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# Amazing Grace: The Dan Lirette Story

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My name is Dan Lirette and today I want to share with you how Jesus Christ transformed my life. But first, let's go back... wayyyyy back.

I was born in 1976 and grew up in Moncton, New Brunswick, Canada's East End. If you're from here, you know what the two words, "East End" bring to mind. Drugs. Violence. Poverty. It wasn't exactly the posh place to live; it was – and continues to be – the bad side of the city. I spent some of my formative years growing up there. Many of the families in the East End were broken families. I was blessed to have been given good parents.

From an early age my late brother and I would attend a local Evangelical church with my parents, though both of my parents weren't Christians; they were simply Christians in name only, with mom being of the Evangelical brand and dad being of the Roman Catholic brand.

I vaguely recall sitting church and it being boring; I wasn't really interested in listening to the Preacher and can't really recall a single sermon preached. I did, however, enjoy the treats given at the churches we attended as youngsters. I mean...what kid doesn't like treats? So that was pretty much the highlight of "going to church" for me; the treats. I don't remember hearing the Gospel at the churches we went to and that's unfortunate. We went to two churches and both are well known and packed out each week... and yet I can't recall anyone ever sharing with me that I was a sinner in need of a Saviour. Nonetheless, God wouldn't have me without knowledge of Him; He personally made certain of that. How so?

At approximately 8 or 9 years of age I was outside playing when God called my name audibly; I heard Him speak my name twice. It was no different than if you called my name. It wasn't "in my head" or a "feeling"; it was from outside of me; a literal voice coming from every direction and sounding like nothing I have ever since heard. I knew beyond a shadow of a doubt that (1) there was a God and (2) He just called out to me twice.

In 1 Samuel 3:1-8 we read, "And the child Samuel ministered unto the LORD before Eli. And the word of the LORD was precious in those days; there was no open vision. And it came to pass at that time, when Eli was laid down in his place, and his eyes began to wax dim, that he could not see; And ere the lamp of God went out in the temple of the LORD, where the ark of God was, and Samuel was laid down to sleep; That the LORD called Samuel: and he answered, Here am I. And he ran unto Eli, and said, Here am I; for thou calledst me. And he said, I called not; lie down again. And he went and lay down. And the LORD called yet again, Samuel. And Samuel arose and went to Eli, and said, Here am I; for thou didst call me. And he answered, I called not, my son; lie down again. Now Samuel did not yet know the LORD, neither was the word of the LORD yet revealed unto him. And the LORD called Samuel again the third time. And he arose and went to Eli, and said, Here am I; for thou didst call me. And Eli perceived that the LORD had called the child."

Just as the Lord had called Samuel by name before he knew the Lord, so the Lord called me before I knew Him. Of course I had no idea as a young boy that 1 Samuel 3:1-8 existed and interestingly enough my middle name is Sam. How cool is that?! God is just amazing, isn't He?! God's mercy and grace are so immeasurable; He calls out to us in different ways while we yet don't even know Him. For me, it was audible; for others, He calls them through circumstances, etc. God knows exactly how to reach out to us in ways that will get our attention.

At approximately the same time of age, I had another experience but it wasn't the kind I'd ever want to have happen again. To this day, it's forever etched in my mind. While walking up the stairs to go to bed, all of a sudden an evil, demonic presence surrounded me, terrifying me and I began screaming and yelling, not knowing what was happening; I know now, however, that it was the enemy and there's such a vile darkness that lives in him. I felt it tangibly and it's indescribable except to say that it was evil beyond evil.

These two incidents – hearing God's audible and having evil surround me – are two distinct experiences that I have never forgotten. There is no atheist alive who has the ability to convince me that there is no God because God convinced me as a child of His reality.

Growing up, I was quite drawn, unfortunately, to bad behaviour because my heart was wicked. Though I had heard God's audible voice I hadn't yet heard the Gospel, that Jesus Christ was Lord and died and rose again to set me free from sin and spiritual death.

My life as a child was quite dark and disturbing. For example, I was one who would go into an abandoned building and light candles, burn Bibles and pray to devils; I was entrenched in darkness as a young boy. Drawn to the dark side of the spiritual realm, my life was engulfed in evil.

Further to this, I engaged in a consistent lifestyle of stealing, lying, whoring around and all sorts of sinful behaviour. As I grew older the chains of sin only grew stronger in my life, holding me captive. I soon found myself stealing cars and later became involved in so-called "petty" armed robberies. Finding no contentment in morality (morality without Christ is vain anyhow!) I turned and walked in immorality.

