



At the age of twelve, I allowed Jesus to become “a part” of my life. I thought that giving God some of my life (and being sprinkled in baptism) would be sufficient to join the ranks of Christianity. Boy was I wrong! A definite relationship with the Spirit of the Living God was missing. As a result, the power of God never filled the void in my heart.

My teen year throughout high school produced high acclamation. Athletics (football, basketball and track) elevated the person of Charles Watson and not the person of Jesus Christ. In addition to this, my life was not centered on the Word of God (the Bible). So it seemed fitting that the course I was on, would lead me to beer, liquor, fast women and other forms of temporary happiness and satisfaction.

LEAVING THE NEST

After high school, I entered college and life got faster without the restraints of my parents. Joining a fraternity allowed my performance-based mentality to increase within the brotherhood, which I had learned as a child for acceptance. My athletic activities turned into the art of “making sport” instead of practicing one. The party life was

now “a big part” of my life on campus. Although, a few of my girlfriends took me to church.

With three years of college, I headed out to California to be with a friend. My desire was to have complete freedom from the watchful eyes of my parents. I wanted the liberty to do what “I” desired, not what someone else envisioned for me. I was tired of having to measure up and be checked up on. In hindsight, fear of failure drove me west. I was insecure, frustrated with life in Texas, and hurt.

In California, my life was one of rejection, only it was I who was doing the rejecting. I had rejected my parents’ wisdom, faith and God, along with their good Book of do’s and don’ts. In actuality, I was rejecting the Answer for my life without knowing it. By this time, I had surrendered my life to the lust of the eye, the flesh and the pride of life. There seemed to be no turning back. I slowly lost control of my life, giving it over to the dark side.

“Satan, who is the god of this world has blinded the minds of those who don’t believe. They are unable to see the glorious light of the Good News. They don’t understand this message about the glory of Christ, who is the exact likeness of God” (2 Cor. 4:4, NLT).

My choice to drink, to take drugs and to live the fast life, drove me to dropping out of college, failure in business and to Charles Manson. Unwilling to return to Texas as a failure, I joined the Manson cult. The book I have co-authored entitled, “Will You Die For Me?”, spells out clearly how a person’s mind can be brainwashed of what morals it has left, and then be programmed to kill. As a result of my character defects (sin) and wrong choices, seven human beings lay dead by my hands. Through my blindness, I allowed the destroyer to kill, steal and destroy the lives of others, as well as my own. By giving myself to drugs, drug-crazed friends and the desires of the flesh, many fell victim. The ripple effect of my behavior caused tremendous pain far and wide. Something I apologize for and deeply regret to this day.

THE GLORIOUS LIGHT

DEATH ROW was waiting for me! Justice demanded it, but God’s love, grace and mercy prevailed (Mic. 6:8). The U.S. Supreme Court abolished the death penalty in 1972, and I was transferred to California Men’s Colony. I was given a new lease on life: got a job, visited, began a hobby, bought a radio and made new friends. I thought I had been moved to a resort, not realizing God had a plan and a future for my life.

Three years later, I heard the Good News with my heart for the first time. In May 1975, I was sick and tired of serving the world, the flesh and the devil. I was finished with being ripped off. No more did I want to do things “my way.” I was looking for answers. I knew I had messed things up to say the least. At that time, Christ came to me through many of His servants; a lady in the visiting room, clergymen from the outside and other inmates sharing the Gospel. They assured me that God loved me regardless of how great my sin, and that he provided forgiveness through his performance, not mine.

“For God so loved the world that he gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life” (John 3:16, NKJV).

How could I not receive forgiveness by faith in Jesus Christ? What a deal! I trusted in His blood that was shed for me on the cross and received Him as the Lord of my life. Afterwards, the sense of guilt I had experienced before Christ turned to the revelation of God’s unconditional love and righteousness. I began to glow in Christ with no more need for the false peace that drugs offered. The closer I drew to God, the nearer He drew to me. My life began to change and produce the fruit of God’s Spirit (2 Cor. 3:18). He began to transform my mistakes into the means for His gracious purposes.

