

Testimony

Steven Faviere's Story

SAVED FROM DRUGS AND DESTRUCTION

Personal, Spiritual, and Eternal

Growing up in Toronto

I was born on August 9th, 1971 in the city of Toronto, Canada. I was the youngest of four children and the only one to be born in Canada. My parents were from Uruguay. Although we were Roman Catholics we were not overly devout. At one time, my parents were church-goers but that changed as my father became increasingly upset with the priest for making things difficult and continually pressuring my parents for donations even though he knew they had very little money. My parents, after all, were still new to the country and with four young children, things were not easy.



I'm thankful for loving parents. To the very best of their ability they gave us the best upbringing they could give us and they instilled in us a respect for the Bible. From my earliest years I had a sense of accountability to God. That being said, the Bible was never read in our home, and the clear gospel was never known or taught.

Looking back throughout my childhood I can distinctly see the hand of God at work. There were times when I would quietly sit and think about life and death. God would get my attention through these thoughts. Knowing from my mother that God did exist and that there was a Heaven and a Hell, was, at times, a preservative for me. But unfortunately, as the Bible says: "The wicked are estranged from the womb: they go astray as soon as they are born, speaking lies." (Psalm 58:3)

A New Friend and His Friends

As I grew up, I played both soccer and hockey at a competitive level until the age of fifteen. When I was just twelve I became friends with another teen who would become a major influence in my life. We were both enrolled in summer mathematics classes. This young man had a troubled life and he was keeping company with older kids from the local high school. He seemed exciting to keep company with because he was daring, free spirited and loved the outdoors.

Little did I realize how this new friend would influence me and assist me in my downfall. Of course, I cannot fully blame him for the wrong choices I made. I have since learned these words from the Bible: "All we like sheep have gone astray, we have turned everyone to his own way." (Isaiah 53:6) The young men with whom he was friends listened to satanic music and were heavy users and dealers of drugs. Keeping company with such friends was a recipe for disaster for any person.

Slippery Slopes of Sin

Tragically, I began to rebel against God and my parents. Consuming alcohol and using drugs at the age of twelve became my life. By age fourteen I was selling drugs. Things progressively worsened throughout my teenage years. I attempted to conceal my destructive lifestyle from my parents, but eventually it was impossible to continue to hide it. They felt helpless and were not sure how to handle this problem.

Between the ages of twelve to twenty four, things progressed from bad to worse. Although I tried at times to reform, I was totally helpless. And this is exactly what the Bible says: "His own iniquities will capture the wicked, and he will be held with the cords of his sin." (Proverbs 5:22)

Reminders of My Own Mortality and Eternity

During these dark years, God used both my conscience and various circumstances to get my attention. There were many occasions which gave me a sense of my own mortality, including a near overdose, a motorcycle accident, a near drowning and many funeral services for friends and acquaintances who, sadly, never made it out of their teenage years.

Some of my friends died from overdose, suicide, accidents and even murder. I remember standing over their caskets and thinking thoughts similar to those found in the Bible: “But man dies and is laid away; Indeed he breathes his last and where is he?” (Job 14:10) What was even more sobering was the thought: “where would I be if that were me?” Soon enough however, I would go on in my sinful and wayward ways and Satan would rob me of these thoughts. The Bible says: “For God speaks in one way, and in two, though man does not perceive it.” (Job 33:14)

Sobering Thoughts Invade My Mind

In my early twenties I started to experience definite and distinct dealings with God. I remember going to a night club in downtown Toronto and for a few minutes I backed away from my friends and began to have sober thoughts. I looked around at the dancing, feeling the loud pounding music, and I began to think: “What am I doing here? There is something not right about this.” To this day I cannot fully explain why I had these sobering thoughts, other than the gracious workings of the Spirit of God.

I was not only growing weary with my sin, I began to despise my sinful habits and even life itself. Oftentimes the conversation with my friends would take on a spiritual tone. Usually sometime between midnight and four o'clock in the morning we would ask each other searching questions concerning the existence of God, eternity, as well as, Heaven and Hell. A few of my friends who had some Bible knowledge would speak about stories they had been taught from Scripture in Sunday school. Often, when arguments arose, I found myself defending the Bible which I had never read.

“I Never Want to Be in Hell.”

A friend once said to me, “My mom believes in God because she said that when she looks at the intricacies and the wonders within the creation around her, she says it’s impossible not to believe there’s a Creator. I don’t believe that though... Steve, why do you believe in God?” I had never really considered why I believed there was a God, but said, “I’m not sure why, but I know one thing, there is a Heaven and Hell, and I want to be in Heaven...I never want to be in hell!”

I remember sitting on a twenty sixth story balcony of a condominium overlooking the city of Mississauga and saying, “God, I know you exist. There has to be more to life than this. What is life about?” It was during this stage of my life when the Lord began to bring Christians who had a concern for the salvation of souls into my path.

