

## **Bobby Horne wrote:**

It is true that one time I was a drug addict, a criminal, and a prisoner, but one day God changed me. That change was so great, that one time while I was still in prison, I was taken from prison to a hospital to pray for a man who had drowned and had been given up by the doctors. God heard my prayer, and the man who had been given up for dead, revived. I want to tell what happened to me starting when I joined a rock band when I was still a teenager.

I was born in Savannah, Georgia to a good family. However, while I was with the rock band, I was exposed to many harmful things. In the next few years, I became totally hooked on drugs, alcohol, and sex.

One day I borrowed a friend's car and went to Knoxville, Tennessee. Of course, after two weeks, it was no longer a borrowed car, it was then a stolen car. The legal term is *larceny after trust*.

In Knoxville one night I got involved in a high speed chase with the police in my friend's "larcenied" car. I tried to outrun the police, and evaded them for 45 minutes. Two policemen were injured in that chase. It looks exciting and glamorous on television, but in real life it's **a whole lot different!** I was scarred to death. And that's how it happened that at 24 years of age I got my first taste of prison life.

At this prison, there were some Christian ministries who persuaded me to commit my life to Jesus; however, at that time I wasn't sincere or persistent. After eleven months, I was given five-year probation back to Savannah. And I went right back to my old life-style—only worse than ever.

Not long after returning to Savannah, I was invited to play drums in a gospel tent (I had been a drummer in the rock band). After playing for two weeks, one night the preacher singled me out; and, pointing a finger at me, said, "You're bound by drugs, alcohol, and lust. Do you believe God can help you?"

"Yes."

"Do you want God to help you?"

"Yes." He laid his hands on me and prayed a short prayer, and I fell to the ground overwhelmed by God's spirit. Immediately I was free and within a few days, I started getting invitations to various churches and groups to give my story of deliverance and prison life. Also, I was successful in my job.

However, before long I again drifted back to my old life-style. However, this time I met my wife, and we married before I completely turned my back on God. She was a good Christian girl, and she really had faith in me; however, in the coming months I put her through some real torment. Oh! how terrible the life of a backslider is! I had everything, a good job and car, new furniture, money in the bank, a beautiful wife, but I was miserable. I felt I was the most miserable person in the world—and you will too if you ever know God and turn back from serving him.

Eventually, she left me and again I hit rock bottom. This time I was picked up by the police for writing worthless checks. Once again in prison I started seeking God, and in a few days, I had a minor miracle: someone came to the jail and paid a \$1000 bond to get me out. But, **I was never able to learn who paid my bond!** I looked

everywhere, got on the phone, called everyone I knew, but nobody paid my bond. However, I called one lady from the church, and she said that God had paid my bond because he wanted me to go to the revival meeting they were having. I didn't believe it, but she made me promised her I would go. I went and there a black preacher prophesied over me—and back in those days I still had a lot of racial prejudice.

The meeting lasted about two weeks, and as soon as the meeting was over, I had to go back to court and to jail. The lady from the church was right, God had gotten me out just to attend that meeting. I had really gotten serious about seeking God and even got a motel room next door to the black preacher.

This time in jail, I got serious about seeking God, reading the Bible, and sharing God's word with others. The burden of sin and addiction began lifting from my life and I began feeling free, enthusiastic, optimistic, full of faith.

However, I had another battle to go through: I started asking my Christian friends to pray that I would not have to go back to Knoxville, Tennessee (I was still on parole). I asked many and prayed much. However, I was taken back. How many times we fail to understand God's ways! I had fought extradition back to Tennessee, but when I got back to Knoxville, they sent me to a small Penal Farm prison, where I saw one of the greatest spiritual revivals I have ever seen in any prison, and I was one of the leaders of this revival! Thank you, Lord, for not answering my prayer! Not only were the blessings of God great at the Penal Farm, but I had such open doors, and so many friends, that I stayed in Knoxville after my release, and my wife rejoined me there.

At the Penal Farm, I was given a job in the kitchen, and the kitchen supervisor was a real, gung-ho Christian, and through him, God opened many doors for me. However, I must tell this first: In those days, all my plans were for whenever I got out. Then one day, God spoke to my heart, “If you want to serve me, you will have to do it right where you are.” I took him seriously, started helping men, and more doors opened. First we got our own meeting one night a week—we could invite any minister we wanted to. Later someone arranged for a four-day meeting. Hundreds came and dozens committed themselves to Jesus. Even the warden attended the meeting. Eleven were baptized at a church near the Penal Farm. I was even allowed to go outside the prison to speak at several meetings in the community.

One Monday, the guard came to me and said, “Bobby, put your clothes on, we're going to the hospital.”

