

Thou Art Mine!

Testimony by Brother Troy Brown
(Dedicated to the young people)

But now thus saith the Lord that created thee, O Jacob, and he that formed thee, O Israel, Fear not: for I have redeemed thee, I have called thee by name, thou art mine. Isaiah 43:1

"Thou art mine," was God's promise to Jacob. I realize now, this promise also belongs to me. I grew up in an unstable home, even by today's standards. By all accounts, my life was destined to be a total disaster. But as Jesus said, *"All that the Father giveth me shall come to me; and him that cometh to me I will in no wise cast out."*

My father was known as the meanest man in town. He was a race car driver, alcoholic and loved to fight. Everyone that knew him stayed away from him. My parents would go to a bar and drink. If my father caught someone looking at my mom (she was an attractive woman), he would wait until they went to the bathroom and follow them in. He would be the only one to walk out. If he saw two guys fighting, he would jump in it. Because he loved to fight, he was always in trouble.

My parents separated when I was about three years old. One day my father came to the house, drunk, with a shotgun in his car. He had plans to kill us all. My grandfather (my mother's father) was babysitting us. Father came into the house and started

causing trouble. My grandfather went to the kitchen and pulled out a 9mm pistol and came back to the living room where we were at and emptied it, in my dad. My dad died upon arrival to the hospital. To this day, I am not sure how that event affected my life, but there is no denying that I was affected. My older brother never quite recovered from it.

My mom had a nervous breakdown causing her to continue making bad mistakes as a parent. We moved around a lot. I had seven different stepfathers. It was really difficult. I was shuffled around in boys work programs and foster homes. School was not a place to learn, but a place to escape from home. I never applied myself and was considered a problem kid. I failed all the required courses in the seventh grade. I went to summer school that year and met a little girl, who did all my homework and I passed. I went to the eighth grade and failed it. On the last day of school, the principal called me into his office. "Troy, you failed this year, but you are going to the ninth grade." I asked him how come. He replied that he did not want me in his school the following year, that I would be someone else's problem. I went to ninth grade for several days and ended up quitting school. I was a quitter. I never was consistent because consistency was never part of my life.

Since I've given my heart to the Lord, several young people who have grown up in the message have told me, "Brother Troy, I wish I could

experience going from a sinful life to salvation, like you did." They claim they wish they knew what it is like to be a sinner and have my kind of experience with Christ. Having an experience with Christ is certainly the correct desire but having a sinful background is something no one should desire. Of course, there is no such thing as "growing up in the message." You are born into the message. It is funny, yet dangerous, how many young people believe they never was a sinner. It is an experience with Christ they lack, not an experience with the world. If Satan tells you that your testimony will be more effective if you sin for a while, before committing your life to God, do not listen to him. Satan is a liar. The results are scars and mental battles that will torment you through out your life.

Sometimes, my family would go to church. One day we would be Baptist, then Seven Day Adventist, and then we would be sinners again. We took the denominational merry go round. My home life was so bad that I began to run around and get into trouble with the law. My file at the courthouse was full. The judge knew me on a first name basis. One cold December day, at the age of fifteen, I moved out. My mom was planning to call the police to come and get me. So I left without even a coat. I went to a friend's house and told him that I was running away and asked him if he was coming. He decided to leave too. We went to Kmart and stole a leather coat. My friend was scared to steal one, so I

went back in and took another one for him. The next day we were walking down the road and four or five police cars pulled up behind us. Out came the policeman and the dogs. They gave me one year probation. A week or two later, I called my probation officer and told him If he did not get me out of the house, I was going to run away again. He called the judge and explained to him my situation. The judge said that I needed to move out. At the young age of fifteen, I was under a rare court order to legally leave home. They figured that I was better off on my own. I moved in with my older brother who had just turned eighteen. I was hanging out with the wrong crowd. If you hang out with dogs you are going to get fleas. I began to drink and started taking on the same habits as my dad. I wasted away precious years of my life.

When I met Reesa, my future wife, my dog and I was living in my car, a two door flat. I do not remember any good times until I met my wife. I knew she was the right one and that my carousing days were over. She let me know it was either her or my friends. I made a good choice, I chose her.

Reesa and I moved to California so that she could go to veterinarian school. While she attended school I worked odd jobs. There was not a lot of opportunity for a guy who did not have a high school diploma. Our relationship became very rocky. I was always riding by the seat of my pants (taking risks) and that drove her crazy because she was very organized and

structured. I finally landed a job at the Kirby vacuum cleaner company in 1988. I was a talker, so selling came easy for me. I would say whatever it took to get a vacuum cleaner sold. Within the first month, I was a top salesman. I began to excel and was tagged as the next person to open up an office.