GROWING IN CHRIST

God was surely moving “in” my life at the Colony. For the first time in my life, I found Someone who could fill my every need. *“And this same God who takes care of me will supply all your needs from His glorious riches, which have been given to us in Christ Jesus” (Phil. 4:19, NLT).* Immediately, I began sharing the goodness of God with others, so they too would repent.

All my life I had spent searching for love and lifelong satisfaction without success. I was focused on my selfish, temporal needs, until Christ fulfilled my spirit, soul and body by opening my eyes to His finished work at Calvary. At last, *“...I have learned in whatever state I am, to be content” (Phil. 4:11)*, and that your past can’t hold your future hostage.

I knew something extraordinary had taken place in me. My life in Christ was real to my family, others and me. God’s

word confirmed that I had been made the righteousness of God in Christ, having wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of Him. I had been set apart from sin, because of Jesus Christ. God had delivered me from the power of darkness and had translated me into the kingdom of His dear Son. Where I was once living in defeat, I was now living in victory. I was a conqueror in Christ, capable of overcoming all the circumstances of this world. By the word of Jesus Christ, whose testimony was witnessed in my life, I was now accepted. I lived by faith in the Son of God, Who loved me and gave Himself for me. I had experienced God's amazing grace!

"For I know the thoughts that I think toward you, says the LORD, thoughts of peace and not of evil, to give you a future and a hope" (Jeremiah 29:11).

MY FUTURE IN CHRIST

Today, my time is spent sharing the Good News of Jesus Christ in prison and through the ministry website. I have been solidly committed to full time ministry almost since the day of my salvation in 1975. Through these prison walls, the Lord has made a way for His testimony to be shared with thousands of people worldwide.

Over the years, God has worked in all things to conform me more into His image (Rom. 8:28, 29). I have lived my life by faith, doing the will of God. It is only by living at His throne of grace that we can obtain mercy and find ability to help in time of need. Through it all, I know I have been chosen of God to sow seeds of love, grace and mercy in the world. Jesus is my life! I live to serve Him humbly with all my heart. I see miracles taking place around me daily.

Lastly, I recall the conversion of Saul, who became the Apostle Paul. Jesus Christ spoke to Ananias and commanded him to minister to Saul. But Ananias said, *"I have heard by many of this man, how much evil he has done to the saints of Jerusalem... But the Lord said unto him, Go thy way: for he is a chosen vessel unto me, to bear my Name before the Gentiles, and kings, and the children of Israel: For I will show how great things he must suffer for My Name's sake"* (Acts 9:13-16). Won't you receive Christ today?

PRAYER OF COMMITMENT

Heavenly Father, in the name of Jesus, I present myself to You. I am so sorry for my sins. I receive Your forgiveness. I believe Your Son, Jesus Christ, died on the cross to pay for my sin, and arose from the dead. I want to be born-again and become a new creature in Christ. Right now, I ask You, Jesus, to come into my heart. Please change my life and make it pleasing to You. Amen.

Congratulations Beloved!

God's Mercy for Everyone

"And I thank Christ Jesus our Lord who has enabled me, because He counted me faithful, putting me into the ministry, although I was formerly a blasphemer, a persecutor, and an insolent man; but I obtained mercy because I did it ignorantly in unbelief. And the grace of our Lord was exceedingly abundant, with faith and love which are in Christ Jesus. This is a faithful saying and worthy of all acceptance, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners, of whom I am chief. However, for this reason I obtained mercy, that in me first Jesus Christ might show all longsuffering, as a pattern to those who are going to believe on Him for everlasting life. Now to the King eternal, immortal, invisible, to God who alone is wise, be honor and glory forever and ever. Amen." (1 Timothy 1:12-17).

The Apostle Paul



FROM TRAGEDY UNTO TRIUMPH

Testimony of a former Manson family member

Jesus Christ has not always been the preeminent One in my life. My childhood was full of toys, dogs, cowboy shows, snap pistols, Scouts, building go-carts and vacation Bible school – even faithful appearances at the local Methodist church with my family.

To me, church was full of do's and don'ts. I felt those do's and don'ts hindered me from the fun and games of life. Besides, as far as I was concerned, I was on my way to heaven because I went to church every Sunday. I didn't connect Christ's death and resurrection with my salvation.

Charles D. Watson
www.aboundinglove.org