

Testimony

by H.T. De Villiers

H.T. De Villiers shares his personal testimony of faith, struggles with assurance, and the transformative power of the Holy Spirit in his life.

Scripture: Genesis 1, Matthew 6:33, John 1:2, Revelation 3:20

Topics: "Personal Testimony"

Description

In this sermon, the speaker shares his personal testimony of how a simple prayer transformed his life. He describes having a hungry heart and a longing for Jesus for 26 years before finally surrendering to Him. The speaker also recounts a conversation with a missionary who helped him understand how to know for certain that he was a child of God. He then shares a powerful story of leading a man to the Lord and witnessing the impact of God's work in his life.

Transcript

I'm not going to waste any time. Exactly seventy years ago, as a boy of seven, I told my first lie. I committed my first sin.

I dare say I told many little lies as a very tiny little boy, like all the little boys do, but at that age I told my first lie, I remember it as well as yesterday. My turn came and my mother questioned us, boys, hungry, did you take it? And I looked her in her eyes and I said, no mother, and as I said no mother, my little heart thumped like this. And I knew I was telling a lie, consciously telling a lie.

I also remember my first prayer. I prayed little prayers at my mother's knee, like all little children do or ought to do, but I remember my first real prayer, when I was desperate and in earnest. The prayer doesn't mean anything is left short and earnest.

It was raining and raining and raining, and a few weeks previously I had listened to the story of Noah and the flood. And I was perfectly sure the world was coming to an end. And I see myself leaning on a bag of meal behind the pantry door, weeping, pleading, please Lord Jesus stop the rain, because if the world comes to an end I'll go to hell.

I'm a liar, I told lies. Hell was very real to me as a little boy of eight. Hell is very real to me tonight.

Heaven was real to me. Jesus was real to me at that early age. At the age of 14 I accepted the Lord Jesus Christ as my personal savior.

Wellington, the days of Andrew Murray, missionary, dealt with me. And when it was all over I said to him, Sir, how may I know now definitely that I am a child of God? And then he took something out of his pocket, and he said to me, I have a knife in my hand. Do you believe me? I said, yes, I believe you.

Why do you believe me? What a question. I said, on that many a so say, because you say so. Very good he said.

Look, I didn't tell you a lie, there's the knife. Now he said, I am only a human being. But God, the great God, who wrote this book.

Look, he says, you come to him as a sinner. Confess your sins. Open your heart.

He will come in. He gave me John 1.12 also. Revelation 3.20. Are you going to believe God like you believe me? I saw the point, I said yes.

But now I will tell you a very sad thing. From that day, 14 years up to my 40th year, 26 years, I had no assurance of salvation. I had no absolute certainty.

I didn't have a clear witness of the Holy Spirit in my heart, that I was born of the Spirit. I don't know why. I wasn't sure that if I died that particular night, I'd go to heaven.

When I was teaching for the first time out there in the field behind the bush, I renewed the covenant, I gave myself to the Lord. I committed myself to him, I accepted him. But I didn't have the assurance.

That's why I feel so sorry for people who have not the assurance, the absolute certainty, at this moment if I die, I'll be in the presence of the Lord Jesus Christ. Don't rest until you have it. I always look back upon that period in my life as 26 wasted years.

My wife at that time, when the Lord came into our lives, she had tears about that blank in the life behind there. In 1913, I went to a little Karudap, my first principalship of a school, and there I plucked the only Karud blossom. There she is, still blossoming.

I tell this because that night of our engagement, now she was in the same boat as I was, uncertain, true believers, but no assurance. She said to me, we ought to go down on our knees now and ask the Lord's blessing on our engagement, and we did. If you were to ask me why we are the happiest couple in Pretoria tonight, I'd say there was the beginning.

Praying together, trusting God, right through the 53 years of married life, up to this afternoon when we pray together. That is enough for that little Karudap. And in 1919, we moved to Perro, way in the Cape.

And as a schoolmaster there, as the principal of the school there, I was very, very popular and very well liked. Everyone spoke about Mr. and Mrs. de Villiers as the most exemplary Christians in this township. And in a sense, we were, and they said all sorts of nice things about us.

