

Charles Pinkney: A Brief Testimony

It might be meaningful to share a little about my own spiritual background. Often even in Christian meetings plain sharing in the form of 'God talk' may not always occur. So if I may, I will share a few pivotal events that highlight significant chapters in my own 'God quest.' This will be abbreviated touching on the principle events that brought me into belief in Jesus. Within the writings that I have shared on links above more details and testimony will be shared. I like to call these my God stories. Such experiences reveal the supernatural intervention of Heaven and the Lord Jesus toward me at numerous times in my life. All of these experiences were God initiated and God enacted.

These modest God stories (the testimonies of many, many others eclipse my story) have allowed me to experience some of the realities of heavenly (Spiritual) things and to validate the reality of the matters written in the early days of the church's beginning when the Messiah's apostles wrote to instruct and encourage all believing disciple. For truly God is the same yesterday, today and tomorrow. The testimonies I write about here ought rightfully, to be *normative* to believers and as I said are familiar to countless others I know. God is very alive and is still doing mighty exploits all over the world in this very hour. Those who follow after a denominational traditions would be advised not to disallow or marginalize such testimonies because of doctrinal teachings from pulpits or media broadcasts. I will use some *italicized items* in the following paragraphs. These will denote matters that might be questioned, misunderstand, even rejected owing to institutional unbelief. In the final analysis, traditions of men should never impede the truths which are given to us in Scripture. (Matthew 15)

It is important that we understand the Gift of God as recorded in the Gospels. The gift of God touches upon all good and perfect things that come to us from God from the Kingdom of Heaven. These are of a heavenly substance and transcend the boundaries of the experiences of the natural (unredeemed) man. Truly greatest gift was the Messiah Jesus himself. All subsequent gifts are owing to him and his completed work on the cross that purchased these gifts.

In a time shortly to come the Kingdom of God will be manifested upon the earth. After the Jews receive their final redemption the Messianic age will come. The glory of God will fill the restored earth. The apostolic epistles speak about the God-transformed life of the **new creation**. This new creation experience allows believers to be recipients of the down payment of these *heavenly things* for which Jesus prayed in John 17. (This is *new creature* is spoken of in 2 Corinthians 5:17) Strangely, while we become new creatures of the God kind, the world neither recognizes this or comprehends it. It remains hidden to their eyes.

Testimony - Selected chapters in my "God-Story"

Until I was forty years of age, I was a faithful church goer. At various times I was a Methodist, Presbyterian, Lutheran, and attended a Congregational church regularly. I sang in choirs and taught Sunday School. I looked as good as any other member of the congregation. All the while, I was aware of the lack of the evidence of any sort of Spirituality. I was familiar with the routine. I had a fondness for the familiar church traditions. I liked well-performed music. I liked the friendly folks albeit it being a most superficial friendliness. But God was absent from my life in any real sense. I did not know Him. As every other unregenerate human being, my heart was desperately wicked, a sinner. My mind was unrenewed. I had no knowledge or faith in the Word of Truth. In God's eyes I was a tare among any wheat that may have existed in any of these congregations.

I had a keen desire to really know God from my earliest days. I was brought up with a curiosity about the supernatural and spiritual world. I sought the *mysteries of God* while in college and

outside of church activities, in the world of Theosophy, Mysticism, Astrology and Eastern Philosophy. Of these studies I knew more than a little; but these pursuits proved to be only vanity.

Two or three years before I was saved I returned from a night at the local piano bar where I sipped wine and sang in my company of good but worldly friends. Later that night, I had a powerful *night vision*. *As the vision commenced*, I saw portrayed before me an huge, ancient book. As I turned each yellowed page, my eyes met with mysterious inscriptions. There were glyphs, charms and symbols representing the deepest hidden mysteries of God. The next scene brought an amazing transformation. As I turned the pages, the book turned into **the Holy Bible**.

In the next scene of the vision an unseen someone placed a white robe upon me. The voice of that someone announced, "With the covering of this *garment* you will be "**a spokesman for God**". Another scene followed. I was among several others all gathered together in a circle. While I was wearing this robe, I began to act in the manner of Jesus or rather, it seemed as though Jesus was acting **through** me. There was a powerful sense of a spiritual presence in our midst. God was acting through all, teaching and discipling. When I awoke from this vision my body was trembling. There was a sensation like electricity pulsing through my body from head to toe. Following this vision, I said to myself, "There is truly a God life and a world of Spiritual experience that I must one day pursue and when I do It will be all consuming. It will consume me and I will never be able to escape from it or return to my ordinary life style.

