

# The Testimony of Jack Shaffer

By Jack Shaffer

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**Bible Text:** Luke 7:38-50

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## Grace Baptist Church

110 Lincoln Road  
Glasgow, KY 42141

**Online Sermons:** <http://www.sermonaudio.com/graceglasgow>

38 And she began to wash His feet with her tears, and wiped them with the hair of her head; and she kissed His feet and anointed them with the fragrant oil. 39 Now when the Pharisee who had invited Him saw this, he spoke to himself, saying, "This man, if He were a prophet, would know who and what manner of woman this is who is touching Him, for she is a sinner." 40 And Jesus answered and said to him, "Simon, I have something to say to you." So he said, "Teacher, say it." 41 "There was a certain creditor who had two debtors. One owed five hundred denarii, and the other fifty. 42 And when they had nothing with which to repay, he freely forgave them both. Tell Me, therefore, which of them will love him more?" 43 Simon answered and said, "I suppose the one whom he forgave more." And He said to him, "You have rightly judged." 44 Then He turned to the woman and said to Simon, "Do you see this woman? I entered your house; you gave Me no water for My feet, but she has washed My feet with her tears and wiped them with the hair of her head. 45 You gave Me no kiss, but this woman has not ceased to kiss My feet since the time I came in. 46 You did not anoint My head with oil, but this woman has anointed My feet with fragrant oil. 47 Therefore I say to you, her sins, which are many, are forgiven, for she loved much. But to whom little is forgiven, the same loves little." 48 Then He said to her, "Your sins are forgiven." 49 And those who sat at the table with Him began to say to themselves, "Who is this who even forgives sins?" 50 Then He said to the woman, "Your faith has saved you. Go in peace."

Let's pray.

*Father in heaven, I just thank you for the opportunity to stand before this body of Christ and to share with them, Lord, your mercy and your grace. I thank you, God, that you would consider me worthy, Lord, just to speak of you and I ask for your help this morning in Christ's name. Amen.*

This passage speaks about a lot of things but I'd like to ask you a question this morning: how much do you love the Lord? And as you think about that, I would like to ask you also: why? It's not anything that needs to be answered other than for you to answer it to yourself.

In verse 39 of this text that I read, the Pharisee I don't believe could see the depth of his own sin. One thing this passage talks about, I think, is the awareness of sin. In verse 39, he's talking about how he was looking at the woman and he had his eyes fixed on her and then he began to look at Jesus and say, "If this man knew what a sinner this woman was." As we direct our thoughts and our eyes upon other people, we have a real hard time seeing what our own heart is about. You know, it doesn't matter whether you have a lot of sins as the world may judge or you just have sin in your heart. It's all the same before God Almighty. Something that I had noticed in verse 39 also is that the Bible says that "Simon thought to himself." He didn't speak out what he was thinking about Jesus but Jesus immediately addressed the issue that was in his heart. You know, Jesus can see into our hearts. He can see exactly where we're at and what is going on inside with our thoughts and our motives and our intentions whether people around us can or cannot.

Verses 44-46 shows the expression of love that this woman had for Jesus. Simon invited them to dinner but I believe that the woman and her act of kindness, her act of worship towards Jesus expressed the love that was in her heart. When you read in verse 47 in the New King James, "Therefore I say to you, her sins, which are many, are forgiven, for she loved much." That may tend to give you the idea that she was forgiven because she loved. If you continue to read down in the passage, you'll find out that's not true at all. She loved much because she was forgiven. I like the New Living translation, it says, "I tell you, her sins and they are many have been forgiven so she has shown me much love." She was aware of the forgiveness in her heart, therefore, she had great love. We don't love God first and then he forgives us, the Bible, I think it's in the fifth chapter of Romans talks about that we were enemies with God and that we were reconciled to him. We can't love an enemy, that's very hard to do.

Our love doesn't save us. In verse 50, Jesus made it clear. He said, "Your faith has saved you." What I want to talk to you about today is why I love the Lord the way I do. And for me to do that, I want to share with you what he has done in my life. As I was a child growing up, I was taken to church. I had a godly mother who took me to church religiously, so to speak, whether I wanted to go or not. When I was younger, I heard all about the teachings of Jesus, how he was the Savior of the world and if I would call out to him, that I could be forgiven and I could have eternal life. Somewhere in my young years, I don't remember where as far as the age, I remember going forward to an altar and making a confession of faith but the only problem with that was that there was nothing changed in my life. You know, oftentimes today men or women are coerced, so to say, into going to the front to make a profession of faith and repeating certain words that a preacher says but the only real problem with that is that there is no change in the heart unless Christ works that change.

