Jim's Testimony: Oh But for the Trees

Forward

I remember a day way back in the 1970s when our family was riding in the car on the way to a weeklong summer vacation in Washington, D.C. On this lovely summer day, my father was driving, and I was riding in the back seat of our Ford Galaxy wagon. We had a long conversation about how various mechanical things worked. Since my father was a high school science teacher, he knew a lot about things that interested me. His explanation was always preceded by just one simple word from me: "Why." I remember that after at least an hour of this discussion, my father started to become agitated as he would explain something, then I would ask "why" again. This led to an endless conversation spiral that my father soon terminated!

I began to understand that without making some rather basic assumptions of truth, nothing in the world was possible to explain. Consider this the next time you try to explain to your child why an apple came from an apple tree or why up is the opposite of down!

During my studies in mechanical engineering at Western Michigan University, I frequently encountered many concepts that initially baffled me. I spent countless hours studying the textbooks and attempting to solve the example problems to understand the concept being taught by my professors. One of the fundamental differences between what I studied in engineering school and what I learned in church was that I initially accepted the engineering concepts as accurate. When I first sat down in the classroom in front of my highly educated professors, only later on did I set out to prove my initial assumption of truth regarding what I was being taught. This was not the case with my beliefs in God. I approached my religion on the basis that even if God existed, He was under the burden to show Himself and prove it to me with no effort on my part!

Later, I set out to study the validity of God and the Bible. During this time, I came across a Bible verse that, in retrospect, I consider paramount for readers of this testimony who are seeking God for themselves. Just like I did in engineering school, I decided to accept the fundamental premise that this particular verse was true. Then, I proceeded to further prove this assumption. After I had done that over several months, I concluded that my assumption of truth was indeed correct.

I ask the reader to read the following Bible verse and accept the basic premise that it is true. The verse is in the Apostle Paul's Second Letter to the Corinthians:

Study Notes for the Sunday Mass Published by Christians for Christ Ministries. We are a non-denominational Christian ministry that seeks to encourage and facilitate Christians in studying the Holy Scriptures. **"For there is one God and one mediator between God and mankind, the man Christ Jesus."** 1 Timothy 2:5

> ˝**But even if our gospel is veiled, it is veiled to those who are perishing, whose minds the god of this age has blinded, who do not believe, lest the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ, who is the image of God, should shine on them."**
> **II Corinthians 4:3-4**

Have you ever been deceived? Has anyone ever pulled a fast one on you?

The basic premise of the passage is that an evil spiritual leader has the ability and has exercised this power to blind the minds of people whose souls will eventually perish because they do not believe the Gospel of Jesus Christ. This concept of good and evil is a pervasive concept throughout the Bible. The Bible records that the name of the spiritual leader of the evil forces is Satan, also known in this verse above as "the god of this age."

This takes me back to my spiritual journey that began in the spring of 1998. Even though I thought that I was a Christian, I rarely read the Bible. Even when I did, I was incapable of understanding it. My church told me what to believe in terms of religion. Because of this, my relationship with God was very impersonal. I viewed the people who showed personal love for Jesus as hypocrites and religious zealots! This is how the spiritual leaders in Jesus' time viewed Him!

I pray that through the reading of this testimony you will develop the spiritual vision to allow you to see the forest but for the trees.

Jim

Part One

In the Forest

I found myself single in my middle thirties, just another member of the human rat race. I had a good job as an engineer at Ford, excellent health and a very good life. I need to mention one more thing – I wanted revenge for some folks that had harmed me in the past.

In those days my heart and soul were not in a lot of things that

I did. I did not look at life as a blessing, rather I did things

pretty much just for me.

I was very selfish. This had led to the breakup with my girl-

friend Jeanie many years before. After that,

I focused on worldly things.

I began windsurfing, and traveled around the world to have fun.

I went to Hood River Oregon and all over the US to windsurf.

I went to Hawaii and to the Dominican Republic.

I went to Barbados, Martinique and Cancun.

- bought a boat and learned to water ski.

- learned to snow ski, and snowboard.

- visited most of the major ski resorts in the US.

- started lifting weights.

- learned to fly and bought my own airplane.

- went to church on Sundays, because I felt an obligation. When

- left the service, many times

- felt very good inside, like

- had done something for God, that I had earned His favor. But,

- drank lots of beer and developed an affinity for dirty movies.

- strived for success at Ford, and enrolled at the University of

Detroit – Mercy to earn my MBA. My heart was in the world.

- I was religious.

- I was not a bad person.

- I never hurt anyone.

- I went to church every Sunday. One more little thing:

- I didn't realize that I was lost living a worldly life and on the road to Hell.

There seemed to be a common theme in my life – **"I"** am certain of that! Let's go back a few years to see how I got into this position.

In the Beginning

I was born into a family that provided me with a very blessed life! My parents were hard working schoolteachers in western Michigan who also owned a family farm. They loved and provided very well for me and my five brothers and sisters. They even paid my way through college. My parents looked after my every need. I enjoyed learning how to work on the farm, and loved the county life.

I was raised in the Roman Catholic Church. Both of my parents were also raised there. At an early age I attended church religiously. Right from the start I did not like the Catechism classes. When I was unable to avoid attending the class, the Catechism teachers tried to drum their doctrine into my mind. But for some reason my mind simply did not allow them to do this and their words fell on deaf ears! This made my Catechism teachers angry. They taught a method of reaching up to God through a complex system of good works, church attendance, and sacraments. Their methods were very authoritarian, and it was clear that they did not enjoy what they were doing. It was as if they were robotically following a rigid script.

Grade School Years

During my grade school years in the local public school, I was a pretty normal child. I enjoyed playing outdoor sports and began writing stories about a couple of characters I called the City Mouse and the Country Mouse. I liked letting my mind wander and pretended that I was one of these characters! I got a lot of time for that to happen in church each week and at Catechism. The other kids in my class used to love to hear me read these stories.

Something came along that made my story writing stop, never to resume. The City Mouse and Country Mouse were lost forever! What, or rather, who could cause such a sudden change in my life? I was not a bad person. I never hurt anyone. I went to church every Sunday.

Beginning in the fourth grade things began to change at my school rather suddenly. Although I did not think that I was a bad boy, it seemed that my teachers did. This was especially true of my fourth grade homeroom teacher Mr. Williams. This teacher began to use all kinds of creative techniques to break my spirit. Although I do not think that this was his intent, this was the effect that it had on me. I began to think that I was a very bad child! This was back in the days of corporal punishment and small indiscretions were met with terrible public punishments. Often I was forced to stand on my tiptoes and hold me hands on a line across the chalkboard, which was barely within reach. After several minutes, I would begin to get tired and my hands would begin to drop below the line. Under the supervision of my teacher, this would be met with further punishments, like public spankings or being forced to write sentences with degrading phrases like "I am a monkey." He would assign this simply by writing the word "monkey" on the board with a name next to it and a number indicating how many times this would have to be written. Then we would write these sentences in chalk on the board. These punishments were dished out on kids that exhibited outgoing behavior and were done in front of everyone as an example to the other children. The quiet kids that just went along with things, and all of the girls, avoided these punishments.