In the next few years, my first marriage had descended to ruin. My life and thought revealed that I was not a devoted and loving husband, or a good role model for my children. During growing marital stress, I felt a growing depression and emotional instability. The marriage ended with dissolution and divorce. A powerful loneliness grew within me. I felt unloved and unhappy. For months I studied to find out how I might reconcile with my wife to restore a loving relationship. I attempted counseling and group therapy. Yet, no methodology, counseling or worldly wisdom could bring peace to my mind. I began to drink to medicate myself. I believe the Lord's grace kept me from bailing out into another relationship which surely would have been another tragedy.

I reached the nadir of my depression at the end of Christmas vacation from my classroom. It was 1980. The night of the New Year of 1981. On that New Year's eve, in my darkest hour, I called out with tears and desperation for God to reveal himself to me and bring me out of the darkness and fearful torment I was living in.

Finally I was ready to do serious business with God. My heart was prepared sufficiently. It was broken (see Psalm 51.) I realized my hopeless and wretched condition. In the seconds after this brief but heartfelt prayer God answered my prayer making his presence known. Within mere seconds of my calling out to God for mercy and relief, **my racing mind became still**. As the stillness settled into my soul. *Words appeared in my mind. They dropped from somewhere outside myself and registered clearly as complete sentences in my mind. The words began, "fear not for I am with you" - - Though not an audible voice words of comfort continued to come into my mind for a long time. Perhaps an hour or two. There was a dialogue. I would ask a question and God would answer. He spoke to me of His love for humanity and the pain that people experience when his love is not realized or received. I felt the power of his Holy love for me and my fear left me. The voice imput from God spoke to me of his love and the power of that love to transform every hurt of humanity. And of this God source of love, there was no limit. It was like an endless flowing river. He spoke to me about matters of all human fears and desperation hinged upon the absence of love in that life. It was peace that came to me and the desire to know God more and more. He told me, "There is an Immanuel born to me, this day."*

It was to be God with me working steadily to know Him more in Truth.

Following this night I wanted to share the experience of my encounter with God, about his power and his unlimited love. But who would I share it with? With students at school? Was there any church where this kind of testimony would be allowed? I didn't know of one. Who would understand that I had really had an encounter with a Holy God? My ex wife only shared that she was happy that I did not feel so desperate and unstable for what ever reason. I did not know where such God-touched believers could go or what they were to do to share a testimony of God touching their life.

My youngest sister Edie had been born again around this time and began to encourage me. Someone told me there was an evangelist name _____, who shared deep Spiritual truths in his teachings. I thought that sounded good. So I began to listen to that man's teaching. His message essentially said *it is all in the Bible*. There is just so much to believe in the Bible! The Bible when examined seriously had marvelous revelation. He also taught that there was a Holy Spirit *power from God* to enable believers. I began to read the Bible regularly. My mind tried to read and comprehend the Bible but I would fall asleep before I got very far. I still wanted to go about with my old friends, drink and carry on in the familiar pleasures of the habitual night life. I watched broadcasts of Christian evangelists and said the 'sinner's prayer' every chance I'd get.

A large evangelistic conference came to Minneapolis five months later, in May. It was the Kenneth Copeland Ministry. The auditorium seemed filled to capacity. I entered the building going up the ramp to the second floor. As I ascended the stairs I heard a huge volume of sound coming from the auditorium. I could literally feel the weight of the presence of God in a tangible way. There was amazing worship. I had not seen, heard or experienced anything like it before. People were swept up in a true passion for worship. Their hands were uplifted they seemed oblivious of anything else but God. Although I was thrilled with the experience I still wanted to leave early to meet some piano bar folks. That very important mile stone moment did not change me to any great degree. My heart was still entangled in my habits and thought patters from my old life style.

