

Guilt feelings are not disposed of when they are disguised; they are only covered up. They are not dead and buried; that, though underground, they are very much alive is demonstrated by the fashion in which a sentence in a sermon or a novel, a scene in a film or a play, a chance meeting will bring them right up from the unconscious to the conscious level of the mind.

A) Much of the hypertension, neurasthenia, neurosis of our time comes from the failure of people to live with themselves, to adapt themselves, not to their environment, but to themselves. We have got to be at rights with ourselves, but the only way to be that is to face the facts about ourselves.

B) To live happily with yourself you have to be honest with yourself. Alibis, evasions, rationalizations - they are all mischiefmakers.

1) Think of Jacob at Peniel. He had deceived his father Isaac, his brother Easu, his uncle Leban, and as a result of crafty dealing was a prosperous man. But he had never stopped long enough to take a good look at himself. He had been running away from himself for a long time. At Peniel he had it out with himself. "What kind of a man am I? What is my real character?" He wrestled all night with something demonic in himself, and after a long struggle he got down to rock bottom. "I am Jacob - a twister." And it was then, evasions done with, disguises cast aside, that he became a new man, "No more Jacob ^{but} Israel - a prince with God."

2) The same miracle of transformation took place in the prodigal son. It was when he was honest with himself with a frank and merciless honesty and said "I have sinned," that he came to his true self. A new chapter of his life began that very day. *He began his journey back home to his family and friends.*

C) A new chapter can begin for you if, bidding good-by to self excuses, self pity, self-defense, you will face the facts about yourself, get right down to them instead of running away from them, if you will say to yourself, "Yes that is the kind of person I am, capable of doing and have done, but, by the grace of God, I can be different and will be ^{that is the sort of thing I am}

IV. There is one thing the Bible keeps saying that some

psychologists and psychiatrists never say: to be right with yourself get closer to God. No sooner had the prodigal acknowledged, "I have sinned" than he made the resolve, "I will arise and go to my father." This is what Jesus urges on us. When we see ourselves for what we really are, are ashamed of ourselves, have difficulty in accepting ourselves, we can be sure of one thing - God will accept us. About nothing is Jesus more emphatic.

A) There is one who can deliver us from self-pity, self-excuse, self-defense. Though we are tied and bound with the chains of our sins, yet in his great mercy he can loose us from our shains, can empower us to live nobly and courageously. He believes in us, sees beneath our worst to our best, help us to believe in ourselves because of his faith in us, calls forth what is fine and splendid in us, quickens our hope, revives our faith, helps us to begin life anew.

B) In the presence of God our littleness is apparent, but but his is not the greatness that creates a sense of inferiority. It humbles and yet it exalts. It challenges, inspires, energizes. Nothing produces a greater happiness. Nothing gives such a sense of well-being. Nothing brings a deeper peace.

As we approach this table this morning, I ask that you join me in honestly asserting the kind of person you are. Ask yourself, just how close am I to God, who has revealed himself in Jesus Christ.

As we come to this table, I ask that you join with me in the prayer that David prayed, asking God for cleansing and pardon -

*Have Mercy on me, O God,
According to your steadfast love;
According to your abundant mercy
blot out my transgressions,
Wash me thoroughly from my iniquity
and cleanse me from sin.*

*Create in me a clean heart,
O God, and right
and put a new spirit within me. Amen*