The torment and humiliation by Mr. Williams went on for a full year, and other teachers like Mr. Sanders continued for another two years. During this three year period I was taught that I was a terrible child. During this time I learned to hate myself. And it seemed that when I went to church things were not much better since they taught me that I was a good person only if I was perfectly nice and did good deeds to make me righteous.

I am certain that these teachers felt that they were helping me. I am also certain that they were probably treated the same way as children. But how could I ever forgive what these terrible people had done to me? Who would even believe me, since by then I really knew that I really was a terrible person?

I remember that there was a man there that was the assistant elementary school principle. This man seemed responsible for much of the chaos. One of his first actions was to paint a yellow line down the hallway. Any kid caught crossing that yellow line would meet tremendous punishment. Another step that he took was to impose speed limits on walking. If you walked too fast you were met with immediate punishment. There were endless rules for everything. When I returned to my homeroom, I was met with additional torture from Mr. Williams! What was worse was it seemed that the teachers would caucus about us because we were such "bad kids." And to top it off, when word got back to my parents that I was a "bad kid" in school I was met with additional punishment at home.

I never really tried to tell my parents about what was occurring, since I thought that they would not believe me. When I finally did attempt to tell them, they listened in unbelief. This resulted in a lack of respect for my parents and others in positions of authority. Then I would go back to Catechism and hear people in positions of authority speaking lies. When I went to church on Sunday and get further confused by the ceremony whereby I was supposed to better myself with God by sitting in a church pew. I knew that I was a loser so sitting in church did not make things any better for me. I was caught in an endless cycle of pain from which there seemed no way of escape!

There was one factor that made my experiences more difficult during my middle school years. This was that my brother and I watched each other going through the same troubles. When one of us was suffering, due to the protective nature of being a sibling, both of us would suffer! So we both had things doubly bad! Both of us hated Catechism, but my brother was stronger at going along with the program, so he got in less trouble during it than I did. It is difficult for me to relate the extent to which my brother and I were harmed by the treatment that we received in school and Catechism.

During the sixth grade I began to see a light at the end of the tunnel since Junior High was approaching. My life became very difficult during these years but began to return to "normal" towards Junior High. Whereas my elementary school should have prepared me to meet the challenges of Junior High, I entered this phase of my life traumatized.

I was not a bad person. I never hurt anyone. I went to church every Sunday.

Junior High

In Junior High, my experiences at church further validated my beliefs that I was a loser. This was because everything that I was taught there revolved around things that I HAD to do. Somehow I managed to do all of the sacraments and the other things that the church said would bring me to Heaven later on when I died. I did the religious "works" for the sake of pleasing my Catechism teachers and my parents. I tried as hard as I could to meet their religious standards to become a good person, but no matter how hard I tried I always came up short!

I found myself absolutely dreading the weekly Catechism classes. The material was boring, the teachers were mean, and I felt absolutely no love from these people! Many times the teachers removed me from the class because I did not go along with their program. By that time I knew that I was a terrible person! This reminded me of the treatment that I had received back in grade school from Mr. Williams and the others. I filed away in my mind a long list of grievances against these terrible teachers and principals! Someday I knew that I would get even with them!

I found out later that my Catechism teachers were teaching religion rather than Christianity which is not a religion but is instead a personal relationship with Jesus Christ.

High School

My experiences in high school were much better than what had happened during my earlier years. I still knew that I was a terrible person and not worthy of anyone's affection, but I had begun to realize that I could make up for this by clowning around. I started having fun by behaving very crazy, to get the attention that I greatly longed for. Attention that I needed to validate myself, to make me feel I was really an OK person. I longed for someone to sit me down and help me to heal from all of the things that had happened to me over the years in that useless middle school!

Along came my band teacher Mr. Wheeler. I began to experience great joy in aggravating this particular teacher! I pulled all kind of jokes on him. I remember one prank especially well. I knew that when our concert band class was over, Mr. Wheeler would lock the room and go to lunch. So I proceeded to make a slight modification to the door jam on the rear door of the room. I simply turned the lock plate backwards and upside down. Because the hole for the striker was offset, the door latch had nothing to engage into. So if the door were closed it would not latch. My friend and I waited until class was over, and then watched from down the hall as Mr. Wheeler attempted to slam the door. When he slammed it, it bounced right back open! It was hilarious! Mr. Wheeler didn't think so. There was never too much proof of who actually did these things. But both of us knew.

After a few years of this, Mr. Wheeler quit teaching. I know that I was at least partially to blame for this.

College and Beyond

During engineering school at Western Michigan University, I met Jeanie who was studying at Southwestern Michigan College to become a nurse. I accepted a job with Ford in Dearborn, Michigan as a product design engineer. My girlfriend Jeanie stayed behind to finish up school. We attended Mass together on Sunday since I traveled home to visit her every weekend. Having been raised on a farm in the country I was not into the big-city life. So I worked Monday through Friday and escaped on weekends back to my parent's farm and my girlfriend. My heart was just not in the hectic life that I was living!

No Report Card on My Life!

My life went along well, but I had a void in my heart. This is rather hard for me to describe. Nothing major happened in my life that caused me to reflect on how I was living. I never had one of those life-changing moments you hear about from others that went through hard times, like having someone close to them die or having a heart attack themselves. I remember back when I was in school that I would receive a grade report every semester. Later on at Ford I received a performance review every year. But in my personal life, I never received any kind of report card at

all. It would have been possible for me to live my entire life in an extremely unsatisfactory manner, die, and not even know the score.

I always hoped that somehow God would just sit me down partway through my life, and then I could be given a chance to fix things before I went too far down the turnpike of life. I knew that I had not lived my life for God, and that I had made many bad decisions. There was a void in my heart. I deeply wanted a loving, all-powerful God to let me appear before Him like on the popular 1970's television show "This is Your Life" and tell me something like as follows.

> "This is your life Jim. I have called you here to give you a chance to set your life back on track – to tell you where you have done good and bad in your life. You have exactly 37 years, 7 months, and 4 days left to live. I love you Jim and want the very best for you. This is the story of your life."
> Imagine then, that this loving and perfectly just Spirit told me what I was doing that was right and wrong, and gave me a plan to fix things to His satisfaction. Then I would have the remaining portion of my life to live according to what He wanted me to do! Oh how I longed for that! Nothing like this ever happened. I watched several people near to me suffer divorces and mid-life crises, including a male friend of mine that left his wife and moved in with a man. I began to feel like I was wasting my life away. Years and years went by…….

