

## OUR FATHER'S PERSISTENT LOVE MINISTRIES, INC.

David Berkowitz

### SON OF HOPE

#### MY STORY

by David Berkowitz

May God bless everyone who is reading this message! My name is David Berkowitz, and I am a prison inmate who has been incarcerated for more than twenty-two years. I have been sentenced to prison for the rest of my life. My criminal case is well known and was called the "Son of Sam" shootings.

It was eleven years ago, when I was living in a cold and lonely prison cell, that God got ahold of my life. Here is my story of Hope...

#### CHILD OF TORMENT

Ever since I was a small child, my life seemed to be filled with torment. I would often have seizures in which I would roll on the floor. Sometimes furniture would get knocked over. When these attacks came, it felt as if something was entering me.

My mother who has long since passed away, had no control over me. I was like a wild and destructive animal. My father had to pin me to the floor until these attacks stopped.

When I was in public school, I was so violent and disruptive that a teacher, who had become so angry at me, grabbed me in a headlock and threw me out of his classroom.

I was getting into a lot of fights, too. Sometimes I started screaming for no reason. And eventually my parents were ordered by school officials to take me to a child psychologist, or else I would be expelled. I had to go to this psychologist once per week for two years. Yet the therapy sessions had no affect on my behavior.

During this period of my life I was also plagued with bouts of severe

depression. When this feeling came over me, I would hide under my bed for hours. I would also lock myself in a closet and sit in total darkness from morning until afternoon. I had a craving for the darkness and I felt an urge to flee away from people.

#### A FORCE WAS AT WORK

Occasionally this same evil force would come upon me in the middle of the night. When this would happen I felt an urge to sneak out of the house and wander the dark streets. I roamed the neighborhood like an alley cat and would creep back into the house by climbing the fire escape. My parents would never know that I was gone.

I continually worried and frightened my parents because I behaved so strangely. At times I would go the entire day without talking to them. I would stay in my room talking to myself. My parents could not reach me, not even with all their love. Many times I saw them break down and cry because they saw that I was such a tormented person.

#### FIGHTING THOUGHTS OF SUICIDE

Thoughts of suicide often came into my mind. Sometimes I spent time sitting on a window ledge with my legs dangling over the side. We lived on the 6th floor of an old apartment building. When my dad saw me doing this he would yell at me to get back inside.

I also felt powerful urges to step in front of moving cars or throw myself in front of subway trains. At times those urges were so strong that my body actually trembled. I remember that it was a tremendous struggle for me to hold on to my sanity.

I had no idea what to do and neither did my parents. They had me talk to a rabbi, teachers and school counselors, but nothing worked.

#### MY MOTHER WAS DEAD

When I was fourteen my mother was stricken with cancer and within several months she was dead. I had no other brothers or sisters, and so it was just me and my dad. He had to work ten hours per day, six days per week. So we spent very little time together.

For the most part, my mother was my source of stability. With her now gone, however, my life quickly went downhill. I was filled with anger at the loss of my mom. I felt hopeless and my periods of depression were more intense than ever. I also became even more rebellious and began to cut out of school.

Yet my dad tried to help as best as he could. He managed to push me through high school. The day after I graduated I went into the Army. I had just turned eighteen several weeks earlier. I joined the Army, in

a sense, to start a new life and get away from my problems. But even in the service I had trouble coping, though I did manage to finish my three-year enlistment.

#### THE FORCE STILL HAD ME

I got out of the service in 1974 to start life again as a "civilian". All my friends that I knew before had either married or moved away. So I found myself alone and living in New York City.

In 1975, however, I met some guys at a party who were, I later found out, heavily involved in the occult. I had always been fascinated with witchcraft, satanism and occult things since I was a child. When I was growing up I watched countless horror and satan-type movies, one of which was Rosemary's Baby. The movie in particular totally captivated my mind.

Now I was age twenty-two and this evil force was still reaching out to me. Everywhere I went there seemed to be a sign or a symbol pointing me to Satan. I felt as if something were trying to take control of my life. I began to read the Satanic Bible by the late Anton LaVey who founded the Church of Satan in San Francisco in 1966. I began, innocently, to practice various occult rituals and incantations.

I am utterly convinced that something satanic had entered into my mind and that, looking back at all that happened, I realize that I had been slowly deceived. I did not know that bad things were going to result from all this. Yet over the months the things that were wicked no longer seemed to be such. I was headed down the road to destruction and I did not know it. Maybe I was at a point where I just didn't care.

#### THE HORROR BEGINS

Eventually I crossed that invisible line of no return. After years of mental torment, behavioral problems, deep inner struggles and my own rebellious ways, I became the criminal that, at the time, it seemed as if it was my destiny to become.

Looking back it was all a horrible nightmare and I would do anything if I could undo everything that happened. Six people lost their lives. Many others suffered at my hand, and will continue to suffer for a lifetime. I am so sorry for this.

In 1978 I was sentenced to about 365 consecutive years, virtually burying me alive behind prison walls. When I first entered the prison system I was placed in isolation. I was then sent to a psychiatric hospital because I was declared temporarily insane. Eventually I was sent to other prisons including the infamous "Attica."

