

My Testimony: Jim Gunn

Vineland Park Baptist Church
Hueytown, Alabama
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Philippians 1:6

... being confident of this very thing, that He who has begun a good work in you will complete *it* until the day of Jesus Christ...

1 Timothy 1:8-15

⁸ But we know that the law *is* good if one uses it lawfully, ⁹ knowing this: that the law is not made for a righteous person, but for *the* lawless and insubordinate, for *the* ungodly and for sinners, for *the* unholy and profane, for murderers of fathers and murderers of mothers, for manslayers, ¹⁰ for fornicators, for sodomites, for kidnappers, for liars, for perjurers, and if there is any other thing that is contrary to sound doctrine, ¹¹ according to the glorious gospel of the blessed God which was committed to my trust.

¹² And I thank Christ Jesus our Lord who has enabled me, because He counted me faithful, putting *me* into the ministry, ¹³ although I was formerly a blasphemer, a persecutor, and an insolent man; but I obtained mercy because I did *it* ignorantly in unbelief. ¹⁴ And the grace of our Lord was exceedingly abundant, with faith and love which are in Christ Jesus. ¹⁵ 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.

Wednesday night, July 8th, Brother Gables played a recording of the testimony of Dr. Curt Daniels and asked all of us if we had ever given our testimony to anyone.

As for me, for nearly forty years, I have given my testimony many times to many people, but to my recollection I have never told the full story of my conversion to my own church and I really don't know why. Over the past 34 years that I have been here in this church I have taught Bible study classes and I have preached and I have often referred to how the Lord drew me and conquered me with His Word. I have related how I did not want to be saved after I began to understand what genuine salvation demanded of me. I have given sketches of my testimony on various occasions but not all of it at one time. Partly my reluctance is that too many testimonies lapse into boasting about how bad the person was and it focuses too much on what the person did in order to get right with God.

So right up front I will tell you that I did nothing to cause God to save me, in fact, I did not want to be saved and I resisted the Holy Spirit with all my human might.

That is one reason, but not the main reason, that I believe in predestination.

The main reason I believe in predestination is because the Bible teaches it from cover to cover. No one can read the story of Joseph and not see how God arranged every detail of his life, from the jealousy of his brothers and their plot to murder him, their selling him to the Midianites, his path to the throne of Egypt: you probably know the story as well as I do.

But the second reason that I believe in predestination is my own story. There is no way that I would ever become a believer in Jesus Christ unless God had interrupted my headlong rush to wind up in the hell that I did not then believe existed.

If it pleases the Lord I will tell you how God saved a wretch like me. Like Dr. Curt Daniels said in his testimony, you may want to dismiss me from the eldership after I finish. There are so many things that I am too ashamed of that do not need to be spoken of in public much less before children and in mixed company.

Imagine what you will from my comments and you won't be too far astray.

Before I begin the story of my pilgrimage the heavenly Mount Zion I want to read to you a biblical definition of a true Christian. Turn to Romans Chapter 8.

Romans 8:1-11

8 *There is therefore now no condemnation to those who are in Christ Jesus,* who do not walk according to the flesh, but according to the Spirit.* ²For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus has made me free from the law of sin and death. ³For what the law could not do in that it was weak through the flesh, God *did* by sending His own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, on account of sin: He condemned sin in the flesh, ⁴that the righteous requirement of the law might be fulfilled in us who do not walk according to the flesh but according to the Spirit. ⁵For those who live according to the flesh set their minds on the things of the flesh, but those *who live* according to the Spirit, the things of the Spirit. ⁶For to be carnally minded *is* death, but to be spiritually minded *is* life and peace. ⁷Because the carnal mind *is* enmity against God; for it is not subject to the law of God, nor indeed can be. ⁸So then, those who are in the flesh cannot please God.

⁹ But you are not in the flesh but in the Spirit, if indeed the Spirit of God dwells in you. Now if anyone does not have the Spirit of Christ, he is not His. ¹⁰ And if Christ *is* in you, the body *is* dead because of sin, but the Spirit *is* life because of righteousness. ¹¹ But if the Spirit of Him who raised Jesus from the dead dwells in you, He who raised Christ from the dead will also give life to your mortal bodies through His Spirit who dwells in you.