I was a good person.

I went to church on Sunday.

I never killed anyone.

I did not steal.

I helped my parents on the farm.

I worked hard at my job.

I lived my life and didn't harm anybody.

Revenge

Back in my middle thirties where this story began, I was looking to blame some people from my past for the problems that I was experiencing. Specifically, I blamed my elementary teacher Mr. Williams. I starting having thoughts and even went so far as to mentally plan taking revenge for what Mr. Williams had put me through back in fourth grade. I began to think about how I could even the score with him, to get even for what he had put me through. Even though these violent thoughts never went beyond the fantasy stage, it was apparent that I had deep-seated anger against this man. I was not a bad person. I never hurt anyone. I went to church every Sunday.

And yet now Mr. Williams and all of the other teachers and principals are forgiven, forever. How can that be? I wish them nothing but the very best. What happened to make me change my mind?

This was my state of mind when my brother starting making some changes in his life.

Brother Where Art Thou?

Before I tell the story about my brother, I need to state that he was the one that was instrumental in helping me to set my life back on track. It was through the struggles in his life that helped to guide me towards the truth. I am deeply indebted to him!

My brother was always an extremely hard worker – a workaholic really. He never really had any

hobbies – his work was his life. Due to this, he began to seek methods of taking relieving some stress in his life. He was a very religious man back in 1994. He went to church every Sunday and often attended weekday church services at the local Catholic Church. At this time, I was living with him in Ann Arbor, Michigan when some of his new friends started coming around his house. My brother was living a rather extravagant life and bought a fancy new Mercedes convertible. In the fall of that year he told me that he wanted his freedom so I moved out of his house. I found a place in Royal Oak, Michigan and moved away. This led to a string of events which resulted in him selling his home and moving to California. A few months after that, he moved to south Florida.

One evening in early 1997, my brother was traveling from Florida to Michigan for a visit. He was driving his new Mercedes in downtown Atlanta on northbound I-75 when a very strange thing happened. His steering wheel suddenly slipped from his hands and his car changed over one lane to the left. He told me that he was very surprised by what happened, but immediately after this there was a stopped car with no lights on in the lane that he had just vacated. The cars behind him slammed into the car, and he dialed 911 and continued on his way. He was saved from certain death or serious injury due to this miracle!

Have you ever had any strange events like this happen to you? In my case, this event made me reflect on my life. Maybe there were other forces at work?

My brother returned to Michigan that summer and spent time back home on my parent's farm; lounging, recovering and far away from the pressures of his work. Later he returned to work and moved into my condo in Royal Oak. Gradually he began to stop his party lifestyle and turned his life around.

What caused my brother to begin to make these changes in his life? We found out together that we had been deceived. But how were we deceived? We were not bad people. We never hurt anyone. We went to church every Sunday.

I Was the Master of My Life, Right?

I just knew that I was "better" than my brother. I did not use drugs, ever, not even once. I was in control of my life. Even though I didn't have a grand vision of what I should accomplish in my life, I still felt like I was in control. Why couldn't other folks get things figured out? Still, there was this nagging in my heart. Maybe I was not in such good control of my life as I thought.

I always thought then when a person died, God would judge them based upon their good works outweighing their bad works. I found out later, that this was incorrect. My brother was deceived in that he thought he was doing OK by dabbling in the fast lane and living a worldly life so long as he went to church on Sunday. He also thought that he would be granted entrance into Heaven because of faithfulness in going to church. I believed the same thing – that even with all the bad things in our lives, our good works evened out the score with God.

Brother to the Rescue

In early 1999 my brother approached me with some interesting material that he found on the web. He emailed me the link to the web site, and I quickly read the material. The web page was: http://www.cuttingedge.org/salvation.html. I carefully studied the information that they presented on their web page entitled "Salvation" and was very intrigued by it. My opinion of the rest of the site was that it was a bit far "right." But at that time, I was pretty far right also! In fact, I attended meetings of a gun-toting people's rights group called Justice Pro Se of Michigan. So, I read and studied the site very carefully! This far out stuff was right up my alley.

I was very puzzled by the information on the website, and began searching for everything that I could read about salvation. Shortly thereafter, my brother came to me and said that he had accepted Jesus as his Lord and Savior and had been "born again." I was confused. I thought that only "good" people were guaranteed entrance into Heaven, that it was something that we earned. I wondered how my brother, a man who still occasionally dabbled in the party scene, could be "born again." I started searching for the truth. I found more information about Jesus on the Internet. I bought a dusty old Bible at a used bookstore on Woodward Avenue in Royal Oak. Here is some of what I found in my search.

"For all have sinned and come short of the glory of God." Romans 3:23

I always knew that I was a sinner, but I thought that due to my good works and church attendance, God would just kind of overlook my sin. I thought that what was really important was how I treated people – the Golden Rule.

I wondered how I was standing in terms of my self-imposed standards of righteousness. What was troubling me was that my church attendance had started to become more infrequent. And I knew that I was very selfish and did not treat people as well as I should. Truly, I did not do very many good works for anyone. On this basis I knew that I according to my own standards I was doomed! I began to wonder where I stood according to God's standard.

Then I came across another passage:

"For the wages of sin is death but the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord." Romans 6:23

It started to become very clear to me that without some other method of getting rid of my sin, when I died I was going to be left with it. I asked myself, if God is Holy, which means separate, or apart from sin, how can I enter into His presence in Heaven when I die? For how could a perfectly just God overlook my sin? If He let just a little bit of sin into Heaven, would that be perfect justice?

I came across a story later on that helped me to understand the concept of justice. Let's say a person committed a terrible crime, and went before a judge saying that they were sorry, and would never do it again. Would justice be done if the judge simply let them go free? No! Sin demands punishment, and I knew that I was guilty!

I continued seeking and came across more verses in my old black King James Bible.

"Jesus answered, "I am the way and the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through Me." John 14:6

"Jesus answered and said to him, "Most assuredly, I say to you, unless one is **born again**, he cannot see the kingdom of God." John 3:3

"Assuredly, I say unto you, unless you are **converted** and become as little children, you will by no means enter the kingdom of Heaven." Matthew 18:3

There was that term again – Born Again! Converted? Was I born again? Converted? I purchased and read the book The Case for Christ by Lee Strobel. After that, once again I opened my Holy Bible and read both the Gospels of Mark and John. I started to understand that I had been deceived by Satan – the god of this age, the master of deception. I was deceived into believing that in order to go to Heaven, I had to earn my way there. Earn it by going to church, doing good deeds, by becoming righteous. I knew FULL WELL that I was not "born again." In fact, the Bible told me so!

