



THE STREETCORNER

"I am the way the truth and the life, no one comes to the Father but by me" John 14:6 NIV

AMAZING GRACE

By Joe Pratte

I started to go to church in 1999 when my wife asked me to take her there because she wanted to fellowship with her friends she had met through "Coffee Break". These ladies had befriended her and given her the fellowship she needed as she had suffered a stroke and would otherwise spend many lonely hours sitting, looking out our window.

Attending church caused me to read and learn as much as I could about what I had heard there.

In September 1999 my brother passed away. At the funeral, my younger brother gave the eulogy. I was challenged by what he said in the eulogy and as I travelled home, I felt very ashamed of myself. I had not shed a tear over my brother's death and for that matter, neither had I mourned the death of my mother. I had built up a wall in my life, a wall which I hid all my emotions behind.

The following day, this wall was mysteriously torn down as I had to face the unforgiveness I had harboured for my childhood sins. As I realized it was myself that I had not forgiven, tears filled my eyes and I wept. I wept for my mother and my brother, I wept all the tears that I refused to let go of as I grew up. When I finally stopped crying I felt an inner peace like I had never known before.

One evening, as I was thinking about God and my beliefs, a

question popped into my head. The question was; 'throughout my life, when I felt helpless and all seemed lost, who did I turn to for help?' Then through a series of flashbacks, my question was answered. It was God. Wow, I thought, I do believe in God! That night for the very first time, I truly opened my mind to God.

Some nights later, I was feeling kind of sorry for myself. I was agonizing over financial and life problems. I asked God, "Lord, could you not ease my burdens? Could you not lift this weight from my shoulders, so that I could live out my life with a little more comfort?" No sooner had I asked this question, when a picture flashed through my mind. It was Jesus carrying the cross, struggling to keep on his feet. Whoa, I thought. My burdens are light compared to what Jesus had to bear for us. I promised God I'd never ask for that again. Strangely enough though, my burdens don't weigh me down anymore. I felt I had come closer to Jesus that night. I confessed my sins and asked for his guidance.

A few weeks later, my wife and I took part in the Lord's Supper at our church. Something that our pastor said kept sticking in my mind. He said that before we partake, we should all examine ourselves and clear up any sin that might hold us back from taking part in the Lord's Supper. As I reflected on my life I thought,

"...a picture
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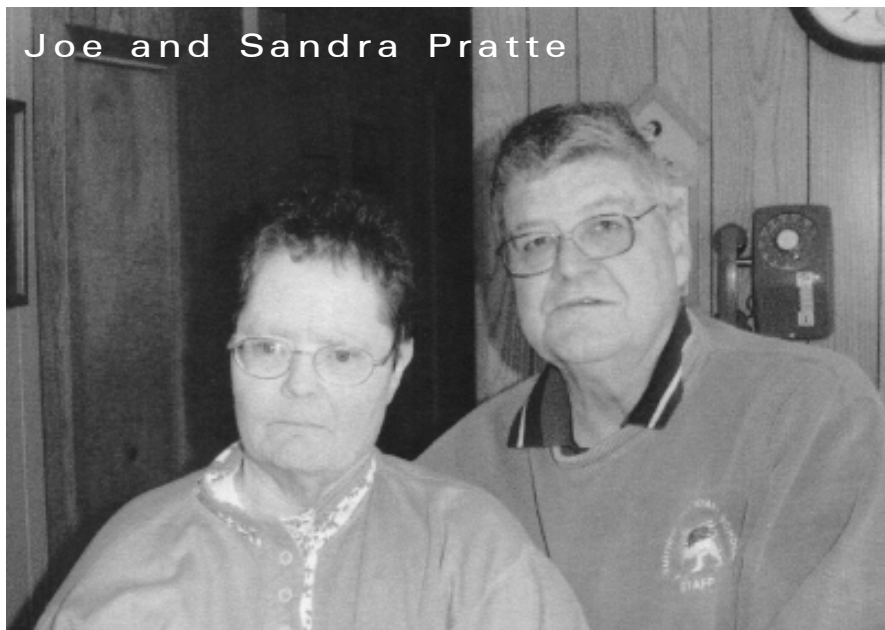
'Sure I've sinned but wasn't my confession of my sins supposed to free me from them? What possibly could I have done that needed clearing up?' No sooner had this thought crossed my mind when a scene of the past began to play itself out before me. My thoughts went back twenty nine years, to the time I was ill unto death on a hospital bed. The doctor had told my family that all they could do was to pray. I remembered how I held my one and a half year old son's picture and prayed to God and asked him to spare my life, so I could see my son grow up; so I could be part of his life. God spared my life, but the thought came to me, that not once in the past twenty nine years had I ever thanked or given God credit for my life. I knew I needed to make this right with God. I was opening my mind to God, that night I gave my heart to Jesus.

