

For God So Loved!

A Testimony of God's Love, Sacrificial Forgiveness & Supernatural Intervention
In The Life of: Gary Westgerdes

"You were dead in your transgressions and sins, in which you used to live when you followed the ways of this world and of the ruler of the kingdom of the air, the spirit who is now at work in those who are disobedient.

All of us also lived among them at one time, gratifying the cravings of our sinful nature and following its desires and thoughts. Like the rest, we were by nature objects of wrath" (Ephesians 2:1-3 NIV).

"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 KJV).

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. However, my religious upbringing taught that eternal life is something that you must work towards with good deeds, the church and the sacraments.

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 my tour of duty in the military, I began conforming to **the world's pattern**.

After three years in the military 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 in my life. 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 rededicate my life to Christ. 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 who does what is sinful is of the devil ..."** **1 John 3:8 NIV**. 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, Ephesians 2:8, 9** "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" (KJV) and realized that eternal life is given as a gift to all who believe in Jesus. It was then that God's mercy, grace, peace and joy flooded my soul with understanding and forgiveness. My eyes had been opened to the truth of God's Word and salvation through Jesus. All my hope and trust was 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 Him and place your trust in Jesus for your forgiveness and eternal life.

Paul wrote: "But because of His great love for us, God, who is rich in mercy, made us alive with Christ even when we were dead in transgressions - it is by grace you have been saved ... For we are God's workmanship, created in Christ Jesus to do good works, which God prepared in advance for us to do ... in Christ Jesus you who once were far away have been brought near through the blood of Christ" (Ephesians 2:4, 5, 10, 13 NIV).

Paul, to the Corinthians: "... Do not be deceived; neither fornicators, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor effeminate, nor homosexuals, nor thieves, nor the covetous, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor swindlers, shall inherit the kingdom of God. AND SUCH WERE SOME OF YOU; But you were washed, but you were sanctified, but you were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, and in the Spirit of our God" (1 Corinthians 6:9-11 NASB).

Amazing Grace:

A hymn of a sinner's faith in God's unmerited grace.

1-3 John Newton, **4** John P. Rees

1. Amazing grace - how sweet the sound - That saved a wretch like me! I once was lost but now am found, was blind but now I see.

2. 'Twas grace that taught my heart to fear, and grace my fears relieved; how precious did that grace appear the hour I first believed!

3. Thru many dangers, toils and snares I have already come;
'Tis grace hath brought me safe thus far, and grace will lead me home.

4. When we've been there ten thousand years, Bright shining as the sun, we've no less days to sing God's praise, Then when we'd first begun.

"... One day is with the Lord as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day. The Lord is not slack concerning His promise ... but is long-suffering to us-ward, not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance" (2 Peter 3:8,9 KJV).

"God ... made from one, every nation of mankind to live on all the face of the earth, having determined their appointed times and the boundaries of their habitation, that they should seek God, if perhaps they might grope for Him and find Him, though He is not far from each one of us" (Acts 17:24-27 NASB).

Gary Westgerdes gary.westgerdes@gmail.com
www.thekeysofheaven.com