"Examine yourselves as to whether you are in the faith. Test yourselves. Do you not know yourselves, that Jesus Christ is in you? – unless indeed you are disqualified. But I trust that you will know that we are not disqualified." II Corinthians 13:5-6

Was I "born again," or "converted"? My parents cautioned me about not judging people. On the other hand, the Bible said that we needed to judge ourselves – our eternal destiny was at stake here. Was I "born again"? No, I was not. Was I really blinded to the truth in the Bible? I suspected that I was, since ever since I was a child in church, none of it ever made any sense to me. In fact, reading it made me angry! I came across the following verse in the Bible that made this clear to me.

"And even if our gospel is veiled, it is veiled to those who are perishing. The god of this age has **blinded** the minds of unbelievers, so that they cannot see the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ, who is the image of God. For we do not preach ourselves, but Jesus Christ as Lord, and ourselves as your servants for Jesus' sake. For God, who said, "Let light shine out of darkness," made his light shine in our hearts to give us the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Christ." II Corinthians 4:3-6

Slowly I began to understand, and my eyes began to open. I started to understand the excitement that I saw in my brother. Shortly thereafter, my sister Kathie called and said that she had

undergone a change in her life. She told me that she had prayed to accept Jesus as her personal Savior and Lord. I wanted what my brother and sister had! I was not sure how to get it though. I kept studying and reading and asking questions. I wanted this faith that they were talking about.

I found a verse that said "Faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the word of God." (Romans 10:17). I found more information in my Bible:

"…that if you confess with your mouth the Lord Jesus and believe in your heart that God has raised Him from the dead, you will be saved. For with the heart one believes unto righteousness, and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation. For the Scripture says, "Whoever believes on Him will not be put to shame." For there is no distinction between Jew and Greek, for the same Lord over all is rich to all who call upon Him. For "whoever calls on the name of the LORD shall be saved." Romans 10:9-13

Doubts and Orthodox Jews

After reading and studying all of that Biblical material over and over again, you would think that I would begin to become enlightened. Instead, the opposite happened and I began to have doubts that God even existed! I began to wonder if it was like one of my employees told me, that God was just a fairy tale.

Looking back to the spring of 1998, I had long since left Ford. I had just left my job as an engineer at an automotive plastics supplier and joined my brother's software consulting company. This company was so small that one of my first tasks was to locate some office space for him. I was fortunate to find a small office in Southfield, Michigan, which is home to many Jewish people. During my drives to and from this office I would see Jewish people walking with their funny hats and long coats. These were of the orthodox variety, which wore plain black and white clothes and had long beards.

Then it finally hit me. These were the same Jews that my Bible was written about! This was validation that there was something real to all of this. Here thousands of years later I doubted that

they existed, and yet there they were walking directly beside me on Ten Mile Road in Southfield, Michigan!

Was God Calling to Me?

I began to believe that God might be real. It was at this point that I decided that if God was real, He was going to have to reveal Himself to me. I said a heart-felt prayer, saying "God, how have You revealed yourself to me in the past? I need this answer Lord to believe that You are real." Very shortly thereafter, memories of strange things that had happened to me over the years returned.

"But without faith it is impossible to please Him, for he who comes to God must believe that He is, and that He is a rewarder of those who diligently seek Him." Hebrews 11:6

In the spring of 1999, I traveled to Beaver Island with my now Bible toting brother. It was there that I found time to reflect on everything that was going on in my life. During and after this island getaway, God revealed to me four specific cases where he had shown himself to me. One of those is too private to share. Let me tell you that this first very private revelation all by itself was enough to convince me that God existed! Someday I may share that, but for now I would have to shoot you if I told you! We wouldn't want that, so here are the other stories in which God directly showed me that He was real in my life.

In the first story I had lost a very valuable part on my car. This was during a very stressful time in my life in which I was attending college at WMU in 1983. This tiny part was a spring from inside the car stereo, my link to enjoyment and an escape from the cruel reality of engineering school. The car was a 1977 Ford Granada that we had just bought from my aunt. While attempting to repair this stereo inside the car, an extremely small spring went flying across the cluttered farm building that I was working in. I was heartbroken, since this was my only time that I had time to fix the stereo, and this part was so small and unique that there was zero chance of getting the nice Clarion brand stereo working again. So, I put my hands together and prayed "God, I am having a hard time in my life. I am struggling in school. Please show me where to locate this spring." I was near tears during this prayer. Immediately, I was compelled to leave the car and go to a certain spot in the BACK seat. Now, this was the very LAST place that I would have looked, since I knew the spring had flown

across the vast wasteland of my dad's farm building. My eyes were led to the exact spot where that spring was lying. I thanked God for the miracle. I proceeded to install the spring on the next try. The stereo worked great, at least until three years later when my little brother crashed into another car that was stopped inspecting a lost horse along the street!

In the second story I almost did something very, very dumb. It was sometime around mid-1996. I was going to work on my airplane; a Cessna 172 that I had just purchased. Remember, I said that I have lived a very blessed life! It had a fuel drain fitting on the left fuel tank that was stuck inside the threaded hole. I thought that I would just take my electric heat gun and apply a small amount of heat to loosen the fitting. I was in my garage in Royal Oak, getting ready to head out there to the airport where the plane was. I wanted to make sure the gun was working, so I plugged it in and heard the familiar fan sound, and a very hot stream of air coming out. In the past I had used this very heat gun and accidentally started fires due to the extreme heat it produced. In fact, the outside of the heat gun had already been melted. It was working just fine. All of a sudden, the heat gun flew out of my hands, across the room, and onto the concrete floor of the garage. I just knew that when I plugged it back in that it would be dead. I did, and it was. I read the label on the side of the gun. It said, "Red Devil." You see, I have always believed in God. I just doubted Him at times. And I knew that this was a miracle. So, I prayed and thanked Him right then. I don't think that I went out to the airport that night!

In the third story I was preparing to fly my Cessna 172 from New Hudson, Michigan to St. Louis, Missouri to visit a Ford Motor Company assembly plant. This was sometime around the summer of 1997 while I was working as a product engineer at an automotive plastics company. Back in those days before the Word Trade Center attack, I was allowed to fly my airplane during the course of my business as an engineer. I recently had obtained my instrument rating and was still learning about flying in bad weather. I packed my clothes and checked the weather before leaving my home in Royal Oak and driving out to the airport. It was the classic dark and stormy night with light rain falling, and the weather was worse in St. Louis with large areas of thunderstorms. I had a very uneasy feeling about this trip, but I really needed to go to St. Louis to check on the launch of the new power steering reservoir that I had designed for the new Ford F250/F350 truck. A thought ran through my head as I was packing the plane and getting ready to taxi to the fuel pump that I should pray. I remember that I prayed asking for a sign on whether I should go. As I taxied the plane to the fuel pump, all the instrument panel lights suddenly burned out and the panel was completely dark except for the lighting inside a couple of the radios. Once again, I recognized the sign from God and thanked Him right then! I am certain that had I undertaken this flight that I would have flown into thunderstorms and become another aviation statistic.

