

I Came Boldy As A Fool

Personal testimony
of Helen Duttenhaver
Saved November, 15, 2018

I grew up in a Baptist church until I was about 9 years old. My parents started having marital problems and we moved to Florida because that is where my mom was born and raised. My parents' marriage just continued to go downhill from there on out. One summer my sister and I decided to go to the local Baptist church's vacation bible school. While there I decided to follow what all the other kids did and go to the altar and claim I had gotten saved. After all, I didn't want to be the only kid in the place that wasn't claiming they were saved. As the years went by, I had completely forgotten of that day. My parents eventually divorced. I started going to a local Methodist church when I was 14 because my best friend at the time was going and I wanted a place to go hang out with others my age. It was there where Ryan got my attention. We had already known of each other because we had all went to school together. We started dating & then of course got married and had our two boys.

Up until this point every time I would sin I would cry out to God to forgive me and promise I would never do it again. I thought every time I sinned that meant I was going to hell unless I asked God to forgive me. Of course, I could never keep my promise and I would sin again & again & again. After I had my boys I felt this urge in me to start going to church. I didn't want my boys growing up in a world and not knowing about God. It took a few years before Ryan & I finally decided to find a church. We were having dinner with our friends Colin & Tina Cash one night and they told us of a home church they had been attending and invited us to come! That is where we met Marc & Amanda Capps! We fell in love with them and really enjoyed Marc's preaching! He preached in such a way that we could understand!

One Sunday they had a missionary come visit and I honestly don't remember anything that he preached at all. But when it was all over I was helping the other ladies in the kitchen get ready for lunch and Mandy said to me isn't it amazing how God loves us even though we are sinners?! I was in shock! Like I said before I thought that every time I sinned God was mad at me & I was going to hell! I just started crying! It was such sweet words to me! I claimed that God saved me then. It wasn't until we started going to Hope Baptist Church in 2016 and Bro Scott wanted us to do The Lord's Supper for Easter. We had been going there for 3 months now. He asked all the saved to write out their testimonies. What felt like weeks went by after I turned in my testimony and I didn't hear anything from bro Scott. Finally, he sat down with me after church and wanted to talk about my testimony. He asked me several questions and I answered them. He told me that he couldn't say whether I was saved or not, only I knew that, but that he wanted me to go home & think about what we had talked about.

The next morning, I woke up and instantly knew that what I had experienced that day and Marc & Mandy's church wasn't salvation. God was definitely working in me and showing me unbelief in my heart. But He hadn't saved me yet! Fast forward 3 more months. We were getting ready to attend our first June camp! Bro. Scott preached a sermon to us about God preparing a city of habitation for us to dwell in out of Psalms 107. He explained that Hope is that city for us! God told me that I was safe here and that I could trust the people here! That this is my safe place. I went home that night so excited! I could barely sleep all night. The next morning, I talked with bro Scott and somewhere through the night I had convinced myself that that was God saving me! Again after talking with him I realized that God is definitely moving and working in me but it wasn't full salvation yet.

Fast forward to November 2018. We had just come home from our November Camp Meeting and Bro Claude was coming to Hope to preach a meeting for us. He is a pastor from one of our sister church's, Faith Baptist Church, in Myrtle Mississippi. God had already been dealing with me pretty heavy about my sins and unbelief for a good year. I felt like I would get right up to the gate of salvation and then fall

back and miss my chance. Sunday morning bro Claude preached out of Saul 26:21 Then said Saul, I have sinned: return, my son David: for I will no more do thee harm, because my soul was precious in thine eyes this day: behold, I have played the fool, and have erred exceedingly. That was me! I did not give importance to the Word of God. I would get so close, but then just give up. God showed me how I was doing this right in front of my boys. It made me think about the example I was being for them. That I had sat here knowing I was lost for 2 years and 8 months, playing the fool.

Sunday evening Bro Claude preached on how to draw nigh to God. We draw nigh in Faith. He gave the definition of Faith as being the cessation of your own works and resting in His works. He said that God gave him a promise when he found out that he was coming this week. That God was looking for a particular person. One that was truly lost. Man that got me so excited and hopeful! Monday he preached out of Proverbs 2 on receiving the Word and hiding the commandments. Inclining your ear to wisdom and applying that to your heart. He said we have to get this in order to get anywhere the rest of this week! I was so focused on everything he has preached to us all week. He said he is here to just water the ground. That he feels the ground is already plowed and its ready to receive the seed. I felt like I was there! I was ready! Tuesday he preached about trusting in God. But trust isn't something that you can muster up in yourself. It has to be trust in Him and what He has done. Not anything you can do. God had already been working on this with me the weeks before. He kept showing me that it's nothing I can do. My flesh is nothing but sin and all it can produce is sin. I can't do or say or change anything to make God save me. I have to look at Him and what He has done. That is exactly what Bro Claude was preaching about. For some reason I wasn't getting it again. I was looking to myself and at the end of his sermon I found myself hopeless saying ok God how am I gonna trust you?? I can't do it. I have no confidence in myself! I know me. I'm just gonna fail. Then Bro Scott got up and preached a little and he explained that it's not trust in yourself but trust in God. He encouraged us to look back at our life and look at all that God has done for us. Even as being a lost person. He has still showed us so much love and kindness. Doesn't that show you that He is a God that can be trusted because of His ability, not ours. Bro Scott looked at me and reminded me that He set the bound of my habitation so that I might find Him!! Hope welled up in me and I got it! I said yes God!! I can trust you! I can trust you because it's not something I need to do! Its putting all my trust in you and what you have done! Earlier that day Mrs. Carrie Biddinger from our sister church, Lighthouse Baptist Church, in Arlington Tennessee had sent me a text and told me that she was praying for Ryan and I and as soon as I read it God said to me, I told you I had set the bounds of your habitation! You are safe here and you have all these people that love you and are praying for you! Man, God has me on his mind! Twice in one day he told me about that promise He gave to me two years ago!!

