

As a child I attended church. I went to Sunday school and service. At the age of 13 I was in a service standing as the last song of service was being sung. My heart began to break. I don't remember the song. Nothing was said to me, but I experienced an aching; a spark of desire to know God.

After that experience I considered myself a Christian. I sought the Lord as best I knew how. I read, studied, and prayed often. I cared for the well-being of my fellow man, and I felt that I wanted to love everyone unconditionally. I see now that I only loved in ways that worked best for me or made me feel like I was sacrificing myself for others. I grew proud in my accomplishments, but I was ignorant of my pride. I thought I was always in the right. I wanted to learn for self-gain. To others, my life looked like it was devoted to Christ. But the sole purpose of my life was not loving Christ and obeying Him out of love and honor for His name. He had not yet captured my heart. But, looking back, I can see that He was wooing me with His kind, gentle love. During this time I saw many glimpses of Him, but I had not yet beheld Him.

I attended a small bible college for a year. Here I saw that "something wasn't right" in the church, but I never thought that something wasn't right with me. During this year I looked at man's failures all around me and used them to justify my own. I felt that I knew better and more than they did.

After that year I moved to a new town and got an apartment with a friend. I started attending a new church with the intention of finding out my own convictions without another person or denomination telling me what I should believe. I was so full of arrogance and pride.

One night at a book study, the man teaching said something that I heard so clearly. He said: "Jesus died for our sin. 'Sin' being plural; past, present, and future." This was all new to me. Not because no one had ever said it to me, but because God opened my ears for a moment in time to hear of this great love. "What? You mean I do not have to perform or do anything to maintain this great love?" Again – another time, another glimpse of Christ.

Shortly after this Matt and I were married. I tried to maintain a relationship with God. As trials and temptations became harder I outwardly professed Christianity but inwardly plugged my ears to anything about God. Hardening my heart, I became bitter and cynical. Gradually I became more open with my sinful decisions. Sins I would've once been ashamed for anyone to know of no longer even bothered me. I was turning into a hard, spiteful, hateful being. I blamed Matt for all my sin to justify my own decisions. I still occasionally read the Bible and prayed. I would still talk to others like I was in fellowship with God. I had so much anger in my heart. But still, beneath it all, there was a desire to know Him.

Matt and I started attending Christ Church New Albany in January of 2008. I enjoyed the services and conversations with others. In the fall of 2009, John preached from Hosea 14: **O Israel, return to the Lord your God, For you have stumbled**

because of your iniquity; Take words with you, And return to the Lord. Say to Him, "Take away all iniquity; Receive us graciously...", and God's response, **"I will heal their backsliding, I will love them freely, For My anger has turned away from him."** He also spoke of Song of Solomon 4:7 being an example of God's love for His Son. **"You are all fair, my love, And there is no spot in you."**

Through these sermons I heard, saw, and understood that a perfect God who loves justly had poured out His wrath on His perfect, spotless Son because of my sin - the sin of mankind. He did this, not primarily out of love for me, but for His Son. The Lord again opened my ears to hear and grasp a glimmer of understanding of His great love.

I started to see my own sin a little at a time. My heart began to grow very fond of this Saviour. I began to realize that it was the finished work of Christ alone that could save me, and His blood alone could atone for my sin.

In the Winter of 2010, the Lord was still dealing with my heart. John began a sermon series on Faith. It seemed like whatever the Lord had been plowing up in my heart during the week, John would preach on it the following Sunday. The Lord showed me in a very realistic way that I had been banking all my assurance for eternity with God on my past experiences as a professing believer. He showed me that I was really following the ways of the world, and "going with the flow" of life. I may have had good intentions and well set morals, I may have still been looking out for my fellow-man as convenient for my schedule/plans, but my hope was not in Him. He showed me that He is to be feared if I am not found in Him, and that hell was a reality for me. This troubled me greatly.

I continued to pour my heart out to the Lord. Repentance with fear and trembling began to take root in my heart. It was not out of the fear of God's wrath or even the reality of Hell, but because I had been given eyes to see a perfect Christ and an imperfect Meagan. The spark of desire that I once had was beginning to burn in an awareness of my dire need of Him. I started understanding verses like 1John 4:19: **"We love Him because He first loved us."** I'd had this verse backwards my whole life.

I started reading the Bible from the beginning. In Genesis I could see man's great need of a loving Father. I started to realize from scripture that I was the lost sheep in need to hear His voice, that I was the one who needed to humble myself as a child.

Verse 4 in hymn 630 became my prayer: **"O that I had a stronger faith, To look within the veil, To rest on what my Saviour saith, Whose word can never fail."**

Even through all this, something within me was hindering me from fully embracing Christ. I wrestled with Matthew 14:25-32: **Now in the fourth watch of the night Jesus went to them, walking on the sea. And when the disciples saw Him walking on the sea, they were troubled, saying, "It is a ghost!" And they cried out for fear. But immediately Jesus spoke to them, saying, "Be of good cheer! It is I; do not be afraid." And Peter answered Him and said, "Lord, if it is You, command me to come to You on the water." So He said, "Come." And when Peter had come down**

out of the boat, he walked on the water to go to Jesus. But when he saw that the wind was boisterous,[b] he was afraid; and beginning to sink he cried out, saying, "Lord, save me!" And immediately Jesus stretched out His hand and caught him, and said to him, "O you of little faith, why did you doubt?" And when they got into the boat, the wind ceased.

I saw in my own life as I would cry out to the Lord and He would draw me just a bit, I would look around at circumstances and self and sink. Now I had come to a place where I wanted to cry out, "Lord, save me!", but I still doubted Him.

In August of 2010, I was still very much troubled and grieved over my sin. I saw my great need of Christ, but still pushed Him away. One afternoon I could not hold it in any longer I confessed to Matt: "I do not know Christ. I do not believe Him. I do not believe His love for me!". I went and cried these same things out to God. I confessed the real issues to Him. I asked Him how, if He is all knowing, could he love a filthy heart like mine? Could He really love me? Throughout the evening I poured my heart out to Him. Confessing my doubt of His perfect love. I had been asking Him to make Hymn 544 a reality for me, so that I could sing it in spirit and truth. **"No more my countless sins shall rise to fill me with dismay; That precious blood before His eyes Hath put them all away. My soul draws near with trust secure, With boldness glad and free; What matters it that I am poor? For I am rich in Thee. Forgotten every stain and spot, Their memory past and gone, For me, O God, Thou seest not, Thou lookest on Thy Son."**

He met me there. He made that prayer a reality. It's not me that God sees; it His perfect Son, my "Glorious Righteousness".

Since then He has been teaching me more about Himself, showing His tender care throughout my life, and continuing in soft whispers to call me to Himself.

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