

Houston Colonial Hills Conference 1995-04

Personal Testimony

by William MacDonald

The speaker shares his personal testimony of growing up in a strict Christian home, experiencing miracles and divine healing, and finding his calling to serve God.

Duration: 27:41

Scripture: Matthew 6:33, Matthew 18:19, Matthew 19:21, Mark 10:21, Luke 14:33, Acts 4:32, 1 Timothy 6:10

Topics: "Personal Testimony"

Description

In this sermon, the speaker shares his personal experience of reading a book called 'CT Stud' by Norman Grubb, which deeply impacted him. The book tells the story of a man who was a cricket champion in England but became a passionate follower of Jesus after getting saved. The speaker highlights a poem written by CT Stud, expressing his desire to run a rescue shop near hell. The speaker reflects on how we often trust God for our eternal salvation but struggle to trust Him with our daily lives. He then shares his own testimony of surrendering his life to the Lord for service, emphasizing the importance of fully committing to God. The speaker also emphasizes the need for genuine salvation, as he realized that his outwardly separated life was not enough to save him from his inner sinfulness.

Transcript

It's going to be brief. I've been tossing around what I should talk to you about. I thought I might just give you my testimony.

And it might be a help to somebody. I was brought up in a very strict Christian home. Very strict Christian home.

My mother was Scotch Presbyterian. That doesn't mean anything to you, but it means a lot to me. She brought me up with a Bible in one hand and a strap in the other.

It was before the days of child rights, you know. But more than that, she was a mother who wore out her knees in prayer for her two boys. And I really thank God for the heritage.

I have a home where the Word of God was read at the table. It was a family thing, you know. Once a day, we're at the table.

We eat our meals together. My father gets out the Bible. He reads the Word of God.

We all get down on our knees on the chairs. I can still feel those wooden chairs around the table. And my father would lead us in prayer.

In fact, my father did that before he was saved, you know. People from the north of Scotland, the Presbyterians from the north of Scotland, they have what they call family worship. And at night, even if the father isn't saved, even if he isn't saved, he takes out the Bible and he reads it and he prays.

Did you ever hear of anything like that? That's how religious they are. Well, my father came out to this country unsaved. And one time, an uncle of mine, my mother's brother, came to visit.

And my father bowed his head and gave thanks for the food. And my uncle said to him, William, are you saved? And my father said, oh, no, I'm not saved. Well, he said, you just committed a sin.

I've never committed. My father said, what was that? He said, you just called God your father, and he's not your father if you're not saved. My father got saved shortly after that.

I bet you never heard that testimony before. What an interesting way to get saved, huh? Calling God your father when he's not your father. Woke my father up to the fact that he needed to be saved, and he got saved.

Well, I was brought up in that kind of an environment, and then things started happening. When I was a baby, a nurse who was a diphtheria carrier kissed me on the side of the face. And I got diphtheria in this eye, and then it went over the nose into this eye.

Very few cases in medical history of anybody having diphtheria in the eye. You get it in the throat. That's where you get diphtheria, not in the eyes.

It was written up, I think, in the New England Journal of Medicine. I should be blind. A man who's standing talking to you right now should be blind.

With my glasses, I have 20-20 vision. Tell me God doesn't work miracles. What's a miracle? You know, people say, do you believe in divine healing? I sure do.

I don't believe in divine healers, but I believe in divine healing. I really do. When I was five, my family moved to Scotland and stayed there for a year up in the north of Scotland.

An island, a remote island up off the north coast of Scotland. And while I started school there, my first year of school there, but in the middle of the school year, I got diphtheria in the throat. You can only get diphtheria once.

I got it twice. The first time you get it, you're supposed to build up an immunity to it, but I didn't build up an immunity to it. I got diphtheria in the throat.

I was very, very sick. You usually die. What happens is a mucous membrane forms across your throat and you're strangled to death.

Now, you young people probably never heard of diphtheria before. If you have, it's because you got an injection for it, you know. And all the babies get an injection today for diphtheria.

