

An Atheist Meets God in a Sawmill

By: Walt Smith

I praise God who redeemed me from the life of misery and shame that I had lived for years. I was an unbeliever, a fighter against God. I had no use for anything connected with religion. It was all foolishness to me, but I was one of the biggest fools on this earth—a professed atheist!

A Visit From the Lord

Many years ago while trimming lumber in a sawmill, God spoke to my heart, revealing Himself to me. He said, "The only true happiness is in the Lord." I knew then that there was a living God. No one could talk that out of me. It was an actual experience! Anyone who has ever been around a sawmill and has heard the screech of those saws, the rattle and the roar, knows one can hardly hear a human voice. There was not a man within thirty feet of me, but God spoke to me above the scream of that machinery. That moment I knew there was a living God and I have never doubted it from that day until this.

The men I worked with knew that I was a drunkard and an atheist. The minute Jesus spoke to my heart, I walked over to a fellow worker I had known for years, a hardened criminal, a fellow who was worse than I was. I said, "There is a God!" He did not laugh. He seemed to realize something really had happened to me.

I went to my father's home, and said to him, "I have had a visit from the Lord." I did not know what else to say. He looked at me as though I had lost my mind. But I knew what had happened to me.

I did more than realize there was a living God. I said, "I will look into this matter, and find out about this thing." And I did. The following Sunday morning found me sitting in the back of an Apostolic Faith Church. I did not know anyone there, but one meeting was enough to convince me. I saw the peace and happiness they had, and I said, "If I had that I would have everything."

I had had my own way for years. I thought I was hard and tough, but that morning the Spirit of the living God came and softened this heart of mine. Tears rolled down my cheeks, and that gave me hope. I went to their altar and prayed. I asked God, the very God I had denied for years, to have mercy on me, and He did. He saved me and transformed me in a moment of time. Thank God for the Blood of Jesus! This miserable, cursing, drunken atheist was changed by the power of God—not through any strength of my own.

Instant Transformation

Sin and unbelief had robbed me of everything, including my willpower and character, leaving me nothing but a hopeless drunkard. I had cursed and drank and smoked from the time I was just a boy, yet instantly I was transformed into a Bible Christian. All of those sinful things were taken out of my life, and I received peace, joy, and victory, power to live without sin every day. No wonder I praise God!

I went to the people I had stolen from and made restitution. It took God to make me do that.

I went back to that sawmill where hundreds of men had known me for years. They had known that I was a drunkard, an atheist, and had preached atheism there. Those same men could tell you that I went back and lived the life of a Bible Christian. Not an oath crossed my lips, I was not fighting my fellowman or chewing tobacco, but I lived for God.

During World War II, I spent thirty-one months in the army, including two years overseas. I thank God that I proved that He can keep a man living without sin right in the barracks, out on the drill field or the rifle range. God kept me with a song in my soul. I did not feel like complaining when the day was hot and the practice was long, tedious, and difficult. I felt like praising God because I had the satisfaction in my soul that I was right with Him. If anything happened to me, I knew where I was going. I was not worried. I knew if I died I would go Home to meet the God who had saved my soul from sin.

I have proved, too, that God can heal the body. One time I was so sick with acute appendicitis that I could not get out of bed, or hardly speak. I knocked on the floor with a shoe and someone came from downstairs to see what was the matter. When he saw my condition, he called for some of the ministers to come and pray for me, according to the Word of God. God instantly healed me when they prayed. God also healed me of ulcers before I went into the Army, and though the food was sometimes not so good; I never had any trouble with my stomach.

After returning from the Army I did sheet metal work. One day when on a ladder, I fell fourteen feet headfirst onto a paved driveway. I was completely helpless. A boy going by saw me and called for help. I was taken to a hospital. My arms were both paralyzed, my skull was fractured, and I had a brain concussion. But in that helpless condition, I could praise the Lord. The doctor did not know what the outcome would be. I was told not to raise my head off the pillow for ten days. But the Lord healed me. I was out of the hospital in three days. A week later I was on an evangelistic trip. That is the power of God.

I thank God for the privilege I have of upholding a Gospel with such miraculous power.

Walt Smith served his country during World War II, and served his Lord for many years after his conversion before going to Heaven.