

Salvation is of the Lord

II Corinthians 5:17

**Personal testimony
of Tom Schottmiller**

Saved April 27, 1989

Introduction

II Corinthians 5:17 says, "Therefore if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature, old things are passed away, behold all things are become new." For many years, I claimed this verse as mine. I thought I became a new creature in Christ when I accepted Jesus Christ as my personal Savior. In fact, if someone was to look at me, they would say that I really did change, because the things I did in the past I didn't want to do anymore. I gave up the bar scene, drinking, smoking, parties, and all the other un-Godly things in my life. In my mind I had truly changed. But later on, the Holy Spirit showed me I was lost. Through this experience, I realized a person can become very religious, like me, and not be saved. The Bible says that "The heart is deceitful above all things and desperately wicked: who can know it." Jeremiah 17:9. I realize now that God is the only one that can show us our hearts through the work of the Holy Spirit. I thank God that He showed me who I really was, just a religious sinner that needed to be saved. I believe, after experiencing God's true salvation, that many people, who claim to be saved, have never experienced the convicting and saving work of the Holy Spirit that leads to life. Like me, they followed a "plan of salvation", devised by man, instead of allowing the work of the Holy Spirit to be complete in him that results in regeneration. John 1:12-13 says, "But as many as received Him, to them gave He power to become the Sons of God, even to them that believe on His Name; which were born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God." As Jesus told Nicodemus in John 3, that "Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God." This "born again" experience must come from above, from the Spirit of God. This is Spiritual Regeneration. Titus 3:3-7. We have cheapened the meaning of grace,

by using such words as "Give your heart to Jesus"; "Accept Jesus Christ as your personal Savior"; "Make a decision for Christ"; "Accept the Good News of the Bible, that Jesus died for you"; "Say this simple prayer, Dear Lord, I know I am a sinner, please come into my heart". This is not Bible, but today's modern evangelism to reach people for Christ. I am convinced that these methods fall way short of God's true salvation. Many, like me, believe that being on the narrow way is salvation as described in Matthew 7:13-14. But it is going through the strait gate that gives life. It is so narrow that you and the Holy Spirit can only go through. Satan has done a good job in blinding the minds of many so-called Christian ministers. They have cut short the work of the Holy Spirit in a sinner's heart by not allowing the Spirit of God to convince man of sin, the righteousness of God, and the judgment of God found in John 16:7-11. They have been brought up knowing only what they have been taught, and in most cases are ignorant of what true salvation is. Easy Believism and Decisional Evangelism has crept into our churches. In their zeal to see people saved, they have eliminated the sovereign work of God in regeneration, Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior, and the work of the Holy Spirit in the sinner's heart. I realize now, from my first false experience that the will of the sinner in his conversion cannot embrace the Lord, Jesus Christ unless he is moved by the regenerating Spirit of God. I believe, like what happened to me, in my first experience, that many people are moved (emotionalism) without the power of God. There has to be life first (regeneration), before a sinner is converted. A false experience produces a worldly sorrow, which produces no life, but death in the sinner. There has to be an inward working of the Holy Spirit to change the sinner's will to receive Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior. I am convinced that if you have never experienced the work of the Holy Spirit, that produces a Godly sorrow,

(sorrow for your sin toward God, which is repentance. II Corinthians 7:9-10), and a revealing of Jesus Christ in your heart by faith, (Ephesians 2:8-9), then you have never been saved. You are still lost in your sins, and your destiny is hell. We need to preach the true Jesus of the Bible, who demands a total surrender of the will to God. Luke 14:25-35. Only God can produce this change in man in the new birth. When one is saved, Jesus Christ becomes Lord and Savior of your life. On April 27, 1989, II Corinthians 5:17 became a reality to me when God saved me. I am writing my testimony in the hope that God would use this to open the eyes of the blind to see what true salvation is. Salvation is not doing something for God in good works, but God performing a Divine work in your heart that changes you into a new creation of God. It is truly all of grace. May this testimony give honor and glory to God.

A New Creature in Christ

On April 27, 1989, at approximately 7:30 p.m., is the day I became a new creature in Christ. I was born again, regenerated by the working of the Holy Spirit in my soul. Amen! As I look back at this miraculous transformation, I realized that it was all of God. It was God that was seeking me, and God that saved me. I can truly say that salvation is of the Lord. It was all of God's grace that saved my wretched soul. This booklet is my testimony of how God brought a lost sinner, Tom Schottmiller, to the saving of my soul.

