

He Reached Down His Hand for Me

Personal testimony
of Janet Moffitt

Saved September 17, 1986

“Oh that men would praise the Lord for his goodness, and for his wonderful works to the children of men.” If I had to pick my favorite Psalm it would have to be Psalm 107. I would like to take this time to praise my Lord for his goodness, for you see, it was by his goodness that he led me to repentance (Romans 2:4) and then his goodness and grace saved me through faith. Even the faith I exercised that night was a gift from Him. One moment I couldn’t believe and the next I could. The work, His wonderful work of salvation, was done in me and I can only boast in Him. Let me back up now and share how God “brought me out of my distresses.”

I grew up from a young child singing “Jesus Loves Me, this I Know.” I have loving parents and three loving sisters. I could not have asked God for a more wonderful home. My parents raised us to love the Lord and follow Him. At the age of eight I began to feel the tug of God at my heart to follow Him. One day on my bed, after being punished for one of the many times I disobeyed, I prayed and asked Jesus to come into my heart. I did this to make my parents proud of me, not because I needed the Lord to save me. For years I believed this was when I got saved. However, I lived with doubt and fear deep in my heart because I never really knew if what I called salvation was really what would carry me through death into God’s presence. I never understood why I doubted because I had done everything I knew to do. That was the problem...I had done everything but what had God done? There was an emptiness, a guilt that I couldn’t explain inside. Oh, I learned to hide it well and sometimes, like during revivals or retreats, I would pray “Oh God, if I am not saved then save me now” or I would try to rededicate my life and go on for a few weeks or months feeling OK. It wasn’t until my teenage years that the real me began to come out. You see, I became very tired of this life of labor. It was too much work being a Christian and then on top of that, everyone else seemed to be having much more fun out in the world. I’ll never forget talking to a close friend of mine on the phone who was also struggling trying to live the Christian life. She was so frustrated and defeated. She made a statement to me...”Janet, you just don’t understand, you are always so good!” When she said this, it made me feel sick inside. For the first time, I let it out and responded “Oh, but I’m so sick of being ‘good’.”

It seems funny to me now, but I didn’t see at the time just how wicked I really was. I didn’t really want God, just the benefits of heaven and the praise of men. I was sick of trying to gain both of these in my own power. I stumbled into sin even deeper after this incident. I guess I felt that now that I’d admitted that my “goodness” was just a front that I could let my hair down and “enjoy life.” Well I’d be lying if I didn’t say that I enjoyed sin. I kept a lot of it hid from my parents, my church and some friends, but I was nothing but a big hypocrite. God was truly merciful to me during these days of my life. The only time I was sorry for my sin was when I got caught (or was almost caught). The fear of judgment came on me finally. One night during my senior year, I walked into my bedroom and it was as if God was waiting on me in there. It was an overwhelming thing. From out of nowhere came the thought, “If you keep going down this road, you’re gonna die.” Little did I know but I was on the broad road and the thought didn’t come out of nowhere, it was God! I immediately began to straighten up my life and seek God again. He was once again drawing me by his goodness. I had no idea I was lost at this time. For a while I felt better. I graduated and began going to Blue Mountain College. College was great! I met my roommate Connie Dean Owen and we had a wonderful time going to school. Then after our first year she married another friend of mine by the name of Terry Owen. I was dating my husband Greg at this time and the four of us were inseparable.

Well, in the spring of 1985 something happened that would change all of our lives. Terry was leading the music at a revival that Bro. Charles Shipman was preaching. During that week Terry found out that

he had never been saved. Well, he didn't get saved that week. He came back to college LOST. I couldn't believe it! But I had gone to the revival and I heard for the first time what real salvation was - a "Work of God." It was not what you do but what God does to you.

