

After a whirlwind of events that transpired over the previous 10 years, I found myself living a life of sin and destruction. I was constantly in and out of cycles of depression and despair. I was in the worst state of my life. Doubt about my Salvation settled in, I struggled in just about every relationship I had, I was angry, bitter, confused and exhausted with every aspect of life. I soon had no hope of ever finding my way out. I didn't know how I was going to make it. It was only by the grace of God that I was alive and that my family hadn't disintegrated.

One sinful Sunday in December, I couldn't bring myself to go to church. My husband and children went without me and he put out a cry for help within our Sunday school class and to our Pastor. This was to mark the beginning of my return to the Lord. We felt the power of prayer being wrapped around us like never before. People reached out to me in an attempt to offer help and prayers. New friendships were formed with people I would have never thought possible; all because of one little prayer request from my husband. God was showing me hope in these acts of kindness. I knew He had a purpose and a plan (Rom 8:28-29), but my focus and perspective was so skewed and foggy and I was so wrapped up in my own little world, that I had no clue what His plan was or what He wanted me to do. Only by His grace was I finally able to recognize and submit to the fact that I needed outside help. My husband and I turned to BBCM. It was here that God showed me His love in ways that I had never experienced.

Now, over the course of the past 7 months, my life has been radically transformed by the gospel of Christ. Even though I have been a Christian for over 20 years, I now know that I had a very wrong view of the Gospel. I had grown up with a works based faith and it was still very prevalent in my THINKING and BEHAVIOR, even though I BELIEVED Christ died for my sins. I had never truly LEARNED to repent of my sins and leave them at the foot of the Cross. I carried my sins myself, instead of letting Christ bear the burden. I thought that God could not forgive me without the cycle of doing good works, having enough time pass and without living a life of sinless perfection. God's grace and mercy were terms that were for other people only, not for me. This self-condemnation, along with perfectionism and legalism was driving my depression and despair.

Slowly, through the counseling classes taught on Monday nights and through wise counsel, the Holy Spirit began working in my heart and God began to reveal Himself to me. He taught me that Christ's suffering on the Cross was definitely enough to cover MY sins as well as others; that Christ poured out His love as a Living Sacrifice and became the atonement for my sins. This act is incomprehensible to me and I often can't participate in Communion without being moved to tears because I have finally realized that my sins helped put Him there; yet He did this all for love and I am made righteous only by His blood (Rom 5:1-11). He taught me how I can do nothing to save myself, how I can never be more perfect than I already am because of Christ (Rom 4:1-3); He taught me how to seek His forgiveness and

offer it freely to others (Matt 18:18-35); He not only revealed Romans 8:1 – “There is now, therefore, no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus,” but He showed me how to participate in it; “But he said to me, ‘My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness. Therefore I will boast all the more gladly of my weaknesses, so that the power of Christ may rest upon me.’” (2 Cor 12:9); He taught me the true meaning and understanding of His grace and mercy and how I am to be a vessel of these attributes as well – (Matt 18:18-35); He taught me that my trials and sufferings are all part of His plan for me to share in His holiness; that He disciplines those He loves and those He calls His sons. His discipline is never easy and is usually very painful, but it is always worth it when the peaceful fruit of righteousness is experienced by those who are trained by it (Heb 12:1-12); He has taught me that when I do stumble and fall, I am to get back up again with perseverance and believe in His promises, not fall to the ways of the wicked (Prov 24:16); that I have hope and a future (Jer 29:11); that He will be my refuge and my strength in my time of need (Psm 46); and that my ultimate goal is to please God and to become more like Christ (Col 1:10). The Bible is now not just words on a page, but it is active and alive (Heb 4:12) bringing joy to my heart and light to my eyes (Psm 19:8-9).

I could go on for hours telling you of all that God has done for me and my family during these months of seeking counsel. The most important thing I have learned is that nothing can take the place of God in my life; nothing can ever compare to the greatness of Him; nothing is more humbling than to understand the meaning of the Cross; to go there with a contrite heart in brokenness for my sins and seek God’s forgiveness (Isa 57:15). I often weep because of the grief I cause God when I sin. It is by His grace that I have finally realized what it means to be truly forgiven and how much He really cares for me. I am truly humbled by the events God orchestrated in order to for me to come to repentance, and I do count it as joy for this trial and suffering because it is in our suffering and weakness that God does His best work (James 1:2-4).

God demands to be the center of our lives, and I gladly give it to Him. We are called to a life of submission and obedience to serve Him. I have certainly not arrived, as Paul spoke in Phil 3:18-25, but I have found my righteousness in Christ which comes from faith and I will press on to make it my own by choosing to please God one step at a time; from glory to glory (2 Cor 3:18). My life motto is this: To live for the glory of God; for His purpose, no matter how hard things might get...nothing else matters; to be a life-long learner of how God wants me to change and grow.

However, when I do stumble and fall, which I most certainly will because only Christ is perfect, He is there waiting with open arms saying, “Come to Me.” He is God. He is Holy. He is Love. He is Grace. He is Mercy. He IS... He is MINE!