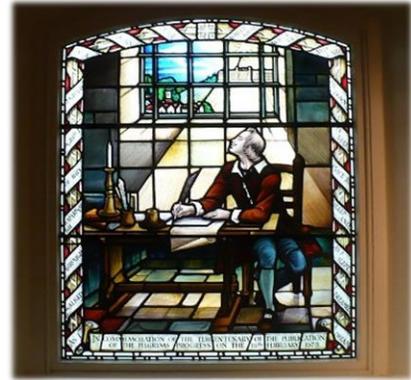


August 3, 2020

Good morning, Everybody.

Some of you were up *very* early yesterday in order to get your teenagers down to the buses for the 5:30 departure for Peniel Bible Camp. Linda and I remember those days (smiles). Lots of excitement and energy the day or two previous to departure, sort of stumbling around in the dark to load the car the morning of leaving, and then the calm, quiet, but kind of lonesome feeling once the bus was out of sight. All the parents getting back into their cars and driving off one by one. The empty parking lot. And then the *real praying* began. *Lord, please give them safety as they travel. No accidents, and keep the bus running. And give them a really great week; lots of fun, no squabbles, no accidents or sickness, and most of all, **please** work in their hearts! Lord, my own child so needs to . . .*



Well . . . you may not be the parent of a teen camper this week, but you know how to pray. Can we all take these teens and their workers to our hearts during these special days in their lives? And ask the Lord for great things?

I was saved at a camp. I went there a rebel (though I didn't realize that trying constantly to get around my parents and their rules meant that that's what I was) and with almost no interest in anything spiritual. My big interest was the swimming pool, the games, and the snack bar.

It's not hard for me to recall, even fifty-five summers later, how I felt about the spiritual side of camp. I didn't *mind* the chapels. Not really any problem there. The singing part was o.k., sort of fun, and I even kind of liked getting to carry the new Bible that I'd earned by memorizing a hundred Bible verses the previous year under a ministry called Rural Bible Crusade.

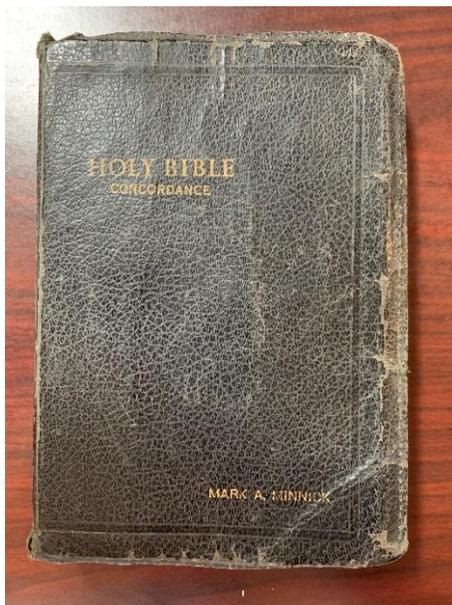
Rural Bible Crusade evangelized young people in the Mid-Western states by challenging them to memorize Scripture. When you could quote the first twenty-five (?; I think) verses you got a Danny Orlic book. Danny was a Christian teenager who got in and out of lots of scrapes, but always came out with a good testimony

to inspire his young readers. In those long-ago days, when most Christian young people were in the public schools, he was a great role model.

There were another couple of Danny Orlics books for memorizing more verses, and then when you could recite your first hundred, you received a Bible in the mail, complete with your name imprinted on the front cover. Then the *real* work began.

If you would memorize 200 more verses, Rural Bible Crusade would sponsor you for an entire week of summer camp. It was a great program, probably financed by sacrificial farmers, widows on pensions, and maybe just a few donors able to give sizable contributions that made up the difference.

I went two summers in a row. It was during the second year that the Lord dealt with me in a heart softening way, partly through a little accident on a swing (the seat broke) that bruised my back, and partly through a sermon that bruised my ego.



Several years ago I was digging through a box in the attic and came across the Bible. Having rediscovered it, I've kept it near the chair where I read in the mornings. Occasionally I thumb through it to see what verses I'd marked when I was still very young both chronologically and spiritually. I evidently didn't have any colored pencils, because the verses marked are heavily shaded in grey lead pencil or blue or green ballpoint pen. They don't look very good (smile). I wonder what I was thinking. Probably wasn't thinking about "looks" at all.

But the part that I most marvel over is a small paper taped in the front cover. Evidently it was hopefully prepared by the preacher of the week, or by one of the camp staff, in anticipation that at least a few boys or girls might actually come to Christ and want to serve Him ever after. It must have taken faith to type it up and have it on hand at the services. God might actually work and save someone!

