

JOE DAVIDSON TESTIMONY MAY 13, 2007

Don't worry; I'm not a guest speaker. I'd like to dedicate this to my mother who spent many hours in prayer for me. Good morning, my name is Joe Davidson. I've been coming to Southern Gable for about 34 years. I'm sure most of you know me and those of you who don't may be considered lucky by those who do.

My testimony is not going to be dramatic; it's not going to be shocking. Neither one of my parents were ever alcoholics and I never owned a house of ill repute and I never did hard drugs but I did have a hard time becoming a Christian.

I was born in Iola, Kansas, the last of eight children. My parents had three daughters and then five sons. The youngest daughter died at the age of three and my oldest brother at the age of one. When I was about five and half years old we moved to Clinton, Okla. where we lived on a farm five miles from town. We attended a small church in Clinton, Okla. A bootlegger lived on one side and the Pentecostal Church was on the other side. We sometimes called them Holy Rollers. But I heard later that the only true Holy Rollers were the members of the Pentecostal bowling team.

My mother was a devout Christian and she took us to church as often as she could. And on a regular quarterly basis the church gave an alter call for those who wanted to be saved, usually after a hellfire and brimstone service. The alter was a long narrow bench about two feet high, four inches wide and about 10 to 12 feet long attached to the floor by the pulpit. It was also called the mourners bench.

Our congregation was small, no more than 150 people. On one of those occasions when I was about eight or nine years old my youngest brother Burt, about a year and a half younger than I, we went forward with a few other people to try to get saved. Some of the saints of the church, not all but a few would come and kneel along beside us to help us to pray through to get the "victory". No one opened the Bible, or showed us any Scriptures to the plan of salvation. We just had to feel that we were saved. I never did feel it but my brother thought he did so I had a lot of fun teasing him and calling him a little angel and he didn't like that a bit.

One night on the way home from town on horseback I was calling him a little angel and without saying a word, he pulled the horse over to the side of the road got off, threw the reins over the fence and I had an ominous feeling that my brother was about to backslide. It quickly turned to reality. He grabbed me and yanked me off that horse and said I am not an angel anymore you "blankety-blank" and he beat the living daylights out of me. He told me later that nothing ever felt so good. He got even with me and got rid of that terrible burden of trying to be so good.

Well, we were soon friends again and in due time when I was approaching the age of fifteen my family moved back to lola, Kansas where they had friends. We settled on a farm four miles from town and we attended a small church in lola where my mother had attended some ten years before.

Soon thereafter, during another revival meeting I became very frightened of going to Hell, so I went forward to the alter along with a few other people and knelt there and again the saints of the church, not all but a few, knelt beside us and wanted to help us pray through and get the "victory". They said, "Keep on praying until you feel the cleansing power. They never opened the Bible, never showed us the scriptures, which explained the plan of salvation. And I was young and didn't know enough about the Bible to know the right scriptures. So I prayed and somebody asked "have you prayed through?" I don't think so. Hang on! So I gripped that rail until my knuckles were white but I never could get the job done.

Well, finally, after awhile (seemed like forever) everybody seemed to be getting up and leaving. There was lots of crying and weeping and wailing and someone was testifying and I was about the only one left at the alter and the pastor was kneeling by me. He kept looking at his watch. He finally said "Well, I'm going to 'claim the victory' for this young man." He picked up my hand and raised it real high. "He's prayed through! He has the victory, Glory to God!"

Well on the way home, Satan came to me and said "Joe, you're not any different are you?" No, I sure don't feel any different. It was all about how I felt. I never heard the word faith or trust or any scriptures of assurance of salvation whatsoever. So I decided then I would just focus on having fun and that's what I did for the next several years. As time went on I grew up, I was working different states and cities. World War II came along, I met Dorothy, we got married, I joined the Navy and served overseas for several months till the end of the war.

A couple of years after the war ended, I ended up back in lola, Kansas managing a shoe store. Sometime later Burt was truly converted in a revival meeting in Amarillo, Texas. He was living there at the time. He drove around 400 miles to lola to try to persuade me to become a Christian. He said I should change my way of living and I should start reading my Bible.

Well he did get me to thinking and under conviction for a while but when he left town it started to wear off and I thought to myself, what if I never feel this way again? I knew the Bible said to seek the Lord while He may be found so I became a little uneasy. I thought I better do something. So I did start reading the Bible as often as I could.

I found my answer in I John 1:9, "If you confess your sins He is just to forgive you and cleanse you from all unrighteousness." There I had the whole package in one shot. I could be saved and sanctified at the same time. The church had always told me you have to get saved and sanctified later on by a second work of grace. Well, I was home

for lunch. Dorothy was at work. I knelt down by the kitchen table, I confessed my sins, I asked God to forgive me, I promised I would live for him the best I could if He would help and guide me.

I also promised to quit smoking. I was addicted to over two packs a day and I tried to quit but I couldn't. The church had told me I could not be a member and use tobacco. It was a sin. When I started walking back to the store about six blocks away, the first trashcan I passed I threw away my cigarettes. I've never lit one to this day since. And that was May the 10th 1950, one o'clock in the afternoon.

Well, Satan came along and said "Joe, you're not any different now are you?" I said, "Oh yes I am! I've now got a contract. God said if I do this – He'd do that! So I'm on my way to Heaven, you just walk away, leave me alone and don't bother coming back." I also knew I had to confess Jesus and so the first person I saw was the dime store manager coming down the street. I called out to him, "Hey, Harold, I just accepted Christ as my Savior, I've become a Christian! I'm going to live for Jesus!" He looked like he was in shock! He started to stutter and said "Wha, tha, tha, that's just fine! He acted like he shied away from a snake and he went across to the other side of the street just as fast as he could walk.

As Lady Godiva says as she approached her home on horseback," I'm finally getting near my clothes."

That evening, when I closed up the store, my brother Ray stopped in to visit as he usually did and we would visit awhile before going to our homes. When I told him about my conversion, he became real excited, he said, "Joe, I'm going to do the same thing!" And he did. So now my whole family is saved except for one brother and one sister and eventually they were also even though my sister wasn't saved until 20 years after my mother had died. But her mother's prayers were finally answered. And eventually all our spouses got saved, all of our children got saved but one. I have a seventy-nine year old niece that hasn't surrendered yet. The rest of the family, spouses are all saved.

So right now, keep on praying for your lost ones, God will answer prayer. Right now I have both my parents in Heaven, I have three sisters in Heaven, I have one brother, my older brother, in Heaven, I have three sisters-in-law in Heaven, and I have two brothers-in-law in Heaven. And Dorothy and I have a son David and a daughter Ann-Marie in Heaven all waiting for a grand reunion. And Dorothy, at our age, just like the monkey said when he got his tail caught in the lawn mower, "It can't be long now."