

Testimony

Mark Eden Tells His Story

1 John 1:5-10, John 3:16-21

Early Life

I was brought up in a Christian home with a faithful Mother. My Father was not walking with the Lord, but my Mother was the strength of the family through her faith and walk with the Lord.

I had memories of my Mother singing Sunday School songs with me and was convinced that at the early age of five that I had received the Lord Jesus as my Saviour through my Mother. It was this testimony that I had shared to my younger sister when I was age seven and she was age four to prove that I must have been a believer then. She gave her heart to Him that night after I spoke to her. I had lived my entire life with the thought that I was a believer based on this declaration that I received Christ through my Mother's preaching.

I had many struggles in life and always felt inadequate and insecure of my abilities and strengths. I constantly focused on my failures and never on anything else.

I was very involved in my home Assembly in Saint Albans, New York, getting involved in singing and in the Worship meeting each Sunday morning from the age of eighteen. After I began actively participating at the Breaking of Bread service.

It was this same Saint Alban's Christian Assembly, now an all black church, but at age five was fifty percent white and fifty percent black, when I began attending Sunday school. I was accepted there as was my entire family for many years. I was loved by the brethren and encouraged by them for my singing gift, and of sharing the Scriptures or giving out a Hymn or Prayer at the Breaking of Bread meeting, and was encouraged by the brethren because of my devotion to the things of the Lord. I even had opportunities to get involved in Gospel outreach and was taken to Open Air Preaching events on the Streets of New York by a man named "Shea Walker." He took me under his wing and taught me many things, and was a father figure to me before he was taken home to the Lord because of a massive heart attack. It was his faith and Godly example that ministered to me and challenged me to eventually get involved with Prison work and Rescue Mission work, but that came later.

As I grew to maturity, I constantly felt something was wrong in my heart and could not identify what it was, but chalked in up to being a weak Christian. Others had identified this of me in my past as well. I always desired to follow the Lord in my life and was used of the Lord to be a strong influence, testimony and encouragement to my Father and to other members of my immediate family to come back to my home church and make more of a serious commitment to the Lord.

I had suffered through a bad first marriage, divorce, and then moved to California January 22, 1989 just to get away from my past hurts and family ties so I could "grow up" without their help or interference into my problems. This obviously did not work, but as my Father said prior to my leaving New York, running away from New York would not solve my problems. The problems would only follow me there, to which it did.

I suffered from a strong attraction to Alcohol and Pornography which was a family weakness, and there were several family members who were addicted to this on both my Parent's sides.

Christian Ministry

I struggled with loneliness and depression through much of my life, even into my late forties. I got a DUI in April 1990 which caused me to spiral out of control emotionally, because of loneliness and depression, and I constantly doubted my salvation and desired that I would die, many times, thousands of times, contemplated killing myself, even through half of my second marriage.

Throughout this time and even into the years between 1990-1993 I was involved in Preaching the gospel at the Local Rescue Mission in Salinas, California, where I lived for two and half years. My messages were most of the time weak because I suffered from depression, alcohol use, and many times, wanted to take my life.

I was part of a Prison work and we had formed a Singing group 1993-2004, called "Heaven's Gate" until it was found that a certain religious cult that was in the news had this same name, and the name was changed to: "Maximum Security Prison Ministries." I was the Bass singer of the group and during one of our quarterly vocal practices, it was said by a member of the singing group that "the strength of the group is only as strong as its weakest link." I was devastated, and she had no clue how this statement spoke to my heart and conscience. I immediately fell into a deep depression that I could not shake. All I could say to myself was, "that's me, that's me."

Later Life

In 1995 I met my wife Carol and eventually married. We had our ups and downs and fortunately for me, my wife is a strong Christian as well as her parents, and unknown to me, they had been praying for me for years. They had seen the inconsistency in my walk and testimony that just did not seem to "add up" to the things that I said, and they were convinced that I was not a believer.

In the course of time my wife's father fell ill and died, back on May 18, 2008, and we (my wife's family) came together for a memorial service at the grave site of my Father-in-law, family only. I had prayed to God earlier that week that He might take me (kill me) if I can't live the life that He wanted me to for His Glory. I went from contemplating taking my own life to asking God to take me home to Him instead.