While my parents were good parents in the sense of being as good as they could have been without transformed by the Grace of God, I was the "goat" of the family, always getting into trouble with the police. Charge after charge for various crimes I would commit. Looking back, I'm thankful that my mother and father loved me even when I was unlovable. I'm thankful that God still loved me when I was unlovable!

No amount of punishment or threats to punish me was sufficient to stop me from living an immoral lifestyle; no one was going to tell me how to go about living my life, well... until a youth court judge sentenced me to 4 months in youth reformatory.

At 12 years of age I was sent to a place called the Kingsclear Reformatory (now closed) in a city called Fredericton, NB; the year was 1989. Here I was at 12 years of age in jail. Sure it was called a reformatory but it was anything but. This was a jail which housed youth.

Kingsclear was filled all sorts of evil, both from the "youth counsellors" as well as the youth sentenced to be there and serve time. While meant to be a place of rehabilitation, it was, in all actuality, a place to learn more evil. What was learned in this facility was hatred and hardening; there was nothing rehabilitative about this place.

A regular routine of fist fights and cliques were a normal part of everyday life for many of the youth who walked through it's doors. Youth counsellors were just as wicked, if not more so, than the youth sentenced there. Simply put, this institution reformed no one but only churned out youth more wicked

then when they first arrived.

I found myself wanting to be accepted by the other youth, so I would engage in the same sneaky games as everyone else, and I soon learned the lingo of “inside life”. The first months were the hardest, but I found that as I was sent back year after year, I became more adapted to life within those walls. Once out, I’d soon return again due to criminal activity. I was in and out of youth jail for several years, my longest stretch being a 23 month sentence. The more the years passed by, the colder I became. Yet, God continued to peruse me.

I remember a particular time when a Christian group came to the jail and I was alone with one of the Christians as he shared Christ. I remember being quite moved by this man’s words. The Spirit of God was using this man to lead me to the Lord Jesus. However, we were interrupted by a youth counsellor and the Christian man had to leave. The devil was seeking to abort a spiritual birth but God would have none of it. His plans always prevail.

Without getting into the details, I was involved in an armed hostage taking situation and briefly escaped from the Kingsclear Reformatory. I was caught the same day and placed in solitary confinement. Because of what I had done, the reformatory was now going to send me to a maximum security facility on the border of Quebec and the USA. And so I was transferred to a place called the Madawaska Regional Correctional Center. Madawaska had the perception of being a violent jail, and I was a bit nervous about going. It was certainly a massive change from Kingsclear. Kingsclear, while a jail, was also more like a school while Madawaska looked like something from a television program on prisons.

It had the two tier cells, bullet proof glass windows, bubble stations for the guards, emergency buttons on most of the walls in case fights broke out or in case guards were in trouble, round barbed razor wire for the outside recreation area... it was quite literally a prison for adults, though at that time it housed youth (now it houses adults).

So here I was to finish my sentence and also finish the sentence I had received for escaping from Kingsclear; a total of 23 months, which included what I was already serving at that particular time.

Now, I was much further away from my home-town of Moncton. Being 6 hours from where my family was, it certainly wasn't everyday that I received visits, but my parents did come to see me as much as they could and that was deeply appreciated.

Madawaska, as well as Kingsclear or any other institution that is segregated from family and society, is a very lonely place and, quite frankly, tormenting. Yet, my days were spent even in jail by thinking of evil and evil things to do; from my waking moment I was usually involved in some type of immoral conduct.

There was one guard who I met, however, who was much different than the other guards; Gilles was a Christian, and it was clear that there was something “different” about this man. It wasn't only in his words, but his very atmosphere was not the same as the one in which the rest of us lived. While we lived in darkness, this man was clearly not living that way, but was living in the presence of the Holy Spirit.

Of course I didn't know all of the specifics at that time of what it meant to be a genuine Christian, yet I

knew that this man “had something” that none of us had. He was always so nice and went out of his way to exude kindness and compassion, regardless of whether he was made fun of for being a Christian or not. Unfortunately, I was one of the ones that would make fun of him, but he continued to love me unconditionally and show me the love of God. He witnessed to me and would tell me about Jesus and forgiveness. I was drawn to this man and I actually looked forward to seeing him on shift.

I remember asking him once while shooting a game of pool (He could play like no one’s business!), “If God is in you, does that mean I’m playing against God?” He laughed, of course.