One day as I read the account of Peter denying Jesus three times, it was as if I was in Peter's place and I wept over what I had done. Then when Jesus asked three times "Do you love me?", I answered three times, "Yes Jesus I love you.". That night I surrendered my soul unto the Lord.

The song "Amazing Grace" took on new meaning to me. I never knew I was lost until I met Jesus. It was like someone had taken off a blindfold. I found that I could see and un-

derstand things that made no sense to me before. I was getting answers to questions I hadn't even thought of yet. I was filled with the Holy Spirit and I knew he lived within me.

My wife Sandra has been a real blessing to me as we grow in Christ together. In her physical weakness she has become an



Joe and Sandra Pratte

encouragement to many with her smile and infectious laugh. I treasure her greatly.

Sometimes I still struggle to find the words to say in my prayers. This is not a problem at home but it causes me to feel intimidated when this happens as I pray with others.

I also have to learn not to pressure God as to what His course for me is. I tend to jump into

things, thinking 'maybe this is it'. I must trust God will guide me in His time and in His way.

I don't not know if my struggles are over yet, but I do know at whose feet I will be leaving them.

I do have a sense that He wants me to use my struggles to assist others who need Him. I hope this testimony of His work in my life will encourage others as they read it.

Dear Lord I love this journey!

"Let us fix our eyes on Jesus, the author and perfecter of our faith, who for the joy set before him endured the cross, scorning its shame, and sat down at the right hand of the throne of God. Consider him who endured such opposition from sinful men, so that you will not grow weary and lose heart."

Hebrews 12:2,3 NJV

THE OLD WOODEN CROSS

What does a 2000 year old cross mean for you?

by Mike Cunningham

In his testimony, Joe's perspective changed when he considered Jesus carrying the cross. Truly the cross is where the heart of God, and the need of mankind meet. How our society has made a common ornament of that which cost God so much. Please consider with me what the cross means, and more importantly, what it means for you?

THE CROSS IS:

pardon

The Bible says that the cross was not pointless. In fact, Jesus was born to die. The Bible says that the penalty for sin is death (Rom. 6:23). On the cross, Jesus died for you. The Bible says that without the shedding of blood there is no forgiveness (Heb. 9:22). On the cross, Jesus shed his sinless blood for you. The Bible says that all have sinned, and that no one is good enough for heaven on their own (Rom. 3:23). On the cross Jesus took your sin on himself and made payment for it (1 Pet. 1:18, 19). Have you come to Jesus to receive your pardon? He offers this freely to all who will come to Him.

THE CROSS IS:

hope

Notice that the cross is empty--Jesus is no longer on it. Praise God that death could not keep its hold on the Author of Life! Yes, Jesus died, taking sin with him, but he rose glorified, exalted, and victorious, never to die again (Phil 2:9-11). And praise God that we follow Christ in everything. As we trust in Christ our sin is put to death. As we follow Christ our slavery to it is gone. As we receive Christ, his righteousness is ours, and we may live forever in heaven with God. Oh what a hope is ours, that this earthly life is not all there is. "I am the resurrection and the life," Jesus said, "he who believes in me shall live, even though he dies." (John 11:25 NIV)

HAVE YOU RECEIVED YOUR PARDON FROM GOD FOR YOUR SINS? HAVE YOU LOOKED TO GOD'S WORK ON THE CROSS AS YOUR ONLY HOPE? GOD HOLDS OUT TO YOU HIS FREE GIFT OF SALVATION. WILL YOU COME AND RECEIVE FROM HIM, WHAT HE PAID FOR WITH HIS BLOOD?