In the Summer, July of that year, I was doing summer work on property I owned in rural North Dakota. I had been invited to sing in an AG church in a near by town that Sunday. This AG pastor had come to visit my sister Mary in town before that scheduled Sunday. She lived next door to me so I was invited over. The pastor told my sister, her husband, and I about *the baptism of the Holy Ghost*. I had no theological objections about this and wanted to go deeper with God. There was some Bible verses shared to validate the practice. Then there we gather for prayer and the *laying on of hands*. I was embarrassed and somewhat put off, when I was asked to do something like expressing words outside of my own vocabulary that I did not even know. So utterance was to be released in my Spirit. I said to the group, "I would go home and do it." I did just that. That night I had a deep and life changing experience. Later, that same night about 3 in the morning a friend came over demonized and drunk. I wanted him to know what I had experienced. I knew at that moment *How Real God Is*. But I was ignorant about too much. I knew too little to be able lead him into the prayer of salvation even though he was ready at that moment. He was open to the Bible and to God right then. I believe that was a seeding event in his life nonetheless.

The morning came. I may have slept a few hours. When I awoke, I was powerfully aware that I was aware that I was experiencing something totally new. It was the *new creation*. I felt lighter than air. The sky was bluer, the world was more beautiful, I felt peace and joy that goes beyond my ability to describe it. In the days following, the Bible became an asset I was never without. From Genesis the Revelation, It provided continuous revelation of the most amazing kind.

The following Sunday morning arrived. I was to sing at that church. Throughout the entire morning, I was in the grip of a compelling Spiritual force that possessed the focus of my thoughts. It was a force beyond myself. I became fixated upon one phrase, "Of all the sinners in the world, I am the chief!" For several hours I was inside what seemed a spiritual 'vacuum jar.' To explain, It felt like a spiritual vacuum enclosed in a jar. No other thought could enter that vacuum. That morning I came forward to sing my special. Now I was compelled to deliver that phrase before the assembled church. Who cares what anybody might think or say? The words came out slowly as one delivering up in child in birth. Following after that moment there was an out-pouring of the anointing that grasped me. It led my thoughts and studies. It led my desire to praise and worship. It grew powerfully. After that it became a regular feature of my life. God was so *very present*. His *revelation* was continuous. The *Rhema of God* attended the Scriptures as I studied. (Man does not live by bread only but by every (Gk. *Rhema*) that proceeds from His mouth.)

That fall, eight months after my first encounter with the Lord, I returned to my teaching job. Every evening I smoked my pipe and drank my liquor until my tobacco supply was gone. Soon my liquor supply was left, untouched. I had no desire to buy more. The desire to consume tobacco or alcohol disappeared.

For the next 3 years or more years or more, I taught during the day and spent all of my time after work listening to a number of (anointed) Bible teachers, then I would read the Bible into the night. *God's presence* was a reality and that presence grew stronger and stronger each day. There was no TV, no entertainment, no daily news reports. I was growing as a disciple of the Lord. During this chapter of my God story, my one passion was being with God and I basked in the warmth of His presence.

Coincidental with this, at this time I was beginning to experience the *Spirit of Truth* and the phenomena of being *Crucified to the World*. To clarify, I can only try to explain that this was a clear witness within my spirit. I knew the things that were of God and the things that were tainted by worldly darkness or human vanity. Traditional Christian hymns and even contemporary Christian music for the most part, jangled my spirit. Too often In contemporary Christian music there was a sense that the artist was trying to draw attention to himself with his or her own performance style. Many forms of music are laden with a religiosity without *anointing*. Soul music is the kind so imbued with the performer's ego that it loses its message and Spiritual power.

The Spirit of Truth became an amazing witness, evident in every possible arena of life. Christian broadcasts, magazines and books clearly resonated to be *of God* or *without God*. Most published articles were discerned to have a spiritual emptiness being without the Spirit. They were religious, flat; essentially intellectual without anointing. In the domain of work, classrooms, at school activities and times spent with my own children, all public events and professional meetings registered as empty, full of deadness; mere noise performed with vanity. I now know this is what Paul the apostle called, being "crucified to the world and the world to me."

During these years, any time I entered a *church house* (churches) if the Spirit of God was absent. There was a pawl of deadness that prevailed. There was a tangible sense of deadly emptiness. This was a sense that was clearly discerned but not based upon intellect or reason. My spirit would become grieved at the absence of God life. How long I would wonder have the souls who come to this place not knowing that there was no God life present, or even if he had

ever been resident.

