

Salvation Testimony – Jonathan Andrews

When I was a child, we had a big brown Bible that primarily had narratives condensed for children. Occasionally throughout the Bible, Scripture readings were placed instead of synopses. I don't know if they were all Psalms, but on one particular evening as my brother and I sat on the bed for our nighttime prayer and Bible time, I was acquainted for the first time with Psalm 24.

If I am remembering it correctly, my brother had done something for which he was being corrected, and certainly it was no accident that my mom selected this Psalm. Verses 3 and 4 ask this question, "Who shall ascend into the hill of the Lord? Or who shall stand in its holy place?" I also followed along with her, as in the next verse the Holy Spirit guided the author as he does so often to answer our deepest questions. My clever mom was appropriating verse 4: "He that hath clean hands, and a pure heart; who hath not lifted up his soul unto vanity, nor sworn deceitfully." Her attention was on my brother. He was the one in need of correction. Wisely she saw that teaching your children why sin was so offensive to God lies at the heart of good parenting and correction. She drove on, trying to get my brother James to see the error of his deceit. I believed he had lied about something.

This, of course, was not the first time she had taught us of sin and our need for a Savior, but as she let the question from verse 4 hang in the air, I felt for the first time attention to the righteousness of God. My reaction was that I wanted to stand in His holy place. The Spirit of God attacked me, and I began to cry uncontrollably. I was unworthy; I didn't have clean hands, and I was not going to stand in the holy place. My mom was surprised; she thought at first I was crying because James was unmoved and was on the brink of escalation into a spanking. When I blurted out that I'm not worthy, she explained the gospel to me once again, and for the first time I really heard it. At this point she had me "confess with my mouth that Jesus is Lord" and led me in the sinner's prayer. I called my dad, who was at church directing choir rehearsal, and let him know what had happened. When he got home, we had a little celebration, which I remember was marked for me at that time with one of those party poppers. It was well past our bedtime.

Now here is the part of my story that is hard to believe: I was 4 years old at the time. Yes, I buried the lead on that. Why? Because that is not the way that I would do it as a parent. While there are many commendable things that I believe my mom did on that day, there are parts of the story that I feel have practices that lead children to doubt later on. However, in my case, I have never doubted my place in Christ since that day. I believed it when I was four. I believed when I was in 7th grade, and the youth pastor tried to get us all unsaved and saved again. I believed when I was 16, when I was 26, and thanks to the steadfast hold of Christ, I believe today.

As for a marked change in behavior- something that all testimonies should have, right? I was saved as I heard a preacher say once, “from a life of not sharing my crayons.” I am thankful that I grew up in a household that loved and exalted the Word of God, preached the Gospel, and revered Christ every moment that I can remember. I never wandered away. I was sheltered from external influences that Satan has tempted others with, and yet as I grow older I learn more each day of the gross offence that my sin was to a three times Holy God. All praise to Him for His gracious gifts to this rebel. Praise be to my Mom for not simply saying, “James, stop it” or “because I told you so,” but getting to the heart of the matter. Praise be to the Spirit for splitting the heart of a four-year-old in half who has yet to demonstrate a life of gross sin. Praise and thanksgiving for a dad who would stop to buy a party popper to celebrate the salvation of his son.

I have had several men in my life and two women who have shaped my maturity in Christ. First, my mom and dad. I remember seeing them having their devotions every day of my life. Their commitment to opening the Word of God without fail is why I have a high view of the Living Word. Their insistence that I memorize the Word of God at a young age has served my life in ways innumerable. Secondly, Jack Wyrzten, a man who loved the gospel and shared it with so many. Pastor John McArthur, the first pastor in my life to preach verse by verse. Steve Robinson, the first Sunday school teacher and friend who stood against the curriculum, read the lesson mentality of our church at the time and helped us to COMA before COMA was cool. He also “allowed” me to use the NKJV, which led to a revival in understanding of God’s words in ways not experienced until I got my first ESV. Michael Card, who wrote the Scripture into song. Steve Green, who inspired us to

live in view of Eternity. My wife Yvette, who has such a deep love for God's righteousness and teaching that to her children. I have been instructed by this humble woman more times than I am willing to admit. She goes unnoticed, unrecognized; she has experienced terrible injustice, her motives were doubted, and yet she never wavered or doubted, and has proved to all that she is my most precious gift and best friend in this world. Pastor Sean Harris, who, although he may not enjoy hearing it now, gave me permission to embrace the questions that I had with my theological upbringing. His emphasis on the centrality of the gospel being the overt proclamation of the death, burial, and resurrection realigned a life of vague nebulae from the Evangelists that I experienced as a youth. His insistence on the doctrine of the sovereignty of God certainly has no small effect on my understanding of God's Word today. The men of God he pointed me to also had a proxy effect on me. The writing and emphasis of John Piper on the glory of God and our supreme satisfaction in Him has reshaped my understanding of my life and pursuit of personal glory. The defense of God by RC Sproul and such a wonderful skill of rendering the appropriate meaning from the text rather than man-invented novelties. Such a mind that can communicate high truths and hard-to-understand concepts with clarity and simplicity.

What is the point? The simple fact is that I didn't know all that when I was a four-year-old boy. All I knew was that I needed a Savior. All I understood was that I had done wrong. But God is gracious, and He knows everything that needed to be known and did everything that needed to be done. Here now, 50-plus years later, it is still He who keeps me every day. My confidence isn't in a perfect salvation presentation or saying the right words when I prayed that first prayer, or even if I "really meant it". I see better now the beauty of the answer to the questions in Psalm 24 isn't about what I can do to be Holy, but more about what I cannot do. It is about what Christ has done and is doing. Christ is the pure one who has clean hands and a pure heart, and through His righteousness I too can stand and do stand in His Holy Hill.