Especially verse 5:

⁵ For those who live according to the flesh set their minds on the things of the flesh, but those *who live* according to the Spirit, the things of the Spirit.

If your life, like mine was before the Lord saved me, all the while being deceived, is characterized by living according to the flesh, i.e. according to your sinful nature **you are not saved!** I don't care how many "decisions you have made for Christ," or how many times you have "rededicated your life to Christ," or how many times you have been baptized; if you live according to the flesh you are deceived and you are yet dead in trespasses and sins.

As for me I could be the "poster child" for Brother Gables' sermon on "The Self-Deceiving Heart", Proverbs 21:2, preached here on July 19th. If you would like a video or a CD of Brother Gables' sermon just fill out the tab on your bulletin and give it to one of the men when they take up the offering.

Proverbs 21:2

Every way of a man *is* right in his own eyes,
But the LORD weighs the hearts.

Speaking of baptism, I was dipped twice and baptized once. By that I mean that my first "baptism" had no spiritual meaning because I was not a believer. Scriptural baptism is for disciples alone. Like far too many young people when I was about fourteen years old I went along with some other teenagers and made a profession of faith at Springhill Baptist Church in Mobile, Alabama and was "baptized." Springhill Baptist was meeting in an old home so we used the baptistery at First Baptist Church.

After that public profession I thought I was a Christian and my name is still on a bronze plaque on the cornerstone of Springhill Baptist Church in Mobile stating that I am a charter member of that church.

When you go into the army you have to tell them what your religion is so they will know what to put on your coffin; a Star of David, or a cross, and now I suppose a Muslim crescent. Being deceived I would say that I was a Christian.

Brother Walter talked about how unbelievers find excuses to avoid church. Well I had an excellent excuse. One of my friends, a girl, got pregnant, and not by me. Now this was in the 1950s and you didn't even say the word "pregnant" out loud in those days. Well her daddy was a deacon in my church and instead of loving his daughter and helping her in that desperate situation he disowned her and he literally put her out of his house because of his sinful pride.

So, I thought, if that is how a Christian treats his daughter I don't want anything to do with Christianity. And the next 18 years of my life was characterized by living after the things of the flesh. I had no interest in or correct knowledge of Jesus Christ. The only time I said the words "Jesus Christ" was to use them as profanity. I became known for my filthy mouth and dirty jokes.

Unknown to me there was something at work for me that I had absolutely no part in or plans for. The Bible calls it "predestination."

Romans 8:28-30

²⁸ And we know that all things work together for good to those who love God, to those who are the called according to *His* purpose. ²⁹ For whom He foreknew, He also predestined *to be* conformed to the image of His Son, that He might be the firstborn among many brethren. ³⁰ Moreover whom He predestined, these He also called; whom He called, these He also justified; and whom He justified, these He also glorified.

"... He also predestined to be conformed to the image of His Son..."

But my life was totally opposite from the image of Christ and that was the way I wanted it to be.

My daddy and my older brother both drank whisky and beer and that was what I wanted to do. Now, I am not blaming my daddy or my brother for my becoming a drunk, I am only saying that was part of my formative years. My mother was, she passed away, and my older sister is a teetotaler.

Part of my shameful past is that while knowing that my mother despised drinking that I would still get drunk in her home.

Another part of my shameful past is that I married at age nineteen and because of my drinking and selfishness that marriage ended after eight years. At the time of the divorce I rationalized and found fault with my spouse and blamed her, but now looking back at that part of my past as a Christian I take all of the blame for that sinful failure.

In the providence of God I met Cora on a blind date in Montgomery, Alabama. That gets us to 1964. Yesterday we celebrated our 45th wedding anniversary.

We married on August 1, 1964 and I adopted her son Bobby who was eight years old as my own son. Let me give you some unsolicited advice. Bobby is my son and it really bothers me to hear someone say, “so and so has a son **but** he is adopted.” Bobby is my son! By my choice!