It was this experience that has guided and compelled my spiritual life since that time. *I felt motivated to encourage believers to **literally experience** the reality of God. I saw the great need to put God life and God's direction back into the fellowship of believers. The intimacy of the family of God must be restored. Believers must be brought to an awareness that they are called as saints and disciples. This has been absent from nearly all churches who practice the delineation of clergy and laity. Body fellowship and ministry must also be restored. Releasing individual believers in their own personal callings to minister their Godly Gift must likewise be restored.*

During my time of being discipled in my 'back of the desert,' I felt entirely like an alien in every respect. Church-house preaching "fell to the ground." Most sermons or teaching by Bible experts resonated similarly without life, uninspired, second-hand doctrine not Spirit inspired revelation. Emotional hype and contrived preaching gimmicks were everywhere in evidence. I knew it for what most of it was, vanity and self promotion.

Discerning Life and Death in Religion

In the years that followed, I carefully listened to hundred of sermons by countless preachers, evangelists, and conference speakers. I believe I heard every conceivable sermon presented with varying degrees of knowledge and revelation, but whether evangelical or charismatic these had one commonality - - the messaged promoted of *the institutional church experience*. It was from these dead ashes that I had been released. Something was so wrong with this churchianity. It labors under human understandings coupled with human authority. Except in rare examples, Bible teaching portrayed theology and doctrinal concepts but frightfully little experience in heavenly matters and too much submission to hierarchical form and structure. Discipleship was for all practical purposes, a foreign concept as it deemphasized experiencing God or doing the works of God. Church life was about promoting the institution and submission to it or its leaders.

In 1995 I began writing a book which might have been called The Gospel for Dummies, or Practical Discipleship, but I did not want to present another *religious* book title in the market of Christian Books. These are produced by the tens of thousands for Christian consumption, each claiming some new doctrine or revelation and each contrived to add to the fame and fortune of the authors. So I decided upon this title, ***The Gospel Without Religion***. The purpose of the writing would be to show to people who, like myself who were hungry to know God more but were stymied in religion. To enable religious people to discover God's reality. Outside the context of [the religious paradigm](#), I hoped to reiterate the simplicity of the God life, the way the apostles described it; no more, no less.

About a year after the anniversary of my first God encounter, in my one room *back of the desert* ghetto apartment, I was blessed to hear the audible *voice of God* on one occasion in a night vision. This voice (I always ask others to describe their own experience with the audible voice) addressed the message of Ephesians 4: relative to the gifts given to the Body to mature us all into the form of one perfect man: *And He Himself gave some to be apostles, some prophets, some evangelists, and some pastors and teachers, ¹² for the equipping of the saints for the work of ministry for the edifying of the body of Christ, ¹³ till we all come to the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to a perfect man, to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ; ¹⁴⁰ that we should no longer be children, tossed to and fro and carried about with every wind of doctrine, by the trickery of men, in the cunning craftiness of deceitful plotting, ¹⁵but, speaking the truth in love, may grow up in all things into Him who is the head- "*

The years following were punctuated with some amazing and special times in the Spirit, There are many God stories that could be shared involving- I am cautioned not be too presumptuous and draw attention to myself - visions of things to come, traveling to far away places to minister in the Spirit, angelic visits and other such things that are attested to in the Book of Acts and the Epistles.

This kind of testimonial sadly is not often well received among some evangelicals. Too often such testimonies produce distrust or argument rather than faith-building hope. As one prominent world-reknoned international Bible teacher once blustered on his radio broadcast, "If anyone ever told me that they had a visit with an angel I would tell him, it is time for him to visit the booby hatch." *J. Vernon McGee, 1990*, Such well meaning Bible teaching results in one thing, disbelief. Such wrong beliefs and teaching grieves me. As Jesus the Great Shepherd and gatherer of his flock stated, "How I would loved to have gathered you as a mother hen gathers her own young, but you would not" (allow it.) And sadly the body remains so divided into disassociated fragments we can only wonder when this oneness, this one perfect man come to be?

Finally, I wish to say that nothing in my testimony should suggest that I am unique from another other man or woman that God has called. Those (any) who ask, seek and knock, find Grace in His sight. It is a good and pleasant thing to share *κοινωνία* (fellowship of the Body.) For intimacy and fellowship as possible with those of like hearts, who seek God with openness to the Holy Spirit. It is my hearts desire that we who call ourselves Christians, welcome and receive from one other who are recipients of their own unique gifts of God. *As it states in 1Peter 4:10.; For as many who have received the gift, minister (that gift) unto one another as stewards of the manifold grace of God.* This is the very form given to us to express *the kingdom of heaven*, As it was in Simon Peter's day, so is it today.

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