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## My Story, Part 4

—By Emanuel Schrock

Welcome to the fourth and last part of Emanuel Schrock's true life story.

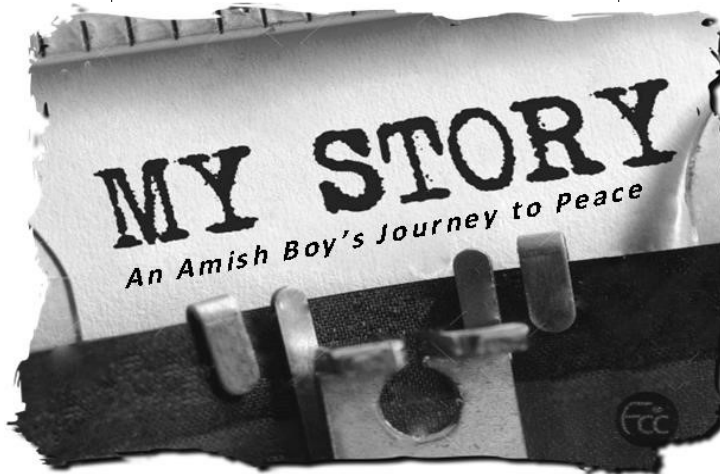
### 4. The Answer

Perhaps you are in the same condition that I was. Perhaps you, too, would like to be born again and have tried to persuade God to save you, but He seems to remain distant. Perhaps your conscience is pressing down on you with guilt. Maybe you are stuck like I was, and you feel that you have tried very hard to please God, but He doesn't seem to care. You have tried your institution's prescribed way of reaching God, but somehow you fell through the cracks, and the formula didn't work for you as it seems to have worked for others. Maybe you are terrified at the thought of meeting God, as I was. And maybe, just maybe, you hate the sin that you are living in, like I did, but you keep going back to it. Maybe you, too, fall asleep on a tear-soaked pillow, praying that you will not die, because it is the only prayer you dare pray.

I know all about that. Fear and misery were my companions for months and years. The devil made me the object of

his amusement, dangling my soul in that miserable space between damnation and salvation, where I had the knowledge of salvation, but not the faith to receive it. You and I both know the hellish torment of that space.

As a former companion of your misery, I have a few things to say to you. First,



understand that there is nothing wrong with you. You are feeling exactly the way you should. You and I are sinners, and the guilt, the torment and misery, and the separation from the God we long to know, should only be expected. Hell from beneath is calling our name, because we belong to it. It owns us, because of our sins and our filth. If home is where the heart is, then the only home

we dare hope to find for our sinful hearts is hell.

Perhaps you have told yourself to shake off this misery and get a grip on life. No, my friend. Because of your sin, you and misery belong to each other. You and I became the products of the sum total of all our choices in life, choices that we squandered and forfeited for moments of pleasure and enjoyment, at the high cost of disobedience to God. If God is indeed a God of justice as He claims and as our consciences have been telling us all of our lives, then there can be only one end for people like you and me. We dare not even implore the goodness of God, because His very goodness condemns our filth.

Ephesians 2:12 gives us a perfect description of our serious condition: *That at that time ye were without Christ, having no hope, and without God in the world.* The darkest and most hopeless condition to be in is to be without God. Without God, there is no hope, and sin, my friend, has cast you and me into that hopeless chasm of godlessness.

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## Hope

There is hope, though, because God is still God. I will talk to you for a minute about hope, but do not dare ask what you must do to find it or to receive it. For now, you must stay motionless in your bed of despair. Your efforts to rise will only cause you to lose sight of the hope that you may yet find.

There was once a sinner like you and me on a cross beside the Lord Jesus. Sin had caught up with him, and he was dying. He understood that the nails that held his hands and feet to the cross were the sharp, bitter claws of justice. He knew he belonged on that cross, that this was the end he deserved.

But there was a Man on the middle cross who did not belong there. The sins that held the Man Jesus on the cross were not His own. In his dying moments, the sinner understood an eternal truth that is still ringing down through the ages and now reaches you in your despair: the just was dying for the unjust. The sins of billions of lifetimes of sinners were being paid for as the perfect Son of God bled away His life on a cruel and bloody Roman cross. With one shuddering sigh, He yielded His spirit to the hungry claws of death—the same claws that have been reaching for you and me. In that instant, the awful deed was done. Sin's sacrifice was made. Guilt and condemnation could not stand in the face of innocence crucified. Justice could find no fault with the death of this good Man, and it was forced to agree to the terms of forgiveness that grace now offers to you, the sinner, for the contract was signed in

blood. On that mountain outside of Jerusalem, beneath the cross of Jesus, a holy and eternal agreement took place: sin, death, and hell had met their match, and they could no longer hold claim to that miserable sinner lying in his bed of despair.

Do you see it now, my friend? Will you now rise and shake off the weight of sins that are no longer yours to bear? Will you take a look at that bloody cross, and will you sign your own name in agreement that, yes, it is indeed true, that justice has indeed been served, and you are free?



Can you, dare you, look at the Lord Jesus hanging on the cross, and say, “No, I dare not believe that it is enough”? Do you understand that this is your final hope, that apart from it, there is no other? If you will not have this righteous Man as your sin-bearer, then you are forever left to your own devices and you dare not expect any help from God, because God has invested all His help in the Lord Jesus and has offered Him to you. All that God wants for you, and what you

have been looking for to make you perfect, is found in Jesus. You may take Him or leave Him; you will not make God richer or poorer by your decision. The choice is yours.

Don't take my word for it. Consider these words from the Bible, from the book of Romans:

**Romans 3:24** *Being justified (made right) freely by his grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus:*

**25** *Whom God hath set forth to be a propitiation (substitute in my place) through faith in his blood, to declare his righteousness for the remission of sins that are past, through the forbearance of God;*

**26** *To declare, I say, at this time his righteousness: that he might be just, and the justifier of him which believeth in Jesus.*

**27** *Where is boasting then? It is excluded. By what law? of works? Nay: but by the law of faith.*

**28** *Therefore we conclude that a man is justified by faith without the deeds of the law.*

Do you see that God can remain just and make you just at the same time? Do you understand that God is able to exercise the full force of His righteousness and find you innocent? Do you know that you can now look the law square in the face and say to it, “Justice has been served, and you can find no fault in me”? Do you, my friend, believe that the righteousness of the Lord Jesus Christ Himself has been given to you, for you to take shelter in from the piercing eyes of the law? If you believe these

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things, the devil has lost you, and you have passed from death to life.

**John 5:24:** *Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that heareth my word, and believeth on him that sent me, hath everlasting life, and shall not come into condemnation; but is passed from death unto life.*

But there is more:

**Romans 8:31** *What shall we then say to these things? If God be for us, who can be against us?*

**32** *He that spared not his own Son, but delivered him up for us all, how shall he not with him also freely give us all things?*

**33** *Who shall lay any thing to the charge of God's elect? It is God that justifieth.*

**34** *Who is he that condemneth? It is Christ that died, yea rather, that is risen again, who is even at the right hand of God, who also maketh intercession for us.*

Is there anyone greater than God? If God has forever proven that He is for you by not sparing His own Son, who or what has the power to condemn you? Your sins can't; they have been buried in the death of Christ. The law can't; it has been cleared by the righteous blood of Christ. Your conscience cannot, because the sins that made it miserable are not to be found anymore. Even God Himself cannot condemn you, because He cannot condemn His Son.