While sitting with Gilles one day, I asked him if he could “prove God”. Gilles then told me about what’s called praying in tongues (1 Corinthians 14:2) and how God gives His children a language that they never learned and were never taught; that it’s a language that the Holy Spirit gives. Scripture also states that Tongues are a sign to unbelievers (1 Corinthians 14:22) of which I was at that point.

I then asked him to do it, to pray in tongues, and with some hesitation, Gilles bowed his head in prayer and began praying in a heavenly language. This wasn’t the kind of gibberish we see in many of today’s churches; this was legitimate and powerful; there was certainly nothing fake or made-up about it. Here I was, a young man in a maximum security youth prison, filled with evil and knowing very little of God, and I’m sitting with a guard who begins praying in an unknown tongue. Immediately the Presence of God fell on me as well as the fear of God. I was terrified but not in a human sense; it was a fear that this man had Almighty God inside of him ... and I didn’t; and I knew I was hell bound.

I asked him to stop due to the fear I was experiencing, but it was not a “demonic” fear; it was, again, clearly the fear of God. God’s Spirit fell on me that day and I’ve never forgotten it.

Many times I would go to my cell for bed at night and would get on my knees and ask Jesus to come into my heart; I was terrified of dying in my sleep and going to Hell. Yet, while I asked Jesus to come into my heart, nothing happened whenever I’d pray that prayer alone in my cell. No one knew the battle that was now raging in my heart, and neither did I know that God was preparing my heart for the day that I would be born again and made alive in Christ.

As all of this was happening – Gilles telling me about Jesus, etc- an inmate named Bernie was led to Christ by Gilles, and as Bernie and I are sitting together one day, I asked Gilles to “speak in tongues again”. Gilles agreed, but said he would do so in the interview room with myself as well as Bernie. The interview room was a place where guards took inmates to talk with them and was also where we made our phone calls to family.

When Gilles said that he would take us into the interview room, the Presence of God fell on me and I said to Bernie, “I’m going to be saved today!” I now know that that was the Spirit of God revealing it to me. Something inside of me all of a sudden “just knew” that I was about to become a child of God.

As we went into the room together, Gilles told me that “where two or three are gathered together in the Name of Jesus” that Jesus was right there present. As Gilles led me in prayer to receive Jesus Christ, afterward I asked, “How do I know if I’m saved?” since I didn’t “feel” anything. He simply replied that I’d know.

When we all walked out of the room, I went to the common area where inmates watch TV, play cards, etc. When I told all of them that, "I'm a Christian now", suddenly and instantaneously the Holy Spirit fell on me in a way that I can't adequately put into words; at that moment I physically felt the Lord wash all of my sins away in front of those inmates; all of a sudden I physically felt completely different and knew that God had just cleansed me of all of my sins and gave me a brand new heart. I knew that I knew that I knew that I knew that He transformed me. God was now my Father!

The moment I confessed Christ as my own, the Scripture was fulfilled in my life where Jesus promises: "Whosoever therefore shall confess me before men, him will I confess also before my Father which is in heaven." (Matthew 10:32)

I was now Born Again.

Jesus Christ had now taken up residence in my heart. I was instantly transformed from sinner to saint by the Grace of God!

All of a sudden I find that Jesus Christ is everything to me... His Person, Presence and workings in my life were forefront. Not long after He saved me He also Filled me with the Holy Spirit and blessed me with the gift of praying in other tongues (1 Corinthians 14:2). My life became consumed in Jesus and learning about Him.

I would receive, on rare occasions at that point, dreams from the Lord and His Presence was with me day by day as He walked with me and I with Him. My life was dramatically different and I was genuinely taken from the kingdom of darkness into the Kingdom of God.

Being in that jail, however, didn't allow much Church Community, and fellowship was very small, with only Bernie and one or two others as well as Gilles' church ministering at that jail I believe once a month.

Little did I realize the cost of serving Christ; my view was that being Born Again rid me of all of my problems and that my life would now be a mountain top experience all the way to Glory. How wrong I was.

Not fully counting the cost of coming to Christ and surrendering to His Lordship, I soon began to experience what every Believer experiences and will experience until we're taken home: Satan's attacks.

Little by little my devotion began to slip away until one day I was backslidden. Having studied the Scriptures and having memorized much of what we know as essential doctrine, I was now more filled with intellectual knowledge than a holy zeal for Christ. Pride entered into my heart and we know what the Word of God says about pride: "Pride goeth before destruction, And an haughty spirit before a fall." (Proverbs 16:18).

