

How God Saved A Missionary's Kid

Personal testimony
of Danny Kreiser

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“For he is not a Jew, which is one outwardly, neither is that circumcision which is outward in the flesh: but he is a Jew which is one inwardly; and circumcision is that of the heart, in the spirit, and not in the letter; whose praise is not of men, but of God.” (Rom. 2:28-29)

It is possible to have the applause and approval of all your fellow church members without having the approval of God. A person can have the outward appearance of being an outstanding Christian and yet find himself standing before the Judge of all the earth hearing those dreadful words: “Depart from me, I never knew you...” (Matt. 7:21-23)

Here is the testimony of one such man who, but for the amazing grace of God, would have found himself in that awful place of damnation.

I was born into a home where Bible reading and prayer was a daily part of life. My parents were in fact missionaries who had left home to serve God in a foreign land. As a young boy I prayed to receive Christ as my Savior but the stony ground of my heart was not prepared to receive the seed and the Gospel was not “Good News!!!” to me until some thirty-five years later. So began my life of empty religion where in the words of Clara Williams I was “feeding on the husks around me till’ my strength was almost gone, longed my soul for something better, only still to hunger on.” The following is a sketch of what took place during those years of religious darkness until the Light came and illuminated my understanding. (John 1:7-9)

By the age of ten I was well aware that my ‘Christianity’ was not what it ought to be. The wickedness of my heart began to manifest itself in the mischief I enjoyed at the expense of others. At eleven years of age I attended our church youth camp and came home with an increased awareness of my sin. My conscience began bothering me more whenever I was tempted to do wrong and I foolishly chalked this up to ‘spiritual growth.’

Now something else began bothering me. Our pastor would often speak of the Lord’s return and the danger of not being ready to meet Him. On several occasions I found myself frantically running through the house looking for Mom or Dad, afraid that I had been left behind. It seemed an eternity before the preacher finally moved on to a new subject. God was showing me way back then that I did not know

Him but my own deceitful heart was bent on believing a lie. (Jer. 17:9) I told myself I must be okay because I prayed asking Jesus to save me.

During my teenage years I was baptized and had more religious experiences that I attributed to normal spiritual growth. By the time I graduated high school I’d spent at least ten years in Christian schools where Biblical education was taken seriously. They actually taught us doctrine and made us memorize large portions of Scripture.

Our church youth leaders made me captain of the Bible quiz team where we competed against teams from other churches in the region. This drove me to study and memorize even more.

Then at twenty-one, I attended Bible college for a year to ensure that I was well grounded in the Word. I was ignorant of the fact that all the Bible knowledge a man can ever gain will never give peace with

God. I had knowledge without true understanding. I did not know I was an (Rom. 5:10) enemy of God and couldn't see that knowledge was just puffing me up with pride that was hidden from the eyes of men.

After working a few years I married the 'girl of my dreams' and by the age of thirty was firmly established in my own commercial fishing business and well on the way to what the world calls 'success.' I thought of God's blessing on my life as another proof that I was His child. I did not understand that the goodness of God leads us to repentance (Rom. 2:4): it does not prove that we are already saved. I had unwittingly associated financial gain with godliness. (I Tim. 6:5)

By this time we were giving to several missionaries above our regular church giving. "After all", I reasoned, "God needs successful businessmen to support His work." But again, I was ignorant of God's ways. (Is. 55:8-9) He didn't want my wallet; he wanted ME! (Mark 10:17-22) And alas despite the fact that I had more Bible knowledge than most devout church members and more scripture committed to memory than most preachers, the little doubts about my salvation began bothering me more and more. It seemed the more I read and studied the Word of God the more pronounced my inner turmoil became.

I had already prayed on many occasions asking God to save me just in case I wasn't really saved. Then one morning at age thirty-four, during my personal devotions, I came under heavy conviction and prayed the 'sinner's prayer' once again, this time with more fervency than ever! A certain 'peace' came over me and "now I surely must have the real thing if I never had it before!" (So I thought.)

