



God Turned Me Around

In a time of crisis, a rebellious teenager made a promise to God that he knew he would have to keep. By: Dwight Baltzell

As I was growing up, I often wondered why I was one of the few people in the world who had to spend so much time going to church. My sister, brother, and I were brought to the Apostolic Faith Church regularly. Many times I felt God's hand of conviction on my heart. Sometimes when the altar call was given at the close of a service, my knees would shake so violently that I would have to hold on to the chair in front of me. Still, I stubbornly resisted God. I began to let the enemy of my soul convince me that, even though God's salvation worked for others, it would not work in my life.

Rebelled against God

As I grew into my teens, I became more and more rebellious against God. I felt confident that I was completely in control of my plans, opinions, and desires and, as a result, I became quite unmoved by spiritual things. One day as I was leaving my sister's house, she asked me, with tears in her eyes, "Dwight, aren't you ever going to get saved?" I remember laughing and brushing off her question with a wave as if it were ridiculous.

In spite of my flippant attitude toward the things of God, I knew what salvation could do. One night, the older brother of one of my friends was degrading people who attended church. After he left, I said to my friend, "All of the people who attend church are not crazy. I know God can do something in a person's life." I began to tell him some of the testimonies I had heard through my growing-up years. He finally looked at me and said, "If it can do that, why haven't you done something about it?" Without thinking, I blurted out, "I intend to someday."

After graduating from high school, I went into a trade and began making good money. I became caught up in fast cars and racing, and that course of action brought me to death's door on numerous occasions. The kind of car I owned was supposed to be capable of doing 180 mph directly off the showroom floor, and I decided I would prove it for myself. There were times I raced in town at 120 mph. I had been in skids at 90 mph with the car going sideways and out of control. Regardless of my recklessness, I was still irritated when I would come home at night and find my mother on her knees in the darkened living room. I knew she was praying for me.

A time of crisis

Thank God for His faithfulness! One evening, I was home alone with my mother, who was ill, and I thought I heard her call. I went into her bedroom and found she could hardly breathe. Her eyes began to roll back into her head, and at that moment, God asked me, "Will you give Me your life?" I knew that as soon as I said yes, my mom would be all right. At first I held out, but when I figured she was taking her last breath, in my heart I said, "Okay, Lord. If You don't let her die here like this, I will give You my heart." Not one word was spoken, and yet she instantly opened her eyes and said, "I think I'm going to be all right." I knew that I had made a promise to God that would have to be kept.

I still went on in my own stubborn way, but I began bargaining with God, saying, "If You will keep me alive until the next camp meeting, I will pray to get saved." When camp meeting came, I was only eighteen years of age, but because I had ignored so much Gospel light, I felt like I had been a sinner for forty years. I stubbornly resisted God until the last service. As I stood to my feet while that final altar call was given, I thought, There's no way I can pray. I'm just going to have to be lost. But somehow, I found my feet taking me down to the altar.

A real change

That night I surrendered my heart to God. A great calm and peace settled in my heart and along with it, there came a real change in my life. For the first time, I had a desire to go to church. During the day, instead of thinking about my plans for the evening, hymns went through my mind. After one particularly hard day, I remember stopping for a moment and saying, "Lord, are You still there?" It seemed as though a reassuring

Voice spoke peace to my heart, and a tear went down my cheek as I realized how different my life had become.

After a church service one night, some of my peers gathered around me and began to pray that God would sanctify me. I was enjoying salvation so much that I had not thought much about my need for sanctification. As I prayed, God blessed me in a way that I knew the work had been done. Then people encouraged me to seek the baptism of the Holy Ghost. I remember praying, "Lord, You'll have to give me a hunger, or I don't see how I'll ever receive it." Just a short time later, God gripped my soul with such a desire for His power that I could hardly eat or sleep. That hunger kept me focused on what He had for me, and took me through until the night He baptized me with the Holy Ghost.

In the years since, I have had the privilege of working for the Lord in many capacities and locations. There have been many changes through the years, but God and His salvation have always been the same. I cannot boast of a thing I have done for God. I can only rejoice that He called me and helped me to shed my rebellion and doubts and to have genuine faith in Him. The best move I ever made was to give God a chance in my life. My purpose is to remain true to Him.

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