christ, where we can decide on him, receive him, and let him pour a fresh experience of who he is into our souls, our lives, our relationships, our ministry and our eternity.

Not to harp on here, but it is critical you understand that there truly is a spiritual counterfeit for every true and real spiritual thing. There is a truly 'righteous anger' (as we saw in Jesus⁷), and there is arrogant,

⁶ 1 Timothy 6:20

⁷ Matthew 21:12-13

sinful anger. Anger is a spiritual thing. It doesn't matter if you're talking about Christian things, or even preaching; this doesn't mean the anger and energy behind your fervor is holy or good.⁸ One man can be speaking about Christian rules or 'laws', but not using the scriptures as they should, nor be moving in the Spirit when using the scriptures. The devil himself did this in Matthew 4:1-11, and Paul warns Timothy to be careful to 'correctly' handle the word of truth.⁹ The Scriptures can be easily mishandled! The gospel has a 'fake' version, and even the Holy Spirit has a 'fake' version. (see 2 Corinthians 11:4)

I say all this so that you will know this truth: Just because you experienced a poor expression of Christian rules, or of Christian relationship with parents, or of use and abuse of the bible to control people... this does not mean that there is not a way for you to experience (and

⁸ James 1:20 '...human anger does not produce the righteousness that God desires.'

⁹ 2 Timothy 2:15

actually minister to others) a good expression of Christian rules, a good expression of Christian relationships and parenting, a good and proper use of the scriptures for living. You can be free. You can be separate. You can stand on new ground with the Lord Jesus, and enjoy all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge that are found in him. (Col 2:3) You can – by faith, repentance, and the Holy Spirit – take up every good thing of Christ, discard the shell of every counterfeit, and walk a new path in Jesus. ***You can!***

It is essential to realize that the only ‘power’ available to us, to shatter the shell of the counterfeit, and give us back the ‘real deal’ (of all things ‘Christian’) is the Holy Spirit, and brought forth by his grace. If you have been encumbered, tied up or chained by ‘counterfeit’ expressions of Jesus (like ‘spiritual discipline’ that is actually just ‘angry dad’, etc.), ***in order to allow true, healthy, life-giving ‘spiritual discipline’ to flow in your life, it is essential to humble yourself before God and ask him to break the chains of the false versions.*** You won’t ‘think’ or ‘rationalize’ your way to a new start, or to

living water. Like the woman at the well, if you want *'living water'* to flow through you, you have to ask Jesus for it. (John 4:10) This is humbling, and hard. We want to have 'reasons' and equations for why we can, and they can't, and why theirs is a counterfeit but ours is true, etc. But Jesus doesn't work like this. He knows our 'proofs' for spiritual truth, will become idols in our hearts.¹⁰ No, the way God liberates us from the *'thorn in our side'*, is not by taking the 'thorn' away; he liberates us by his 'grace'. You will access the true version of spiritual truths in Jesus, by the grace of God. To access this grace, you bring your 'thorn' to Christ, and there let his grace be 'sufficient for you', breaking you into a new, true, Spirit-filled expression of all things Christ. You will arrive in this place, build in this place, flow in this place, by his grace.

'...in order to keep me from becoming conceited, I was given a thorn in my flesh, a messenger of Satan, to torment me. Three times I pleaded with the Lord to

¹⁰ Ezekiel 8:12

*take it away from me. But he said to me, “**My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness.**” Therefore I will boast all the more gladly about my weaknesses, so that Christ’s power may rest on me. That is why, for Christ’s sake, I delight in weaknesses, in insults, in hardships, in persecutions, in difficulties. For when I am weak, then I am strong.’*
(2 Corinthians 12:7-10)

Look at this profound way forward! Paul did not, in his own strength or mind, shake off the torment of his parents and their false expression of Christianity - my application here!:) Paul heard that God, by his grace, would be sufficient to move forward in strength and truth, despite the discomfort of his own insecurities and fears and lack of ‘proof’ for his new version. And he goes one step further. He actually boasts in his weakness, and through this accesses even greater power: Here’s an example of a boast that one day you might make: ***‘The truth is, I sometimes lack confidence when talking about rules and regulations of the Christian life, because I had parents***

who confused this area with spiritual talk, and verses, but with a lot of human anger and motives mixed in... so honestly, I tread in weakness in this area. But I go forward in it, nonetheless, because despite my weakness, by God's grace I am seeing power released here...'

So we need to know that our parents don't own Jesus. That people – including our parents and pastors – can mishandle the 'Word of Truth', and mix the Spirit of God with their own sinful spirits, and produce counterfeit Christian expressions and experiences in our lives. We also now see, however, that despite this experience of the 'false', the 'true version' of Christ and his Spirit in our lives remains true, and is available for us. The path? Well, we call on God for his grace to shatter the shell of the counterfeit over our souls, and to produce in us, make flow through us, the true version: living water. ***In humility we ask for this, and in our weakness we rely on God's grace to produce it.*** We might feel that thorn for quite some time, but his grace is 'sufficient' for us to see, know and walk in true power...

