

For God So Loved!

"It is of the LORD'S mercies that we are not consumed, because His compassions fail not. They are New Every Morning: great is thy faithfulness."

(Lamentations 3:22-23)

My Testimony

"And you hath He quickened, who were dead in trespasses and sins; Wherein in time past ye walked according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that now worketh in the children of disobedience: Among whom also we all had our conversation in times past in the lusts of our flesh fulfilling the desires of the flesh and of the mind; and were by nature the children of wrath, even as others." (Ephesians 2:1-3).

"For God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life" (John 3:16).

I first heard this verse in catechism class at the age of seven. Like a child I took the verse to heart and really believed Jesus died for me that I might receive forgiveness of sin and eternal life. A church leader asked me the day before my eighth birthday why I was so happy I told him "because I'm going to heaven when I die" he just chuckled and laughed and said "Oh No! You can never know for sure if you're going to heaven or not until after you're dead because you can never know for sure if you've been good enough or not." After his visit I remember looking at my five brothers and sister running around the house and thinking "if you have to be good enough to get to heaven no one in this family is going to make it!" However, my religious upbringing taught that eternal life is something that you must work towards through the church, with good works, the sacraments and devotions.

I had always hoped the church was wrong and God's word was true, but I had nowhere to turn, I was a good kid growing up but after high school, and then during my tour of duty in the Navy, I began conforming to the world's pattern.

After three years I was moving up. I was having a good time and my daily jogging had me in excellent health. I had received a few witnesses about Jesus, and took them to heart, but I didn't really do anything about them. I felt my life was altogether until I found myself hospitalized with a blood clot in my lungs which had passed from my leg and through my heart.

With my life at age twenty-three coming so close to death I began to reconsider my life and its direction. After recovering from the clot and being placed on limited duty, I began to think about my sin and my accountability towards God. I started going over to the library to read God's word and God began to work on my heart. A friend asked if I was worried about my leg, and I said, "No, because I knew God could work things out for the best." He asked if I was a Christian, and I said "I did not know," he then invited me to his church. I went and after the service I went forward to pray and seek God. Afterwards my friend encouraged me to read the Bible.

That week I read First John and Revelation, but as I read First John this verse hit me hard, "He that committeth sin is of the devil ..." (1 John 3:8). I had always thought I was a pretty good person, but suddenly I knew I deserved and was headed for hell. I was shattered. God placed His finger on my sin and I could not deny it.

I went back to the library to read 1 John again the next two days, with the same results. I knew my life wasn't worth living if I was just going to die and end up in hell. I cried out to God about my struggle, but did not communicate this to my friend. That following Saturday my friend helped me pick out some Christian books. One of the books I read shared the simple gospel message that I had always hoped was true back when I was seven.

There is nothing of myself that I can offer to God for my sins. My sins deserve the eternal punishment of a Holy God. But God's love reached out to me through Jesus Christ. Throughout the week I had acknowledged my sinfulness to God, I then read, "For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God: Not of works, lest any man should boast" (Ephesians 2:8-9) and realized that eternal life is given as a gift to all who believe in Jesus. It was then that God's mercy, grace and peace flooded my soul with understanding and forgiveness. My eyes had been opened to the truth of God's Word that salvation was through faith in Jesus alone and His atoning sacrifice on the cross. I had experienced Emmanuel "*God with us.*" My prayer is that God will be with you. Come to Jesus in faith for your forgiveness and eternal life.

Paul wrote: "But God, who is rich in mercy, for His great love wherewith He loved us Even when we were dead in sins, hath quickened us together with Christ, (by grace ye are saved;) ... For we are God's workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works, which God hath before ordained that we should walk in them. ... **But now in Christ Jesus ye who sometimes were far off are made nigh by the blood of Christ"** (Ephesians 2:4, 5, 10, 13).