When I got up to about the age of 15, I got tired of playing the church game. At the time, I think I was going to church with my oldest sister and I can remember sitting in my bedroom one day on my bed and I just kind of told God, I said, "I don't think I want you in my life anymore." I was 15 years old at the time and I can remember by the time I was 16 that I had left home, I had quit school, I had already been arrested. My life took a

dramatic change from that point on. From the age of 15 to the age of 20, I lived kind of like this woman. In one translation of the Bible it says that this woman was a notorious sinner. I want to tell you that Jack Shaffer was a notorious sinner. I wreaked a lot of havoc in people's lives. I was not a kind person. I was not a nice person. I was focused upon myself and that's how I lived.

I don't want to talk a whole lot about my past life. I want to talk to you about what Christ has done in my heart. When I was 35 years old, I was driving down the road one day after a day of drinking. I drank for 20 years and I drank hard. Whatever I did in life, I was talking to Brother Grover last night and he was talking about how he always gives 125% and I can relate to that because whatever I did in life, I gave it my all plus a little more so when it came to the drinking and the partying and so on, I gave it out 100% plus just a little more. When I was 35 years old, I had a day of drinking and I'd been doing it for 20 years so it was just part of my life. I decided like I did hundreds of other times, to get into a vehicle and to drive down the road, not giving one thought about anybody's safety or anybody else's concern. It was all about me. That's the way I had lived for 20 years. Shortly after I left my house, I crossed the center line and I crashed into a vehicle, killing five people. There were only six in the vehicle. It was a mother and a dad who died, two teenagers and a six-month-old infant. I want to tell you that there is nothing in my life that I ever did that affected me the way that did. I could be pretty hardhearted at times towards people. I didn't even know what had happened that day until the next day when one of my family members told me that I was responsible for five people dying in a car wreck.

Of course I was taken to jail and Christ began reminding me of the truth of the Gospel that I had heard as a child. I may not have been paying attention when I was in those church meetings, I would sit in the back row and laugh and play with my friends but, you know, God has a way of implanting things into your heart that he uses later and as I sat in that jail cell, God began to work in my heart in a marvelous way. I don't know anybody's background in here. I don't know if you've ever been incarcerated anywhere. Most county jails are not nice places to be. I want to tell you about how Christ revealed the wickedness in my heart to me. The shower at the county jail that I was held in was filthy, nasty, with black and green mold on the sides of the walls. When you would get into the shower, you would stand in the middle of it not wanting to touch the outside of it because of the filth that was there. I was in there one day and Christ revealed that my heart was just that wicked. Just that dirty. Just that filthy because of the sin in my heart. It was the power the Holy Spirit that convicted my heart of that unrighteousness and of that wickedness. I just melted down on the floor and I didn't care about that filthiness anymore because Jesus was talking to me about the wickedness of my heart. You know, I wasn't seeking God but God was seeking after me. He came to me in a dirty, filthy shower stall and as that water rushed down on me, I want to tell you, when I cried out to Jesus and I said, "Lord, will you fix me?" I didn't confess all of my dirty, rotten sins to him. I said, "Jesus, will you fix me?" I knew I was in bad shape. I want to tell you that the blood of Jesus Christ that he shed on that cross began to wash over my spirit and my soul and my heart and as I lay in there crying, asking God for forgiveness for the wickedness of my heart, I want to tell you that a peace just came over my heart. God took the righteousness of his Son upon

that cross and right there in that dirty shower stall he gave it to me and he took my filthy, rotten unrighteousness and he cast upon it his Son. That's why I love the Lord the way I love the Lord today. You may hear that Jesus doesn't do miracles but the most marvelous miracle that God can ever do is when he takes a sinful heart and he imputes life, when he takes the righteousness of Jesus and just freely gives it to you. The text we read said that the debts, whether they were big or small, that they were both freely forgiven and that's what Jesus Christ did for me that day in that shower.

I want to tell you, that was my first life sentence. 1 John 5:12 says, "He who has the Son has life." Do you have a life sentence today? Have you been given life from Christ? You know, just when God saves you, it doesn't necessarily mean that he changes all your circumstances. I was still in jail. I was still responsible for the deaths of five people and I still had to answer to society for that. Ultimately, I went through a trial. I was convicted on five counts of wanton murder and the jury sentenced me to five consecutive life sentences in prison and just so they were sure that I would never get out of prison, they gave me an extra 20 years. I was sent to the Eastern Correctional Complex in Kentucky and I can remember one of my first prayers there. I said, "Lord, I don't want to stay in prison for the rest of my life but I know that I want to follow you and serve you with all my heart, all the days of my life."

