

Testimony

of F. Hay

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It was autumn in the Hebrides, the season of faithfulness and of fulfillment. Simultaneously with the gathering-in of field after field of golden grain was going on the steady ripening of a greater, if unseen, harvest for the Great Reaper -- the Holy Spirit of God.

God's people were praying. Despite the bleak outlook of no change in the longed-for, pleasure-bent, God-forsaking young people, the Lord's laborers did not lose heart. They had a promise from a covenant-keeping God, who is not unrighteous to forget a 'work of faith' and a 'labour of love'. Thus unceasing prayer and unfainting faith continued to await the promised harvest. It is my privilege to relate to His glory how the Lord of the Harvest worked silently, steadily, utterly faithfully, until the time of the thrusting in of the sickle should come.

In 1949 I was in my last year at High School at Stornoway, and drinking to the full of the current teenage pleasures. Life was too sweet and too full for anything but the merest flicker of a thought for God or an eternity ahead. The only thing that made us different from the restless teenagers of the South was that we had been clearly taught at home, at school and at church, of a better way, and most of us accepted without question the presence of a God 'somewhere in the shadows'. One day we would have to face Him, but not yet. Into this sad and universally-prevalent state of affairs stepped the seeking love of the Son of God. He called upon His people to pray, and to pray prevailingly. He Himself then set to answering these prayers in sovereign grace.

Perhaps Psalm 45, verse 5, best describes my experiences during the months before the Revival: "Thine arrows are sharp in the hearts of the king's enemies; whereby the people fall under thee," says the Word, and so it was -- to the downfall of the citadel of self and sin.

One of the earliest barbed arrows came one evening while a group of us sat together in the fifth-year study. Someone casually threw out the question: "What is a Christian anyway? What happens when folk get converted?" A babel of views followed, but it became obvious that not one of us present had any clear idea of what a Christian really was -- this, despite our very excellent and thorough Scripture knowledge. On one point, however, we were all agreed -- they were good-living, we were not! As far as I was concerned, this revelation of my ignorance of so vital a matter was most disquieting.

A second arrow came unexpectedly during the singing of a hymn. One evening while plowing my unmelodious way through a new hymn, my senses suddenly focused on the words I was so heedlessly repeating. My voice dried up, and tears began to flood the page, as the meaning of those majestic lines reached my consciousness. I had been singing a lie:

"Bearing shame and scoffing rude,
In my place condemned He stood:
Sealed my pardon with His blood.
Hallelujah, what a Saviour!"

It was starkly clear to me now that He was not my Saviour, and so sharp was this arrow that I could not even use His Name ". . . for Jesus' sake, Amen," to wind up my ritual prayer from then on. I had no right to cash in on His merits.

Another shot found its mark when my bosom pal dumbfounded me one day by producing a New Testament from her bag and by telling me she was going to seek for God until she found Him. No more dances, pictures, concerts for her! He wasn't there! What about me? Wouldn't I do the same? Not yet! But then a curious thing began to happen to the dances: while I still enjoyed every minute I spent there I found that the pleasure turned to very ashes in my mouth after I got back to the silence of my own room. What was I getting out of my giddy round? Absolutely nothing of any value! So the Spirit of God moves in answer to prevailing prayer.

It was now November 1949, and outwardly there was nothing to show for the months of countless prayers by the Lord's intercessors. But if God's people could hold on for the last dark hour, victory was at hand. And what a glorious victory that was! I myself was by then truly exercised -- reading my Bible under the bedclothes each evening and gleaning but the one indubitable fact: I was a sinner, and far away from God. I knew it sorely. Each church service now drove this fact home mercilessly. When a preacher would extol the loveliness of Christ, I would weep for sorrow that between us there was a 'great gulf fixed'. A program of earnest good works did nothing but aggravate the sore, so that by the time Revival came, I had but one heart cry: "What must I do to be saved?" (Acts 16.30).

My seeking friend was one of the very first sheaves gathered on that memorable first break in revival power. When I looked into her eyes I saw that, whatever conversion was, it had happened to her. "You've got it!" I cried. Lovingly she corrected me. "I have found Him," she said, "the Lord Jesus who died for sinners, not for good people." Would I follow her this time? I surely would!

Words cannot describe the kindly welcome this lost one received at Shadar, Barvas. I was smothered in a loving hug by her saintly parents, while a message was sent to their newly-saved neighbor (now a fine minister of Jesus Christ) to come and join them in prayer for the afternoon. So the time was passed until the evening meeting, leaving me with one awareness only -- of my abysmal poverty and their unspeakable riches in the Saviour.

The church was crowded. People sat in the windows and along benches in the passage way, even up the very steps to the pulpit! As we entered late, the words of the Psalm hit my ear like a blow: "O set ye open unto me the gates of righteousness" (Psalm 118.19, met. ver.). My prayer indeed! I doubt if I spared the preacher a passing glance that evening, for God was present, and that to deal with souls. From the very outset of the sermon on Song of Solomon 2.8-12, I had my life minutely and inexorably exposed for the shoddy, selfish, useless thing it was -- worse, for the God-dishonoring, sinful, hell-bound thing it was. Then, when utter despair had been reached, I heard the preacher's words come through like a clarion call: "Who His own self bare our sins in His own body on the tree . . . by whose stripes ye were healed" (1 Peter 2.24). I understood the gospel in a flash. "O fools and slow of heart to believe!" It was the old, old story of Jesus and His love, the story I could have told to any pagan, but could not apply to my own heart's need. "He (Satan) hath blinded their eyes," says the Word truly, but thank God, One came "to preach deliverance to the captives, and recovering of sight to the blind" (Luke 4.18).

Then followed such a time of singing of birds that it seemed like heaven upon earth -- songs of deliverance as friends were saved, songs of praise for help in testings and trials, songs of penitence as one grieved the Holy Spirit through zeal without knowledge. After such a meeting with the strong Son of God one could not but offer all that one was or hoped to be -- for missionary service if He would require. Nine years later the Lord took me up on this offer, and I have had the privilege and joy of seeking with Himself His lost ones in Central Thailand (as the wife of a missionary doctor). "Hath He said, and shall He not do it?" (Num. 23.19). "I, even I, will both search of My sheep, and seek them out . . . I will feed them in a good pasture . . . there shall they lie in a good fold" (Ezek. 34.11, 14).

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