You know at a certain stage in one's spiritual experience, your eyes, ears are open to listen to all the nice things people say about you, and you enjoy it, and you want to hear more of it at a certain time of your life. And we heard all these things. And we were exemplary Christians.

In our home, we were very happy. We had morning prayers, family prayers, and evening family prayers, and we were very strict about Sabbath observance. My wife played the organ in the church, and she had

the Sunday school, and I helped the minister sometimes with services, even with Pentecostal services, in every respect.

Well liked and popular, but I was not satisfied. In spite of it all, wondering, wondering, what is lacking in my life? I would like to have assurance, and I haven't got it. A minister came there, one a special preacher, and he said to him from the hood, I'll tell you in a few words how to have assurance, and he told me in the same old words I know over and over again, Revelations 3.20, and John 1.12, and so on.

I said, Lord, but I acted upon those scriptures. I haven't got the assurance. I haven't got the witness.

One reason why I had this uncertainty, because I didn't have absolute, 100% victory in my life. And I had this high standard for God's new birth, that if I'm truly born of the Holy Ghost, I must have absolute victory. It mustn't be that I'm a corner filler, a little lie, or a little dishonesty, or anything like that.

Praise God for a high standard. In 1930, we went to Hermanus. That's where Hermanus is, Hermanus is a very soft spot in my heart.

My long leave, six months after 20 years unbroken teaching service. When we came there, we heard about a missionaries conference to be held shortly. Not a missionaries conference, ministers conference.

It was a counter-conference. There were 91 of them from all over the Republic. Reverend Scrippers, and Reverend DeToy, and Reverend Reineke here, and Dominique Cotsi, Professor Cotsi today there in Stellenbosch.

They were the four speakers. And they had their meeting in a hall away there, and we from the congregation there had a meeting in the church. And that very first night, the subject was Egypt, the Red Sea, the wilderness, Jordan, Canaan.

You got it? It's well known. And as he spoke about Egypt and the Red Sea, and he spoke about the wilderness experience and the wandering about there, I, for the first time in my life, discovered myself. And it is a very great thing when you discover yourself, when you stand spiritually, know exactly just, that is just where I am, in the wilderness, or in Egypt, or just over the border in the land, or deep into the land, wherever you are, you ought to know exactly where you are as a Christian.

And I knew that night. And the Lord by His grace revealed the whole thing to me. It was illuminated by the Holy Spirit, and I saw it all.

I saw Canaan. Here you are wandering about for 26 years in the wilderness, and I wanted to get there as soon as possible. I couldn't wait, but unfortunately the time was up.

And he would continue tomorrow night. But before he ended, he said just one little thing. He said, Sir, friends, I know of cases where a little thing stood in the way, and the person couldn't get through into the fullness of the blessing.

For instance, a pipe. My ear was right in my pocket, a pipe. Now to show you that I was in earnest.

Some people argue about these things. People who argue about these Christian things are people who are nowhere spiritually. I went home that night and my pipe went into the stove.

Just straight away into the stove. Dear old pipe. That afternoon I bought a quarter pound of nice tobacco.

Never touched it for 36 years. Now where was I now? Well, yes. Now tomorrow comes, the next night.

And he continued to talk about the wilderness and the passing through Jordan and Canaan and all the nice things in Canaan. And he said the passing through Jordan. It's a pipe in the Old Testament.

It's the same as the 120 had in the upper room. To be filled with the Spirit. To be filled with the Holy Spirit.

Now an invitation was made. About 400 people in the church. And when the invitation came, no singing or raising of hands or bowing of heads.

Stand up those who want to get out of the wilderness into Canaan. And I was the first shyest person in the world. Reserved very, very much all my life.

But oh, there was something in my heart that I knew. I'm on the track of it now. And I got up and my wife next to me and two others.

And four of us had to stay behind. Four out of 400. One percent.

Sad, isn't it? All the same message. Here's one, there's one. But the message goes into the heart.

Ready. The message, hungry. Then we had to pray.

And it came to my turn, you know, with trembling. Nervous. I said, Lord, I open my heart.

