

When I Was First Saved

by William MacDonald

The sermon emphasizes the importance of faith, obedience, and the Word of God in understanding and living out one's salvation.

Duration: 32:13

Topics: "Salvation"

Description

In this sermon, the speaker emphasizes the importance of recognizing our inability to stand before God on our own merits. Instead, he highlights the concept of being accepted by God through the person of Christ. The speaker refers to Ephesians 1:7, which speaks of redemption through Christ's blood. He then transitions to discussing the practical aspect of living a worthy Christian life, emphasizing the need for obedience to God's word. The speaker shares examples of individuals who made significant progress in their Christian walk despite having limited education, emphasizing that true progress comes from following God's commands rather than relying on human achievements.

Transcript

Some things I wish someone had told me when I first got saved. Maybe you can start your mind thinking, those of you who are believers, were there some things that you wish you had known when you first got saved that would have saved you a lot of difficulty afterwards? Well, I can think of quite a few. And it wasn't that I didn't have good shepherding and good follow-up, but just these things kind of skipped me.

The first of all, I wish somebody had taken me by the ear and sat me down and taught me that assurance of salvation comes through the Word of God. You know why? Because I was looking inside for that assurance. I wasn't looking in the right place.

I wish somebody had taken me and said, Bill, turn to 1 John 5.13, would you? And I want you to turn to it. 1 John 5.13. And just hold your finger near it, not on it, because we're going to read it. 1 John 5.13. These things I have written to you who believe in the name of the Son of God that you may know that you have eternal life and that you may continue to believe in the name of the Son of God.

I wish somebody had said to me, who said that? And I probably would have said, John said it. And they would have said, who inspired John to say it? Of course, I would know. God inspired John to say it.

So, this is the Word of God. Yes, this is the Word of God. What are these things? These things I have written unto you.

And I probably would have said, well, this letter, 1 John. That's right. But in a broader sense, what things did God write unto you? And I would say, well, the Bible.

These things I have, and I there, of course, is God. Of course, John, but really God. These things I, God, have written unto you.

Who is you? Well, of course, I would have been tempted to say myself. What does it say? It says, you who believe in the name of the Son of God. And then that person would have asked me, do you believe in the name of the Son of God? And I hope he would have explained to me, it doesn't say who believes about the name of the Son of God.

It says, who believe in the name of the Son of God. You know, there's a difference between believing about a parachute and believing in a parachute, isn't there? You can believe all the facts about that circular piece of nylon or silk or whatever it's made of. There's another thing when you stand at the door of that plane and the jumpmaster says, go, you know, and you jump.

You're believing in the parachute then, aren't you? These things I have written unto you that believe in the name of the Son of God. What does that mean to believe in the name of the Son of God? It means to believe in him just as if you were jumping with that parachute. In other words, committing your whole time and eternity to him.

Believing that he died for you on the cross of Calvary. He was buried, he rose again the third day according to the scriptures. Who believe in the name of the Son of God.

Not believe about him, but believe in him. Trusting him as Lord and Savior. What does it say? That you may know, that you may know.

I want to tell you, after I was saved, I misread that verse for three months at least. That you may feel that you have eternal life. But it doesn't say that, does it? It doesn't say you'll feel you have eternal life.

Something better than feeling, that's knowing. And here it's knowing on the authority of the Word of God. You may know that you have eternal life.

What does it say? It's saying assurance of salvation comes first and foremost through the Word of God. Isn't that what it's saying? I was thinking this morning, you know, the whole Christian faith, everything about the Christian faith eventually goes back to faith. It does.

Believing God. And that's not a hard thing to do, to believe God. Because he's the only truly believable person in the universe.

So it's no great risk, no great chance to believe in him. Everything you can think about in the Christian life eventually goes back to faith. And that's what you have here.

These things I've written to you who believe in the name of the Son of God, that you may know that you have eternal life. I wish somebody had just said to me, Phil, quit looking within. Quit looking to your feelings to tell you you have eternal life.