Now that you know you can be free and build anew, the real question is... Do you want to?

‘See, I am doing a new thing! Now it springs up; do you not perceive it? I am making a way in the wilderness and streams in the wasteland.’ (Isaiah 43:19)

#2 You do not own Jesus

So here we stand, a little shaky on our feet. We've walked away from our past, from our parents, from our experiences, and we're alone now with Jesus Christ. We're scarred, but we're free. We believe him when he says that even in our weakness, we can – by his grace – break into greater strength. We're not feeling it; we're feeling the thorn in our side. But we're believing him. So here we are, **'born of God.'** (John 1:12)

Let's take a fresh look at Christ. Let's get right back to the very beginning, looking not even at Christ's actual life, but at the prophecy about him, 600 years before he was born. So we're going right back to who Christ truly is, in the depths of his being, in the purity of his Spirit available to us even now – before a preacher ever preached about him, before a parent ever taught about him, before a disciple ever followed him. An untouched, perfect picture of the man who was God in the

flesh¹¹:

Isaiah 53

Who has believed our message and to whom has the arm of the LORD been revealed?

He grew up before him like a tender shoot, and like a root out of dry ground.

He had no beauty or majesty to attract us to him, nothing in his appearance that we should desire him.

He was despised and rejected by mankind, a man of suffering, and familiar with pain.

Like one from whom people hide their faces he was despised, and we held him in low esteem.

Surely he took up our pain and bore our suffering, yet we considered him punished by God, stricken by him, and afflicted.

But he was pierced for our transgressions, he was crushed for our iniquities; the

¹¹ John 1:1,14

punishment that brought us peace was on him, and by his wounds we are healed.

We all, like sheep, have gone astray, each of us has turned to our own way; and the LORD has laid on him the iniquity of us all.

He was oppressed and afflicted, yet he did not open his mouth; he was led like a lamb to the slaughter, and as a sheep before its shearers is silent, so he did not open his mouth.

By oppression and judgment he was taken away.

Yet who of his generation protested?

For he was cut off from the land of the living; for the transgression of my people he was punished.

He was assigned a grave with the wicked, and with the rich in his death, though he had done no violence, nor was any deceit in his mouth.

Yet it was the LORD's will to crush him and cause him to suffer, and though the LORD makes his life an offering for sin, he will see his offspring and prolong his

days, and the will of the LORD will prosper in his hand.

After he has suffered, he will see the light of life and be satisfied; by his knowledge my righteous servant will justify many, and he will bear their iniquities.

Therefore I will give him a portion among the great, and he will divide the spoils with the strong, because he poured out his life unto death, and was numbered with the transgressors.

For he bore the sin of many, and made intercession for the transgressors.

I entitled this chapter, '*You do not own Jesus*'. I'm not trying to be harsh here, but just to protect the integrity of our standing, and to give us a solid floor to stand on. Our parents don't own Jesus, and nor do we. We all stand before him, made in his image and made to 'reach' for him¹², and he is to be followed with our lives, not fit in

¹² Acts 17:27

to our lives. ***We don't add Christ on to our relationships and lifestyle preferences; we follow Christ, and let this shape and define our relationships and lifestyle.*** Our parents cannot print their version of Christ on us, and we cannot print our version of Christ on ourselves. He made us, stands separate to us, is incredibly meek, mild and a '*man of suffering*'. He is not threatening or distant. But he *is* Lord. He *is* the one and only Lord. He calls us to lay down our lives and follow him.

'Whoever wants to be my disciple must deny themselves and take up their cross and follow me. For whoever wants to save their life will lose it, but whoever loses their life for me and for the gospel will save it. What good is it for someone to gain the whole world, yet forfeit their soul? Or what can anyone give in exchange for their soul? If anyone is ashamed of me and my words in this adulterous and sinful generation, the Son of Man will be ashamed of them when he comes in his Father's glory with the holy angels.'

(Mark 8:34-38)

We have a decision to make. Having shaken off the counterfeit, in some ways I've also shaken off an 'excuse'. I cannot stand distant from Christ, or from a decision about following Christ, based on my parents, my pastors, my experiences of the 'false'. Here stands God himself, in the person of Jesus Christ, before me. He has been abused and misunderstood by many, even betrayed, in order to stand here before me, and offer me eternal life, forgiveness of sins, a destiny in his Kingdom. He extends his hand to me. Do I take it?

