

I'm Forgiven

Personal testimony
of Harold Johnston

The first time that I know of God talking to me was in 1988. I was standing on the sidewalk outside my house drinking a cup of coffee. I was thinking how bad my life was. I didn't want to live that way any longer. God spoke to me and told me to get myself to church. I walked into the house and told my family to get dressed that we are going to church. Everyone got ready without any discussion and off we went to church.

Sometime in 1989 through the preaching, God showed me I was filthy rags. I had a real experience with God that night. He spoke to me in my bedroom on my knees praying. He showed me some things that had really hurt Deanna and our relationship. I don't remember God telling me I was forgiven however, I really thought I was saved.

I got involved in everything I could in church. My whole life changed from that time forward. But things changed in the church. Sin was allowed to go on within the church. The preacher was diagnosed with cancer and was not able to preach any longer. A young preacher took over and was all easy believeism. I couldn't stand it so I quit going to that church. I tried other churches but could not find God. Auto racing became a priority in my life. I would occasionally go to church and I would pray at night for God to lead me to a real church.

In 2004, guess where God sent me! To Maryland! Actually, I went there to make a lot of money building houses – so I thought!

After all the easy believeism preaching I had heard, the preaching from Brother Charlie (my son-in-law) was hard. I thought no one could be saved. Well, I was wrong! I witnessed Brother James saved right in front of me. What a day that was!

Brother Charlie had asked that everyone write their testimony. I wrote mine and gave it to him. I thought everything was okay. Brother Charlie wanted so much to believe I was saved. He just overlooked the small things in my testimony.

Things got really bad for us in the business. We were getting ripped off by everyone that we came in contact with – or it seemed. I got bitter and as time went on the bitterness grew so much that I was not fit to be around. I caused a lot of grief and heartache with my family and my church family (Beulah Baptist Church) so I felt it best to leave Maryland and return to Inverness.

Once I came back, it was the worst time in my life. There was no God! I started going to a small church where my brother-in-law was the preacher. I was asked to teach a Sunday School class. I couldn't do it. I don't remember how long I was at that church. I do remember that one Sunday morning a "man" who was attending the church asked if he could preach. Instead of preaching he told about an experience he had. He was in a bad accident and died three times – on the road, in the ambulance and at the hospital. His family was told that he would not live through the night and if he did live that he would just be a "vegetable" the rest of his life. In all my depression and grumbling and feeling sorry for myself God spoke to me, "You think you got it bad!" All I could do was cry.

Things changed for me that day. I don't know why God had anything to do with me but He did. I prayed a lot. I prayed that God would make a way for me to go back to Beulah Baptist Church and make things right.

I was working at Ace Hardware making \$8.00 an hour. I was not stressed or worried about money. We tithed on every penny we received and gave extra when the church had needs. I look back and see how God carried us through those rough days.

Then out of the blue, a Doctor that we had worked for in Maryland called me. He needed some work done on his house and asked if I was coming back. I explained that it was not financially possible. His response was that he would pay my way there and back and for the work he wanted done. I put the phone down and started thanking God for making a way to go back to Maryland!

I spoke with Brother Charlie to make sure that it was okay that I return to Maryland to do the job. He said come. So, I went to Maryland to try and make things right with my Beulah family. That was all that was on my heart. I had wanted to go before the church on Wednesday evening but I had taken some medication and I couldn't keep my eyes open. I talked with Brother Charlie the next day and told him that I was supposed to do something in church the night before and told him what happened. I asked if it would be okay if I could stay through to Sunday. After Brother Charlie preached on Sunday he asked if I had something I needed to do. I got up and poured my heart out and asked them for forgiveness for what I had done. Everyone loved me and forgave me. But, there was still something wrong inside me.