There is still more:

**Hebrews 6:17** *Wherein God, willing more abundantly to shew unto the heirs of promise the immutability of his counsel, confirmed it by an oath:*

**18** *That by two immutable things, in which it was impossible for God to lie, we might have a strong consolation, who have fled for refuge to lay hold upon the hope set before us:*

**19** *Which hope we have as an anchor of the soul, both sure and steadfast, and which entereth into that within the veil.*

Do you know why God can offer salvation to you that is certain and guaranteed to work? It is because God Himself has sworn with an oath that He is satisfied with that which Christ has done on your behalf. Christ entered into the place where sinful man was not allowed to enter—the Holy place behind the veil, into the very presence of God, where He reconciled you to God with His righteous blood. He now offers this hope as an anchor for your soul, a sure and steadfast stronghold of promise that will keep your soul safely secured to Christ; you must only lay hold of it and make it your refuge.

Consider this prophecy of the Lord Jesus:

**Isaiah 53:3** *He is despised and rejected of men; a man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief: and we hid as it were our faces from him; he was despised, and we esteemed him not.*

**4** *Surely he hath borne our griefs, and carried our sorrows: yet we did esteem him stricken, smitten of God, and afflicted.*

**5** *But he was wounded for our transgressions, he was bruised for our iniquities: the chastisement of our peace was upon him; and with his stripes we are healed.*

**6** *All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned everyone to his own*

*way; and the LORD hath laid on him the iniquity of us all.*

**7** *He was oppressed, and he was afflicted, yet he opened not his mouth: he is brought as a lamb to the slaughter, and as a sheep before her shearers is dumb, so he openeth not his mouth.*

**8** *He was taken from prison and from judgment: and who shall declare his generation? for he was cut off out of the land of the living: for the transgression of my people was he stricken.*

**9** *And he made his grave with the wicked, and with the rich in his death; because he had done no violence, neither was any deceit in his mouth.*

**10** *Yet it pleased the LORD to bruise him; he hath put him to grief: when thou shalt make his soul an offering for sin, he shall see his seed, he shall prolong his days, and the pleasure of the LORD shall prosper in his hand.*

Do you see it now? Do you see that surely He has borne your sins; that literally, He made your sins His very own, and He bore the shame, the guilt, and the punishment of them on a lonely cross? Do you understand that when the Bible says Christ was *stricken of God*, it means that God struck Him down, because in that moment, Christ became what you are: a sinner condemned to die? Do you see that the body of Jesus was wounded and bruised to a bloody mess, so that the sins you committed in your body could be forgiven to the uttermost?

You see, the whole purpose from the very beginning—the baby in the manger who was God in human flesh; the Man, who was perfect in everything that He did; the Man who was the first not to obey sin and temptation, but to always obey His Father



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every minute of every day of every year of His life on earth—he whole purpose of the Lord Jesus Christ coming to earth in a body of flesh—was so for that one moment in time He could bear the enormous debt of sin you owed. He paid it all; therefore, there is nothing left for you to pay. You are made free, forgiven, justified, righteous, and fully accepted by God on the basis of that glorious and bloody sacrifice. Trust it now, and you are born again. Believe that it is true, and you have escaped judgment.

Are you still not convinced? Well, the Bible is not finished with you yet.

**Romans 5:6** *For when we were yet without strength, in due time Christ died for the ungodly.*

*7 For scarcely for a righteous man will one die: yet peradventure for a good man some would even dare to die.*

*8 But God commendeth his love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us.*

*9 Much more then, being now justified by his blood, we shall be saved from wrath through him.*

*10 For if, when we were enemies, we were reconciled to God by the death of his Son, much more, being reconciled, we shall be saved by his life.*

Think about it. When you were yet without strength, Christ died for the ungodly. Are you not ungodly? Is it not for you, then, that Christ died? And when did He die? Did He wait until you had shown evidence that you would love Him for it? No! He died while you were still without the strength to do anything to help yourself. He made the first move, because you did not have the strength to make it yourself. He opened the door because you could not; all that is left for you to do is to walk through. He paid the price, and all you can do is to take it as your own. Will you? You would be a fool to stay wallowing in your doom as a condemned sinner when all you have to

do is reach out and grab hold of the hand that will save you.

## Repentance

Jesus said in Luke 13:3, “. . . *except ye repent, ye shall all likewise perish.*”

For years, I wondered what repentance was. I wanted to repent, because I knew that I would not be saved unless I did; but for a long time, the issue of repentance is what kept me from coming to Christ. I had made it into a condition I had to meet before Christ would save me. It was another obstacle that stood between me and God, and I was confused on how to overcome it.

I thought repentance meant being sorry for my sins, so I turned my focus on trying to see how sinful I was so that I could be sorry; but when I tried to repent, I was scared at my lack of remorse for my sins, and I didn't dare hope that God would accept my repentance as genuine.

The Bible makes it very clear that only those who repent will be saved. It is the dividing line between being a saint and a sinner. It is the difference between heaven and hell. Biblical repentance is not something that you keep trying to accomplish, but never know if you truly did. If you have repented, you know it for a fact; it is not something you keep trying to reach but never arrive at. There is a way you can know that you have truly repented.

**Acts 20:20** *“I kept back nothing that was profitable unto you, but have shewed you, and have taught you publickly, and from house to house,*

*21 Testifying both to the Jews, and also to the Greeks, repentance toward God, and faith toward our Lord Jesus Christ.*

Notice that repentance and faith are linked together. They are not a series of steps that must be followed in the right order; repentance and faith happen at the same time. Biblical repentance is a change in your mind and heart, and not

just in your feelings or actions. It is to change your opinion about something.

Repentance that leads to salvation requires a change of your mind and opinion concerning the Lord Jesus Christ. Paul gives an example in his letter to the Philippians:

**Philippians 3:3** *For we are the circumcision, which worship God in the spirit, and rejoice in Christ Jesus, and have no confidence in the flesh.*

*4 Though I might also have confidence in the flesh. If any other man thinketh that he hath whereof he might trust in the flesh, I more:*

*5 Circumcised the eighth day, of the stock of Israel, of the tribe of Benjamin, an Hebrew of the Hebrews; as touching the law, a Pharisee;*

*6 Concerning zeal, persecuting the church; touching the righteousness which is in the law, blameless.*

*7 But what things were gain to me, those I counted loss for Christ.*

*8 Yea doubtless, and I count all things but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord: for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and do count them but dung, that I may win Christ,*

*9 And be found in him, not having mine own righteousness, which is of the law, but that which is through the faith of Christ, the righteousness which is of God by faith:*

