

Only You Can Be You

Day 4

SCRAPES AND SCARS

Healing Old Wounds

¹³Brothers, I do not consider myself yet to have taken hold of it. But one thing I do: Forgetting what is behind and straining toward what is ahead, ¹⁴I press on toward the goal to win the prize for which God has called me heavenward in Christ Jesus. (Philippians 3:13-14)

No one goes through life without accumulating what Eric Rees calls “scrapes and scars”. He is speaking of wounds we experience and wounds we cause. Scrapes and scars are parts of who we are. They shape us for good or for ill. Eric Rees is concerned that our scrapes and scars not hinder our becoming the person God has called us to be.

In the scripture verse from Philippians Paul is expressing his passion to reach the prize – the prize of becoming like Christ. To do that he tells us forget “what is behind” – that is, leave behind those aspects of our past that hinder our pressing on to the goal. The scrapes and scars of our past often hold us down, inhibit our growth and maturation.

Consider some of the scars that continue to shape our lives today: Physical abuse, emotional abuse, sexual abuse, divorce, abandonment, rejection, being raised by dysfunctional parents. These are scars left by others in our lives. Often we remain bound by the scars of the past. But Jesus came to set the prisoner free – God wants to free us from the past which binds us and even use those scrapes and scars in shaping you into the you he intended to be. Eric Rees writes:

I encourage you to face those scrapes and scars by writing them down. Something about looking at them in print brings them out of hiding and into the light where they have a chance to heal. You may be tempted to think, *Oh my problems aren't such a big deal*. But anything that keeps you from fully being the you God intended is a big deal to God. Ask him to reveal to you any old hurts that are hindering your development.

As God reveals hurts that are hindering and holding you back you need to surrender them to God. Ask God heal you and give you the courage to move beyond the past. An important aspect of your surrender will be forgiveness. Essential to our healing is simply forgiving the person or persons who inflicted the scar upon our soul. As God reveals the old hurts that are hindering you, forgive. If you find forgiveness difficult then ask God to help you forgive. Forgiveness is an essential discipline for being released from a past which binds you.

Sadly, many times our scrapes and scars are of our own making. Our own actions have left us spiritually and emotionally scarred with guilt. Rees writes:

"Few things stall the process of becoming the real you than guilt ... Guilt is never productive. It only hurts - and hurts and hurts - and it ripples outward to effect everyone in our path. It causes great sorrow with no good end: self-condemnation, shame, remorse, regret."

Do not underestimate the debilitating power of guilt nor the normal human defense mechanism of denial. As you look at your scars you must evaluate all those things over which you feel guilt. And for those things you need to confess them to God and ask his forgiveness. 1 John 1:9 says: "If we confess our sins He is faithful and just and will forgive us of our sins and purify us cleanse us from all unrighteousness." God's forgiveness frees us - don't presume it, receive it through confession and repentance. If, among your scars you discover that you need to ask someone's forgiveness whom you have hurt - then be prayerfully seek them out and ask their forgiveness as well.

Eric Rees encourages us to take an honest inventory of our lives. He challenge us to prayerfully ask:

- In what areas are you being held captive by an old scar?
- What scrapes have you caused in another person's life?
- Where do you need God's power to forgive or turn your life around?
- Who needs to hear, "Please forgive me" from your lips?

As you do so, the following pray the following prayer:

Lord, help me to see not the person other people have told me I am but the person you say I am. I don't have the strength to forgive the person or people who have hurt me, but I believe that you can forgive them through me. What's more, you've helped me understand that my failure to forgive doesn't hurt them at all - in the end it only hurts me. I long to live a life that's whole and strong and purposeful, not crippled by my past. Set me free, Father, by your power. Show me what you need me to do and give me the strength to do it. By the power of Jesus I pray. Amen.