The common theme that runs throughout these stories is divine protection from God. I found a verse in the Bible that explained this. In this verse, the author of the book of Hebrews was discussing angels.

"Are they not all ministering spirits sent forth to minister for those who will inherit salvation?" Hebrews 1:14

This simple verse had momentous implications to me. If God had indeed utilized guardian angels to protect me, this verse stated that I would inherit salvation. And I was learning that the "salvation" came through faith in Jesus, and this meant an eternity in Heaven with God.

The verse on angels made me reflect on other people whom I knew had experiences with divine intervention in their lives. I knew of two people that had such an experience. The first was my brother while he was driving in Atlanta, and he was a born-again Christian. The second was my former girlfriend Jeanie. Looking back to 1986 her story is as follows.

Seeking Good Works

During this time in my life, I began to seek opportunities for helping other people. Since I owned an airplane at the time I volunteered for an organization called AirLifeline Midwest. This organization provided a service to link qualified pilots with their own aircraft with medical patients requiring transportation to medical facilities. The patients need for transportation was predicated on the basis of financial need. I found out that when people develop a long-term illness, many deplete their financial resources while dealing with the disease. Additionally, many desperately ill patients desired advanced medical techniques available in locations far away from their homes.

Over the course of the next several years, I was fortunate to be able to provide many flights to patients and their family members all over the Midwest and Great Lakes. I began to feel a sense of fulfillment in serving others. This was occurring at the same time that I was learning about God's plan of salvation for mankind.

But some things were troubling me about owning an airplane. I found that many people identified me with the airplane, or with my windsurfing, or other things that I did. In a way I appreciated being the worldly superstar, the pilot of a fast airplane, traveling the country to windsurf. But on the other hand, I began to realize that I did not want to be remembered for these worldly things.

Would my good works get me into Heaven? I was not a bad person. I never hurt anyone. I went to church just about every Sunday. One more little thing: I was lost.

What Didn't the Church Tell Me?

I was taught, and always believed that my good works would get me to Heaven. I thought that when I died, God would see if my good works kind of outweighed my bad works, and then he would let me into Heaven. This was what both my church and my parents taught me. When I finally looked in the Bible, the one that many people died to preserve, I found out that my good works by themselves would not get me into Heaven. In thinking that my good works accounted me worthy before God, what I was forgetting was Jesus. Why did Jesus have to come and die if I could earn my way to Heaven? My parents were confused about this too. In the Bible, Isaiah said that "my righteous deeds were as filthy rags before the Lord." (Isaiah 64:6) I also found out that the primary teaching of Islam was judgment on the basis of works.[1]

I looked at more verses in the Bible.

"For by grace are ye saved through faith, and that not of yourselves: [it is] the **gift** of God." Ephesians 2:8-9

"Not by **works** of righteousness which we have done, but according to his mercy he saved us, by the washing of regeneration, and renewing of the Holy Ghost." Titus 3:5

I asked myself this question: If someone offered me a gift, then I went to them before I accepted it

and told them six reasons why I had earned the gift, would this really be a gift? I asked myself, would the person giving the gift be insulted by the inference that I had earned it? Is Salvation a gift? Could I earn it? If so, how was I doing? Was I good enough yet? The authoritative source, the Bible, said that I could not earn it, and did not deserve it.

I kept on studying.

"Behold I stand at the door and knock. If anyone hears my voice and opens the door, I will come in and eat with him, and he with me." Revelation 3:20 (Jesus speaking)

I began to realize that up until the present time I was on the "Jesus Plus Plan." I had a temporal belief in Jesus, a purely intellectual knowledge in contrast to having a heart knowledge of Him. To this lukewarm belief I added good works, going to church, and being a good person. In effect, I was adding to what God had said that I must do to be saved from Hell! Revelation 22:18 was pretty clear that doom awaited anyone that added to the Word of God:

"For I testify to everyone who hears the words of the prophecy of this book: If anyone adds to these things, God will add to him the plagues that are written in this book;" Revelation 22:18

This really made me start to think. The Bible told me that I could not be saved from Hell by doing good works or upholding traditions. If being a good person would not get me to Heaven, was I doomed to Hell even though I still went to Church?

Born Again

It was in the fall of 1999 that I finally realized that Jesus had died for my sins, as a substitute, and that He was the only way to Heaven. Salvation was a gift from God granted once I believed in Jesus.

"Nor is there salvation in any other, for there is no other name under Heaven given among men by which we must be saved." Acts 4:12

"Jesus answered, "I am the way and the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through Me." John 14:6

I remembered what I had read in the Old Testament Bible about the Jews sacrificing lambs during the Passover. It finally hit me that Jesus was the final sacrificial Lamb, the Lamb of God, whose blood was poured out upon the cross at Calvary. Jesus said that I had to open the door – He would knock, but I had to accept and believe upon Him as my personal Lord and Savior.

Up until then, I had "**I**" trouble. I did this to get to Heaven. I did that to become righteous; or my own god. Everything was about me. In fact, I had rejected the Lord Jesus. So I took a step of faith and accepted Jesus as my Savior and Lord of my life.

"Assuredly, I say to you, unless you are converted and become as little children, you will by no means enter the kingdom of heaven." Matthew 18:3

I finally figured out that it just came down to FAITH in Jesus – the Jesus of the Bible! It began to be very clear to me that I needed to trust in what Jesus did on the cross for me NOW, before I died. I believed that Jesus died for my sins, was raised by God, and was in Heaven. I believed everything in the Apostles Creed that I prayed out loud every Sunday. But I just knew that I had never actually trusted in the Lord Jesus ALONE to save me.

What Being Born Again Meant to Me

After I made the commitment to accept Jesus as my Savior and Lord, I began to slowly yield my will to Him. I began praying to God every day and throughout the day. I came to realize that God would accept even a sinner like me through the sacrifice that Jesus made for me. I began to place my faith

in what God was doing in my life and others around me, rather than what I was doing. Even though I had always respected the Bible, I began to read it daily, especially the gospels of John and Mark. I stopped praying repetitive prayers, as was clearly opposed by Jesus on the Sermon on the Mount recorded in Matthew 6:7. God began to show me through His word to yield my will to others rather than my selfish, worldly interests. I began looking for others that believed in the saving power of Jesus as I did.

