

Are You Crucified to the World?

Ryan Skinner | illbehonest.com

Well, my name is Ryan, and I'm 22 years old and I'm from Columbia, Missouri in the United States here. I just wanted to share my testimony with you as to how the Lord saved me. I was going to read a verse first. In Galatians 6:14, Paul says, "May it never be that I would boast except in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ through which the world has been crucified to me and I to the world. For neither is circumcision anything or uncircumcision, but a new creation."

I grew up in a nominal Christian home - or a professing Christian home, in which, me and my brother, we went to church from a young age every Christmas and Easter, but by and large, God was never spoken about in our home. We never really gave thought to Him. Before we would go to sleep, we were taught to say little repetitive prayers before we went to sleep. But from a young age, I never really knew anything of true Christianity or anything like that. And there was never a point when I doubted the existence of God, which even the Scripture in Romans 1 testifies that all men know without excuse that there is a God. And I knew that He was there, and I knew that I had a conscience. And I knew that there was right and wrong, but as being born in sin, from a young age, I was a slave to sin. The greatest bondage was that I lived for myself. I loved myself and I loved to do whatever I wanted to do. And that's the crime of all men's crimes is that they don't seek God. There is none that seeks God. There is none that understands. And I had no understanding. I had no apprehension of spiritual reality.

And as I grew older, I just went right along with the world. And in our age, there's hardly any discipline going on in the household. I basically, in one sense, ruled my household. I would beat up my brother to make my parents angry and upset everything. I was just full of pride and was wanting to control the situation. I was manipulative. I was just given total freedom basically in my own sinful nature. And as time went on, I got worse. I had a Christian friend in the neighborhood. This was about when I was 9 years old, and I remember him telling me, "you're going to go to hell unless you go home and invite Jesus into your heart." And so I remember, I went home. That was the only time I ever had any real terror of hell. I always thought I was right with God. I wasn't a bad person. I wasn't a murderer or a serial killer. So I remember going home and saying, "Jesus, come into my heart." And I didn't feel anything. So I waited for a couple of minutes, and I said, "Jesus, come into my heart." And I didn't feel anything, so I was like, well, I guess I did it, so I took that and kind of forgot all about that memory until recently. I thought I was on my way to heaven.

As time went on, I continued into deeper and deeper sin, into the common snares of this age in pornography and in greediness. By the time I was in high school, in junior high I got heavy into drugs. At the time of my conversion, that was my main idol. I lived to get high, to spend time with people that got high. And what's crazy is I would think man, these people are greedy. They never want to share. But all the while, I'm spending all of my money on this and living for this. While there's people starving to death, I'm selfishly sitting in some dark room in order to feel good and get high. I mean, that was the extent of my depravity. While I was getting high, I was self-righteous in even thinking that I was good. And that had a strong grip on me. And I knew it had a grip on me. I knew that I was a slave to sin and that I couldn't get out. I tried

to get out of it. I was miserable in life. I didn't have any hope or reason to live, any direction, any purpose. I didn't know what I was going to do.

By the grace of God, my parents made my brother and I when I was 15 years old and my brother was roughly 12 or 13, they made us start going to this liberal protestant church in my hometown. A very big one. You know, I thought I was a believer, but I used to get high before going to church even. And they have a thing called a confirmation class. You go through the confirmation class, and I was an older kid. And I went through the confirmation class with a bunch of kids that were younger, maybe three years younger than me. And I remember, in my mind I'm thinking, this is such a joke. The lady's telling us about Christ and this and that. She had no reality. She was not saved as far as I know. Nor do I think the vast majority of the people in that congregation were saved.

But I thought I was a believer, and I got sprinkled with water and they presented me in front of the church. And everyone claps their hands for all the youth that have now been added to the church and praise God, you know, but in that church, there was no concept of being lost or saved. I didn't have any concept of that at all. There was never any mention of hell. As a matter of fact, my pastors taught that everyone was going to be saved. And this is not uncommon. This is common in liberal protestant churches in America. And it's heresy. It's lies. And it will damn people to hell. I sat under that, not really knowing anything else other than that.

But anyway, my parents made me go on this mission trip with the youth group there. And we went to Tennessee. And there in the mountains of Tennessee, it was one of those mission trips where you go and help out old ladies and clean up their yard and stuff like that. But it was there that the Lord met with me. If you would have seen me, I was the kid on the bus that had my headphones on. Not smiling. Everyone is laughing, having a good time. I was one that was quiet sitting on the bus on our way there as we left looking miserable. Not wanting to be with these happy-go-lucky people.