I was a deacon in our conservative Baptist church by now and I plunged into 'Christian service' with more devotion than ever. Among other activities I began actively giving out gospel tracts and talking to people about their souls. During this time I had a 'brush with death' in an attempted armed robbery, but the realization that I could have been killed didn't really bother me. My own deceitful heart fooled me into thinking that I would have gone to Heaven. This 'peace' I had didn't last more than two years however, because it was only a manmade peace. I had been born of the will of man (John 1:13) rather than of God and eventually the nagging doubts returned.

Around this time, a visiting pastor preached a message, "Are You Sure That You're Saved?" He did a good job of convincing me that maybe I wasn't but when I spoke with him afterward he didn't tell me anything I didn't already know. I prayed 'the sinner's prayer' in his presence and wrote his name in my Bible as a witness to what I had done. (I did not know that my real need was to be found in the presence of the Living God with the Holy Spirit as my witness to what He had done.)

Once again the 'peace' was short-lived. H.L. Cox describes the inner turmoil of my heart during those years in these words:

"Oh how well do I remember
How I doubted day by day,
For I did not know for certain
That my sins were washed away
When the Spirit tried to tell me
I would not the truth receive,

I endeavored to be happy,
And to make myself believe.”

“When the truth came close and searching,
All my joy would disappear
For I did not have the witness
Of the Spirit bright and clear
If at times the coming judgment
Would appear before my mind,
Oh it made me so uneasy,
For God’s smile I could not find.”

I began thinking I would just have to live with these doubts and fears the rest of my life. “After all,” I reasoned, “What else can a man do to be saved?” “Maybe some Christians just don’t get the full assurance of salvation - I’ll just be as faithful as I can and hope for the best.”

As time passed, we began attending another church. I became a deacon there also and even preached on several occasions. I had noticed in the past that the more ‘witnessing’ I did, the less I was bothered by doubts; so this became one of my top priorities, even more than before. I obtained some unique gospel tracts and by the pastor’s request, led our church in a Sunday night study of evangelism and personal witnessing for a couple of months. Our study focused largely on the use of God’s law to bring the knowledge of sin (Matt. 5:17-28) and how God sees the motives of our hearts, not just our outward deeds. (Matt. 15:17-20)

We also studied the parable of the sower (Matt. 13) and saw that unless the soil (heart) was properly prepared (by conviction) there would be no fruit unto life eternal. I had already begun to see the folly of casting pearls before swine (Matt. 7:6); of offering the Gospel to those who have no genuine appreciation for God’s unspeakable gift. I was tired of seeing ‘converts’ and professing Christians who had so little interest in the things of God. (Ps. 1:1-2, Heb. 10:24-25)

So I labored more abundantly using ‘The Law’ to press home the knowledge of sin in an effort to produce an appreciation for God’s forgiveness. The result was that I began to see my own guilt for sin to a much greater degree than ever before. I did not love God with all my heart, mind, soul and strength. (Ex. 20) I had rebelled against His authority and that of my parents. I was a lying, stealing, murdering adulterer at heart (Rom. 2); I was a transgressor of the whole law despite the impressive outward appearance of my life. (I Sam 16:7)

I was giving out tracts everywhere I went and actively ‘witnessing’ to anyone who would listen. But I became increasingly troubled by a quiet, almost imperceptible voice, “But Danny, do you know the One you’re trying to tell them about? If you died tonight where would you spend eternity?” I tried to convince myself that these doubts were from the Devil to discourage me; so in response I developed a long mental list of what I thought was evidence that proved I was saved. My list even included all the things given in I John except for one: I could not say with confidence that I knew the Holy Spirit lived within me (I John 4:13 with Rom. 8:9, 16). This one thing really bothered me.

Bro. Kevin Smith had come to pastor our church and whenever he preached he convinced me that his relationship with God was very real and I began to wonder if he had something I didn't have. In private conversation I told him about the doubts that were bothering me and we began praying that God would show me what my problem was.

About a week later a guest speaker came to our church and briefly told his testimony during his message. He told of nagging doubts that plagued him for years despite many prayers asking God to save him. I had never heard a testimony like that before and it really got my attention. Up to this point I was almost ready to think I was starting to go crazy, wondering if I was the only Baptist who didn't know I was saved. I really wanted to ask that man some questions but I couldn't find a way to speak with him in private without others finding out. Pride still had a strangle-hold on me and my heart sank as I watched that opportunity to find help slip away.