Avoiding a Former Street Fighter

I remember my friends speaking about a young man named Chris Paisley whom I knew from the streets. Chris used to be one of the fiercest and ill-reputable street fighters that I knew. My friends warned me that he had joined a cult and became a religious fanatic. I now know that this was a message from the devil, because it persuaded me to avoid him at all costs.

But my avoiding Chris did not hinder the workings of God. If I saw him in a local mall I would duck into a store and hide behind an aisle until I saw him pass by. However, later that week I would be downtown Toronto, among thousands of people, and he would bump into me on the street and say, “Hey Steve, I was just thinking about you.”

There was one instance, while taking a city transit bus, that Chris just happened to get on halfway through my trip, and he said, “Hey Steve, I was just thinking about you. Have you ever heard of Sodom and Gomorrah?” He then gave me an account from the Bible of what took place when God destroyed those wicked and sinful cities by fire and said, “Our day isn’t much different than theirs is it? If God rained down on them fire and brimstone from heaven because of their sin, what do you think is stopping him from doing that now?” This was like a sword piercing into my heart. I could only say, “That’s a good question...I’m not really sure.”

The Christian and His Bible

I was beginning to think more deeply and the Spirit of God started using the Word of God, in order to awaken me to my need of peace with God. I began ignoring the pleas of my ungodly friends who were urging me to avoid Chris. I thought that if Chris could prove these things to me through the Bible, then they would have to be true. He always showed me the exact verses from the Word of God to prove what he was saying. On the other hand, my friends would only give their opinions -often ridiculous or confusing and none of their opinions had any solid foundation to rest upon. They would always begin by saying something like, "Well, I think..." However, Chris would say with conviction, "The Word of God says..." I knew that anything that God said in the Bible had to be worth listening to.

During this time, Chris began asking me to come and hear the gospel preached. He asked me if I had ever been to a Gospel meeting. To this I answered, "Well...I've been to Mass." He smiled and said, "Steve, this is different."

Making Excuses to Avoid Facing the Reality

Now deep inside I really wanted to attend a Gospel meeting, but when the day would come and Chris would phone me, I would back out at the last minute. It's almost as if the devil would whisper in my ear, "Hey, maybe he is in a cult. Maybe it's rubbing off on you and you're also becoming a fanatic. Wait another week."

The devil was just like me in some ways. He, much like myself, didn't know when I would die, and if he could persuade me to put it off even one more day, then he might just get his wish and I could have gone into eternity having neglected the dealings of God. He knew that the Word of God says "How shall we escape, if we neglect so great salvation?" Hebrews 2:3. And the Lord Jesus Christ said about those who die having neglected salvation, "...you...shall die in your sins: where I go, you cannot come." If we don't end up in Heaven where Christ went, then there's only one other place and that's Hell and eventually the Lake of Fire. This is something that should sober our thinking and cause each one of us to tremble.

Christian Kindness Touched My Heart

I am indebted to the mercy of God. Although I kept making excuses each time Chris called, he never gave up. Whenever we crossed paths, he would do kind things for me. He would buy me coffee or something to eat and I began to feel indebted to him due to his kindness. Having backed out of going to hear the gospel with him three or four times, I finally thought: "I can't keep saying no. This guy is too kind and I'm being a selfish, lying wretch."

At first, I didn't attend the gospel meeting because of spiritual distress over my sin but rather, out of guilt due to Chris' generosity. It's like the old hymn says, "Years I spent in vanity and pride, knowing not my Lord was crucified, knowing not it was for me He died at Calvary." I was thoroughly without excuse because I was violating my conscience and neglecting the grace of God.

My First Reaction to Gospel Preaching

Although I was undeniably guilty, when I heard the gospel preached for the first time, I thought: "Hey, I'm not like my friends. At least I believe in God, and I am here at this church." I was self-righteous, yet no different than the worst sinner in Hell. I was like the very religious Pharisee in Luke chapter 18 who arrogantly thought within himself, "God, I thank thee, that I am not as other men are, extortioners, unjust, adulterers, or even as this publican. I fast twice in the week, I give tithes of all that I possess." The Lord said that he was not right before God. He was only religious and self-deceived. The problem was that although I was lost, I thought that somehow I wasn't that bad of a guy after all. The truth is that Christ came "...to seek and to save that which was lost." (Luke 19:10)

Hit With the Toughest Question

After the Gospel meeting ended, Chris could see that I was void of any concern in respect to the need of being saved, and no doubt this must have grieved him. On the way home he asked: "Steve, if we got into a car accident right now and you died, where would your soul be?" No one had ever asked me a question like that. I really wasn't sure but my pride made me say, "Well, I'm not like some people we know who are in prison, and I've never been mean to anyone." He did what should always be done in situations like that. He said, "Steve, if God were to tell you, would you believe Him?" I said, "Of course I would!"

