

# *Testimony*

*Richard Ross Tells His Story*

---

## **Lost and Empty Then – Peace and Purpose Now**

### **Early Life**

I grew up in the San Francisco Bay Area, in the city of Berkeley. Berkeley was then a quiet college town, and I was happy there with my parents, and my three sisters. My father was a professor at the University of California, and most of the family friends were university people, sharing the liberal, secular humanist views of our times. When I was 11, we moved out into the suburbs, into a more affluent area. It was a difficult move for me, away from my friends and all I was familiar with. But I made a few friends there, and basically enjoyed school, particularly my first year of high school, where I did quite well academically, enjoying the courses I took.

### **Private School far from Home**

However, I did not complete my High School there. My father decided he wanted me to go to a private school in Vermont, 3000 miles from home. He had gone to Harvard, and this school sent 25% of its male graduates there. I didn't want to go, but had no choice in the matter. I was accepted there, and, just prior to my 15th birthday, flew across the country to Putney, Vermont.

### **Loneliness**

As one can imagine, I was very lonely there. It was a highly intellectual environment, and I soon found myself unable to keep up with others who loved delving into philosophical ideas. They never interested me. I managed to graduate, but never excelled. It was there I began looking for something that had meaning to me, though I had no idea what it was, or even that I was searching.

### **College Years**

I eventually went to Marlboro College, not far from Putney. There were many others there who were like-minded, not knowing where we were headed in our lives. It was there I began taking drugs and drinking more and more heavily, spending my time gambling in pool halls, and at poker tables. I somehow managed to get my degree there, though by the skin of my teeth. However, I had some kind of a nervous breakdown about that time.

### **Sadness and Music**

When I returned home, at that time, in Ann Arbor, Michigan, I began seeing a psychiatrist. Not long after, my father took his life. That sent me deeper into a desire to escape from reality. I immersed myself in rock and roll, thinking the musicians knew something, had a handle on what life was really about. I would get high, and turn the volume way-up, thinking I would somehow get what I needed. But they actually knew no more than I did.

### **Theatre Business but Persistent Despair**

I got involved in the theater as a musician, and later started my own theater company in California. I was somehow driven to find reality, but was searching in a place which was in itself an escape from reality. My company was getting more favorable reviews as time went on, but I correspondingly sank deeper into despair, as I realized there was no real hope there at all. I had named the company The Blue Horizon Theater Company, after the song with the lyrics, "Beyond the blue horizon lies a beautiful day. Goodbye to things that bore me, joy is waiting for me." I longed to get there, but, of course, that too, was all an illusion.

### **Russian River Road Encounter**

I despaired of hope, and contemplated taking my own life. As I walked along a country road in the Russian River area of California, feeling absolutely hopeless, a man came along in a Datsun pickup truck. He stopped for me, and there was something about him that made me pour out my troubles to him, though a complete stranger. He listened courteously, but, when he had an opening, said, "Your problem is you're lost. You need Jesus Christ." It rang true.

## **Glimmer of Hope**

I had spent years and thousands of dollars on counsellors and therapy that never got to the root of things. This man did with that one brief statement. It was an entrance of divine light into my heart. Though he told me of the reason for my lost condition, which was my sin against God, I had a glimmer of hope. He spoke to me of Christ. He spoke of Christ's death on the cross. It clearly meant something deeply personal to him, though I couldn't understand why at that time.

## **The Bible**

But I kept seeing him, and he always told me what the word of God says. He gave me a Bible, which I had never read. I'll always remember the effect upon me when he quoted, "The wages of sin is death." (Romans 6:23) I was frightened, and had every reason to be. I realized that God was real, and that he was interested in me individually.

That was quite a revelation.

I also began to run into Christians every day, who gave me Gospel tracts and spoke of salvation. I couldn't deny what was happening wasn't chance. I eventually left that area, as I wasn't comfortable with the Christians, knowing that I wasn't right with God and they were. And I wasn't comfortable with my old friends, because I wanted to get away from the drugs, and clear my mind enough to be able to consider these things.

## **Alone with a Bible**

I went to my mother's in Berkeley. I was deeply troubled, and often couldn't sleep. I would stay up into the early hours of the morning listening to a Christian radio station where Christ was preached. I tried to read my Bible, but couldn't make sense out of it. I believed the answer was there, but I couldn't find it. Sometimes I would just wait for something to come over me. One night something did: the full force of what I was told on the river road.

## **"Lord, Save Me."**

The reality of being totally lost forever under the judgment of God for my sins, caused me to fall to my knees, and cry out loud, "Lord, save me. I'm lost." I didn't know what had happened to me, but I realized my fear was gone. I found myself thanking God for saving me, and, for the first time, calling Him Father. As I learned from the scriptures, "God had sent the spirit of His Son into my heart, crying 'Abba, Father.'" That's in Galatians chapter 4 verse 6.

Another wonderful thing happened right there. The Bible, which had always seemed mysterious, became a living thing to me, with amazing clarity. I was saved. Hallelujah, God saved this poor, sinful man! Not because of anything I was, or did, but really in spite of it. According to his mercy, he saved me. It was all of grace, from beginning to end.

## **Christian Life and the Blessed Hope**

God has treated me wonderfully now for 37 years, giving me a loving, faithful wife, two dear sons, and many friends who share the same blessed hope of Christ's return to take us to heaven. My earnest desire is that some who read this will find the Lord Jesus Christ, and peace with God through him, and what he accomplished on the cross at Calvary to set the guilty free from guilt and judgment. "In due time, Christ died for the ungodly." (Romans 5:6)

I wrote this poem in 1991 and it is the only poem I ever wrote.

Christ came to me when all was night;  
My heart was dark, I had no sight.  
I groped and felt to find the way  
But could not see the light of day.

So many ways I sought to find  
The peace I craved for my poor mind;  
But every hopeful road just proved  
To be dead-end, mocked every move.

Through arts and education high,  
To depths of sin and Satan's lies,

I searched with desperate energy  
To find how I might be set free.

The more I searched, the less I found  
Of hope to plant on solid ground.  
The more some light I sought to grasp  
The more in darkness I was cast.

'Till came the day when hope was gone;  
I found myself to be undone.  
To end my life seemed all 'twas left  
Since now of hope I was bereft.

Just then a man was sent to me  
By One whom I knew not to be  
The answer to my soul's mad quest,  
The One who cared for my distress.

My heart I poured out to this man,  
And my dashed hopes and desperate plans.  
He waited 'till the time was ripe,  
Then told me, "You need Jesus Christ."

That I was lost, I heard from him.  
Then came the truth of guilt and sin.  
The words, unwelcome at the start,  
Yet rang of truth within my heart.

Then came the word of One who'd died;  
Of Jesus Christ, the Crucified.  
If I would have Him, He would be  
The answer to my soul's deep need.

To yield to God proved no small task;  
For Satan does no quarter ask.  
I did not realize that sin  
Held such sway o'er this poor man.

Nine months went by, and still I craved  
To find the key. I was not saved,  
'Till came the night, in pitch-black cloud,  
I cried "O God, I'm lost!" out loud.

"Save me," to Him I then did cry,  
To save myself was now passed by.  
'Twas none but Christ now for my plea.  
His grace or nothing, it must be.

And grace there was for me that night.  
I found Him there, I gained my sight.  
And now, for all eternity  
This song I'll sing, "He died for me."

***The Son of Man is come to seek and to save that which was lost. Luke 19:10***

*. . . . Gleaned from Heaven4Sure*