I came back to the little church in Florida and the preacher asked me if I would teach Sunday School. I told him that God said that I was to do whatever I was asked to do. The next Sunday, he told me that God said to make me a deacon. I knew from Brother Charlie what a deacon was. I tried to explain it to the preacher. He disagreed and so I became a "deacon". Then he asked me to teach Sunday School. I did. I'm not sure how long it was, maybe two years, that on Monday morning on March 11th, God woke me up around 4:00 a.m. and told me how wrong all this was. I was really messed up then.

Guess who showed up at my house on March 12th – Charlie and Christie.

Florida was the last place that Brother Charlie wanted to be but Beulah sent them to Orlando for their anniversary. They got out of the car and I just broke down crying. When they returned to my house after going to Mary's to have lunch, Brother Charlie and I sat down in the living room to talk. He asked how church was going. I told him what happened the day before. After talking with Brother Charlie, it was clear what I needed to do. I had to leave that church not knowing what I was suppose to do or where I was going.

Brother Charlie called a few days later and said that if we wanted, we could meet with Beulah on-line for church services. It sounded great to me! He called Mary and asked if she would like to join us. She said yes because she would be able to see her kids and grandkids every week. So, Brother Charlie and Brother James came to Florida and brought everything we needed to get on-line with them and got everything set-up to be on-line that Sunday with Beulah. It was great to see everyone at Beulah and worship with them three times a week, hear real preaching of God's Word three times a week and able to join in the Men's meeting each week.

After two years of meeting on-line things were not like they should have been. There was no "power" in the preaching. God put it on Brother Charlie's heart that we needed a preacher in Florida. We never

talked about that but thank you God! I knew that none of the other preachers had any trust in a man that ran from God. I didn't blame them for thinking that way, I didn't even trust myself.

Brother Greg spoke to the Pastors and expressed that it was time to go and see if God was in Florida. Brother Greg and Brother Charlie arrived on a Saturday and we had good fellowship. Sunday morning, early, both of them went to the church to pray. When it was time for church service, I was scared to death. What if they said there was no God here? What was going to happen to us? I was the last person to enter the church before services were to begin. Brother Greg spoke and said, "I came here to see if God is here and He is here"! Thank you, God!!

After church that Sunday, Brother Greg and Brother Charlie told me that they needed to talk to me about my salvation I was holding on to. I didn't want to mess anything up so I agreed with them that I was lost. I told the church I was lost but deep down I really did not believe I was.

All the churches were asked if God had put on anyone to pasture a little flock of four people down in Florida -- with no pay, would have to get their own place to live and would have to provide for themselves. Seven preachers said they would go. One preacher and his family came to preach every week. We loved everyone of them. Each week, the four of us would express how glad we were that we didn't have to pick one of them to be our Pastor that that was God's job to send the right one.

However, the eighth week Brother Charlie called and said that we needed to tell him which one of the preachers we liked the best, 1st, 2nd, and 3rd. I said, "What? That's not my job. I can't do that." Brother Charlie said that I had to because something like this had never been done before and the Pastor's didn't know where to start. So, I called Kara and Mary and told them. They said they couldn't. Wednesday evening each one of us -- Deanna, Mary, Kara and I -- brought our list to church. We called Brother Charlie and told him it was unanimous vote to call Brother Scott to be our Pastor.

The Pastors called Brother Scott and his reply was, "I have to hear from God." (Everybody that knows Brother Scott knows that God has to hit him three times before he agrees!) After a short period of time, God spoke to Brother Josh Moffitt and told him he needed to go to Florida! Thank you, God! We doubled overnight! Then Brother Marc Capps came and said that God told him that he was suppose to be with us. We, Beulah Baptist Mission Church, tripled in size within a few months.

HOW GREAT IS GOD!!