Thank God they do. But you didn't have it in those days. I was far from medical help of any kind.

There were no doctors. There were no nurses around. Nothing.

And I was so low that my mother, a godly Christian woman, she turned her back so she wouldn't see me take my last breath. And right when she turned her back, there's a knock on the door. Right when she turned her back, it was my uncle, my father's brother, a godly man, and he had been sitting by the fire.

He lived in the next village, and he had been sitting by the fire reading the scripture. They're really people of the word, thank God for that. And he came to the door, and my mother said, What is it? He said, I've come to tell you he's not going to die.

He's going to live. And someday God's going to save his soul too. Well, my mother invited me in, and being a good Scottish woman, they have a reflex action.

A Scottish woman has a reflex action. When anybody comes through the door, they put the kettle on to make a cup of tea. And it worked.

It worked that night. She went and put a kettle on to make a cup of tea for my uncle, and then he sat down at the table and drank his tea, and he told her that that night he was reading by the fire, and he was reading this. Because he has set his love, this is Psalm 91.

Because he has set his love upon me, therefore I will deliver him. I will set him on high because he has known my name. He shall call upon me, and I will answer him.

I will be with him in trouble. I will deliver him and honor him. Verse 16, with long life will I honor him and show him my salvation.

And he claimed that as a promise from God that God would save me through that diphtheria, and that someday he would save my soul. Well, humanly speaking, I should have died. But another case of divine healing.

There was nobody around, you know, just people praying, that's all. And God spared me with long life. I'll be 79 in January.

I call that long life, don't you? And show him my salvation. I was saved 13 years later. You know, marvelous when you think of God's working in your life.

Well, I was brought up in a whole. I don't remember a time in my life when I didn't know the gospel. Did I know that I was? Yes, I knew I was a sinner.

Did I know Jesus died as my son? Yes, I did. We used to witness to kids in the neighborhood, but we weren't saved ourselves. We tell other people the way of salvation, but we weren't saved ourselves.

And I can remember preachers coming and saying, You saved yet, Bill? And I'd feel like saying, Drop dead. You know, I really resented anybody saying that to me. Yet, I knew I wasn't saved.

I knew I wasn't saved. But I had that resentment against it in my heart. I went through school, through junior high school, and through high school.

My last year in high school, my last year in high school, something happened. What happened? The Spirit of God came upon me and showed me that what I was inside here was a lot worse than anything I had ever done. You know that was true.

I had never smoked. I had never drank. I had never gambled.

I had never gone to a dance. I had never gone to a show. Look at the man you're looking at tonight.

He's never been in a show. Even now, up to today, 79 years, I've never been in a show. Listen, I lived a more separated life than most Christians did today.

But I was lost and on the way to hell. And then God showed me that what I was inside was a lot worse than anything I had ever done. He gave me a terrible expose of the inner life of Bill McDonald.

And I tell you, that made me in a hurry to get saved. And you know, that's true of you too. It's true of you.

What you are inside is a lot worse than what appears on the outside. We have what we call our person, and we have our personality. My personality is what I want you to think I am.

But my person is what I really am. Well, I really wanted to get saved then. When God really barbecued me, and he really did.

He barbecued me. A guy that had lived such a separated life. Yeah, he barbecued me.

I'll tell you that. And I went through such a time of emotional and spiritual turmoil. I cannot tell you the date when I was saved.

This is very distressing to some of our brethren. Some of our brethren feel that you should have a stopwatch in one hand and a calendar in the other hand. You know, you have to know the day, and you have to know the hour.

Well, I'm sorry. I don't know. God knows.

But I know there was that time in my life when I had a decision to make. Will you accept Jesus Christ as your Lord and Savior? I can remember I made such a decision. But then, nothing happened.

Say, nothing happened? Well, what I expected to happen didn't happen. I expected that when I trusted the Lord Jesus as my Savior, the bells would ring, the lights would go on. I'd get nervous, shivers in my arm, and shivers in my liver, and you know what I mean.