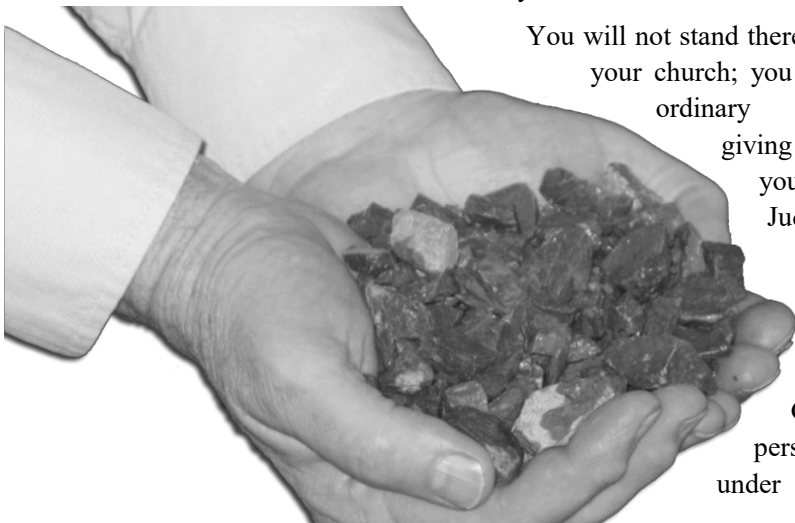
The word *repentance* is not mentioned in this passage, but that is exactly what Paul is describing. He listed all the good things that he had done. He was an Israelite, a Hebrew of the Hebrews, and a Pharisee. According to the law, he was blameless; that is, no one could prove him guilty of breaking the law. But there came a time when he heard about the Lord Jesus and that Christ offered him a righteousness that was better than his own. At that point, Paul had to make a

decision; he was forced to decide between two options: (a) he could keep trusting in the things he had to offer as righteousness, or (b) he could cast those aside and take the righteousness that Christ offered to him. This decision required a change of mind and heart toward Christ, and that is what repentance is about. It is to stop trusting in one thing and begin trusting another. It may not be an easy thing for you to do, but it is not complicated. Repentance is not about changing your view or opinion about yourself. It is to change your view and opinion about Jesus Christ, and is therefore something at which you can immediately arrive, simply by believing the gospel.

## Conclusion

When I was a young boy at home, the man we worked for collected special stones called fossils. We children would spend hours in creek beds and gravel pits searching for these. When we found them, we gave them to this man, who always gave us candy and other goodies. It was always a big excitement to bring him our finds and to receive our rewards.

One day, my brothers and I were in the log yard, which was covered with limestone gravel. Suddenly we noticed that many of the stones had special marks on them that looked like fossils. We got excited, and as we looked around, we discovered they were everywhere. We



started filling our pockets, but they soon filled up, so we also used our hats. As we gathered the “fossils,” we chattered excitedly about how pleased the man would be with us and about all the goodies we would receive.

After we had filled our hats, we took them to him, expecting him to be pleased and excited with what we had to offer. To our surprise and deep disappointment, he looked at them and started scolding us. “Those aren’t fossils; they’re gravel! What do you think you’re doing? Go put them back where you got them!” Gravel? No, it couldn’t be. We showed him the marks, but it was no use. We had picked up gravel to give to the boss in exchange for goodies. As we carried our hats full of rocks back to their place in the log yard, we were not only disappointed, but we were also embarrassed and ashamed. Not only did we not receive the reward we were expecting, but also all the “fossils” we had worked so hard to gather had been rejected by the man we had gathered them for, and we were left with nothing. After all our efforts, we only had a pile of gravel.

When the great Day of Judgment comes, all people will be there. It won’t matter what church or religion they are from; all will be judged by the same Judge. You will be there, too. As you stand before Almighty God, the Creator of heaven and earth, and His eyes pierce into your soul, you will be alone.

You will not stand there as a member of your church; you will only be an ordinary human being, giving an answer to your Creator and Judge.

Your church will not be there with you; you will face God as the person you are under your religious

cover.

What will you answer when He points to your sins and says that you are guilty?

What will you offer Him that will have the power to satisfy His justice and allow you to enter into heaven?

Will you offer your church membership?

Your baptism?

Your repentance?

Your confession?

Your good Christian life?

What if He still points at you and says, “I never knew you. Depart from me, you worker of iniquity”?

Will you be like my brothers and I were, hoping to receive a reward for what you worked so hard to get, only to be rejected and turned away, discovering too late that what you brought has no value?

The problem with our gravel was not that we didn’t have enough; it was that we had the wrong kind. Will you have something to offer to God that will have real value, or will you be sent away with your hat full of gravel, realizing that God would not accept what you had worked all your life to establish?

That would be a tragedy.

You need something that you can be absolutely sure will pass the test of that day. Only one thing is guaranteed by God to do so: the blood of Jesus. It alone has the power to please God on your behalf. If you will place your faith and trust in Him alone, you will be guaranteed to be accepted of God, for God accepts the blood of His Son.

I challenge you to think about the reality of these things. As each day passes, you and I are moving closer to that great day. It is the one thing we have in common. I am ready for it, and I have no fear, because I rest in Jesus Christ and His blood. I will meet God as my friend and Jesus as my

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Savior and brother; death is only the door I must walk through to meet Him.

## Are YOU ready?

### You can be.

**1 John 4:15** *Whosoever shall confess that Jesus is the Son of God, God dwelleth in him, and he in God.*

**16** *And we have known and believed the love that God hath to us. God is love; and he that dwelleth in love dwelleth in God, and God in him.*

**17** *Herein is our love made perfect, that we may have boldness in the day of judgment: because as he is, so are we in this world.*

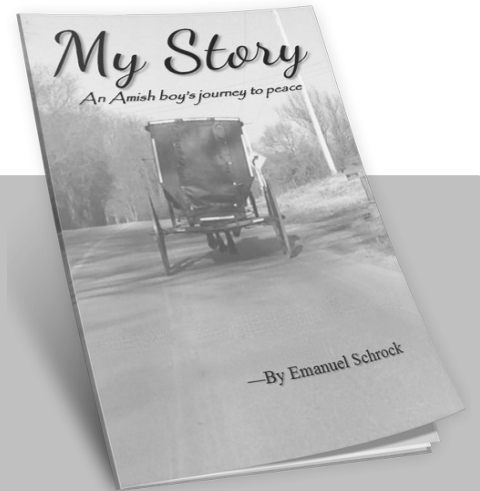
**18** *There is no fear in love; but perfect love casteth out fear: because fear hath torment. He that feareth is not made perfect in love.*

**19** *We love him, because he first loved us.*

**This concludes the fourth and final part of *My Story*, written by Emanuel Schrock.**

**If you'd like to contact Emanuel directly, you are invited to do so. God bless you, as continue to make your way toward the Promised Land.**

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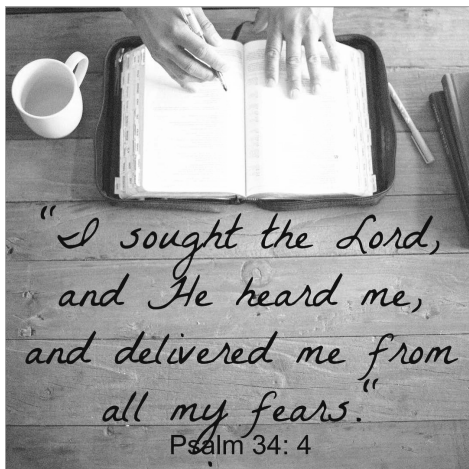


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## Are You Afraid?

—By Martin Miller



What are you afraid of? It seems like everyone has a fear of something. You could be afraid of the dark, or maybe you have a fear of snakes or spiders. Maybe it's a fear of the future, of the unknown, or the fear of being alone. Most, if not all of us, probably have at least one of these fears. Fear can be a good thing, warning us of danger. For example, let's say we are on the way to church on a Sunday

morning, and suddenly we see a horse galloping down the road toward us. The horse is not pulling a buggy, and no one is in control of the horse. It is apparent that this a runaway horse. So, how do we respond?

