

# Evangelism 01 My Testimony

by Welcome Detweiler

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*The speaker shares their personal testimony of coming to trust in Jesus Christ as their Savior through the message of the gospel of the grace of God.*

**Duration:** 38:03

**Scripture:** Psalm 66:2-3, Psalm 66:16, Psalm 107:1, Matthew 25:21, Mark 5:19

**Topics:** "Personal Responsibility", "Taking Blame"

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## Description

In this sermon, the teacher discusses a situation where a board does not explicitly state whether a certain action is allowed or not. The teacher asks the audience if they would like to engage in this action, and they all raise their hands in agreement. However, later on, the teacher discovers that one of the students, little Johnny, has carved initials on a desk. The teacher decides to punish Johnny, but the other students intervene and ask if they can take Johnny's punishment instead. The sermon emphasizes the importance of considering the consequences of our actions and the concept of taking responsibility for our deeds.

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## Transcript

Some years ago, I heard that when you speak at a chapel for the first time, you are expected to tell how you were saved. And especially if you are there for the week, lest all during the week the people in the pew are saying, I would enjoy his messages better if I was only sure that he was a Christian. A little while later, I heard another rumor, and that rumor was that that is not expected of every chapel, just some of them.

And when I asked the question, how would you know which chapel they expect this and which chapel they don't, they still haven't answered that question, so I don't take any chance. But, I have to have a simple reason. Do I have a simple reason for telling you how I was saved? Psalm 107, verse 1. Psalm 107, and verse 1. O give thanks unto the Lord, for he is good, for his mercy endureth forever.

Let the redeemed of the Lord say so, whom he hath redeemed from the hands of the enemy. Chapter 66 of the psalm also. Psalm 66, and verse 16.

Psalm 66, 16. Come and hear, all ye that fear God, and I will declare what he hath done for my soul. But you want a New Testament reading, don't you? Then I'll ask you to turn to Mark, chapter 5. I'm not going to read the entire chapter, because I'm speaking to a fan of Bible students, and you already know this chapter.

It's concerning the maniac of Gadara, and how he was out there in the tombs, cutting himself, and finally met the Lord Jesus Christ, who settled things. And I read from verse 15. Mark, chapter 5, and from verse 15.

And they come to Jesus, and see him that was possessed with the devil, and had the legion sitting, and clothed, and in his right mind, and they were afraid. And they that saw it told them how it befell to him that was possessed of the devil, and also concerning the swine. They began to pray him to depart out of their coast.

And when he was come into the ship, he that had been possessed with the devil prayed him that he might be with him. However, to see it, Jesus suffered him not, but said unto him, Go home to thy friends, and tell them how great things the Lord hath done for thee, and hath had compassion on thee. And he departed, and began to publish in Decapolis how great things Jesus hath done for him.

And all men did marvel. In order to give my testimony, time-wise, I have to turn the calendar back to the 1920s. I'm sorry, many of you are not able to go back that far.

If you are, you were probably in the nursery at that time. But you have to just take my word for it that there was a time when we were in the 1920s. Place-wise, I will have to take you to the miserable state of Pennsylvania.

I never make that statement unless I am sure that there is no one in my audience from that state. About 25 miles north of Philadelphia, on Route 611, there is a chapel standing there now called Great Gospel Chapel, formerly called the Curly Hill Chapel. Many years ago, being raised on a dairy farm in that particular area, my parents were Mennonite, and I am thankful for the training that I got from the Mennonite church because my parents were very religious.

And the question never arose on Sunday morning, shall we go? Is the weather so that we can go? Rain or shine, snow or sleet, it didn't make any difference. We went, either by Model T or we still had horses. We had the buggy, and we had the sled.

There was nothing to keep us from attending church. My early impressions of the Bible, of God, of the way of salvation were received during those impressionable years, and after listening to my Sunday school teacher and the preachers, and also those who preached at funerals, I came to the conclusion that there is a heaven and there is a hell, and if you want to be in heaven and not in hell, you have to be good. Only good people go to heaven.