God says in his Word that if you trusted in the name of his Son, you have eternal life. And it says that you may continue to believe in the name of the Son of God. Of course, I know there are other ways in which you know later on, in which you confirm your assurance.

For instance, you love the Christians in a way you didn't before. And you have a new love for holiness, and you have a new hatred for sin. There are other things that come in.

They come in later, and not all at once either. But the marvelous thing is, the moment I trust the Lord Jesus Christ as my Savior, I can know I'm saved. On the very test.

And it'll be the same tomorrow as it is today. Isn't it? Isn't that true? Because I have learned that over the years, I don't think very much about feelings in my Christian life. I don't dwell very much about my feelings.

I just go to the Word of God and see what's written and believe that. The feelings come and feelings go, and feelings are deceiving. My warrant is the Word of God.

Nothing else is worth believing. I wish somebody had taken me aside right away when I trusted Christ. They didn't.

They let me flounder. Of course, God was faithful and showed it to me. A second thing I wish somebody had taken me aside.

It taught me the truth that the believer has two natures. I'll tell you why. When I trusted Christ as my Savior, it was like the end of a war.

The battle was over. I had been fighting against God. Against the God who built the sky, I fought with hands up, lifted high.

I despised the mention of his grace, too proud to seek a hiding place. That was me. And then finally, I trusted the Savior.

I said, nay, but I yield, I yield, I can hold out no more. I think by dying, love compelled, and own thee, conqueror. That's what my conversion was like.

Owning Christ, conqueror. The war is over. But it wasn't very long before I realized another war had begun.

And that was a war between my two natures. I thought, what is this? What is this going on in my life? There was a battle going on in my life. I wish somebody had said, Bill, now you have two natures.

Up until now, you only had one nature. That old, evil, corrupt nature that you inherited from Adam. But now you've got a new nature, the life of Christ.

And these two natures are at war with one another. And they were, and have been ever since. I wish somebody had told me, Bill, you're going to have that old nature to the end of your life here on earth.

And after 60 years of Christian living, it's not going to be any better than it was when you started out in the Christian life. But it's good to get these things, isn't it? It's good to get them in your mind. You say, well, is all this in the Bible? Yeah, turn to Romans 7, would you? Romans 7, the battle of the two natures.

We'll begin reading in verse 14. Romans 7, 14. For we know that the law is spiritual, but I am carnal, sold under sin.

For what I am doing I do not understand. This is me. This is me.

As a young believer. What I am doing I do not understand. For what I will to do, that is what I want to do, what I wish to do, that I do not practice.

But what I hate, that I do. If then I do what I will not to do, I agree with the law that it is good. But now it's no longer I who do it, but sin that dwells in me.

For I know that in me, that is in my flesh, nothing good dwells. Now this is speaking of the old nature. Nothing good about it.

I tell you, you get to know it better as you go along into Christian life. And you're really amazed at yourself. You're really amazed at yourself.

How could I have ever thought such a thing? How could I have ever done such a thing? Two natures. Knowing, let's see, Romans 7, 14. Where did I leave off here? But now it is no longer I who do it, but sin that dwells in me.

For I know that in me, that is in my flesh, nothing good dwells. For to will is present with me, but how to perform what is good I do not find. For the good that I will to do, I do not do.

But the evil I will not to do, that I practice. Now if I do what I will not to do, it is no longer I who do it, but sin, there it is, sin that dwells in me. I find then a law that evil is present with me, the one who wills to do good.

For I delight, here's the other side of the picture, I delight in the law of God according to the inward man. But I see another law in my members warring against the law of my mind. There it is, warring.

I didn't make up the word, God says it. Warring against the law of my mind and bringing me into captivity to the law of sin which is in my members. Oh wretched man that I am.

Who shall deliver me? And many of you know that, but the picture there is Paul, the regenerated Paul. And it's as if he's walking around with a corpse strapped to his back, you know. A stinking rotten corpse strapped to his back.

Who will deliver me from the body? And where is deliverance? I thank God, through Jesus Christ our Lord. And then he summarizes the whole thing. So then, with the mind I myself serve the law of God, but with the flesh the law of sin.

