

**I WAS TOO BAD
FOR HEAVEN, BUT
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By: C Jack Orr

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That was the conclusion I came to, hurrying along the street that morning in York, Pennsylvania, Instead of checking in as usual at People's Drug Store where I was assistant manager, I headed in another direction. I had to see my pastor!

Since that meeting last night, I couldn't get the speaker's words out of my mind. No sermon I'd heard in all my twenty-seven years had shook me like his statement that if he died right now, he knew he'd go to Heaven. Who'd he think he was, talking like that? How could anyone possibly know such a thing! Had I courage, I'd have argued with him, but instead, went home and took it out on my wife. "Millie," I said, "Our cradles budded together. We've gone to the same church all our lives. Let me ask you. If you died tonight, do you know if you'd go to Heaven?" "No, Jack. I'd go to Hell!" "I'm not kidding!" I fumed. "I'm sincere!" "You don't make sense, Jack. You get mad because Dr. Swartz knows he's going to Heaven; you get mad when I say I'm going to Hell. There are only two places to go!"

Unable to sleep that night, I lay thinking. What was life and death all about? What did my church membership really mean? I didn't know but I intended to find out.

On my way to the parsonage I'd pass two cathedrals, a synagogue and two protestant churches. I decided to stop and ask each cleric if he could answer my questions. But what if they disagreed? I'd be more confused than ever. I turned around and went home. I thought I was just emotionally upset but Millie's words of the night before kept pounding in my ears: "You get mad because Dr. Swartz knows he's going to Heaven: you get mad when I say I'm going to Hell. There are only two places to go!" Falling down on my knees, I cried, "Dear God, if there's any way of knowing I can go to Heaven, show me." Impulsively I reached for the Bible which fell open at I John 5: 13 and read, "These things have I written unto you that believe on the name of the Son of God that ye may **KNOW** that ye have eternal life." Then I could know!

Had I gone to those ministers as planned and they hadn't shown me in the Bible what they believed, their opinions would have been no better than anyone else's but here God said, "These things have I written." If **HE** said it, I knew I could believe it.

But how long was "eternal life?" There could be only one answer ... forever.

Paging at random, I came to Romans 3 and started to read. When I reached verse 11, "There's none that understandeth, there's none that seeketh after God." I said, "But **I HAVE** sought after God. I've always been part of the church."

Then why was I angry when Dr. Swartz said he knew he was going to Heaven? Why my sudden interest in life after death? At last I knew. I wasn't seeking God. **HE** was seeking me!

I read, "All have sinned" in verse 23 which referred to a cross reference in Psalm 14:2, 3. "The Lord looked down to see if any did understand, and seek God. They're all gone aside; they're all together become filthy. There's none that doeth good; no not one."

Here God and I had an argument. If anyone had lived a good life, I thought I had. Hadn't I gone to church since I was three weeks old? I was baptized, an official member and a deacon. How could God call **ME** "filthy?"

Another cross reference led me to Psalm 139. "Lord, Thou hast searched me and known me. Thou understandest my thought afar off. . . Thou are acquainted with all my ways. There's not a word in my tongue but Thou knowest it altogether." This got to me. Everything I had ever thought, said or did, God knew beforehand. I had never become involved in outright sinful practices but my thought life was terrible. If God portrayed my life on the wall for all to see, I knew I'd be ashamed. I needed no more convincing. **I WAS** "filthy."

Reading on, I learned in Romans 6:23 that sin earned me a wage . . . "death." Again I was referred to another verse.

Hebrews 9:27. "As it's appointed unto men once to die but after this the judgment." Here God gave me a mental picture as an example. If I were speeding and a policeman clocked me at 80 miles per hour, he'd give me a ticket. I might say, "I'm sorry. I'll never do it again." "But this is for what you've already done," he replies. For the first time in my life, I was without excuse. I knew I was condemned.

In Revelation 20:12-15 I read what awaited me. "And I saw the dead stand before God and the books were opened;

and the dead were judged out of those things written in the books according to their works. And whosoever was not found written in the book of life was cast into the lake of fire."

For three months the Bible didn't make sense. Fearful, confused and convicted, I was miserable to get along with at home and work. I couldn't sleep. When I could stand it no longer and told my pastor what was on my heart, he decided to hold two weeks of evangelistic meetings.

That first night when the invitation was given, I wanted to go forward but when I stepped into the aisle, pride stopped me. What would people think? Me, a Sunday School teacher and president of the Youth group! But, on the other hand, what if I died and went to Hell? I ran to the altar only to find that I couldn't understand what the pastor was trying to tell me.

"Will you take Christ by faith?" he asked. "Sir, I've been a proud man but not anymore. You'll have to break it down, I don't know what you're talking about." "It's as if I offer you my hand and you take it. That's the way with salvation "

"But what about my sin?" I pleaded.

The hour grew late. People wanted to go home so I asked to return again.

The next night was a repetition of the first. When a friend of mine told of receiving Christ as His Saviour, his face glowed. If he could be saved, why couldn't I?

I must be too great a sinner! I wouldn't blame God for not forgiving me but I decided that if I didn't find peace before the end of the week, I'd live like someone going to Hell. I'd not be a hypocrite!

One day I read an account of Francis Warren's conversion. Similarly, he'd told God that if he didn't find salvation, he'd never go to church again.

On the last day of a current revival meeting, he was on a hay wagon in his father's field when John 3: 16 came to mind. By inserting his name in place of "the world," he made it personal and received Jesus Christ as his Saviour.

When I did the same thing, I realized how God could be just and yet forgiving. That Jesus had died on the cross was a historical fact I'd known all my life. But knowing that **HE** died for **MY** sins made all the difference in the world. Even more wonderful was the fact that he rose from the dead (I Corinthians 15) to live out His life in me.

Kneeling in my bedroom, I thanked God for giving His Son to die in my place, received Jesus Christ as my Lord and

Saviour, and rose to my feet assured that my sins were forgiven.

The following night, Millie and I both went to the altar; she to receive Christ as her personal Saviour, I to publicly acknowledge having already done so.

No longer was I too good for Hell. God had shown me that I deserved punishment for my sin. Nor was I too bad for Heaven. Since I believed that Jesus suffered for me, my sin debt to God was wiped out. I **KNEW** I had eternal life.

Do you? If you've never received Jesus Christ as your personal Saviour, why not? Do it now. How? Make this your sincere personal prayer.

MY DECISION

Dear God, I thank you for loving me and giving your son to be my Saviour. Lord Jesus, I thank you for suffering and dying for all of my sins. I am glad you are alive, and right NOW, best I know how, I turn from all of my own ways, and I ask you, Lord Jesus, please come into my life, take over all my life, be my Saviour and my Lord. I thank you for doing it. Amen.

If you made a decision for Christ or have questions,
please contact or email

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