As a child growing up, and in my early youth, I was raised a Catholic. We went to church every Sunday, and I was instructed in the Catholic religion. My parents were strong in their

faith and brought me up believing what they believed. We believed in one God, believed the Trinity, believed Jesus Christ died on the cross for our sins, believed strongly in the Ten Commandments and the sacraments of the church. I thought I was a good person because I went to church and believed in God. When I look back at this, I realize that all I had was religion. II Timothy 3:5 tells us that we have a form of godliness but denying the power thereof. Also, in verse 7, it says "ever learning and never able to come to the knowledge of the truth". This was me, a religious person who was ignorant of God's truth. Just believing in God doesn't mean you are going to heaven. The Bible says that the devil believes in God, and trembles. Now we know the devil isn't going to heaven. I believe now, that the only truth to understand about our salvation comes from the word of God. In fact, by preaching, the word of God shows us our spiritual condition before God. Romans 10:14, I Corinthians 1:21.

I had a depraved sinful nature that was kept in control by my parent's authority, and some religion in my life. When I went away to college, I left the sanctuary of my parent's home, and entered college life. Boy, this was fun! No parents to watch over me and tell me what to do. I took full advantage of this new adventure. I was still going to church on Sundays, but by my senior year, going to church was not a priority. It didn't bother me if I went or not. When I went home, I would go to church to please my parents, but it didn't really mean anything to me. I would go through the motions, but my thoughts were a million miles away. There was nothing there to change me. After I graduated from college, I started to work in Milwaukee, Wisconsin. I was on my own now, and enjoying the single lifestyle. By this time, Sundays were a day of rest in bed from the weekend parties and

bars. I then met my beautiful wife, Helen, in Milwaukee. We were married on June 2, 1973, in the Catholic church. Even though we were married in the Catholic church, we still were not going to church anywhere. Our weekends consisted of going to the bars or parties and having fun. After our first child was born, we moved into our first house. We still hadn't been going to church at this time. Then one day, an old high school friend of my wife's invited her to come to church with her and her husband. I didn't pay much attention to what church she was going to. Later on I found out it was a Baptist church. After my wife went to the service, I noticed a difference in her. I guess you would say she was getting religious on me. She invited the pastor to come over to the house and talk to me about what they believed. For the first time, I sat and listened to him explain the gospel to me. He opened the Bible and started to show me scripture. We had never used a Bible in our church. The pastor said the truth is from the word of God. Our authority comes from God's written word, and not from man. That made sense to me because even though the Bible is written by man, every word that man wrote was inspired by God. II Peter 1:19-21. The written word reveals to us the living Word, who is Jesus Christ. This truth, who is Jesus Christ, sets men free from the bondage of sin. John 14:6. The pastor, first of all, showed me that man is a sinner and needs to be saved from his sin. He said that we have all inherited the sinful nature of Adam. Romans 5:12. He said, it is not the committing of sin that makes one a sinner, but that we are born with sin. Psalms 51:5. This is why we lie, steal, commit murder, or get drunk because we have a sinful nature. He said that all sins come from the sin of unbelief. This really hit me, because all this time, I said I believed in God. I could feel a sense of guilt come over me. Outwardly, I was trying to be cool and act like nothing was affecting me. But deep down, I felt very uneasy. I realize now that this

