

This Is My Story

By Scott Poling

When asked to write down my testimony, memories went flooding back to the night of January 12, 1997. That was the last night of our church's winter revival where Brother Rick Cassada, from Richmond Virginia, was speaking. That night crying out to the Lord, being very sorry from the bottom of my heart for my sins, humbly desiring forgiveness of my sins from the Almighty God my Saviour and Redeemer, I trusted and believe assuredly to be saved, and to have full remission and forgiveness of all my sins. It took many years and many professions to reach that night, but Praise God for "those prison doors to be finally opened."

When growing up I have always relied upon myself to take care of the things that I needed. Being a "military brat" and moving every three years of my life, I didn't want or make many friends so I was never close to anyone. I knew if I made friends, my heart would just be broken as I had to leave them when we moved to another place around the world. Oh, I would have acquaintances, but I never really had any close friends in my life to rely upon when I needed someone to talk to. That would prove to be detriment for years to come, because I would use that same philosophy with God. I spent all those years taking care of myself why did I need God?

As a kid, we would attend church every once in a while but not very faithfully. When I was in junior high school, I remember attending a Baptist church in Ogden Utah for a time. As a teenager it was great, every once in a while our Sunday school teacher (during the Sunday school hour) would take the class to a Perkins style restaurant for doughnuts and hot chocolate. That was our Sunday school lesson for the day. I remember thinking if this is what church is all about, this isn't so bad. I can come to church and still do all the things I wanted to do. One Sunday school "outing" my teacher asked me if I would like to go to heaven. I told him, "Sure I would like to go to heaven, what do I have to?" So he led me into a prayer and after I said "Amen", the teacher told me I was saved and going to heaven. The teacher went and told the pastor that I got saved and that night, after the evening service, I was baptized. I remember my mom being so happy, after the service that night we had Strawberry Shortcake to celebrate at home. However, after that night, we didn't go to church much after that. That was my first profession of faith.

Years went by and my dad finally retired in Spanaway Washington. I felt a sense of belonging because I knew I wasn't going to move anymore. This was my third high school in two years, but I knew this was going to be my last school I was going to attend. I finally allowed myself to open up a little to one classmate (named Matt) and we became close friends (as a matter of fact, we are still friends to this day). The Lord used that friendship to get me back into church. Matt's mom went to a Baptist church and she invited me to come to church with her. She wanted to see me in church, but she had other plans as well. She wanted me to get to know the church's piano player because she thought we would be right for each other. After a while, she was right because I started to like the piano player (in fact that piano player is my wife Kris).

To spend more time with Kris, I went to church every Sunday and Wednesday. I heard the gospel preached but I never did anything about it. I was remembering back to the profession of faith I made in Utah, even though I knew that it was empty. I started to get real serious about Kris, so I made another

profession of faith so when I went to talk to Kris' dad, he would know that I was a Christian. Once again, it was just a profession of faith and not a true conversion because I didn't want to turn my life over to Christ; I just wanted to have a wife. That was my second profession of faith.

Kris and I got married and I had enlisted in the United States Air Force. Our first duty station was in Berlin Germany where we attended church (because I was "saved" that what we were supposed to do). However, inside my heart I really didn't care about church or even care for the people at church. I just wanted to do what I wanted to do. I would play soccer on Sunday, look forward to work my shift over Sunday, and even got to a point where I would fake sickness so I wouldn't have to go to church. That went on for three years and then we got orders to go to North Carolina. Once again pretending to be a Christian we needed to find a church, so we started to attend a church right outside the base. I only went to church to keep up the façade of being a Christian to my wife, still knowing that I had nothing inside. I believed at this time if I did a lot of things around the church that would enough to get me to heaven not turning my life over to Christ. I took a bus route, taught Sunday school, and went to all the special meetings, attended the Saturday morning prayer breakfasts, all to convince Kris and myself, that I was "saved", but in reality I was most miserable. I hated to give up my time to do the things at church (especially the bus route because on Saturdays I had to visit my bus kids), but I kept telling myself these things will get me to heaven. I was still relying upon myself; I wouldn't even let my wife get close to me.

One week our church had a special meeting, and the speaker spoke on hell every night. It bothered me knowing that that was the place I was going if I don't keep up the different jobs around the church. But I could I go forward when everybody knew I was already "saved". I was a bus captain and bus driver, I worked with the church's finances, and I even helped out with teaching a Sunday school class. I couldn't go forward, what would everybody say! So to try to save my pride I talked to the special speaker on the afternoon he was leaving. I told him I didn't want to go to hell, so he led me in a prayer. Once again I made another profession of faith, trying to make sure I was going to heaven. Once again, this profession of faith was empty because I still wasn't ready to turn my life over to the Lord Jesus Christ. There wasn't true repentance of my sins; I just wanted an escape from hell and to keep my life for myself. That was the third profession of faith.