As with many inmates, life in prison is a struggle. I have had my share of problems, hassles and fights. At one time I almost lost my life when another inmate cut my throat. Yet all through this, and I did not realize it until later, God had His loving hands on me.

#### HOPE WAS COMING

Ten years into my prison sentence and feeling despondent and without hope, another inmate came up to me one day as I was walking the prison yard one cold winter's night. He introduced himself and began to tell me that Jesus Christ loved me and wanted to forgive me. Although I knew he meant well, I mocked him because I did not think that God would ever forgive me or that He would want anything to do with me.

Still this man persisted and we became friends. His name was Rick and we would walk the yard together. Little by little he would share with me about his life and what he believed Jesus had done for him. He kept reminding me that no matter what a person did, Christ stood ready to forgive if that individual would be willing to turn from the bad things they were doing and would put their full faith and trust in Jesus Christ and what Jesus did on the cross - dying for our sins.

He gave me a Gideon's Pocket Testament and asked me to read the Psalms. I did. Every night I would read from them. And it was at this time that the Lord was quietly melting my stone cold heart.

#### A NEW LIFE BEGINS

One night I was reading Psalm 34. I came upon the 6th verse, which says, "This poor man cried, and the Lord heard him, and saved him from all his troubles."

It was at this moment, in 1987, that I began to pour out my heart to God. Everything seemed to hit me at once. The guilt from what I did... the disgust at what I had become... late that night in my cold cell, I got down on my knees and I began to cry to Jesus Christ.

I told Him that I was sick and tired of doing evil. I asked Jesus to forgive me for all my sins. I spent a good while on my knees praying to Him. When I got up it felt as if a very heavy but invisible chain that had been around me for so many years was broken. A peace flooded over me. I did not understand what was happening. But in my heart I just knew that my life, somehow, was going to be different.

#### A DECADE OF FREEDOM

More than eleven years have gone by since I had that first talk with the Lord. So many good things have happened in my life since. Jesus Christ has allowed me to start an outreach ministry right here in the prison where I have been given permission by prison officials to work

in the "Special Needs Unit" where men who have various emotional and coping problems are housed. I can pray with them as we read our Bibles together. I get the chance to show them a lot of brotherly love and compassion.

I have worked as the Chaplain's clerk and also have a letter writing ministry. In addition, the Lord has made ways for me to share with millions, via TV programs such as Inside Edition in 1993 and A&E Investigative Reporter in 1997, what He has done in my life as well as to warn others about the dangers of getting involved in the occult.

I have also shared my testimony on several Christian TV programs such as The 700 Club in 1997 and The Coral Ridge Hour (Dr. James Kennedy) in 1999. For all these opportunities I am most thankful, and I do not feel I deserve this.

#### THERE'S HOPE FOR YOU TOO

One of my favorite passages of Scripture is Romans 10:13. It says, "For whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved." Here it is clear that God has no favorites. He rejects no one, but welcomes all who call upon Him.

I know that God is a God of mercy who is willing to forgive. He is perfectly able to restore and heal our hurting and broken lives. I have discovered from the Bible that Jesus Christ died for our sins. Yet He was without sin. He took our place on that cross. He shed His blood as the full and complete payment God required for our wrongdoing.

The Bible also says, "For all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God" (Romans 3:23). Furthermore, it says, "For the wages of sin is death; but the gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord" (Romans 6:23).

These passages make it clear that everyone has sinned. Yes, some like myself did so more than others. But all have done things wrong. Therefore we must all make the decision to acknowledge our sins before God and be sorry for them. We need to turn from our lives of sin as well as believe that Christ was and is the Son of God.

You must believe that Jesus Christ died and was buried, and on the third day He rose again in victory, for death could not hold Him. Ask Christ to forgive you. Declare Him as Lord of your life and do not be ashamed to do so. To reject Jesus Christ and His work on the cross is to reject God's perfect and only gift of salvation and eternal life.

#### HERE'S YOUR CHANCE

Friend, here is your chance to get things right with God. The Bible

says, "If you confess with your mouth that Jesus Christ is Lord, and if you believe in your heart that God has raised Him from the dead, you shall be saved. For with the heart mankind believes unto righteousness, and with the mouth confession of salvation is made" (Romans 10:9,10). So believe in your heart that these words from the Bible are true.

Please consider what I am saying. I beg you with all my heart to place your faith in Christ right now. Tomorrow is promised to no one.

You see, I am not sharing this message to simply tell you an interesting story. Rather I want you to taste the good-ness of God in my life, a man who was once a devil worshipper and a murderer, to show you that Jesus Christ is about forgiveness, hope and change.

I was involved in the occult and I got burned. I became a cruel killer and threw away my life as well as destroyed the lives of others. Now I have discovered that Christ is my answer and my hope. He broke the chains of mental confusion and depression that had me bound. Today I have placed my life in His hands. I only wish I knew Jesus before all these crimes happened – they would not have happened.

God bless you and thank you for reading this.

With Love in Christ,  
David Berkowitz  
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JESUS CHRIST, THE TRUE TREASURE AND PEARL OF GREAT PRICE  
by David Berkowitz