

I Found Rest in Christ

John Dees | *illbehonest.com*

I want to share about what God has done for my soul. And I'm thankful, the Lord, He didn't let me go. I was very lost. In fact, I didn't even have a clue that I was lost. That's one of the worst parts about not knowing the Lord is you really are stumbling around in the dark. You're blind, you don't realize that you need him. And that was true for me.

I grew up basically going to church with my mom and hearing about some things of God but being totally ignorant and totally clueless. And I thought basically what it meant to be a Christian was and to be right with God was, that you go to church and that you believe in Jesus Christ. Both of which I did.

But what I didn't realize was that my life was full of sin. And I actually was in a totally different kingdom, a totally different world. And that realm I was under kept me deceived for a long time.

I thought that basically I was good but as I began to get a little older, sin really started coming out. It really started coming to the forefront, And I was a hypocrite, totally. And I was really ashamed of the Lord. If you would get me around other Christians or if you would see me in mixed company, I didn't want to talk about Christ. In fact, usually any true Christians really got on my nerves. I didn't feel comfortable around them and I was kind of hiding from the Lord. But what God began to do was, He let sin manifest itself in me.

And as things got deeper, things that I'm ashamed of now, even to talk about, things that are wrong, things that are perverted and sinful and evil. Those things I actually took delight in and I never would have let anyone know that but if you could have followed me around which God, I mean, God's everywhere He's in every place everywhere and His eyes see everything. There is nothing hidden from His sight and if you could've seen me, you would have seen sin in my heart but what the Lord began to do slowly was expose me. And He began to show me really He was exposing me to myself because up to that point I was blind and what God began to do was He put me...

When I was in high school I was going to church but really I didn't want to be there. Even my Bible, I kept it in the back of my mom's car like just so I could pull it out and take it in church when I needed to go there. But He put me around true Christians that actually loved the Lord and what that did was it really showed me the example of what a life for God is supposed to look like. Some of these people, they were the most dorky, geeky people in the world.

I was a sophomore in high school, and I can remember there was this one seventh grader in particular, and he was just about as geeky as they come but I felt convicted when I was around him. Because he would share things in church about sharing Christ with his friends he just had a love for God he was totally unashamed and I was really ashamed.

And that began to cut into me and I realized there were problems in my life so what did I do? My thought was, basically to try and fix myself. I thought the solution lied within myself. I have the power to change this, that was really, you could say that that was my Gospel, that was really the only gospel that I knew was save yourself. Change yourself. And so I tried that.

The sins that were in my life that God began to put his finger on and show me I tried to get rid of. I was 15 years old and what happened was things actually started to get worse.(P) And I didn't know this Bible verse at the time but in John 8 it says, if any man commits sin he is the slave of sin. You know sin is not an accident. Sin isn't something that is skin deep, it goes to the heart, it's coming out of your heart.

And there's a principle that is reigning inside you. You're under the power of sin. I didn't know that but God began to teach that to me from experience. So that, as I tried to fight sin that was in my life, as I tried to rescue myself, change myself, to commend myself to God, I actually went deeper and deeper into sin and I felt the struggle. And I didn't like it. At this point, sin was not my friend. I was trying to get away from sin. I was trying to follow God.

I was much like the man in Romans 7. You know the commandment comes to him and he realizes what he's doing is wrong and he tries to stop but actually the law stirs up sin and that's exactly what was happening.

I felt convicted. I knew God, You're right on this. I need to stop this. This is wrong. I can see it as clear as day. And yet I was under the power of it. And I began to be... feel very guilty and very weighed down because I knew I was a hypocrite. And there's nothing I could do about it. I felt like, okay, I'm a hypocrite now what?

And in the mercy of God, He didn't leave me there. If God begins to reveal your sin to you, that's a merciful thing. And He did that for me. And I'm thankful. He didn't let me love sin and enjoy it. He began to cause me to flee from it and to hate it and to feel heavy, heavy laden.

And so what happened was there was a retreat at the church I was going to and it was strange it was like this was the first time. Before I was always kind of forced to go to church but this was the first time after months of feeling guilty that there was just a new feeling about it. It was like there was some... God was doing something and I didn't understand what it was.

But on Saturday night I got alone by myself and I just cried out to God. I wasn't around anybody, there wasn't anybody telling me what to do, I didn't even know what to pray, but I needed help. And I began to cry out to God for Him to take me, to change me to save me and really all I could say at first was "I'm sorry. I'm sorry I'm sorry." I just repeated that over and over to the Lord. I was just broken just weeping before the Lord because I knew what made it so bad what made the feeling so heavy was that God was so good.