When I was released from jail I was directed to a local church in my city. I began attending, and also attended their youth group. The name on top of the church said "Pentecostal" but it was lukewarm. While there were times when God's Presence was in our midst, for the most part the church was spiritually dry. I don't recall prayer and fasting times nor passionate times of calling on the Name of the Lord; our youth meetings certainly had the Word preached, but without much power. Youth enjoyed

sports and such things more than seeking the face of Christ in prayer and in fasting. While sports, games, etc are not wrong in and of themselves, they become evil when they take the place of Christ in our lives individually and corporately as a church. That said, I place no judgment on that church nor it's former leadership. In fact, as it stands today, the same church is on fire, has godly leadership and is seeking God's Presence and Power in all they do.

During that time many years ago, satan had brought an individual on my path who called herself a prophet, who then invited me to her assembly. I obliged and attended and I had never seen anything quite like this church! It was exciting and seemed to be full of God, unlike the church I was attended that was spiritually dry.

The Pastor of this small church was young, energetic and preached like a televangelist, complete with yelling, screaming, tears and the whole nine yards. Prophecy, visions, being "slain in the Spirit" and things like this were common place. So, I made this church my new home fellowship. There was only one problem: this church taught things contrary to the Word of God. The teachings coming from the pulpit were, for the most part, a twisting of the Truth of Scripture.

We were fed doctrines which elevated man and demoted the Lord. The church I was in was a Word of Faith church. It looked Pentecostal in it's expressions but in it's doctrines it was the Prosperity/Health and Wealth message. We'd all bought into a false gospel which brought with it false doctrines.

Visions and prophecies were a big part of church life, and these manifestations were primarily a means of controlling those who attended the church. I had personally received prophecies that told me of worldwide influence and such things. Many of us did, if not all of us.

These kinds of things were normal in this small church... but for the most part, much of the "supernatural" things taking place were simply not of God and were in fact instilling pride in us, causing us to believe we were spiritual giants – little gods- when in all truth we merely had a reputation that we were alive. We were, in fact, spiritually dead as a congregation and we didn't know it.

Not all of what was happening was of the devil, though, or of the flesh... the Lord was certainly with us but I believe He was with us in the sense of calling us as individuals and as a church to repent of our false gospel. Did we have ears to hear? Some did while others, to this day, continue in their delusion.

Due to being involved in the Word of Faith movement via this small church I was attending, I became filled to overflowing with pride, believing that even Pentecostals didn't have the "revelation" we, as Word of Faith followers, had. Sure, Baptists and Pentecostals and all who were saved were going to Heaven, but they certainly weren't living as as we believed they should; the Word of Faith way. Prosperity, miracles, signs, wonders.

My own life, however, was a complete mess. I'm full of pride, living in sin and yet I believe that everyone else is wrong while the movement I'm a part of is the "purest form" of Christianity. Through several series of events, I became "so backslidden" that I began living as a wicked reprobate, going to nightclubs, constantly drinking and doing all sorts of evils. I became worse as a backslider than before I had known the Lord, and the Scripture was fulfilled in my own life that says, "When the unclean spirit is gone out of a man, he walketh through dry places, seeking rest; and finding none, he

saith, I will return unto my house whence I came out. And when he cometh, he findeth it swept and garnished. Then goeth he, and taketh to him seven other spirits more wicked than himself; and they enter in, and dwell there: and the last state of that man is worse than the first." (Luke 11:24-26)

I had become much much worse as a backslider than previous to the Lord saving me, and my heart became engulfed in hatred and darkness and my life was characterized by vile outward manifestations of inward wickedness.

I had become so accustomed to sinning that whenever I did go to church and went to the altar to "come back to the Lord", it never lasted very long, due to holding secret sin in my heart and not letting it go. I found myself, over and over again, being drawn to the same sins, and whenever I'd "repent", I'd soon be back into those same sins and worse. Because my repentance wasn't a full surrender. Without fully surrendering to the Lord, the only outcome is returning to sin. It's either all of Christ or none of Christ.

My heart was constantly longing for the pleasures of sin and for a relationship with the Lord; yet in reality it wasn't the Lord I was seeking but only an experience from the Lord. I had come to a place where my mind was trained to seek manifestations, prophetic words and altar calls.

Jesus said these solemn words: "And whosoever shall speak a word against the Son of man, it shall be forgiven him: but unto him that blasphemeth against the Holy Ghost it shall not be forgiven." (Luke 12:10)

There's a place that a person can come to where they can no longer be forgiven. Was I at that place? I feared that I was; that I had crossed the line. That's where I was at in my life and in my thinking because of the sin that I continued to live in.

