

My Testimony

by Butch Paquette

A Changed Man – My Conversion to God

*"He brought me up also out of an horrible pit,
out of the miry clay,
and set my feet upon a rock and established my goings.
And He hath put a new song in my heart,
even praise unto our God."
Psalm 40:2-3*

SADNESS OF OUR HOME

I was born and raised in a Roman Catholic family in a poor community in Northern Ontario. My father was an alcoholic and worked as a lumberjack in the bush. Vividly I remember my father would not arrive home on Friday nights. Often in winter, late at night, my mother would call us and my brother and I would go out the mile trail to the highway to look for my father. Many times we would find him on the side of the highway where his drinking buddies had dropped him off and we would bring him home on the sled. He would have died there had we not found him.

MOTHER STRUGGLES TO RAISE SEVEN CHILDREN

When I was about seven or eight years of age, my father left my mother to raise the seven of us children on her own. We were very poor and most of what we had were the castaways of others including clothing, food and furniture. Daily after school, my brother and I would go hunting for partridge or rabbit to cook for our supper meal the next day. Every night before we went to bed, my mother would pray and recite the rosary with us. Although the Bible was never opened in our home, my mother taught us a reverence for the *Word of God* and took us to mass regularly.

FOSTER HOMES AND REFORM SCHOOL

At the age of ten I became an altar boy and this is where I had my first exposure to alcohol. Around this time my mother became ill and was unable to care for us so we were placed with Children's Aid. I became angry and unruly and lived in several different foster homes. About the age of twelve, after one of my moves, I was placed in a new school. A teacher there blamed me for something I had never done and I felt really hurt. I was in such emotional pain in my life I ran away. After the police found me, I returned to school and was punished despite my pleas of truth and from that time on I became extremely rebellious. Soon after, I was sent to a Catholic boys' reformatory where I learned nothing but crime and drugs.

PRISON

The next nine years of my life were spent in and out of prison. My friends would say 'you're back in prison you must like it here'. Inside I was miserable and contemplated suicide. At my last release from prison, I decided I had to do something with my life and called my brother Denis, in Woodstock, who promised to help me out if I abode by his rules.

CIRCUMSTANCES SURPRISE ME

I later moved to London to work. I didn't care for the city and began to look for a place in the country. How the Lord was working in my life was unknown to me at the time. I found this little farmhouse in West Lorne and decided that I would move there. My landlord, Jim McCandless, came to the door the Monday after I moved in and asked me if I would come to a gospel meeting in a tent. I had never heard of such a thing but since I didn't know anyone in the area, I decided to go to meet some folks from the community. In a tent, sitting on a lawn chair, I said to myself, "*Butch, what in the world are you doing here?*"

IS THIS REALLY IN THE BIBLE?

What I heard that night I had never heard before. Where were they getting all this from the Bible? I always believed the Bible was the Word of God but had never read it for myself. How can a man know how to get to heaven if he never reads the Bible? John 3:3 says, "**Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of**

God.” The Lord Jesus declares in John 14:6, **“I am the way, the truth and the life, no man cometh unto the Father but by me.”** I thought to myself, the preacher’s Bible must be different than the Catholic Bible. Later, I called my mother. *“What does John 3:3 say?”* It had the same message. I needed to be born again to enter heaven.

NO PURGATORY

Some days, I would go with Jim to help him in the fields. There he would talk with me about his life and I could identify with him and his experiences. He told me how he was saved and sure of heaven. The preachers, Mr. Crawford and Mr. Paul Kember, would visit me regularly. I soon discovered that God had only two places for people to go when they died - heaven or hell. There was no purgatory in the Bible, and I knew I wasn’t fit for heaven.

ONE SECOND AFTER YOU DIE

One night at the end of the gospel meeting, Mr. Crawford asked the question, *‘Where will your soul be one second after you die? You could leave here and have a car accident on the way home and where will you be in eternity?’* For the first time, I was scared of dying. I had seen people die and had some close calls myself. But now I knew there was no second chance, no purgatory, and I was headed for hell.

HELL WAS ON MY MIND

After the meeting that night, the preachers came to visit at the house as I was in earnest about being saved. They read many verses with me then prayed and left me alone at midnight. I went to bed but couldn’t sleep knowing I was headed for hell. I got up again and began to read in John chapter 3. I read it over and over. I tried to get saved, I couldn’t, and I would just have to go to hell because of my sin.

HE LOVED ME THAT MUCH

Again, I read John 3 and when I came to verse 16 I read,

**“For God so loved the world,
that he gave his only begotten Son
that whosoever believeth in him should not perish
but have everlasting life.”**

I had known all my life about the death of Jesus on the cross but I had never realized why He died. He had died for me and me alone. If I had been the only sinner in the world, God loved me so much that He’d sent His only Son to die on the cross for me.

A PERSONAL, PRECIOUS AND PRECISE MOMENT OF SALVATION

On July 27, 1980, about two o’clock in the morning, I knelt on my living room floor in front of the old furnace and thanked God for sending His Son to die on the cross for me. I had peace with God and had no more fear of death knowing I had a home in heaven. I have never regretted getting saved and I have never met anyone else who is saved that’s regretted their salvation. In addition to my eternal blessings I have received through Christ, God has given me my wife Nancy and our little boy Jeremy.

