

Jesus Came To Seek And To Save That Which Was Lost

**Personal Testimony
of Jamie Langley**

Saved August 24, 1989

I didn't grow up in church. I was told that we did attend church for a while when I was very young. As a child, I remember going to Vacation Bible School a couple of times and we were taught to say our bedtime prayers. It was a positive experience, but that's about it. My Grandmother often times would tell us to always know and believe that there is a God. She would become very upset if my sister, brother or I would ever say that there wasn't a God.

The next time that I remember having any exposure to God was when a friend invited me to go with her to church one Sunday. I was about twelve or thirteen years old. At the end of the service there was an invitation to come to the altar and be saved. My friend wanted me to go to the front and get saved. I told her no; I really don't know what you are talking about.

She was disappointed, and I was just puzzled.

When I was fourteen my parents divorced, and our family was torn apart. That would mark the beginning of my life, changing for the worse. I am not going to blame my parents.

for the mistakes that I made.

One summer I went to spend a week at my grandmother's house. I had a dream that awakened my heart to the reality of God and great fear of his judgment. I described the dream to my grandmother. I told her that in the dream I saw Jesus up in the sky and there was bright light

shining down from him and there were many people standing on the ground looking up at him. I was terrified. She told me that I had dreamed about the "Rapture". Well, I felt very afraid for myself. She called a dear relative and asked him to come and talk to me. I believe he was studying to become a preacher at the time, and by far had the most Bible knowledge of anyone that we knew.

He shared those scriptures with me that many people refer to as the "Roman Road". This "Roman Road" has been used by many people in order to "get people saved". Well, I knew that Bible was true, and I trusted my him, so when he explained that if I would pray the "sinners' prayer" I would be saved. I was very willing to do whatever I needed to do. He led me through the prayer and afterward, I did feel better, even a sense of joy and relief. I was glad that I was right with God.

That was short lived. I attended church for a couple of months. I was baptized and joined a church.

Soon, my true sin nature would really come out.

As a teenager, I became friends with the wrong people. I did things that were sinful and ungodly. I did feel a great sense of remorse for committing sin.

There were a few times that when several of us would be out driving around having what we thought was a good time, A fear of God would come over me. I was so afraid that God would come to get His people and I would be left behind because I was doing such terrible things. I would go

home and park the car and tell my friends, I am done. You will have to find your own way home. I

did not care that they laughed at me.

My fear of being wrong with God was stronger than their persecution.

Even though I wanted to be free from a life of sin, I continued to live my life my way. No one was going to rule my life as far as I was concerned. I was in bondage to sin, unable to break free. I tried several times to be free from that life. I would start going to church, rededicate my life, and low and

behold, it was only a matter of time before I was back at it again.

At the age of nineteen, I met a guy that I thought was so wonderful. We got married, and it was not long before I realized that I had made a big mistake. It was too late. I had a baby when I was twenty years old. Having my son was the best thing that had ever happened to me at that time. Finally, there was someone that loved me unconditionally. After only three years of marriage, we divorced.

I continued to live a life of sin. Not happy, but always looking for happiness and contentment. Still, from time to time, I would go to church hoping that I would somehow be a part of something good and Godly, only to find myself back in my old way of life.

It was around that time that a friend of mine had begun inviting me to go to her church. I would only attend on Sunday nights. It was a bit easier to go to church with a friend. Ec. 4:9-

12 “Two are better than one...and a threefold cord is not quickly broken.” God knew that I would need friends for support. But I was still living an ungodly life. I had not been changed. I was just going to church from time to time. I did whatever I wanted to do. I continued to listen to ungodly music, go to ungodly places with ungodly people. That was just normal activity for me.

As time went on, my life of sin became less and less pleasurable. I remember once during the Christmas Season, when I was out trying to have a good time, I was so puzzled wondering, “why can’t I have fun anymore”. I didn’t realize that God was beginning to draw me away from my life of sin. I Cor. 2:13 ...God have from the beginning chosen you to salvation through sanctification of the Spirit and belief of the truth.

I was still enslaved to my sinful life. I wanted something better than sin was offering. God was giving that desire to me. I wanted out, but I knew that I didn’t have the power to change myself.

My Grandmother had been inviting me to come to church for several months. I was member of the church that she attended, but refused to go because the new preacher, Brother Bob Orgeron, preached some things that I didn’t like. I didn’t know that they were not his ideas, but they were Gods ways. Is. 55:8 “For my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways, saith the LORD.”

The church voted him out. I just had to go and find out what had happened. She said that most of the people were tired of hearing him preach salvation all the time. That was very puzzling to me. I couldn't imagine anything being more important than salvation. She said that a group of people left with Brother Bob, and they would continue to have church wherever they could. I had to know when and where the next church service would be. There was a carpenter shop that was behind the home of one of the couples that stood with Brother Bob. That was where the church would meet for the time being. I couldn't wait for Sunday.

I will never forget that day. I had never heard anything like this before in my life. I was in full agreement with everything that he preached. Somehow, I knew that this was what I had always longed to hear. I didn't know that I was lost, but I knew that I was in a good place, and I did not want to depart from this.