Fear can do two things, it will either move us into action or it will paralyze us. Our first impulse should be to take action and try to stop the runaway horse before it causes an accident. But what if we just shrink back in fear and say there is nothing we can do and hopefully everything will turn out okay? Let's say the horse continues on his way and eventually causes an accident where someone is seriously injured. The accident could have been avoided had we responded correctly to our fear and stopped the horse. So, my question to you is, how do you respond to your fears? Are you constantly filled with worry and dread because of your fears? Let me tell you a little bit of my story and how God

has released me from those fears that I once had.

As a young boy growing up, I remember hearing about God, about Jesus, and about heaven and hell. But above all that, I remember very distinctly hearing over and over about God's judgement, about the end of the world and Jesus' return, and of one day standing before God and giving an account of my life here on earth. That alone was enough to make me fearful of God, and rightfully so.

When we understand that God is almighty, that He is righteous, holy, and perfect, and that no sin can enter into His presence, and we realize how helpless we are by ourselves, how can we help but be fearful and afraid? We are supposed to have a fear of God, right? But, just like the story about the runaway horse, so the fear of God can cause us either to take action or to shrink back and let that fear consume us.

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Does the fear of God move you to study God's word and learn more about His salvation, or does your fear cause you to turn away from God and His word because you just don't understand? Let's take a look at Proverbs 14:27: *The fear of the Lord is a fountain of life, to depart from the snares of death.* So, the fear of God can deliver us from death to life!

My greatest fear was the fear of the end of the world, of the time when Jesus would return, when I would stand before my Creator and give Him an account of my life. The thought of dying always filled me with a great feeling of dread. I wanted to do what was right. I sincerely wanted to please God, but I couldn't get rid of that fear of not knowing if I was right with God. I could usually push those fears to the back of my mind, especially at work, or when I was with a group of people; but, when night came and I would lay in my bed, those fears would come back and remind me that tonight could be the night when Jesus comes back.

How I hoped with all my heart that He would give me another day. Each morning I would wake up with a great sense of relief that I was still here. The cycle continued every day. I would push my fears to the back of my mind, only to have them come back with full force at nighttime. I remember how I would look forward to a vacation or another big event in my life, and I would hope and pray that Jesus would not come back before then. How selfish of me to want those earthly pleasures above the heavenly kingdom that God has promised to those who are in Christ.

But, I did not know if I was in Christ. I

considered myself to be a good person, I knew I was sinful and far from perfect, but I wasn't that bad, was I? I mean, I went to church regularly, I was baptized, and I followed the rules of the church most of the time; so, I should be okay, right? Well, you might think so, but deep down inside me something still wasn't right. I hardly read my Bible and almost never prayed, because God seemed so far away. I knew I didn't have a relationship with God. I wondered if that was even possible.

I finally got to the point where my fears got the best of me, and I became depressed. I didn't see anything exciting in my future. I didn't know why I was even here. Life just seemed meaningless. Eventually, through a series of events, I finally turned to the Bible for answers instead of looking within. I opened God's Word and read the gospel of John and several of Paul's letters.

Before, I would only read the Bible because I thought I should or because it made me feel better. This time it was different. It was like reading it for the very first time, like it was actually meant for me! Could this really be true? Read John 5:24: *Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that heareth my word, and believeth on Him that sent me, hath everlasting life, and shall not come into condemnation; but is passed from death unto life.*

Wow! Could this be what Proverbs 14:27 is talking about? I could take the time to try and explain to you what I believe this verse means, but, I don't think that's really necessary. Let's read it again, very slowly. *He that heareth my word, and believeth on Him that sent me, hath everlasting life, and shall not come into*

*condemnation; but is passed from death unto life.*

Now, back to my story. The next few weeks I continued to read my Bible regularly. It was as if I couldn't get enough. Slowly, I began to understand why God sent His Son to die on the cross for us. One night as I was talking to a friend, I finally recognized how sinful I really was. I knew I could never measure up to God's standards. All the good I was doing was as filthy rags in God's eyes (Isaiah 64:6). I realized that I couldn't save myself, that it was only through faith in Jesus Christ and in what He has done for me (John 14:6, Ephesians 2:8-9).

That very night Jesus became personal to me! I didn't realize it right away, but all of a sudden, I noticed that I was free from all those fears. What a feeling of relief to know that God was watching over me, and that He loves me enough to die for me! What a feeling of peace and comfort to lie down each night and know that I am safe in God's care. I don't need to fear death, for death is just a gateway to eternal life for all those who trust in Jesus as their Savior.

I pray that if you are bogged down with fear and worry, that you, too, may find the freedom and peace in Christ, our risen Savior, and in Him alone (Acts 4:12). May God be with you as you search His holy Word.

The author of the article, Martin Miller, would love to hear from you. If you would like to write to him about this article, you may contact him at:

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**END**

## The Word of God

Concerning judgment, Jesus makes two powerful statements in John 12:47-48.

He says: a) *I [Jesus] judge him not*, and then He goes on to say b) *the WORD that I have spoken, the SAME shall judge him in the last day.*

Dear friend, the WORD, which we hold in our hands, has also been etched in eternal stone, and one day the WORD (not Jesus) will stand as a witness in eternity.

For that reason, we must read the WORD, understand the WORD, and make a choice to either abide by the WORD or be judged by the WORD.

Thank you, Lord for giving us the WORD. – Joe Keim

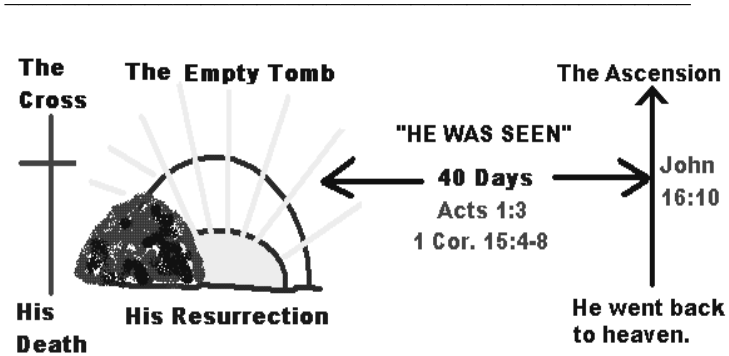
# Part 11 AND IT SHALL COME TO PASS

As the world continues to turn its back on God, we want to take a look at what the future holds according to the One who is the Beginning and the End—God! We hope you enjoy and benefit from this series, courtesy of Middletown Bible Church. Follow along, fill in the blanks, and look up! May we all be ready for the return of Jesus Christ!

## You will need a Bible for this lesson.

About 2000 years ago Jesus Christ visited this earth and died on the cross to provide salvation for sinful men. He then rose again from the dead and returned to heaven. Will Jesus Christ ever come to earth again?

After Jesus died and rose again, He appeared to His disciples for a period of 40 days (Acts 1:3). What happened to Jesus at the end of these 40 days (Acts 1:9; Luke 24:51)? \_\_\_\_\_



After Jesus disappeared out of their sight, the disciples were still looking up toward heaven (Acts 1:9-10). As they were looking, two angels stood by them dressed in white (Acts 1:10). These angels told the disciples something very important: "This same Jesus, which is taken up from you into heaven, shall so \_\_\_\_\_ in like manner (in the same way) as ye have seen Him go into heaven" (Acts 1:11).