Let me back up just for a second. I want to tell you a couple of incidences that happened to me at the county jail that I was in. You know, when Christ comes into your heart, I didn't know the Scripture about being a new creation in Christ. In fact, I didn't know many Scriptures at all. I knew part of John 3:16 from when I was a child but that was probably about it. But when Christ comes into your heart, I want you to know that you cannot stay the same person. You cannot. You will not. And there were some things that were beginning to happen to me that I didn't really understand. Upon my conversion when Christ gave me life, I wanted to read the Bible. I hadn't picked up a Bible for 20 years plus probably. All of a sudden I had a desire for the word of God. Do you know that that desire has never gone away? I still have a desire for the word of God.

In Ezekiel 36:26 of the new New Living translation, it talks about God calling the nation of Israel back to himself and he talks about giving them a new heart and a new spirit. I want to read you 36:26 from that translation. He says, "I will give you a new heart with new and right desires." I didn't know that verse at the time but that's what was happening inside my heart. God was putting some new desires in my heart. He didn't necessarily remove all of the old desires. I still like to play poker a little bit and I would find myself in a poker game but when Monday night church time came around at the county jail at 7 o'clock, I would leave the poker game and go to church for an hour. You'll be happy to know that I've not played poker for about 14 years now. God removes the old, evil out of your heart and he replaces it with new desires.

There was another incident in that jail where God had put it into my heart to send some money to a Christian organization. Back at that time, of course, everything was done on hard paper, just hard copy and I went to the canteen services one day and I realized that they had not taken the money off of my account for the money that I had sent out. When I

questioned the officer about it, I said, "I don't believe that my account is right." He immediately got defensive and explained to me that they don't make mistakes. My first thought was, "Okay, I just won't tell you about that. Thank you for the extra money you just gave me." But there was something in my heart that wouldn't let me do that and I explained to him and I asked him, "Do you remember the money that I sent out? You didn't deduct it from that." His attitude changed a little bit and he thanked me. As I walked away from there, I was realizing, I thought to myself, "Why did I do that?" But as Christ works in your heart, you begin doing the right things because that's what you are. You have new and right desires in your heart.

Going back to Eastern Kentucky that is where I met Grover Dean at and I began going to some different Bible studies there and going to some church services. You know, I didn't go to church services because I had to, I went to the churches services, Bible studies because I wanted to. Often times on Sunday mornings people will get up and say, "It's Sunday. I have to go to church." I'm going to tell you that with me I get up on Sunday and say, "I get to go to church." I enjoy fellowship with other Christians in the Lord.

I can remember one Bible study at Eastern that I was in. It was a group that came in and did it. It was entitled "Sound Speech." That was probably one of the first verses that I remember out of Ephesians 4:29. It says, "Let no corrupt communication proceed from your mouth but that which is good for edification that it may impart grace to the hearer." I want to tell you how God spoke to my heart about that verse was just walking through the chow line with other men all around you, the conversation that was going on, that I was talking out/ There were all kinds of men around me hearing what was being said and God convicted my heart that some of the things that I was saying were not imparting grace to the hearers. He began to clean up my mouth about that time and he took a lot of that old language out and he started replacing it with words like "redemption" and "justification" and "being born again."

I had met a man in the county jail. We had made conversation and had made plans that when we went to prison because we pretty much knew we were both going, that we would become roommates. That did happen. I ended up meeting him at Eastern and we became roommates. He was a good man as far as society goes. He was a good man as far as a roommate in prison goes. But it was a short time after being in that room with him that God began to deal with my heart that I needed to find a Christian roommate. You know, the Bible says that bad company corrupts good character and as God begins to work in a heart, things change. We don't want to be in the same circumstances. We don't want to be around the same type of people sometimes as far as on a regular basis that we used to hang out with.