Only bad people go to hell. This, I said, is very reasonable. I've got to believe it.

And I have things figured out. I'm sure that when we come to die, God will face us with a pair of scales, and he will have a record of all the good deeds that I have done. He will put them on one pan of the scale.

Then he will pick out all the naughty things, the sinful things I have done. He will put them on this side, and he will watch. If the good deeds are heavier than the bad deeds, well done, thou good and faithful servant, enter into the joy of thy Lord.

If the sins are heavier than the good deeds, I'm sorry, you'll have to go to a lost eternity. I learned that God is the creator of the universe, that he sees everything you do, that he hears everything you say, and many things I was taught I could say, these are in the Bible. But there came a certain day when I heard a

different message.

My father and a few other men were interested in some of the rural sections of the state of Pennsylvania, eastern Pennsylvania, where some churches had been closed because of a lack of interest. These few men, with my father, went to see if it was possible to open these churches up on a Sunday afternoon for a Sunday school and get the community in. They found a church down towards the Delaware River in the little village of Lahaska that had been closed for a number of years.

And they were holding Sunday school, they went out to visit the people, and I said, yes, we'll try and come, and there was a very poor interest. Just a few people came. And then my father said, you know, most of these people are from a different denomination.

Maybe if we just could get a preacher in for one Sunday from their denomination, maybe we could get a better crowd. So, he arranged for that, and that Sunday there was a better crowd. I'm interested in that particular service because on that particular service, and that might have been around 1921, for the first time I heard the gospel of the grace of God.

I don't remember the text. I don't remember the preacher's name. I only remember the story that he gave.

I think probably you have heard this story. It's been going around. In fact, I saw it in print not long ago.

But after preachers get a hold of a story and add a lot of imagination, these stories change tremendously. And it's very difficult to tell who has the official, the first of these stories. If you heard it before 1921, you probably have the original one.

If you heard it after 1921, I have the original one. And that's the one I'm going to give, and then you can change it any way you want to. But this is how I heard it from that other man.

He said in the western part of Pennsylvania, and this was before there was compulsory attendance in the schools, the farmers would allow their children to go to school any time they wanted to. After all the crops were in during the winter months, they could go to school even 17, 18 years of age, even though there were only eight grades in that school. It turned out that some of these older boys were pretty rough, and teachers were resigning because they couldn't keep order.

They couldn't control these fellows. The school board got together and said, we have a problem. We can't get any teachers anymore.

We have tried a number of teachers. They stay for six weeks, or maybe eight weeks, if they can stick it out. And then they say, I resign.

And they said, what are we going to do? They said, the report is out now. Everybody knows it. We approach a new teacher.

Where did you see the school is? Uh-oh, I heard about that. No thank you. What are we going to do? We've got to keep the school open.

There was an old man there, must have been old, he had white hair, and he said, you know, many years ago, I used to teach school, and I could sort of fill in some time if we can't find a teacher. That's good, that's good. You're going to teach next Monday morning.

No, no, no, no, no. I meant just to fill in. You have the job next Monday morning.

It's time to eat anyway. Let's go. And the man had a job.

Monday morning, the pupils are coming to school. A little old white-haired man. This has got to be good.

The first thing he did was a very unconstitutional thing. He read from the Bible. Can you imagine? That's why I said miserable Pennsylvania.

Break constitutional law, and don't seem to know any better. And then he asked them to stand up and repeat the so-called Lord's Prayer. And after that, he said, he introduced himself and said, I would like to have you help me to have a good time here at this school.

And when I was teaching years ago, I didn't make all the rules. I didn't stand up like a dictator and say, you're going to do so-and-so. When I say, you go, you go.

When I say, you sit down, you sit down. I don't like that. I want you students to help me.

Now, you do know that there have to be some rules around here. We've got to take care of the property, the windows, the doors, the furniture, all these things. And it may help you to know that when I was teaching school, I carried a black snake along to school.

Oh, it was made out of leather, and it had maybe as big of a broom hand as one hand, and it came down to a point. But when you wiggled it, it looked just like a black snake. I took it along just to protect myself, and he showed it to the boys.