Doggedly I continued praying that God would show me the truth, wondering the whole time if I really wanted to know the truth. (Jer. 17:9) I thought, "If I'm not saved, how will I ever endure the shame of having everyone find out that I'm just a fake?" With these thoughts I would at times sink down in despair.

(But God who is rich in mercy was not confused about anything. He was setting me up for a 'divine appointment.' He had prepared a messenger (Rom. 10:14-15) and sent him with a message that seemed to be just for me.)

Two months after hearing that first testimony I had to take our three-year old son from the Bahamas where we lived, to southern Michigan where my parents live, for eye surgery. (Ps. 139:7) I found out that an evangelist named Tim Rutherford would be preaching at my parent's church during the same week I had to be there. I felt a tinge of fear as I sensed this might turn out to be more than just getting to hear a very unique preacher.

Before Bro. Tim preached he sang a song that describes the attitude of a man's heart who has experienced the miracle of divine grace in salvation. It was, "I Never Will Get Over What Jesus Did For Me." As he preached, he told parts of his own testimony and I realized he was telling the story of my own life. Like the man two months earlier, he told of a life of inner turmoil despite his most sincere prayers to get saved and efforts to live a godly life. In over thirty-five years of faithfully attending church and special meetings I'd never heard testimonies like these. This was no coincidence; God had heard my cry for help.

Bro. Tim told how he met the Prince of Peace in person, how he heard that his sins were forgiven, and found rest for his soul. I knew what he had was real. I saw the joy that was still there many ears later and was convinced he knew the One I needed. I also heard that you can't meet Him without knowing (John 11:14, 14:20) about it and having something real to tell about. (Acts 1:8, John 14:21-23)

When the invitation was given I wanted to walk down the aisle and get this settled but I couldn't move. I was shackled to two large, heavy 'anchors', my pride and my religion. I really didn't want to make a fool of myself (John 5:44) and all these people knew me as an 'outstanding Christian'. How could I, of all people possibly be lost?

So I stayed in my pew that Sunday morning but that night the sense of urgency was even stronger. As I found myself grappling with pride again, God began to speak. “Danny, in eternity what good will your reputation be? My Spirit will not always strive with man. Today, if you will hear His voice, harden not your heart.” With these words, I headed down the aisle.

I found out that night that the church aisle and altar couldn’t save me but they do a great deal in humbling a proud sinner (I Pet. 5:5) so he can be saved. I thought I was ready to be saved that night but God knew His greatest work of preparing me to receive Christ had only barely begun.

After the service was over I just knew I had to talk to the man of God. Like Nicodemus, I asked questions and then listened intently. I couldn’t see how I could be lost with such a mountain of ‘evidence’ in my life that seemed to indicate that I loved God. I was all dressed up in a three-piece suit of self-righteousness that looked okay to me. (Gen. 3:7 and Is. 64:6) But the man of God knew I would be cast into outer darkness when the King came in and saw me dressed in my own garment. (Matt. 22:11-13) So gently, by telling me words of truth, he began to strip me of my ‘rags.’ “Those are all things that you have done,” he said.

I began to see that night, though only dimly at first that when I am truly saved I’m so overwhelmed by who God is and all He has done for me that my eyes are taken off myself and my own accomplishments mean absolutely nothing! (Phil. 3:4-9, Rom. 2:28-29)

“Not the labors of my hands
Can fulfill Thy law’s demands;
Could my zeal no respite know
Could my tears forever flow
All for sin could not atone;
Thou must save and Thou alone.”

“Nothing in my hand I bring
Simply to Thy cross I cling
Naked come to Thee for dress
Helpless look to Thee for grace;
Foul, I to the fountain fly,
Wash me, Savior, or I die!”

Had you asked me if I was trusting in my own works I would have said “No! Of course not. I’m trusting in the blood of Jesus and His sacrifice for sin on my behalf.” But God is not fooled by words; He knows the heart! (Jer..7:8; 17:9)

Bro. Tim mentioned a couple of things about ‘counting the cost’ and ‘wanting Jesus more than anything’ (Matt. 6:24, 16:24-26, Luke 14:26-33). In the past I had tried to avoid these and similar passages and even tried to explain them away because they were too troubling for my conscience. But by now I was worn out, tired of trying to live the Christian life in the energy of my flesh, (II Tim. 3:5), tired of keeping up the good show (Matt. 23:27), tired of running from God. The ‘hound of Heaven’ had me ‘treed!’ It shocked me to hear myself admit that I was lost! (Luke 19:10; 5:31-32) But at the

same time it was a relief to finally know where I stood before God. For over thirty years I had lived with the uncertainty of not knowing.