These are some of the things that I had noticed early in my walk with the Lord of him working with me. In the fall of 1999, of course, any time a man receives that kind of time, they automatically do appeal and in the fall of '99, I received notification from the Supreme Court of Kentucky that they had overturned my case. Of course, I was happy to say that, I guess, or about that. You know, my prayer was, "Thank you, Lord." I just knew that God had worked on my behalf for that. I said, "Thank you, Lord, and I know

that I want to follow you and I want to serve you no matter what happens." I went back to the county jail and was there for quite some time going through all the legal processes that go on but there were some things that had changed in my heart at this time. During my first trial, I got up on the stand and I said some things that I pretty much knew weren't true even though Christ had saved my soul. I got up on that stand and told some things that weren't right. As I went back for that retrial that first time, I knew I couldn't do that anymore. God wouldn't let me.

God has a way of dealing with you in your heart. He will keep you from doing things sometimes that he just doesn't want you to do when you listen to the calling and the leading of the Holy Spirit. But at the same time, I still had a lot of pride in my heart. I had enough pride in my heart that I would not get up on the stand and admit guilt. That only left me one option and that was just to sit and not say anything. At the time, they offered me what we would consider a good plea bargain. They offered me a 22 year plea bargain which was basically unheard of considering I came off of five life sentences. In my pride, I still had some paid attorneys that were telling me that they could do this and they could do that and I refused to take that 22 year plea bargain because of the pride in my heart. Psalm 118, I think it's verse 8, says, "It is better to trust in the Lord than it is to put your trust in man." At that time, I was putting my trust in those lawyers. I was still under the impression that we could beat this and I could be free. That wasn't the case though. I was convicted again. This time the jury gave me five 20 years sentences and they were running consecutive which meant I had a 100 year sentence to do. They took me back to the county jail and I remember thanking God for returning and working in people's hearts to overturn that conviction. I said, "God, I don't understand." A hundred years in the Department of Corrections is no different from a life sentence. You couldn't do it. My serve out the date was 2072. I said, "Lord, I don't understand." But I knew this, I wanted to follow him and I wanted to serve him no matter what.

It was also at this time that God had put something very special in my heart. I had begun to develop a compassion for my victims and my victim's family and I began praying that I could meet some of them. I didn't know it but there was a woman. Long story short, I was able to meet the sister of the father who had died in the car wreck. God has a way of doing some amazing things sometimes. When this woman came to the county jail and I was talking to her through the glass, I was a wreck. I didn't know what to expect. I looked through the window and I called her name out and I said, "I just don't want you to hate me." She said, "Jack, I've never hated you. I've been mad. I've been angry. I've been grieved. I tried to hate you but God wouldn't let me." If God ever used anybody to show me what Christian forgiveness is all about and what it means when Christ forgives you of your sins, God used that woman.

With that hundred year sentence, I was sent to the state penitentiary in Eddyville. I just basically thought, "It's through. It's over. I'm here forever. It's a done deal." That's the same thing, there was going to be an appeal and all that I said, "Lord, it's yours." During my first appeal, I was always on the phone with the lawyers and when I got to Eddyville I just gave it to the Lord. I said, "Lord, it's yours. It doesn't matter. Whatever happens happens. I just know that I want to follow you and that I want to serve you all of my life."

I met some what I call hard-hearted men at that place. It wasn't a nice place at all. I can remember a prayer that I had at Eddyville, a couple of them I will share with you. One of them was, "God, please don't ever let my heart become so hard-hearted that I'm just so full of hate for everything in life." And I stand before you today and I say, "Thank you, Lord, that you kept my heart soft and tender before him."

One very special prayer that I remember from Eddyville was I was going through something down there, I'm not sure exactly what it was anymore but I was really discouraged and I was in my room one night and I said, "Lord, I just need an encouraging word from you." The next afternoon I received a letter that had been written three days earlier. This is how that letter started out. It said, "Jack, I just wanted to send you an encouraging word from the Lord." You talk about God speaking volumes to a heart. Just to know that he had known what I was going to go through before I ever got there is the story about Daniel where God had sent an answer to his prayer before he had ever prayed.

While I was at Eddyville, I met a man that, I call him my Barnabas. The way it would work out was that I would do the next 11 years of my incarceration with him. I call him my Barnabas because he was a great encouragement to me. We became fast friends in the Lord. He was very bold and very outspoken with his walk with the Lord and was not afraid to talk to you about things in your life that he saw that God was displeased with. At the time, I didn't know why I went to Eddyville. I could see no reason whatsoever why God would send me to such a place or why I would end up there. Like I say, 11-12 years later, I look back and I see why because I needed that encourager to walk with me.

