

Testimony

Peter Bates Tells His Story

I was saved in June of 1985 by the grace of GOD. I came from a nominal Christian family, i.e., we were Catholics. As a young child of 8 or 9 I recall how I loved to sing the simple tunes we were taught concerning God, and in my young years, as with many children, I was receptive to the things I heard in religious instruction. Yet we as Catholics were never taught the simple, plain truths of the Gospel. I recall once in the Catholic church, looking at the figure on the large crucifix up behind the altar and wondering in my simple mind how God could let such a man as Jesus die such a tragic death! It disturbed me to think that the one who was so good as Jesus, could have such a humiliating end. We were not told that it was God's plan that the Lord Jesus should die for mankind (Lk. 24:46).

As I progressed into my teenage years, I became hardened towards Catholicism. I looked upon the Nuns and Brothers that taught us and saw a hardness and bitterness in them that made me question whether Catholicism was such a good thing at all.

One of our classmates had died in a car accident and the funeral was to be held at school. Our class teacher was a Nun and she warned us that she didn't want any outbursts of emotion or tears or such nonsense at the funeral, as it would look bad for her as the class teacher. I remember how she would go into a mad rage without much provocation, and her behaviour made me think that Christianity is hollow and full of hypocrisy. These teachers were our peers and so religious, yet so bitter and hard in heart. I decided that Christianity was just a lot of hypocrisy and rejected it from my late teenage years. It was just rules and rigour but it didn't give any real hope. In my rejection of Catholicism however, I made a tragic error, I thought that the Bible was from the Catholics. As we had been taught that Catholicism was "The true church" and all other churches were inferior, so once you rejected Catholicism, you had rejected Christianity and the Bible. This was a tragic mistake, that led me on a sad course of destruction in my life.

In my late teenage years and early twenties I lived for what the world had to offer, what else was there? I became involved with rock and roll bands, working as the sound mixer and setting up the band's equipment. I spent my time working in pubs and live band venues, I became addicted to alcohol and drinking. There were many others in the "music industry" who would do things to excess, drug taking and wild living, it was all just part of living life in the fast lane. Yet in my heart I thought there must be more to life surely than just this, but I didn't know where to look. I searched for the meaning to life in books on alternative religions; Hare Krishna's, Hinduism, Yoga, Astral travel, ESP, Meditation, The Power of Positive Thinking. These all seemed to me to have a bit of truth in them, but still I was searching for a greater purpose to living than this.

I lived recklessly and was known for this, particularly in my driving habits. I was reckless behind the wheel of a motor vehicle and would often push myself and the vehicle to its limits just for the thrill of it. There were times when I would drive at dangerous speeds and think what would happen if I crashed? The thought that I might die didn't bother me, that would be the end of that, but the thought of crippling myself for life seemed far worse! I thought if I am going to die, I really would like to know the reason why we are here, and if there is more to life than just this? Is this all there is?

One day my number finally came up! I had been drinking at a hotel with a friend and after he left for his home, I took off in my car. I drove excessively and came to grief around a bend, losing control and crashing into an oncoming vehicle. The cars were both extensively damaged. The other driver was o.k. but in shock and I was also in shock. I was fortunate to have come out of such an accident with only a few stitches and bruises. I could not explain how I had survived such a crash for my car was wrecked! Yet I had survived. As a result of the accident, and being in trouble with the police again for drink and driving, I knew I would lose my driving license. But this time I might even get a jail sentence. The accident and the thought of not having a driving license depressed me.

During the months after the accident, I would sometimes consider where would I have been if I had died in the accident? I had no answer. I realized also that my life was a mess. I would spend my money on drink, or marijuana, so I could be stoned and not have to face reality. It all seemed too difficult, and I was powerless to fix up my life. Sin can be a powerful master!

Some of my old school friends had been converted from Catholicism to become Born-again Christians, but up till then I had considered them to be a bunch of do-gooders. Now, however, I was willing to hear what they could tell me about GOD. I went along with them to a meeting where one man read from the Bible. I don't recall the words spoken, but I do recall how they spoke to me, as if I was the only one there, and it seemed as if he knew my very thoughts. I realized from what was read, that there was indeed a living God and that He was speaking to me through this preacher! How I was convicted that night of my lost condition before God. (Rom 3:23) "For all have sinned and come short of the glory of God." You didn't have to prove to me that I was a sinner, I knew that well enough, but was there an answer to my problems, that's what I longed for? (Prov. 25:25) "As cold waters to a thirsty soul, so is good news from a far country."

That night as the Bible was read, it was as if a ray of light had dawned on my soul. A flicker of hope to a needy sinner. I didn't get saved that night, but I certainly went home thinking about what I had heard. To think that God loved sinners, and that Jesus Christ died to save sinners. This was the best news I'd heard in a long time! Some two weeks later at another meeting, I was greatly convicted of my lost condition, and the burden of my sin became intolerable. I had put off getting saved up till now, and I wasn't sure how I could straighten out things in my life, but I sensed this might be my last opportunity to be saved, it was now or never.

After the meeting I spoke to the pastor asking him if he would pray for me, instead he asked me if I had accepted Jesus as my Saviour, I told him that I had not. He asked me if I wanted to be saved? I said I did. There seemed to be now no going back, having admitted to someone else my need, I wanted the terrible burden of my sin removed and if accepting Jesus Christ as my Lord and Saviour was the remedy.

The pastor led me in praying the "sinners prayer." I don't remember the words, but it was there and then that I TRUSTED CHRIST AS MY SAVIOR (Rom. 10:9). In that moment I went from darkness into His marvelous light. I was saved! The great burden and guilt of sin was gone and oh what a joy filled my soul.

That night was the beginning of a new life for me. The world seemed a much brighter place from that moment on. Old things had passed away and all things had become new. 1 Sam. 2:8 "He raiseth up the poor out of the dust and lifteth up the beggar from the dunghill, to set them among princes and to make them inherit the throne of glory." What a Gracious and Merciful Saviour we have.

. . . . Gleaned from Saved.com