This is what I used to use years ago when I taught school. Now, he said, let's have some rules that we can put on the board so that we can have something that is in order around here. And he mentioned a number of things.

And when he came to the furnishings in the schoolroom, he said, what shall be done to any boy or any girl that will mar any of the furniture in the school? And after they saw that black snake, some wise guy got up and said, give them ten cracks of the black snake. Yeah, yeah, yeah, they all wanted that. Sounded like those Iranian students, didn't they? And then another one got up and said, on the bare back.

And the teacher said, now, wait a minute. I'm going to let you make the rules. But after they're on the board, they're going to be carried out.

I'll see to that. So you better not make them too strict. Now, think it over before you vote.

How many of you really want that? If anyone mars the furniture, ten stripes of the black snake on his bare back. Every hand went up. They wanted it.

I'll put it on the board, and he put it on the board. A number of days passed by, and those old teachers used to walk up and down the aisle, looking at things, that one day when the teacher was walking up and down the aisle, he spied something. Uh-oh, initials carved on the desk.

It was little Johnny, maybe the poorest boy in the school. Many of the children shared their lunch with him because he didn't bring enough lunch to take care of him. That night, at four o'clock, the teacher said, you may all rise, and they stood at attention.

You may all leave the room except little Johnny. They all walked out silently. The door was closed, and the door was locked.

And the boys started to peep in the school room, and they saw what was happening. They saw little Johnny taking his shirt off, and they saw the teacher going for the black snake. They rapped at the door, and the teacher went to the door, and they said, we have decided that you are not going to whip Johnny because he didn't mean to do that, and we didn't realize just how terrible that would be.

We don't want you to whip Johnny. Do you remember what I said before I put it on the board? I told you to be careful. You said, let's have it, and I wrote it on the board, and I promised I would carry it out.

I'm sorry. The door was closed and locked. Those children didn't feel like going home.

They looked in some more. He's going to do it. There was another rap at the door.

The biggest fellow, Bill, at the door. He opened again. Teacher, could I come in and take Johnny's punishment? And the teacher said, the board doesn't say that you can.

And the board doesn't say that you can't. Would you like to? I would. Come on in.

Bill came in. Take your shirt off. Bend over that desk.

And the black snake came out. And that little man had plenty of strength. There were pink stripes that turned to red stripes, and then blood flowing before the ten stripes were finished.

And afterwards, all over, little Johnny threw his arms around Bill and said, thank you. I don't think I could have taken it. And then the preacher said, there is no illustration that I can give you that adequately tells the story of Jesus Christ and his coming into the world, but there are certain things in this story that do tell us something about him.

He came into the world. He had no sin at all. At Calvary's cross, God punished him in my stead, in your stead, and there he was wounded for our transgression, bruised for our iniquities.

The chapter's been upon him, and with his stripes we are healed. He said, now, in that story, wouldn't it have been terrible if Johnny had never thanked Bill for taking that punishment? And I said, yes, that would be terrible. And he said, anybody in this building that has never at any moment thanked Jesus Christ for dying on the cross for his sins is a very ungrateful person, and the only possible way that you can go to heaven is through the work that Jesus Christ did on the cross of Calvary.

Your works will never take you there. Jesus died for you, and that's the only way you will ever get to heaven. What can wash away my sins? Nothing but the blood of Jesus.

When I heard that, I've got a problem. I've been under the impression that if you are good, you are eligible for heaven. This man says, no.

He says, the only way you can be in heaven is through the work that Jesus Christ did on the cross of Calvary. I wonder who is right. I never did quite understand why he came into the world.

I do remember that if you ask the question, why did Jesus Christ go to the cross? For the sins of the world, whatever that means. To me, it meant that there were too many wicked people and not enough good

people to protect him, and therefore they overpowered him and they murdered him. That's all I could understand.

But that he actually wanted to, like Bill, volunteered to come and take my punishment for me, I never heard that before. Salvation by grace? That's a new message. And my eyes were opened.

