



DAMNED

I don't know how I got so far from where I should be — days, months, and years — then I saw myself as I really was — inside.

To others, I looked normal, but I knew what I had become. The things I had thought, done, and wanted to do were enough to condemn me to prison, and even Hell. Then I had a dream: I was passing through a nasty prison and saw a man shackled and standing in a foot of human waste. His flesh was rotted open, and I said, "That man needs help." The one leading me said, "Oh, there's no hope for him — he's in Hell." His face, especially his eyes, had the hopeless look of eternal death — the way I saw myself. Then I met a complete stranger who saw me as God saw me, and he spoke of

the love of Jesus. His words gave me hope and a sense of value I have never known. Jesus promised, "...and him that cometh to me I will in no wise cast out" (John 6:37). Those have become the most important words in my life. The only way out of my pit was to use this new hope, which I learned is faith, to turn from and forsake everything I had trusted in before. Repentance is confession and humility to the only One who can forgive, and it has changed men worse than I.

Today, I have the hope I once laughed off. There is no relief except surrender to the Lord of Hope. Many try to make this Jesus go away, but I am glad He didn't. Once you see who you really are, you will also want the cleansing that forgiveness brings. The Good News is that He died and conquered Hell and death so we could too. Today, I am a new person. This is Salvation, and while you yet have breath, you too can claim it as yours. Fail to accept the love and

forgiveness He offers, and the nightmare that awaits is sure, without end, and worst of all, without hope.

You can start like this: "God of Heaven, I trust in all the hope I can find, that You will forgive me of all my sin. I trust also in Jesus as my Savior, and now cast my life upon Him. Just now, change me and make me the person You designed me to become, before I got so far from You. Help me to live for You, as I call You my Father, Savior, and Lord. Amen."

— Tom Buttram

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