Late that night in my room I fell on my knees and cried out for help. And Help came, in a way completely foreign to my natural expectations! (Is. 55:8-9) The Comforter came, not to make me feel good, but to reveal my own wicked heart to me (John 16:7-8), to help me see myself from God's perspective. Before this I never realized the conviction of the Holy Spirit is so real and powerful (Rom. 1:16, I Thess. 1:5), nor did I know that a work of reproof is absolutely necessary for salvation. (John 6:44-45). I found myself in the presence of the Judge. My crimes and the evidence against me mounted up and to the heavens. (Heb. 4:12-13) 'Little' sins suddenly became great and grievous to me. My own heart was desperately wicked despite how good I looked to others. (Ez. 20:43) I was identified as the "chief of sinners." (I Tim. 1:15) I found myself agreeing with God against myself and my own lips echoed the verdict; "Guilty! Guilty!" I saw that I was just a Pharisee, trying to buy my way into Heaven with good works!

My attitude changed as I saw that God owed me nothing but judgment (John 16: 8-11) and would be perfectly justified in leaving me under condemnation. I was a guilty, hell-deserving sinner with a wicked heart of unbelief! My 'belief' was nothing more than a mental assent to the facts about God, the Bible, and salvation. (James 2:19) My repentance was nothing more than self-righteous rags. (Is. 64:6) Furthermore, I saw that my material wealth and possessions were my 'gods' and that I was powerless to untangle and free my heart from them. (Luke 18: 24-25) I experienced the reality of Jesus' words, "It is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for a rich man to enter into the kingdom of God." This hit me like a ton of bricks and plunged me into utter despair. "I'm lost! And it's impossible for me to be saved!"

Up to this point my lost condition was only in my mind. Now God let me have a sense of lostness that engulfed my entire being. I never knew a man could feel such an utter loneliness. Oh, the terrible state of those under the judgment of God; banished from His presence for all eternity!!! LOST!!!

I envisioned a great high wall extending as far as the eye could see. (Luke 16:26) There was no way over, under, around or through it. The Way of Life was on the other side and I was helpless to get there, yet, I was terrified at the thought of turning back. I remained in this state for some time and then those blessed words of Jesus came into my mind, "The things that are impossible with men are possible with God." (Luke 18:27) "Ask and it shall be given..." (Luke 11:9, 13) So I began earnestly begging God to do a work in my heart that I could not do. I began to see the truth of Matt. 7:14 "straight is the gate..." I could never squeeze through that narrow gate until I was stripped of my self-righteousness, self-sufficiency, and self-will.

For two weeks the hand of God's power in conviction lay heavy upon me. (Ps. 32:4a) The daily activities of life seemed to fade into oblivion as my attention was given entirely to what God was saying. (Hab. 2:1) I wept more during that time than my entire life put together, literally torrents of tears. (Ps. 80:5, 126:5) Occasionally I felt the 'presence' of God beginning to leave me (Ps. 51:11a); then would my heart cry out and beg Him to stay. (Luke 24:29)

I could never be saved until I wanted Him more than anything. But as hard as I tried I could not make myself believe and receive Him as Lord and Master. Oh, the wretched sin of unbelief!!!

But God was not interested in something I could do on my own. (I John 15:5c) The faith that pleases Him is created by hearing His voice (Rom. 10:17) and then stepping in the light of what He has said. (Jer. 7:23, Heb. 5:9)

These words of Jesus suddenly rang out and echoed down the corridor of eternity in my mind; “What shall it profit a man if he shall gain the whole world and lose his own soul? (Matt. 8:35, 38) “Danny, what will the respect, admiration, and approval of the whole world mean to you in hell?” (Luke 16:15) And so I was led to “count the cost.” (Luke 14:25-33) (Counting the cost has nothing to do with helping to pay the price of Redemption; it has everything to do with coming to Jesus ‘empty-handed’! “Nothing in my hand I bring...”) (Luke 16:13; Phil. 3:4-10)

