

Salvation Comes From God

I receive many requests inquiring about the events leading to my salvation. People want to read about my conversion. I am asked for my testimony. So, this blog is about what happened in my life before, during and after Jesus Christ became my Lord and Savior.

I attended church as a child. It was a regular part of my life. I was in love with the idea of a gentle Savior that cared for me. I believed in God and had moments of joy at the thought of being favored by Him. Yet, I had many hidden and unconfessed sins. I was unsaved.

In my teen years my sins led to rebellion against my guardians, the government and God. I started to run away and to hitchhike across the country. I experimented with many forbidden behaviors. My anger and pride spurred me to reject the care of many people. However, God's call was on my life. I often stopped at small churches in little towns to ask for work. I was presented with the Gospel repeatedly. But, I always moved on without receiving "the pearl of great price". I was drawn to God's people but I refused to submit to their Master.

The program of Alcoholics Anonymous became my church in my twenties. It was a place where I could feel loved. The group became my family. It also gave me a way to have a form of spirituality without the limitations of Church. I worshipped a god of my own imagination and decided for myself what was good or bad. I chose what was right or wrong in my own sight. I refrained from using drugs or
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alcohol. I was a sober member of Alcoholics Anonymous for eleven consecutive years. At the end of this period I tried drinking and found myself to have no problem with alcoholism.

I also attended church sporadically during my twenties. I participated in some congregations for a year or more. I was open and honest about being unsaved. It was frustrating for many of the concerned individuals I met. I was unwilling and unable to bow before the Creator of the Universe. I felt pulled to do so, especially during altar calls. Yet, I remained attached to my sinful lifestyle and at odds with God.

In my early thirties I drifted spiritually. I no longer attended Alcoholics Anonymous. I ran with a wild crowd and the restraining hand of the program was gone. In the midst of the madness, a friend who lived with me was invited to church. He refused to attend. I asked if the guy who offered to take him would bring me instead. He did. I ended up going to that church for over a year. I enjoyed studying the Bible there.

My Sunday school teacher invited me to join his family on Christmas eve. They took me to eat at a fancy restaurant. We went to a Christmas program that night after dinner. It was a beautiful candle lit service. Bob took me home in his truck afterwards. His family rode to their house in another car.

This arrangement opened the door for Bob and I to have a private conversation. Most of the details of it escaped my memory. I do know that he cried out in frustration:
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"What is keeping you from receiving Jesus as Lord?"

He asked in anguish. It was the perfect question for me. That moment was the exact one when it could impact me the most. He knew I had all the information and that I understood my fallen condition.

The Holy Spirit worked through Bob's words. The force of his emotions were like cold water on my soul. It dawned on me that time was of the essence. I feared my heart was becoming too hard to receive salvation. My life was going better than most of it had. I lived in a nice apartment in a gated community. I had a steady income and maintained a reputation with my friends of which I was proud. Still, I was in complete and unhappy.

The decision could be put off no longer. It would be that night or never. I suddenly realized that no matter what I obtained in life I would be dissatisfied. I was a chronic malcontent. My life lacked the joy I saw in Bob's. In disgust, I saw that everything I chased after was worthless. I was reserving a place in Hell for myself because of a fantasy. The illusion that I could make myself happy, whole and content disappeared in the light of the truth. Nothing in this world could give me peace.

Bob asked me to pray with him. I did. I said something like: "God, I am a sinner. I can never meet your standards. Jesus, please come into my life and make me whole, I receive you now." I did it because at the time I was thinking, I might as well as give it a try. I thought I had nothing to lose. I was wrong.

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I was still unsaved at this point. My heart was wicked. I was trying Jesus on, like I would a coat, before making a purchase. Bob was excited. He wanted to take me to his house to report that I was saved. He wanted me to celebrate with his family. I declined, I felt somber. I was in no mood to party. The Holy Spirit was dealing with me, so, I returned to my apartment. I needed to spend time alone in contemplation.

That night, in my living room, I received Jesus Christ as my Lord and Savior. I confessed my sins before God. I was specific with Him. I admitted my pride and weaknesses, I spoke about my fears, I laid out everything I could think of that stood between God and I. I also mentioned my belief that the Bible is true and proclaimed Jesus to be the Son of God. Furthermore, I professed that He died, was buried and rose again. Finally, I affirmed that my life was His to do with as He pleased. I was ready for His control. I wanted to die to self. And; I did. I became a new creature that night. My life became centered in learning to love, serve and obey my new Master. I was ready for Him to mold me no matter what it took. He has,

The Creator "took the heart of stone out of my flesh and gave me a heart of flesh." I had new desires. God gave them to me. They began to have an immediate effect on my life. Soon I was to find it drastically changed.

A night or two later I met with some friends. They wanted to party. They were providing all the methamphetamine, [http:// betweenthebars.org/blogs/520](http://betweenthebars.org/blogs/520)

booze and companionship. It was arranged for me to spend the time with a woman who desired me. It was a disaster for them and confirmation to me that something had changed. I did take a little meth. I quickly stopped. I kept thinking and talking about God. I brought a Bible with me. When it came time to settle in for the night, I refused the woman's advances and sat up to read scripture. I never touched another illegal drug.

I rarely used prior to that evening but the fact that I shunned the drug totally demonstrated something was happening inside of me. Bigger still was my resistance to the sex. Truly God was doing a new work within me. I decided that night that I would abstain from dating from that point on. I had no clue how to do so without falling into sin. Pornography was eliminated from my life shortly thereafter. I was transformed by the Holy Spirit. God was cleaning up my life. I was overjoyed. In a short time I would also know pain.

My friends could clearly see something had changed. I was responding to situations in ways they were unable to predict. Soon my closest partners faded out of my life. Several of them visited me in my apartment and saw my Bibles sitting out. They asked me if I really had God. I said yes. They responded by saying: "then you don't need us anymore." They walked out and I never saw them again.

Another friend got angry because I destroyed
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all the pornography I found in my home. Every file, folder or book was trashed. He indignantly stated I could have at least sold it. I refused to lead others into that sinful trap anymore. He too, ended up departing.

In my new zeal, I was convicted of lying. God clearly wanted me to live honestly. My business associate who helped me generate a lot of income, wanted no more to do with me because of it. I explained that I would no longer lie for him. I would deal honestly with clients or not at all. He chose to sever our working relationship. Soon I was totally alienated from all my old friends.

Within a year and a half I lost everything I had, including my freedom. Nothing I lost comes close to the treasures God gave me. I am at peace with my Creator and with myself. The Master's hand is upon my life. I know my destiny is secure. I have a home in heaven.

In the meantime my life has purpose and direction. I serve Jesus Christ as His ambassador. The work is demanding. It is both challenging and rewarding. I never knew life on earth could be so full, or so blessed. I write this from a prison cell. Today I can say: I am freer and more loved than I ever believed possible. There truly is victory in Jesus. Salvation comes from God.

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