After this I began a thorough search for a church that believed as I did; in the truth of God's word found in the Bible. I attended various churches over a period of six months or so and finally selected a non-denominational Christian Church. I liked this church because even though I was a Catholic, I was accepted right away. People were nice to me, and I found many other Roman Catholics were there!

My Performance Review from God

After this, I realized that the fact that I accepted Jesus as my Savior yielded a kind of ongoing "performance review" with God, through the Holy Spirit. This is very hard for me to put into words. Almost at once I lost the very sad feeling that I had, that my life was a waste, that it had been in vain. Once I began yielding to the will of God, I realized that Jesus died for my sins ONCE, and that the Bible said He was coming back to the earth again in the very same way in which He left. I realized that I had been deceived by the trappings of RELIGION.

In my mind not even my little brother had told me the truth about God and Jesus, although he had known it since he was 16 years old. In fact, after he had read this testimony letter, he told me that he had indeed told me about Jesus Christ. Yet somehow I did not listen.

The Bible says in Galatians 4:16 "**Have I now become your enemy by telling you the truth?**" He did tell me – even though he knew that I would get mad. I would rather that someone be angry with me in the short term, than to have them hear the following verse which Jesus said as a warning to RELIGIOUS people, like I used to be.

"Not everyone who says to Me, 'Lord, Lord,' shall enter the kingdom of Heaven, but he who does the will of My Father in Heaven. Many will say to me in that day 'Lord, have we not prophesied in Your name, cast out demons in Your name, and done many wonders in Your name?' And then I will declare to them 'I never knew you; depart from Me, you who practice lawlessness!'" Matthew 7: 21-23

Was I Really Better Than my Brother?

Was I really better than my brother? No! The reason that I thought that I was better than my brother was what God calls pride. God hates pride (Mark 7:22), and I had major dose of it! I developed this pride by going to church, by doing good works for the flying charity, and by trying to earn my way to Heaven. My pride was one of many sins that I asked the Lord to forgive me of after I came to faith in Jesus Christ.

Before my decision for Jesus, I thought that I had total control of my life, when in fact; I was on the road to Hell! Two years after I accepted Jesus, I recognized that I was relying more upon Jesus as my Savior than as my Lord. I knew from the Bible that the two were inseparable, and that I could not claim the promises of Jesus without yielding my will to him. I realized that my human nature to sin was still very much with me, but that I had Jesus as my ally in fighting the temptation. Without Him I was unable to resist these temptations – I was locked in a constant struggle with sin! It was at this point that I confessed some secret sin in my life to one of the elders of my church. I found victory in accepting Jesus as my Savior, but I had to yield to his authority as Lord.

With Jesus' victory on the cross for all sin, all of us can be victorious! And what's better, we don't have to earn it. We only have to believe that God forgave all of our sins through the death of his Son Jesus. Once this acceptance is made, we are "born again," even if we don't have a spectacular feeling when this happens. In fact, in the third chapter of the Gospel of John, Jesus said that we won't have a feeling when it happens, since it is not something that WE are doing, rather the act of the spiritual birth is done by God. Many people come to faith in Jesus and then pray a simple prayer like is attached to the end of this testimony.

Forgiveness

At this point in my life I was able to forgive all of the people that had harmed me over the years. I forgave Mr. Williams along with the other teachers in my middle school. The act of forgiving these people provided a great sense of freedom for me, and a happy retirement for Mr. Williams!
Post Script: As of 2024 he is suffering with dementia. May the Lord have mercy on him and reach him through my Savior Jesus.

What about Mr. Wheeler? Would he ever forgive me for what I put him through? Whatever became of him? I found out that when he left his teaching job at my high school, he had married a lady named Linda from my hometown. Later, he enrolled and completed Bible School, then became an associate pastor at a Bible believing church in Indiana. He has a large family and is doing very well.

I was fortunate to be able to located Mr. Wheeler in the summer of 2000. I am very sorry about the way that I treated him, and he has forgiven me. You may find this hard to believe, but Mr. Wheeler and I are now friends. I have been blessed with several opportunities to visit him since I came to faith in Jesus. Through Mr. Wheeler I have been very fortunate to meet many of his wife's relatives from my hometown.

If I can locate the other teachers, I am going to send them a copy of this testimony!

How Could I Have Been So Deceived?

How could I have been so deceived as to think that I could earn my way to Heaven? Let's look at some passages which show the facts on this.

"For by grace are ye saved through faith, and that not of yourselves: [it is] the **gift** of God." Ephesians 2:8-9

Study Notes for the Sunday Mass Published by Christians for Christ Ministries. We are a non-denominational Christian ministry that seeks to encourage and facilitate Christians in studying the Holy Scriptures. **"For there is one God and one mediator between God and mankind, the man Christ Jesus."** 1 Timothy 2:5

By definition we are saved by grace through faith. The Bible says that if we call upon the name of the Lord (Romans 10:13) then God gives us spiritual discernment, leading to a certainly of Heaven. By definition we are saved by grace through faith**!** That is the only way that we can know that we are! And the act of saving us cannot be earned since Jesus did it on the cross for us. This is explained in the following passages.

"And if by grace, then it is no longer by works; if it were, grace would no longer be grace." Romans 11:6

"I do not set aside the grace of God, for if righteousness could be gained through the law, Christ died for nothing!" Galatians 2:21

"Knowing that a man is not justified by the works of the law but by faith in Jesus Christ, even we have believed in Christ Jesus, that we might be justified by faith in Christ and not by the works of the law; for by the works of the law no flesh shall be justified." Galatians 2:16

"For what does the Scripture say? "Abraham believed God, and it was accounted to him for righteousness." Now to him who works, the wages are not counted as grace but as debt." Romans 4:3-4

Can a Christian presume, or be certain that they are going to Heaven? This is clearly explained in the following verses.

"These things I have written to you who believe in the name of the Son of God, that you may know that you have eternal life, and that you may continue to believe in the name of the Son of God." 1John 5:13

"Most assuredly, I say to you, he who hears My word and believes in Him who sent Me **has** everlasting life, and shall not come into judgment, but has passed from death into life. "John 5:24

I know according to God's word that the only true church is the group of believers known as Christians, the body of Christ. I know that when I die, I will be reunited with Christians from all around the world and from all of the different churches in my hometown, whether Catholic or Protestant. But I also know that I had to answer the knock from Jesus. Mere church attendance did not make me become a Christian. This came through a personal acceptance of Jesus as my Lord and Savior.

Is God Calling You?

Have you recognized and accepted Jesus as your personal Lord and Savior? What this comes down to is your relationship with the person known as Jesus Christ. Why did Jesus have to come and die? The following verse explains what Jesus expects us to do when He calls us.

