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« ...I girded thee, though thou hast not known me.” Isaiah 45.5

My name is RAHARITSIFA Narindra. I was born in Madagascar, an island south east of Africa which lies in the Indian Ocean. The island has a population of 15 million inhabitants. At this time, I am doing my PhD at Laval University (Québec, Canada) in the field of Food Science and Technology.

I was born into a Christian family. My grandfather was the pastor of a rural evangelical church about 20 kilometers away from Madagascar’s capital, Antananarivo, where my family dwelt. When I was a child, my parents brought me to church every Sunday.

“Train up a child in the way he should go: and when he is old, he will not depart from it.”Proverbs.22.6

I remember my mother made us learn the 23rd Psalm by heart. When I was about six or seven years old, I saw a painting hanging on one of the walls of my grandfather’s room. This painting intrigued me. It showed a suspended bridge and two young children walking on it at night while a violent wind was blowing. The bridge in this painting looked like it was ready to collapse. I wondered why the children in the painting were crossing the bridge at that time when they could have waited for a safer time to do so. My mother noticed that I was looking at the painting and she asked me what I thought of the painting. She told me that the painting contained a spiritual message. She then quoted the 4th verse of Psalm 23 which says:

“ Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil: for thou art with me.”

Something then clicked inside my mind. For the first time, I saw a practical application associated with a passage in the Bible.

When I was a teenager, my life was guided by two basic values: my family and success. My family was very important for me. I also wanted to succeed in life by acquiring riches and accumulating honours. I was determined to work and study hard in order to achieve these objectives. I became a model student always succeeding. Almost every Sunday, I heard the repeated testimonies of my grand father during his sermons:

“Men will forsake thee, but I will never abandon thee.”

Usually, on Sunday, my thoughts gravitated around the games we played after church. I didn't put much importance on the sermons because I saw them as being simple Sunday formalities. During the week, I believed that each individual lived his or her life the way he or she saw fit. I thought that my destiny was in my own hands.

At the age of 12, I experienced a family crisis. My father became ill and his illness worsened with time. The illness was incurable. One of the pillars in my life was greatly shaken. I wasn't able to control what was happening to me.

At the age of 16, I experienced academic failure. I failed a very important exam. It was the worst thing that happened to me in my life. Not only I was humiliated but my whole world seemed to be crumbling. The two guiding values in my life, my family and success, were crumbling before my eyes and I couldn't do anything to make things better.

In my mind, these things which happened to me were a judgment from the Lord. I offended Him when I heard the pastor preaching every Sunday, but I did not really care about what was being preached. I thought that my destiny was in my own hands.

*“If I have made gold my hope, or have said to the fine gold, Thou art my confidence;
If I rejoiced because my wealth was great, and because mine hand had gotten much;
If I beheld the sun when it shined, or the moon walking in brightness;
And my heart hath been secretly enticed, or my mouth hath kissed my hand:*

This also were an iniquity to be punished by the judge: for I should have denied the God that is above." Job 31.24-28

I read and reread the 1st, 15th, 23rd and 51st psalms which I knew by heart. A hymn that I heard few weeks ago "**O taste and see that the LORD is good: blessed is the man that trusteth in him." Psalm 34.8** lead me to read the 34th psalm. God gave me peace after reading this chapter. I prayed to the Lord asking Him to not abandon me because I understood that I was a lost sinner. I praise the Lord that He showed me his Word.

"He sheweth his word unto Jacob, his statutes and his judgments unto Israel. He hath not dealt so with any nation: and as for his judgments, they have not known them. Praise ye the LORD." Psalm 147.19-20

Christ obeyed the law in my place and died on the cross enduring the equivalent punishment I deserved for my sins. God showed me mercy. I am convinced; there is only one with whom we can trust and deliver us from our uncleanness: JESUS-CHRIST.

"The face of the Lord is against them that do evil, to cut off the remembrance of them from the earth. The righteous cry, and the Lord heareth, and delivereth them out of all their troubles." Psalm 34.16-17.

