

MY STORY HOW GOD FOUND ME

I was a very timid, eight-year-old preacher's daughter. I heard every sermon my father preached about Jesus, yet, I did not know Jesus as my Savior and friend. My dad always used an illustration in his sermons that explained a verse in the Bible, [Ephesians 2:8-9] that says, "*It is by grace you are saved through faith, and that not of yourselves; it is the GIFT of God, **not of works**, lest anyone should boast.*"

This means we are born into an ugly world of sin, but God provided a way to give us life forever in heaven after we die. And, this eternal life is a FREE GIFT because Jesus overcame death and hell. There is nothing we can DO to earn it. After Jesus was crucified and died on the cross, he came back to life and offers us this FREE GIFT of life also.

My Daddy would hold it up some money and say, "Whoever wants this may come and get it. It is a FREE gift, just like salvation is." But we have to accept it. He held the money until someone stepped up to take it.

I wanted to take that free gift of eternal life, and to know in my heart that I was going to heaven when I died, yet I didn't know how. Our church had an 'invitation' at the end of every service when anyone can go forward to make a decision for Christ, or to be *saved*. I was so shy and timid; I could not put myself in front of anyone. I knew the Bible said that if I was willing to acknowledge Jesus before people, He would acknowledge me before the angels of God, and that those angels would rejoice at my coming into the kingdom of heaven, but it made no difference (see Luke 12:8-10). FEAR had its hold on me.

One Sunday morning, during the invitation, I wanted to go forward so badly, but my fingers just gripped the wooden bench in front of me. I found it impossible to step into that isle. Thankfully, my father saw my dilemma. Later that afternoon, he called me to his office.

He said, "You know **John 3:16**, don't you?"

"Yes, Daddy. I've known it all my life. For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him will not perish but have everlasting life."

Daddy said, "Then, why don't you pray it to your heavenly Father by putting your name in the blanks where it says the whole 'world' and 'whoever'? Make it personal to Him, and then ask Him to come into your heart."

"You mean like this?" I bowed my head.

"For God so loved **Ann** that He gave His only begotten Son, that if **Ann** believes in Him, **Ann** shall not perish but shall have everlasting life? Please come into my heart, Lord Jesus!"

"Yes, that's right. Do you feel any different now?"

I did NOT *feel* any different, but I was afraid to tell my dad so. I didn't want to disappoint him, so I said, "Yes."

Immediately, I jolted out the door so Daddy couldn't see I was lying.

As I ran toward the house . . . the sky startled me; I stopped. It was bluer than any blue I'd seen; and then, I looked at the grass; it was greener than any green I knew. Joy filled my soul. God

was so close. Jesus was in my heart without a doubt, and He had made all things new. From that time on, I *knew* heaven was my home—that Jesus saw me and loved me and died for me even if I was the only person in the whole wide world.

Fourteen years later I was married with two children. Although I still had the assurance of going to heaven in my heart, the joy had slowly vanished. I did not know what to do with what I'd received, I felt dead. and I absolutely had no idea how to get the JOY of Jesus back in my heart.

Finally, a friend sent me a book that asked the question, “Are you filled with the Holy Spirit?” I knew I was not, surely if I were, I'd know it. So, I started to read my Bible and learned that I needed to simply ask Jesus to baptize me in the Holy Spirit, I learned He is the very spirit of the heavenly Father. Holy Spirit is God on earth today and gives us the power to live the Christian life, and to even *want* to read His Word.

It had seemed to me before this that every prayer I prayed hit the ceiling and came back down. My thoughts were: *Why would God be so concerned about ME?* Then, a preacher said that Jesus, who is at the right hand of the Father, intercedes for us, and “that’s why we pray, ‘In the name of Jesus.’”