Wednesday afternoon Trever had started feeling miserable. I took his temp and he had a fever. I was so upset. I knew that meant I had to miss service that night. But I knew that is what needed to be done and was grateful that I was going to watch the service online through Go to meeting. That night Bro Claude started out his preaching with exhorting us to have a fear in us to not miss out! To not let another day pass and miss God! I was so fired up telling God I didn't want to miss again! Asking Him to help me! Then Bro Claude got to Hebrews 4 and told us to rest in the finished work of Christ. He explained how Christ paid for it all on the cross. All of our sins from our past and even our future. He said God is satisfied with that payment. And if God is satisfied then we should be satisfied too. I instantly felt my heart tighten up and my body get stiff like it had done so many times before when I felt like I was right there at the gate! I started sobbing and begging God to not let me miss it!! Then I felt myself saying I MISSED IT!!! I was so heartbroken. I was like here we go again. I missed it. Right in

the middle of all that Jake came running in the room saying Trever had thrown up. I started sobbing again saying now I have to miss tomorrow night too!! I'm never gonna get saved!! Ryan started texting me saying some may have gotten saved. I told him I want to be happy and rejoice but my heart hurts so bad. The more I texted with him I began to change my thinking and I said there's still two more nights! God is talking to me! I'm not giving up! I'm not gonna let this week pass by and still be lost. If I have to watch again on go to meeting that's fine! God can still talk to me!

When I woke up Thursday morning, I didn't have much hope. Friends started texting me reminding me that I don't have to be in church to be saved. That God can talk to me anywhere. Mrs. Amy, my pastor's wife, called me and was encouraging me, telling me she didn't get saved at church. I really needed to hear that. I finished schooling the boys and we ran to town to run some errands. I was determined to find time to listen to last night's sermon again.

After we got home and had lunch I sat down and listened to the sermon. This time I was still asking God to not let me miss out. But when Bro Claude got to a point where he was reminding us of the definition of Faith I was already praying to God saying it's not of me God. It's not anything I can do! It's all of You and what You do!! Bro Claude gave the definition of Faith, a cessation of your own works. I instantly stopped crying and bowed my head and closed my eyes and just RESTED!!! As he began to preach on the cross my chest didn't tighten, my body didn't tense up. I just rested and agreed with everything He had done for me!! I kept saying it's what You did, not me God! But at that point I still didn't believe that God saved me! Surely it wasn't that easy!! That isn't what I had expected! I thought that God had to say something specifically to me that no one else could hear in that still small voice.

I texted Bro Scott and told him what had happened. He asked me to call him and he explained that in the past when God has spoken to me has it always been in that still small voice? I realized that sometimes when God speaks to me it's through the preaching. Its right there in the middle of service. Bro Scott would preach the Word and I would believe it and I knew that that was God talking to me and not Bro Scott!! He told me that he didn't have a problem with anything I had told him and that it all lined up with the Bible. But only I would know if I was truly saved. I still didn't want to admit it. He said I've told you that when it happens it's not gonna be anything like you think!! I said well if this is it, that is so true! He told me to get on go to meeting tonight, because Trever is still not 24 hours fever free, and see if the spirit bears witness in my heart. He said you will know. It will either bear witness or it won't! Ryan got home soon after that and I told him I might have gotten saved! He said why do you keep giving me that puzzled look?!?! I said because that was it?!?! That was too easy!! I just don't know!!! He said well do like bro Scott said and watch service tonight and see what happens.

Services start and we start singing O Great God. The words had a whole new meaning!! I was blinded by my sin, had no ears to hear your voice, did not know your love within, had no taste for heaven's joys, then your spirit gave me life, opened up Your Word to me, through the gospel of your Son, gave me endless hope and peace!!! WOW!!!! You did that for me God!!! The next song was Come Praise and Glorify. In HIM our sins are washed away, redeemed to the praise of Your glory, YOU are the God who saves!!!! Next was All of You. YOU satisfy me with YOUR love and all I have in YOU is more than enough. Each song brought so much praise and thankfulness in my heart!! Next was He is Mine. I have pardon full and free through the BLOOD HE SHED FOR ME, safe forever I shall be, HE IS MINE!! And last was Jesus, Thank You. Once your enemy, now seated at your table, Jesus thank you. Your blood has washed away my sin, Jesus thank you!!!

I sent Bro Scott a text right away and said is it too early to say it? COMPLETE REST!! Every. Single. Song. Total agreeance!! I rested in every single song and was able to praise God for what He has done in me! The rest of the evening all I could do was agree with everything Bro Claude preached and praise and thank Him for all of it! Bro Claude preached about coming boldly to the throne of grace. I was like that is exactly what I did! I came boldly because I knew that I in myself am prone to weakness and to wander, falling back. That my only hope was to come to God exactly as I am, not trying to hide anything, I came freely. Knowing my only shot at salvation was not in me or my ability, but in God's ability and what He has already done at the cross! I didn't feel any pain in my heart. I felt saved! No longer lost and on the outside! Every word was so sweet!! At the end Bro Scott got up and said I know we still have one more night, in a happy voice. But you lost need to realize we only have one more night, in a sobering voice. I just sat there and smiled!!! It was a totally inappropriate time to be smiling, but I just felt peace!! I didn't have the stress of knowing that there was only one night left!! I was safe in Gods arms!!