Fill me with your Spirit. Thank you, Lord. Amen.

It's not a simple little prayer. And that little prayer turned my life upside down. Transformed me absolutely.

Because behind that little simple prayer there was a hungry heart. That is the whole secret. I didn't try to persuade me to come to the Lord and do this and that.

No, there was a hungry heart, a heart, a spirit I prepared for 26 years. And when I saw it at last, I put up both hands. Lord, I want it.

Or I'll sacrifice my work. I'll go straight away out into the work. Anything at all, but I want it.

I'm tired of that wilderness experience. That little prayer. And then that night I went home and I confessed all my sins.

There at my bedside. Late into the night. Confessed all the sins I knew about as a wandering wilderness Christian.

I said, Lord, if there's anything more at all, just tell me. I'll put it straight. I'll make restitution.

I'll do anything, but I want to get there. And the next day I went out fishing as usual. I was very fond of fishing, sitting on the rocks there.

And the devil paid me a visit. You, a little schoolmaster filled with the Holy Spirit. What do you think of yourself? Not meant for you.

Filled with the Spirit. You know when I said to the devil loudly. I like speaking loudly to the devil today, Stu.

I said to him, those men last night were older than I am. They told me it's a matter of faith. Faith.

It's a matter of believing God and His Word. And I believe God. And then a strange thing happened.

That flashed into my mind. The text. I had the slightest idea where it was in the Bible.

He will call if he is faithful. He will do it. And I stuck on to that.

I got hold of it. Oh, what a wonderful thing. What a need to get hold of the scripture and stick to it.

In spite of all the devils in the world. That was my text. Now we go home.

First morning there at home. I was early up with my Bible. Reading my Bible.

I determined to read my Bible. And a strange thing happened. The Bible was new to me.

I couldn't believe my eyes. I read the Bible through as a child. From Genesis to Revelations.

Right through and marked it all over. I was proud sitting in the church next to someone to show how my Bible was marked. And it was new.

It was no longer mechanical reading. It's that promise for me, mind you. Oh, look at this one here.

And as I went along, I never saw that. Absolutely new. I remember I learned pieces by heart.

I can't do it now. The memory is failing me. You have noticed it already.

But I read Romans 8. I learned Romans 8 in the Netherlands. Cut off. You can say the whole thing.

There is no third domination in Africa in the Netherlands. In the night time at 2 o'clock or 3 o'clock I would wake up and say Romans 2 right out. And rejoice in the Lord there in the middle of the night.

Hallelujah. Oh, I loved the Bible. Great love God put into my heart.

I remember standing in the kitchen and my job was every morning to make porridge for the children. My wife was busy with the others and the servant came late. And I stood there stirring the porridge and reading the Bible all the time.

Yes, that is absolutely true. A wonderful thing. I praise God for it.

Love for the old book. God's book. And there I sat.

And I take this, the Bible becoming new to me as a part of the witness. And afterwards, not that same morning but another day, I came into the room and I knelt down in the middle of the room. Strange thing, I don't know why.

I just fell down there and looked up. And as I looked up I started weeping. This experience is to me very, very precious and sacred.

I very, very, very seldom speak about it. It came to me. And as I wept there, tears flowing, just one word escaped my lips.

Over and over and over and over again. Jesus. Jesus.

Jesus. Jesus. I don't know why I was weeping.

I don't know tonight why. I guessed already. It's perhaps because He came so near.

And God comes near to you when you have that awareness. You can't help it. Something must happen.

You must weep and you must go down in your face. He came very near last night, didn't He? I had trouble with my handkerchief there. I didn't know what to do.

Was my eye watering or what is the matter with me? He came so near. I spoke to my dear son-in-law about it and he said, It was the same with me. Praise God when He comes near and depends upon all of us Christians.

So to pray down the blessing from heaven that He will come near at every meeting. He wants to. There mustn't be hindering things.

And then now I came away from the Armadas with great expectations. Oh, I want to tell them about being filled with the Holy Spirit. The wonder of it all.

Perhaps it's a new message to them because it was new to me. Then during my absence they elected me on the Kerkraat. Deacon.