was the Holy Spirit pricking my heart, showing me my sinful condition. He said that Romans 3:23 says, "For all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God." He said, that since man cannot go to heaven because of his sinful nature, that God in His mercy sent His only begotten Son, Jesus Christ to die on the cross for our sins. He was the perfect sacrifice because He was without sin. The shedding of His blood took away our sins. John 3:16. He continued to say that when we repent of our sins and confess Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior by asking Him to come into our heart, he would save us. Romans 10:9. At this point, I didn't know exactly what he wanted me to do. I understood what he was saying, but on the other hand, there was doubt and confusion in my mind about the things that he had said. He wanted me to make a decision for Jesus, but I wasn't ready for this. He tried to persuade me not to wait, that I could die tomorrow without Jesus. Many so-called converts are scared into making a decision without them realizing their lost condition. They acknowledge the truth of the word of God, and their emotions are affected, but the will has never been changed by God. For a while, they appear to be saved, but then they go back to their old ways, or they become self-righteous and very religious. The pastor said he would pray for me and encouraged me to come to church. My wife wanted us to start going to church because we had a family, and we needed some religion in our lives. I was open to this and said I would go. The church had meetings all that week and so we went for the first time. I remember everyone having a Bible, and how friendly everyone was toward me. They shook my hand and introduced themselves to me. When the preacher started preaching, the message again was the same as what the pastor had told me. Again, I could feel a sense of guilt come over me about my sins. The Holy Spirit was convicting me of my sins. At the end of the message, the preacher asked everyone to bow

their heads and close their eyes. He then asked everyone to raise their hand if they didn't know Jesus as their personal Savior. This was all new to me and I peeked to see if people around me had raised their hand. Several people had raised their hands. The preacher acknowledged the raised hands and said he would pray for them. He then gave an invitation for them to come to the altar. He even went into the pews and talked to them that raised their hands to come to the altar. As I looked up, I noticed several people at the altar with church members kneeling by them. They had their Bibles open showing them scripture. They then went into another room. When they came back, the preacher talked to them for a while and then announced that so and so got saved. The people were excited for them and came up and shook their hand and hugged them. I remember some coming up to me and saying that they were praying for me. I never experienced anything like that before.

The next day, the preacher came over to our house. He sat down with me and talked to me about getting saved. He told me not to wait, and that I needed to get saved soon. After the preacher had left, I sat on the couch and all I could think about was getting saved. In fact, I had made up my mind that I was going to raise my hand for salvation when the invitation came that night in service. I knew I needed God and wanted to be saved. It's interesting to note here, that after I had gotten truly saved many years later, I realized that you cannot plan your own salvation. Only God knows when a person has repented enough and is ready to believe. The Bible says that God, on His time, grants us repentance, and gives us the faith to believe. The Bible says that salvation is of the Lord. One of the biggest problems we have today in God's plan of salvation, is that we have made grace into a work. As

I mentioned before, men in their zeal to see people saved, about the work of the Holy Spirit in a sinner's heart. The heart isn't prepared yet by the convicting work of the Holy Spirit. I believe that most of the time the gospel is preached straight as an arrow, but the methods that are used in bringing a sinner to the saving knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ are wrong. Like me, they become as the Bible says, "a two-fold child of Hell." I now became a religious sinner!

That night after the preaching was done, I raised my hand for salvation. I went forward at the invitation and went into a room with one of the church members. We knelt down in front of a chair and he told me to say the sinner's prayer. I was very sincere and serious about this, and I said, "Dear Lord, I know that I am a sinner, and I believe you died on the cross for my sins; please come into my heart." After I had said this prayer, we got up and he said that I was saved. I felt a relief after what I had done. When we came back into the church, everyone was waiting for me. The first thing they asked me is if I got saved. Since this was all new to me, I said, "I guess so; I asked Jesus into my heart." Everyone was real happy for me. Immediately I jumped headfirst into anything they wanted me to do. I knew the basic doctrines of the Bible, and I guess that was sufficient for them. I taught vacation Bible class to the adults on end time events in the book of Revelation. That was really interesting to me, because I had never heard about the rapture and other events that took place during the tribulation period. I then became the Sunday school superintendent. The pastor had strong beliefs for a bus ministry, and I became involved in that ministry. Every Saturday we would go out and get the kids to come to church. My pastor wanted me to go to pastor's school, but I had other plans for my future. I was a salesman for a major snack

food company, and I wanted to climb the ladder to success. That was more important to me than anything God wanted me to do for Him. I was always doing something for the church. My wife commented that she saw less of me than before. I think she began to resent the church because I was always there. It was beginning to wear on me, and I was getting burned out. But I knew it was for the Lord and so I kept on doing things at church.

Finally, I got the promotion I wanted at work. I was promoted to District Sales Manager in Dubuque, Iowa. It was a relief for me and my wife because it freed me from the church.