I expected some dramatic. It never came. It never came.

I'm not saved. And I went on for months in misery. I thought, I've done all I can do.

I trusted Christ as my Savior. And if I'm not saved, what can I do? And yet, I didn't have assurance and salvation. And I want to tell you, when I got assurance and salvation through the Word of God, that was even, how can I say this, it was more like my conversion.

It's something I really enjoyed. And it was through 1 John 5, 13. These things have I written unto you that believe in the name of the Son of God, that you may know that you have eternal life.

See, I was misreading it. These things have I written unto you that believe in the name of the Son of God, that you may feel that you have eternal life. No, it doesn't say that.

It doesn't say anything about feelings. It says you may know that you have eternal life. And when I learned that assurance and salvation comes through the Word of God, it was like that, you know.

And I've often quoted three other sources that helped me along that line. Martin Luther, somebody said to Martin Luther, Mr. Luther, do you feel your sins have been forgiven? And he said, no, but I'm sure of it, as there's a God in heaven. For feelings come and feelings go, and feelings are deceiving.

My warrant is the Word of God, not else is worth believing. Looks good, doesn't it? My warrant is the Word of God. And then Dr. Ironside says, I don't know I'm saved because I feel happy, but I feel happy because I know I'm saved.

And how do you know you're saved, Dr. Ironside? Because the Bible tells me so. It seems so simple to me now, but it wasn't simple then. And Dr. Schofield said, this is a tremendous help to me, he said, justification takes place in the mind of God and not in the nervous system of the believer.

And it does. Justification takes place in the mind of God and not in the nervous system of the believer. In other words, the minute Bill McDonald trusted Christ to save him, God reckoned me to be righteous on the basis of the work of Christ.

He wrote my name in the Lamb's Book of Life. Did I feel it? Of course I didn't feel it. It took place in heaven.

How do you know it? Because the Bible says it. Verily, verily, I say unto you, he that heareth my word, and believeth on him that sent me, hath everlasting now, and shall not come into condemnation, but is passed from death unto life. God wants you to know.

If you're saved, God wants you to know it, because you can't enjoy a salvation if you don't know it. I believe you can be saved without assurance of salvation. I believe that.

You can be saved without assurance of salvation. You'll never enjoy it. Okay, then I went on to college, and it was depression days, and it was tough.

It was tough. My parents were struggling to keep a house over our heads. We had very little in the way of money, and I got through college.

I couldn't find a job. There were no jobs. I mean, it was depression.

You don't know what that's like. So, I thought, well, I'd better get more schooling. So, I decided to go to Harvard Business School.

I didn't have any money. So, I borrowed the money at 6% and went to Harvard Business School. When I got out of Harvard, I got the job I wanted.

My ambition was get into the stock market, make a killing, and retire at 35. That was my ambition. I'd seen my parents go through poverty during this, and I didn't want that to happen to me.

Get into business. And, you know, the day I got out of Harvard Business School, I had a job waiting for me in the First National Bank of Boston. It wasn't the greatest job in the world.

I was an investment analyst. And so, I plugged away there as an investment analyst in the First National Bank of Boston. Good titles, poor pay.

You know, banks are wonderful. I hope nobody works for a bank here. But, anyway, I mean, they don't mind giving you a vice presidency.

Not that I was vice president, but they don't mind giving you a vice presidency. But, it's just a name. You know, you don't get paid.

It's commensurate with it. Well, one day, I was with the young people in our assembly. It was a Sunday afternoon, and I was out passing out cracks in the neighborhood of the chapel.

And, a drunk lurched by. And, he said with garbled speech, Pearl Harbor has been bombed. And, I thought, how drunk can you be, you know? I mean, it was completely unexpected.

Pearl Harbor has been bombed. But, it was right. It was true.

And, we knew it very soon. The next day, I went to work. I looked around and saw all the young fellows my age.

And, I thought, we're in, friend. If you had a warm body, you were in. It was total mobilization, you know.

