BEFORE JESUS SAVED ME

When I was very young you must understand that my life was a living nightmare. Now – also understand that my life was an American Midwestern boy's dream. I lived in a farmhouse with every adventure imaginable just beyond the back porch. I loved to run and jump off that porch as far as I could. I had a wonderful family: "*ALL my best friends had the same last name*" … brothers and cousins, grandparents, aunts and uncles. I had a mom and dad who loved me. We had enough money so that all our needs were totally met – and yet not so much money that we were tempted to trust in it or "fall in love" with it. It *was* a dream life – but it was a nightmare. I just didn't know it was.

Here is what I didn't know. My soul was hanging by its mortal thread over the eternal judgment of God. If I had died I would have had no defense against God's condemnation. Why? Because every day of my young life I continued to do, to say, and to think things that dishonored God, all without genuine remorse toward Him. Boyhood things, yes, but wrong things.

Well, what's so horrible about that? I'll tell you. I had been handed every imaginable blessing. I heard the good news about Jesus. I saw great examples all around me of Him saving sinners. But I had never turned and trusted in Jesus for myself. I took good things from God. I said thank you very much. But I never said sorry to Him for the bad things I was doing.

HOW DID JESUS SAVE ME?

One day for probably the 100th time I heard the gospel. It was from a dear old lady at church. I heard the good news Jesus saves. Before that day I had never even admitted I needed to be saved, but that day I heard that the gospel is "*the power of God for <u>salvation</u>*" (Rom. 1:16a). I heard that I needed to be saved because "*none is righteous, no, not one*" (Rom. 3:10) and that I "*did <u>not</u> understand, was <u>not</u> seeking God, had turned aside to*

my own way, together with all people" (Rom. 3:11-12). I had "*become worthless, not doing good*." I had "*sinned and fallen short of the glory of God*" (Rom. 3:23), even though He had made me in His image for His glory.

BUT I also learned this: "*God showed His love for me in that while I was still a sinner, Christ died for me*" (Rom. 5:8). I heard (again), but truly listened for the first time, these words: "*The wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord*" (Rom. 6:23).

And for the first time I confessed Jesus as Lord, and in that moment I know that I was saved from the *power* of slavery to sin and from the *penalty* of that sin through the sacrifice and risen life of Jesus. "*Because, if you confess with your mouth that Jesus is Lord and believe in your heart that God raised Him from the dead, you will be saved*" (Rom. 10:9).

NOW THAT JESUS IS SAVING ME

I don't like talking about (quote) "after Jesus saved me" because I want to make sure you know I am talking about the here and now, not just an afterthought about the afterlife. No, I have not only been saved once and for all from God's *terrible, judicious* wrath for eternity (that's true!), but I am also being saved here and now by God's *loving, fatherly* discipline.

When I sin (and I do), Jesus confronts me in Person through His lifegiving Spirit. His lifegiving Word grants to me the miracle of mercy new every morning, the grace of repentance according to His commands and belief according to His promises.

Friend, wouldn't you too want to receive such blessings of peace and joy, wisdom from above, and God's active presence in your life? He is real and living in me. He can give you life, more abundant and free. If you hear His voice, turn to Him in faith.