

GET ANOTHER ESTIMATE
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When we look in the mirror, what is the worth of the one who returns our stare? The good news is that Jesus can be inside these bodies. The bad news is that we will still be in us. If our minds are not continually transformed as Paul described in **Romans 12:2** we are still very much inclined to sin. Without the transforming ongoing power of God, we can never successfully present our bodies as living sacrifices as commanded in **Romans 12:1**. It is a good thing there is a cross standing between us and forever. Every time we turn toward sin, there is our bloody friend, hanging between us and the consequences of the sin we desire. He hangs between us and death.

Who lifted Him up there anyway? Moses suspended a brass serpent on a pole in **Numbers 21:9** to save those who looked upon it from death for their sin. Jesus told us in **John 12:32** that if He also was lifted up off the earth, He would draw all men unto Him. Did the Romans crucify Him? In reality, no one did. He personally chose in **John 10:17-18** to lay down His life for us. Why did He do this? Because it is the strong who build bridges. When our relationships are in trouble, remember that repairing them requires strength. He laid down His life to build a bridge that would make a relationship and companionship with the giver of Life possible once again. He now stands between us and our tendency toward death, saying, "If you go to Hell, it will be over my dead body."

I bring a simple message from that same loving God. It goes like this. "I know why I created you, everything about you. I knew before you were born, every decision you would make, every mistake you would ever pay for. I have seen your every fear, every tear you have shed, because I know your heart. You compare yourselves among yourselves, and esteem yourself of little worth, but you forget the price tag paid for you when considering your worth. I gave my life for you, a ransom once for all and forever. I know the plans I have for you. Because I know what you were created to be, I will reset the clock, I will begin your life anew. I love you. I would just die to have you back in my arms again."

He wasn't exactly the best of sons. In fact, he brought his father little to be proud of and a great deal of shame. We don't know his name; just his description as the prodigal son. His story can be read in **Luke 15:11-24**. Since the birthright went to the older of two brothers, the younger stood to inherit one third of his Dad's wealth. Tired of life on the farm and of waiting for Dad to die, the boy requested his money up front and got it. He did not keep it for long, but blew it partying with new friends till the money ran out. When he found himself competing for food with the pigs he had been hired to oversee, he decided his old farm life had not been too bad after all. In the pigpen, he "came to himself," realized whose son he had been all along, and decided to return home. He rehearsed his apology and admission of error, and then went home hoping for forgiveness and a job as a servant with his father. Instead, he found his Dad, still watching for him, still loving him, and rejoicing over his return.

Let us go to scripture and look at a heavenly Father who loves us that much. Let us look at God as seen in the life of one of His servants who He renamed Paul. His story really begins in **Acts 9:3-19**. This murderer of Christians began life as Saul. Sure he was working for God; he was nonetheless disturbed by the manner of Steven's death and the glimpse of God he had seen in it. En route afterwards to Damascus to seize more Christians, he was struck down and blinded by God. Upon his repentance, God instructed him to go to Ananias in Damascus, where he would receive both his sight and instruction in living for God. Imagine their meeting! Saul, once feared, comes into the presence of a man who, for all we know, had loved ones killed by Saul. Ananias comes into the presence of a helpless killer of Christians, but Ananias is about to remove that helplessness. Saul was still in the dark, figuratively and literally, when this man he now had every reason to fear, and who had every reason to fear him, began to speak. The first two words set the stage. Addressing Paul by name indicated knowledge of Saul's past and what he had done. The second word spoke of Saul's future in the body of Christ. Those first two words, spoken by Ananias, were "Brother Saul!"

I want to be a servant of God like Ananias. I am not a preacher, just a servant of God who knows how to pray, listens to God, tries to obey God, and see through the eyes of God. By faith, I want to call men my brothers. I want to be able to picture men, not as they were, but as they can be. Those who I meet may well be the next evangelist to the whole world, the next Saul. Who but God knew that the man Ananias

prayed for in obedience to God would become the last apostle and turn the entire world upside down? We will never know though, the plans God has for us, unless we come down from our high horse, admit we are blind, ask God what He wants us to do next, and then obey Him. God did not call my pastor or some famous preacher to give men that gospel, that good news. He called me!

So I thought I would tell you. You have forgotten who you are. You have forgotten that your soul came from God and will return back to Him. You have forgotten that you were created as a child of God, regardless of whatever pig pen you find yourself in. It is time to “come to yourself” and return back home. When the Father, who has been waiting all this time, comes running, it is time to let Him hold you again. That all starts with, “Father, I have sinned.”

If “sorry” just seems to too hard to say, at least turn and look. Look at the body hanging between heaven and earth, lifted up to draw all men to Him. Look at the bridge between heaven and earth. Regardless of what others tell you about who you are and your value, look at the price tag placed on your life, the life of a God, given up for you.

Get another estimate of your worth. Turn and look at love.