Well you know, it's a wonderful thing for a young believer to know this, that he has two natures. He has that old evil corrupt nature, but he has a new nature, the life of Christ. And these two natures cannot live peacefully together.

That explains why we're rather a puzzle to ourselves after we get saved. We are, we're a conundrum to ourselves. How can this be? I've trusted Christ as my Savior.

I'm on the road to holiness. But I still have this old evil Adamic nature. The nature I inherited from Adam.

Good to know that. Otherwise you'd be apt to look up at the preacher and say, Boy, I wish I were as pure and holy and sinless as he is. Forget it.

We're all made of the same dust. And we all have those two natures. And it's a battle.

How long? Every day of our lives. But there is victory. Didn't he say that? Who shall deliver me from this body of death? Thank God, through Jesus Christ our Lord.

The same Lord who saves us gives us victory. And he gives us the power of deliverance from indwelling sin. Not perfectly.

I mean, he would give it to us perfectly, but we don't take it perfectly. The Christian still sins, but you know, there's a difference. The Christian still sins, but when he does, he's miserable.

When he does, he doesn't do it with the full consent of his will. When he does, he's ashamed to his tiptoes that he's done it. When he does, he thinks, am I going to go on in that which caused the death of the Son of God? And he has a hatred for it.

And when he does, he's in a hurry to get down on his knees and confess it to the Lord. And by confession of sin, and by committing myself to the Lord, and by spending time in the Word of God and in prayer, and by serving the Lord faithfully and fellowshiping with his people, walking close to the Lord, I can know deliverance from the power of indwelling sin. I can.

Perfectly? No, not perfectly. It won't be perfectly as long as I'm here in the body. I wish somebody had explained that to me.

It would have solved a great riddle in my life. Something else I wish they explained to me, and that is that you appropriate forgiveness by faith. I'm back to it again.

Faith. Everything in the Christian life goes back to faith. 1 John 1.9. Turn to that, please.

1 John 1.9. Many of you know it by heart, but you never get tired of it. If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness. Once again, I wish somebody had sat down with me and gone over and explained that verse to me.

You say, well, it doesn't need explanation. Yes, it does need explanation. It really does need explanation.

First of all, it's written to believers. This is not written to sinners. A sinner receives forgiveness of sins when he believes on the Lord Jesus Christ.

A believer receives forgiveness of sins when he confesses his sins. There are two different kinds of forgiveness. The sinner receives the forgiveness of God the Judge when he believes on the Lord Jesus Christ.

The believer receives forgiveness of sins from his Father when he confesses the sins. Now, let's look at the verse. If we confess our sins.

What does that mean, to confess your sins? Does that mean to do penance? No, it has nothing to do with penance at all. Nothing to do with penance. When I confess my sin, I get down before the Lord.

I call the wretched thing by its name, which I think is very important. I don't say, Lord, I did it again. Or, Lord, I confess to you my peccadilloes.

I confess to you my, we have nice words to cover it. No, you don't do that. You call it by its name.

Confess it. That's what confession is. And confession doesn't have any ifs, ands, and buts connected with it.

This is what it is. Notice what it says. If we confess our sins.

He is faithful. What does that mean, he's faithful? It means he's faithful to his promise. It means he'll do what he said.

What did he say he would do? He said he'd forgive us. He's faithful. And just.

What does that mean, he's just? Well, that means he has a righteous basis on which to forgive us. That's what it means. He's not overlooking our sins.

He's not winking at our sins. He's not saying, well, Bill's a pretty good guy. I think I'll just let it go this time.

He's not doing that. He's just. He's got a righteous basis upon which he can forgive Bill McDonnell's sins.

That's the work of Christ at the cross at Calvary. That's wonderful, isn't it? He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins. And to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.

So, dear believer, what that means is when I sin, I get before the Lord, and I confess that sin, the sin is gone. God has forgiven it. That's how you stay clean before the Lord.

That's how you stay clean before him. When you confess it, when you sin, you hurry into his presence. You don't let sins accumulate.

