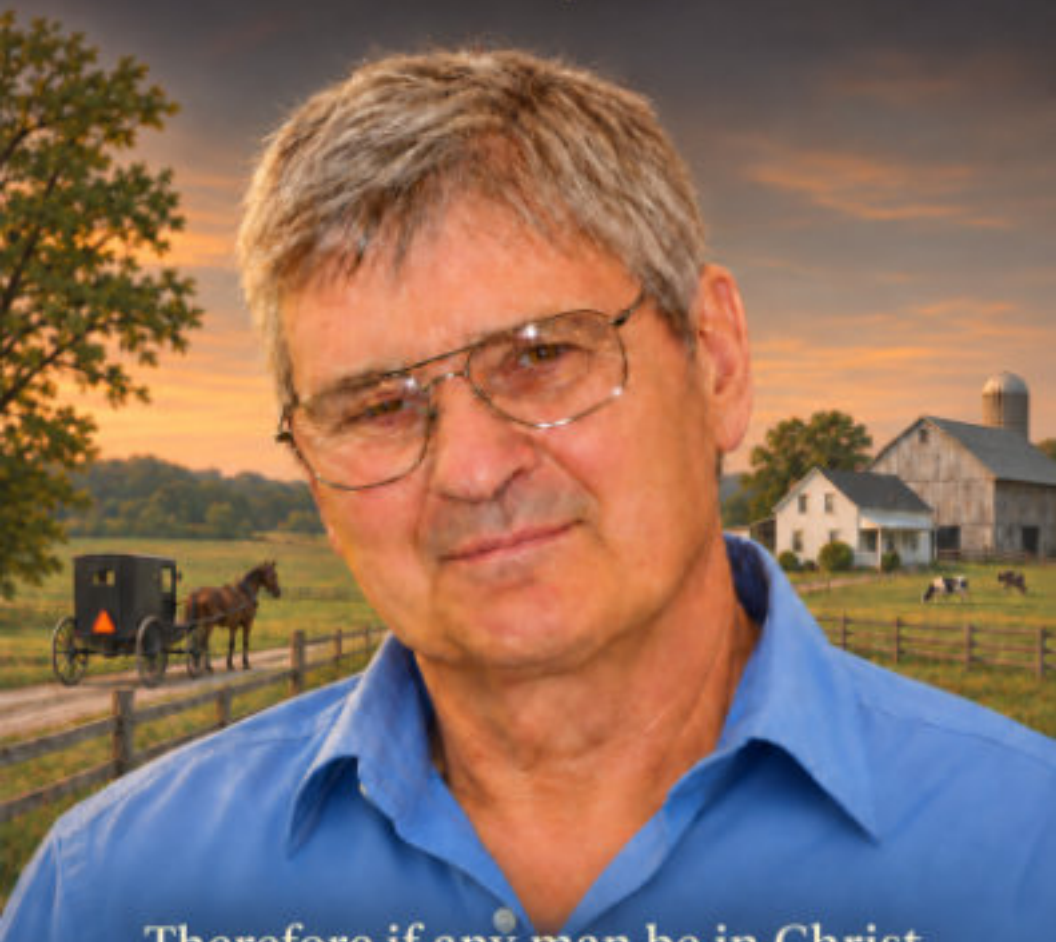
Unshackled

Dan Byler



Therefore if any man be in Christ,
he is a new creature:
old things are passed away;
behold, all things are become new.

II Corinthians 5:17

Unshackled

As Shared by Dan J. Byler

March 4, 1965

By Author: Dan J. Byler

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This is the story of my life. I write this only with the thought of passing it on to my fellowmen; to help them as I have helped; and to lift up and glorify my dear Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.

I was born and raised in an Old Order Amish home which I am very grateful in many ways. I had a normal childhood, was taught right from wrong, and went to church every other Sunday, which is a tradition of he church. When I was sixteen, I started to go with the boys of our church. I wanted to be one of the boys and a lot of the boys went to the beer joint. My mother had always warned me this is the devil's house and not to go in. But the lure of the crowd overruled in my heart. I did not want to be different than most of the other boys so away I went on my merry way. The next eleven years I am ashamed of, and sorry for all because of alcohol.

Now boys and girls, everywhere, please take this kind of warning, from one who has been down that broad road of destruction, and by the grace of God has returned. Don't take that first drug, drink, or cigarette which will lead you to more sin and hell!! The devil says, "oh but one drug, drink or cigarette won't hurt," but one will lead to a thousand more.

At the age of eighteen, I started taking instruction to join church, hoping that water baptism, church membership, turning over a new leaf, settling down, or something, would somehow stop that awful fear of I know not what and fill that empty, lonely, guilty feeling within. But these things did not give me any peace.