God wanted these disciples to know that Jesus Christ would come back to earth someday! The two angels made one thing very clear in Acts 1:11. What they were saying was this: Jesus Christ will come in the same way that you saw Him go. As He went up, so He will come down!

HOW DID JESUS GO?	HOW WILL JESUS COME?
He went up!	He will come down!
He left earth to go to heaven	He will leave heaven to come to earth.
He left from the earth.	He will come down to the earth.
He left in a cloud (Acts 1:9).	He will return in the clouds (Matthew 24:30; Revelation 1:7).
He left in a real body (a resurrection body).	He will return in a real body.
When He left people saw Him (Acts 1:9).	When He comes people will see Him (Revelation 1:7).
It was JESUS CHRIST who went up into heaven.	It will be this "SAME JESUS" who will come again (Acts 1:11). The same Person who left will be the same Person who will return!

### What Will His Coming Be Like?

There are two passages that very clearly describe our Lord's second coming to the earth. They are found in Revelation 19:11-21 and Matthew 24:29-31. What do you learn about the second coming of Jesus Christ as you read these verses? Will He come



alone or will others come with Him? What will He do to His enemies? What will He do to the beast and the false prophet? Will people see Him coming (Matthew 24:30)? \_\_\_\_\_ What Name will Jesus have written on Him (Revelation 19:16)? \_\_\_\_\_

### A Comparison to the Days of Noah

Jesus once spoke to His disciples and said, "But as the days of Noah were, so shall also the coming of the Son of man be" (Matthew 24:37). This means that Jesus was making a comparison. He was comparing the days of Noah with the time of His coming. He was saying, "My coming will be very similar to what

happened in the days of Noah. If you understand what happened in the days of Noah, then you will understand what will happen when I come to earth."

Let's think about the days of Noah and this will help us to understand our Lord's second coming to earth:

**See comparison chart below, before moving on to next page...**

THE DAYS OF NOAH	THE COMING OF CHRIST
In the days of Noah men were very wicked and God had to judge them (Genesis 6:5-7).	In the days before Christ comes men will be very wicked (Matthew 24:12) and God will have to judge the world.
In the days of Noah men made fun of Noah and did not believe that God would really send a flood.	In the days before the coming of Christ men will make fun of what the Bible says and will not believe that Christ is coming again (see 2 Peter 3:3-4).
In the days of Noah God waited a LONG TIME before sending judgment. God waited 120 years during which time Noah built the ark (Genesis 6:3). God was very LONGSUFFERING (waiting a long time before getting angry).	In the days before Christ comes God will be very LONGSUFFERING (2 Peter 3:9). For the past 2,000 years God has been waiting and giving men an opportunity to be saved.
In the days before the flood Enoch was taken to heaven before God judged the world	In the days before Christ returns to the earth believers will be taken to heaven before the world is judged (John 14:3; 1 Thessalonians 4:13-18).
In the days of Noah the wicked people were surprised by the flood. They were eating and drinking and doing other normal things. Suddenly the flood came and destroyed them! Then it was too late (see Matthew 24:36-39).	There will be wicked people who will be completely surprised when Christ comes to judge the world. They will be eating and drinking and doing other normal things. Suddenly Christ will come, and then it will be too late!
In the days of Noah the righteous people (Noah and those in the ark) were left on the earth. After the flood those in the ark were still alive and their job was to multiply and repopulate the earth (1 Peter 3:20; Genesis 9:1).	In the day when Christ returns the righteous people (the saved people) will be left on the earth. These people will remain on the earth and will become part of Christ's kingdom (see Matthew 25:34). Their job will be to multiply and repopulate the earth
In the days of Noah the wicked people were taken away (Matthew 24:38-39). This means that they were destroyed by the flood.	In the day when Christ returns the wicked people will be taken away (Matthew 24:40-41; Luke 17:34-37). This means that God will judge them and they will be removed from the earth (Matthew 13:41-42).

## The Two Comings of Christ

Today we are living between the two comings of Christ. Christ came to earth the first time about 2,000 years ago, born as a baby in Bethlehem. Someday Christ will come to this earth a second time—the second coming of Christ.

The first coming has already happened. Christ Jesus \_\_\_\_\_ into the world to save \_\_\_\_\_ " (1 Timothy 1:15). He has already done this! "And we know that the \_\_\_\_\_ of God is (has) \_\_\_\_\_" (1 John 5:20). He has come, and the Bible also teaches that

He will come again!

The second coming of Christ is a future event. This has not yet happened. This will happen sometime in the future. Does any man know exactly when Christ will come (Matthew 24:36,42)? \_\_\_\_\_

There have been many groups of people who have tried to set dates. They have said, "We believe Christ will come in 1918" or "We believe Christ will come in 1988." But all these people have been wrong. God has told us that Christ will come again, but He has not told us WHEN.

Note: A man by the name of Edgar Whisenant, actually wrote a paperback book entitled, *88 Reasons Why the Rapture Could Be In 1988*. Over 3.2 million copies of the book were originally distributed. Of course, the date came and the rapture did not occur. The Bible teaches very clearly that date setting is impossible (Matthew 24:36, 42).

Let's think about some of the differences

**See comparison chart below, before moving on to next page...**

<b>THE FIRST COMING OF CHRIST</b> <u>The Cross</u>	<b>THE SECOND COMING OF CHRIST</b> <u>The Crown</u>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>* Christ came to die.</li> <li>* The first coming of Christ is a matter of HISTORY.</li> <li>* It has already happened!</li> <li>* It took place in the PAST.</li> <li>* Christ HAS COME (1 John 4:2).</li> <li>* Christ came to be the SAVIOR OF SINNERS (Matthew 1:21).</li> <li>* Christ came to be man's SAVIOR (John 3:17).</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>* Christ will come to rule and reign.</li> <li>* The second coming of Christ is a matter of PROPHECY.</li> <li>* God's Word tells us that it will happen!</li> <li>* It will take place in the FUTURE.</li> <li>* Christ WILL COME (Acts 1:11).</li> <li>* Christ will come to be the KING OF _____ (Rev. 19:16).</li> <li>* Christ will come to be man's JUDGE (Jude 14-15).</li> </ul>
<p><b>Which will it be for you? If you do not surrender your life to Jesus Christ, then someday you must face Him as your Judge.</b></p>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>* Christ came to earth as a newborn baby (Luke 2:7).</li> <li>* Christ came with meekness riding on a donkey (Matthew 21:1-5).</li> <li>* Christ came to bring peace to the human heart (Ephesians 2:13-19; Romans 5:1).</li> <li>* When Christ came the first time the government was in the hands of men (Herod the Great, the Romans, etc.)</li> <li>* Christ was killed by His enemies (Matthew 27:20-25).</li> <li>* When Christ came the first time He was rejected by the Jewish people (John 1:11). They crucified their Messiah.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>* Christ will come to earth as a conquering warrior (Rev.19:11-16).</li> <li>* Christ will come with power riding on a white horse (Rev. 19:11-16).</li> <li>* Christ will come to bring peace to the entire world (Isaiah 9:6-7; Zechariah 9:10).</li> <li>* When Christ comes the second time the government will be in His hands and upon His shoulder (Isaiah 9:6-7).</li> <li>* Christ will kill His enemies (2 Thess. 1:7-10; Rev. 19:21).</li> <li>* When Christ comes the second time He will be received by the Jewish people (Zechariah 12:10-11; Romans 11:25-28; Matthew 23:39).</li> </ul>
<p><b>What have you done with the One who came to save you almost 2,000 years ago? (see John 3:18; 3:36)? He came to save (1 Timothy 1:15). Has He saved you (Acts 16:30-1)?</b></p> <p><b>Are You a True Believer?</b></p>	

between the first and second comings of Christ.

