

Testimony

Lost at Sea - Philip Sarlo's Story

Personal Testimony of Philip Sarlo

It has been over 40 years since this adventure began. Those who've heard me tell the four-hour version of the story have repeatedly asked me to put it in written form. So, here's a much-abbreviated account...

Restless Years on the Run from 'Christianity'

In the summer of 1971 after high school graduation, I had been partying regularly with some so-called friends. I was depressed and very bored with my life up until then. As usual, the never-ending search for excitement, in whatever form I could find, would end in emptiness and depression.

I would try not to think about the godly influence of two loving parents and all they had tried to teach me about God's Word and His ways as seen in the Bible. Down deep I knew they were right, but I was not ready to give up my rebellious, self-indulgent ways. I was so convicted when I was around them that I made up my mind that I was going to "run away from home" and try to get away from the Christianity that had always surrounded my life.

Selfish Pursuits Break Hearts at Home

I not only wanted escape from what I thought were oppressive parents and church influences, I wanted adventure and lots of it. Well, on a summer Saturday afternoon in late June, I hurriedly made the decision to leave my small Michigan town and head for the bright lights and fun of Miami Beach, Florida.

The flight south that afternoon was a cruel thing to do to my family, especially my mother, since I left without telling them where I was going. However, I was not thinking about them. I was only thinking about myself and about what I thought I wanted. The adventures in the days ahead in South Florida are too numerous to tell here; however, one thing I know now and suspected then was that God had His protecting hand on me. This was no doubt due to praying parents and grandparents.

High Life: Rubbing Shoulders with Stars and Millionaires

After two weeks in Miami Beach, my parents discovered my whereabouts about the same time I found a "dream job" aboard a world-class yacht that chartered to movie stars and millionaires. A few days later we headed up the east coast to New York for the summer, just as I started receiving letters from mostly my mother and grandmother.

The next 100 days spawned adventures that Tom Sawyer and Huck Finn would have been thrilled with. But, even so, my days consisted of loneliness, disillusionment and despair. At every turn God reached out his hand to spare my life and speak to my empty heart in my desperate search for peace and fulfillment.

Heavy Heart – Lost at Sea

My sins were a constant burden and reminder that there, indeed, was a God who had created within me a conscience. I knew, beyond any doubt, that when life here ended there was a real Heaven to be sure to enter and a literal burning Hell to be avoided at any cost; but I tried to tell myself that I was already a Christian. I had no peace about it, and I tried to do everything not to think about it.

Those dark days of storms, hurricanes, waves crashing over the entire ship, and nights with the wind tugging at the anchor caused me to think of Eternity. I was truly "Lost at Sea."



Not Going Home – Going Home

After miraculously arriving safely back in Miami that November, the Lord, through circumstances, changed my mind about not going home. I had been determined to continue my quest for peace, in spite of all God had shown me and allowed me to survive through. Up until then, I had my heart set on another adventure to California via motorcycle, but God had other plans. I walked down the jet-way in Detroit on a cold November morning, wondering if I was in my right mind to return home.

Previously, I had let my family know that I would not be returning home as the prodigal son, and I had my own plans, which did not include them. Well, after being in the biggest cities in the U.S., and then coming home to a small town was more of a letdown than ever. The emptiness, depression, and memories of that whirlwind summer and the adventures that God had allowed me to return home from made me more miserable than ever.

Boredom Leads Me to Church

After being home for two weeks and being bored out of my mind, I decided to go to church to see some of my old friends. The church was having some special services conducted by two visiting evangelists. I had no intention of listening. After all, I had heard it a thousand times before.

The preacher was speaking forcefully and loudly about one of the last things Jesus said while on the cross. It was the phrase, “It is finished,” that caught my attention. He kept repeating it and explaining what it meant. He said that it meant there was nothing we could do to save ourselves, that the work was already done, and that all of our sins were completely paid for. He said that all we could do was to rest in it.

In a moment of time, it flooded over me. It was something I had heard many times, but never realized ‘til then... that Jesus, having no sins of His own, took my place and paid the price to satisfy the justice of a Holy God. Furthermore, God was so pleased with the finished work that He raised Him from the dead with His mighty power.

Peace Comes in Like a Flood

The wonder of it all! Then the thought crossed my mind. Could it be so simple? The peace that flooded through me that night and in the days ahead was the answer to that. What could be better in this world, than to know your sins forgiven and be assured of a home in Heaven! It does not matter whether it is large or small sins. We all have them and the Bible says in the Book of Hebrews, “Without faith it is impossible to please God.” That night, at the end of myself, God gave me faith to trust and rest in the finished work of redemption, receiving it as my very own.

So my dear friend, I beg you to consider these matters carefully. Read God’s Word, the Bible. Read St. John, Chapters 1-4, and the Book of Romans. Ask God to show you your need of His great gift. My earthly father always told me that God only does business with honest hearts. Remember, there is nothing you can do to be saved. He did it all. “It is Finished.” “Paid in Full!” Rest in Him, as I did all those years ago.

The real adventure began on that wonderful night, now so long ago, and furthermore, it will never have an end, as the Bible reveals—continuing throughout the endless ages of God’s Eternal Day.

Some verses from the Bible for you to carefully consider:

- For all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God. (Romans 3:23 - KJV)
- For the wages of sin is death; but the gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord. (Romans 6:23 - KJV)
- For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life. (John 3:16 - KJV)
- For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God: Not of works, lest any man should boast. (Ephesians 2:8-9 - KJV)
- For Christ also hath once suffered for sins, the just for the unjust, that He might bring us to God. (1 Peter 3:18 - KJV)

- These things have I written unto you that believe on the name of the Son of God; that ye may know that ye have eternal life, and that ye may believe on the name of the Son of God. (1 John 5:13 - KJV)
- Not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to his mercy he saved us. (Titus 3:5 - KJV)
- And as it is appointed unto men once to die, but after this the judgment. (Hebrews 9:27 - KJV)
- But as it is written, Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man, the things which God hath prepared for them that love him. (1 Corinthians 2:9 - KJV)

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