Living after the flesh:

Compared to most of the people I associated with I had a high paying job with the telephone company but I found a way to spend more than I was making and guess what, I managed to get us head over heels in debt. At one point I owed more on stuff that had already been used up or thrown away than I could make in a year’s time. Francis Schaeffer calls this the trash heap society.

Back to finances; you see I was a “big-shot” telephone executive. Even before the Lord saved me I was in the top two percent in the hierarchy of the over one million employees. One time when Cora told her daddy how much money I made a year he said, “Nobody is worth that much money.”

His reference point was as a modest and honest farmer.

When we moved from Montgomery to Atlanta in 1964, right after we were married, I was driving a Cadillac Coupe Deville and Bobby told his friends that his daddy was rich. Among the 58 or more cars and trucks that I have bought over the years include eight new Mercedes Benz. In those years a new Mercedes cost what my annual salary was. When I retired in 1991 from the telephone company I was still making what a high-end S-class Mercedes cost.

My reason for talking about my high salary and expensive cars and foolish wasteful spending is not to boast but to show how living after the flesh will ruin your life and any sense of contentment. A lost man will never be content with his circumstances.

My life was void of any true spiritual interest. However, again without boasting, I was intelligent and had an eclectic curiosity about many things. I had worked my way through college because my folks were poor, although they didn't know it, and had earned an electrical engineering degree in communications and I would read anything and everything.

Somehow I developed an interest in religion. When I say "somehow" I am talking about it from the human side. Looking back I can see how God was drawing me to the day when I would believe the truth as it is in Christ Jesus.

Along the way I sought information about Unitarianism and Armstrongism. I never went so far as to join one of these false religions but I was searching for something to answer the emptiness in my soul. Now I realize that God was keeping me from getting in too deep with an apostate church or a cult.

Now we come to the real spiritual battle in my life.

My life's ambition was to be a finger style guitar player. If you are familiar with the Chet Atkins method, he could, but did not usually use a plectrum, that's a pick Brother Walter. Finger style picking employs the five fingers on one hand to work the fret board, yes, even the thumb; and the five fingers on the other hand to pluck the strings and to me that is the proper way to play a guitar.

The guitar is one of the easiest and also one of the most difficult instruments to play. Almost anyone can learn three chords and strum a tune. But to really play the guitar you need to be able to run the full length of the fret board and make every pluck of the strings perfectly like John Williams.

So while we lived in Atlanta I started trying to learn how to play the guitar. Then in 1967 we moved from Atlanta to Birmingham. My secretary heard me talking to someone about wanting to learn how to play the guitar and she told me that her uncle was a classical guitarist and he knew a man that gave guitar lessons. Her uncle was George Crumly and he introduced me to Ted Brooks. Now I am sure that Ted Brooks immediately realized that I did not have the talent to really play well but because his friend George had sent me to him he took me on as a student.

Please see how the Lord in His providence is moving me along.

Ted Brooks passed away but he was the absolute best guitarist that I have ever heard. And that includes John Williams, Les Paul, Chet Atkins, Roy Clark, and any of the great pickers of our day like Brad Paisley, et al.

Providentially God arranged for my weekly guitar lesson to be just before a preacher's lesson. That preacher was Ferrell Griswold.

Now see how God used my curiosity to draw me under the hearing of the Gospel.

One Saturday in late 1967 Ted said to me, "Jim you ought to go hear Ferrell preach, he can preach as good as I can play the guitar." Now that was no boast by Ted, in fact Ted Brooks was a humble man.

As Dizzy Dean said, "If you can do it, it ain't bragging." And Ted could play anything with strings on it and play it perfectly.

Ted had what is called "perfect pitch." He could hear the pitch and tone so well that when he was giving me lessons and I had a finger on the wrong fret, without even looking at my hand he would take my finger and place it on the correct fret.

One time at Ted's music store, a young woman came in and put a guitar still in its case on the counter and asked Ted if he could tune it. Ted did not take the guitar out of the case but simply ran his finger over the six strings; then he turned a few pegs, just one time: he ran his finger over the strings again and the guitar was in perfect tune. The young woman, and me, was dumbfounded. She said, "Let me go and get my boyfriend and you do that again." Which thing Ted proceeded to do; he detuned the guitar; and tuned it again without ever taking it out of the case or making a second adjustment; no brag, just a gift of perfect pitch.