## The Lord's Second Coming to Earth will be Public and Spectacular



In **Matthew 24:26** "desert" signifies a remote place. You will not find the true Messiah out there in some remote place. If someone claims that the true Messiah is located in some remote place, don't be deceived. Or, if they claim that He is to be found in secret chambers or in a private room, don't believe them. The Greek term "private room" is also found in Matthew 6:6 where the Lord was recommending private prayer, rather than public prayer for the purpose of being seen by men. The Lord's coming will not be a private affair, known by only a few people. You will not find Him in some secret location. On the contrary, His coming will be a public affair, known by everyone. "Every eye will see Him" (Rev. 1:7). The world will not miss this event. No one will say, "I wonder if the Lord has come back to earth?" It will be clear and obvious to all. His coming will not be obscure in any way.

**Matthew 24:27** cements the point further by using the illustration of a huge lightning storm, one that lights up the entire sky. A lightning storm is very public, very dramatic, very noisy, very spectacular, very hard to miss. The whole sky lights up. So also the Lord Jesus will

come in power and great glory and there will be no mistaking His return. The whole world will witness this spectacular event.

### Good News For Planet Earth!

Planet earth is filled with problems. What are some of the problems that man is facing today? Man is unable to solve these problems. Only God can get man out of the mess that man has made for himself. There is good news for Planet Earth! The Lord Jesus Christ is coming back! He will take the wrong and make it right! He will take the crooked things and make them straight! He will be able to solve the problems that our world faces. What will the world be like after Christ returns? Will it be different from the world we know today? In the next chapter we will learn about what this world will be like when Christ is ruling on earth as KING OF KINGS AND LORD OF LORDS. A new world is coming!

This same Jesus Christ who can straighten out this world and all its problems is the same Jesus Christ who can straighten out your life and the problems you face. Will you let Him do it? Tomorrow He will rule on the throne of this world. Today will you let Him rule on the throne of your life? Someday the world will be different because Christ will rule there. Today your life can be changed and made different if you let Christ rule in your heart! Someday Jesus Christ is coming to this world. Today why not let Jesus Christ come to your heart and be your Savior and King? He wants to come in.

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In his book *Discover Yourself in the Psalms*, Warren Wiersbe recalls a story told by an evangelist he heard many years ago. It went like this:

In a frontier town, a horse bolted and ran away with a wagon that had a little child

in it. Seeing that the child was in danger, a young man risked his life to catch the horse and stop it. The child who was rescued grew up to become a lawless man, and one day he stood before a judge to be sentenced for a serious crime. The prisoner recognized the judge as the man who, years before, had saved his life, so he pled for mercy on the basis of that experience. But the words from the bench silenced all his pleas: "Young man, then I was your savior; today I am your judge, and I must sentence you to be hanged."

Do you see the parallel? Jesus stands before us today as our Savior, the Lamb slain for our sins. But if we do not turn to Him in faith, He will one day stand before us as our righteous Judge. He will say: "On earth I was your Savior, but you would not believe. Here I am your Judge; depart from Me to everlasting punishment. You don't have to face the Lion in the judgment. The Lamb is waiting to save you. Believing on Him today!

In His first coming Christ came as Savior; in His second coming, He will come as judge!

**END**

### Contact The Amish Voice

1. If you have any comments, ideas, prayer requests, suggestions, or questions, or if you want to send us an article or your testimony to be printed in the *Amish Voice*.
2. If you enjoy the *Amish Voice* and would like to help us with the cost of printing and postage.
3. If you know of others who might benefit from the *Amish Voice*.

Contact us at:

The Amish Voice  
P.O. Box 128  
Savannah, OH 44874  
(419) 962-1515

## No More Wasted Years

—By Norma Miller

Just a simple line spoken over me, but such grace and wonder it held. "The things of the past, the pain, the mistakes, are not a waste. God will use those things in a wonderful way."

I always knew God was able to use everything in our lives for good, even the bad things, but I still had a mindset that suggested that some seasons of my life were simply wasted, thrown away, and irretrievable. I found myself unable to move forward as I wanted to because I wanted a do-over. God doesn't give us do-overs, my friends. He gives us something better! He gives us second chances, yes, but He gives us something much better than that. He has the ability to make something totally wonderful, beautiful and new from our mistakes and from our sin! The only thing we need to do is to confess it, repent, and give it to Him!

Let's face it; we have all done things that we are not proud of, those devastating seasons we'd love to forget, those lost things we hope to regain, the deep grief of things that happened in the past. They happened in the past, but somehow they just won't stay in the past because we can't seem to move on, and the memories keep haunting us.

Or perhaps we can't move on from hurts caused by others, or offences that remain to steal our peace. The torment of bitterness and unforgiveness is unparalleled and it keeps festering deeper and deeper, causing great pain and void.

This is a season in which God offers great grace for us to release those things into His hands, so they truly are His and no longer ours! When we make the decision to transfer these things from our hands to His all-capable ones, we give Him permission and control to turn these ashes into something beautiful and as a result, all those mistakes, hurts, failures, and disappointments are so totally NOT WASTED! This is true redemption, my friends! Jesus has already paid the price, it is up to us to receive this amazing, free gift!

No longer do the things of the past need to weigh us down, steal our joy and peace, and instead, we have the opportunity to stand in awe and amazement at the beautiful way He turns our sorrows and grief into joy unspeakable and full of glory!

There is no such thing as wasted years when they've been placed in His hands. It's ALL good! Because He makes it good. He has already accomplished all in His suffering, death, burial, and resurrection. He paid the full price. It's done. All that is left is for us to open our hearts completely so we can receive the fullness of His healing power in our lives.

Let's those difficult things to Him today, so we can release the hurt, pain, bitterness, and sorrow of the past, and be gloriously free to walk into the destiny, the plans He has for us! —Norma Miller

## Amish Voice Conference Calls (Past, Present, and Future)

Join us for a live conference call on the first Sunday of every month at 8:00 P.M. EST.

Simply dial (302) 202-1110, and then enter the conference code 409703. Join us in discussion or just listen to the call!

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### UPCOMING DISCUSSIONS

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- ◆ **Sunday Night, February 05:** Sam Troyer Testimony
- ◆ **Sunday Night, March 05** Your Eternal Home, Zion
- ◆ **Sunday Night, April 02:** Ephesians 1

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### PREVIOUS DISCUSSIONS

**(RECORDED)**

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If you missed any of our **previous conference call discussions**, dial (641) 715-3800, enter code 89752 and listen to the recordings.

**January—Allowed or Not Allowed for Christians?** What does the Bible say about things like gambling, smoking, music, alcohol, modesty, etc.

**December—Witnessing:** Are we supposed to keep the truth of the gospel to ourselves, or are we to share it with others all around us? How do we tell others about the truth and love of Jesus Christ?

**November—Victory in Jesus:** We all struggle and have problems and temptations. We might not be able to overcome the world, sin, and Satan on our own, but we can have victory in Jesus.