One day, I knocked on the door of a Jehovah Witness. He provided homes for wayward kids. I had told him about my past and we got along great. He asked me if he could come over sometime so that he could witness to me. "Sure", I told him. I did not want to lose a sale. He came to my house several times. One day, I asked him a question about Jesus and he told me there was no deity in Jesus and that Jesus was just a man. Something within me said, wait a minute. This does not sound right. I became suspicious of this guy. My wife and I started talking about God, which we never done before. I tried to read the Bible, but could not make sense of it. I called some religious friends. As I talked to them we became more confused. Something inside of me wanted desperately to prove to this guy that Jesus was divine. My wife and I were at wits end. One night we were sitting on the bed talking and I said, "Who do we know that is a true Christian that we could talk to." In unison we both said Ernie Villanueva. I had met Ernie through the Kirby Company. He was a motivational speaker for the Kirby Company. He was always praying for me and

handing me tracts. I had a lot of confidence in Brother Ernie because he had taught me how to sell. I knew that he was living in Florida. The next morning I called the office to get his number. They told me that he would be at the California office in two days for a meeting. I went to the meeting. At the end of the meeting, I walked up to him and told him I wanted to talk to him in private. I was embarrassed to talk about God openly. We went to a private room. "Why is there so much confusion and does anybody have truth?" I questioned. Brother Ernie took me through a chronological timeline of the Bible. It made sense and I wanted to know more. He said: "Troy, there are some incredible things that I would like to share with you. The travel agent had messed up my flight and I will be staying in town an extra day, with nothing to do. Write down all your questions and tomorrow we will meet and I will try and help you answer them." The following night, my wife and I met with Brother Ernie for dinner. After dinner, we went to his motel room and Brother Ernie answered all of our questions with the Bible. He showed us Serpent Seed, The God Head and the Mark of the Beast. He gave us the testimonies of Brother Branham. It did not choke us, nor was it too much. We believed it. Brother Ernie asked us if we had ever given our hearts to God. My wife and I said no. We kneeled down in the little motel room. It was about 3:00 in the morning, before we left. Brother Ernie never told us about holiness; he

never showed us the hook. It is funny to think about it now, but here we were, driving a candy apple red Camaro on the way home that morning. I had wild looking hair and my wife was dressed like a Jezebel. We were excited. Our conversation on the way home went like this, "Just think, we're going in the rapture and we are part of the Bride!"

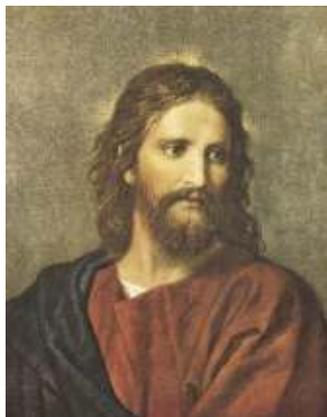
One of the truths Brother Ernie showed me was baptism. I could not wait to be baptized. He had given us the phone number of the closest church to us, which was about two hours away. I called the Pastor the next morning. I told him we wanted to be baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, right away. He asked me if we could wait until Sunday. Though disappointed, I told him we would wait. Sunday morning arrived and we went to church for the first time together and was baptized. We were real nervous. I am sure we looked weird. We noticed that all the ladies had long hair and dresses. We thought maybe it had something to do with most of them being older Hispanic ladies.

We drove the two hours to church every Wednesday and Sunday. We started feeling convicted of some of the habits we were doing. Our appetite began to change as God made Himself real to us. Since that night at the motel room, my wife and I have grown in God's Word very much. God has blessed us with three wonderful daughters, who love to serve Him. I would like to give thanks to the Lord.

For as I look back, I can see our lives as a maze, with Jesus standing at the end of it. There is millions of reasons why we should have been lost. But there is only one reason why I am in the Bride, and that is because I am His. If you are a young person that thinks you have excuses or reasons for not living for Jesus, you are wrong! God hath said "thou art mine."

*"But they are trying to find something to identify themselves with. And the reason they are doing it, is because that there's something in them that God made them that. **But God made them something to be identified with, and that was when He made Jesus Christ to become your Saviour. That's the Example. That's what people wants - should want, to be identified with Jesus, to be like Him.**"*

William Branham



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