And I went there full of hope. And the very first meeting of that Kerkraat something happened. A letter came from one of the members of the congregation complaining about a certain elder in that Kerkraat who on the wedding of his daughter gave a dance and there was wine.

A charge against this elder. And that thing had to be discussed that night. My first meeting.

And they treated the thing very lightly and they were on the point of putting it into the waste paper basket. Ah, but that's a personal thing. And the Lord said to me, you must get up and protest.

Now imagine me, now the most popular fellow standing up now and here the elder is sitting in front of me. But God gave me grace and I got up. I told them how disappointed I as a young deacon for the first time, my first experience in the Kerkraat seeing such a very important thing being treated so lightly.

What I thought of dancing and wine and all these things. I can imagine the atmosphere. And the eyes on me.

What's it happened to now? That this fellow. We like him so much. He was so popular.

Look at this. And I said, do you mind give me a chance to give my testimony to tell you why I act like this tonight. And he gave me five minutes.

And I told him how God filled me with his spirit. Oh, it's far worse. Filled with the spirit.

I could feel it. I could feel it. In the atmosphere.

But that night when I went home, I walked on air. And the bells were ringing inside. That's just what I needed.

A bit of persecution. Dominique de Troyes there from Marysburg wrote a letter to me. He said, brother, if you are really filled with the spirit, you may expect persecution, criticism, and it will come from a quarter from where you least expect it.

I didn't know what it meant then, but I know now. I want to tell you my first soul God gave to me. The first soul God gave to me.

I came home and the Lord said to me, I must go to Johnny Kirsten. He's unsaved. That's a great man.

He was the mayor of the town. He was the leader, leading elder in the church. The man who took charge of the whole business when the minister was on holiday.

He was a secretary, you know. Casir and all that sort of thing. A highly respected man.

A nice man. A man of character and esteem. I was afraid.

On that afternoon, a note came from him. Wonderful God works. Asking me to come down to help him with the church books.

I went down and I helped him with the church books. And I began to tell him my story. What happened in my life away in Hermannus.

And as I spoke, very quietly, gently, with love, I saw the big tears beginning to run down his face. This big, strong man. I didn't know what had happened.

I had no experience in these things yet. So I said, let's go down and pray. And I prayed and I said, may you pray.

And his big flame shook like this. For a while. And at last he got it out.

And he said, Weeping. Wonderful. Lord, seal upon what you have done.

God brings you into the blessing. From the Lord before you, we will sow for the Lord Jesus Christ. I just want to continue to give this illustration and I'm finished.

That Kerkra, that Oberlin who sat there. Against whom that complaint came. You know, the Lord said, I must go to him.

I must go to him. Something against you. In the church, he sits there in front, the Oberlin and we behind there.

This fellow. You must go and go to him. And I went to him and made an appointment with him to come and see me.

He said, no, I will come and see you. And he came to my home. You know.

Ready for a fight. Smoking a cigarette. Sit down.

Speak to him. Give my testimony. Couldn't preach in those days.

I give my testimony. That's always your weapon. What God has done for you.

And as I spoke, quite gently and softly. He nipped out the cigarette. Wasn't long with the tears running.

On our faces. And there he found the Lord. And this is a beautiful thing.

Fourth night later, he brought that very son on whose wedding the dance was given. To my home. I was leading to the Lord.

They had been dealt in the dining room and he came to the Lord. And the beautiful thing is now. A month ago.

A few months ago, I was in Paro. Cape Town. And Mr. Kempen, the superintendent there.

Who has a monthly meeting in Paro. Heard about it. So he said, I want you to take the meeting next month.

And the Paro people knew. When they heard Mr. de Villiers coming. I was there for 27 years.

All was full. And Mr. Kempen, when he began, he said, Meneer Leeman say for us the vergadering weapon mit gebed. And I was in shock.

And I looked. Yes, there he was. That elder son who on that wedding had the dance.

There he stood up. After 30, more than 30 years. On fire for God.

So much so that he was asked to open the meeting. Praise the Lord. For every man and woman filled with the Holy Ghost.

Don't wait, brother, sister. With your least of the least. The least doubt.