Jesus said to Nicodemus:

> *Except a man be born of water and of the Spirit; he cannot enter the kingdom of God: ye must be born again*. – John 3:5-7.

In October 1950, my wife and I were married, and I hoped marriage was the answer. Others had married and settled down, but this did not work for me. Dear one, if you are enslaved by sin let me tell you now, that the answer is in Jesus Christ.

The Bible says:

> *If we (you and I) confess our sins He is faithful and just to*

forgive us our sins, (all of them) and cleanse us from all unrighteousness. – I John 1:9

Praise God! For the next seven years of our married life alcohol put myself, wife and our oldest children, parents, sisters and brothers through much shame and disgrace. It was a living hell on earth for me. Alcohol is a hard master, as in all sin. I was excommunicated from church numerous times and rightly so, always because of alcohol or of things that stemmed from alcohol.

In December 1957 I came to the end of myself. Things started to happen I had no control over. God allowed things to take place in my life which eventually led to my conversion. At this time I had terrible fears of I know not what. Periods of blackouts when I did not know what I had done or said. I thought I was losing my mind. By this time alcohol really had a hold on me. I spent December 25, 1957 in jail.

By this time I would lie, cheat and steal for a drink. I would not face reality, but lived in a false world only alcoholics know. After being in jail for twenty-four hours two men from Alcoholics Anonymous came to see me. A.A. has not cure for alcoholism, but they can arrest it through group therapy and fellowship with one another; by helping others they receive help for themselves. I was asked if I believed in God and if I wanted to quit drinking. I said yes, but I couldn't stop drinking. They asked if I would consent to be hospitalized for alcoholism and I said yes. I spent six days in an alcoholics' hospital where I received medication and food to build up my body. Men from Alcoholics Anonymous came in the hospital and told me their story of how they stayed sober by helping others.

I was released from the hospital on New Year's evening in 1958; then everything seemed to go wrong. I lost my job; debts were pressing, and I had fears within and without. But I hung on for fifteen months and lived without alcohol. But if you remove just the alcohol from the alcoholic you only get a sober alcoholic. I still smoked, swore, and did many things I know were displeasing to God. Now in these fifteen months

of sobriety in A.A. I had just turned over a new leaf, and this is not the answer.

I was a member of the church again, but I know now that I was still lost. There was no confession of past sins required on my part. I was told to start over and the church would accept me back again, and they did. But I did not know that I could be free from all sin as it says in I John 1:9

> *"If we (you and I) confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins (all of them) and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness."*

After fifteen months of sobriety in A.A., I was miserable again and depressed. I thought I was losing my mind. Three o'clock in the morning I was walking the road by our house and because I could not sleep; these periods would sometimes last two or three weeks. I knew I was lost, but did not know what to do about it. Then on April 28, 1959, I went back to that old false courage – the bottle. I see now, I had three roads left before me, but I did not know it then. (1) I could have lost my sanity; (2) accept Jesus Christ as my Savior and lose my sin burden; (3) or go back to the bottle.

I went back to the bottle and drank. After one day I knew this was not the answer. I was full of self-pity, resentments, remorse, and fear so I went back to an A.A. meeting again thoroughly disgusted with myself. I had failed in finding peace and had let down my friends. The road ahead looked dark.

About this time a man from A.A. took notice of my condition, and we became acquainted. He asked me what my trouble was and I told him my whole story. He listened and then said words to this effect: "You are trying to work your own way to Heaven," and he also explained the difference between law and grace and mercy. I learned from him that I did what I did because I had inherited Adam's sinful nature. A fish swims because he is a fish; a sinner sins because he is born a sinner.

> *For all have sinned and come short of the glory of God* – Romans 3:23

Wherefore, as by one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin; and so death passed upon all men, for that all have sinned. – Romans 5:12

Wherefore, the law is holy, and the commandment holy, and just and good. – Romans 7:12.

But it could not fulfill God's purpose because the Bible says:

Whosoever shall keep the whole law, yet offend in one point is guilty of all. – James 2:10

This to say, guilty of breaking the whole law. I knew I had broken God's law so I was guilty of the whole law, AND THIS IS SIN. The wages of SIN is DEATH.

But the gift of God is eternal life. So the law showed me just how sinful I had been all the while. Through the law came the (full) knowledge of sin.

Wherefore the law was our schoolmaster to bring us to Christ, that we might be justified by faith, (in the shed blood of Jesus Christ).

– Romans 3:20

In Ephesians 2:4-6 we read some of God's mercy:

But God, who is rich in mercy, for his great love wherewith he loved us, even when we were dead in sins, hath quickened us together with Christ (by grace we are saved) and hath raised us up, and made us sit in heavenly places in Christ Jesus. For by grace are ye saved through faith; and not that of yourselves, it is the gift of God, not of works lest any man should boast.

