

WHY WE NEED A SAVIOR

MAN

GOD

IN THE BEGINNING . . . The first man and woman, Adam and Eve, were created by God and enjoyed perfect fellowship with Him. They were without sin and lived peacefully in a beautiful garden that supplied all their needs. God gave them only one rule, which was not to eat the fruit of a particular tree. However, Satan tempted them to eat the forbidden fruit by saying it would benefit them. They ate it, and that act of disobedience against God was the first sin. It severed Adam's and Eve's relationships with God because He is holy and cannot have fellowship with evil.

MAN

SIN

GOD

OUR CONDITION TODAY . . . Since we are all Adam's descendants, every child in the world has been born with his fallen nature. Instead of coming into the world desiring to do right, we are all born with an inclination toward sin and evil. Proof of this natural downward tendency is abundantly evident anywhere human beings are found. Our sin results in tremendous pain, sorrow, and suffering. The consequences of sin reach far beyond this life because those who reject God and die in a sinful state will go to Hell and be separated from God eternally.

MAN

JESUS

GOD

GOD'S PLAN . . . God wants to remove sin from our lives so that we can have a relationship with Him and spend eternity in Heaven. However, the penalty for sin is death, and that penalty must be paid. Out of His great love for us, God sent His Son, Jesus Christ, to be our Savior. Jesus lived as a man and died in our place for our sins. Because of that, if we follow the steps that God has laid out in the Bible, our sins can be forgiven. God will change our desires and give us power to live without sin so we can enjoy eternal life with Him in Heaven one day.

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IN PRISON, BUT FREE!

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Facing a fifteen-year sentence for armed robbery, Walter cried out to God from his cell.

By Walter Cobb



God thought enough of me to reach out to my unworthy soul, and how I thank Him for that! I was brought up in a Christian home where the Bible was an open book. My mother and father not only sent me to Sunday school, but also took me to Sunday school. I can recall many days, there in Anniston, Alabama, when I walked the rocky roads on the way to the house of the Lord. Unfortunately, those things did not make me a Christian, but I thank God that His Word was planted in my heart. I'm thankful I knew that John 3:16 says, "For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life."

During my growing up years, I was not a rowdy child.

I wasn't one who always got into trouble with the law. Somewhere along the line, though, I started making some bad decisions. After finishing high school, I spent a brief time in the military at the England Air Force Base in Alexandria, Louisiana. I was discharged from the service in August 1967 on a bad conduct discharge. After my discharge, I continued on my path of sin from one place to another. I went back to Alabama for a short while, and reunited with one of my school friends, supposedly enjoying my freedom. While there, we went on a rampage, and I went farther and farther into a wicked life. I didn't intend to go that far into sin, but I just couldn't help myself. Soon I found myself back in Louisiana, where I began to roam the streets. Finally, I ended up in Long Beach, California, with the authorities of Louisiana looking for me for armed robbery and unlawful flight to avoid prosecution.

SENTENCED AT AGE TWENTY

One night, after coming home from the theater, I stepped into my apartment to find the authorities waiting for me. They extradited me to the State of Louisiana, where I was sentenced to thirty years for armed robbery. It was almost unbearable to realize that, at the age of twenty, I was facing thirty years in jail. As I entered the prison, I began to think about home. My parents and my pastor kept in touch with me, and I knew they were praying for me. They would send me Gospel tracts from the Apostolic Faith Church, and I would always read them.

One day, I decided to retain a lawyer to get my name on the Pardon Board list. After they ran the ad in the newspaper for me, which was the procedure, they told me

to send \$500 for the retainer fee. I did not have \$500 and did not feel I could ask my parents for that much money. So instead, I sent the Pardon Board a list of thirteen reasons why I should be pardoned. Within weeks, members from the Board interviewed me. I had served almost ten years of my sentence, and because of the age I was when I went in and overcrowding in the prison, they released me. My rap sheet was very long by that time, but I thank God that someone was still praying for me.