What finally turned my spiritual life around when was I got orders to Grand Forks Air Force Base (that is a story in itself how the Lord was moving in my life to get salvation). Once we moved up to Grand Forks, the Lord was chipping away at my pride. We were attending a church (the New Testament Baptist Church, NTBC), that taught and preached the Bible. The other churches I have attended throughout my life did teach and preach from the Bible, but not as NTBC did. NTBC wasn't watering down the doctrines of the Bible and didn't believe in easy believism (like the other churches I went to). NTBC taught and lived in a total change of one's life for Christ; it was a total surrender of one's self. NTBC preached that when one gets saved their whole life is turned over to Christ. All the old things that a person did are cast to the side, so that Christ could get all the glory. As it says in

II Corinthians 5:17: "Therefore if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature: old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new."

After all the professions of faith I made I wasn't a new person and I knew it. However, I still believed if I kept accomplishing things for God, I could still get to heaven. All those professions of faith I made wasn't for God (that is why I was still empty inside), but made to get things I wanted and to do things I wanted to do. It wasn't until 1997 when I first started to realize that my pride wasn't leading me

anywhere except directly to hell. Throughout my whole life, the Lord was trying to teach me not to rely upon myself but upon Him. He gave me chance after chance, and even made it possible to be at a place where He could finally cut through me. He finally did cut through me on January 12, 1997.

Brother Rick Cassada was preaching all week on salvation, and for the first time I really took a hard look at my relationship with the Almighty God. I know all the professions of faith I made were empty, but I was doing okay, or at least I thought I was. I was helping in the Christian School, teaching a Sunday school class, helping with the teens in the Youth Department, and even was a trustee of the church. I filled all the spots I could to be a good person for God to allow into His heaven. I heard all the verses before, but for the first time in my life the Scriptures were speaking to me loud and clear. Deep down in my heart, I was holding onto the idea that basically I was a good person. I didn't break the law and I wasn't any trouble to anybody, so why did I need God?

Romans 3:10, 12 told me why I needed God, "As it is written, There is none righteousness, no, not one: They are all gone out of the way, they are together become unprofitable; there is none that doeth good, no, not one."

Brother Cassada was preaching from John 3 about Nicodemus. Like Nicodemus, I was moral and religious, but I had never been born again. At the invitation time, Brother Cassada said, "Don't wait until you're better or you may never come at all." I have been trying to appease my conscience for years by working hard to find favor with God forgetting (or ignoring)

Ephesians 2:8 – 9, "For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves; it is the gift of God: not of works, lest any man should boast."

So I went forward to talk with the Pastor. I told Pastor what I was feeling and thinking about and told him, "I don't think I'm saved." Pastor told me to pray about and think about it throughout the night and the following day, and if I still feel this way on the last night service to come up.

The next day I was feeling just miserable. I couldn't concentrate at work and I was going to college at the time. I went to class, but I have no idea what the professor lectured about. I kept going over in my mind, "I'm trying to live a good life, why isn't that good enough?" When I went to church that night, Brother Cassada said he had a message ready for tonight, but the Lord wanted him to preach

Proverbs 6:16 – 19: "These six things doth the Lord hate; yea seven are an abomination unto him: a proud look, a lying tongue, and hands that shed innocent blood, a heart that deviseth wicked imaginations, feet that be swift in running to mischief, a false witness that speaketh lies, and he that soweth discord among brethren."

I finally realized right then and there, it was my pride keeping me from a relationship with the Lord Jesus Christ. I waited until the invitation was given and I ran right down to talk with Pastor. I told him the revelation I received and that I needed to get saved tonight. He sent me to Mrs. Kennedy's office with one of the personal workers. We sat down and he read some good gospel verses to me. One I remember especially,

Isaiah 53:6, "All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned every one to his own way;"

He stopped right there and asked me if that was me. I thought back of how I went my own way as a boy and young adult, and how it wasn't God's way. So I answered, "Yes, that's me." He read the rest of the verse, "and the Lord hath laid on him the iniquity of us all."

We prayed, and I realized for the first time in my life that when Christ died on the cross, God laid on Him all my sins. I was crying for joy to know that at last I had found peace with God and my soul, not through any works of my own, but simply accepting Christ as my own personal Saviour.

John 1:7b says, "...and the blood of Jesus Christ his Son cleanseth us from all sin."

It was certainly, "not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to his mercy he saved us..." - Titus 3:5

"Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that hearth my Word, and believeth on Him that sent me, hath everlasting life, and shall not come into condemnation; but is passed from death unto life" John 5:24