"Behold, I stand at the door, and knock: if any man hear my voice, and open the door, I will come in to him, and will sup with him, and he with me." Revelation 3:20

When Jesus calls us, He expects us to listen to Him by reading His word in the Bible. Second, He expects us open our hearts and receive Him, which means a surrender of the reliance upon our good deeds or religious works for salvation.

William Faye, a popular evangelist had this to say about the other ways in which people think they are earning their way to Heaven.

"Kind of think of it this way. In my left hand is every religion other than Christianity. And they all make two consistent claims. The first claim they make is that Jesus is not God. The second claim they make is that some effort on your part; could be diet, terrorist acts, good deeds, can get you from earth to Heaven. Now, Christianity, which we will call my other hand, says two opposite things. It says that Jesus is God and that God had to come to us – we can 't get to Him. Know one logical fact; two opposites, both can't be true. Now they both could be wrong, but they both can't be true. I'll admit that if my left hand is true, it doesn't matter which of those religions you are, because they are all saying the same thing. And I'll admit that my faith would be in vain. But I am

wondering if all of them would be as honest to admit that if Christianity is true, that their faith is in vain."[2]

The Bible in the book of James says "faith without works is dead." James 2:17

James (me!!), Chapter 1, verse 1 says "Works without faith is death."

"There is a way that seems right to a man, But its end is the way of death." Proverbs 14:12

You see, our works will never remove the sin from our life. Our works will never erase this debt with God; it was something that only God could do. The Bible was clear that God was the one that was calling me to faith in Him. It was not something that I could earn; it was something that I had to accept. Once I accepted it; I had to let God be the Lord of my life.

"Jesus answered and said to him, "Most assuredly, I say to you, unless one is born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God." John 3:3

In looking at the physical and spiritual births, I could either be born once, and die twice, or born twice, and die once.[3]

"… so Christ was offered once to bear the sins of many." Hebrews 9:28

The Jews, and other "religions," still practice in ways that they believe will make them righteous before God. As a Christian, I know that the only way that I will be declared righteous is through what Jesus Christ did for me by dying on the cross. This free gift of salvation was offered to me, but until I actually accepted it by responding to God's calling placed upon my heart, I was LOST! The fact that I was "born again" did not come automatically through my church attendance. I had to recognize the calling that God has placed upon my heart and accept Jesus as my Lord and Savior.

"By that will we have been sanctified through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once for all. And every priest stands ministering daily and offering repeatedly the same sacrifices, which can never take away sins. But this Man, after He had offered one sacrifice for sins forever, sat down at the right hand of God, from that time waiting till His enemies are made His footstool. For by one offering He has perfected forever those who are being sanctified." Hebrews 10:10-14

Are you being called by God? If you died today, would you go to Heaven? If your answer is yes, then I beg you to honestly ask yourself why would God let you in? If you say something like "because I am a good person, I go to church every Sunday, I have done good things for my family, I have never hurt anyone, etc.," according to God, you would not be allowed into Heaven on the basis of your good works alone. This is what God tells us in His Word, the Bible. Would you like to be absolutely certain of going to Heaven? Are you willing to take that step of faith and accept the free gift?

What if you don't go to church – are you lost forever? NO! David Berkowitz was saved in prison. He used to be a Satan worshiper and mass murderer.[4] One of the criminals on the cross next to Jesus was saved, and he didn't attend even one single church service to earn his way there – he was too busy dying. It is not too late for you. This is a free gift which you cannot earn. All that you have to do is answer the call from God and believe that the blood of Jesus washed away your sins forever.

Frankly, most people just never hear the message of salvation. They never listen, and they never seek. They never get that mid-life "performance review" from God. They just go to their graves simply hoping that everything will be OK with their souls. Or that their religion will save them. Or they die suddenly and just never get around to it. Many plan on "repenting on their death beds" so to speak.

Do not rely on wishing. Don't rely on what just your priest or Catechism teachers have told you. Test everything you are told against the definitive source, which is your Bible and not your feelings. Feelings lie, but God does not. You may feel that you accepted Jesus as your Savior, but do you remember this happening, or have you just always gone to church and thought you were saved? God determined the plan of salvation, not any church or religious institution. Do not assume anything, your eternal soul is far too valuable to entrust it to someone else. Rely upon God to save you.

How important is your eternal soul to you? Our lives are but a vapor and all of us will be gone soon. If you believe that Jesus died for your sins, and recognize that you need to accept Jesus as your

Savior, turn to the end of this testimony to the INVITATION section.

The Teacher that Cared

Since both of my parents were teachers, many times I have heard stories about a certain teacher that positively impacted a person's life. My father had many people approach him over the years telling him that he was this teacher. My father was a very special teacher and I was fortunate to have him teach me many science subjects in my very own high school!

Earlier in my life, another teacher really put her arms around me and gave me a head start. This was my first-grade teacher Mrs. Locke. Mrs. Locke had a reputation for being very stern. This was verified my older brother who had her for his teacher several years before me. But right away she had a way of accepting me, even though I was kind of a hyperactive child. I had a speech problem which made saying words with the letter "R" difficult for me. Oh "Weally" you say! Mrs. Locke showed me great love and allowed me great latitude in my learning. She showed me special attention in teaching difficult concepts. And she allowed me to sit on the heating radiator when I had my work done!

Mrs. Locke had no way of knowing that since she showed me such special love, that this would carry me through some very hard times in elementary school. If it were not for her kindness, I am very certain that things would be much worse in my life. And since I was contemplating taking revenge prior to accepting Jesus, things may have been worse for those that harmed me also.

I was able to tell Mrs. Locke about this during a time when I spoke at a church in Decatur, Michigan. You can listen to what I spoke about by following this link:
Jim Speaking at Decatur First Reformed Church – Christians for Christ Ministries

Post Script: Chris Locke went to be with our Lord and Saviour in November or 2021.

Kettle Point

Since I came to faith in Jesus Christ I have had several milestone events happen in my life. One of those was a trip that I took in the summer of 2000.

It was just after church on a breezy Sunday afternoon when I decided to travel to a place in Canada to do some windsurfing. Kettle Point was a place on the southern end of Lake Huron that was rather famous to windsurfers for having very large waves on windy days. This day was no exception and the waves were forecasted to be ten feet tall! Even though it was not normal for him, my brother decided to ride along to watch. In fact, I can never remember another day that he had gone windsurfing with me.

After the hour and a half journey there, I had an excellent day riding the large, smooth waves in the bay. Just before I was going to stop for the day, I came in for a brief rest. Then I decided to go out for one just more run. My brother was sitting in my truck reading due to the high wind and blowing sand. I had a very uneasy feeling as I was carrying the windsurf board back to the water. I was compelled to pray very hard for God to keep me safe on this final run of the day.