All this time I was living the high life and getting drunk nearly every night.

When we moved to Birmingham in 1967 Cora started going to church and she was taking Bobby with her. I had gone downhill to the point that I told Cora not to talk to me ever again about going to church with her.

Cora had the wisdom to just leave me alone.

1 Peter 3:1-2

Wives, likewise, *be* submissive to your own husbands, that even if some do not obey the word, they, without a word, may be won by the conduct of their wives, ² when they observe your chaste conduct *accompanied* by fear.

But the Lord was about to take over this wretch's life. Not that the Lord was not in charge of me all the time but now He is going to get my full attention.

Ted had planted the seed of curiosity in my brain about a preacher that could preach as good as he could play the guitar.

So to satisfy my curiosity, on the first Sunday in 1968, January 7th it was, I told Cora that we were going to church. Cora is a good wife, even to a drunk, and we went to Christian Heritage in Vestavia to hear a preacher that could preach as well as Ted could play the guitar.

Well, nothing happened! That's not really true. Nothing happened that I could realize at the time but I heard the Bible preached and I heard the Gospel. I heard that all men were guilty sinners and I heard that Jesus Christ was the only sufficient Savior, and that He saved sinners who repented and trusted Him for their eternal destiny.

And we went back to church the next Sunday and the next and the next.

Cora had resigned from the telephone company because driving into downtown Birmingham was not too good, and besides I was making so much money that she didn't need to work.

However, after the Lord saved me she did take the position as the Registrar of the Christian Heritage Church School.

Well, I started helping out at the school on nights and weekends with painting and repairs and other things that always need doing at a school.

The big one:

Another task that I took on was to take boxes full of reel-to-reel tapes that were just in the box with no labels. They needed to be cataloged: listen to the sermon, make a record of the date and where the sermon was preached and by whom, and make up a title for the text being preached.

So here is Jim going to church every Sunday and listening to recordings of Gospel sermons. These recordings were not only by Ferrell Griswold, but also by Quincy Caldwell, E.W. Johnson, N.B. McGruder, Henry Mahan, James Foust, Maurice ontgomery, Rolf Barnard, et al.

All the time I was still drinking heavily but the Gospel was being planted into my stupid head.

Back to my excellent excuse for dropping out of church and to the deacon who disowned his daughter, and who was himself most certainly a hypocrite. While I was running away from God I would say, "Well, at least I am not a hypocrite." Now, I know that really impressed God, but it sounded smart to me.

Get the picture of a man who has become a part of a Christian fellowship, going to church every Sunday, listening to recorded sermons, and still getting drunk.

Brother Gables said this past Wednesday that God deals with man as a moral being. In my heart of hearts I knew I was lost but I really didn't care.

But the more I listened to the Word of God the worse I became. I knew the Bible was the Word of God, and I knew I was a lost man, even though I had once made a "decision" and had been "baptized."

What I also knew was that if I was ever going to be saved that my life had to change. I knew that Bible was truth and I did not want it to be.

In March of 1968 I sold a new Oldsmobile that I had owed on for only a couple of months. You know that a vehicle loses about 30 percent of its original value as soon as you sign the contract to purchase it. It becomes a "used car" before you drive it off the dealer's lot. So I took a huge loss in order to try to get my finances under control. I paid off the car loan and I bought a 1963 Rambler for \$400. It was a good car and it was paid for; but what a comedown for this man of such great pride.

On May 30, 1968, while on a business trip to Atlanta, I went to a friend's house and proceeded to drink a quart of pretty good whisky, you know I only drank the best booze.

Well, I left his house sometime after midnight and I woke up in the Atlanta jail. I did not even know where I was or remember how I got there. The police report charged me with DUI, driving the wrong way on a one-way street, driving with no lights on, running several stop signs. If I had killed myself it would have been justice; but if I had killed someone else it would have been murder!