Jesus loved people – but he let them walk away from him. Look at this story:

'As Jesus started on his way, a man ran up to him and fell on his knees before him. "Good teacher," he asked, "*what must I do to inherit eternal life?*"... **Jesus looked at him and loved him.** "One thing you lack," he said. "Go, sell everything you have and give to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven. Then come,

follow me.” At this the man’s face fell. He went away sad, because he had great wealth.’ (Mark 10:17-22)

Jesus will allow you to walk away from him, even though he does look at you, and loves you. You are made in God’s image, have ‘*eternity in your heart*’ (Eccl 3:11), and you decide on what you do with the revelation of God to you.

I want to encourage you, my brother, my sister, to put your faith in Jesus, and follow him. I want to encourage you to respond to Jesus. He calls us to turn away from our sin. Do you have sin in your life? I’m not talking about just being a ‘sinner’, but have you actually put your hand to some things that you know are sinful – like pornography, lust, unwholesome talk with friends, loving money, selfishness, violence, lying, stealing, etc.? ***In turning to Jesus, we must turn away from sin. It is, in some respects, the same***

‘turn’.¹³ We’re all sinners generally, but we are also called to repent of, and turn away from *specific* sinful practices in our life.¹⁴ Is Jesus prompting you to turn away from some things today, to repent of them?

I suggest 2 steps here, in the way of repentance. First, pray. Simply – even now – get down on your knees in a quiet place, and speak to the Lord. Tell him you are truly sorry for your sin, and that today you commit to turning away from this sin. Ask the Lord to help you delete, block and throw away all things related to this sin in your life. Speak to the Lord and commit to this!

Secondly, as my soccer coach used to say, the best defense is offense. In other words, it is much easier to defend yourself

¹³ 2 Timothy 2:19

¹⁴ Revelation 2-3

spiritually, if you are on the attack spiritually. How? Well, incorporate new disciplines (activities) into your life. Go to church on Sunday – every Sunday. Tithe the first 10% of your ‘gross’ pay. Ouch! Yes, do it! Every time! Commit to reading your bible and spending time in prayer every day! (even just 10 minutes) Now you’re on the attack. Now your life is taking a new, practical turn, and coming after Christ. The pain of this walk, is the cross on your back. For more on taking a ‘First Step’ with Jesus, and getting this walk going, check out the ‘First Step’ tab on my website:

www.1peter1three.weebly.com

Jesus has a special grace for the prodigal – i.e. the son or daughter that has wandered far off, but then come back home for a new start. His grace and favor over the prodigal is so lavish, that it often leaves the ‘faithful’ kids feeling like they got the raw deal! Now, God is careful to let

us know that this is not the case¹⁵, but truly you must understand this: If you turn back to Christ today, no matter how far or how many years you have wandered, the Lord can redeem every single minute lost. How? By his power, working not only here but on into eternity.

'I will restore to you the years the locusts have eaten...' (Joel 2:25)

I often think of how the man on the cross beside Jesus, with only minutes left of his life, turned to Jesus and was saved.¹⁶ But what amazes me is not that he was saved, but how the Lord has used this man's life and testimony, to win many thousands of others to Christ since that day. The man never went on to share his testimony with friends and family. He never had a chance to apologize and make things right with

¹⁵ Look up the parable of the Prodigal Son, and pay special attention to verses 25-32 (Luke 15:11-32)

¹⁶ Luke 23:42-43

people. And yet the Lord used his step of faith, at the very end of his life, to not only save his soul but save many souls since then... God will do the same for you! Don't let the enemy tell you it's too late. Don't let the enemy whisper to you that it's pointless at this stage in life to turn and follow Christ. Just fall to your knees and do it!

I leave you with this story to ponder, to own, to be part of:

'Jesus continued: "There was a man who had two sons. The younger one said to his father, *'Father, give me my share of the estate.'* So he divided his property between them. Not long after that, the younger son got together all he had, set off for a distant country and there squandered his wealth in wild living. After he had spent everything, there was a severe famine in that whole country, and he began to be in need. So he went and hired himself out to a citizen of that

country, who sent him to his fields to feed pigs. He longed to fill his stomach with the pods that the pigs were eating, but no one gave him anything. When he came to his senses, he said, *'How many of my father's hired servants have food to spare, and here I am starving to death! I will set out and go back to my father and say to him: Father, I have sinned against heaven and against you. I am no longer worthy to be called your son; make me like one of your hired servants.'* So he got up and went to his father.

But while he was still a long way off, his father saw him and was filled with compassion for him; he ran to his son, threw his arms around him and kissed him.

The son said to him, ***'Father, I have sinned against heaven and against you. I am no longer worthy to be called your son.'***

But the father said to his servants, *'Quick! Bring the best robe and put it on him. Put a ring on his finger and sandals on his feet. Bring the fattened calf and kill it. Let's have a feast and celebrate. For this son of mine was dead and is alive again; he was lost and is found.'* So they began to celebrate.'

(Luke 15:11-24)

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