

Pastor Ike Graham's Testimony

July 15, 2012

Almighty God had mercy on me and revealed Himself to me so that I could believe in Jesus Christ, God the Son, in December of 1970. At that time, I was a senior in high school at Smithville. I lived with my parents in Marshallville at the same address where I reside now.



I wasn't born in Wayne County, however. I was born in Barberton in Summit County on January 9, 1953. We moved to Marshallville when I was 7 in November of 1960. My father was not a Christian and my mother's background was Catholic. It was the Catholicism of Europe as my mother and her family came to the U.S. on March 18, 1950 from Yugoslavia. When my mother and father were married, as it used to be often in the U.S., they lived with my father's parents. But my grandfather also was not a Christian. Only my grandmother was a believer and she began to witness to my mother.

After we moved to Marshallville in 1960, we worked incessantly. My parents wanted to farm and there was also a lot of upkeep because the place they purchased had no inside plumbing and the buildings were in need of repair. So, during my years growing up, I don't remember going to church very much. Our neighbors attended East Chippewa Church of the Brethren and they invited my grandmother to go there. Maybe they invited other family members too, but I was unaware of it. So my grandmother went and on occasion, she took me. I do not remember hearing the Gospel, even though it may have been preached. My grandmother used to tell me that she was praying for me and she used to tell me quite often that I should read the Bible. But I wasn't interested. I loved me more than God. It is a testimony to 2 Corinthians 4:4 which says, "in whose case the god of this world has blinded the minds of the unbelieving, that they might not see the light of the Gospel of the glory of Christ, who is the image of God." That was me. I was spiritually blind. I was not only spiritually blind, I was an idolater. I worshipped me. And I worshipped sports. My life revolved around sports at school. I got good grades so that I could play football.

Then, it happened. Ephesians 2:1-5 became a reality in my life. It reads:

1 And you were dead in your trespasses and sins, 2 in which you formerly walked according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air, of the spirit that is now working in the sons of disobedience. 3 Among them we too all formerly lived in the lusts of our flesh, indulging the desires of the flesh and of the mind, and were by nature children of wrath even as the rest. 4 But God, being rich in mercy, because of His great love with which He loved us, 5 even when we were dead in our transgressions, made us alive together with Christ (by grace you have been saved),
In September of 1970, I broke my lower right leg at football practice. I was devastated. I was angry. Now, I couldn't play football! One of my gods died and let me down. Soon,

my so-called friends didn't come by. I couldn't drive and they didn't come to see me. I had a lot of time on my hands. So I decided to read the Bible to get my grandmother off my back. As I perused through the table of contents, I saw Romans. That seemed interesting so I began to read the book of Romans. I was shocked! Read Romans 1:29-32. I thought, "Whoa! This book is about me!" And I knew that I was in trouble with God. I had just read Romans 1:18-22. I knew that I was going to hell; separated from God forever. As I continued to read, I read about Jesus. I read that He died for my sin. I read that He died in my place. But, I didn't know who Jesus was or why He died for me. I was amazed when I read Romans 5:8.

Realizing that I shouldn't just start reading randomly, I decided to read beginning in Matthew. So from September into December of 1970, I read Matthew, Mark, Luke and John. I was amazed. I don't remember ever hearing some of the things Jesus taught or did. I was enthralled. I marveled at His words...and was fearful of them. Words like "and whoever shall say (to his brother), 'You fool!' shall be guilty to go into the fiery hell." Or, "I tell you...unless you repent, you will all likewise perish."

Then, it happened. God opened my eyes to understand who Jesus is. I read in the Gospel of John Jesus saying, "Before Abraham was, I am;" and "I am the Father are One;" and, "...if you have seen Me then you have seen the Father." My heart was broken. God Himself came to this sin-ravaged, God-hating planet in order to take the penalty for my sins...and your sins. His death on the cross was for me; in my place. So there in my living room in December of 1970 I called out to God. "Please forgive my sins. Please give to me the eternal life which you promise to those to who believe...and one more thing. Please direct and control my life. Amen."

Immediately, God began to answer my prayer and I didn't even realize it. I was born again right then. I experienced John 3:8, "the wind blows where it wishes and you hear the sound of it, but do not know where it comes from and where it is going; so is everyone who is born of the Spirit." The second week of January, 1971, I met Nancy and began attending the Wooster Grace Brethren Church. I still remember the Sunday evening when Pastor Ashman said, "Tonight, we begin our study in the book of Romans." I was captivated by the Word of God. I was like a dry sponge soaking up water. I couldn't get enough. And, as they say, the rest is history. That was almost 43 years ago, and the Lord Jesus has been more to me than all that I have read in the word of God; the Bible. He wants to be your Savior too. You can know Him today. By simply calling out to Him to forgive your sins and to grant to you eternal life, you can be born again right now...right where you are. Will you call out to Him to save you?