Though my sins were great and though Hell itself was not sufficient punishment for all that I had done against the Name of Jesus Christ, the Lord loved me still. When I had feared that I had blasphemed the Holy Spirit and that there was no longer any hope for me, the Lord was working on my heart behind the scenes. The Lord saw fit on a handful of occasions to wake me up from a dead sleep and have me engulfed in what the Bible describes as outer darkness. The outer darkness spoken of in Scripture is reserved for those who have turned from the Lord and who have refused to repent of their wickedness, as Scripture makes clear that those who go into outer darkness are those who were once servants (though unprofitable) in the Kingdom of God:

"But the children of the kingdom shall be cast out into outer darkness: there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth." (Matthew 8:12)

"And cast ye the unprofitable servant into outer darkness: there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth." (Matthew 25:30)

I tangibly experienced this place of outer darkness on a handful of occasions. I wasn't asleep and I wasn't in a vision on any of the times that the Lord showed me outer darkness. It was literal, tangible and I was fully conscious and aware. It was real; as real as the day when I heard the Lord call my name audibly.

On one of these occasions, I thought I was dead as the presence of death and darkness engulfed me. What I was in, so to speak, was a cloud of darkness, utter abandonment, utter hopelessness and terrifying fear.

In this outer darkness was a knowing – a deep conviction- that all hope for Salvation was gone; that God would allow no second chance; no hope and no way out; there was no sense of thinking, “I may be able to get out of here”; there was a clear knowing that those who end up in outer darkness at death will never come out of it for all of eternity.

I also had a knowing, however, that God was present in the sense that He’s everywhere at one time, as Psalm 139:7-10 tells us that if we make our bed in Hell that God is also present even there but not to rescue the damned but rather to enforce the fact that there is no escape from outer darkness for backsliders; that regardless of one’s cries for mercy, no mercy is given in Hell. All of this “knowing” was given by God directly; it was His revelation to me of Hell’s reality in a very personal and tangible way. I had experienced a small portion of Hell’s reality prior to and just before my Salvation but this was much heavier a conviction and a much fuller revelation to me by the Lord.

All of this took place long after I left the Word of Faith church and it’s doctrines. In fact, by this time, I was absolutely opposed to the WOF and it’s teachings and was attending a Baptist church. Remember; while I may have been attending a Baptist church, I was living in sin; backslidden and immoral.

One evening I was overtaken with the burden of my sin and praise God that the Lord saw fit to have the weight of my sin crush me. I called my pastor at the time, who is a godly man, and asked if we could get together and talk, and I found myself weeping on the phone.

He said he'd come right over and did, and we went to a parking lot and I confessed my hypocrisy for the past several years of sin. I was quite specific in much of my confession, as he asked me to be; I had quite frankly never confessed to anyone like this before. It was humiliating and yet at the same time God was doing a mighty work in the process of it all. Upon the conclusion of confession to my Pastor and then in prayer to the Lord, I was forgiven and cleansed.

God Himself is the one who arranged all of the happenings of my confession.... from the very beginning to when the burden of my sin fell on me to the moment of confession and repentance! God also used the outer darkness experiences to show me the dire result of turning from Christ and being cast into Hell for all of eternity.

After my confession and when I got back to my home, Jesus Christ's nearness came to me that evening. The Lord has wrought a mighty work in my heart and life. When I believed all hope was lost and gone, Jesus Christ loved me while I was yet in my sin, showing me just how much by redeeming from it. The fact that He saved me from my sin and washed me in His Blood shows me that there is Hope even for the worst of sinners and the greatest of backsliders.

All of what you just read took place many years ago. Since that time, there have been seasons of victory as well as defeat in my personal life. There have been ups, downs and everything in-between. That’s a

part of life and a part of growth. Yet, through all of it, the Lord has continued to work in my heart, just as He will yours.

In 2011 He called me to plant a church in my home which became a place of salvation, deliverance and healing for the lost, backslidden and spiritually dry. We were blessed to have Pastor Tim Dilena minister with us as well as Edgar Reich, Daniel Jalbert and other men of God.

The Lord spoke to my heart some years after pastoring, that He was going to have another take my place as pastor. He had me in that position for a season; my calling is not as a pastor and yet the Lord graciously allowed me to walk in that ministry for some time, not only to see others disciplined but to teach me various lessons on His people, His church, etc. The Lord will at times place us in areas that aren't permanent for us in order to teach us permanent lessons. This was one of those times for my own life.