For over four years I had been fighting a battle within myself. I didn't know for certain what battle I was fighting. I look back now and see how many times Brother Scott had preached on Forgiveness but there was no connection to ME. In 2018, I finally decided that I needed to talk to Brother Scott about my salvation. We met and he said that he knew we were going to have this conversation. (NOTE: Not long after Brother Scott came to be our Pastor, I started writing down my argument on a piece of paper why I thought I was saved. That piece of paper, somehow, got left on a chair in the church and Brother Scott found it.) We went over my testimony that I had written and realized that I WAS lost! **NOW I HAD TO BE SAVED!**

That same year Brother Claude came to preach a meeting. The first night he preached on the mirey clay/muddy pit that you can't get out of. The second night he preached on the bitter cup that Jesus

put all of our sins in and drank it. Everybody needed help that night. I was the last to talk to Brother Scott. I said that every time that I felt God around me, I started repenting and then God would leave. Brother Scott told me that God did not want my garbage. He said that I needed to repent what I had DONE to a Holy God. On my way home, I told myself that I was going into the meeting the next night and that I was not bringing my garbage with me. I knew that God was going to be there. I was just going to enjoy being with God.

August 25, 2018, Brother Claude got up and said that God told him to preach something different than what he had studied. He brought out paper plates with words written on them. (We still have those plates in the One Another Cabinet!) The first plate was MERCY. He asked if anybody needed mercy? I replied with "Yes, I do!" Does anybody need God to withhold judgement? "Yes, I do!" After speaking about Mercy, he then threw the plate on the floor in front of me.

The next plate was GRACE. He asked if anybody needed any grace? I said "Yes, I do!" Does anybody need God to give them what they don't deserve? "Yes, I do!" After speaking about Grace, he then threw that plate on the floor in front of me.

The next plate was FORGIVENESS. Something stirred in me but I wasn't sure what was going on. He asked if anybody needed forgiveness? I said "Yes, I need all the forgiveness I can get!" After preaching on forgiveness, He threw that plate on the floor in front of me.

The next plate was PEACE. He asked if anybody needed peace? I said "Yes, I do!" That's when a small voice said, "how about forgiveness?" I said yes, I need forgiveness.

The next plate was JUSTIFICATION. He asked if anybody needed to be justified? I said "Yes, I do!" That small voice was louder and said, "how about forgiveness?" I asked God why am I stuck on forgiveness? I don't understand.

The last plate was REST. He asked if anybody needed rest? I said "Yes, I do!" Then the voice was loud and clear and said, "how about forgiveness?" I kept asking God why was I stuck on forgiveness. Help me! I don't understand.

God took me to my back porch where Brother Charlie and I had been sitting and talking before Brother Scott came to be our Pastor. Brother Charlie had asked me what was going on and I told him that I felt like there was something still between us. He told me that he had forgiven me for everything. I said that I think I can't forgive myself for what I have done.

Then God took me in the church with Brother Scott. He was preaching from Hebrews 3:7-11 "Wherefore (as the Holy Ghost saith, To day if ye will hear his voice, 8 Harden not your hearts as in the provocation, in the day of temptation in the wilderness: 9 When your fathers tempted me, proved me, and saw my works forty years. 10 Wherefore I was grieved with that generation, and said, They do always err in their heart; and they have not known my ways. 11 So I swear in my wrath, They shall not enter into my rest.) When Brother Scott dismissed the church, I took my bible to him and told him that I believed that this was where I was at. I have grieved and provoked God, and therefore I shall not enter into rest. He read it and said "No, God is not telling you that." The verses are a warning not to harden your heart like they did, to hear Today.

After God spoke this to me, I fell on the floor on top of FORGIVENESS. I knew that that was MY unbelief! I told God that I know that He came to this earth and gave His life for sinners like me! And I was sorry! Then God spoke, "I forgive you!" At that moment all the battle stopped. There was nothing but peace in me. I got up off the floor, grabbed tissues and sat on the edge of the chair asking God what do I do now! He told me to tell my Pastor.

However, Brother Scott started singing. I couldn't sit in my chair. I jumped up and starting praising God. I hugged Brother Scott and told him that God just saved me.