The people were sorry to see us go because we were a strong part of the church. When I think about this, I never prayed to ask God's will in this matter. It was something I wanted and so I went after it. My wife and I, along with our three children packed up and moved to

Dubuque, Iowa. As I started my new job, I was working 60 to 80 hours a week.

Fortunately, my wife didn't have to work and stayed home with the children. We found a Baptist church in town and went there faithfully. I wasn't involved as much as before but I still was there a lot when I wasn't working. I taught Sunday school and volunteered to

help at the church whenever something needed to be done. During this time, our pastor at Calvary Baptist Church resigned and moved to another church. We voted in another pastor soon after. However, things weren't going very well at church. I had pretty much consumed

my life with my job. I was gone all the time. Church life wasn't that important to me. I was faithful in my duties to the church, but my heart wasn't in it. I wanted to succeed at my job and pursued going higher in the organization. When I look back at this, I realize how much

God was in this in bringing me to the end of myself to receive His true salvation. Things were going well at this time. We had a new home, and I had a good job. We felt very

secure in our life. God was providing for us in all our needs. I was considered for a promotion at this time, and this is what I wanted - to be at the top. But then, the bottom fell out. My manager resigned and a new manager was brought in. We didn't get along very well. I felt things slipping away for my promotion. Everyone I knew that could help me get ahead was either promoted or resigned from the company. I was back to square one. Then that dreadful day came when my manager came to see me. He started to ask me questions about certain things that I had done. I was beginning to feel uncomfortable at this point and sensed something was wrong. Finally, he told me I was fired. I couldn't believe what was happening to me. One minute I was on top of the world and the next minute I had nothing. I was devastated. I went home that day and told my wife what had happened. I didn't know what to do. I questioned God, why He was doing this to me. I realize now it was for my own good, but at the time, I felt my whole life was destroyed. We had to sell our beautiful home and move. The church provided us a house on their grounds for the summer. Things at church weren't going well, and the pastor resigned. At that time, the pastor at Grace Baptist Church visited us. Pastor Harbin invited us to come to their church.

We moved into a rented house at the end of summer, and I started a new job at Mike Finnin Ford as their car rental manager. After visiting Grace Baptist Church several times, we decided to join the church. Again, we were faithful to the church. I began to teach the teen group at the church. During this time, we had several evangelists come and speak. One of the preachers was Bro. Charles Shipman. He had quite a testimony. He was a pastor at a church and for a long time was never saved. I had never heard anything like that before. How can a preacher be lost! The Holy Spirit showed him that there never was a time and place where God saved him. I had never questioned my salvation because I had a

time and place when God saved me. I began to realize, after hearing the testimonies of several church members, that one isn't saved by just being a church member faithfully or teaching a Sunday school class, or going to prayer meetings, or even being a preacher! You can be a very religious person and not have Christ as your Savior. You can profess Christ but not possess Christ. Again, I never doubted my salvation. In fact, I became more faithful in witnessing to people, reading my Bible and praying. During this time, the Holy Spirit began to deal with me about sin in my life. I remember how sensitive I was to the convicting work of the Holy Spirit. I would weep and go to the altar for sins that the Holy Spirit was showing me. I could literally feel the presence of God on me. I didn't know what this was, but I felt I was growing spiritually. I can look back now and realize that God was working a Godly sorrow in my heart, convicting me of my sins and leading me to repentance and faith in Jesus Christ. II Cor. 7:9-10. Again, I thought all this time I was saved but just growing spiritually.

During the week of April 24-28, 1989, we had a meeting with Bro. Charles Shipman. I loved going to those meetings, especially to hear the preaching of Bro. Shipman. The meeting was going well, and I was enjoying the preaching. Then that Thursday afternoon at work, something strange happened. I was sitting at my desk, and I heard the voice of God speak to me saying, "Tom, are you really saved?" I'll never forget that moment. I was shaking like a leaf. For the first time, there was a fear that overcame me realizing that I wasn't saved! I remember going over to Bob Hopper, one of the salesmen who recently got saved, and told him what happened. He didn't know what to think. I then immediately called our pastor and told him I needed to talk to him. Right after work I went down to the church and told

Pastor Harbin and Bro. Shipman what happened. They asked me when and how I got saved and I told them my testimony. After I had told them my testimony, they didn't try to convince me that I was saved. Many ministers try to convince people when they are under Holy Spirit conviction that the devil is putting doubts in their minds about their salvation. However, the Holy Spirit is showing them that they are lost. Paul, in the book of Corinthians says, "Examine yourself, whether you be in the faith." Bro. Shipman told me to let God show me whether I was saved or lost. He told me not to try and figure it out but to let God reveal it to me. I felt at ease at this point, realizing he was right. I couldn't do anything until God showed me.