I could testify to so many amazing things that I've witnessed the Lord do through the years. I saw one resurrection, several healings and many prophetic encounters too numerous to mention here. Suffice it to say that God is in the miracle working business; signs and wonders are real and are for today. That said, whenever a miracle takes place, it's never to be the focus or emphasis; all signs and wonders are meant to point all of us to Jesus Christ. Each time the Spirit of the Lord moves in a supernatural way is for the Glory of God; it's never for us to boast about or place an emphasis on.

Our God is the God of the unexpected! When we walk in humility with Him, He'll use us for His purposes and for His glory alone. Lives will be impacted and transformed as we continually yield to the Lord's leading in our lives. That won't always be as we imagine; often the Lord will place us in situations that test us. Yet, when we come out victorious because of the Lord's grace working in our lives, there's no greater joy than to know that we've been counted faithful by the Lord.

I have no idea what the future holds but I know that God is there, waiting patiently for me to say yes to His Will and to His way. I know that no matter what comes, He's there to lead, guide, strengthen and empower me to look to Christ, the Author and Finisher of my faith. He's also there for you; for your life! He has a plan and a purpose for you and He invites you to follow Him on the journey into a life you couldn't have possibly imagined was possible!

You may be lost today; you may be a backslider; whoever you are, call on the Name of the Lord and cast yourself on the Cross of Christ, asking God for mercy. He won't turn you down!

There is nothing that I can give to the Lord in return for His great work in my heart; there's nothing I can say or do to repay the goodness and mercy and compassion that He's showered on me when I deserved only outer darkness.

If you and I will simply be honest with God and with man and come clean with all that's in our hearts and confess and forsake sin once and for all, holding nothing back, the Lord promises to not only forgive and cleanse us, but He also promises to keep us, as the Scripture says:

"Now unto him that is able to keep you from falling, and to present you faultless before the presence of his glory with exceeding joy, To the only wise God our Saviour, be glory and majesty, dominion and power, both now and ever. Amen."

Jesus Christ is more than able to keep us from falling, but we must allow Him to expose all of our darkness and sin and we must allow Him to take complete control of our hearts and lives if we're to be

kept by His power. We're not kept by self effort, rules or regulations; we're kept by the all powerful blood of Jesus Christ alone. Nothing but the blood of Jesus will suffice.

We're called to be open and honest; we're not called to hide our sin in secret places. We're called to walk with Christ in humility and openness, not fearing the scorn of man or whatever man might think or say about us due to our former sin. Jesus Christ will not cast you aside if you come His way, which is the way of truth and life:

“Jesus saith unto him, I am the way, the truth, and the life: no man cometh unto the Father, but by me.”  
(John 14:6)

Don't hold back from coming to God in absolute surrender of your sin and darkness, but come to Him in open confession and if need be confess before to your pastor or someone godly that you trust, holding on to no sin, but releasing it all to the Lord.

God is not unrighteous to cast aside those come to Him His way; He won't forsake you if you turn to Him in repentance and faith in Jesus. Once you've done that, you then have to allow the Lord to continue shedding light on your heart and you must maintain, by His Grace alone, an honest and open communication with those whom you're accountable to in the Lord, such as your family and pastors and church body.

An honest heart pleases God's Heart; let's continue to be an open book regardless of the cost or the shame associated with it.

Friend, Jesus Christ stands at the door and knocks: Will you answer and allow Him to come in and clean your heart, forgive your sin and make you whole again? Will you allow Him to touch your life and cause you to walk in His Word openly and honestly, holding nothing back, but allowing Him to reveal those things in you that displease Him? Will you allow God to transform your life, conforming your heart into the very image of Jesus Christ?

Satan's desire is that you stay locked in the prison of sin, yet Jesus came to set the captives free. If you're a captive to sin, there's Good News for you: Jesus Christ will unlock the prison doors and release you. Trust in Him alone today for your Salvation and restoration to the Heavenly Father. Don't trust in your feelings but trust in Him by simply calling on His Name and asking Him to do the impossible in your life because our God is the God of the impossible!

In conclusion, for those of you reading who may not know the Lord or for those of you who aren't aware of the true Gospel of Jesus Christ, I want to take time to share with you the Bible's way of Salvation. Most believe that asking Jesus into their hearts is sufficient; I myself believed that so long ago. While the Lord does save people when they pray what's called the Sinner's Prayer, it's in spite of and not because of the prayer. Scripture is clear on the way of Salvation and it's not asking Jesus into our hearts but rather it's repentance from sin, trust in Jesus Christ and His Cross and water baptism in His Name.