“Now, what's this about?” I wondered. What happened was that an inmate named Glen had gotten out the day before, a Sunday, and had gone to a lake with his fiancée and her mother, after having quite a bit to drink. He jumped into the lake and hit his head on a rock, knocking him unconscious. He lay unconscious underwater for seven minutes before someone accidentally stumbled over him and pulled him out. Before his accident, he had frequently told his family about “that preacher at the Penal Farm,” meaning me, Bobby. Now the family called the Penal Farm, and asked for “that preacher” to come pray for Glen. By this time I had such a reputation at the Penal Farm, that it didn't take long for the authorities to figure out who “that preacher” was.

The warden approved it, and we went to the hospital. However, we did not see any immediate results. We were called back a second time, and a third time, each time with the warden approving the visit.

On the third day, Glen suddenly sat up, pulled the respirator out of his throat, and was perfectly healed. We believe this to be a miracle, and we give God all the credit for it.

One other thing happened at the hospital that I want to tell: When we went in, we had to wait a little while in a waiting room. I sat down and noticed that there were two teenage girls sitting directly across from me. They were wearing mini-skirts, and from where I was sitting, I could see practically everything. I started to think, "I'm here to pray for a guy who is almost dead, and here I am looking at something lewd and enticing." I got up and moved to another chair. And God blessed. If I had allowed my mind to stay on lewd, lustful, enticing things, I am sure my prayers would not have been answered, and perhaps Glen would be dead and in Hell today.

On the fourth day we once again got permission to visit Glen. When we went into the hospital room, he was on the floor doing pushups. He was completely healed, both body and mind.

After seeing such a great miracle, virtually raising the dead, many people would think, "Boy, we sure are spiritual. We must be perfect." However, it was at this time that God began speaking to me about a greater relationship with him. We had a three-day meeting that was very great, but God did something very special in me on the last day of the meeting. About seven o'clock on Sun-

day night, I was sitting in the meeting when suddenly the presence of God was with me in such a way that I just began to cry. I just cried and cried and couldn't stop. I cried for seven hours, until two o'clock in the morning. Then I slept a couple of hours and woke up still crying. I cried most of that day, and went about hugging almost everybody I saw (imagine this: in a prison, a criminal is hugging guards and other criminals—that had to be God!). It was pure love, God's love, not human love. The crying lasted about three days. It was at this time that God was giving me a new heart. He was taking out the stony places in my heart, and giving me the love that is described in the thirteenth chapter of First Corinthians, in the Bible. It was a perfect love, a love that never fails. Although I was doing all I knew to do, I knew I did not have the perfect love that Jesus Christ had. And those men that used to bother me with all their problems, I learned to love them just as they were. I learned not to look at their faults or habits, but to pray and to intercede with God for those men. This is the time in my life when I saw God really begin to move. I believe at this time of my life, everything changed. I believe I stepped from the natural realm into the spiritual realm. I went from hatred, bitterness, criticism, jealousy, and envy about the power struggle among the inmates; to love, joy, and peace in my life, and patience, gentleness, meekness, and faith. God's word was becoming real in me. God was making me his soldier and putting his armor on me. He intends for me to put this armor on everyday.

I wish to give thanks to several of the guards and especially to the chaplain at the County Jail for having

such a big influence in my life. I know that God brought them into my life.

Now I want to go back to the time before I came to Tennessee. When I was in the Savannah jail, I prayed that I would not have to go to Tennessee. I had many Christian friends praying. Did God answer my prayers? Well, he gave me something far better. So I say to you, if you pray for something really big in your life, and you do not get it (like praying to not have to go to prison, and the judge says 99 years), don't be discouraged. Remember, your heavenly father has everything under control.

Again, I want to give God the credit for everything. I realize that it was while I was imprisoned that God gave me many fantastic blessings. I chose to humble myself to God, to obey his word. I put no confidence in myself, all of my confidence is in Jesus Christ and the Holy Spirit and his fire and in God's word.

A final word: you have to give yourself to God. He is standing at the door of your heart and is knocking. You have to give yourself to him.

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In the above story, I mentioned the description of God's love found in the Bible. Here is an excerpt from the thirteenth chapter of First Corinthians, verses 1-10 (paraphrased):

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If I speak with the languages of men and even of angels, but do not have love,  
I am only a noisy instrument.  
If I have the gift of prophecy and can fathom all mysteries and all knowledge,

and if I have faith to move mountains, but do not have love, I am nothing.

If I give all I possess to the poor and even give my

body to be burned,

but do not have love, I gain nothing.

Love is patient, love is kind.

It does not boast, it is not proud.

It is not rude or self-seeking.

It is not easily angered,

And it does not keep a record of wrongs done to it.

Love does not delight in evil but rejoices in the

truth.

It always protects,

always trusts,

always hopes,

always perseveres.

Love never come to an end.

If there are prophecies, they will come to an end;

If there are languages, they will cease;

If there is knowledge, it will come to an end.

We have partial knowledge, and our prophecies are

partial,

But when the perfect [love] comes, then everything that is

partial will be come to an end.

— Bobby Horne