

# **I was young, angry, bitter and full of hate**

My name is Richard Bartholmew Goode and this is my story.

I am 36 years old, black. I've been down going on 19 years. I've been a Christian for three years now.

The man I am today is totally different from the man I was three or four years ago. When you have been in prison for as long as I have often friends and family come and go, or as in my case long gone from the beginning. When I first read about love in the bible it appeared alien to me, however it was through the word in the Bible that I learned how much God loves me. I was deeply inspired by the selfless grace and love of Jesus Christ. I didn't know such a love existed. I know first hand what it is like to have something good, but in one dark moment lose it all, and everyone dear to you. Needless to say, I was once a terrible person and sinner.

My Mother and Father separated when I was nine. The last memory of my Father is of him shooting at my mother and I as we ran out of our home and into the

rainy night to escape my father's rage and uncontrolled drinking. Although I heard bullets bouncing off the cars all around my mother and I, I kept stopping to look back toward our house because my oldest brother, one sister and our baby brother were still trapped inside our home. I ran away from home at age 13. At age 14 I began selling large quantities of crack cocaine. By 16 I became a father. Crimes, Alcohol and violence all led me to prison at the age of 17.

I hit rock bottom in prison. My soul yearned to be free and I suffered from deep depression. I didn't want to face the pain and disappointment that I caused myself and others and I didn't want to face the fact that I was truly alone. Entering prison as a child was the worst thing that could have happened to me. One day a gang of men raped a good friend of mine named Rocky. Rocky and I were the same age and alike in many ways, except he was white and I am black. We were watching each others back. When I saw the one person that I loved and trusted lying on the floor in his own blood. I snapped, I ran and got a knife and then I stabbed the leader of the gang that hurt Rocky. As a result of almost taking this mans life I was taken back to court and given more time. Rocky was never again the same.

I took care of him the best I could but one year later he committed suicide, and once again I was alone. I vowed that day Rocky died to never again make another friend in prison. I joined a gang. I was loyal to the gang and soon earned a reputation for being ruthless. I was young, angry, bitter and full of hate. I spent many years in prison picking up more time, drinking home made wine and liquor and smoking marijuana. I didn't care whether I lived or died. You see I thought I was tough. I had endured a drug addicted, abusive father who wouldn't work. My father beat my mother and molested my sister.

I endured a mother who suffered from depression and was neglected and abusive. I endured being robbed at gunpoint, getting shot on the streets. While in prison I endured poverty, violent drug wars, the death of my son and his mother. Both were killed in a drive by shooting. I have endured the most violent prison in the state of Virginia. I should have fallen victim to the many traps set to control and destroy me in prison. But God had other plans for me. By the traps I mean; aids, drugs, death by another inmate, mental illness or homosexuality. One night after many years of self-destructive behavior, I gave what was

left of my broken life to Jesus Christ. It is hard to say in words what being saved is like but the experience was unmistakable. At first there was a kind of wrenching in my heart. An inner longing for a better way that gradually grew into a storm. Kneeling in the dark on the cold floor of a prison dungeon I called out to God, I just cried out, God take the pain, bitterness and loneliness away! Immediately the power of God spoke true in my mind and the Spirit pulsed through my veins like the burn of fire. Until I got saved I never realized how closed I was to everything and everyone around me. I never realized how superficial, thoughtless and indifferent my thinking and actions really were. Every day in prison is dreary and a man's soul feels chilled to the bone but the night I got saved the Spirit of the living God came and softened my heart of stone. Tears rolled down my face and that gave me hope because for the first time in my life I felt human. The Bible says that **God works all things together for good to those who love him,**

**Romans 8:28.**

My life is a living illustration of that great truth. Unfortunately, it took the cold reality of prison to teach me the value of the good thing of God. Now that I am a Christian I want to meet other Christians. I don't have anyone to help me hopefully this will change.

Richard Bartholomew Goode  
Oakwood, Va.

I hope this testimony has been a blessing to you. If you would like to read how others in similar situations have experienced the life transforming power of God please write to me at the address below. We now have over 80 testimonies and over 70 contracts of those whose lives have been transformed by God's amazing Grace. Please send us your testimony as well. We would also like artwork and poetry to use in this ministry.

**Bro. Otto Ball C/o  
Crossroads Ministry  
P.O. Box 363  
Hyde, PA 16843**

**Planted a seed Ministry  
P.O. Box 48  
Chireno, TX 75937**  
(Offers free monthly Bible lessons, counseling  
and newsletter.

**The Mailbox Club  
404 Eager Road  
Valdosta, Ga. 31602-1399**  
Bible study

**Crossroad Bible Institute  
P.O. Box 900  
Grand Rapids, MI 49509-0900**  
Bible studies

**Emmaus Correspondence School  
2570 Asbury Road  
P.O. Box 1028  
Dabouque, IA 52004-1028**

Free Books  
**Books to Prisoners  
Left Bank Bookstore  
92 Pike St.  
Seattle, WA 98101**

# **I'M NOT THE MAN I ONCE WAS**

**I was young,  
angry, bitter  
and full of hate**



**Richard  
Bartholmew Goode**