

**The Undeserved Mercy & Grace That the Lord Jesus has given to me
– He will give to Anyone who will Turn or Return to Him in True Trust!**

Please be assured that this is not being written to glory in my shame: but to exalt the loving, merciful Name of the Lord Jesus Christ, who is ready and wanting to give & pour out the riches of His forgiving-redeeming-restoring-healing-transforming grace to all -including you if still needed - who call upon Him in truth. He is the Good Shepherd who is looking for the lost sheep until it is found: "And when he has found it, he lays it on his shoulders, rejoicing... Rejoice with me, for I have found my sheep which was lost!...there will be more joy in heaven over one sinner who repents than over ninety-nine just persons who need no repentance."

IA. Turning to the Lord Jesus: When I was ~ 8 yrs old, at a Church VBS, suddenly thru hearing the Word of God ("faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the word of God..."; "Being born again...by the word of God"), I realized my need to be saved from my sin after being convicted that I was a lost sinner ("There is none righteous, no, not one...all have sinned") that needed Jesus, His redeeming grace & blood to save me. By His mercies, I clearly remember personally praying to believe in (to receive) the Lord Jesus Christ. A great fear had come over me that if I died in my sins without trusting Christ - I would go to Hell - "For the wages of sin is death". But those fears were relieved through trusting the Lord Jesus Christ & His Word - "repent ye, and believe the gospel!": "He who believes in the Son has everlasting life; and he who does not believe the Son shall not see life, but the wrath of God abides on him." . By His grace I came to believe -*that: the Bible is the Word of God ; Jesus is the Son of God - "God was manifest in the flesh"; Jesus "was delivered up because of our offenses and was raised because of our justification" - "To Him who loves us and freed us from our sins by His blood"; that He arose from the dead in a glorified body, was seen alive by witnesses, ascended into Heaven. That night at the supper table, after sharing what had happened my dad rebuked me by saying in effect "You don't need to believe in Jesus (for salvation)": I remember calmly replying that I did need to believe in Him. "But what does it say? "The word is...in your mouth and in your heart" ...the word of faith...that if you confess with your mouth the Lord Jesus and believe in your heart that God has raised Him from the dead, you will be saved. For with the heart one believes unto righteousness, and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation"... "No one believing on him shall be ashamed." (Praise the Lord, 35 yrs later - just 2 wks before my dad died, after having almost died 1-1/2 yrs before then: the Holy Spirit convicted him (of his sin, and that he was not ready to die & stand before God in judgment). My daddy ask "what must I do to be saved" - and then he prayed a prayer of repentance (from trusting himself) & of trusting Christ (that He died for him, came back from the dead & that only Jesus' shed blood could give forgiveness of sins) to save him from his sins).

B. Dear Friend: Do you need to turn from trusting yourself (your own will & way) -to genuinely trusting the Lord Jesus, for the first time? Is the Holy Spirit convicting you of your sin & impending judgment? Then please cry out to Him now - tomorrow could be too late: "Today, if you will hear His voice, Do not harden your hearts as in the rebellion." Is He convicting you that you are still a lost ungodly sinner, that needs to turn from trusting yourself (that resulted in sin) by now being born again ("born of the Spirit") by turning in whole-hearted trust in Christ & His finished work alone: trusting Him as the Son of God who loved us and gave himself to die on the cross for our sins and was raised again so that we could be justified. And now He ever lives to intercede for His own! Praise the Lord - He is so Good!!! Are you willing to pray and receive the Lord Jesus & His saving grace right now and become a son or daughter of God? Is the Holy Spirit lifting up to you the Lord Jesus Christ -who humbled Himself & bore the judgment for our sin --"He was pierced for our transgressions (rebellion), He was crushed for our iniquities"... "the chastisement of our peace was upon Him ("My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me")...with His stripes we are healed (made whole)". **But if you reject Him as your Saviour & Substitute**- then you will have to bear the judgment for your own sins for all of eternity.