Push through. Get through. Until you know you are through with God.

You are filled with the Spirit. And cleansed by the blood of Jesus. For his name's sake.

Amen. Just a moment of silence. Oh God.

Let a volume of prayer go from this meeting. For souls who are in the valley of decision. It may be their last opportunity.

To yield to Jesus. Give us a mighty break tonight. A Holy Ghost break.

Not wrought up by man. But sent down from heaven by God Almighty. Lord, save souls in this meeting.

Set them free. Break the fetters of sin. Oh, send the backsliders back home to God.

Right to the very heart of God. Let the things of this world become evil to them. Sinful.

Abhorring. Let them flee. Flee to Jesus for salvation.

To the uttermost. Oh God. Have mercy on the Christians.

Oh God. Give us grace. Not only to have a name.

But a life. And not only life. But life more abundant.

In Jesus. Oh God. Take over this meeting.

As thou hast done from the beginning. Continue to do now. And speak thyself.

Blessed Holy Ghost. To that soul. To whom Jesus has been speaking.

Perhaps right through this meeting. Perhaps for years. And they have been resisting thee.

The Holy Spirit of God. And that voice has just become a whisper. They have grieved the Holy Ghost so often.

Oh Lord. Have mercy on us tonight. In this hall.

Come down upon us in the power of the Holy Ghost. And melt us. Every one of us.

The deepest Christian. The most sanctified amongst us. Oh get us down on our faces before thee.

Body. Soul. Spirit.

Yield to Jesus. And him only. Set apart from sin.

Unto God. Do it tonight. In Jesus name.

Dear friends we are going to sing a hymn in closing. And we are going to mean what we sing. You look up the hymn first.

Hymn 85. And I want as few as possible to leave the meeting. If it is at all possible dear friends.

Stay with us a few more moments. Pray with us. If you are right with God.

Pray for those perhaps the man sitting next to you. You may never see him again. Never.

Pray for her. Can you pray for him? Are you through with God? Oh let every one of us get into touch with the living God tonight. Whatever our needs are.

Jesus is here. Jesus is in our midst. He is calling us to repentance.

And not only to repentance. But to life. And life more abundant.

Hymn 85. We will sing it to the tune of nearer my God to thee. Wash me.

Oh God. I am unclean. I am unclean in the sight of the all seeing eye.

God knows me. God I cannot hide my real state from thee. I have been hiding my heart's condition from my wife.

At least I have been trying to. Oh God knows me. My husband doesn't know me.

My minister doesn't know me. My boy. My girlie.

They don't know me but oh Jesus I am unclean. I am a Christian. But oh God the life behind that name.

I am coming as I am tonight. Just as I am. Not what I am thought to be.

Wash me. Make me whiter than snow Lord Jesus. Send me into this filthy world.

As a light sent by God. Lord help me. I am coming tonight as I am.

Is that the prayer of your heart? Have you at last become honest with yourself and with God? Are you at your wit's end? Oh beloved. Why are we singing this hymn? Will you come to the front? Make your way into the vicinity? That won't save you. That won't sanctify you.

But it will help you to break with sin in the world and the devil and the flesh. Yes it will. To make an open stand for Jesus.

Will you do it? I know this beloved. If you are desperate. If you are under conviction.

Brought under conviction by the Holy Ghost. You won't care what you do. You will come.

You will come to get deliverance. Will you come tonight? God help you. I know prayer is going up in this hall.

I know there are those who have been out. Not out to the front. But came out of themselves to God.

Came as they were. And the blood cleansed them. Purified them.

And the blessed Holy Ghost filled them. Christian. You must be the first.

You and I. To humble ourselves. Underneath the mighty hand of God. And the greater my profession.

The lower I must go. If I have sinned against God. And my fellow man.

God help us. Don't stand in the way of others. If the Christians.

Get through with God. Get done with sin. And be forgetful with the Holy Ghost.

Sinners. Will get converted. Don't hinder your girlie.

To come to Jesus. Father. She is stumbling over your life.

Oh come to Jesus. For that miserable failure. In the whole mother.

You are praying for them. But you are full of thorns. Oh let Him make you a new tree tonight.

