

Salvation Stories

SALVATION IS A “BEFORE AND AFTER” EVENT!

In my youth, I thought I was a Christian because I believed in God, Jesus His Son, went to church every Sunday and came from an ethically moral home with parents that were loving and compatible. However, I really had no understanding of salvation nor had I trusted and committed myself to God for His gift of salvation. One is not just born into a Christian home and automatically a child of God.

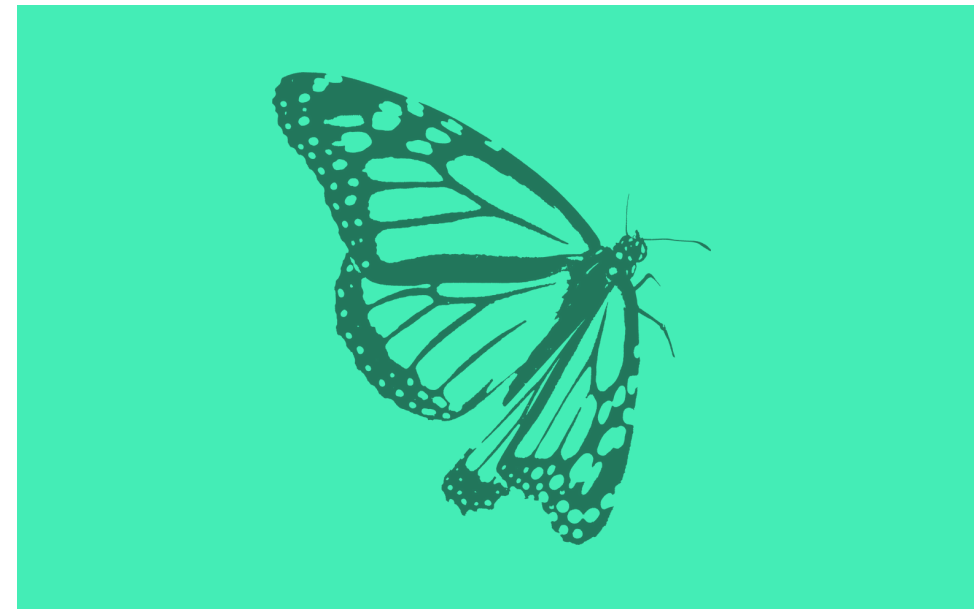
In high school thoughts crept in that I was not committed to Christ as some other people seemed to be. I wanted to go to heaven, but because of the hardness of heart, I avoided confronting such thoughts to seek truth. I was afraid of what it might cost. I had been looking forward to the day I would be in charge of my life. What might have to change? God, not me, would be in charge of my life.

In spite of myself, God has been gracious to me, including the often outpouring of His preserving power. Looking back at one instance, I clearly see God protecting me from the disaster of involvement in the occult. On a particular day when I was 16, there was a fork in the road. I was about to take a specific step into the occult. From what I had read, it was clear that if this step into the occult turned out not to be to my liking, I probably would not be able to extricate myself and go back to my former life. That knowledge brought fear and uncertainty, which I believe God gave to me in His kindness. Why? Because God chose me before the foundation of the world as is stated in Ephesians 1:4: just as He chose us in Him before the foundation of the world, that we would be holy and blameless before Him.

This caused me to deliberately choose to put this attraction as far from me as I could. To this day, I thank God for this and other saving experiences where His protection was evident.

In college I met my husband, Jon. Though he loved God, he was actually in a false "works-based" religious system, which of course, we did not then understand.

A couple of years after our marriage, I resolved to be a part of this religious way. Our mutual desire was to be united in all ways in our marriage, love and friendship.



Surely it must be the right way, because it had very little appeal to the flesh. I liked the small groups that met in the home for worship, I loved the people, yet, I was repulsed by the exclusivity that this "sect" was the only correct Christian church. The dress code was distressing to me. But I thought, if this is the way to Christ, if this is what one must do to be saved, I was willing. I had come to the place where nothing mattered as much as salvation. With little Biblical understanding and discernment, it seemed the verses this religious system taught supported their beliefs.

