

KATRINA'S JOURNEY TO FIND GOD

Sitting in church one Sunday morning, Katrina's mind was in a whirlwind. She wondered, "What in the world am I doing here, as scenes of her past kept flashing across her mind. "I not worthy to be here" she thought, "I'm sure God couldn't possibly love me, if He really knew me." She thought about the kindness of her mother-in-law. Her charming, loving ways that touched so many lives; and the openness of her family to accept her, Katrina, without question. She felt tears fill her eyes; ready to spill over, and run down her cheeks. Blinking hard to hold them back, she silently said, "I'm not like them—I have difficulty trusting people—I've been betrayed—hurt too many times. I'm ashamed to even be sitting in God's house. Oh, I truly want to be different, I want to trust, I want to have a smile in my heart, not just on my face—I want to believe in You, God, BUT...!" Then Katrina's attention was brought back to the pulpit as the pastor smiling at his congregation, opened his Bible saying, "If you'd like to follow along with me, I will reading from 1 John 4:7-11. I'd like to tell you about God's love.

"1 John 4:7 reads, 'Beloved, let us love one another, for love is of God, and everyone who loves is born of God and knows God. He who does not love does not know God, for God is love. In this the love of God was manifested toward us, that God has sent His only begotten Son into the world, that we might live through Him. In this is love, not that we loved God, but that He loved us and sent His Son to be the propitiation for our sins. Beloved, if God so loved us, we also ought to love one another.' Then he said, "Love is not a definition of God—God is infinitely more—but God is the definition of love. Without Him, love does not exist and the goal of God's love is to have us with Him throughout eternity.

"The Scripture tells us over and over that God is love. In John 3:16 we see the greatest expression of this love—'For God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believes in him should not perish but have everlasting life.' Who is this only begotten Son in this verse? It is Jesus Christ. He alone is qualified to take on the sins of the world, for He is God. In John 10:30 are Jesus' own words, 'I and my Father are one.'

"Is there really hope for me—dare I believe?" Katrina asked herself? "Could it be true that God really loves me? Dare I hope that my life could change; be different? But what would I do with this Jesus? Oh my!" Katrina felt her mind reeling as question after question streaked across her mind.

"'All have sinned and come short of the glory of God—Romans 3:23.' ALL have sinned," Pastor Patterson said his voice strong and clear. "Some people may not believe it and disagree with what I am saying. You might be thinking, 'I've never stolen anything. I've never committed murder. I've never cheated. Those things are sins and I've never done those.' 'But the verse says, 'All have sinned and come short of the glory of God.'" Pastor Patterson then said, "In the light of God's holiness, we have all sinned. Pride, greed, unforgiveness, gossip—the list is long. Heaven is God's home and he will not allow these sins into Heaven and he alone decides who will enter.

"Now don't despair my brothers and sisters, for there is hope. In Romans 3:24 it says, 'Being justified freely by his grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus, there is hope.' Jesus Christ is the answer to all your needs. 'For he is the same today, yesterday and forever' (Hebrews 13:8). And in Malachi 3:6 He says, 'For I am the Lord, I do not change...'

"In conclusion," Pastor Patterson said, "I must ask you this: do you know where you would spend eternity if you were to die today? Know this, God loves you and sent His Son to die for your sins. Have you ever confessed your sin to God and told Him you believe that Jesus died for those sins? Have you ever opened

up your heart to Him? Do so today, as He is waiting for you with open arms. Your prayer need not be complicated or elaborate. The Word says in Romans 10:9-13, ‘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—Whoever believes on Him will not be put to shame.—Whoever calls on the name of the Lord shall be saved.’

“Don’t put it off. No one knows how long his time on earth will be. Don’t wait until tomorrow, for tomorrow may never come. Go to Him and open your heart for He loves you with an everlasting love. God is love. Confess your sins and ask Him to cleanse you and to come into your heart for you have opened the door. Ask Jesus to come in. He will gladly enter. As you sit under my voice, know this, He is your only answer to life everlasting and He is also the One to give you abundant life here on earth. Do it now! Ask Jesus to come into your heart to dwell there forever. Jesus is your Hope!”

The sermon ended—the worship leader led the closing hymn—*Just As I Am* and Pastor dismissed the congregation. Yet Katrina sat glued to her seat—quietly lost in her thoughts—oblivious to the world milling around her. She thought, “I want to open my heart, to ask You, Jesus to come in. But I have so many questions. I’m not quite ready to trust You, Lord with my heart. I need more time to study the Scriptures the Pastor shared and think upon his words. Your love the pastor talked about is so new—so strange to me.” Yet I knew my heart had been deeply touched, softened by pastor’s words, as he’d passionately shared God’s Word with us—I knew Jesus was softly knocking at my heart’s door.

“Later, Jesus, later!” I whispered, walking out the door. “But I knew I must not wait too long!”

Katrina’s journey to find the Lord continues...