I said, that must be the reason why Jesus Christ came into the world to die for my sins. It was a year later when I heard that there was an evangelist coming from the Philadelphia area by the name of Harold Harper. He's going to have meetings in the Plumsteadville schoolhouse for two weeks.

And all the Mennonite people said, let's go and hear him. And he packed that place out, a two-room schoolhouse. A room here, a room there, and the doors were open and Mr. Harper stood here and he spoke to both audiences.

Packed every night. And as soon as I heard him, I said, he's just like that other man. He agrees with that other man.

He says that salvation is by grace and by grace alone, and not by works. I don't know which one I should believe. My church is an old established church.

Why would they leave me under the impression that we have to be saved by our good life when it is through Jesus Christ? And some of the hymns that we sing agree with these other fellows that say it's by grace alone. Something dreadful happened in those meetings. I suppose it must have been by the end of the first week.

Guess what happened? A church member got saved. And that's not supposed to happen. But it did.

And when we heard about it, the first thing we said, didn't he have an aunt that had a nervous breakdown one time? Yes, he did. Uh-huh. He's got problems.

He's got problems. We asked him, what is this we hear about you? Listen, I was trying to work my way to heaven, and I found out that salvation is by grace, and the other night, I thanked Jesus Christ for dying for me, and I trusted him as my Savior, and for the first time in my life, I can say I know I'm on the way to heaven. No, no one knows that.

That's terrible for a man to stand up. How can a man be that presumptuous to say, I know I'm going to heaven? Not me. I'll never do it.

I want to take the humble place. I will say, if the Lord wants me in heaven, he'll get me there. Nobody can keep me out.

If he doesn't want me there, I'm willing to go to the other place. But I will never stand up and say like he does. He knows he's saved.

Terrible. A few more people got saved, and the news got around. Different people, church members, are getting saved.

And after a while, those meetings continued from that place to another village. In fact, instead of lasting two weeks, they lasted 22 weeks, skipping from one place to another place, all through central Bucks County in Pennsylvania. The gospel of the grace of God was preached to people who'd never heard that

clear message of the gospel of the grace of God.

I will not be surprised if, in heaven, I meet approximately 1,000 people who were saved in the latter part of 1922 and the early part of 1923, for about six months as the gospel went forth and people heard the message of salvation. I had to make a decision, and I listened to the message very carefully, and I said, I've got to believe one or the other. The two won't mix.

And I started to read the scriptures to see what the Bible has to say, running across such verses as Ephesians 2, 8 and 9, But I still don't understand why I haven't been told this before, and why I was left under the impression it's the life you live that counts. I attended funerals, and I enjoyed them from this point of view, because the man that was in that casket wasn't quite as good as I was, but the preacher got him into heaven, so I stood a pretty good chance, I thought. But, as to saying, I know I'm going to heaven, I never could.

One more thing that bothered me. I was told that when you sin, you have to ask God to forgive you. And I did that regularly, every night.

I would say, Lord, anything I've done, please forgive me. And I got a psychological relief from it. I could roll into bed and sleep well all night because I asked him to forgive me.

If you had asked me, did he hear you? Did he forgive you? I don't know. I suppose so. Why not? When I came to read my Bible, I discovered that God cannot forgive sins unless a payment is made.

Without the shedding of blood is no remission. I was faced with salvation by grace alone, over and over and over again. There is a little chapel standing in Pipersville, Pennsylvania.

When it was first built, it was sort of a community chapel, and some of the people who didn't like the place called it the Goat Stable. That's a terrible name to give for a chapel, but the devil uses any kind of term to designate a place when he doesn't like it. One night when Mr. Harper was preaching, and I have no idea what he was preaching on that night, but when he closed the meeting in prayer, I tuned him out, and I said, Lord Jesus, I've been trying to save myself all these days.

I have been good. I never went to a movie. I never touched a cigarette.

I never had any beer. I never did anything bad. I went to church every Sunday.

I read my Bible. I say my prayers. I've done all of this, but I'm a lost sinner, and I believe that Jesus died for me, and that I need to be saved, and right now I will accept him as my Savior.