This is the means that God has given to us as recorded in His Word. If you do not know the Lord, this is what He calls you to do in obedience to Him.

In Acts 2:37, we read these words: “Now when they heard this, they were pricked in their heart, and said unto Peter and to the rest of the apostles, Men and brethren, what shall we do?”

Peter gave a clear answer in verse 38 and 39 when he said, "Then Peter said unto them, Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost. For the promise is unto you, and to your children, and to all that are afar off, even as many as the Lord our God shall call."

1- You must repent of your sin. God tells us that if we don't repent then we're His enemy and will one day be judged by Him for loving our sin and hating His Son, Jesus Christ: Acts 17:30-31 "And the times of this ignorance God winked at; but now commandeth all men every where to repent: Because he hath appointed a day, in the which he will judge the world in righteousness by that man whom he hath ordained; whereof he hath given assurance unto all men, in that he hath raised him from the dead."

Repentance means to turn around; to make a complete 180 and go in the opposite direction. It involves turning from sin and also turning from trusting in our own morality and goodness ... because our best morality is nothing more than filth in the eyes of God. We read this in Isaiah 64:6 "But we are all as an unclean thing, and all our righteousnesses are as filthy rags; and we all do fade as a leaf; and our iniquities, like the wind, have taken us away."

So we see that repentance involves three things; turning from sin, turning from our own good works in order to be saved and turning to God. We aren't good enough to save ourselves but we're certainly wicked enough to condemn ourselves and the fact is that we're all condemned apart from the new life that God promises to those who obey the Gospel. Part of receiving the Gospel is repentance. Repentance is necessary and essential if you're to be made right with the Lord.

If we reject God's command to repent we'll one day be cast into Hell: Luke 13:3 "I tell you, Nay: but, except ye repent, ye shall all likewise perish."

Genuine repentance leads us to Salvation: 2 Corinthians 7:9-10 "Now I rejoice, not that ye were made sorry, but that ye sorrowed to repentance: for ye were made sorry after a godly manner, that ye might receive damage by us in nothing. For godly sorrow worketh repentance to salvation not to be repented of: but the sorrow of the world worketh death."

2- You must put your complete trust in Jesus Christ alone. Jesus Christ gives eternal life to all who put their trust in Him: John 11:25-26 "Jesus said unto her, I am the resurrection, and the life: he that believeth in me, though he were dead, yet shall he live: And whosoever liveth and believeth in me shall never die. Believest thou this?"

God gives eternal life to those who put their full trust in Jesus alone. Galatians 3:22-26 "But the scripture hath concluded all under sin, that the promise by faith of Jesus Christ might be given to them that believe. But before faith came, we were kept under the law, shut up unto the faith which should afterwards be revealed. Wherefore the law was our schoolmaster to bring us unto Christ, that we might be justified by faith. But after that faith is come, we are no longer under a schoolmaster. For ye are all the children of God by faith in Christ Jesus."

Notice that we're children of God by faith. Faith alone. It's trusting in Jesus and what He's done for you that unlocks the door of Salvation. Repentance leads you to the door of salvation but it's faith – and faith alone – that gets you through the door.

The Bible promises that if you put your trust in Jesus Christ that you'll be brought into right relationship with God and that your sins will be taken away from you by God: John 3:16-18 "For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life. For God sent not his Son into the world to condemn the world; but that the world through him might be saved. He that believeth on him is not condemned: but he that believeth not is condemned already, because he hath not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God."

To believe in Christ is more than head knowledge about who He is and what He's done for you. Believing in Jesus will always show itself in godly works; not our own works and our own ideas of being saved but God's way. Repentance is one of those godly works and the next godly work we see in the Scripture is water baptism. It's the very first step you're to take in becoming a child of God. Water baptism saves but it doesn't save from sin; it saves from a condemned conscience. We read this in 1 Peter 3:21 "The like figure whereunto even baptism doth also now save us (not the putting away of the filth of the flesh, but the answer of a good conscience toward God,) by the resurrection of Jesus Christ."

Water baptism is both a funeral and a birthday. A funeral as you're dying to your old life when you go under the water; a birthday as you're coming out of the water a new and transformed person. It can also be compared to a wedding ring. Repentance is the engagement ring; it's your way of saying you're turning from sin and your own good works to serve God as His child. Water baptism is the actual wedding where you're giving up your old life for the new life that God is giving you. Faith is the substance that bridges repentance and baptism; it's what seals it all!