Well, my friend knew a doctor who knew a judge in Atlanta and he arranged for me to have a private hearing in the judge's chambers. I was allowed to plead guilty and beg the "mercy of the court." This is a one-time only plea offer. What that meant was that there would be no public record, nothing in the newspaper or in a court record, so I would be able to keep my job. If the telephone company had learned of this they would have and should have fired me. Part of the deal was that if I was ever again arrested in Atlanta for DUI that I would go to prison for a few years.

On June 2, 1968 Cora and I joined the Christian Heritage Church **but I was still lost**. In July they asked me to teach a Bible study which I did **but I was still lost**. Then on August 24, 1968 I preached my first sermon at Christian Heritage **but I was still lost**.

From the first of the year [1968] and for nearly nine months what began as an act to satisfy my curiosity about a preacher who could preach as well as Ted could play the guitar, and as I heard several different men preach the Gospel, I attempted to harden my mind against what I knew to be the truth. You see if what I had been hearing was the truth that meant that I was lost. And if I was ever going to be saved my life had to change. I was not ready to repent!

Be sure you hear me correctly. When I say "My life had to change." I now understand that it was not in my power to do anything. But the Lord Jesus Christ by His Holy Spirit had begun a good work in me.

Philippians 1:6

being confident of this very thing, that He who has begun a good work in you will complete *it* until the day of Jesus Christ;

In September the Lord began to bring me to a conclusion; turn or burn!

Flashback:

Cora didn't know my plans for giving my testimony and I was asking her questions about our life before we were saved. She recalled how when we lived in an apartment in Atlanta and I would sit by the pool and have Bobby bring me beers and how it embarrassed her. I just didn't care.

There were acts of providential deliverance that include an August 1966 head-on collision with the guard rail that divides I-75 and I-85 in northeast Atlanta. You are supposed to turn either to the west or to the east but in my drunken condition I simply went right up the middle into the guard rail that divided the two highways.

Yogi Berra said, "When you come to a fork in the road, take it." Well, I didn't.

In God's providential deliverance the wrecker driver, a man that I had never met, picked up a half empty bottle of whisky and put it in his truck so there was no open container in my totally wrecked new Mercedes Benz.

What made him do that?

Another time before the Lord saved me our heat pump stopped working on a hot stormy night. Being an engineer, and also drunk, I went outside in the storm to fix the air conditioner. Kneeling on the wet ground, I took the cover off the unit and stuck in a screwdriver and shorted across 240 volts. The metal part of the screwdriver was burned off but in God's providence I was holding the plastic handle and allowed to live another day.

How many other times the Lord spared this fool's life I don't know.

All the while these deliverances were accumulating in my mind. Why?

Why am I still alive? Why am I not in prison?

The answer to those questions that I did not know in my lost condition but do know now according to the Bible:

Romans 2:1-11

Therefore you are inexcusable, O man, whoever you are who judge, for in whatever you judge another you condemn yourself; for you who judge practice the same things. ² But we know that the judgment of God is according to truth against those who practice such things. ³ And do you think this, O man, you who judge those practicing such things, and doing the same, that you will escape the judgment of

God? ⁴ Or do you despise the riches of His goodness, forbearance, and longsuffering, not knowing that the goodness of God leads you to repentance? ⁵ But in accordance with your hardness and your impenitent heart you are treasuring up for yourself wrath in the day of wrath and revelation of the righteous judgment of God, ⁶ who *"will render to each one according to his deeds":** ⁷ eternal life to those who by patient continuance in doing good seek for glory, honor, and immortality; ⁸ but to those who are self-seeking and do not obey the truth, but obey unrighteousness – indignation and wrath, ⁹ tribulation and anguish, on every soul of man who does evil, of the Jew first and also of the Greek; ¹⁰ but glory, honor, and peace to everyone who works what is good, to the Jew first and also to the Greek. ¹¹ For there is no partiality with God.

My world began to come down on me. After years of boasting that I was not a hypocrite and scoffing at Christianity I realized that I had become one of the biggest hypocrites that I ever knew. I had a life in the church and thought I had everyone fooled and I had the life that really preferred my whisky.

On September 8, 1968 I witnessed Cora being baptized. You know baptism is a visual presentation of the Gospel, the death burial and resurrection of Christ and the one being baptized new relationship with Jesus Christ. **But I was still lost.**

The end of me!