In 2002, I was transferred to the reformatory at LaGrange and I am still amazed and awed at how God began to open doors for me within the confines of a prison. Sometimes spiritually and sometimes physically. At the reformatory in Kentucky, it is the hospital for men that are incarcerated in Kentucky whether a mental hospital or a physical hospital. The first place that God opened up the door for me was the mental hospital. I was a legal aid within the system and when I got to KSR, I came to find out that nobody wanted to work in CPTU, it stands for Correctional Psychiatric Treatment Unit. God began to put it upon my heart to work there. I had heard that they needed a legal aid there so I volunteered for that and that immediately raised some questions with the authorities at the reformatory because nobody ever volunteered to work there. I was able to get the job there. I had been in there probably for about 2 to 3 weeks doing my duties as a legal aid and able to talk to the men about the grace and the mercy of Jesus Christ. I was called into the unit administrator's office and the woman that was over it at the time, she said, "Jack Shaffer, I want to know what's your angle." In prison you are always suspect. She said, "What's your angle? No one ever volunteers to work at CPTU." I asked her, "Do you want me to tell you the truth?" She said, "Most definitely." I said, "I'm up here pretending to be a legal aid while I am spreading the message of the grace of the Gospel of Jesus Christ to the men back here." In a sense, that unit administrator took the keys off her belt and handed them to me. I had access to go in and out of that building basically as I chose to do.

I see that as how God opened some doors for me. Even to confirm that was one time when Grover had made a visit to KSR and it was on a Saturday and we were out walking in the yard and I said, "Brother Grover, would you like to go visit the men at CPTU?" He said, "Well sure." So we just went and as we were up there talking to some men, I'll never forget it, Grover looked over at me and said, "Jack, God has given you this ministry." What a way, with God speaking in my heart about the responsibility to share the Gospel of Jesus Christ to men.

In the fall of 2002, I had written a letter to the woman that I had met, the sister of the man I killed, and I had put in this letter to her, I said, "I don't know what's going to happen with that appeal but I want you to know this, there will never be another trial." Less than two weeks later, the Supreme Court of Kentucky overturned my case a second time. I went back to court knowing exactly what I was going to do. I was appointed a public defender at the time and I told him, I said, "I don't want a trial. I just want to go in and plead guilty." He said, "Oh no Jack, we can't do that." I said, "Yes we can. And that's what we're going to do." Basically that is what happened and I took a plea bargain for five 25 year sentences all to be run concurrent which means you're going to do a 25 year sentence. My prayer at the time was, "Thank you, Lord, and I want to follow you. I want to serve you all the days of my life."

On my trip from the county jail to the county where I was at court at, back to the one way they were holding me at, I want to tell you how I got there. I was used to being in handcuffs and shackles and 2 to 4 officers around me, in the backseat of a cruiser, sometimes with a cruiser in front and sometimes with a cruiser in the back. They didn't give me five life sentences just for that wreck, they gave me five life sentences because of my past history, a combination of several things. When I tell you that I was a notorious sinner, that's exactly what I was. You know, we're all sinners. Sometimes we express our sins and sometimes we just hide it in our heart. Men can have hate in their heart and suppress it. Other men can have hate in their heart and express it by being mean or maybe beating somebody up. I just had a way of expressing mine. But on the day they were taking me back to the other county jail, I sat in the front seat of a cruiser beside the jailer, no handcuffs on, no shackles on, no cruiser behind me or in front of me. I looked over at him as we were going down the Parkway and I called his name out and I said, "Boy, this is different, isn't it?" He said, "Well yeah Jack, but you're different."

Back at the county jail that was right around Thanksgiving if I remember correctly and the volunteer Minister that came in that week decided that we should all sit in a circle and tell something that we were thankful for. Well, when it came to my turn, when it came around to me, I said, "Well, I just received a 25 year sentence and I'd like to thank God for that." Some people gave me some funny looks but they didn't know where I had been and what God had brought me from so when I say thank you to God, I know where he's brought me from. I know the weakness in my heart that he's cleansed me from so when I say thank you to God, when I look up to heaven and say, "Thank you, God," I know what he's delivered me from.



I was back at the Kentucky State Reformatory. Of course when something like that happens in the prison system, news travels quick. "Jack's back and he got all that time off of him." I had a guy come up to me and say, "Boy, I bet you're happy." I said, "Well, yeah I am but think about this, you've known me the past few years and wasn't I happy when I had 100 years?" He looked at me kind of funny and said, "Well, yeah you were." You know, when you have Christ in your heart, your circumstances should not dictate your happiness or your joy. Christ in your heart is what dictates your joy.