And, I went into the Navy. That's a long story in itself. I'll just tell you a couple of items there.

I began to know God in a new way in the Navy. And, I was away from home. From all the distractions at home.

Plenty of time to think. I was stationed in Kansas City for a while. Dry Land Navy.

I was with the Naval Air Transport Service. And, we had just a very small unit there. And, one night, I went into the officer's mess, mess hall.

And, there was an officer there. His name was Max Knudson. He was a pilot from Minnesota.

And, he was sitting there reading his paper. And, he had ordered his Kansas City steak. And, I went in.

I ordered my Kansas City steak. And, I had a paper. And, I felt a distinct impression from the Lord.

Bill witnessed to Max about the Lord. And, I said, Lord, he's reading his paper. He wouldn't appreciate being witnessed to.

So, I went, my steak came. And, I started eating it and reading my paper. I got that impression again the second that Bill witnessed to Max about his soul.

I said, Lord, he's reading his paper. He wouldn't want to be interrupted. And, I never did.

And, that night, Max and a co-pilot took a freight flight. No passengers, just the two of them. And, they left Kansas City.

Disappeared. Disappeared. They sent out search parties all over.

They were flying west. Couldn't find them anywhere. Couldn't find them anywhere.

At springtime, spring thaw, some Boy Scouts were climbing San Francisco Peaks. I think it's outside Winslow, Arizona. And, they saw the tail structure of a plane sticking out from the snow.

Search party went up. And, the bodies of Max Knudsen and his co-pilot were in the plane. I'll tell you, friends, it's a terrible thing to have the answer and not to share it with people.

What really broke me, what really broke me was one day I went by the hangar. And, they had brought back all Max's effects. You know, his suitcase and all his effects.

And, they had spread a tarpaulin over the hangar deck. And, they were inventorying the pilots and the co-pilots' effects. And, I ran to my room and I fell on my knees and I wept.

And, I said, Lord, don't let this ever happen again to me. I knew then I was going to be transferred. And, I said to the Lord, Lord, wherever I'm transferred, I'd like to have the opportunity to have a witness for you.

Well, God hears prayers like that, you know. And, they're prayers born out of desperation. So, I was transferred out to Oakland, California.

And, when I went there, some of the Christians there said to me, Oh, are you stationed over there? Oh, there's a wonderful Christian guy over there named Bob Hancock. You've got to look him up. I said, where is he? They said, I wouldn't know.

So, I went and made inquiry the next day and found he was in the supply department. I went over and they said, could we help you? And, I said, yes, I'd like to speak to a man named Hancock. And, they said, he'll be right out.

So, this tall southerner came out. I said, your name is Hancock? He said, yes, sir. I said, I hear you're a Christian.

He said, yes, are you? And, I said, yes, I am. He said, that's interesting. He said, I've been praying that God would send somebody here so we could have a Bible class.

You know, a verse of Scripture flashed through my mind, that if two of you shall agree on earth as touching anything that they shall ask, it shall be done of them with my Father which is in heaven. I was praying in Kansas City and Bob was praying in Oakland. And, God brings us together and a Bible class was born.

We didn't have a chaplain. I'm really condensing it. There wasn't a chaplain at that base.

And, we applied for permission to have a service every Sunday morning at 9 o'clock. And, the permission was granted. In fact, the scripper said to me, if you need any money, let us know.

We've got money for that purpose. We don't need any money. We just want your permission.

So, we started a Bible class there. And, I'm up there teaching. In my wildest imagination, I never thought of myself as a teacher.

Never. I wanted to get into stocks and bonds. You must remember that.

I wanted to make a killing financially. And, here I am Sunday morning after Sunday. And, God is saying to me, you know what God is saying to me? He's saying, this is what I made you for Bill.

Not to develop ulcers over other people's money. This is what I was doing in the bank. I was developing ulcers over other people's money.

But, I was listening too. I was listening to the Lord. And, this conviction was deepening.