You hurry into his presence. And just drag them out in the open before the Lord. And all their rottenness.

Confess them to him. You say, how do you know you're forgiven? God says so. You appropriate forgiveness by faith.

Well, God said it. If he said it, it must be true. And it is true.

And it is true. Do you know there are Christians today, and there's a sin in their past. I think of many fellows I knew in the service.

And there was a sin in their past. And they never learned how to appropriate forgiveness from God. And you know, they've been on the shelf all these years.

They didn't have to be. They didn't have to be. They just drag on incessantly under a guilt of that sin.

When if they would just come and confess to the Lord, all forgiven. And that's a word for every one of us. Don't live.

If you're a believer in the Lord Jesus Christ, don't live under the cloud of guilt. There's no necessity for it. No necessity for it.

I don't care what your sin is. I don't care what your sin is. Come and confess it to the Lord.

Get up from your knees and say, thank God I'm forgiven. That's appropriating forgiveness by faith. It's beautiful, isn't it? Really beautiful.

Notice that everything I'm saying to you today goes back to the word of God. I'm not talking about experience today. I'm talking about what the word of God says and how you appropriate it by faith.

You learn to do that and I'll tell you, your life, your Christian life is going to be much easier. I wish somebody, after I got saved, had explained to me that obedience is the way to spiritual knowledge. Because I was brought up in a culture where education was very, very important.

And degrees were very, very important. You really have to have some degrees after your name. And in the culture I was brought up in, when you got a diploma, you framed it and you put it in a prominent place in the house.

It seemed so funny today because I never see that today. You could paper houses today with diplomas. That was the culture I was brought up in, the importance of... Of course, it is natural to go from there and think, well, the people that do best in the Christian life are the people with the best educations.

But it isn't true. It isn't true. The people who make the best progress in the Christian life are those who go to the word of God and see what's written.

Then shall we know if we follow on and know the Lord. Obedience is the organ of spiritual knowledge. Do you remember how often the Lord Jesus kept saying that? Him that has ears to hear, hear.

You got the capacity to hear it? Hear it and obey it! You'll make very good progress in the Christian life. And as you go on in the Christian life, you'll see people, and some of them had very mediocre educations. I can remember men in my early days who were miners.

I can remember a man named Alec Stewart. He had a big scar across his face here from an accident in a mine. He really didn't have much in the way of education.

Who is this Paul, this radio announcer who said, now you know the rest of the story? Paul who? Paul Harvey. Paul Harvey. Paul Harvey used to come to one of the assemblies.

He used to attend one of the assemblies in River Forest, Illinois when I was there. And he had an agreement with the assembly that he would just come and sit there and leave and nobody would make a fuss about him because he was a celebrity. But you know, there was one man that came to preach there.

His name was Alexander Stewart. And whenever Stewart was there, Paul Harvey was there. And he went to the word of God as a young man and he studied the word of God.

And he began serving the Lord, preaching, preaching the word of God. And I tell you, Paul Harvey, when Paul Harvey's son, Paul Jr., got baptized, who do you think baptized him? And I think of that when I think of men that I've known in the past and very little of this world's education. But I tell you, they knew God.

And they knew the word of God. And they had the spirit of God in power. And when they preached, things happened for God.

So I think that's an encouragement to some of us who aren't of the highest IQ. It doesn't make any difference. It doesn't make any difference.

Use what you've got for the Lord. What is that in your hand, God is saying? And use it for the Lord. I think it would have been helpful to me as a young believer if somebody had sat me down and explained the difference between a believer's position and his practice.

Very important. Other words that are used to describe that are the believer's standing and his faith. You say, why would that be important? Well, because I go to the Bible and I read, By one offering he hath perfected forever them that are sanctified.

Perfected forever. I think, are you perfect, MacDonald? I said, no, I'm not perfect. It says, you're complete in Christ.

Complete in Christ. It says, you're dead to sin. Romans chapter 7. You're dead to sin.