And I went on this mission trip. And I remember as I was riding down, in my mind, I said, well, maybe I should keep an open mind to this whole Christianity thing. Even to think that thought, I can look back now and see that's not a natural thought. That was the grace of God already softening my heart, preparing me for this time that I got to get away from the world and away from everything that I was used to up there in the mountains of Tennessee. And it was there, I don't know how to explain it, except by the second day, they'd be singing Christian songs and by the second day, I was walking around singing all of a sudden. It was like I was meaning the things that I was singing about Christ coming and dying and these various things that were taught. At that camp, no one ever clearly preached the Gospel to me. I never heard anyone preach against sin before. And it didn't happen at that camp either. As far as I know, I was not under heavy conviction of sin. I was aware of my sins, and aware of the bondage that I was in.

One night, I got away from the rest of the group and went out under the stars. And probably the first time I ever really truly prayed to the Lord and told the Lord Jesus that I wanted to serve Him. I couldn't have told you anything about the necessity of repentance and faith in order to be saved. But that's what God was working in my heart. I no longer wanted to live for sin. I no longer wanted to live for myself. And God opened my eyes there to see the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ. And that's what salvation is. When someone's eyes are opened

and for the first time they see that Jesus He was not this little old historical figure that went around carrying lambs around patting children on the head saying nice, little moral teachings. But their eyes are open to see that Jesus Christ, He's the Lord of Glory. He's the Christ. He's the Son of the living God.

And I knew that He was living. I didn't even think so much about the death of Christ, I was enamored with the resurrection of Christ. That He was a risen, living Savior. And I came back from that trip born again. No one ever used the language "born again." I was in liberal protestantism. But that's what happened to me. My brother was shocked that I was no longer beating him up. My best friend just couldn't understand what happened to me. All my pothead friends thought that I'd been brainwashed at some church camp. But in reality, most of those kids, those happy-go-lucky kids, most of them have gone their own way and are in the world completely and are believing lies.

The Lord looked down with mercy on me and saved me - one of the worst of the worst to demonstrate His grace, to demonstrate His power, to demonstrate His love. And the Lord's been good to me ever since. He's led me in paths of righteousness for His name's sake. Many struggles coming out of false doctrine and even giving way to sin, but the Lord was gracious. He brought me out of those things.

He's continuing to do a work in my life. He saved me from the penalty of sin, from everlasting damnation and hell. I'm trusting only in Christ, that He came into this world to save sinners. And He took my place, and He bore the wrath of God on the cross, and He paid for my sins. The eye of faith can only be on one thing. And my eye of faith is not on myself or the strength of my faith, but it's on Christ. The finished work of Jesus Christ, that He paid, He died to save me from all those various sins, and that He rose again on the third day victoriously triumphing over death and hell and all the powers of hell proving that He was indeed the divine Son of God.

And the whole message of the Bible is this: That you don't have to be lost. You don't have to be in the misery of sin and the bondage of sin. That you can be set free. That you can be forgiven all of your sins. He says He'll cast your sins - it's like they're cast in the depths of the sea and He remembers them no more. That's the promise of the New Covenant that if you repent of your sins - that means you let go of this life, you let go of this world, and the things that you love so much that are not God, if you let go and repent and cast yourself completely on Christ and trust in Him alone as your Lord and Savior, I mean, if you give everything to Him and bow down to Him as your Lord and your Master and as your only hope - if you do that, that He will save you. He will embrace you. You'll know the infinite love of God. You couldn't offer me all the money in this world, or whatever, you couldn't offer me all the women in this world to go back to my life of sin. It's not comparable to knowing Christ, to the joy of knowing Christ, to the joy of having life in Him, a daily walk with Him, to know Christians, to have fellowship with Christians, to be able to read the Word of God.

So my question for you today is this. This verse that I read: Are you crucified to the world? Is this world dead to you? Or does it still capture your heart? Are you still living for it? Because when God saves a person, He doesn't just save them from hell and then they are on their merry way and they can live life how they want to live. Bless God, we're Christians, but we're still getting drunk every Saturday night. Still looking at pornography. He saves people to

radically change them, to conform them to the image of His Son, that they would be lovers of God. So are you dead to the world? Are you crucified with Christ? Have you been raised up to newness of life? Or are you the same person you've always been? Because if you're the same person you've always been from birth, you're lost because you were born in sin. You were born alienated from God.

And the message of the Bible is this, that you need to turn to God. Look to Him all the ends of the earth and be saved, for He is God and there is none other. There's no other Savior. There's no other name by which we must be saved other than the name of Jesus. And so if you let go of your sins, you let go of any trust in yourself or your baptism or any sinner's prayer that you said, or any false confidence because you did this or that or because you think you're a good person. If you let go of that, and come to Christ and trust only in Him, you will be saved. And He's mighty to save. He's good. He's worth it. God is worthy of glory. And it's sin not to give Him the glory. It's sin not to give Him the glory. But I praise the Lord for His grace to me. I praise Him for all the mercy He's shown me. And I pray and I plead with you that you would turn to Christ, that you would let go of your sins and come to Him.