Then on Saturday night, September 28, 1968 as I sat at the kitchen table, I was listening to a recorded sermon and I was making up a title for and writing down the text of Scripture. I don't remember who preached the sermon, or the text of Scripture, or what the sermon was about, but I am sure it was the Gospel.

As I sat there I was overwhelmed with conviction of sin and guilt. It came down on me that I was the biggest hypocrite that ever lived. While I was regular in church attendance and was teaching Bible studies and even preaching a little, I was a hypocrite and I was lost and now I knew it!

I got up from the kitchen table and went into our living room; I got down on my knees and I prayed, really prayed for the first time in my life. I said something along the lines of, "Lord, I am lost and I don't deserve any mercy from You. If You send me to hell right now You would be right and I could have no argument. Lord, all I ask is for mercy. Save me or send me to hell, I can't live any longer as a hypocrite."

Psalm 51:1-4

Have mercy upon me, O God,
According to Your lovingkindness;
According to the multitude of Your tender mercies,
Blot out my transgressions.

² Wash me thoroughly from my iniquity,
And cleanse me from my sin.

³ For I acknowledge my transgressions,
And my sin *is* always before me.

⁴ Against You, You only, have I sinned,
And done *this* evil in Your sight —
That You may be found just when You speak,*
And blameless when You judge.

I was pleading for the “mercy of the court.”

And He saved me!

One Puritan wrote, “Salvation is judgment come before the time.”

When a person is convicted by the Holy Spirit of their sin and guilt against a holy God and agrees with God that they deserve to be sent to hell; then that person is prepared to trust Christ. But let me stress this. Trusting Christ is not a “fire escape” from hell. What I mean is that you must really believe that you deserve to go to hell. **You must see the beauty of Jesus Christ.**

Another thing, don’t make this just another “formula” on how to be saved. You may fool your mama, your spouse, and most of your friends; but know this:

God will not be mocked!

Galatians 6:7-10

⁷ Do not be deceived, God is not mocked; for whatever a man sows, that he will also reap. ⁸ For he who sows to his flesh will of the flesh reap corruption, but he who sows to the Spirit will of the Spirit reap everlasting life. ⁹ And let us not grow weary while doing good, for in due season we shall reap if we do not lose heart. ¹⁰ Therefore, as we have opportunity, let us do good to all, especially to those who are of the household of faith.

Fast forward to 1970; Cora and I were transferred by the telephone company to Nashville, TN. We bought a house in Franklin and it's another story of the grace of God in Christ Jesus how the Lord used me and Norbert Ward to plant a grace church there in 1971 that is still there after 38 years. The name of that church, the Reformed Baptist Church, was changed to the Grace Church at Franklin.

Allow me to comment further on the significance of baptism.

When I was saved in 1968 I asked the pastor if I should be baptized as a believer. However, the members of the Christian Heritage Church were mostly disaffected Methodists and he didn't want to raise an issue over their having been sprinkled as babies. If I needed to be baptized then so would most of that congregation. Now he was a Baptist preacher and he preached believer's baptism at his other church but he was a coward and he compromised the truth in my case.

But after the church at Franklin was going well and I was one of the preachers I became convicted that I had not been Scripturally baptized. Well, we had a guest preacher by the name of James Foust and on May 2, 1971, about 3 ½ years after I was saved; I was baptized in Franklin, TN.

I am past my biblical three score and ten and my life as a believer is coming up on 41 years and there are two more things that I need to tell you.

The first thing is that you do not have to have a dramatic conversion experience in order to be saved. You do not need to be saved just like me or just like anyone else. But you must be convinced that you are a guilty and hell-deserving sinner and that the righteousness of Jesus Christ is absolutely the only thing that you trust for your eternal salvation and security.

Some people are blessed to be raised in a Christian home and they hear the Gospel and truly believe at an early age. However you arrive at the understanding of your guilt and the sufficiency of the righteousness of Jesus Christ and His beauty it must be by grace through faith alone.