And I open my shirt here and I look inside and say, are you dead to sin, MacDonald? It says you're dead to sin. No, I'm not dead to sin. And then I go down to verse 11 and it says, And I scratch my head and I say, what is this? I'm dead to sin? Reckon myself to be dead to sin? And then I go over to Ephesians 1 and it says, And then if just somebody had said to me, look, so there's a difference between a believer's position and his practice.

His position is what he is in Christ. His practice is what he is in everyday life. His position before God is absolutely perfect.

Absolutely perfect. You know why? Because God looks down and he doesn't see Bill MacDonald. He sees Bill MacDonald in Christ.

That really makes all the difference in the world, doesn't it? And he accepts me in the beloved. He accepts me not because of what I am in myself, but what I am in Christ. That makes all the difference in the world.

And if I had just seen that earlier, I would have been able to understand the scriptures better. It says, Bill, you are dead in sin. That's my position.

Dead to sin. Just turn to Romans chapter 6, please. Romans chapter 6, verse 1. What shall we say then? Shall we continue in sin that grace may abound? Certainly not.

But how shall we who died to sin live any longer therein? We died to sin. That's position. What does it mean? It means when the Lord Jesus died, I died.

And he died to the whole subject of sin, and I died to the whole subject of sin because he died as my representative there on the cross of Calvary. When he died, I died. When he was buried, I was buried.

When he rose again, I rose again. In him, right? How shall we who died to sin live any longer? That's my position. Do you not know? And he goes on to explain that.

And then if you go down to verse 11, it says, Likewise, you also reckon yourselves to be dead indeed to sin, but alive to God in Christ Jesus our Lord. See, this is the practice. God says, Bill, here you are, in Christ, dead to sin.

And here's your practice. Now, I want your practice to increasingly correspond to your position, you know. I want that graph to be going up all the time like that.

God, first of all, puts us in the position, and he says, Now, you make your practice commensurate with that. The first three chapters of Ephesians, they're all about position. All about position.

And one of the great keys, when you're looking for position, the word, in Christ, in Christ. Sometimes I think those words, in Christ, are the most important words for understanding the New Testament epistles. In Christ.

What you are in Christ. Notice verse 3, I'm in Ephesians 1. Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places in Christ. Watch.

Just as he chose us in him, before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before him in love, having predestinated us to adoption as sons by Jesus Christ to himself, according to the good pleasure of his will, to the praise of the glory of his grace, by which he has made us accepted in the beloved. Dear friends, my acceptance before God today is completely in Christ. I have no right to stand before God in myself.

But I tell you, if somehow or other I can go in the person of Christ, I can get acceptance with God. That's what happens when you're saved. God sees my Savior, and then he sees me.

In the beloved. Accepted. And free.

Verse 7. In him we have redemption through his blood. See, in, in, in, in. Then, all through these first three chapters.

Then notice how chapter 4 begins. I, therefore, the prisoner of the Lord, beseech you to have a walk worthy of the calling with which you were called. The first three chapters tell you of the calling with which you were called.

All to be sons of God, heirs of God, all the wonderful things that happen when you're saved. Now, Paul is saying, these next three chapters, I'm going to tell you sort of practically how you can walk worthy of that. Now, this is wonderful.

It's a wonderful truth. Position and practice. Here's my standing.

Here's my position. Here's my practice. And he says, I want to tell you how to walk worthy of it.

You'll never get here, Bill, as long as you're here on earth. You'll never get here. The moment you see the Lord, you'll be there.

But I'd like to see your life like an upward graph. Like that. Making progress in holiness.

In Christ-likeness. All the time. This is great.

The opposite of this is law. Law says, if you do, you will attain. Law says, now you obey all of these rules, and you'll come here.

You know what I mean? Of course, you can't do it. You don't have the power to do it. Law tells you what to do, but it doesn't give you the power to do it.

It curses you if you don't do it. Grace puts you in the position and says, okay, this is what I want, and I'll give you the power to do it. And the power is the indwelling Holy Spirit.

To me, this illuminates the New Testament epistle. And it makes me want to walk worthy of the vocation with which I was called. So, as far as my position is concerned, I am perfect before God.

I'm complete before God. I'm accepted in the Beloved.

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