THE CROSS IS:

love

The cross is the greatest expression of God's love for you. So many people wonder if God sees, or cares about them. The Bible teaches that God does care. He cares enough to draw near to us while we were still sinners. He cared enough to give His only Son to suffer and die to forgive our sin. John 3:16 begins with... "For God so loved He gave..." He gave His Son to be beaten; He gave His Son to be killed...all for his rebellious creation! What an amazing love has God for you, and me.

THE CROSS IS:

surrender

The cross, for Jesus, was more than just the death of his body, it was a total surrender to His Father in Heaven. "Not my will, but thine be done" is what he said before going to the cross. Hard as it was, Jesus would rather do the will of His Father, than avoid pain and suffering.

And this too is God's will for us. When we are truly surrendered to God we will obey Him rather than our sinful desires. In all circumstances we will seek to do what would please God. Not my will--as bent and as prone as it is to selfishness and sin; but thine be done. This is the path to finding God's best in all situations.



*"But God demonstrates His love for us in this: while we were still sinners, Christ died for us."
Romans 5:8 NIV*

HEART, MIND, SOUL.

This I Believe!

By Ken Penner

As I read Joe's testimony for the first time the following verse from the Bible came to my mind. "Love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul and with all your mind" Matthew 22:37 NIV

I noticed the various ways in which God was working in Joe's life actually were reflected in these words which Jesus spoke some 2000 years ago. The heart has to do with our desires, emotions and needs; our soul is our life, that life that makes us unique individuals; and the mind is our intellect, the seat of knowledge and wisdom. This really means loving God with our total being. In every area of our lives.

Do I love the temporary things of this world more than God? Do I always come first? Am I often the center of my thoughts, words and actions? Do I truly love God with every area of my life? Do you?

The love mentioned in this verse is directly related to obedience, "If you love me you will obey what I command." John 14:15 NIV One way of taking inventory of our love for him is to see how well we are obeying him. Do I live my life according to my plans or do I live it according to His will? Are my thoughts, words and actions centered on the will of God? Is it my greatest desire to know and follow God? Does my very life depend solely on Him, the true life giver?

God is telling us here that He wants to be the center of all our ambitions, hopes and plans. A life lived wholly depending on the Lord will bring an abundant life that will last forever, while a life centered on self will ultimately come to naught and end in death. Which will we choose? I choose life, through Him alone who helps me love God, heart, mind and soul!

This I believe!



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WHAT WE BELIEVE

The Bible and Its Authority

a) We believe in the Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments as verbally inspired by God and inerrant in the original writings, and that they are the supreme and final authority in faith and conduct.

The Eternal Godhead

b) We believe in one God, eternally existing in three persons: the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit.

Man and His Need

c) We believe that man was created in the image of God: that through sin man incurred both spiritual and physical death. Consequently, man is totally depraved, alienated from God, under his righteous anger, and in need of the new birth.

Jesus Christ and His Work

d) We believe that Jesus Christ was begotten by the Holy Spirit and born of the Virgin Mary and is true God and true man.

e) We believe that the Lord Jesus Christ, as a representative and substitutionary sacrifice, died for our sins according to the Scriptures, and that all who believe in him are justified on the ground of his shed blood.

f) We believe in the resurrection of the crucified body of our Lord Jesus Christ, in his ascension into heaven, his present life there for us as High Priest and Advocate and in his personal return.

Salvation for Sinners

g) We believe that by the grace of God, all who in repentance and faith receive the Lord Jesus Christ are born again by the Holy Spirit and thereby become children of God. Such are sealed unto the day of redemption. Nevertheless, the believer is commanded to be filled with the Spirit, moment by moment.

The Future

h) We believe in the bodily resurrection of the just and the unjust, in the everlasting blessedness of the saved, and in the everlasting conscious punishment of the lost.

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