**October—Unity in Christ:** Is Christian unity an inward or outward thing? If we all look and dress exactly the same, does that mean that we are united? Did Jesus have inward unity in mind or outward conformity? What are the basic beliefs that should unite us as Christians?

## Topics and Testimonies Over the Phone

Now you can listen to a variety of topics that covers things such as family, parenting, testimonies, and biblical teaching. All you have to do is pick up the phone, dial a phone number, and add an access code. From there, we will give you step-by-step instructions on how to

listen to your each message for the month. Come back at the beginning of each month to listen to a whole new set of messages.

**Dial-in Number: (641) 715-3800**

**Access Code: 478499 #**

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At the end of each session, you'll have an opportunity to leave a message for us.

### January

**Why God Chose You I, II, III—30 minutes (by Greg Laurie):** (I) It seems some believers have a lack of spiritual power in their lives. As a result, they become stagnate and suffer. Greg Laurie points out that the Lord makes unlimited power and resources available to His children. We just need to access them. (II) God chose you before you chose before the world began – He chose you before you chose Him. (III) Because of the sacrifice of Jesus on the cross, we are not only forgiven, and justified, but accepted.

**The Key to Victory—30 minutes (by Charles Stanley):** You've probably been there: temptation, defeat, repentance, repeat. This cycle doesn't have to define your Christian life. God has provided a better way. You don't have to keep giving in. Learn how to win for good when temptation comes knocking.

**Adding Some Spice to Your Marriage—30 minutes (by Focus on the Family):** Pastor and author Ted Cunningham combines humor with practical advice for enjoying more connection and intimacy in your marriage.

### February

**Parenting Your Teenager When Times are Tough—30 minutes (by Focus on the Family):** Dr. Greg Smalley offers encouragement to parents who are struggling with the challenges of raising teens.

**How the Truth Can Set You Free—25 Minutes (Charles Stanley):** (I) If we focus on our position, person, and possessions in Christ, we'll be set free to fulfil God's plan for our lives. (II) For many of us, the biggest battle we'll ever face is between what we have been taught and the truth of God's Word. (III) Once we receive Jesus Christ as our Savior, we become His workmanship.

**Dealing with Discouragement—30 Minutes (by Adrian Rogers):** Any work for God is going to be met with opposition from the devil. When God's people have a mind to work the devil has a mind to wreck, and discouragement is his most valuable tool. But you can be armed against it and defeat him.

### March

**Discovering Your Love Style I, II—30 minutes (by Focus on the Family):** Counselors Milan and Kay Yerkovich offer helpful insights on learning how

you show love to others, particularly your spouse, and explain what steps you can take toward loving like God does and breaking negative patterns to create a deeper, richer marriage. (II) Counselors Milan and Kay Yerkovich offer helpful insights on learning how you show love to others, particularly your spouse, and explain what steps you can take toward loving like God does and breaking negative patterns to create a deeper, richer marriage.

**How to find Eternal Life I, II—30 minutes (by Greg Laurie)**

(I) Below the surface, everyone wrestles with the same things: loneliness, emptiness and guilt. Pastor Greg says those needs can only be filled by a relationship with Christ. (II) When we feel emotional pain, we tend to isolate ourselves...insulate ourselves. Pastor Greg helps us understand how to let down our defenses and let God in.

**Do You Have a Grudge With God? — 42 minutes (by Adrian Rogers, Love Worth Finding)**

Have you ever been resentful, angry, pouting at the way God is running our universe? Find out the four ways many of us become offended at God. We ask, "Where is God?" That happened to John the Baptist. We all have this tendency. But in this message Adrian Rogers tells you what causes it and how to deal with it.

weren't sitting together somewhere, for Paul was lying on the ground and Jesus was in heaven. Years later, Paul told the story of this conversation to a king named Agrippa. He told the king that he used to persecute Christians, but that something had happened to him one day on his way to another city to hunt down more followers of Jesus. We'll let Paul take up the story from here.

*And I punished them oft in every synagogue, and compelled them to blaspheme; and being exceedingly mad against them, I persecuted them even unto strange cities. Whereupon as I went to Damascus with authority and commission from the chief priests, at midday, O king, I saw in the way a light from heaven, above the brightness of the sun, shining round about me and them which journeyed with me.*

*And when we were all fallen to the earth, I heard a voice speaking unto me, and saying in the Hebrew tongue, Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou me? it is hard for thee to kick against the pricks. And I said, Who art thou, Lord? And he said, I am Jesus whom thou persecutest.*

*But rise, and stand upon thy feet: for I have appeared unto thee for this purpose, to make thee a minister and a witness both of these things which thou hast seen, and of those things in the which I will appear unto thee; delivering thee from the people, and from the Gentiles, unto whom now I send thee, to open their eyes, and to*

*turn them from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan unto God, that they may receive forgiveness of sins, and inheritance among them which are sanctified by faith that is in me (Acts 26:11-18).*

Here was Paul in an all-out war against the Christians. Jesus took that personally, yet He stopped Paul and talked to him about turning people to God. Paul didn't have much to say in the conversation. He said only four words! What is of interest to us is what Jesus said about forgiveness of sins. First, notice that nobody was asking Jesus to forgive anybody. Paul wasn't begging and praying, "Oh God, have mercy on us poor sinners!" Jesus needed no persuasion to talk about the subject. The second thing I want to point out is that Jesus said nothing about giving them forgiveness of sins. That's right. He did not say, "I will forgive them, if..." He said, "That they may receive forgiveness of sins."

Since He said nothing about giving forgiveness, but only that they receive forgiveness, we can see that the giving part was already a done deal for Jesus. The only thing required yet was getting people to receive it.

Now back to my personal story. During all the time I was asking and begging and confessing to try to get God to forgive me, Jesus had already provided forgiveness for me.

When Jesus said, "It is finished" (John 19:30), He meant it. The work of salvation was done. There is nothing more we can do or add to it. It is finished.

While people have been trying to persuade Jesus to give them forgiveness of sins,

He has been trying to persuade them to receive forgiveness of sins—to simply trust in Him and in what He has done! As you read this, know that God has already loved you and put all your sins on His innocent Son, the Lord Jesus (Isaiah 53:6). Since He has already done it, it doesn't take your faith to make Him do it! He's just been waiting on you to find out what He did and to believe it.

I will give a true-life illustration that might help to explain this. One day I went to a restaurant and ordered a meal. In doing so, I had a bill to pay. That bill had to get paid or I would have owed a debt to the restaurant; but before I was done eating, the waitress came and announced to me that someone else had paid my bill for me! Another man's money made me right with the restaurant before I was even aware of it. My faith didn't move him to pay. The announcement of his payment moved me to believe. This illustrates the gospel quite accurately. While we were facing death for our sins, God, out of His great love for us, gave His Son to die in our place. The Holy Spirit then comes and announces to us through the gospel that our sins have been paid for. We believe in response to what has already been done.

*And, having made peace through the blood of his cross, by him to reconcile all things unto himself; by him, I say, whether they be things in earth, or things in heaven. And you, that were sometime alienated and enemies in your mind by wicked works, yet now hath he reconciled in the body of his flesh through death, to present you holy and unblameable and unreprouvable in his sight: if ye continue in the faith grounded and settled, and be not moved away from the hope of the gospel, which ye have heard, and which was preached to every creature which is under heaven; whereof I Paul am made a minister (Colossians 1:20-23).*



Continued  
Next Page

*But God commendeth his love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us. Much more then, being now justified by his blood, we shall be saved from wrath through him. For if, when we were enemies, we were reconciled to God by the death of his Son, much more, being reconciled, we shall be saved by his life (Romans 5:8-10).*

So, if you happened to hear a conversation between Jesus and another man, you wouldn't hear Jesus say a word about what you must do to get Him to forgive you. He would show His nail-scarred hands and say, "Son, be of good cheer; thy sins be forgiven thee" (Matthew 9:2).