The conviction was deepening that I would never go back to the bank again. I had found something that was fulfilling in life. Better than American tell-and-tell in Sears, Roebuck, and Standard Oil.

Well, I was transferred out to Hawaii. And, one day, Christian fellow, God bless him. I don't know who he was.

I'll meet him in heaven and thank him. Christian lad, we were exchanging Christian books. You know, we had plenty of time to read.

And, we were exchanging. And, he came to me. And, he said, have you ever read C.T. Studd? I said, no.

He said, would you like to? And, I thought, what a dull title for a book. Who would ever want to read a book with the title C.T. Studd? I said, why, do you think I should? He said, yes, I think you should. I was an officer.

He was an enlisted man giving me orders. So, I said, okay, I'll read it. And, I got off duty that day at noon.

I went and threw myself in the grass. It's so vivid in my mind. I threw myself in the grass outside the B.O.Q. Bachelor of Officer's Quarters.

And, I started to read. I can't tell you how that book affected me. Anybody here ever read C.T. Studd by Norman Grubb? Not many.

Put him on your list of books to read. This guy was a cricket champ in England. And, when he got saved, he became a fanatic for the Lord Jesus.

And, a fanatic in the best possible way. He wrote this poem. Some want to live within the sound of church or chapel bell.

I want to run a rescue shop within a yard of hell. I've never heard anybody talk like that. You know.

He fell in love with a girl. He inherited a fortune. And, he fell in love with a girl.

And, the Lord was saying to him, forsake all. Follow me. Forsake all.

So, he decided to forsake his fortune. Which he did. And, that's the fortune that helped start Moody Bible Institute.

But, he thought, well, it's okay for me to do that. But, I should save my wife's portion for her. So, he set aside a portion for his wife.

And, he told her what he had done. And, she said, Charlie, what did the Lord say to the rich young ruler? He said, forsake all. Go sell off the half and give to the poor.

And, come follow me. He said. And, she said, let's do what the rich young ruler didn't do.

And, she forsook her part of the fortune as well. Charlie was afraid. He was afraid that his wife might love him more than she loved Jesus.

And, he didn't want that. So, he wrote a poem. And, he said, I want you to recite this every day of your life.

Jesus, I love thee. Thou art to me dearer than Charlie ever could be. I mean, I was just ripe for that book.

Just ripe for it. Because, I never met anybody like that in my life. You know, I found more reality in the average communist than I found in the average Christian.

But, what really slew me. I read on past supper time. I didn't get up to go and have supper.

Just went into my room and pulled on with a string in the barracks there to pull on to the light. I finished the book at midnight. When I finished the book, I knew I'd never go back to the bank.

What was it? It was his life motto. He said, if Jesus Christ be God and died for me. Then, no sacrifice can be too great for me to make for him.

I want to tell you, that slew me. If Jesus Christ be God and died for me. Then, no sacrifice can be too great for me to make for him.

I closed the book. And, I tell you, that was the end of all of Bill McDonald's plans and ambitions for his life. And, I did something, young people, that night that I had never done before.

I got down on my knees and I turned my life over to the Lord for service. You say, Richard, you were saved. I know, I was saved when I was 18.

This is six or eight years later. When I was saved, I turned my life over to the Lord for service, for salvation. But, this was when I turned my life over to the Lord for service.

It should have happened at the same time. You understand that, don't you? It should have happened at the same time. It didn't.

Some of us are reluctant dragons. And, I just want to pause there and explain something to you. I was brought up in a good Christian home.

My parents were immigrants. They came out to this country from another country and settled there. And, they were ambitious for their boys.

But, I want to say this, and I say it in love to my parents. I don't remember anybody ever suggesting to me that the work of the Lord was a good way to spend your life. That's true of a lot of parents today.

A lot of parents have, we're talking about carnal, a lot of parents have carnal ambitions for their children. And, they'd rather see their son as the vice president in charge of paper clips at Amalgamated Futility Company than see him out preaching the gospel in the open air in Calcutta. I'm serious.