Guess what? Nothing happened, and I was disappointed. If you had stopped me that night and asked me, are you saved? I would have said, I don't know. I don't know, and that went on for maybe a month or more, that I didn't have the assurance of my salvation, but I did remember that night, very definitely, I turned from my works, and I trusted Jesus Christ as my Lord and Savior.

It was on a later date, one day, that I thought of this. Mr. Harper says that if you accept Jesus Christ as your personal Savior, you have everlasting life. No! Mr. Harper doesn't say it.

The Bible says it. That settles it. I must be saved.

The Bible says I have eternal life. That was February the 10th, 1923. What date is today? That's another reason why I should give my testimony this morning.

This is not the date of my conversion, but it's the date of my blessed assurance, and I tell you, your salvation isn't worth an awful lot until you have the assurance of your salvation. I didn't bother marking that date down when I trusted Christ as my Savior, and that has bothered me on a few occasions because I've heard a few preachers say, if you didn't mark the calendar and check the stopwatch the day you were saved, you are not saved. And if those preachers are right, you've got something to look forward to.

An unsaved preacher all week. They left me under the impression that since the majority of people know exactly when it happened and got the assurance immediately, they will be in a roped-off section in heaven, in a wonderful place, and you will have to be over there with those others that didn't get the assurance that same moment. You know, there is a possibility that those of you who do have the date, when you get to heaven, there is a possibility that the Lord will pull out his records and say, you were saved two days earlier.

You thought you were saved on that day, but I know when you did just what I asked you to do. So, I wouldn't be a bit surprised there are a few more people here that may be in my category. It helps me to know that the misery loves company, you know, that I cannot tell you the day that I was saved.

I was there when it happened, but I didn't get the assurance, and therefore I didn't bother marking it down. But I do remember the day I got my blessed assurance. When it comes to the story that we read in Mark, chapter 5, the Lord Jesus tells this person to go home and tell his friends of what the Lord has done.

And I don't know any better way for Christians to preach the gospel than by giving their testimony. The majority of Christians, immediately after they're saved, will tell all their friends, even sometimes bore them, hey, sit down, I want to tell you what happened to me. I got saved, and I know I'm on the way to heaven.

All in fools. How long? Three weeks? Three months? How long does it last? Until the devil gets in and says, why don't you stop telling them? They're getting tired of hearing it. You're saved, so don't bother.

And it is possible that Christians let months go by. If I were to ask you the naughty question, when is the last time that you told someone, presumably an unsafe person, how you came to know the Lord Jesus as your Savior? Would you like to tell me? When was it? And it may be that the devil has buttoned your lips just by saying, well, everybody knows it. No, they don't.

When you come to a sinner and you want to help him, you realize he has a need. Do you know, sinner, that you're on the way to hell? You don't get very far. They don't like it.

They put the brakes on. I'd like to share something with you. I'd like to tell you how I got saved.

In Raleigh, North Carolina, there's a very powerful radio station, and some years ago, there were disc jockeys on there, and between all of the commercials, they would play some kind of jazz music, you know. Well, that has changed. Today, from 8 o'clock till 11 o'clock at night, there is a call-in program.

People are calling in and talking about anything they want to, except religion. Can't talk about religion, but anything else. And people are listening to that all over the place.

They've found that people are interested in hearing what people think. Tremendous audience of listeners. And I found out in traveling that Raleigh is not the only place.

They're doing it all over the country. They call them call-in programs. Anybody.

Call in. What do you want to talk about? Anything. And people say, I'd like to hear that.

I'd like to hear that. Now, if that is true, that people are interested in hearing life stories or what you're thinking, here is a wonderful opportunity for us to tell what the Lord has done to us. The Lord Jesus did not say to this man, go home and preach to the people.

Go home and tell them what the Lord has done for you. If a person asks me, how long should a person be saved before he should tell others how to be saved? I don't know what the time element is here, but I presume it was the same day. There's no reason why he should wait.