Well, after about a month of hearing preaching on true salvation and God's work in man, I began to wonder if I was really saved. The question kept coming up "How could a saved person live that way for ten years and truly be saved". One sermon that really made me begin to examine myself was one on God's plumbline. Am 7:7-8 "...Behold, I will set a plumbline in the midst of my people Israel: I will not again pass by them anymore." Well my life did not meet up to God's plumbline. Not even close. I had no argument or excuses. I was so puzzled. How could I think that I am saved? God was convincing me that I was lost. After about three months of hearing the truth being preached on real salvation, I was finally totally convinced that I had never been saved. I was definitely lost. I was

relieved to know what was wrong with me. That explained why I could not continue to attend church for any length of time or leave my life of sin.

At that time, I knew more about salvation than ever. I didn't expect to get saved immediately, but I knew that he would complete His work in me. I longed to hear preaching. I learned that God chose the foolishness of preaching to save them that believe. 1Cor. 1:21 "For after that in the wisdom of God the world by wisdom knew not God, it pleased God by the foolishness of preaching to save them that believe." I went to every service thinking, "this could be the day that I get saved". Each service held great expectation in my heart that God is going to save me.

For about three months, God showed my sin. He didn't show all of my sin, but He showed me enough to make me never want to return to that way of life. If God was dealing with me during or after preaching, I would go to the altar, pray and ask Him to save me. I was unable to trust Him to save me. My attempts to find God for salvation failed because I was in unbelief. Several times at the altar it was like I hit a brick wall. I didn't realize it then, but that was my unbelief.

In August of 1989, I attended my first camp meeting at Mississippi Delta Camp Meeting in West Helena Arkansas. I saw a room full of people praising God and enjoying being in His presence. It was a joyous celebration unlike anything that I had ever seen. I loved every minute of it. I remember thinking, I want this! I want to know God like these people know God. I knew that this was real.

I went to this camp meeting hoping to get saved, but I didn't. I left on Saturday morning disappointed to return home, lost. I had my hope in camp meeting more than in God. I was not hopeless. I was very encouraged by the verse that says "For the Son of Man is come to seek and to save that which was lost." Luke 19:10. Well, I was convinced that I was lost, and I knew that it was God that showed me that. I told God, "You may not save me, but I'm going to be following you and keep asking you to save me for the rest of my life ". That was my attitude. There was no way that I could stop searching for God.

During those months that I knew that I was lost, I would pray day and night. I was hungering for God's word. I would get up early in the morning to spend some time reading the Bible. I was not working for salvation; I was looking for God.

There were several occasions when I would pray at night that I was confronted with a spirit of fear. I knew that this was more than I could handle on my own. My pastor directed me to Rev. 12:11 "And they overcame him by the blood of the Lamb, and by the word of their testimony; and they loved not their lives unto the death." That is a great verse, but I would soon need much more than that as a lost person.

The week following the camp meeting was life changing. All my hope in people and things other than God had been depleted. I was quickly getting to the place that I knew that only God would be able to save me.

The Thursday night following that camp meeting, as I was praying, the reality that I truly deserved to go to hell had settled in on me. It was so much more than words. I felt it. I knew that I had no hope outside of God, and if He did do something for me, I was a goner. So, knowing that there was nothing that I could do about it, I ended my prayer and went to bed.

In just a moment I sensed that fearful spirit again. I was so tired of repeating that scripture out loud only for temporary help. I knew that only God would be able to help me. Out of my great need to be delivered, I began to call on God. Somehow, by the grace of God, I knew He would hear me. I asked Him to keep me safe and protect me. I knew that I was helpless and if God didn't come and do this, I was as good as gone. I just needed God to be there with me.

I laid my head down on my pillow and believing that whatever He decided to do with me, He would be right.

The next thing that I knew was I felt like the safest person in the world. I didn't know what was going on, but I felt an overwhelming sense of peace and safety. I felt like a newborn baby wrapped up in a blanket of love and safety. I thought, "wow, what was that"? I wonder if I just got saved?

I was puzzled because I only asked God to keep me safe and protect me, but this was more than safety and protection. I began to think about what I had learned about true salvation. I knew that if you were truly saved your sin and the guilt and condemnation would be gone. So, I looked for my sin. I couldn't find it. All I could find was peace and rest and a sense of God's love for me. For the first time in my life, I felt forgiven. I was amazed at what had just occurred.

I thought that I should call Brother Bob and tell him what had just happened. I decided to wait until the morning, because this was just too good to spoil. If there was going to be any bad news that this wasn't salvation, it would have to wait until tomorrow.

The next morning, the first person that I saw was my sister. She was lost and knew it at the time. As we were driving our kids to school, I began to tell her about what had happened the night before. She listened to my unusual experience. She said "Jamie, I don't think that was salvation". "I think the devil was just playing tricks on you." I said to her, "yeah, he can play tricks, but he can't forgive sin and mine are gone"! When I spoke those words, I felt the Holy Spirit bear witness in me.

Wow, that was a new thing! I was sure that my sins were gone.

I did call my pastor and his wife that morning and shared all the details of the experience. His response was "Well praise the Lord!". I told him that I didn't want to tell the church right away, I wanted to wait until I felt more sure. He was fine with that. I wanted to go to church and hear the preaching and see if the conviction would come back on me. Sunday morning and Sunday night

preaching came and went with no more conviction or condemnation. This was so different and good.

The following Wednesday night service had started. We had just finished singing and Brother Bob was telling us where to go to in the Bible, and I just had to raise my hand. I could not withhold this good news any longer. I said "I just want to tell you all that God saved me last Thursday night "!

Salvation was not like I expected, it was so much more.