They would. They'd be ashamed to think of their son out on the mission field. Their daughter out on the mission field.

It isn't right, friends. It isn't right. 1947, I was commended to the work of the Lord from Oakland, California.

Went back to Emmaus Bible School. I literally went out having no visible means of support. But, I believe God had called me.

Nobody knew me in Chicago, you know. Starvation faced me. You know what, I'm speaking justfully.

I want to tell you something. I've been in the work of the Lord for 48 years. I've never lacked a single thing.

I've never made my requests known to anybody. Never. I'd rather die than make my requests, my needs known to anybody.

I've never lacked a single thing. I want to tell you something. I've had more opportunity to give to the work of the Lord than if I had been working in the bank.

Well, you figure that one out. And, I'm telling you the truth. I'm not exaggerating a bit.

God has been very good to me. I've traveled all over the world. Been on all continents except Africa and Antarctica.

I don't particularly have a calling to the penguins in Antarctica. But, I've been on all the other continents. Wherever I go, meeting Christian people, you're with them five minutes and you think you've known them all your life.

I want to tell you young people tonight, it's been a charmed life. If God had said to me in 1947, Bill, you sit down and you figure it out. Chart out the course ahead.

I couldn't have done it as good as the Lord has done it. And, that's what I try to emphasize to young people. Turn your life over to the Lord for service.

He knows more about it than you know. And, He can do a better job at it than you can do. When I was in the Navy, we were losing an awful lot of planes in operational accidents.

Not combat. We lost a lot in combat too, but operational accidents. You know, our dear guys would go up to Alaska.

They'd take off from the field and the tule fog would come in, you know. And, it didn't come in for a couple of hours. It came in to stay.

And, they'd be flying up there and they couldn't see the field. They couldn't land. And, they'd have to fly around until their fuel was gone and then radio in so long.

And, they'd crash. And, we lost a lot of planes that way. So, when I was at the Oakland Airport, Oakland Naval Air Station, they were working on a system called ground control approach.

Where, the man in the control tower would give instructions to the pilot. He couldn't see him. Give instructions to him.

And, they had the radar and they had all this sort of thing. And, they would tell him to do a figure eight and then they'd line him up for the runway like this. And, they'd get him just going down.

He couldn't see the runway. And, as he's descending, they'd say, take your hands off the controls. And, he'd take his hands off the controls.

And, they'd bring him in. And, they have that on the aircraft carriers today. They have that on the aircraft carriers today.

You know, here's an aircraft carrier going like this, you know, in the ocean. It's weaving this way and this way. And, you know, they synchronize.

The computer synchronizes the movement of the plane with the movement of the aircraft. Whichever the movement was. So, that when it hits the deck, it's moving just the same way as the plane is moving.

Just the same way as the carrier. And, all the time, I would say to me, if only one man crashed, what do you think happened? He didn't take his hands off the controls. And, I want to tell you, the Lord is saying to us, just take your hands off the controls.

Let me run your life for you. I can do a better job than you can do. It's a funny thing, isn't it? We can trust God for the eternal salvation of our souls.

But, we can't trust him to run our lives down here. And, he wants to do it. Well, I'm just going to stop there.

I told you it would be short. Nine o'clock. Let's close in prayer.

Father, we think of your wonderful ways and grace. We feel so rebuked that we don't trust you more. Thank you for salvation.

For those here who've known the cleansing power of the blood of Christ in their lives. We pray for any who might be here. And, they know there's a decision to be made.

And, they haven't made that decision. What a wonderful thing it would be at a time like this to say yes to the Lord Jesus Christ. Perhaps there are some hearts here and the Lord is saying to them, let me run your life.

Now, you've trusted me for salvation. Let me run your life. Learn to what it means to walk on water.

Father, we just pray that you'll have your way in all of our lives. We might be the clay in the hands of the potter. We ask it as we give you our thanks in the Savior's name.

Amen.

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