

Testimony

by Gary Sharp



This is my story. It happened to me. I do hope it brings blessing to you. You don't need to experience my exact story, but you do need my Saviour.

Born June 11th 1946 – an only son of parents who were from very different backgrounds. My dad had heard the gospel when he was younger. My mother was a very unhappy person and disrupted the household with her tirades. I was in kindergarten about a month when one day, after my father had left for work, mom pulled a suitcase out from under my bed. A taxi pulled up to the door. I was told that we were going away! I wanted to know why my daddy wasn't coming. Mom refused to answer. We lived apart from my dad here and there, for about 9 months until dad obtained custody of me. Now I was taken away from my mother to Midland where my father's sister lived. She was willing to take me in. I didn't know what "Separation and Divorce" meant. I only knew it hurt. But thank God, He looked down on that hurting, confused, troubled little 'almost 6' year old and loved him.

My aunt's utmost desire in taking me in was to see that my greatest need was met – God's salvation! My aunt was in fellowship with the assembly in Midland, ON and I was taken to Sunday School. There I was required to learn verses. One of the first verses I learned presented a real quandary to me. I understood every word, nevertheless – "God is love" raised real questions in my mind. How could God be a God of Love and allow this to happen to me? How could these things happen to my family? And God looked down on that little boy who questioned His great love and loved him anyway.

In Sunday School, I was struck by a chorus – "There's a home for little children – Above the bright blue sky – Where Jesus dwells in Glory – A home of peace and joy". A desire began to grow within me for a Home like that! "No home on earth is like it – nor can with it compare" I knew that well enough! "For everyone is happy - Nor can be happier there". I wanted a happy home! What about you, dear reader, do you have such a home ahead of you? Another song that meant something to me was one that I had learned in those first few days of kindergarten, when my teacher taught us a chorus, "God sees the little sparrow fall, It meets His tender view, If God so loves the little things, I know He loves me too!" What a reminder that God had noticed a 'little sparrow's' plight and loved him so.

As I grew older, I became bitterly angry as I thought on it all. My bitterness and unhappiness grew as I proudly thought that it was all God's fault. I loved my father's visits and the times we spent together, fishing and other shared activities. Each weekend, after the gospel meeting and a snack together, my dad had to leave. I remember one departure which resulted in a torrent of tears. I raised my fist in the darkness towards God defying Him for what He had done to me. And God looked down on that resentful boy and loved him anyway.

During my early teens, my thoughts and actions revealed more evidently what I really was – a sinner and a rebel. It wasn't simply what I did that made me a sinner – that is what I was. In those years, I sought to find pleasure in so many things. Sadly I found nothing to fill the void within and to satisfy the longings inside. I'm not going to tell you what I did – the things I did are nothing to be proud of! However, God looked down on that willful and unsatisfied lad. He saw his frantic attempts to find happiness in a world that could not satisfy - and He loved him in spite of it all.

There were times of awakening, when I had refused to listen to the message that could bring peace – and God noticed. Such was His love and interest. He would not let me go on as I was. One night, while at my father's home over the Christmas Holidays, I had a dream that was so real. I dreamed that the Lord had come. It was all so very vivid. I woke up shaking. As I lay there awake I realized that if the Lord really had come – I would have been left behind. God was speaking to me, but in spite of such a vivid message, I went on as I was. Thank God – He kept on loving me still!

