

SAVED BUT NOT DELIVERED

I must share a story with you that I heard from a man that I had never met until, one day, by God's kind hand of providence, I shared a brief ride with him to the airport in Chicago.

Though I do not remember his name, his experience touched my heart in a way that I will never forget. He was employed as a security person at the condominium where our son, Ryan, was living when we visited him for his graduation. Rather than hailing a taxi to take us to the airport, Ryan had secured his services. He was a big, jovial black man, and as we made our way to the airport I noticed he had a clergy sticker on the front window of his van. This, of course, encouraged me to visit with him about his ministry. I was writing an article at that time and I wanted to pick his brain and see what I might learn from him. I do not remember who he preached for, but I soon discovered that he loved the Lord, and enjoyed preaching.

Rather than answering my question directly, he said something like this, "That is one of those scriptures that has a lot to it. Rather than trying to explain it, I will just tell you my experience. I grew up in Detroit, Michigan. My mother took me to church every Sunday morning, Sunday night, and Wednesday night. We lived at church. When the adults were in the kitchen eating, my cousins and I would be in the sanctuary playing church. We would take turns preaching, and practice baptizing one another. When we became teenagers, my cousin became a minister. But I started running with the wrong crowd and got involved in drugs, and alcohol. My cousin would call me and beg me to come to church. Sometimes I would go. Sometimes I would show up drunk. But my cousin continued to call me and invite me. He never gave up on me. My worst problem was gin. I became a gin-head. You know, the gin bottle has these little dimples on the outside of the bottle. It was easy to climb up the outside of the bottle and get in. But the inside of the bottle was slippery, and no matter how hard I tried, I couldn't get out. I just kept sliding back down the inside of the bottle. My cousin and other relatives continued to pray for me. One day I decided to move to Chicago and get away from all the people I knew and just make a fresh start. So I got enough money to purchase a bus ticket to Chicago. When I entered the doorway of my grandmothers' home, I felt like things were going to be different. At night, I could hear my grandmother praying for me from her bedroom. I began to read my Bible and attend her church. I never went back to the bottle again! The Lord delivered me from it. I started holding some meetings and became an ordained minister. Now I have my own congregation."

As I listened to his story, I could hear the cry of a suffering heart that had once been captive to Satan, drugs, and alcohol. He had several family members that had not fared as well as he. They were very poor, and growing up in Detroit was hard. I thought of my childhood, and how blessed I had been.

Of course, he didn't know what we believed concerning God's grace, how a person is born again, or the purpose of the gospel. But I had to ask him a question that kept

looming in my mind. So I asked him, "Do you believe you were a born again child of God when you were involved in all of that? Were you a saved person?" I will never forget his answer as he humbly replied, and I quote, "Yes! **I was saved, but not delivered.**"

That was an honest testimony from one of God's children that had been delivered from the bondage of a great sin. I immediately thought about the wild Gadarene, and Mary Magdalene, even myself when I too, believe in God, but was far away from God's house. Sweet deliverance!

I took something away from that man's testimony that I will never forget. It proved, by experience, that our doctrine is right. This man was saved eternally, but not delivered from his bondage down here. That is a part of our job. Jesus called Lazarus to life from the tomb, but the apostles unwound him from his grave clothes. When Jesus called Paul, his commission was for this purpose: "To open their eyes, and to turn them from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan unto God..."(Acts 26:18a). His experience proved how graceful our Lord is, but also how Satan can bind the Lord's children. I believe many are like this man was, they desperately want to be delivered, but they just do not know how. They need the prayers of those that love them, and those who may not know them but have caring hearts. It made me wonder how many of the Lord's people are under bridges, living in cardboard boxes, or in worse circumstances. Lord help us to deliver some!

Let us be careful to remember those who have been trapped in Satan's snares, and hold them up before our Lord. Let us never give up on anyone. Also, let us hold Christ, the great deliverer, before their eyes, and pray for their deliverance from the bondage of sin for there are many who are "**saved, but not delivered.**" I believe the fields remain to be: "white unto harvest." -NMP