Let Him give you a new life. In Christ Jesus. Christians.

If you are not through on holiness. If you haven't got that lovely pure heart. Which only the blood can give us.

Come tonight. Come as you are. Jesus will wash you.

Hallelujah. He will sanctify you. Only I can't do it.

Major can't do it. I wish you could have heard Him pray in my room. What a privilege it was to kneel with Him.

I knew God was going to do something tonight. I heard that prayer not coming from the Major. Coming from the heart of God.

For souls in this audience tonight. God is in our midst Christian. Oh don't let us miss this.

Don't let us stand in the way of revival. Come let's humble ourselves. Get done with sin.

And let the Holy Ghost fill us. And send us out into South Africa. Why not into the world.

To save sinners. To bring sinners to Jesus. Will you come? God help you.

What about you back Slider? Nobody knows. The outward profession is so wonderful as you think. But in your heart of hearts.

You know I am out of touch with God. It's cold. It's dead.

The word of God is neglected. It's full of dots. So is my soul.

I'm out of touch with God. You want to come back home tonight. It's a miserable life.

You want God. You want reality. You want forgiveness.

Come to your Father's home. Through Jesus blood. Will you come back Slider? Perhaps you've never had the assurance of salvation.

Never. Never. There's always this awful uncertainty.

You want to be sure tonight. That you're a child of God. Will you come? God help you.

We're going to sing this in prayer fully. We'll remain seated while we sing it. Just the first verse perhaps.

Perhaps that will be enough. To let that soul come. God help you.

We're praying for you. Make way for the people who come dear friends. There will be pilgrims.

We'll by due time be as quiet as possible. Because God is here. We'll do it reverently.

But do it wholeheartedly. Wholeheartedly beloved. Will you come? God help you.

Christian. Christian. Will you be the first? And others will follow.

Hallelujah. Let's sing the first verse. It's a mighty word verse.

Make it the prayer of your heart. While you come. Let's sing it.

Wash me O Lamb of God. Don't wait. Come immediately.

And others will come. Just get up to your feet. Come out into the race street.

And the pilgrims will pray with you. Wash me O Lamb of God. Wash me and sing.

Wash me O Lamb of God. Wash me and sing. Wash me O Lamb of God.

Wash me and sing. Wash me and sing. Listen.

Don't be looking at other people who are walking out. You get alone with God in this meeting young woman. It's time you should come to God.

Precious soul. He's been pleading with you for years. And God knows the state of your life tonight.

You should suddenly die. You meet God. Without fear.

Oh let's pray. Don't let's look around. See what's going on in the hall.

Oh either pray for yourself. Or pray for souls who should come. Listen to the second verse.

Wash me O Lamb of God. Wash me from sin. I long to be like Thee.

All pure within. Like Jesus. All pure within.

And then it's so easy to be pure without. Listen. Now let the crimson tide.

Shed from Thy wounded side. Be to my heart a tide. And make me clean.

Will it be easier for that patient soul. For that unsure soul. To come.

To stand. Sing the second verse. If you can stand reverently.

And sing reverently beloved. Pray. And help souls to get to God tonight.

God is moving in this meeting. He gave us the assurance early this morning. In the prayer meetings.

I believe in both. Because we prayed for this prayer meeting. And I know they prayed for us.

I know some prayer has been going up. Right through this day in this camp. God is in this place.

God is moving in our midst. Oh will you hear. What must God still do.

To get you at His feet. Young daughter. Young son.

Christian Elder. When are you going to make the final meeting with God. Oh it must.

And soon the eve of the loss. To be caught. From Satan born in the priest.

Whenever. When are you going to get done. With Satan.

Will you do it tonight. God help you. Your time is running out.

The door is closing. Of our mankind. Will you come.

God help you. Let's pray as we've never prayed before. Sing the second verse.

We'll rise while we sing it. Will you. And then you come.

Any soul. Sing it softly in prayer. Any soul to whom God has spoken.

Just join the others in the verse. Don't go out if it's at all possible. The second verse.

Sing it. Sing it. Sing it.

Sing it. Sing it.

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