On Saturday evening after the memorial service, most of the younger ones were in the living room asleep in their sleeping bags or blankets on the floor, while I was awake on the couch watching TV. I was sitting there when a program called, "The Awakening hour", came on from one of the Christian Channels. The Preacher, Dr. William R. Crews, was preaching from his booklet called, "Saved or deceived?" What first got my attention was his ability to give the Gospel in a no nonsense, straight from the hip, in your face style, which I found interesting and later very convicting, as he proceeded to bring the "Word of God" in this hard-hitting, prosecutorial, style of preaching.

Saved or Deceived Excerpts:

- *A person is not saved but deceived who has never taken a lost sinner's place. What I mean by that is that every person who is ever saved must assume the place and state of lostness that God declares in His Word. The Bible plainly declares that all of the human family is lost, guilty, sinful creatures. (Rom. 3:23). "For all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God" (Rom. 3:23) and as it is written, "There is none righteous, no, not one; there is none who understands; There is none who seeks after God. They have all turned aside; they have together become unprofitable; there is none who does good, no, not one" (Rom. 3:10-12). Now in order for any person to be saved, he/she must take a lost sinner's place. If you cannot go back to a time in your life when you were lost and knew it, it is impossible for you to be saved. Any person who has been saved can remember when they saw and felt themselves a lost sinner in the sight of a Holy God."*
- *A Person is not saved but deceived who has not become a transformed and new creature in Christ. Perhaps we all know that there are many people in the Church world who name the name of Christ, yet fail to depart from their old sinful way of life. They still swear, cheat, lie, tell filthy jokes, live in disobedience and rebellion to God, and live selfish lives. The power of the old life has never been broken."*
- *The Apostle Paul warned, "But fornication and all uncleanness or covetousness, let it not even be named among you, as is fitting for saints (believers); neither filthiness, nor foolish talking, nor coarse jesting, which are not fitting, but rather giving of thanks. For this you know, that no fornicator, unclean person, nor covetous man, who is an idolater, has any inheritance in the kingdom of Christ and God. Let no one*

deceive you with empty words, for because of these things the wrath of God comes upon the sons of disobedience” (Eph. 5:3-6).

- *Any claim of being saved by a person who has never had the power of sin broken in his life is a false claim. Such a person is not saved but deceived. When a person is saved, he becomes a new creature in Christ and the power of and the love of sin is broken in that individual's life. “If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us” (1 Jn. 1:8).*
- *“Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; old things have passed away; behold, all things have become new” (II Cor. 5:17) .*
- *In another place Paul, describing the same experience, says, “But you have not so learned Christ, if indeed you have heard Him and have been taught by Him, as the truth is in Jesus: that you put off, concerning your former conduct, the old man (the old nature, way of life, sin nature you were born in) which grows corrupt according to the deceitful lusts, and be renewed in the spirit of your mind, and that you put on the new man which was created according to God, in true righteousness and holiness” (Eph. 4:20-24).*
- *When a person becomes a new creature in Christ, the old way of life is put off, and the new way of life is put on. The old way gives to the new. A mere decision or superficial commitment to Christ or walking a church aisle or repeating the so-called sinner's prayer, will not bring to pass this new life in Christ, but a total break with the old way of life will.*
- *When a person becomes a new creature in Christ, the power of God brings about a resurrection to a new life. The old way of life with its deceitful lusts is totally abandoned. Remember, old things are passed away and all things are become new.*
- *The old joys pass away. The old loves pass away. The old habits pass away. The old hopes pass away. The old agendas pass away. The old bad language passes away. The old purpose for living passes away. The old way of thinking and perceiving passes away.*
- *When a person becomes new in Christ, there will be a new nature given from above. There will be a new knowledge of Christ, a new peace in Christ, a new joy in Christ, a new power in Christ, a new love for Christ, a new rest in Christ, a new victory in Christ, new convictions in Christ, a new appetite for Christ, a new practice through Christ.*
- *Has this great change honestly, truthfully and really taken place in your life? Have you sincerely and actually become a new creature in Christ? The key to becoming a new person is in Christ. There is simply no other sphere in which a person may become a new creature but in Christ. Are you in Christ right now? I didn't ask if you profess Christ. I ask you whether you are, right now, a new creature in Christ? You must be in Christ Jesus in order for you to be a really new person. (Excerpts from Saved or Deceived booklet, Part 4).*

