

INDEPENDENCE DAY

Drugs. Alcohol. Unrestrained sexual lusts. A criminal mind. Prison time for robbery. Liar. Cheat. Pimp. Deceit. Selfishness. The Bible says that those who live like I had lived cannot enter the Kingdom of God. But then it says

"AND SUCH WERE SOME OF YOU, BUT YOU ARE WASHED, BUT YOU ARE SANCTIFIED, BUT YOU ARE JUSTIFIED IN THE NAME OF THE LORD JESUS, AND BY THE SPIRIT OF GOD." (1 Cor.6:11)

In the fall of 1983 (September 6th) I was headed for Salt Lake City, Utah, to go to work on a highline tower construction job after spending some jail time in Northern Minnesota. I told the girl I had spent the summer with (the part of summer that I wasn't in jail) that I would come back to get her after I got settled in Salt Lake City. I was lying. I couldn't stay faithful to one woman.

On the way I decided to stop and say good bye to a couple of ex-party friends of mine. Dave was a big Chippewa Indian who would often get very violent when he got drunk. Lorinda was the sister of the girl I was leaving behind. Now they were Christians, and even though I knew they would preach to me, I stopped anyway, because Christian or no, they were still my friends.

PHILOSOPHY VERSUS THE TRUTH

Sure enough, when I got there they started telling me about Jesus.

Oh, I believed in Jesus. Historically, there was no doubt that He existed. I thought He was just a good man, a prophet, a sage, a shaman, a yogi, a guru, a man who had reached a higher level of consciousness than most men had ever reached. I thought He was like Buddha, or Muhammad. But no way would I be closed minded enough to say He was the ONLY WAY. Yet when a man held a gun to my head, I defied him to pull the trigger, but inwardly I was praying to Jesus to get me out of this one. Another time I had spent 48 hours in a Minnesota blizzard with little more than a sweater and a couple of pairs of pants and a thin summer sleeping bag. I called on Jesus then, too.

Another time, when I was hitchhiking in Idaho, my packsack was all that was between me and a rattlesnake. I was talking to Jesus then, as well. Several other times I had been in danger, and each time I called on Jesus; not to mention the many times I spent hugging a commode after a long hard drunken binge, puking my guts out, and swearing to Jesus that I'd never do *THAT* again.

AT THOSE TIMES IN MY LIFE, IT NEVER ENTERED INTO MY MIND TO CALL ON ANYONE BUT JESUS.

Anyway, I stood there arguing and philosophizing with Dave and Lorinda and Dave's sister for three and a half hours, trying to get them to see my point. During those three and a half hours, Dave would repeat one phrase over and over again.

He'd say: "**Now faith is the substance of things hoped for, and the evidence of things not seen.**" I didn't know what that meant, and it didn't make any sense to me, and after a while, I began to

conclude that maybe the reason he had become a Christian was because the drugs and the booze had gotten to his mind, and he didn't realize he was just repeating that phrase over and over again. It got so that I would know when he was going to say it, because he would get this funny look on his face, and say, "Now...." and inwardly, I would say it with him..."Yeah, yeah, **'faith is the substance of things hoped for, and the evidence of things not seen'**". After about 3 1/2 hours, they prayed for me, and I excused myself and left for Salt Lake City.

About 150-200 miles down the road, I checked into a motel in Fairbault, Minnesota. There was a bar nearby, but I knew that if I went to the bar at 7:00 in the evening there was a good chance that I would spend too much of my travelling money, so I sat in my room, and a sudden restlessness came over me. I noticed a Bible on the bed stand, but I ignored it and went and took a shower. When I came out of the shower, as I dried my hair, I noticed that Gideon's Bible again. When you are alone in a motel room, you can get serious with God, and no one will care, because no one will see you. I picked it up, and said a prayer, something like:

"God, you had some of Your best people telling me about Jesus today. If Jesus is the ONLY WAY, if You think I can be a Christian, and if You think you could forgive me for my sins, now's the time tell me." I opened the Bible, and laid down on the bed, and started to read right where I had opened the Bible to.

The Bible had opened to the book of Romans. I

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