I couldn't deny the truth of the Word. It came to my heart in "Power", Holy Ghost, and much assurance (I Thess. 1:5) that what was being preached was true. I had no assurance about me but I knew God was all over the messages I heard. I didn't know why it was so hard for Bro. Terry to just believe. I didn't understand but I tried to make myself understand. I guess part of me didn't really want to because I would have to look at my own life. I would have to "examine myself" as Paul told the Corinthians to do. It was much easier to look at everyone else's life. Well, Brother Terry struggled for 16 long months. During that time Greg had accepted a pastorate and they started coming to Moss Hill. Not long after Terry realized he was lost, his wife Connie got saved in March at Camp Zion. I can remember how I felt when she told me. I tried to be happy and joyful, but inside I was miserable. I felt so empty and I really started to prop myself up with all my works. The guilt of my past was haunting me and I went to the altar at Camp Zion under a load. When I left that day, I'll never forget the drive home. I asked Greg "Do you ever feel like you just can't get forgiveness for your sin?" Well, he was really dumbfounded and I was left feeling sick and empty as usual. Well I kept watching and waiting to see if Terry was ever really going to get saved. Things began to get really serious. Greg and I spent hours with he and Connie. One Sunday it all came to a head and Greg preached "Don't say Goodbye to God" from Luke 18, where the rich young ruler walked away without Christ. Well, all I can say is that God thorough His Spirit manifested Himself in that church that morning like I'd never known before. That morning Terry was gloriously saved. All my doubts about what he went through vanished. I could see the change God had made in him. I knew that God had saved him. Well, I was in big trouble. I began to really work hard trying to convince everyone around me, including myself, that I was alright. Inside though, God was working me over. I started sneaking around reading a book called "Questions and Doubts". I was so prideful!! I didn't want anyone to know how deeply I doubted my salvation. The more I went back to my eight year old experience, the emptier I became. I tried to find repentance and faith in the Lord. I tried desperately to find a new creature but I had always been the same old Janet. I tried to find forgiveness but all I felt was guilt and condemnation. Finally I began to consider that maybe, just maybe I'd never really been born again. Maybe I really was lost. Well, on Wednesday afternoon, traveling back to Mississippi from visiting my parents, the Lord helped me to see that I truly was lost. He was so gentle and kind when He helped me see this about myself. He showed me that I was so confused and that I needed Him to do the work in me. Well, for a few minutes that brought peace to my heart. "Yes Lord", PLEASE DO THE WORK IN ME. Don't let me get in the way." I even cried, "Oh God, even if I have to wait 5 years! I want you and the peace that Terry now has." You see, I was listening, really listening to God for the first time in my life and He was actually showing me what I needed to see. I was still fighting with pride though. I had tried so hard to convince Greg, Terry, and Connie that I was saved and the last thing I wanted to do was admit my lostness to any of them. Well, I was under a load. I walked into church that night and the first song we sang was "Amazing Grace, I once was lost...". I cried "Oh God, I want to be found by you. Please", I cried, "show me what to do."

All of a sudden I had to find Brother Terry and tell him that God was dealing with me. I thought he knew and that he had left to go pray for me in the back where the Sunday School rooms were. Well, I left and went to find him and he was back with all the RA boys about to begin class and didn't have a clue what God was doing inside of me. I had gone down that hall opening and closing doors looking for him. When I opened the door and saw him sitting there with all those boys, it was as if God said, "You

see, I'm in control here. He doesn't even have you on his mind but I do! I'm the one who wants to save you!" Well, all I could do was weep. Brother Terry saw my distress and came out in the hall questioning me about what was the matter. I was so upset I couldn't talk. He put his hand on my shoulder and it was as if God calmed me down when he said "Calm down and let's talk about what's going on." Ironically, we went into the five year old classroom. Jesus was really wanting me to come as a little child. I felt so helpless. Brother Terry began to ask me questions and when he saw my hesitance to come clean and answer, He looked me dead in the eye and said "Janet, for the first time just get honest. It's just me, you, and God and you have to get honest." Well, that was it. I began to unload it all. How I'd been hiding and lying all my life. It felt like I was literally vomiting up my sin. I wanted to crawl under that concrete floor. I felt so dirty in the presence of God. Sometime during all of this "getting honest with God" Brother Terry left and went to get Greg. The service had dismissed and a few lingered out of curiosity. Greg came in and I told him that I was lost. He became very burdened and began to pray for me as Brother Terry began to tell me that JESUS wanted to save me, that I had to TRUST Him. Well, I became frustrated. How do I trust? I thought I had trusted him and I found out that true trust had never really happened in my heart. How I began to beg God to help me to trust. Then in anguish, despair and true repentance I cried out to God "Oh Lord, I don't know how to TRUST, I just can't" I wasn't saying that He wasn't capable...I was saying that I was so incapable. You see, I knew that He would save me if I would just trust Him. I had worked all my life, so hard, to try to trust Him. He was trying to show me that I didn't have to work at trusting Him. He showed up in Power, Holy Ghost, and brought me much assurance that He was worthy to be trusted. All I know to tell you is that I asked for help and He gave it to me. That TRUST, that Faith, for the first time, was a gift. In a split second all the burden was gone. He had cleansed me and washed me white as snow and the most important thing was the work was complete and rest and peace came to my heart. All of this transpired in my heart. Brother Terry and Greg were still praying for God to help me and I was basking in His Love. When I came to realize that they knew nothing of what the Lord had done for me, I didn't know how else to tell them. I just said out loud "Oh, Thank you Lord." It seemed so minuet and small of a thing to say, but I wanted them to know that the Lord needed to be thanked for He had just "Reached down His Hand for Me!" He gave me the forgiveness, peace, and assurance that I had longed for.

It has been many years since that September night in 1986 but the rest is still there. I will never get over what God did for me. My life on the outside may not have looked a lot different to those around me after I got saved but inside I'm a new creature. I had lived for so long with guilt inside and after that night there is no longer any condemnation. The blood of Jesus covers me now and when I sin it continues to cleanse me. I experienced what Romans 3:23-27 says. For years these had been just words, good words, but much better to be lived and not just read. I have nothing to boast in except in the wonderful work of the Lord.

Thank you Lord, for reaching down your hand for me and for keeping me in your hand until I see you face to face.

For more information, please contact

Lighthouse Baptist Church
11792 Douglas Street
Arlington, TN 38002
(901) 867-2009

www.lighthousebaptistarlington.org