Maybe he didn't know much of the Old Testament. All he could say is, I can tell what the Lord has done for me. I was out there in the tombs, cutting myself a miserable wretch.

I am absolutely relaxed in my right mind. In fact, I've just started to live. What a testimony.

It says he began to publish in Decapolis. Did you see in that verse when he stopped? He never did. He began.

And the fact that it doesn't tell us when he stopped, I'm going to presume. He never stopped. And that's my message for you.

Don't stop telling people how you came to know the Lord Jesus as Savior. Sometimes I hesitate to give my testimony because it's not really fantastic in some respects. Sometimes you hear a testimony of a gangster, a man who spent a lot of time in jail.

He may have even been a murderer. He comes to know the Lord Jesus Christ as Savior. Isn't that wonderful? I remember in our home assembly, we had that kind of character giving his testimony one night, and everyone said, wasn't that wonderful? Wasn't that wonderful? One man said, yeah, fairly wonderful, but my conversion's greater than that.

If the Lord can save a Lutheran deacon, he can save anybody. And he said, to save a wretch like that, he knew he was a sinner. I didn't.

So, when God saves a clean, moral, religious person, that person has a harder job getting saved than the down-and-out, the up-and-out. And I happen to have been in that category. I never shot anybody, not so far, and have no plans to.

But God saved me, and I'm delighted to tell people of that wonderful Savior. At a place like this, I could presume that everyone is a Christian, but I dare not do that. I have no idea.

There is a possibility that there's someone in this building this morning who has something in common with my background. You have tried to be good. You have tried to live right.

And you have presumed that that will at least help you to get into heaven. And now, I have to tell you something that will hurt you. If you are counting on that, and you drop dead today, you will go straight to

hell.

I hate that I have to say that, but really, I don't. The Bible says it. The Bible says it.

Any person who will count upon his goodness, or anything short from the substitutionary work of Jesus Christ on the cross of Calvary, is not going to heaven. I hope that jolts you enough that you will not leave this building in the same condition that you came in. Is there someone here this morning that can say from the heart, I've never been able to say, I know I'm going to heaven.

I've always said, I hope so. I didn't know it was possible to say, I know so. Would you like to go from this service and be able to say, I know? Yes, my friend, that's absolutely possible.

If, in sincerity, in honesty, you will come before the Lord and say, I am a sinner. A lost sinner. A guilty sinner.

I have broken God's law. In fact, according to the Bible, I'm a hell-deserving sinner. That's getting awful low, isn't it? Can you do it? And if you can't, perhaps you're not ready to be saved.

I am a lost, guilty, helpless, hopeless, hell-deserving sinner. But I don't want to go to hell. I do believe that Jesus loved me and died for me personally on the cross of Calvary.

And right now, I want to do something I've never done before. I will accept him as my Lord and Savior. And the Bible says, if you will do that, God will save you right where you are, without moving a muscle.

Simply by saying, I will receive Jesus Christ as my Lord and Savior. I do not feel that I have discharged my responsibility fully while I'm through speaking, because there may be some barrier that is standing in your way. You would like to be saved, but I haven't even touched on that.

And that's why I would like to have a personal conversation with you after this service. While the rest go out, I'll be remaining at the front of the auditorium. And if there are any questions regarding the way of salvation, or regarding the assurance of your salvation, please feel free to ask me.

I would count it a privilege to sit down with an open Bible and show you how you can leave this service and be able to say, now I know that I'm on the way to heaven. Let us pray. Our Father, we thank Thee for the wonderful way of salvation Thou hast given us.

We thank Thee for the Savior that came into the world. We never shall understand why He loved us that much. Why all the suffering and Calvary's cost to make possible our salvation, but we thank Thee for it.

We thank Thee for the many people in this building that have already trusted Him, and we pray especially for any person that may be bowing the heart before Thee now, and is not saved. Help that person to understand Thy Word, to believe it, and to leave this building rejoicing in the knowledge of sins forgiven. We give Thee thanks.

Dismiss us with Thy blessing. We ask in Jesus' name. Amen.

Immediate dismissal.

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