I had an opportunity to be on a program at the reformatory and it was called the Outreach Program and we talked to children, troubled youth, so to say. There was a different panel of inmates who was on this group and of course I talked to them about drinking and driving and other men talked to them about gang activity or whatever. As I talked to them about drinking and driving, I always did my utmost to watch for an opportunity that God opened a door for me to speak about what Christ had done in my heart. There was one time when one of the deputy wardens had come and got two or three of us out for a group that they were bringing in. As I began to talk to them, I talked to them about my faith in Christ and how I was able to share that with other inmates around me. I talked to them about how Christ had given me hope and life. And a lady looked at me and she said, "Well, let me ask you a question. Do you find it hard to talk about your faith?" I had to smile a little bit and say, "No, I just witnessed to you about it." You know, I don't find it hard at all in my life to talk about what Jesus Christ has done for me. I find it a joy and a pleasure and an honor and a privilege.

With that 25 year sentence, I had an out date that I could kind of see, light at the end of the tunnel, so to say. And I began to pray about my parents. They were getting up in age and I said, "God, would you allow my parents to see me on the outside of a prison setting?" As I prayed that prayer, my thoughts were that they would be alive when I got out of prison. My dad died in January of 2008 and I knew he had gotten sick and had gone through a couple of years of health issues. So they called me into the chapel and they asked me about whether I wanted to go to a bedside visit and I said, "Well sure." So when they asked me where he was, I gave them the address and they said, "What nursing care home is that?" I said, "It's not." "Well, what hospital it is it?" "Well, it's not." "Where is that?" "That's his house." The chaplain took his book and just closed it up and said, "Well, you can't go there." He said that's against policy and procedure. That's a security risk. Being a legal aide, I kind of knew that but if they wanted to let me go, I was going to go. Before I left the chapel, his phone rang and he's like, "Wait a minute," and he motions me back into his office and he says, "He told me to let you go." The next day I was in a cruiser going down the interstate where my dad was at and we pulled into the driveway and the officer turned around and looked at me and said, "Jack, we don't want any problems here." I said, "I just want to see my Dad." I got out of the cruiser and walked up to the front porch, through the living room, down the hallway and sat on the bed with my daddy. I was later told by a deputy warden that had never occurred in the history of the Department of Corrections. As I thought about that, and the prayer I had been praying to God about my parents seeing me on the outside of a prison setting, God hears the desires of our hearts and he answers prayers. That taught me something else, I changed the prayer for my mother. I said, "God, would you allow my mother to be alive when I get

out of prison so she can see me?" I want you to know that I haven't been in church with my mother for 20 something years, maybe 30, I don't know, until this morning and a few weeks back in North Carolina. I am just so thankful to God for giving me another desire of my heart.

I had much favor within the Department of Corrections. I could talk for hours about things that the Lord has done for me while I was there, the favor he showed me. Not favor for me but favor to do his work. How he opened different doors in the nursing care unit. How he opened the doors literally on a prison and allowed me to go to a school and talk to the children. God doesn't just save us and then leave us to ourselves. He has watched over me for the past 16 years and he has kept me. He has blessed my heart. He has guided me and he has directed me. From that very first prayer at Eastern when I had those life sentences, when I asked God, "Lord, I don't want to stay in prison the rest of my life but whatever it takes, I know that I want to follow you and that I want to serve you." God has been right there with me. The Bible says he will never leave you nor forsake you. We might feel like he has but as we look back in time, we can see that he never has.

Something I did want to share with you and I've kind of forgotten about it. After I received that 25 years sentence, I was taken back to the county jail and I was sitting on the bed and I kind of questioned the Lord a little bit. I say, "Lord, what about that 22 years they offered me four years earlier? Why couldn't I get that?" Just clear as day God spoke to my heart and he said, "I tried to show you my mercy and my grace but you had your focus upon men and not me."

As my release date neared, my prayers began to focus on what my life would be like as a Christian. I had never been a Christian on the outside world, only during my incarceration. I said, "God, I don't know how to be a Christian." In that same small, still voice he spoke to me and said, "The same truths, the same principles that have guided you all of these years will keep you and will guide you through your life." I don't know what's going to happen this afternoon, I don't know what's going to happen tomorrow or next week but one thing I know, I want to follow the Lord and I want to serve the Lord with all my heart, with all my soul, with all my mind and with all my strength.