

My Testimony

by Gary Goodes



New Beginnings

I was born in Fremantle, Western Australia. I had a very good upbringing, a good education, and very loving parents. However, I never went to church. I never went to Sunday school or children's meetings or youth fellowships, and I never went to church on a Sunday. The only time I was in church was for the occasional wedding or funeral. As a result, I grew up to be a self-confessed atheist. I had no fear of God. I thought that we were no different to a cat or a dog; that we are born, we grow up, we live our life, and then we die; we come from nothing and we go back to nothing. I thought that there was no existence beyond the grave. As a result, by the time I reached my twenties, I was drinking, gambling, going to pubs, and partaking of all the vices that most young people of my age were doing.

So when did it all change? Well, I met the girl of my dreams and decided to get married and settle down. People asked me what church I was going to get married in. I told them that I did not believe in God, so it would be hypocritical for me to get married in a church. So we were married in the Queens Park in Perth, where many weddings were held. We were not married by a church minister, but by a marriage celebrant.

We had a lovely wedding, with all the trimmings, but there was no mention of God. We then bought a little house and began to meet the neighbours. Now, even though we were not religious, we discovered that the neighbours beside us were Roman Catholics, from Cork, and the neighbours over the road were Seventh-day Adventists. The Seventh-day Adventists decided that we needed a little religion in our lives, so they invited us over to their home to watch a couple of videos about their religion. Now I was not really interested, but just to be polite, I watched the videos. Needless to say, the Seventh-day Adventists are a false cult, and there was nothing there to make me change my way of life. However, the one thing that was mentioned, that was to be the "hook" that the Lord used to get me thinking, was eternal life. I remember thinking to myself, even as an atheist, if there is a one-million-to-one chance that eternal life was for real, I would be a fool if I didn't spend a little bit of time to look into this for myself.

So after listening to everything that the neighbours told me, I got talking to a man at work one day who I knew was "religious." I asked him what religion he was, and he told me that he wasn't religious, he was a Christian. George went on to tell me that he was a born-again Christian, and it was then, at the age of twenty-three, that I heard the gospel for the first time in my life. I was given various gospel tracts and booklets to read. Always having had a love for history, I enjoyed reading about the history of the nation of Israel. It was then that I was introduced to the subject of Bible prophecy, and I was fascinated to learn that the Bible not only tells us about the past, but it also predicts future events.

After about two weeks of reading, I realised there was some truth in the Bible, at least historically, but I still did not believe in the existence of God. So George gave me another gospel tract to read, and this time he encouraged me to pray that God would prove to me that He existed, because the Bible says, "Ask, and it shall be given you; seek, and ye shall find; knock, and it shall be opened unto you." So that night I was home alone, my wife having gone out somewhere, and I sat down to read this latest tract. For the first time in my life, I prayed. I told God that I did not believe in Him, but if He did exist, I wanted to know. I had no desire to change my life, I just wanted to know whether God was real and whether or not heaven and hell and eternal life were real.

The little tract told me about the sufferings and the death of Christ. I read about how Christ was mocked by the Roman soldiers. I read about the scourging He received. He was whipped with a “cat-o’-nine tails.” It was a leather whip with nine strips of leather attached to it. Each time the victim was whipped once, he would receive nine lashes. Then if that wasn’t bad enough, at the end of each piece of leather they would tie sharp pieces of bone or steel. These would dig into the man’s back and, when pulled away, would slice open the victim’s back. I went on to read about the horror of crucifixion. It was the most agonising death a person could face. I had no idea that Christ suffered so much for sinners.

Then I read how Christ, being the Son of God, could have come down from that cruel cross at any time, but He didn’t come down, because He was actually born into this world to be the Lamb of God who came to die for the sins of His people. When I read that, I thought to myself, He must have really loved us to go through so much for someone like me. It was then that the love of God and the peace of God flooded my soul. I had never felt anything like it before. I can only describe it as the Bible describes it when it speaks about a “perfect peace” (Isaiah 26:3) that “passeth all understanding” (Philippians 4:7). I had been such a sceptic, but that night the Lord answered my prayer and proved to me that He existed. I knew then that I needed to be saved. However, despite having read several gospel tracts, I did not know how to get saved. I had to wait until the next day, when I could go to work and ask my Christian friend how to actually get saved. I didn’t sleep very well that night, knowing that if I died in my sleep, before he could lead me to Christ, I would be in a lost sinner’s hell. The next morning I told him what had happened and I asked him the way of salvation. He turned me to Romans 10:13; “For whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved.” So I simply bowed my head in prayer, admitted I was a lost sinner for whom Christ died, and asked the Lord to cleanse me from my sin in His own precious blood and save me. At the moment I did that, there were no strange feelings, but I knew I was saved, because the Bible told me so.

Let me close by saying to anyone who is reading this, that if you are not saved, then I know why you are not saved. It is because you don’t believe. You may not be an atheist, you may even have a form of religion, but what you need is the reality of God’s so great salvation. I would urge you to pray as I prayed and to ask the Lord to come into your heart and life. Heaven is real. Hell is real. Christ is real. Eternal life is real. Therefore, “seek ye the LORD while he may be found, call ye upon him while he is near” (Isaiah 55:6).

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