As I proceeded out into the bay where the largest waves were crashing into a bowl-shaped area to the east of the beach, I made a turn on the face of a very large wave. This was like heaven! Suddenly, my sail separated from the mast base on the board that sent my board flying one direction while my sail remained in my hands. Meanwhile the large wave that I had just finishing turning on crashed overtop of me with my sail! I let loose of my sail and soon realized that I was drowning. For a brief instant I hated to let go of my equipment but quickly decided that the equipment was replaceable. Even though I was wearing a short wet suit, I was unable to float in the bubbly water caused by the constant crashing of the waves. I got very tired in my attempts to grab small amounts of air in between the waves. I knew that I was going to die right there, with my precious brother only a half a mile away on the shore. Once again, I began to pray.

I began to visualize my dead body washing up on the beach. This was very real, and is difficult for me to put into words. I visualized my body from a viewpoint some distance away, above me.

As I was fighting for my life in Lake Huron that day, I made the vivid realization that God was in control. He was the Lord of the universe! Somehow during the events of the past several years, I missed that point. While I was drowning, I surrendered my will to God. I accepted that He was the Lord of my life. I had accepted Jesus as my Savior, but I had never really surrendered my will to God as my Lord. This was made clear to me while I was dying that day at Kettle Point.

Somehow, I came to realize that if I pulled on my wet suit, I could create a small air bubble in my chest area that slightly increased my buoyancy. Also, I saw a white flag on a small floating buoy a few yards away. And there were some jet skiers in the area. So somehow, I managed to swim over to the buoy and break the fiberglass rod attaching the flag. This left me with a two-foot-long mast with a flag attached. Between the huge waves I was able to wave the flag. After about five minutes of waving, I had still not moved any distance towards the shore, although my board and sail had long ago washed away. I continued to pray, and as one of the jet skis approached, I was spotted and rescued. I walked back up the beach praising God to tell my brother the amazing story. My equipment washed up on the beach a few minutes later in perfect condition except for the broken mast base.

Later that evening at a restaurant in Sarnia, Ontario I had my first meal as a truly "born again" man. And although I am much more careful while windsurfing, I recognize now that God is in control of my life.

Why Did I Write This?

A few days after Christmas in 2002 a good friend of mine passed away due to a sudden heart attack. Greg Trojan, who was only 48 years old, had a wife and three daughters. This caused me to reflect even further upon my life. I asked myself "What is the purpose of my life?" My answer was, "To serve God and testify what He had done for me." Then I asked myself, is that what I have been doing for the past several years? What areas in my life do I really need to take a look at? Should I be sharing my testimony with more folks, so that they too can be transformed from the selfish person I was, into the more generous Christian that I am now?

Let me relate one final story that my little brother told me just after I came to faith in Jesus. Many

years ago my little brother accepted a challenge in his Bible study class at the Bible church he was attending. Everyone was asked to select the most difficult person that they knew to pray for in accepting Jesus as their Savior. He was asked to pick a person that was so wrapped up in the world that they would require an absolute miracle from God in order to come to faith in Jesus. My little brother selected me and prayed for many years. His prayers were finally answered.

Recently my little brother told me some additional details about this challenge. He told me that he asked himself what kind of Christian I would become if I ever came to faith in Jesus. I am now standing up to my own challenge and trying to become the Christian that God wants me to be by reaching out to other Roman Catholics and people that need to hear the Gospel. None of us should doubt that the saving power of Jesus can transform our lives.

God Bless You!

Invitation

Are you are being called by God to accept Jesus as your personal Lord and Savior? Do you recognize that you are a sinner, and Jesus is the only way to be saved? Are you willing to repent of your sins, and believe that Jesus can save you without your good works? The Bible says that God calls a person to faith in Jesus Christ. You must trust in Jesus' bloody death on the cross for your sins to save you from an eternity in Hell. God determined the method to be saved, not the traditions of man.

My Lord and my God, have mercy upon my soul, a sinner.[1] I believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of the Living God.2 I believe that He died on the cross and shed His precious blood for the forgiveness of all my sins.3 I believe that God raised Jesus from the dead by the power of the Holy Spirit4 and that He sits on the right hand of God at this moment, hearing my confession of sin and this prayer.[5] I open up the door of my heart and I invite You into my heart, Lord Jesus.6 Wash all of my filthy sins away in the precious blood that You shed in my place on the cross at Calvary.7 You will not turn me away, Lord Jesus, You will forgive my sins and save my soul. I know because Your Word, the Bible says so.8 Your Word says that You will turn no one away, and that includes me.9 Therefore, I know that You have heard me, and I know that You have answered me, and I know that I am saved.10 And 1 thank You, Lord Jesus, for saving my soul, and I will show my

thankfulness by doing as You command and sin no more. 11

1. Psa. 51:5, Rom. 3:10-12, 23 2. Matt. 26:63-64, 27:54, Luke 1 :30-33, John 9:35-37, Rom. 1:3-4 3. Acts 4:12, 20:28, Rom. 3:25, / John 1:7, Rev. 5:9 4. Psa. 16:9-10, Matt. 28:5-7, Mark 16:9, John 2:19, 21, 10:17-18, 11:25, Acts 2:24, 3:15, Rom. 8:11, I Cor. 15:3-6 5. Luke 22:69, Acts 2:25-36, Heb. 10:12-13 6. Rom. 8:11, 1 Cor. 3:16, Rev. 3:20 7. Eph. 2:13-22, Heb. 9:22, 13:12, 20-2 1, / John 1:7, Rev. 1:5, 7:14 8. Matt. 26:28, Acts 2:2 1, 4:12, Eph. 1:7, CoI. 1:14 9. Rom. 10:13, Jas. 4:2-3 10. Heb. 11:6 11. John 8:11, 1 Cor. 15:10, Rev. 7:14, 22:14

Footnotes

1. Christian Research and Apologetics Ministry Web Page, March 15, 2003, http://www.carm.org/islam/salvation_by_works.htm

2. "William Faye and Ralph Hodge, "Sharing Jesus Without Fear" video guide Lifeway Press, Nashville, TN, 1997.

3. Warren E. Berkley and Jon W. Quinn, Expository Files 9.12, Word Wide Web, April 17, 2003, http://www.flash.net/~wberkley/efdec02.html#anchor65920
New link as of 5/2025 can be found by searching: Expository Files by Warren E. Berkley and Jon W. Quinn

4. World Wide Web, March 22, 2003, http://www.forgivenforlife.com/.

Dedication

This is dedicated in loving memory of Mr. Greg Trojan, man of God.