Unfortunately, I was more corrupt when I got out than when I went in. There had been no rehabilitation for me in that prison. After my release, I returned home to Alabama, where I realized that I still hadn't had enough of the street life. I went to Georgia, and in approximately sixteen months, I was sent to the Georgia Department of Corrections for theft, and breaking and entering. Once more, I found myself behind bars. After serving my time, I was released in October 1980. I said, "Well, I'll go back to Alabama now, and perhaps I'll get a wife." That is what I did.

After being married a little while, my job was taken from me. That meant I had to do something else to take care of my family. I remember the Thanksgiving evening when my baby boy was about two months old. While we were eating, my friend came by and we left the house to go commit crime to take care of our drug habit. I didn't make it back. The police caught us, and when we stood before the judge, he gave me fifteen years.

GOD MET ME IN MY CELL

I had four or five other cases pending, and God used my desperate situation to finally get my attention. One night in jail, they had a church call. Instead of going to church that

night, I got on my knees in my cell. I cried out to Jesus for salvation: "Lord, if You'll save my soul, I'll live for You." The Lord came in and I knew I was saved. From that day to this, things have been different for me, because Jesus changed my heart. He took the drug needle out; He took the alcohol; He took the cigarettes; He took the lying tongue; He took the robbery; He took the lusts; He took every evil craving. He took it all away and washed me in His Blood. I'm grateful for that.

Though the Lord had saved me, I still had fifteen years hanging over my head. I fell on my knees and prayed, and the decision came that the sentences from the other pending cases would run concurrently with the fifteen years I was serving. That was a blessing because they could have run consecutively.

The first couple of days after that, my friends would come by my cell and bring me cigarettes. Sometimes they would put them by my pillow while I lay there. I could smell the tobacco, but I would not touch it. After three days, I was convinced that the desires were gone. I began praying to God for sanctification. God showed me that I needed to separate myself from situations around me. As I began to consecrate myself for service for the Lord, He came in and sanctified my soul. He cleansed me from within.

Then I started seeking for power on my life. I didn't have anywhere to pray as I wanted, but the Lord made a way. When the warden decided to plant a garden, I was told to work in it, and that is where the Lord baptized me with the Holy Ghost and fire—behind the garden shack. As I got on my knees that day, seeking power on my life, the Lord came in and I spoke in another language. He gave me power for service! I thank God for that wonderful day.

GOD'S MERCY IN MY LIFE

God continued to work on my behalf. I was assigned to a work release program in Birmingham, Alabama. I drove a van for that program, taking inmates to places where they were assigned to work. That gave me the opportunity to drive by the house of the Lord sometimes and wave to the saints of God. One day, after returning to the prison, I found out that the parole officer had been looking for me. I was certain that they had a mix-up in the name, but it was not a mistake. The parole officer told me that two officers had written good things to the Parole Board about me and that he was sure I would be released. He was right. I was released in October 1986.

I thank God for His faithfulness to me. I thank Him for how He has kept me. He reunited my home. I have a wonderful wife and two sons, and I am grateful to God for each of them. God has also given me a wonderful church family. The family of God showed me nothing but love when I got out of prison. God taught me how to go to work, and how to hold on to a job. It is hard work, but I enjoy doing it, and I thank God for it.

I shudder to think of the life that I once lived, but I am proof that God can change lives. He changed mine! The Lord has blessed me and has brought me a long way since the day He wiped my slate clean. We have to face many oppositions on life's journey, but I thank God that He takes care of every one of them. I love the Lord with all my heart and I recommend Him to anybody.

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STEPS TO DELIVERANCE

ACKNOWLEDGE

Admit that you have sinned and need God's help.

For all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God. (Romans 3:23)

CONFESS AND REPENT

Be genuinely sorry for the sins you have committed and ask God to forgive you.

If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness. (1 John 1:9)

Except ye repent, ye shall all likewise perish. (Luke 13:3)

FORSAKE

Determine that with God's help you are going to turn away from all sin in your life.

Let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts: and let him return unto the Lord, and he will have mercy upon him . . . for he will abundantly pardon. (Isaiah 55:7)

BELIEVE

When you have honestly and sincerely taken the steps above, then believe that God will hear your prayer and save you.

For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life. (John 3:16)

RECEIVE

God will let you know that the work is done in your heart.

The Spirit itself beareth witness with our spirit, that we are the children of God. (Romans 8:16)