

Testimony

by Steve McMurray

My Conversion

Several years ago, I worked as a volunteer in a third world country where I learned much about third world problems of poverty and prejudice. Especially enlightening to me was learning what it was to be in a despised minority -- cursed at, ridiculed, spat upon and sneered at because of my race and nationality. I found myself unable to rise above my growing cynicism and contempt for the people that I had purposed to help. This was all very disturbing to me.

I am an adopted child, raised by loving and moral parents, taught a form of godliness though I never really knew the power of God's Word. I trusted that sincerity and compassion for others would win God's favor and when I sinned I could go to the priest for confession and forgiveness. Baptized, confirmed, serving as an acolyte all made me feel that my life was better than many. I did not know that, "By grace are ye saved through faith and that NOT OF YOURSELVES, it is the gift of God, NOT OF WORKS, lest any should boast." (Ephesians 2:8-9)

It seemed that a concern for others and acceptance of their beliefs was all that was necessary to make me a good person. Again, I did not know God's Word declared, "There is NONE RIGHTEOUS, no, not one, they are all gone out of the way. There is NONE GOOD, no, not one." (Romans 3:10, 12)

I believed that we are all God's children and that as long as I was sincere, that was all that mattered to God. To my mind, Jesus Christ was only one of many prophets and spiritual teachers, not the ONLY BEGOTTEN SON OF GOD. Yet, the Bible says that it is only; "As many as received Him, to them gave He the authority to be called the children of God, even them that believe on His name." (John 1:12)

A result of my cynicism was to increase my use of drugs and alcohol in order to escape the sense of guilt I had for my feelings of contempt. I lived more and more for 'the good life' with rum and parties. This 'good life' was suddenly interrupted when I was called home to be with my father who had been diagnosed with terminal cancer. As I watched my dad struggle with his pain and impending death, I began to think of my own soul's destiny. I wondered, if I was me dying, where would my should be going? This too, was very disturbing to me.

Several months after my father's death, I returned overseas to my work and party life, only this time I brought a Bible back with me and I began to read it regularly. One night, I was impressed with a passage in the book of Romans ch. 7. In verse 18, the apostle Paul wrote, "For I know that in me, (that is, in my flesh) dwells no good thing: for to will is present with me; but how to perform that which is good, I find not."

I circled the passage and wrote in the margin, 'that's me'. No sooner had I done this than a friend knocked on my door and asked me to go to the rum shops. I closed my Bible and went with him. We ended up, as usual, in a place aptly named 'the graveyard disco' (for only the dead danced there). It sat on the side of a hill above a small cemetery containing several unused and open grave vaults.

Once inside the disco, we ordered more drinks and began dancing with the women. By this time, I was quite drunk and very tired, so I went out for some air. Passing down the long flight of stairs with graves on either side of me, I reached the bottom and stopped to catch my balance. I found myself staring into the darkness of an open grave and at the dimly lit grave markers. I wondered to myself, "What would happen to me if I fell in", "Would anybody find me?" Then a hauntingly familiar thought struck me, "If I died, where would my soul be?"

Dear Reader, have you ever asked yourself that same question?

The following day, the only thing clear in my mind was a sense of hopelessness and futility. Suffering through the familiar rum hangover, I asked myself why I keep doing this. Realizing that I was alone and without God, I got down on my knees and asked the Lord what I should do and where I should go. Nothing happened except the

name of another volunteer came to mind. I heard that he had 'gotten religion' some months before, but I rarely saw him since he lived in the south of the country.

It was astonishing to me that I met him downtown the very next day. He told me that he had been transferred up to the north of the island, so I invited him to dinner on several occasions. During our visits, he told me how the Lord had saved him. He also told me about his ASSURANCE OF SALVATION, which I was very sceptical of. Still, I noted a marked change in his demeanour from the embittered man that I had known him to be before.

Eventually, he invited me to some gospel meetings being held in town and I went with him. The preachers had never met me before and yet they seemed to know my thoughts and my sin. On the night of October 7, 1982 I walked out of the gospel meeting thinking that what I was hearing was the truth, but I really did not want to 'get religion'. Yet, I was convinced that God was speaking to me through these men.

Well, I thought, I always believed that Jesus had died for the sin of the world, but if God is speaking to me, personally, then it must be true . . . Jesus really did die for me!

It WAS true! ". . . The blood of Jesus Christ His (God's) Son cleanses us (me) from ALL sin" (1 John 1:7). It was certainly; "Not by works of righteousness that I have done, but according to His mercy He saved me..." (Titus 3:5)

I didn't get religion, I got the Lord Jesus Christ!

Though I disliked church singing, the following nights I joined in the hymns with a happy heart as we sang:

At the cross, At the cross, Where I first saw the light,
And the burden of my heart rolled away,
It was there by faith, I received my sight,
And now I am happy all the day.

Thank you for allowing me to share this with you. My prayer is that you too may have joy in knowing your sins are forgiven with the FULL ASSURANCE of eternal life. This is according to the promise of God who cannot lie.

*"Truly, truly, I say unto you,
he that hears My Word, and believes on Him that sent me,
HAS everlasting life, and shall not come into condemnation,
but is passed from death unto life."
(John 5:24)*

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