

Give thanks to the Lord, for he is good; his love endures forever.  
Let the redeemed of the Lord **tell their story**—  
those he redeemed from the hand of the foe.  
(Psalm 107:1-2)

March 2015

## STORIES OF GRACE

*Since we have many new prayer partners, many of you probably haven't heard a more extended story of how I came to faith in Christ. And as you will read below, if God can save me, He can save anyone! And His grace doesn't stop with His gift of forgiveness and eternal life, but goes on and on. We hope you can find time to read all the following stories of God's amazing grace working in and through our partnership together. He truly is pouring out grace upon grace and enabling us to reach thousands.*

### I LOST MY EYESIGHT BUT NOT MY VISION

I spent my teenage years in the 60's when morals were cast aside and drug use was prevalent. I found myself caught up in all the mayhem and decadence. My physical eyesight (poor, but corrected by glasses or contacts) only served to be a doorway for all kinds of temptations. Drugs proved to be only a temporary answer for the peace that I was seeking. So I began to try to figure out the difference between various faiths such as Hinduism, Buddhism, Mormonism, and Christianity.

When I was 20 years old, I was on a traveling team surveying leaks on gas pipelines. Many of my teammates moved on from smoking marijuana to shooting up heroin. They would go out at night to make their "score", and I stayed back at the hotel trying to figure out the true meaning of life. God used those times of searching to begin to open my spiritual eyes. A few months later, I left this band of rebels because I could see where they were headed. All of them, I learned years later, eventually landed in prison.

In the summer of '72, I moved back home with my long hair and bushy beard. I was determined to continue my journey to find God. Shortly thereafter, God allowed me to cross paths with a youth leader in San Antonio, Texas, Lee Patton, who headed up an organization called Hub. And there, at a Hub meeting in someone's home, the fuzziness of all the major questions I had about God and the meaning of life were resolved.

#### *God Opened My Spiritual Eyes*

That night in August of 1972, at the age of 21, God's eternal and pursuing love captured my heart. I heard clearly the message of God's love. Lee explained that all the good works I might ever be able to do would never be enough to qualify me for Heaven. But rather, the free gift of entrance into Heaven came through simply trusting in Jesus Christ alone, who died on the cross for all my sins and rose from the dead. It was such a simple message and yet so very powerful and profound. At that meeting, he shared the verses of Ephesians 2:8 and 9: "For by grace you are saved through faith and not of yourselves. It is the gift of God, not by works, lest anyone should boast." He explained clearly that a person was saved by faith apart from his own goodness or works or a religion. The forgiveness of all sin and the free gift of eternal life came not through some kind of volitional commitment to submit or promise to obey God but as a gift, free and clear, by simple faith in Christ, Who died for our sins and rose from the dead.





This answered the question I had in my mind: Why can't doing good works play a role in getting me to Heaven? Lee explained to me that Heaven is a perfect place and God cannot allow sin into Heaven, which would pollute it. Jesus died to take away those sins so that we could enter Heaven with His perfection. It's not good people who get to Heaven but forgiven people.

That night I made that decision. The best I knew how, I put my trust in Christ alone to forgive all my imperfections and God gave me his gift of eternal life. This simple step of faith gave me what the Bible calls salvation--by grace alone, through faith alone in Christ alone. And even more amazing, I learned that this eternal life was secure in the hand of God (John 10:28, 29).

### *The Good News Keeps on Rolling*

And the good news doesn't stop there. I discovered that once people place their trust in Christ alone for their eternal salvation, God gives them the privilege of participating in His work here on earth. He allows you and me to serve Him and others, not to gain or secure our salvation, but to tell the Lord thank you for all He has done. What a privilege! Just as if some king offered me a post as an ambassador, wouldn't I be foolish not to accept this offer, too?

Four months after trusting in Christ alone for my salvation, I went off to study at Florida Bible College in January of 1973 and then to Capital Bible Seminary for a degree in Old Testament Studies in 1975. After that, I served for 2 years in a San Antonio church. Then, I enrolled at Dallas Theological Seminary for doctoral courses, but I had to leave in July of 1980 due to my first serious eye problem--detached retinas. It forced me into the business world for a time.

I served as general manager for Ross-McClain Homebuilders in Arlington, Texas for several years. Then I started, with two friends, Texas Heritage Homes. In the course of this building experience, we were building anywhere from 30 to 60 custom homes a year. This was just before the collapse of the housing market in 1985.

In March of 1984, while attending Park Springs Bible Church in Arlington, Texas, a visiting preacher gave an invitation to those present to consider going into the mission field. My two oldest kids, then 7 and 8, went forward to become missionaries. That night, God broke my heart. I went forward as well, and gave up a thriving home-building business to become a missionary in Belgium. My wife, Joan, and I, with our four young children, left in 1986 for that country, where we served for 11 years.

### *The Challenge of Physical Blindness*

Near the end of our service in Belgium, at age 44, I was diagnosed with retinitis pigmentosa (RP), a genetic issue that can result in total blindness. I apparently had inherited it from my grandfather on my mother's side, who went blind about the same age.

Could God use an older man who was going blind? The answer is yes. I had had the privilege of having seen my grandfather, Frank Robertson, deal with his blindness and how he had helped start a 500-acre Lion's Club Camp in Kerrville, Texas, for blind and special-needs kids. His Christian testimony and faith in God inspired me to continue on and trust that I also could be used for God's service. God seems to delight all the more in using broken people.

In March of 1997, my wife and I started a mission organization, CrossWay International, which has allowed me to share the good news of God's love in more than 50 countries. We continue to grow, taking on more missionaries and coworkers overseas. We reach out to the hurting of the world through various humanitarian means such as drilling water wells, caring for orphans and needy kids, and starting schools. After we establish rapport with those whom we serve, we share the clear message of God's free gift of eternal life through Christ's death and resurrection. For more current information of how God has used us, simply go to [www.gocrossway.org](http://www.gocrossway.org).

