

**With All the Gospel Confusion, Its Amazing  
Anyone Gets Saved**

by Steve Smitter

Before I came to faith in Christ, God spared my life no less than 15 times. Otherwise, I would have died prematurely and gone to hell.

On 13 different occasions I was arrested for various crimes I committed.

I spent several years in prison. This came as no surprise to those who knew me. They'd been predicting this for quite some time.

I was the only one of my close friends who actually graduated from high school (1972).

Yet I did have some positive influences while growing up. I went regularly to a Protestant church and Sunday school until age 12. Even though I quit attending Sunday school, I still attended some Vacation Bible School meetings.

I remember playing Joseph in the Christmas play and going forward at a crusade at the Grand Rapids civic auditorium to "ask Jesus into my heart." Actually I invited Jesus into my heart on many occasions. Unfortunately, I still didn't understand or believe the good news.

I had a strong desire to be born again. I simply didn't know what was required. By far my biggest problem was that the gospel messages I had heard in church confused me.

I honestly don't know how anybody gets saved today; and if you're born again you should thank God every day for the light of the truth that came your way and rescued you from your lost condition. Few find the way to eternal life (Matt 7:14).

My sins were catching up with me. I had already done enough smoking, drinking, and stealing for one lifetime. More important than simply knowing I was a sinner was my concern about judgment.

As I would listen attentively to preachers, confusion would set in. What exactly did I need to do to be saved? Some told me to repent. Others said I needed to beg for mercy, follow Christ, pray for forgiveness, confess Christ before men, ask Jesus into my heart, call upon the name of the Lord, surrender all, make Jesus Lord of my life, go forward in a public meeting, forsake all, and give my heart to Christ. I was so confused. I wanted eternal life and I didn't know how to get it.

I was 19 years old serving a two-and-a-half to ten-year sentence in Jackson State Prison for burglary. During my time in prison I took a Bible correspondence course and I met regularly with a visiting chaplain. We talked about a lot of religious things,

but he couldn't clear up my confusion about how to be saved. As a matter of fact, he was so confused after months of conversation that he thought that I was simply a carnal believer. I tried to tell him I'd never been saved; but he seemed confused himself when we got down to the details.

I got out of prison in February of 1975 having served less than 2 years of my sentence. This was a happy day in my life, but I still wasn't saved.

For some reason I went to the Grand Rapids Post Office to apply for a job, and scored pretty high on the test to get in. While the pay was pretty good, it was still pretty boring sorting mail all night on the second shift.

Being bored, I tried to strike up a conversation with almost anybody. As it happens, I was working next to a guy who was fairly clear on the gospel. I would ask him about different religious questions usually centered around gospel issues, which was my area of greatest confusion. Although I didn't always get the clearest answer to my questions, he always pulled out his pocket Bible and read to me when answering my questions.

After a month of my asking Ed various questions he handed me his Bible and said, "Read that." It was a verse that said that if we simply believe in Jesus we have eternal life.

"Do you believe that?" Ed asked.

I said, "Yeah."

Ed asked, "Are you saved?"

I said, "I don't know."

"Read it again."

So I did.

Ed asked, "Do you believe what you read?"

I said, "Yes."

Again Ed asked, "Are you saved?"

This time I said, "Well, I guess so, according to that verse."

Ed shook my hand and said, “Congratulations, you’ve just accepted the Lord.”

But actually at the exact moment that I had said, “I guess so,” I really wasn’t saved like Ed thought. But, a moment later while he was shaking my hand, it clicked with me and I was instantly and gloriously saved at that exact moment! I finally understood what it meant to accept Christ by faith. I was to simply take God at his Word. If Christ paid the penalty for my sins, who was I to argue and say that He didn’t!

For the first time in my life I believed that “God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life” (John 3:16). Christ paid the penalty for my sins so that I wouldn’t have to! Simply by believing in Him I had eternal life! What a wonderful truth! The burden of my sin rolled away upon belief in that very simple truth! I couldn’t be happier than a blind man receiving his sight or the lame being healed to walk.

Jesus loves me this I know (for sure) because the Bible tells me so.