Silenced by the Word of God

Chris then said, "I'm going to read to you what the Bible sets forth as the human race (including you and me) in a court case with God as the judge." Then he opened the Bible and began to read from Romans 3:10-19:

"As it is written, There is **none** righteous, **no, not one**: There is **none** who understands, there is **none** that seek after God. They are **all** gone out of the way, they are **together** become unprofitable; there is **none** that does good, **no, not one**... Now we know that what things soever the law says, it says to them who are under the law: that **every mouth may be stopped, and all the world may become guilty before God.**"

That's all it took. My eyes were opened to the fact that I was lost and helpless, and I felt that I couldn't justify myself any further. I stood condemned by God's holy and righteous law and I honestly said, "According to that Chris, I'm going to Hell...I'm not ready to meet God." I believed it and it troubled me deeply.

I asked Chris for a Bible and began from that moment to read earnestly. Sunday through Tuesday I read in the Old Testament from Genesis through Deuteronomy but the more I read, the less I understood, and the deeper my guilt and hopelessness seemed.

Attending a Bible Study

Chris called me the following Tuesday afternoon and invited me to the Bible study at the Mimico Gospel Hall. I would have attended anything if it meant that I would hear something concerning peace with God. I didn't know the section of the Bible they were studying that night, but I knew one thing: the verses they were quoting had nothing to do with the chapter they had originally planned to study. They mentioned, more than once, that if Christ could save the Chief of Sinners, namely Saul of Tarsus, He can save anybody. At the end of the Bible reading I said: "Chris, I really want to be saved, but I don't know how. I don't understand."

"I've Sinned Against God and I'm Going to Hell."

I'm thankful Chris didn't ask me to just recite a prayer. I didn't want to falsely think I was a Christian because I had merely recited a prayer. He simply said, "Steve let me introduce you to someone who would love to speak to you." Mr. Bill Spencer was a true caring shepherd and a soul winner. I said, "Mr. Spencer, it's really nice to meet you, but right now I really want to be saved. I found out the other day that I've sinned against God and I am going to Hell, and I don't know how I can be saved from that." Mr. Spencer said, "Steve, I can't save you, all I can do is point you to the One who can."

He kindly sat down with me and opened the Bible and showed me verses such as Isaiah 53:5-6, Romans 3:1-20, Romans 5:1-9, and John 3. Although I was still in spiritual darkness, for the first time I realized from the Bible, that if I got saved, I would know I was saved. Mr. Spencer prayed that the Lord would open my understanding and then said, "I can't save you Steve. You need to get alone with God and he needs to show you from His Word."

Light Shines into My Darkness

I went home that night and knelt down beside my bed with an open Bible. I spoke honestly about my condition to God for the first time and said, "God, I'm lost and am going to hell. I don't know how to be saved. Lord please show me the way." I began to read carefully and prayerfully in John's gospel, seeking an answer from God's Word, when this realization suddenly flooded into my mind: "I'm lost and going to Hell...that's why Christ suffered, died and rose again." I then searched through the verses that were marked out in the Bible to see if the Word of God would confirm this. As far as I know, it was the first time in my life that I read those beautiful words:

**For God so loved the world,
that He gave His only begotten Son,
that whosoever believes in Him should not perish,
but have everlasting life.**

John 3:16

I then took in the glorious message of the gospel. I suddenly became like the people of the city of Samaria we read about in John 4 who said: "Now we believe...for we have heard Him ourselves, and know that this is indeed the Christ, the Saviour of the world."

In an instant I was saved and transformed by the mighty power of the Spirit of God. But then I thought: "This seems too simple. Can it really be? Am I really saved?" I continued to read diligently and came across John 6:37 and Romans 10:13 which were marked in my Bible and stated, "All that the Father gives Me shall come to Me; and he who comes to Me I will in no wise cast out...whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved." I knew that if God said it in His Word, then that was all I needed.

Freed, Forgiven and Forever Saved

I was saved May 7th, 1996, sometime just before 11:00 P.M. and like the Ethiopian man in Acts 8, I went on my way rejoicing. The truth of the hymn became very real to me which says, "My chains are snapt, the bonds of sin are broken, and I am free; O let the triumphs of His grace be spoken, who died for me." That night he gave me a new heart with new desires due to the fact that, "If any man be in Christ, he is a new creation: old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new." (2 Corinthians 5:17)

I flushed my drugs and alcohol down the toilet that night and destroyed my corrupting and vile music collection. When asked later that week why I destroyed the collection rather than sell it and recover some of the costs, I simply said: "How can I take money for something that was contributing to the destruction of my life, and all the while knowing that it will corrupt someone else?"

I am grateful to this day that despite my weakness, the Lord has continued to prove Himself both kind and faithful. I thank God so much for that moment He showed me my need of sins forgiven, and consequently that Christ died for me. By the grace of God, after 18 years, I have never turned back, and my desire is to live for Him, and to help seek after lost souls for Him because He is absolutely worthy. He saved my life and most importantly, He saved my soul.