This was just a portion of the message that I heard by Dr. Crews that night and it left me feeling that something was indeed wrong with me, which I could not shake. I had no peace that night, and my sleep left me as well. I had to get a copy of the complete message, parts 1-5, that the speaker said, I could receive free for the asking, if I would write or call, “The Awakening hour.”

Mark's Testimony (Part 2)

The following week I called the Awakening Hour station to get a copy sent to me, but it took three weeks for it to arrive, and I was on pins and needles waiting for it to come in the mail. Finally, it arrived and I set out to read it. After reading it, I felt convinced that I was not a true believer, but was instead one of many in our churches today who profess to know Jesus Christ as Savior and Lord, but outwardly had put on the “Church Face” or “Church Talk” before others. These are they which go about doing good works for God; they talk about God, but don't have a relationship with God. Inside they have no spiritual life, and no power to live the life of the true Christian.

I decided to go to my wife and read it aloud to her. Then I asked her what she thought, am I saved or not, to which she told me that she and her Parents had been praying for me about this very issue, and they had been convinced that I did not know Jesus as Lord. It took my father-in-law's death to bring me to the point in my life, to acknowledge my need, and that I was unsaved and deceived.

I immediately got down on my knees with my wife as a witness and asked Jesus into my heart there and then. On Saturday, June 20, 2008, I gave my life to Christ and have never been the same since then. I still struggle with my flesh and its desires, but I have never again had the thought of suicide or of asking God to take me home again, the wrong way. Since then, I prayed and thanked God that He did not answer my prayer and take me, for I would have awakened in the wrong place, now that I look back on what I prayed to God to do for me.

In 1 John 1:8-9 it says, "If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness. If we say that we have not sinned, we make Him a liar, and His word is not in us." This means that God knows that we sin, we fail, we are weak because of the sin nature that we were born with, but we can choose not to sin. And if we say that we have not sinned, we are saying that God is a liar.

Philippians 2:13 says "for it is God who works in you both to will and to do for His good pleasure." This means that God is at work in our lives to do His will and fulfill His purposes, but we must choose to follow His will.

Galatians 2:20 says, "I have been crucified with Christ; it is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me; and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave Himself for me." This means I died with Christ spiritually at the Cross, and as He arose from the grave, three days later, I also arose when I received Him as my personal Savior; I am spiritually raised from the dead. So I no longer live in my sin nature, but by Christ and His Spirit in me, I live by the Power of Faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave Himself up for me."

After I came to know for certain that I knew Jesus as my Savior, I went back to my Mother and asked her whether or not I had come to know Jesus as my Savior as a child through her witness of Christ to me, but she said that I had never professed to her as a child to know Jesus, to my shock, that I had believed a lie for most of my life and had based my Salvation on a Hope, on a mistaken belief that I had heard the Gospel by my Mother and received Jesus as Savior so many years ago, and I had acted as though I knew Jesus and believed in Jesus, but did not have a personal relationship with Him as Savior and Lord of my life.

I wish you all to know that that it is very possible that a person can live a life, serve the Lord in Christian ministry, be active in a local Church body, but still be an unbeliever in Jesus Christ. I was, until age forty-eight years of age. You can have the peace that I found in Him by believing these verses:

- Romans 10:8 But what does it say? "The word is near you, in your mouth and in your heart" (that is, the word of faith which we preach):
- 9 - 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.
- 10 - For with the heart one believes unto righteousness, and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation.

(All verse quotations from the New King James Version)

I have two questions for you to consider:

1) Why confess with the mouth?

It is the power of the spoken word by declaring the Lord Jesus from a changed mind (repentance).

2) Why must we believe in the heart?

It is the power of a change of condition before God (made right before God).

Mark Eden (Westside Bible Church, Meridian, Idaho)