

Man Exonerated for Rape: 'My Father God Got Me Through This'

A Texas man who was exonerated for rape—a crime for which he spent 12 years in prison—gave credit to God for getting him through the ordeal.

"It was only my Father God that got me through this. That's all I got to say," Michael Phillips, 57, said Friday during a court appearance. "That speaks for itself. Pick up His book, it's truthful ... [the Bible will] see you through anything."

"Phillips was released from prison in 2002, and prosecutors said his innocence was proven through a new program by the Dallas County district attorney's office to analyze untested rape kits, even if the defendant does not make a request," Reuters reported.

Legal experts say this is the first time someone has been cleared of a crime by DNA testing that was not requested by the convicted person.

Phillips, 57, was initially convicted of raping a 16-year-old girl in 1990. Reuters reports: "The actual culprit ... was identified through the DNA testing but cannot be prosecuted because the statute of limitations has expired," officials said.

The assailant, Lee Marvin Banks, lived at the same motel as Phillips and the victim, which is where the crime took place. The teen identified Phillips in a lineup, and his attorney advised him to accept a plea deal because there was only a small chance that a black man accused of raping a white girl would receive a fair trial.

Phillips has been living in a nursing home and is wheelchair-bound from sickle-cell anemia.

"I never imagined I would live to see my name cleared," he said. "Six of my siblings died from the same disease, so I thank God for sustaining me in prison. I always told everyone I was innocent, and now people will finally believe me."

"Under Texas law, Phillips is entitled to \$80,000 compensation for each year of wrongful conviction plus an additional \$80,000 each year for life," Reuters said.