In Galatians 2:21 Paul says:

I do not frustrate the grace of God; for if righteousness came by the law, Christ died in vain.

Also Titus 3:15:

Not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to His mercy He has saved us by the washing of regeneration and renewing of the Holy Spirit.

I have learned that we should not mix law and grace, and that all of God's promises are for me today, not just for sometime in the future.

God does not want an old life "patched-up" or want us to turn over a new leaf. Matt. 9:16-17. My old nature is likened to a dead tree, and when I quit smoking and drinking or a few other bad habits, and then I think I am alright in God's sight, I am mistaken. I have only taken a few limbs off an already dead tree. The Bible says the axe is laid at the root of this already dead tree, see Matthew 3:10. The cross of Christ deals with that sin which dwells in us.

> *Knowing this, that our old man is crucified with him, that the body of sin might be destroyed, that henceforth we should not serve sin.* – Romans 6:5

Every man is born with a built-in sin factory, (Adam's nature) and this Adam's nature was dealt with by Christ's death on the cross 2000 years ago.

> *Now if we be dead with Christ, we believe we shall also live with him.* – Romans 6:8

Our bodies are the means of sinning. Our eyes, mouth, ears, hands and feet, etc. are the instruments of sin. Before I was saved I yielded these to Satan. Every man who is not saved yields his members as instruments to Satan.

> *Neither yield ye your members as instruments of unrighteousness unto sin but yield yourselves unto God, as those from the dead, and your members as instruments of righteousness unto God.* – Romans 6:13

Now our body is Christ's hands, feet, eyes, mouth, ears, etc. Also our money, time and most of all, our heart, or anything else we possess.

> *What? Know ye not that your body is the temple of the Holy Ghost which is in you, which ye have of God, and ye are not your own for ye are bought with a price: therefore glorify God in your body, and in your spirit which are God's.* – I Corinthians 6:19-20

> *Therefore if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature: old things have passed away, behold all things are become new.* – II Corinthians 5:17

When God opened the eyes of my mind and heart to the above scripture, I knew it was so, and I came to Jesus just as I was, sins and all. I did the confessing, His blood did the cleansing, and His Spirit transformed and renewed my mind (See Romans 12:2). I now praise God for His love and mercy.

Dear reader, I will tell you now, if you are not in right standing with God, and are still living in your sins, don't put it off any longer; get right with God now. He knows all about you anyhow, and the price for your redemption from your sins has already been paid.

> *If we (you and I) confess our sins, HE is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, (all of them) and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.* – I John 1:9

You are not reading this by accident – somebody is concerned about your soul. Just accept by faith the shed blood of Jesus Christ for payment of your sins.

> *He was wounded for our transgressions, He was bruised for our iniquities: the chastisement for our peace was upon Him, and with His stripes we are healed. All We like sheep, have gone astray, we have turned everyone to his own way; and the Lord laid on Him the iniquity of us all.* – Isaiah 53:5-6

> *Who His own self bare our sins in His own body on the tree, that we, being dead to sins, should live unto righteousness; by whose stripes ye were healed.* – I Peter 2:24

> *For as much as ye know that ye were not redeemed with corruptible things, as silver or gold, from the vain conversation received by tradition from your fathers, but with the precious blood of Christ as of a lamb, without blemish, and without spot.* – I Peter 1:18-19

You have nothing to lose but your old sinful life, pride, hate, guilt, fear, unbelief, loneliness and all other sins. Pray to Jesus, ask Him to save your soul.

The words of this song will tell you how to come to Him:

Just as I am, without one plea,
But that thy blood was shed for me,
And that thou bidst me come to thee,
O Lamb of God, I come, I come.

Just as I am, and waiting not,
To cleanse my soul of one dark blot;
To thee, whose blood can cleanse each spot,
O Lamb of God, I come, I come.

Just as I am, poor wretched blind,
Sight riches healing of the mind,
Yea, all I need in thee to find,
O Lamb of God, I come, I come.

Just as I am thou wilt receive,
Wilt welcome, pardon, cleanse, relieve,
Because thy promise I believe,
O Lamb of God, I come, I come.

The Bible says:

Having therefore these promises, dearly beloved, let us cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of God. –II Cor. 7:1

Let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts; and let him return unto the Lord, and he will have mercy upon him; and to our God, for he will abundantly pardon. – Isaiah 55:7

THIS CONCLUDES DAN BYLER'S TESTIMONY

Finishing the Course, Keeping the Faith

by Joe Keim

The first time I met Dan Byler, I knew right away that we would be friends for life. He was a man on fire for God, with a burning passion to reach lost people for Christ. He understood all too well what it meant to be lost and searching for true meaning in life. And he never forgot how it felt when Jesus reached down from heaven, loved him unconditionally, and gave him everlasting life.