The second thing is that even if you do have a dramatic conversion experience you must not look back to an experience for your assurance of being born again or saved. The Lord is very gracious and some people are converted quietly and come to realize that they were lost but now are saved. But just like those who have a dramatic conversion experience, they know that they are a guilty and hell-deserving sinners and that the righteousness of Jesus Christ is absolutely the only thing that you trust for your eternal salvation and security.

What matters is what you believe right now!

If you have a religious experience in your past that you believe is the point of your conversion then look back to your conversion experience and be honest.

Since that time have you walked according to the Spirit or have you continued to walk according to the flesh? Has there been a noticeable change in your thinking and communication?

Do you daily struggle against sin?

Is your life characterized by repentance and trust in Jesus Christ?

Rolf Barnard said, "When the Lord saves you even your old dog will know it."

What you believe and trust at this moment is all that matters. If your trust is not in Jesus Christ and His righteousness alone it does not matter what your experience may have been. Do not put your trust in a religious experience no matter how dramatic it may have been.

I hope my testimony has not been too much about me. My purpose was to show you how each step of the way the Lord's providence was keeping me alive and leading me to a place where I would willingly give up on myself and trust in His sovereign mercy.

I don't believe in "decisionism" as it is preached in far too many churches today. When the preacher tells you that it is your decision that is the trigger or the cause that allows God to save you they are sending you to hell if you put a modicum of trust in a "decision."

But I did make a decision, an informed decision, I decided that I was guilty and lost and deserved to be so. But I did not “decide” to allow God to save me; I begged Him for mercy!

Don't play the hypocrite. Don't live a life of deceived heart and die in your sin.

Let me close my testimony by telling you some things that I now know:

Number One: I know first hand about **depravity**. I can match wickedness with the worst of them. As I said there are things in my past that I wish I could forget. And most of the time I don't think of them but every now and then Satan keeps reminding me and I keep telling him that Jesus' blood has taken care of those awful things.

Number Two: I believe in God's sovereign choice in **election**. If God had not chosen me in Christ before the foundation of the world and in His providence bring certain events into my life, I never would have responded to the Gospel in faith. If you are resisting the call of the Holy Spirit don't be concerned whether you are one of the elect or not. You can only “make your calling and election sure” by a consistent life of repentance and continued trust in Jesus Christ.

Number Three: There is no doubt in my mind that Jesus knew who He died for. Jesus didn't think, well I will give this **atonement** thing a shot and see if anyone will believe My death on the cross was meant for them. To tell people that Jesus died for the entire human race is dishonoring to Jesus Christ. To tell everyone that Jesus died for sinners, and are you a sinner, is the proper way to evangelize.

Jesus said, “I am the good shepherd. The good shepherd gives His life for the sheep.” And He said, “I know My sheep.”

Number Four: Surely I can relate to the **irresistible grace** of God' the Father's drawing. My life's story up to September 28, 1968 was that of a self-deceived heart. If I could have resisted the calling of the Gospel I would have continued in my lost condition.

Number Five: And I believe that by God's mercy and grace that I will **persevere** and that He will **preserve** me will keep me saved; not in my strength, but in His mighty power.

Jude 24-25

²⁴ Now to Him who is able to keep you from stumbling,
And to present *you* faultless
Before the presence of His glory with exceeding joy,
²⁵ To God our Savior,
Who alone is wise,
Be glory and majesty,
Dominion and power,
Both now and forever.
Amen.

Back to where we started.

Romans 8

⁵ For those who live according to the flesh set their minds on the things of the flesh, but those *who live* according to the Spirit, the things of the Spirit. ⁶ For to be carnally minded *is* death, but to be spiritually minded *is* life and peace. ⁷ Because the carnal mind *is* enmity against God; for it is not subject to the law of God, nor indeed can be. ⁸ So then, those who are in the flesh cannot please God.

Brother Gables' question about giving your testimony is what encouraged me to tell you my testimony. Now I want to encourage you to tell us how the Lord saved you. If you will let me know that you wish to do so I will find a time for you to tell it to the church.

If you are not saved, do not leave this building today without repenting and trusting in Jesus Christ and His righteousness alone.

All glory to the Lamb of God, even to Jesus Christ who loved me and gave Himself for me.

Amen.