

I Believed Facts About God But Was Still Dead in My Sins

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Well, I was raised in Texas. And my parents both died when I was young. My mother died when I was two years old. And my father died six years later, when I was eight years old. And my cousin, who did not have children, she and her husband took me in their home, along with my older sister, and they raised us. My cousin's husband who was like a grandfather to me, then became my step-father; he died when I was twelve. Then it was Wilma, my cousin. It was her and my sister and I who lived together on our farm. And then, three years later, when my sister was an older teenager, she was married and moved. So then it was just my adoptive mother and I.

And I grew up in church, although it was not a Gospel-preaching church. It was a conservative church. It was somewhat legalistic. And did not believe in musical instruments. And I never remember hearing the Gospel preached there. I remember as a pre-teenager one night fearing that I would go to hell if I was not baptized. And so I went and got baptized as quickly as I could.

But all religious feelings were soon gone, and I was still unconverted. And as I got into my high school years, I began to visit the local Baptist church with my friends. And every time I would go, I would hear the basic Gospel. It was not a strongly doctrinal Gospel message, but it was yet true. It had the basics of the Gospel in it. And every time I would go, I would come under conviction. I would know that God was real. I would have feelings and desires and emotions about wanting Christ, about being interested, feeling my sinfulness. But no one ever instructed me. No one ever counseled me biblically what repentance was, what saving faith was.

So there were many times in the context of that Baptist church, that I would do what they said: Walk the aisle. Pray a prayer. Make a decision for Christ. And yet, my heart was unchanged, and I didn't know what to do. So, generally those feelings would leave within about three or four weeks, and I would be back to my old self. This continued through high school, until I got out of high school, and I finally just grew weary of it. I decided I didn't want to go to church anymore, because it never lasted for me. It didn't work for me. And the entire time, I sincerely knew that God was real. I did believe the Bible was the Word of God. And I did believe that Jesus Christ had come and He was the Savior. I had those facts in my mind. And I knew in my conscience that they were true. But I was yet dead in my sins.

And when I was 19 years old, in the summer of 1973, I had gotten completely out of church. I was not interested at all. I was working. And a very close friend of mine whose name was Kent, was in the army. He came home from the army one weekend, and he had come to know Christ while he was in the army only that summer. He was a new Christian. And he was burdened for me, because we were close friends. And he came home for a weekend from the army. He saw me on a Saturday morning, and he asked me if we could have some time together.

So that evening on a Saturday night, The last Saturday of July of 1973, I spent about three hours with Kent. We were in his car just there in town on a summer evening. And he began to talk to me about the Lord Jesus Christ. And he didn't say anything that I hadn't heard in high school being in the Baptist church. But as he spoke, his life had authenticity. And I knew him well. And I trusted him. And the more he spoke, and the more his words were owned by the Holy Spirit, they were used by God to bring conviction to my heart. And the longer we talked, the more I came under conviction of sin. Deep conviction of sin. And as our time got into one hour and two hours, the Holy Spirit really came in a great way with a sense of His presence in an overwhelming way. And for the first time, the cross was made very real to me. That Christ really had died for my sins. And that's what happened on the cross. And that Christ truly did love me unconditionally. And it overwhelmed my heart.

I didn't know how to pray. I didn't know anything, except the love of God was poured out upon me, and I knew it in a way that I had never seen before. And so I began to cry out to God. I didn't know how to pray, but it didn't matter. My heart wanted Him. And I began to cry out to God. And I said Lord Jesus, I know You died for me. And I have nothing to bring You, except my sin and my self, but here I am. In those moments, I felt washed. I felt clean. I felt whole. I felt the love of God fill me. And it was very, very real. And it was nothing that my friend did. He was overwhelmed as well. He had hoped that his words could influence me, but he did not have any idea, I believe, that this was going to happen. We were both surprised by the presence of the Lord in an unusual way.

So my conversion - three hours earlier, God was the furthest thing from my mind. I was not thinking about Christianity. I wasn't interested. I wasn't under conviction. I was not searching. God came in His mercy and apprehended me. And saved me. And turned me. And His goodness overwhelmed me. And granted to my heart repentance. Repentance for me at that moment was just feeling the weight of my sin, seeing it and hating it. And I wanted Christ above everything else. And my heart went to Him.

That was a Saturday night. I was 19 years old. The next morning, I went back up to the Baptist church there where I was a member. Both Kent and I did - where we were members. And I stood up and I gave testimony that before the previous night I had never been a true Christian at all. And that Christ had saved me. And it created a little bit of either great joy for some or confusion for others because many had presumed that I was a true Christian. But, that was the beginning of my relationship with Christ as a 19 year old. And it's been now over 40 years of walking with Him, finding joy only in the Lord Jesus Christ.

Well, every person knows in their heart that there is a God. That knowledge is inside every person. People quench it. They resist it. They try to suppress it. But it's there. The knowledge of God is within a person. They know God is real. They also know intuitively that they have sinned. Their conscience tells them that they have sinned. All have sinned and come short of the glory of God. And every person has need of the Lord Jesus Christ. Every person, being sinful, is separated from God. And is in need of the Savior.

You, as well, are such a person. The most important thing you can do; the most urgent thing you can do, is to stop your rebellion, to face your rebellion, to face your need, to acknowledge from your heart that indeed you are a sinner in need of a Savior. And turn to Him. The Gospel says God commended His love, He showed His love toward us, in that while we

were yet sinners, Christ died for us. He died for our sins. He took our sins. And He took the wrath of God toward us upon Himself on the cross. And He bore them in our place. He died in our place. Christ died for us. And the love of God was demonstrated, in that while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us. And then He rose again.

And He calls all to come to Him. God commands all men everywhere to repent, to turn from their sin, and to turn to His Son. God has commanded all men everywhere to repent. And He's verified that, in that He raised Christ from the dead. He's a living Savior. And He offers forgiveness of sins and eternal life to all who will come to Him. The Bible says that God saves all who come to God through Christ. The Lord Jesus Christ Himself said, "I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through Me."

So what does God say to any sinner? To any person who is not in Jesus Christ? He tells them to repent. To turn from their sin. To realize how evil it is. And to turn away in their heart from it. And to turn in dependence and trust to Christ alone. Not your works, not your religion. Not church attendance. Not baptism. Not anything else. But to turn to the Lord Jesus Christ. He is the object that your heart must go to. It's the living Savior who offers salvation and forgiveness to every person.

This week, I spoke to a young man who expressed to me that he wanted to be saved, he had tried to be saved, but he didn't think that Christ would save him. And I told him that in all four of the Gospels, Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John, you never find anyone coming to the Lord Jesus Christ for healing or for salvation or for forgiveness - if they came sincerely; if they came genuinely, He never turned anyone away. He always had mercy on them. And Christ is a merciful Savior. He will receive all who come unto Him through faith.

So, He says to every sinner, to every person who's not a Christian, "Come unto Me, all you who labor, and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest." The most important thing you can do in life is to not let your heart rest in anything else; not let your heart be satisfied, not let your heart find satisfaction in anything else. Until you come to believe the Gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ and trust in Him and find salvation in Him. The Bible says, whoever will truly, from the heart, call upon the name of the Lord, they will be saved. And you can do that. Trust Christ.