Dan often called me and would talk for hours if I let him. Once, he came to our home and shared his testimony with a group of young people. He told them not only about his troubled life as an Amish person, but also about the time he was asked to dismantle the community water tower.



Dan Byler and his wife Edna

Before beginning that project, Dan sat in his rocking chair one evening and worked out exactly how he would do it. Soon afterward, he took a cutting torch, climbed to the top of the tower, and brought it down piece by piece. People were so impressed by his method that pictures and stories began appearing in newspapers everywhere.

Dan also had a mind for business. He owned a campground, a train, a small zoo, and an upholstery business. Church groups and campers from across the United States came to visit.

In late 2008, Dan called me and said, "Joe, the doctors say I have cancer." Then he added, "But don't you worry a bit; God will not let me die." In fact, he was convinced that he didn't even have cancer. As time passed, however, it became clear that his body was growing weaker.

One day in early 2009, Dan called to say goodbye. He had finally accepted that he was dying. We both wept on the phone that day. I had never known Dan to give up on anything. Never! It simply wasn't like him. But now he was surrendering his life to God and preparing to be with Jesus.

At the end of our conversation, I said, "Dan, I want you to hang on to life long enough for me to come and see you." He promised he would. Several days later, I headed to Jackson, Ohio, to visit the man who had impacted my life like few others.

When I arrived at Dan's house, he could barely lift his head from the pillow. Even then, he was filled with excitement and could hardly wait to see Jesus. As we talked, I asked whether our ministry could continue printing and distributing his gospel tract.

"Oh," he said, "that would be absolutely awesome!"

As our conversation continued, Dan said, "Joe, I'm not sure why, but there have always been four empty pages at the end of my gospel tract. Do you have any idea what we could put there?"

It was as if the Lord gave me the answer at that very moment.

"Dan," I said, "you know how so many Amish people believe that those who leave the plain church use the Bible and Christianity as a crutch? And how they believe that those who leave will eventually fall away and believe nothing?"

"Ah, yes," he said. "There were all kinds of rumors like that when my family left the Amish."

"Well, Dan," I said, "you finished well! You never left the faith, and your readers know that."

At those words, tears began streaming down Dan's cheeks. Finally, he looked up and said, "Joe, that's it. I must tell the readers that I kept my eyes on the finish line all the way to the end. Please fill those last four pages with the fact that I finished well."

Eventually, it was time to go home. I knew I would never again talk with my friend on this side of heaven. We hugged, said our goodbyes, and I left.

Exactly two weeks later, on July 31, 2009, my phone rang. It was Dan's daughter.

"Joe," she said, "Dad passed into eternity last night."

She explained that her father had awakened from his coma just long enough to tell the family that two angels were standing at his bedside to take him home. Soon afterward, Dan Byler drew his last breath and went to be with the Lord forevermore.

Since then, my thoughts went to 2 Timothy 4:7-8 where Paul writes:

> ***I have fought*** *a good fight,* ***I have finished*** *the course,* ***I have kept*** *the faith:*
>
> *Henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous judge, shall give me at that day: and* ***not to me only, but unto all them also that love his appearing.***

My friend, if you have read the story of Dan Byler and you do not know for sure that your sins are forgiven, can I urge you to repent and let Jesus save you from your sins and the lake of fire? Please don't wait one more minute.

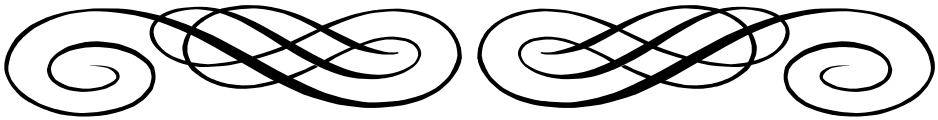
In Romans 10:9, God says:

> *That if thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus, and*

shalt believe in thine heart that God hath raised him from the dead, thou shalt be saved.

The Bible goes on to say in verses 12 and 13 of the same chapter:

For there is no difference between the Jew and the Greek: for the same Lord over all is rich unto all that call upon him. For whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved.



Here is a model prayer that you can use to call out to God

Today, I call upon the name of the Lord for my salvation. I believe in my heart that God the Father raised Jesus from the dead in order that I might have eternal life. I now declare Him to be the Lord of my life. I renounce any effort on my part to save myself, and I renounce all finger-pointing of Satan that would rob me of my full assurance of eternal life. Because of what God says in His Word, I have been transferred out of the kingdom of darkness and into the Kingdom of His beloved Son. In Jesus' name I pray and believe. Amen.

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