There is nothing as wonderful as knowing that God is happy with you because Jesus has taken your sins away. This is not just a belief. Many have experienced this and you can, too.

*Even as David also describeth the blessedness of the man, unto whom God imputeth righteousness without works, saying, Blessed are they whose iniquities are forgiven, and whose sins are covered. Blessed is the man to whom the Lord will not impute sin (Romans 4:6-8).*

Maybe you've been trying to get right with God by your own good works. Do you not realize that the bill is much higher than your good works could ever pay? The bill is so high that only Jesus,

the sinless Lamb of God, could pay it.

*For the wages of sin is death; but the gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord (Romans 6:23).*

Well, then, what do you about this? You have sinned and have a debt that you will never be able to pay. You are a sinner in need of a Savior. You may not be able to

heaven, but I now trust in the blood and righteousness of Your Son and my Savior, Jesus Christ. Thank You that He is seated on Your right hand as the go-between to keep me right with You forever. I believe that I am forgiven and that You are completely happy with me through the blood and righteousness of Jesus. I want to live for You forevermore. In the name of Jesus, I pray. Amen!

For further verification, read the following portions of the Bible:

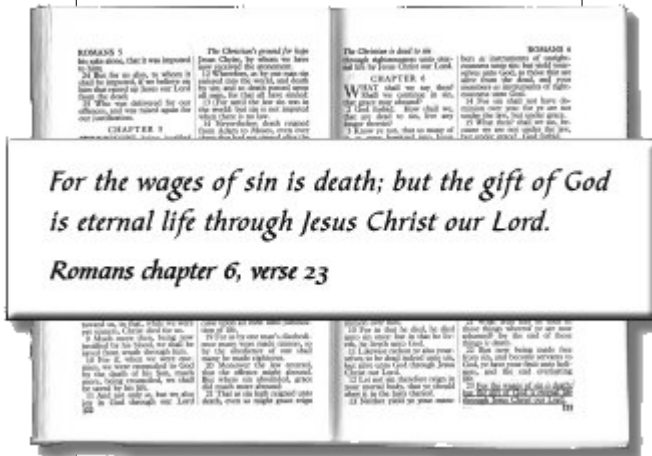
- Romans 3:20-28
- Romans 4-5
- Colossians 1
- Ephesians 1-2
- Hebrews 9-10
- The gospel of John

Read them with the following questions in mind concerning salvation:

- How did He do it?
- What made Him do it?
- Is it something He will do, or something He has done already?
- What do those scriptures say we have to do?

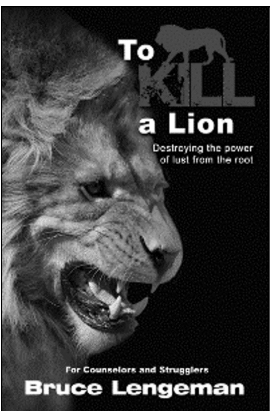
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Moses Schrock  
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Hohenwald, TN 38462



pay, but you can pray. Sincerely and humbly tell God the truth of your predicament. He knows. He cares. He sent His Son to pay for your sins—to do what you could not do yourself. You can pray something like this:

Thank You for putting all my sins upon Your innocent Son Jesus, so that You can put His righteousness upon me as a free gift. I believe that when He died and was buried, my sins were buried with Him. When He arose from the dead, He came up without my sins. I do not trust in my own works or religion to get me to



## Do you struggle with lust or other sins and addictions?

*To Kill a Lion*, written by Bruce Lengeman, is designed to help men find the roots of their sexual addiction. The theme is, "Men cry out, 'I know it is wrong, but why can't I stop!'" The book is for both counselors and strugglers. *To Kill a Lion* will help

men understand their own sexuality and what makes it operate "out of alignment" with God's design. You'll learn why it is healthy to be sexual as a man, but in a pure and Godly way. Though this book was not written for women, many are reading it and getting understanding of things they never knew about sexuality.

To order, call us at (419) 962-1515 or mail a check to The Amish Voice, PO Box 128, Savannah, OH 44874. The price of the book is \$15 (includes S&H).

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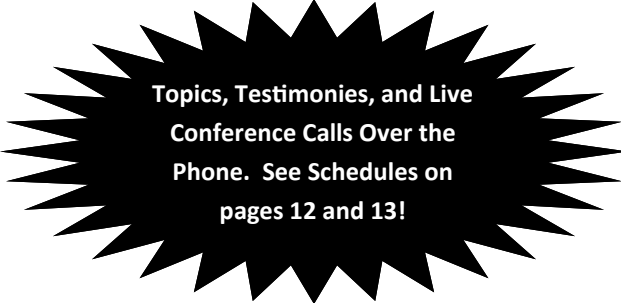
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## Forgiveness: What Does it Take for God to Forgive You?

—By Moses Schrock

Suppose you saw Jesus sitting down and talking with someone. Curious, you sneak up and eavesdrop, and you are surprised to hear them talking about you!

If this would happen, what do you think Jesus would be saying about you? Would He be praising you for your good works and faithfulness? Would He be speaking of your need to repent and turn from sin or from dead works?

Many people think that getting right with God is something you do over the span of your lifetime. You go to church, get baptized, say your prayers, confess your sins, obey the commandments, live better than the rest of the world, and hopefully by the time you die you will be good enough for God to accept you. If you are spending your life like that, you cannot and will not know until you die whether or not you will make it into heaven.

However, some people want to know before they die whether or not they are forgiven. Is their desire unfounded? Is it possible to know before death that we have been forgiven?

Many young people hope when they get baptized, they will experience a washing away of their old life and a new beginning with a new heart and a new nature. They are usually disappointed. I heard that one man fasted and prayed for days seeking assurance of salvation. Nothing happened. He, like most people, has given up on finding something so wonderful as the peace and joy that comes through forgiveness and eternal life. They have settled down to a life of doing the best they can, hoping they will make it in the end. But under such a belief, there is as much a chance that they will end up in hell as in heaven. How can they have peace with God when they live in fear and confusion every day, wondering if they are being good enough to please Him?

Years ago, I, too, went on a mission to get God to save me. I had found a verse that says we can know we have eternal life:

*“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...” (1 John 5:13).*

I begged and prayed and confessed my sins to get God’s attention, but as hard as I tried, I could not get Him to give me the assurance that He promised in in that verse of scripture.

What about you? What do you think it takes to get God to forgive you?

Did you know there is a conversation recorded in the Bible in which Jesus talks about us? He didn’t mention any names, but He used the word Gentiles. That would include us. In that conversation, Jesus mentioned forgiveness of sins. Before we see what He said it takes to get Him to forgive us (if anything), let us put everything on the table that we have been taught: faith, repentance, prayers, confessions, baptism, our works—everything—and see if it lines up with the conversation.

The conversation is recorded in Acts 26. Go ahead and read it for yourself.

The man who spoke with Jesus was Paul. They

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