

GOD THE SEEKER... A Testimony of God's Grace to Farmer Dan

My salvation story is evidence of God's continuing hand in the lives of mankind. It is a story of his unceasing work, which he began—in the beginning—and has continued throughout the history of the world.

- My testimony reveals:
 - what God is presently doing in the world,
 - what he plans to do until the time comes when he finally declares that his work in time and history has been completed.
- God is at work—as recorded in John 5:17... *Jesus said to them. "My Father is always at his work to this very day, and I, too, am working."* [John 5:17]
 - Since the dawn of history- God has been at work in this world.
 - This world is the stage on which God has chosen to act.
- The Bible is the record of God's progressive revelation of himself within the framework of history.
 - God has the leading role in the whole drama of redemption.
 - The Bible is the story of God's revelation of himself to mankind and his plan of salvation.

God always answers prayer and thus—my redemption

In early 1997, at age 55 I began to experience a desire to go to church though I hadn't gone to church for several years. As a child I dutifully went to Sunday school at a local Protestant church and after meeting my future wife, while sophomores in high school, I began to go with her to the local Catholic Church. We were married in the Catholic Church and our daughter went to Catholic schools. We all just sort of drifted away from going to church—not a sudden choice to not attend—we just quit going.

I WAS A GOOD MAN

Up until I was 56 years old, I didn't have the slightest doubt that I was goin' to Heaven... I was a good man. Matter of fact, I was certain that most everybody was goin' to Heaven except some of those folks who were murderers, sexual deviates, robbers, drunkards and all those who, in my and most folks opinion, by their actions, were not "good enough" to spend eternity in Heaven.

None of this supposition was based on any great study, understanding or wisdom. It was something I just "knew," I didn't have to prove it. I think if you asked most anyone who knew me, they would have agreed that I was heaven bound... because I was a good man. Everybody knows you don't have to be perfect to go to Heaven... because nobody's perfect.

I believed in God. Even though I had never read the Bible, I didn't have any doubt that God was the creator of the universe and everything in it. I also didn't doubt that Jesus was a real person, that he was born of the Virgin Mary, that he lived around Jerusalem and that he was crucified on a cross. I believed that he had risen from the dead and was in heaven with God. I knew that one day I would join him there, along with my family, friends and relatives who hadn't done anything, too bad, to keep them from getting there. I knew I was a good man and deserved to go there—no doubt in my mind!

One Sunday in the spring of 1997 we did go to a church that was located on the edge of our farm. The folks were warm and welcoming and the worship was filled with wonderful, stirring music and a meaningful message. And, on a summer Sunday morning, as my wife and I were getting dressed for a typical summer Sunday ride on our motorcycle I suggested that we go to church. She asked, "why this sudden interest in going back to church?"

I found myself proclaiming things that, up until then I don't ever recall thinking about, yet, uttering. I replied that, "I didn't know why I had this sudden desire to attend church but, I felt that something was missing in my life and whatever it was must have something to do with going to church." I also proclaimed, "We have a wonderful life—as I rattled off all the material blessings we were enjoying, the business success, the vacations, our good health, a couple of Harleys." I found myself crying, tears running down my face, saying, "This can not be all there is to life—being born, having lots of stuff, some success and then dying. There must be more to life than this, this can not be all there is."

God has chosen to act through his people

At the time, I did not know why I was saying these things or why the tears. However, just a few months later I was to discover that I was an answer to prayer—the faithful prayers of some wonderful children of God.

Although it is God who prepares the heart of the sinner for the Gospel, he does not do it supernaturally apart from human instruments. I was to learn that many folks were praying for my salvation. I learned that some had been praying for nine years. The folks from the church at the edge of our farm had been asking God to rescue me.

- The human heart untouched by God's mighty preparatory work is not naturally good soil for the Gospel seed. [1 Corinthians 2:14]
 - The goal of the Gospel is not to supply man's felt needs but to bring him back into a right relationship with his Creator.

Life-changing impact of the revelation of God's Word

God in his wonderful kindness, allowed the folks that had been praying for nine years to witness his answer to their prayers around Thanksgiving 1997. My wife, Karen, and I went with them to the church where they had been members for 26 years... Elmbrook Church in Brookfield, Wisconsin.

In early December, while attending a musical drama at Elmbrook of the birth, life and death of Jesus Christ I found myself—crying! As Jesus was being crucified, in a very real and believable reenactment, I cried and cried—deep sobs!

- After the play the pastor, Stuart Briscoe, very clearly explained the Gospel that had just been presented:
 - being very direct about the shedding of blood for sin,
 - that Jesus died in the place of sinners
 - that God demands death as payment for sin
 - that God raised him from the dead
 - that man is a sinner. He needs God and is helpless to save himself,
 - that man can come to God only according to God's will and plan
 - that man must have faith in order to please God and be saved.

What is the Gospel?

The gospel is the good news of what God has done outside of us in the person of Christ 2000 years ago.

- Romans 1:3 tells us that the gospel is God's good news concerning his Son, Jesus Christ our Lord.
- It is God's assurance "*...that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures; and that he was buried; and that he rose again the third day according to the Scriptures*" (1 Corinthians 15:3-4).

The Gospel is first and foremost about Christ.

- It is the message of the finished historical work of God in Christ.
- The Gospel is the work of the Godhead alone, Christ was “...smitten of God...” “it pleased the Lord to bruise him; he hath put him to grief...” “...his soul an offering for sin...” (Is 53:4,10)

The Gospel... is not about our experiences but about Christ’s experiences on our behalf.

Trevor McIllwain, New Tribes missionary and author of “Building on Firm Foundations” makes the following points regarding the many misconceptions about the Gospel...

- Many Christians confuse the gospel with the fruit of the gospel.
 - They confuse God’s past work that he did for us in Christ with the work the Holy Spirit does in the lives of those who believe the Gospel.
 - They confuse what God has finalized once for all in Christ FOR sinners—with what God does IN all those who put their trust in Christ.

That night in December of 1997 **began** a life-changing experience for me; not because of anything that I did. It was completely a work of God...by his grace and for his glory.

- The Gospel was not the coming of Jesus into my heart.
 - The Gospel is that Jesus came into the world and died for me.
- The Gospel is not about my accepting Jesus as Savior, but that God accepted the Lord Jesus to be the perfect and only Savior for mankind more than two thousand years ago.

My salvation is a testimony to God’s saving grace and his promise of a Deliverer—in the beginning. (Genesis 3:15)

- He demonstrated that he is loving, merciful and gracious.
- He demonstrated that he is very much at work in this age.
- He demonstrated that he is revealing himself to man.

Farmer Dan exists to glorify God... as a workman approved by God

Because God has saved me I am to speak to those around me. Because he has reconciled me I am to bear his message of reconciliation—through faith and repentance. Because he loves me I am to demonstrate his love for everyone around me. I do these things so that others may come to know his saving grace, his timeless love, his peace and joy, and his gift of eternal life in Christ Jesus.

I desire to be used by the Spirit of God to clearly and firmly teach the foundational principles in Scripture necessary for salvation by grace.

- Christ command is, “...All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age” (Matthew 28:18-20).

MY MISSION STATEMENT... To speak God’s Word carefully and prayerfully, trusting the Lord to make himself known in all his glory through the truths found only in the Bible... “in the hope that God will grant repentance, leading all to a knowledge of the truth.” [2 Timothy 2:25]

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