That night at service, we opened the service with several songs. One of the songs that we started to sing was "It is Well With My Soul." As I started to sing this song, I could feel the Spirit of God on me. I tried to sing the words of the song, but I couldn't because it wasn't well with my soul! The Holy Spirit was speaking to my heart saying, "You are lost!" For the first time, the Spirit of God revealed to me my sinful condition. It wasn't any particular sin the Spirit was convicting me of, but that my whole being was sinful. I could see the filth of who I was, and my destiny was hell. I remember standing there, weeping in the pew over my lost condition. I was oblivious to anything else going around me. I didn't know what to do. Actually, I realized there was nothing I could do. There was no pastor to turn to or say some words to give me peace. This was something different going on. It was between me and God, and no one else. As I was crying, realizing my lost condition, the Lord spoke to my heart again and said, "Tom, do you want me?" It was as if I was face to face with God.

I then said with my heart, "Lord, I want you more than anything." At that moment, I

stopped crying, and the peace of God just flooded my soul. I can't explain it, but I felt at rest. The Holy Spirit gave me an assurance that just overwhelmed me. I was saved! What a glorious feeling to realize that God just saved me. I was truly in the presence of God, and His amazing grace saved me! I remember in my first experience, the man that was with me told me I was saved because he said the Bible says, "Whosoever calls upon the name of the Lord is saved." But I realize now that the assurance of salvation must come from the Holy Spirit and not from man. As I look back at this experience, I realize how merciful God was to me. All those years thinking I was saved and then God revealed His Son to me on April 27, 1989. Thank you, Lord! I realize now how precious His salvation is to me because it was all from Him. I had nothing to do with it. He was seeking me all this time, from beginning to end to save a wretched soul like me. Oh, what a Savior! I know some people are in doubt about their salvation because they are victims of man-made methods in trying to save them. I was sincere in what I did before I was truly saved but it was me deciding my salvation and not God. Salvation is not just a decision in the mind, but the work of the Holy Spirit in a sinner's heart to reveal to him his lost condition and that he needs a Savior. John 16:7-11. It is the power of God unto salvation! We are missing this power of God and substituting it with a word only salvation experience. I Thessalonians 1:5. Only God can do this work in regeneration and conversion. John Chapter 3 and Chapter 4. We can help the lost sinner by proclaiming the gospel, praying for them, teaching them the truth from the Word of God, and encouraging them to seek the Lord with all their heart that He may be found. Jeremiah 29:11-13. As ministers of the Word of God, let us be careful in allowing the Holy Spirit to do the work that is needed in a sinner's heart that brings a person to God's saving knowledge. Only God knows when that time is.

Salvation is of the Lord. I realized how much God loved me when He came seeking me. In the hymn, "The Inner Life", the author wrote:

"I sought the Lord, and afterwards I knew
He moved my soul to seek Him, seeking me.

It was not I that found O'Savior true
No, I was found by thee. Amen!"

GRACE THAT IS AMAZING

As I see what my life once was and see what God had done; I thank God for his only begotten Son. The love of God is truly great; my sins you'll find no trace. For I can live freely now, cause of His amazing grace. The standing I have with God, as if I'd never sinned; This gives me a confidence now, which is all from Him. But when I fall into sin, as I run this race, God still loves me and forgives me, and that's amazing grace. It's difficult to know how amazing it is to me; Grace that made me see, or grace that keeps me free. But someday this I'll know, when I see His face; That God's plan for me, was truly amazing grace. Amazing Grace is the song I'll sing, the song until I die. But if by chance, Christ comes in a twinkling of an eye, I'll praise His Name, and sing songs from my heart; Yes, it's still amazing grace as I depart

CHORUS

Grace that is amazing that He loved me so

Grace that is amazing that saved my wretched soul

Grace that is sufficient when I am so low

Yes, it's truly amazing grace to me.