

# *My Testimony*

by Rowan Jennings Sr.



My name is Rowan Jennings and I was born and raised in Portadown, Northern Ireland. My home life was a sad situation with a dad who was a drunk, therefore, little money for anything. Ireland, in the 1920's, was a poverty stricken place, especially in the small towns. I was born into a family where drink was a curse, for when my dad was born, his mother hardly knew she had given birth. Poverty to the extreme was our lot, with father drinking himself out of two businesses. At times, a piece of turnip was all we had to eat. I wore a pair of my aunt's shoes when going to work, and since there were 5 children, the younger ones got hand downs. The gospel was unknown and we knew very little about God, we were pagans in the north of Ireland. Looking back I wonder how was it that an area so small with approximately 120 Gospel Halls and multiple Baptist churches etc., that we knew nothing of God nor ever heard the gospel.

When I was a boy of about 8 years old I had a little friend called Madge who took sick and died. Even at that young age I recall thinking, "If that was me where would I be"? It was a very real question since I had the same sickness as little Madge. Time passed and on Sunday nights there was nothing for those of an unsaved background to do. The stores were closed as were the picture houses. Sometimes a couple of friends and I would walk down the Portadown Road. One had a christian background and he would bring sulphur and set it on fire and say: "Rowan you're going to burn in fire and sulphur because you tell lies" etc. I was deeply frightened.

One of my school teachers bought me a book called "Kitty's Annual", and in it was a picture of Cain and Abel offering sacrifices. On Cain's altar there were vegetables, and on Abel's sheep. The caption underneath said: "if the Israelite could not afford a lamb they could offer two turtledoves or two pigeons."

At 17 years of age I had never heard the gospel, but I thought if I can get two little birds I could offer them as a sacrifice, and by so doing I would get right with God. A friend had pigeons and he kindly gave me two. I was so excited for I would do that which the book showed, I would offer the birds in sacrifice, and as the fire consumed them, I would lift my hands up and I would be accepted by God. Then a dreadful thing happenend. On my way to sacrifice one I opened my jacket where I put them, and the birds flew away. I was heartbroken for this was my chance of getting right with God. A short time after this, a man whom I worked with, Carson Hooks, asked me to go to a Gospel meeting. I had never been to one in all my life and I did not know what to expect. The preacher came from the United States or Canada, and started to preach from that which I now know was the book of Hebrews. "But this man, after he had offered one sacrifice for sins, forever sat down". He began by saying there was a time when God wanted an animal sacrifice, and if you could not afford an animal you could bring two little birds. I was so excited, and then he said: "God does not want an animal sacrifice anymore". I wondered then how will I get right with God? Then he said: "Christ has finished the work at Calvary's cross". That was the first time I had ever heard the gospel.

A couple of nights later I was over at the home of a friend who asked me to the meeting. I told him I wanted to get right with God. He told me it was simply a gift that I could accept, and so on the 21 May 1935, as a 17-year-old lad, I accepted Jesus Christ as my Savior. I did not know John 3:16, I did not know where to look for the book of Genesis. One thing I did know, I would saved. I went home and told father, and I shall never forget that which he said: "That's the best decision you can make". My dad was not saved for some 25 years later, at approximately 66 years of age. I never saw him with another drink in his hand nor another cigarette. In 1961 he died of cancer but had shown clearly that he had been born of God (1 Jn. 5:1). My brother Samuel got saved, and sister Myrtle, but sadly, despite many prayers and knowing the gospel, neither of my sisters Evelyn or Isobel ever accepted God's salvation. Regarding mum, we are not sure.

Addendum to Rowan Jennings Sr.'s Testimony by his son, Rowan Jennings.

I can do nothing better than add that which Dad's very good friend, Norman Mellish, of many years said:

*"One Lord's Day afternoon in 1964, a stranger at a Bible reading in John's gospel chapter 17 was asked if he had any contribution to make. Within a few minutes, it was evident that a man of ability in the word of God was in our midst. Rowan had a remarkable gift for making profound truth simple. A child could understand him though his ministry was never childish."*

Dad was a bible student and teacher of indepth teaching to thousands in many parts of Europe. He was also a shepherd, and while never in the official level, he was in heart and life. His visitation of the saints was a common practise, and mum and dad's home was ever open for those who wanted to learn the scriptures. On May 22<sup>nd</sup> 1986 dad went home to be with the Lord, having been saved 51 years the previous day. It was an exceedingly large funeral with Dr. David Gooding and Norman Mellish taking the service.