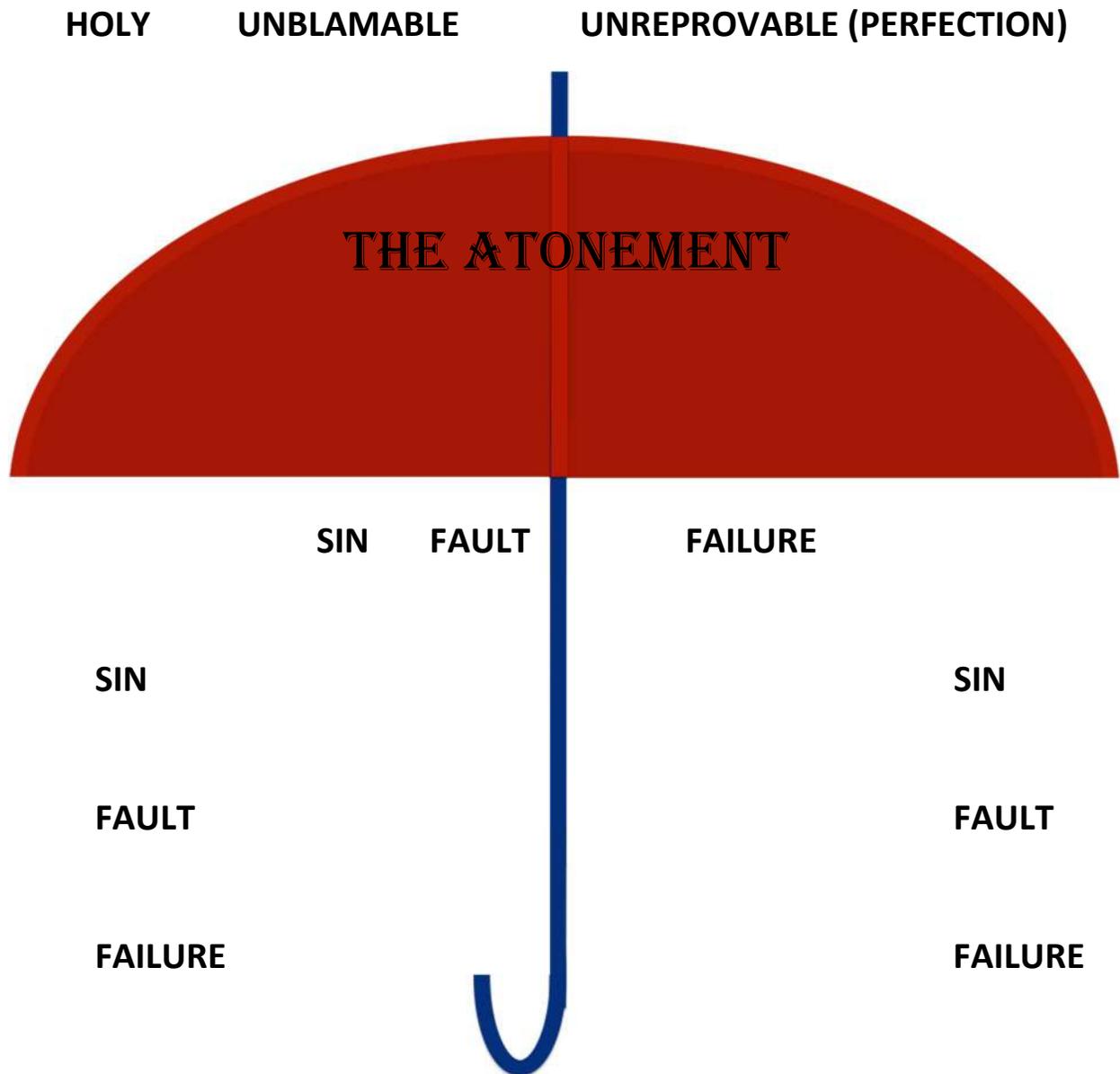
I had always learned to end a prayer with the words, “In the name of Jesus,” but until then, the full impact of what that meant had not gone from my head to my heart. However, now, in my mind’s eye, I could see a red umbrella over me so that when God looked down upon me, He saw Jesus’ red blood, not me. Until then, I was looking at God from my own viewpoint. And what I saw was the underneath side of the umbrella smeared with my own UNWORTHINESS. I saw REJECTION, SIN, and FAILURE.

The words *no good in me* came to mind. I looked them up to see if they were in the Bible. Sure enough, there they were, “I know that nothing good lives in me, that is, in my sinful nature” (Rom. 7:18).

“I realized I’d been trying to *feel* worthy of His love on my own, when Jesus had already made me worthy. I thought, *God actually did hear my prayers because of Jesus’ name; He is the only good in me. God actually did see Jesus when He looked upon me. Therefore, He saw perfection, beauty and cleanliness, because of the blood—the price Jesus paid for my salvation and eternal life with him – a FREE GIFT.*”

FROM GOD'S VIEW

Col. 1:22
Eph. 1:4
Titus 3:6-8
Num. 23:21



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FROM MAN'S VIEW

(A reproduction from a diagram in the book, *Angels on Assignment*, by Charles and Frances Hunter and Roland Buck)