We're to be baptized immediately upon repentance and faith in Jesus. Jesus Himself commanded it: Matthew 28:18-20 "And Jesus came and spake unto them, saying, All power is given unto me in heaven and in earth. Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost: Teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you: and, lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world. Amen."

The Early Church practiced it: Acts 2:37-39 "Now when they heard this, they were pricked in their heart, and said unto Peter and to the rest of the apostles, Men and brethren, what shall we do? Then Peter said unto them, Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost. For the promise is unto you, and to your children, and to all that are afar off, even as many as the Lord our God shall call."

It was immediate: Acts 8:35-38 "Then Philip opened his mouth, and began at the same scripture, and preached unto him Jesus. And as they went on their way, they came unto a certain water: and the eunuch said, See, here is water; what doth hinder me to be baptized? And Philip said, If thou believest with all thine heart, thou mayest. And he answered and said, I believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God. And he commanded the chariot to stand still: and they went down both into the water, both Philip and the eunuch; and he baptized him."

Now, what actually takes place when you become a child of God?

Turning to God means that we have been saved by Jesus Christ's death on the Cross from the punishment of sin which is eternal separation from God: Romans 5:10-11 "For if, when we were enemies, we were reconciled to God by the death of his Son, much more, being reconciled, we shall be saved by his life. And not only so, but we also joy in God through our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom we have now received the atonement."

God can only make us His friend through what Jesus Christ did for us: Romans 5:19 "For as by one man's disobedience many were made sinners, so by the obedience of one shall many be made righteous."

Once we turn our lives over to God then Jesus Christ actually comes to live inside of our hearts: Colossians 1:26-29 "Even the mystery which hath been hid from ages and from generations, but now is made manifest to his saints: To whom God would make known what is the riches of the glory of this mystery among the Gentiles; which is Christ in you, the hope of glory: Whom we preach, warning every man, and teaching every man in all wisdom; that we may present every man perfect in Christ Jesus: Whereunto I also labour, striving according to his working, which worketh in me mightily."

Once we come to God He changes our hearts, puts His Holy Spirit in us and gives us a hatred for sin and a love to do what is right in His eyes: Ezekiel 36:25-27 "Then will I sprinkle clean water upon you, and ye shall be clean: from all your filthiness, and from all your idols, will I cleanse you. A new heart also will I give you, and a new spirit will I put within you: and I will take away the stony heart out of your flesh, and I will give you an heart of flesh. And I will put my spirit within you, and cause you to walk in my statutes, and ye shall keep my judgments, and do them."

Once we come to God we will have a character change that comes from His Holy Spirit living in our hearts and changing us from the inside out: Galatians 5:22-23 "But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, Meekness, temperance: against such there is no law."

Once we become a child of God we'll naturally obey Him because that's the mark of a true child of God: 1 John 2:3-4 "And hereby we do know that we know him, if we keep his commandments. He that saith, I know him, and keepeth not his commandments, is a liar, and the truth is not in him."

Once we turn our lives completely over to God we'll become His true children and He'll become our true Heavenly Father and we'll have His peace and love inside of us: Romans 5:1-2 "Therefore being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ: By whom also we have access by faith into this grace wherein we stand, and rejoice in hope of the glory of God."

To recap the above:

We have to change our minds (repent) about sin and turn away from them: Acts 3:19 "Repent ye therefore, and be converted, that your sins may be blotted out, when the times of refreshing shall come from the presence of the Lord."

We have to then put our complete trust, from our hearts, in Jesus Christ and His death and

Resurrection and ask Him to become the ruler and master of our lives: Romans 10:8-13 "But what saith it? The word is nigh thee, even in thy mouth, and in thy heart: that is, the word of faith, which we preach; That if thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus, and shalt believe in thine heart that God hath raised him from the dead, thou shalt be saved. For with the heart man believeth unto righteousness; and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation. For the scripture saith, Whosoever believeth on him shall not be ashamed. For there is no difference between the Jew and the Greek: for the same Lord over all is rich unto all that call upon him. For whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved."

We have to be water baptized which is our burial and resurrection to new life: Acts 22:16 "And now why tarriest thou? arise, and be baptized, and wash away thy sins, calling on the name of the Lord."

If you'll surrender your life to Jesus Christ in the way that the Bible teaches, you'll be given a new heart and a new mind; your old life will pass away and your new life, given to you by God, will begin. If you've made the decision to turn to the Lord for the first time or if you've made the decision to return to the Lord, I'd love to know about it! Get in touch with me at [dan.lirette@danlirette.ca](mailto:dan.lirette@danlirette.ca) and let me rejoice with you!

In Christ,

Dan