

Testimony

of Ben Sutton

How the Lost Sheep was Found

I began to drink at eleven o'clock on that Saturday morning, in the tavern in South Shields named "The Winter Gardens". It was there that it happened! I had idled away three hours. Looking up at the clock I noticed that there was an advertisement around it which read, "Guinness Time". Every now and again I would read those words. I began to think about TIME. When did it start? Then suddenly, like a bolt from the blue, one word thundered into my mind — "ETERNITY".

Many times I have stood in close proximity to bursting bombs and exploding shells, but I have never experienced a greater shock than when the searchlight of God's holiness shone into my sin-blackened heart and into my mind, cob-webbed with evil, and dark with Nature's Christless night. For a moment I stood aghast at my sinfulness as conviction flooded like a tidal-wave into my being; then I slammed my beer-glass down on the counter and stumbled out into the cold January afternoon. All the rest of the day I walked blindly through the streets, afraid to cross the road in case I should be knocked down by a vehicle and ushered in the awful Presence of the Almighty Being who was even then dealing with me. Memories of the past crowded into my mind. I remembered how that some two years before this, I had gone to take my brother-in-law out on a drinking spree, only to be told by him and my sister that such days for them were over. I had asked them the reason for this most unusual decision, and was promptly told that they had both been "saved". I remembered how I had exploded with laughter and had told them that they had both got religious mania. Suddenly, I decided to go to that house again. By now it was eleven at night! Soon I reached the bottom of the stairs that led up to my sister's door. Then a great battle was raging within me. An insistent voice was dictating to my will, saying, "*Go home; they will think you're mad. What will you say to them? No one wants you Ben Sutton; the Drunkard, the Fighter, the Gambler*". Thank God, another voice was gently and firmly saying, "*Come*". I went up the stairs. When my brother-in-law came to the door, his face fell. He thought I had come for trouble — my usual occupation on a Saturday night. I remember saying something like this; "*Can you tell me something about Jesus?*" He spoke to me about the Lord Jesus till 2:30 in the morning; but I just could not take it in. I couldn't grasp what he was so earnestly trying to tell me. I shall never forget his face, when finally he looked at me and said, "*Look Ben, every Sunday night the Gospel is preached at Bethesda. Come and hear for yourself. The Lord Jesus will change your life*". I promised to be there.

I went home and had a few fitful hours of sleep. Still the terrible burden of sin weighed on my heart. At about ten minutes to six that evening, I walked past the drinking-place I knew so well. Another sixty yards and I reached the door of the meeting-place. I glanced quickly up and down the street to make sure no one was watching me; then, with my heart beating wildly, I dived in. I found myself sitting very near the front with an unobstructed view of the preacher. I cannot remember any of the opening part of that memorable service; but, oh the message of that night! I think I was the only ex-seaman in the place, yet the subject was the storm on the Sea of Galilee. The speaker told of seamen and their struggles. He spoke of the great storm that raged around their little craft, that was manned by a handful of helpless seamen. Then, he likened that storm to the storms that rage in the lives of men. All through his discourse, I could see myself, *my* sin, *my* helplessness, *my* need. He came to the part where the Lord Jesus took command and said three words that sped like polished shafts into the storm-centre of my soul, "**PEACE BE STILL**". It was no longer the preacher who was speaking; it was the Lord Himself! and oh the power of those words, "**PEACE BE STILL**". We are all sinners who must experience the storm of God's righteous judgment forever, unless saved by grace. But the **LORD JESUS CHRIST**, the very **GOD**, who knew no sin, endured the full fury of that storm, on our behalf, at the Cross. HE TASTED DEATH FOR EVERY MAN. The one who truly believes in the Lord Jesus, has PEACE WITH GOD.

I, a big foul-mouthed, drunken, gambling, black-hearted miner, was soon down on my knees at that wonderful place called Calvary! "*Oh, God*", I cried, "*I'm a bad un, but take me, and forgive me, and help me please*". I felt the hot tears burning my face. I heard other men praying for me. Then it happened. Suddenly the burden lifted! Oh the joy; oh the peace that was mine! One moment I was a helpless, hopeless sinner, bound in the chains of sin; then the **LORD JESUS CAME**, and I stood up, "*A NEW CREATURE IN CHRIST JESUS*".

. . . . Gleaned from Truth and Tidings