

Salvation

I am so thankful for my parents. They raised me with good morals, provided for me in love and kindness, and took the family to church every Sunday. Unfortunately, our church was void of the Holy Spirit. None of us knew Jesus, so we weren't reconciled to our Heavenly Father (yet). Our family's church-going was about religion, not relationship. It was sprinkled with confused, new-age spirituality. It was about doing good works, rather than being loved by God and choosing to love Him and others. Thank the Lord, my parents were eventually gloriously overtaken by the Holy Spirit and are currently walking in vibrant relationship with Jesus. And then, at age 26, I finally got saved...

On July 12, 1993, my sister, who had surrendered her life to Christ three years prior, invited me to a 'concert.' When we arrived at the outdoor stadium, I could see this was no usual music festival. It was a Harvest Crusade, hosted by the evangelist Greg Laurie, intended to share the Gospel with unbelievers. My heart immediately put up its guard.

At some point before this unforgettable evening, I'd actually asked my sister to stop talking to me about Jesus. She respectfully stopped, but unbeknownst to me, she then recruited a ton people to pray for me. Those people were now walking into the Crusade with us!

As the evening progressed, many testified of their love for Jesus through personal stories and song. Then Pastor Laurie shared his message. It was God's message to me, for sure. During the 20 minutes he spoke, there were two things that jolted me:

- One was the Scripture, "*For what will it profit a man, if he gains the whole world and loses his own soul?*" (Mark 8:36)

You see, I *had* gained the whole world. I'd gotten straight A's in high school, graduated as Salutatorian, was a top ten finalist for Miss Indiana, was chosen Purdue University Homecoming Queen, had the pick of several excellent job opportunities multiple times, had flown around the world multiple times, got the red convertible I'd desired, and lived in the side room of a mansion in Hollywood. From the world's perspective, I had it all. *But I didn't.*

In actuality, I had nothing, because I *had* lost my soul. Truly, when I put my head on my pillow every night, I didn't have the peace that only reconciliation with God can bring. I'd tried to find peace in so many worldly things, but none of those things succeeded. Rather, they left me in want again, every morning. Inside me was an angst that was never satisfied. A hole never filled. And I knew it.

- The other thing that haunted me that evening was the question, “If you were to get in your car tonight yet not make it home, can you say, beyond a shadow of a doubt, that you know you’d go to heaven if you died?”

I knew the answer. I was *not* sure that I’d go to heaven if I died. I *didn’t* have assurance of eternal life! That scared me.

Then the moment came.

An invitation was given, to surrender our lives to Jesus.

To admit that we have sin and are in need of a Savior.

“All have sinned and fall short of the glory of God.” (Romans 3:23)

I resisted.

A second invitation was given. *“The wages of sin is death...” (Romans 6:23a)* I didn’t go forward, but I could practically feel on my neck the prayers of my sister’s friends seated behind me. Really. It was powerful.

A third call to surrender to Christ was offered. *“...but the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord.” (Romans 6:23b)* I turned to my sister and said, “Lisa, I feel something really strange inside me.” She didn’t say anything and just gently smiled.

Finally, on the fourth invitation, I couldn’t stay seated any longer. I’m so thankful Greg kept offering that glorious, free gift of salvation! *“For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life.” (John 3:16)*

I turned to my sister and announced, “I need to go down there. Will you go with me?” She lit up and said yes. The Holy Spirit pulled me up out of my seat and walked me down to the football field. Lisa’s praying friends, who soon became mine, followed.

Clusters of people were scattered all about the field, praying together. I was led in a prayer to surrender my life to Christ. It was the best night of my life. That night is when I truly began to live.

“I have been crucified with Christ; it is no longer I who live, but Christ who 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.” (Galatians 2:20)

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