Yes, I am, and have been for many years totally blind. But I still have a vision--to travel the world and share the good news of Jesus Christ. I have lost my eyesight, but not my vision.



*Dean Chollar*



## *Tangled in a Web of Works in Tanzania*



*Pastors Conference in Mwanza, Tanzania*

I had a curious email passed on to me from a pastor in Bukoba, Tanzania by the name of John Balole. What caught my eye about John's email were a couple of things: First, John knew English fairly well. Most in Tanzania only know Swahili. And second, he didn't ask for money. We get countless requests for money from such people overseas. He simply wanted to know if we could come and visit or do some teaching in his area. His focus was clearly on ministry, not money.

The Lord kept bringing this opportunity to mind. I had been to Tanzania 3 times before, but several years have passed since then. On those trips, I conducted a pastors conference for 60 pastors in Morogoro and lined up two water projects in that same area.

I received John's email in December 2014 and had a trip lined up to Kenya in January. Since I was going to be

in his general area of Africa, I lined up a side trip for me and our Kenyan Field Director, Ken Gatithi, to go and teach a pastors conference in Mwanza, Tanzania.

John lined up 10 pastors he knew from Mwanza and all showed up, curious about what and how a blind American missionary might teach them. Early on during the pastors conference it became clear, from the questions and comments they were making, that most were tangled in a web of works as the basis for eternal salvation. I wish I could say this is unusual, but it's not. In fact, I am sometimes questioned by some of our prayer partners in America if I'm not mistaken or exaggerating things. When I began to give precise definitions to certain words like "repent" or "believe" or "propitiation", their questions and comments indicated that salvation by grace alone was new to them. I knew they came from various denominations that tend toward teaching some kind of works were necessary to be saved, and so I focused on the biblical basis of salvation by grace alone, a free gift through faith in Christ. They had questions typical of what I usually hear from people confused on the basis of our salvation. Just as in many developing countries, theological training is sparse at best, and many times, when they do receive training, they are heavily indoctrinated by a works-basis type system to gain eternal life.

So at the end of the conference, I modeled for them how I give an invitation to those I have an opportunity to address. I asked them to close their eyes and focus on what we had discussed. With eyes closed, I reviewed that 1) we have all sinned, 2) that the wages of sin is death, 3) that Christ died for our sins and rose from the dead, and 4) that it is only through trusting in Christ, relying only on the payment that He made on the cross, apart from our good works, that we can obtain eternal life.

Continuing on, I said, "If this is the first time you have understood that eternal salvation does not come through good works, or a religion, but only through faith in Christ, who died for your sins and rose again; and if, today, you put your trust in Christ alone for your eternal salvation, then I would ask you to put your hand up and then put it down." Now you know I'm blind so I couldn't see, but Ken Gatithi, our Field Director, had been instructed to keep his eyes open. A few minutes later, when we were about to dismiss the pastors from the conference and go have coffee and a snack together, Ken discreetly let me know that 8 of the 10 pastors present had raised their hand. Were they saved before they came to this pastors conference? I don't know, but it does sound very similar to what we read in the N.T. concerning many of the Pharisees and Sadducees who were also tangled in a web of works to gain eternal life.

# STORIES OF GRACE



# Praise

1. Praise for the reopening of our school in Ben Town, Liberia. The Ebola crisis has calmed down quite a bit and we are up to 97 students and expecting 150.
2. Praise for our school in Meki, Ethiopia with 170 students and good teachers.
3. Praise for some improvement with Francisco Caldera's health who is our Field Director in Nicaragua.
4. Praise for safe travel for Dean to Kenya and Ethiopia. These trips are hard on the body but God has been faithful to give him the strength and endurance.

# Prayer

1. Pray for the next water project in Kiuu, Kenya with 1500 in need of safe drinking water.
2. Pray for the church start in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia where Dean visited in late February.
3. Pray also for the funds needed to start the construction of one more classroom in Meki, Ethiopia so we can add another grade next year, as required by the government.

March 2015

## *Inspired by a 3 Year-Old*



*An excerpt from the blog of Allen (Regional Director) and Sheree Mann:*  
...CrossWay International sent out a Christmas Postcard, featuring kids from around the world saying "Thank You" for the help they've received. Maybe you received one?

My cousin received hers today, and her daughter, barely 3 years old, saw it. Pointing to one child, she said, "That's my friend. She is my age." When my cousin replied that those kids need prayer, this sweet girl decided to pray right then and there. The end of the prayer was caught on video...where she said: "Take care of these kids. In Jesus Name, Amen." A simple prayer from the sweetest of lips, and a huge blessing to my heart.

Thank you, to all of you who have given of yourselves in order to allow CrossWay International to help these children. "Take care of these kids", Jesus!

## *50,000 With Clean, Safe Drinking Water*

Can you think of a city with 50,000 people? Maybe San Marcos, Pensacola, Grand Junction, or Cupertino? Now imagine if you lived there, and there was no safe, clean water.

I want to report to you that since the beginning of our efforts to drill wells several years ago, the Lord has, through your prayers and support, provided clean, safe drinking water to over 50,000 people in the countries where we work. I was hoping it may encourage you to hear this. It certainly helps me realize that our work is going forward. Even more important, we are gaining the attention of many people through our water project ministry, which provides a strong platform to preach God's message of grace. And this has resulted in seeing many thousands come to faith in Christ. Our labor is indeed not in vain. Thank you for your partnership in Christ.



*Water for Gathaka, Kenya*