

Testimony of Michael Ntodie

Imagine the blind given sight:

I praise God upon every remembrance of His saving grace, for His grace alone could save a lost blind sinner such as me. I was born in a town in the western region of Ghana on August 15, 1984. I am first of three children to my parents. My father, the late Albert Ntodie, was a church secretary for a Pentecostal church, and my mother was a Sunday school teacher. So growing up I was exposed to early Christian influences by way of scriptures, prayers, and attending Sunday School etc. However, I do not remember any point in time where the gospel was presented with the clarity and conciseness it deserved. I was taught to do right and avoid sins (here there were a list of sins, some of which best-selling author, Jerry Bridges has described as `respectable sins`) so that when I died I could go to heaven. My parents rewarded good works with praises and gifts, and punished wrong doings.

I had terrible early years of rebellion in my primary school years, which never pleased my parents. But then I started to think, why not do right to earn the approval of my parents and others? I started to do the good things my parents wanted, and enjoyed their praises, and that of our neighbours and even my teachers. This also coincided with academic success, so that so I enjoyed praise and goodwill of my peers also. I was respected so much, even in my early years because of my apparent morality and academic success.

I spent most part of my Junior High School, Secondary and Undergraduate years at university, building and maintaining these credentials which earned me praise and respect. At the same time I was neck deep in religious activities I thought was the way to please God, and earn His forgiveness whenever I sinned. Ultimately, it was also my basis of hope for acceptance into heaven, because that was what I had learned about salvation, and that was the common belief in the community of Christians I found myself. Although this was my hope, deep down in my heart I had no peace with God and I had no assurance. I knew I was a wretched sinner, but I enjoyed the pride, self-fulfillment and the praises of men that I was upright, so I cared less.

I graduated from University in 2010 as an Optometrist, and I was retained to work in the department where I studied, both as a clinician and a teaching assistant. I was out daily to "give sight to the visually impaired, and the blind." One day in the summer of 2011, I was not on the clinical roster for the week, but my colleague was travelling to undertake a research, so he asked me to cover him for that day. I agreed and went to undertake my daily clinical routine. In the course of the day, an American Baptist missionary (Pastor Micah Colbert) attended the clinic to have his eyes checked. I did attend to him and got his sight "restored". During the consultation, we conversed on a whole range of issues, and he shared a gospel tract he used for evangelism with me. I took it, but in my pride, I just told myself "I do not need this stuff, I already know them". I saw some familiar bible passages which convinced me of this position. However, the missionary kept on asking for an opportunity to go through the gospel truths with me. I kept postponing, and gave several excuses so that we could not meet. In August 2011, the church which the missionary had planted (the Anchor Baptist Church), was having their 2nd anniversary and he invited me to the service. I accepted to go, with the hope that he would cease to bother me with further invitations. But that was the beginning of my salvation story because at the anniversary service I observed something I had never seen before: men in the church who shared testimonies of their conversion, had assurance of salvation, had joy and peace which I could see from afar. At that point, fear and anxiety engulfed me, as I knew I lacked all of them, and was lost. After the service I spoke with the missionary and told him sincerely that I was a wretched and lost man, although men praised and held me in high esteem. He went through the gospel tract with me which I refused to read in the past.

I realised I was lost and sinking deep in sin. For the first time, I understood the gravity of my sin in relation to God's holiness. Passages such as Jeremiah 17:9 (about the heart of man), helped me to understand why God cannot accept even my best acts/ righteous deeds (Isaiah 64:6). I realised that I had a deficient appreciation of God's holiness (Isaiah 6: 1-10) and the magnitude of my sin. The bible passage which led me to renounce my pride and all that I was trusting in, was Ephesians 2: 8-9 "For by GRACE are ye SAVED through faith; and that NOT OF YOURSELVES; it is the GIFT of God: not of WORKS, lest any man should BOAST." I had read this passage before, but I was blind to trust the message therein. God through His grace, opened my eyes to my need of Christ, and the pardon He secured by his work on Calvary's cross.

While I eventually came to trust Christ after the Holy Spirit's conviction and illumination, on human terms, I battled somewhat! The gospel message sounded so simple to be true. Only Christ's work on the cross to be saved?...Where would my religious credentials be placed? Am I letting go of the self-fulfilment associated with the work-based salvation. Finally am I going to stop my church with I loved so much, to fellowship with this "wee" assembly who worshipped in a classroom? I praise my Saviour that His grace humbled me to count these human considerations rubbish for the excellence of knowing Him and be found in Him.

Finally, I would say that like the Apostle Paul said in Philippians 3: 12-13, not that I have attained perfection, far from that! But I thank my Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ that fellowship with the Father, the Son, and the Spirit each day illuminates the dark areas of my life, and through the Spirit's enablement I am able to confess, forsake and gain victory! Unlike the human life (physical) where growing is associated with poor vision, I find that growing each day in fellowship with the triune God is associated with clearer vision in this life and for eternity! One thing I know: I was blind but now I can see! Praise the Lord, Praise the Lord oh my soul!

Amen

Michael Ntodie (1984)