IIA. Backslidden or False Profession? – Either way, He is the God of another chance. I wish I could say from the point I first trusted Christ, that -"And they all lived happily ever after". But unfortunately from that point -even before & into my teens & twenties -I backslid against the Lord by: relying on my own understanding: instead of whole-heartedly trusting the Lord & His Word ("Trust in the LORD with all your heart, And lean not on your own understanding"; trusting man rather than God & giving into peer pressure ("Cursed is the man who trusts in man and makes flesh his strength, Whose heart departs from the LORD."); self-willed & going my own way ("All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned everyone to his own way; and the LORD hath laid on him the iniquity of us all."); loving self, pleasure & money rather than God; disobeying my parents; etc ("...in the last days perilous times will come: For men will be lovers of themselves, lovers of money ...proud...disobedient to parents, unthankful, unholy, unloving, unforgiving ...without self-control ...lovers of pleasure rather than lovers of God, having a form of godliness but denying its power. And from such people turn away!"). At 16 yrs old, my Pastor told me in effect that he felt I was called by God to preach: but sadly I listened to the "voice(s)" who said "you need to go to college to make something of yourself". After having almost drowned at Pompano Beach, FL over spring-break (thru disobeying & not listening to my parents who really didn't want me to go); and after not going thru with an opportunity to go on a summer Teen Missions trip (because I had a guilty conscience over being backslidden in hypocrisy & sin): I went to Ohio State to "make a lot of money". In 1979, the freshman orientation Professor promised in effect: "you get this BSWE degree and 3 yrs into the work-force, you can be making \$60,000 per year (~\$212,000 per year modern day equivalent)". That night, with my heart having become so blinded & hardened by my own lustful desires, the thought came in my heart: "with that kind of money I won't need God anymore (can you believe that a heart can become so hard to think that?) & I won't need to listen to my bossy (older) sister anymore". My trust & hope had become the financial security of looking unto the "Almighty Dollar" and no longer was I "looking for that blessed hope, and the glorious appearing of the great God and our Saviour Jesus Christ; Who gave himself for us, that he might redeem us from all iniquity, and purify unto himself a peculiar people, zealous of good works." And no longer did I have any assurance of my salvation (whether possibly never truly converted, or apparently, I believe, backslidden - it really didn't matter: the end result of living in "practical unbelief" was the same): but instead I was afraid of dying and spending eternity in the torments of Hell (the Lake of Fire). I was in bondage to my sin-in total shame without peace & rest:"There is no peace," Says my God, "for the wicked."

But Praise God - Jesus didn't leave me there to die eternally, but as my "Good Shepherd", he came looking for His own "little (notice I said "little" -I didn't say "innocent") lost lamb". A week before graduation my appendix ruptured & the doctor told my dad I almost died. As I laid in the hospital for 7 days - I knew it was a righteous judgment from my loving Heavenly Father on my covetous, lustful ways and he was trying to wake me up to my selfish spiritual condition -"For the Lord disciplines him whom he loves, and chastises every son whom he receives." 3 yrs into the work force, I wasn't making the equivalent" of \$212,000/yr using the degree which I had wrongly trusted in (rather than trusting God's will for my life): instead, I was digging a dig, at minimum wage. There is nothing wrong with the hard work, but again God was lovingly trying to humble me so that I would repent and to turn back in complete trust in the Lord Jesus Christ & His redeeming grace -instead of continuing to mix it with trusting in & loving myself & the world's ways. The "straw that broke the camel's back" is when He had already began to use the Word of God to break my hard heart including a Bible teaching program called "Thru the Bible Radio" (ttb.org), that teaches every book of the Bible in 5 years: "Fools, because of their transgression...drew near to the gates of death. Then they cried out to the LORD in their trouble, And He saved them out of their distresses. He sent His word and healed them, And delivered them from their destructions. Oh, that men would give thanks to the LORD for His goodness, And for His wonderful works to the children of men!" The Lord lovingly was showing me how my sins & their consequences ("Do not be deceived, God is not mocked; for whatever a man sows, that he will also reap. For he who sows to his flesh will of the flesh reap corruption, but he who sows to the Spirit will of the Spirit reap everlasting life.") were not only affecting myself & others -but were also hurting, offending, & grieving Him. My sins were breaking the heart of the very One who loved us & His Father (instead of loving Himself) and died in our place for our sins. I began to realize that the Lord Jesus longed to have that "first love" relationship with me. Have you ever been broken-hearted by being rejected by the very person that you love deeply-the Lord had to show me how my rejection of Him, His true love, His Word, & His will for my life - was breaking His heart. By me choosing to love