My aunt found that as I developed and became more obstinate, she could do little with me. She simply turned me over to God. Rest assured, dear reader, that God can handle anyone! In early November 1961 (I was 15-1/2 at the time), I had grown more desperate in my search for pleasure and found it all a great disappointment. One day I went for a walk to think things over. I walked down to the harbour which was past the flour mill and grain elevator by the shore, over the train trestle, and then to the very farthest pier – as far from town as I could get. I was quite alone - or so I thought. My reflections had only reminded me of my emptiness. It was bitterly cold – the water and the sky were stormy and dark. I looked into the deep dark waters and thought "I would gladly throw myself in, if only, all this misery would end." And yet as I stood there thinking – it seemed as though God said, "Gary Sharp, if you died today, you would drop right into Hell." I did not want to go to Hell. As you read this just now – let me ask – do you want to go there? I remember clearly all the details of my walk to that pier, but I do not remember a thing about the way I went home. Why? Because God revealed to me the truth that if I had died that day, I WOULD HAVE DROPPED INTO HELL. God can speak even when we are determined not to listen. The thought of ETERNITY brought terror to my heart. For I knew I was not ready for Eternity. God had been looking down – He knew all my thoughts – and He still loved me so much that He was willing to take unusual measures to speak to my soul.

I have another very vivid memory from those days. One evening as I was going to my room I passed by my aunt's open door.. The shadow on the far wall showed her kneeling form. She was down on her knees praying. I knew within my heart who she was burdened about. Later she told me that she feared that I was determined to go to Hell. Is someone praying for your soul, dear reader? Humble your heart and thank God that someone cares! A Gospel Series started about that time. I attended most meetings but skipped others. One thing I learned is that you cannot run from God! What no one knew was that I had acknowledged within myself that what they were preaching was true even if I didn't like what I was hearing. My outward response told everyone that I could care less! But I read the tracts they gave me! I didn't want God to stop speaking to me. I didn't want to be lost forever. One night after several weeks of meetings, my aunt announced that the preachers were coming for supper. Rudely I replied, "Well, I won't be here". However, for some reason I came home. The preachers spoiled everything. My aunt made one of my favourite meals but it tasted like sawdust. One read from the Bible after supper – it seemed like Psalm 119 – I thought it would never end. Then the other one prayed. Finally I tried to escape to my room, but one doesn't always get away so easily. One of the preachers spoke with me personally. I don't remember a word he said, but what I do remember is that when he laid his hand on my shoulder. This kind gesture made me realize one important fact – this man cares for my soul. The next obvious conclusion came through loud and clear – It's time I begin to care about my soul also! I had always thought that I could be saved anytime I really wanted to. But there I stood wanting it and realizing I was in the dark. I determined that, if there was salvation for Gary Sharp, I would get it that night.

I went to the gospel meeting and I listened as I hadn't done for years. Surely the Lord would speak to me. The first preacher got up and there was nothing. "Surely the second one will have something for me, God must know I want to be saved." But it was the same as with the first and when he was done, I was done too - done fighting – done questioning – and done delaying. Had I waited too long – had God had stopped speaking to me? While they were singing the last hymn – my aunt asked me if I would like to talk to the preachers. I said "Yes!" But "Why?", you say. Because anything is better than going to Hell in your sins. I had discovered what my problem was – it was my self-will and my sin. I didn't care what the others thought as they filed past me. I was going to Hell.

The preachers showed me some verses. The Scriptures revealed what Christ had done. It seemed too simple that HE had died for ME. "Can it be that simple." It was then that a verse came to my mind that I had learned in the

past. John 5:24, “Verily, verily” I knew what that meant – It is TRUE! “I say unto you” – and I thought, He is speaking to me – and I knew He never lied, He never made mistakes, He is always true. “He that heareth My Word” - That was exactly what I was doing.... I was hearing what God said. “and believeth Him that sent ME” – I knew why God sent His Son and where and why – it was to die for me. “Hath everlasting life” – right then, right there – I had it! “and shall not come into condemnation” – O the wonder of it all – it was as simple as He said. His promise was as real to me as it is to any other. That was December 7th 1961. I am ready. I have peace. I have His Word for it!

My father had come to know the Saviour through Isaiah 44:22 six months before my mother left him. It was 1987 before my mother and her husband were saved during a gospel series that John Slabaugh and I shared in Waubaushene, ON. She was 73 at the time. My half-sister Debbie was saved in 1998. The grace of God towards us is cause to give thanks to God forevermore.

.... Gary N Sharp