I knew the history of Christ and I knew what happened two thousand years ago. But between knowing Jesus Christ and loving Him, there is an infinite difference. Loving Christ means to obey Him.

"By this we know that we love the children of God, when we love God, and keep his commandments. For this is the love of God, that we keep his commandments: and his commandments are not grievous." 1 John 5.2-3.

"We love him, because he first loved us." 1 John 4.19

From that moment, God has never abandoned me. Jesus alone can save and deliver us. He showed me that there is only one God on Earth and in Heaven and He is Sovereign.

“Remember the former things of old: for I am God, and there is none else; I am God, and there is none like me, Declaring the end from the beginning, and from ancient times the things that are not yet done, saying, My counsel shall stand, and I will do all my pleasure.”
Isaiah 46.9-10.

The Lord through His Holy Scriptures teaches me, shows me the right path that I have to take and sanctifies me. My heart is like desert soil and only the Word of God can water it and bring forth life but neither the soft word of one nor the flattering word of another.

“For the word of God is quick, and powerful, and sharper than any twoedged sword, piercing even to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit, and of the joints and marrow, and is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart.” Hebrew 4.12

“The grass withereth, the flower fadeth: but the word of our God shall stand for ever.” Isaiah 40.8

As God is my Lord, being servant, I follow him. Things on this earth are ephemeral and fragile.

“For my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways, saith the Lord. For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways, and my thoughts than your thoughts.” Isaiah 55.89

“My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me:” John 10.27

At the end of my high school studies, my friends invited me to the high school prom. I could have gone to the prom before I converted to Christ but not at this moment of invitation.

“Therefore if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature: old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new.” 2 Corinthians 5.17.

During my second year of engineering studies, all of the other students in my class had agreed to cheat during the exam period because of the large number of exams scheduled in a rather short span of time: 8 exams in 4 days. Out of weakness, I cheated like my classmates. Despite the fact that I cheated, I received the worst grade I ever obtained during all my university years. I then understood that the Lord had chastened me for having cheated. That chastening led me to never cheat again.

"My son, despise not the chastening of the Lord; neither be weary of his correction: for whom the Lord loveth he correcteth; even as a father the son in whom he delighteth." Proverbs 3.11-12.

Previously, a person had told me to thank the Lord each time I pass an exam because it is only by His grace that I could succeed. But I always said to myself: "how is that? " since I am the one who studied and I saw no one helping me. In other words, I believed I was entirely responsible for my success until I saw a passage in the Book of Proverbs which says:

"For the LORD giveth wisdom: out of his mouth cometh knowledge and understanding." Proverbs 2.6

All comes from the Lord. The Lord gives strength during times of hardship. When my father died in 1993 I would have normally had great difficulty in living through such an experience because I am a sensitive person. Instead of despair, the Lord was with me during this time of mourning and the Holy Spirit comforted me.

"We are troubled on every side, yet not distressed; we are perplexed, but not in despair." 2 Corinthians 4.8.

I also saw the Lord's guiding hand when He allowed me to come to Canada to pursue my university studies. A professor at Laval University invited me to come in Canada. In January 2001, after I arrived at Laval University (Quebec, Canada). I started attending Sunday service at a Pentecostal assembly. A friend invited me to come to a Bible study meeting at an assembly located at nearby Orléans Island. The teachings I received there helped me better understand the Biblical teaching of the Sovereign Grace of God over all things.

"It is the LORD: let him do what seemeth him good."¹ Samuël 3.18

I knew that my grandfather, when he was still alive, prayed for me continually despite the long distance separating us. When I lived in a campus dorm building, the temptation to fornicate was quite strong because of all the pretty girls living in the same building. But the Lord always protected me and gave me the strength to resist such temptations.

"(...) The effectual fervent prayer of a righteous man availeth much." James 5.16

"Let us hear the conclusion of the whole matter: Fear God, and keep his commandments: for this is the whole duty of man." Ecclesiastes 12.13.

"The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you. Amen"^{1st} Thessalonians 5.28.

Amen.