It was several years before we came to the realization this was a false religious cult. We began learning more of their hidden beliefs. With increasing knowledge of what we had been unaware of, we tested those beliefs with the Scripture, as the Bereans did in Acts 17:11, coming to the conclusion, the doctrine did not line up with the Bible.

So when was I saved? Was it the day I stood confessing my sins, willing to reject my desire to be on my own throne, though it was a false religion? I desperately wanted salvation that is only offered through the Lord Jesus.

I was resolved to follow Jesus no matter what it meant or cost. Or, did salvation come sometime after when I was often begging God again and again to forgive and save me because of the lack of any assurance?

We were taught in this religious sect that it was presumptuous to believe in assurance of salvation. Only death would finally reveal if we were saved. That doctrine left me hopeless and continually fearful of death. For a long period of time, I cried myself to sleep at night, not sure where I would be in eternity. I had no works that could save me, only the mercy of God could do that. I knew no matter how hard I tried I could not live up to the perfect life of Christ.

What caused this anxiety and distress about my salvation? In Exodus 20 there are 10 commandments given to Moses by God that set principles of what pleases God. Only one sin unforgiven will separate us forever from Him, i.e., taking His name in vain, lying, stealing, covetousness, adultery, etc.. Who is not guilty? Without His forgiveness we are eternally damned. It was critical to have a confident hope in His forgiveness. It is promised to those that are saved, but we did not understand that due to the false teaching.

2 Cor. 5:21 He made Him who knew no sin to be sin in our behalf, so that we might become the righteousness of God in Him. This verse should have brought peace, if I had understood it.

Eph. 2: 9-9 For by grace you have been saved through faith; and this is not of yourselves, it is the gift of God; not a result of works, so that no one may boast.

One night a friend was with us who was a part of our "group, cult, religious system". Bruce told me, "Philis you can be assured you have eternal life before death." I responded, "Bruce, we know that is not true. How can you say that?"



His answer was Luke 10:20: "Nevertheless, do not rejoice in this, that the spirits are

subject to you, but rejoice that your names are recorded in heaven.”



I was stunned. In a split second, God gave me the ability to trust that I could have assurance. I never cried myself to sleep after that wondering where I would be in eternity. Was that the day I was saved? Or when I surrendered my will and way, but just did not have an understanding of assurance?

Months passed and after several conversations with the leaders of that false religion, we felt free to leave to find a Biblically sound church.

It has been a struggle to write out my salvation story. It is not as clear a testimony as those who know the exact moment they were saved. It is strange to consider, can one be saved while in a false religion?

There is comfort in Romans 8:15 For you have not received a spirit of slavery leading to fear again, but you have received a spirit of adoption as sons and daughters by which we cry out, “Abba! Father!”

I may not be sure of the exact day or time of my salvation, but I am so grateful that my life has changed from resisting God, so I could be the master of my life, as though anyone can really do that. Submission to His will (teachings) brings peace.

Ps. 32:8 I will instruct you and teach you in the way which you should go; I will advise you with My eye upon you.

Proverbs 3: 5, 6 Trust in the Lord with all your heart And do not lean on your own understanding. In all your ways acknowledge Him, And He will make your paths straight.

Like all people, we have experienced difficult times, whether financial debt or deep concerns for our children, but we have not walked alone through life.

We always knew our Lord saw our predicaments and promised to believers, "And we know that God causes all things to work together for good to those who love God, to those who are called according to His purpose." Romans 8:28.

We long and pray each day for others to trust in Jesus who as stated in Rev. 17:14. ... "He is Lord of lords and King of kings; and those who are with Him are the called and chosen and faithful."

Ps. 34:8 Taste and see that the Lord is good; How blessed is the man who takes refuge in Him!

Your friend in Christ,

Philis Hileman