It was like, I had never known the presence of God before but that night God came, it was unmistakable, God came. And it was like, His goodness was present. His love and His worth was present. And I was broken. I felt like humbled to the dust clinging to the dust because I had sinned against a God that was good. I had sinned against a God that was holy and lovely and pure.

And a God even who had loved me. And I knew that, I don't know how I knew that but I knew that. And I was broken because of it just full of remorse and just telling the Lord I'm sorry I'm sorry. But then the tears of pain and of contrition out of nowhere turned into joy. And it was like my soul was flooded with assurance that God accepted me, God loved me. I belong to God and I didn't even really know the right terminology about "I'm saved" or I didn't know to say that but I knew this: I was saying Jesus is my Lord. That's what I was saying. And I was telling the Lord, I just told Him, I said God, I mean I can remember this, just telling the Lord, "You can have

my life. Just take my life. I don't want to keep it. I want it to be Yours." It was like, it was surrender, but it was a happy surrender.

And that's really what it means like in the Bible when you see yourself as a sinner when you begin to feel heavy laden, Christ says come to Me and that's what I did. The Lord drew me to Himself and when I came to Him I found His yoke wasn't heavy, you know His burden wasn't this suppressive burden, it was light. And that's the case when it comes to walking with the Lord What is that?

Because I knew my sins were forgiven because I knew that God had washed me all of that guilt, all of that filth I had been living in, all of that hypocrisy, it was like, it was just washed away. It was like it was thrown away and God wasn't going to remember any of it.

And I felt so loved and caught up and near to God that my soul was just filled with joy and peace and even in the Christian life you say well is it easy to be a Christian? No it's not easy to be a Christian at all. In fact, that Scripture says many are the afflictions of the righteous and the world is going to hate you if you love the Lord. We live in a sinful world and if you love the Lord the world is gonna hate you.

And I experienced that I lost all my friends right off the bat in high school. I couldn't contain it. I was wanting to share it with them and they just said get out of here but I wasn't sad about losing my friends. It wasn't a burdensome thing to me because God's peace had come into my life.

His forgiveness was covering me and if you know what it means to be justified, if you know what it means to be spotless in His sight," it's like your world is unshakable and that's what it was for me right away the Lord did that in my life and I'm so thankful just to follow the Lord and walk with the Lord it doesn't matter you know even as you go on in the Christian life.

I've been telling people recently, because His word says this, that the path of the righteous, it grows brighter and brighter until the full day. And that's true even as God gives you more, more trials, more things to handle, more things to walk in, more sin to fight against, more battles, He gives grace. And like over the years God has shown me more and more.

At first I didn't really know anything, I knew that God loved me, I knew that He had forgiven me. I knew that Christ had died for me. But even as you go on in the Christian life God begins to show you more of the depth of His love, more of the power of His salvation and the finality of it, the security of it.

I can remember when I was 18, I heard a man preaching, and he quoted a line from a hymn that I had never heard before. I didn't grow up listening to hymns or singing hymns which was a shame cause this one I think would have been really good. He said, the hymn writer says "nothing in my hands I bring, simply to the cross I cling," And when the Lord taught me that I had been Christian for like three years but again it's been like more even depth of the forgiveness that God has.

The freedom of the Gospel, that He invites you just to come and lay hold of the Lord Jesus Christ. You can't clean yourself up to come to Him. I tried that and failed miserably. That's bondage, it's death. It'll lead you straight to hell if you do that. But if you come to the Lord with empty hands, what can you give to God to impress God? Nothing. What can you do to commend your soul to God? Nothing. But if you come with empty hands like a child that verse says you can cling to the cross.

And when God showed me that, it was like new levels of joy that I've never known before. A new level of rest in the Lord, that's why rest comes up in the Bible so much. Why is it saying so much in the Old testament about Sabbath rest? Like why is He always telling, He actually commands His people to rest, you will rest and the Lord told me that when I was 18.

It was like even more showing me the depth of salvation that Christ has won on the Cross that He purchased for His people to rest in Him to come empty handed to Him and it continues to be that way as I walk with the Lord, He continues to show me more things I never knew about His goodness, about His grace. And even the fact that God had grace for me, even before I ever turned to Him while I was still His enemy Christ had died for me He demonstrated His love for me, His grace was set upon my life.

It was like it was riding over me all the time and I had no clue. But God's love, as it says in Psalm 103:17, that His love is from everlasting to everlasting upon those who fear Him. And God began to teach that to me too it's like where will it end? Where is God even going to run out of grace? Well, He doesn't. All the riches, all the fullness is hidden in Christ.

Every treasure and you can't, it's unfathomable, you cannot sound the depths. So I just look forward to knowing more of who God is and God is what a Savior we have! What a Lord, what a God we serve.