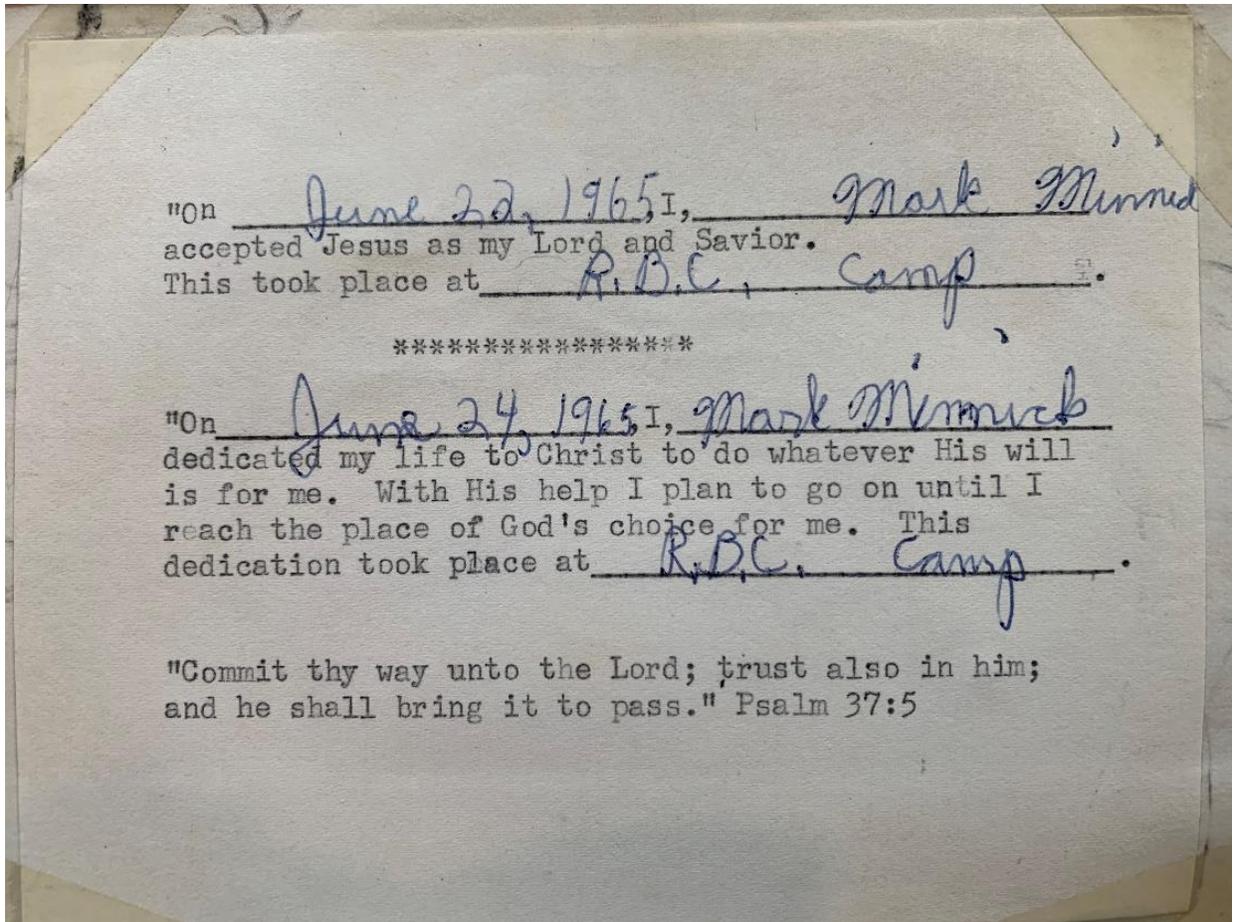
Whenever I see this little decision paper, I'm overwhelmed all over again by God's grace to me. I hadn't been paying attention to the message that night. I was impatient for the service to conclude so that we could run out into the dark and catch fire flies or line up for snacks. But on the second stanza of "Just As I Am," the Spirit of God spoke to my heart as clearly as if someone had shouted audibly in my ear, *You're not saved!*

I'd thought that I was! I didn't know that my hard heart and my rebellious ways throughout my entire childhood testified to the fact that actually, I didn't possess eternal life at all. I was still an "old creature."

That night I knelt down on the platform with two other young people, a girl and a guy, and we all called upon the Lord to save us. I wish I knew their names and what their lives have been.

We were evidently given the little, hopeful paper on which to record our decisions in our own handwriting. June 22, 1965 was a Tuesday. I remember vividly how "light" my heart felt, and how everything looked bright and happy for the first time I could ever remember. Everything and everybody looked different. Now I realized what real salvation was. I'd been changed.

I don't know what happened the next night. But on Thursday night, June 24, I must have responded again, because the decision paper records that I committed myself to do whatever the Lord willed. I don't remember that service or whether I went forward again or not. But something important must have happened that caused me to fill in the rest of the paper with my twelve-year-old scrawl.



I relive all of this every summer when our young people go to camp. If the Lord would save me (a thief, a liar, a gospel-hardened rebel), He can certainly save any of our teens as well. Or fill them with longings to serve Him forever.

Just as I am, without one plea, but that thy blood was shed for me.
And that Thou bidd'st me come to Thee,
O Lamb of God, I come, I come.

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

Prayed for you this morning. Let's all pray for them all day.

Pastor Minnick