As the days passed I began to see the vanity of ‘my’ life in the light of eternity. The things that were near and dear to my heart vanished into nothing. Faintly I began to catch sight of the blessed state of those who have obtained the righteousness of Jesus Christ. My understanding was gradually enlightened to what God has done for sinners in Christ Jesus (II Corinthians 5:19, 21, Gal. 3:13, I Pet. 3:18, Is. 53). This all became very real and personal. He went to the cross for me! It was my sin that nailed Him to the tree! A glimmer of hope began to dawn in my soul that someday soon I might be “found in Him, not having mine own righteousness... (Phil. 3:9) but..., the righteousness which is of God by faith.”

Gradually the “eyes of my understanding” were enlightened (Eph. 1:17-18 to “see” Him who is invisible. (Heb 11:27, Matt. 16:17) “Beyond the sacred page I see Thee Lord, I see Thee Lord.” (John 6:40, 14:21c) Writers of scripture have tried to describe the beauty of the “Heavenly Bridegroom” with numerous metaphors: Rose of Sharon, Lily of the valley, bright and morning star, fairest of ten thousand. (Song 2:1, 5:10) But the truth is that mortal tongue simply cannot adequately express the glory and beauty of the Lord Jesus. (II Cor. 9:6, Heb. 2:9, Is. 33:17, Song 5:16) Just one glimpse of Him is worth more than all the ‘riches untold.’ (We speak not of seeing Him with the eyes of flesh; but with the eye of faith.) (I Cor. 2:9-10) A desire was kindled within me to be with Jesus more than anything; to have Him more than life itself.

The following morning I was awakened by the heavenly voice: “Danny” - “Yes Lord” - “Will you tell them what I’ve done for you?” (“Will you tell your family and friends what great things the Lord has done for you?”) (Mark 5:19, Luke 8:39) “Yes, Lord; I will tell them!” (Acts 4:19-20, 26:18)

I was sitting on my couch early the next morning meditating on this marvelous work of God in my life, when presently my attention was drawn to the cross. In my minds’ eye I saw the blessed Son of God hanging there for me. As I gazed in wonder and thanksgiving on “Him who bore my sins in His own body on the tree” (I Pet. 2:24), suddenly a heavy “weight” was lifted off me (John 8:32-36) and I felt as light as a feather, free as a bird. Until now I never truly recognized what that ‘weight’ was that seemed to get heavier year after year. ‘Twas the burden of sin, the weight of condemnation, and now, it was gone! Set free! Forgiven!

How would a man born in prison know anything of freedom until the day of his own release? How does a man born blind have any appreciation for the wonder and beauty of God’s creation until his own eyes are opened by the gift of sight? Hallelujah!

The Word of God and the old hymns and gospel songs I knew from childhood were transformed into 'living color'; they became alive with meaning! (II Cor. 3:14-18, 4:3-6) My heart was filled with "joy unspeakable and full of glory." (Ps. 16:11, I Pet. 1:8) I began to sing:

"My faith has found a resting place
Not in device nor creed
I trust the every living One
His wounds for me shall plead."

For all these years I'd been trying various 'things' to get God to save me. (John 5:40, Rom. 14:17) I'd been down the church aisle, down the 'Roman Road', prayed a hundred prayers asking God to save, been baptized, lived by a good creed; but I didn't have Him.

"Hallelujah! I have found Him
Whom my soul so long has craved!
Jesus satisfies my longing
Through His blood I now am saved"

"All that thrills my soul is Jesus,
He is more than life to me
And the fairest of ten thousand,
In my blessed Lord I see"

I never did have any real peace or satisfying rest in my soul until Jesus found me! (Phil. 4:7, Matt. 11:28-30)

"Once I was lost upon the plains of sin
Once was a slave to doubts and fears within
Once was afraid to trust a loving God
But now my guilt is washed away in Jesus blood"

"Once I was bound, but now I am set free
Once I was blind, but now the light I see
Once I was dead, but now in Christ I live
To tell the world the peace that He alone can give"

"I love Him... Because He first loved me,
And purchased my salvation on Calvary's tree"

"Thanks be unto God for His unspeakable gift!" (II Cor. 9:15)

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