pleasure, myself, & my own way - I was breaking His heart. My (everyone's) sins of loving myself (ourselves) rather than Him, forsaking Him, & rejecting Him as first place in my (our) life(s) - deserved God's judgment of being eternally rejected and forsaken by Him. The Lord was trying to bring me to that place of broken-hearted, godly sorrowful repentance. "The LORD is nigh unto them that are of a broken heart; and saveth such as be of a contrite spirit." It has been said that "from what scripture teaches, the worst sin one can commit is to become unfaithful to the one who loves you...many people feel that it is murder or lying or even coveting, but isn't the greatest sin unfaithfulness to God who has redeemed you and loved you". Tragically, I've been guilty of unfaithfulness to God thru self-trust, self-love, self-will (doing my will & way instead of His), and Pride (includes disobedience): I had been guilty of living a life of receiving "the grace of God in vain". There was also period of time in my backslidden fleshly state, having "fallen from grace": that I tried to merit my salvation & live the Christian life in my own strength ("...Received ye the Spirit by the works of the law, or by the hearing of faith? Are ye so foolish? having begun in the Spirit, are ye now made perfect by the flesh?"). However by His redeeming grace & blood & by the Holy Spirit using the Word of God: at a specific time & date (while praying in a mini-barn lot), the Lord granted me repentance to chance my trust to totally be on the Lord Jesus Christ alone. At that very moment of time - His forgiveness, peace, rest, and restoration of fellowship & relationship flooded my soul! Praise His Merciful, Awesome, Holy Name - He is so good! By His mercies, He restored my hope to be on Him alone. 40 yrs later, He even enabled me to fulfill a Teen Missions trip! His Blood has power not only to forgive, but to cleanse & free from sin; and His transforming grace has power to change heart & life.

B. Dear Friend: Do you need to turn from a false profession of faith -to genuinely, whole-heartedly, savingly trusting in the Lord Jesus alone. Although God already knows our hearts, He loves us so much that He allows us to be tested to reveal (prove) to ourselves whether our faith is genuine saving faith. Orpah & Ruth had their repentance & faith tested at a "spiritual crossroads of decision" on the road with Naomi. Orpah showed that hers was not genuine: by leaving and turning back from following Naomi - to go "back to her people and to her gods". Ruth, however, being steadfastly-minded - continued with Naomi and showed her faith was genuine by its resulting fruit: "Your people shall be my people, And your God, my God... May the LORD repay your work...under whose wings you have come to trust". A true believer in the Lord Jesus Christ not only has received (past tense) God's root of being saved by grace thru faith - a true believer in Christ will have (present tense) God's fruit of living by grace thru faith where he produces the fruit of the Spirit & works of faith ("created in Christ Jesus for good works...") - "Through Him we have received grace ...for obedience to the faith...for His name." "...As ye have always obeyed ...work out your own salvation with fear and trembling...For it is God which worketh in you both to will and to do of his good pleasure...". The genuine faith of Christ is a "faith working through love". Jesus said: "If anyone loves Me, he will keep My word ...he who does not love Me does not keep My words". "Faith without works is dead" The woman of John 7 showed that her faith was alive & that she had been forgiven by the Lord Jesus thru her much love: "Therefore I say to you, her sins, which are many, are forgiven, for she loved much. But to whom little is forgiven, the same loves little." Then He said to her, "Your sins are forgiven...Your faith has saved you. Go in peace." However the Bible says it is possible to believe in vain, and not truly have a heart right with God. Isn't there grave concern about the genuineness of the professed "belief" of the following since they did not seemingly show the fruit of true confession, repentance & belief: 1) Demas: "For Demas hath forsaken me, having loved this present world, and is departed..."; 2) Ananias & (his wife) Sapphira seemingly maintained their lie & didn't repent: "But Peter said, "Ananias, why has Satan filled your heart to lie to the Holy Spirit...how is it that you have contrived this deed in your heart? You have not lied to men but to God." When Ananias heard these words, he fell down and died." ("But the fearful, and unbelieving, and the abominable, and murderers, and whoremongers, and sorcerers, and idolaters, and all liars, shall have their part in the lake which burneth with fire and brimstone: which is the second death."); 3) Simon: "Simon himself also believed; and ...was baptized" but yet he showed that his heart was not right in the sight of God and was told by Peter: "Repent therefore of this your wickedness, and pray God if perhaps the thought of your heart may be forgiven you...For I see that you are poisoned by bitterness and bound by iniquity." Dear friend, let all of us who have made a profession of believing in Jesus, take the Holy Spirits advise: "Examine yourselves, whether ye be in the faith; prove your own selves. Know ye not your own selves, how that Jesus Christ is in you, except ye be probates?"

C. Dear Friend: Do you need to Return to the Lord Jesus in Complete Genuine Trust in Him alone: Maybe the Lord has been lovingly showing you, like He did me: how your unconfessed, unrepented (at least not in a godly sorrowful way) sins have not only broken fellowship with Him -but are also hurting, grieving, offending, and breaking His heart: to where now He wants you to return to Him in complete trust. If He has, please cry out to Him for mercy & grace-to receive His forgiveness as well as restoration of fellowship & loving relationship with Him. Please be encouraged thru the following examples: 1) David was given great faith to kill the giant Goliath, and to whom God "gave testimony and said, 'I have found David the son of Jesse, a man after My own heart, who will do all My will". Yet tragically, he sinned and despised the Lord and "the commandment of the LORD, to do evil in His sight" and gave "great occasion to the enemies of the LORD to blaspheme": by committing adultery with Bathsheba (Uriah wife) and taking her to be his wife - and had Uriah (who remained faithful to the Lord & His cause) killed by the sword of the enemy. Although there were severe consequences for his sins, David finally confessed - "I have sinned against the LORD." God not only forgave and cleansed David from his sin: but surely the Lord lovingly, mercifully answered his prayer for restoration of relationship & fellowship: "Create in me a clean heart...renew a steadfast spirit within me. Do not cast me away from Your presence...do not take Your Holy Spirit from me. Restore to me the joy of Your salvation...uphold me by Your generous Spirit."; 2) The Prodigal son sinned & wasted his father's possessions in the far country and got in the pig pen - Yet God & his father (a loving picture of our Heavenly Father) forgave him and restored him in grace & relationship & fellowship when he returned home in repentance & restored trust.; 3) Although Peter had denied the Lord: the Lord forgave him, restored Him in loving relationship, and still mightily used him, including in preaching the gospel; 4) Even though Jonah died for his disobedience to the Lord: the Lord raised Him back to life again and gave him another chance to obey. No wonder Jonah could proclaim - "Those who cling to worthless idols forfeit the grace that could be theirs...But I will sacrifice to You With the voice of thanksgiving; I will pay what I have vowed. Salvation is of the LORD." 5) Not only did the Lord forgive Mark, the "one who had deserted...and had not accompanied...in the (gospel) work - the Lord made him "profitable...for the ministry", and the one the Holy Spirit used to write the "Gospel according to Mark". 6) Naomi: The Lord mercifully provided a kinsman-redeemer for Naomi, who was part of a seemingly prodigal family, to have a restoration of property, life, and most importantly - a restoration of complete trust in the Lord & His grace again. **Dear Friend, if you have backslidden, like I & others (including Israel) have:** please take hope -repent & return unto the Lord in true trust. The Lord Jesus Christ is our "Kinsman-Redeemer" who alone can restore. Praise the Lord - He is our God of another chance. **Please, right now, call upon the Lord in prayer and come back to the Lord** in true godly-sorrowed repentance ("He who covers his sins shall not be blessed; but whoever confesses and leaves them shall have mercy")-in wholehearted trust in the Lord Jesus. His redeeming grace & blood,& in His precious promises in His Word. Let's be like Israel, who will someday "...Return unto the LORD thy God; for thou hast fallen by thine iniquity. Take with you words, and turn to the LORD: say unto him, Take away all iniquity, and receive us graciously: so will we render the calves of our lips. Asshur shall not save us ...neither will we say any more to the work of our hands, Ye are our gods: for in thee the fatherless findeth mercy. I (God) will heal their backsliding, I will love them freely: for mine anger is turned away from him.". "He brought me up also out of an horrible pit...He hath put a new song in my mouth, even praise unto our God: many shall see it, and fear, and shall trust in the LORD. Blessed is that man that maketh the LORD his trust...If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness." If we come back to the Lord in complete saving trust, we can hear Him say: "The LORD also hath put away thy sin; thou shalt not die." Like Paul we can say: "I am crucified with Christ...Christ liveth in me; and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave himself for me." "They overcame him by the Blood of the Lamb, and by the Word of their testimony; and they loved not their lives unto the death." Please Study the Bible (ttb.org). tom@worthythelamb4ever.com