

Testimony

of Matty Vasey

"To God be the Glory great things he has done"

On 29th November, "Uncle Matty", a dear brother in the meeting where I go (Bethesda Gospel Hall) was called home to be with the Lord Jesus. The photo above was taken at his 100th birthday party last year (2013). While clearing his flat, his daughter found a copy of his life story and also his Christian testimony. She very kindly asked that it be shared, so a few hundred printed copies were made and handed out at his funeral. Below is a copy of his testimony and his life growing up in Newcastle, England. He was one of the most gentle, kind and loving people you could wish to meet, and his packed out funeral was testament to the high regard in which he was held. Over to Matty for his life story.....



“This is my Testimony of how I came to know the Lord Jesus Christ”

Little Matty Vasey was born on 13 Nov 1913 at a place called Byker in Newcastle. I was born of working class parents. Sadly my mother died when I was 5 years old. She died of the deadly Spanish flu which was raging through Europe at the time. In 1918 more folk died of the epidemic than the number of soldiers killed in the First World War. My brother and I were then under the care of granny, my father’s mother.

After a short while father married again and a stepmother was installed in our home causing much hostility between gran, father, and stepmother. My father was very bad tempered and the name of Christ was only used as a swear word, vows and bad language were flavour of the month. However, one ray of sunshine came out of the mist, she insisted we should go to Sunday School and as she was of Presbyterian stock I started to attend Byker Presbyterian Church on Gordon Road off Raby Street, which was the backbone of Byker. Talking of Byker, I watched the scene of Parishes being burned down from Byker village about 2 miles away. The firemen wore brass helmets. I attended Sunday School and Church for some years but was never challenged to the lostness of my soul, I was just going through the motions. It was more of a sociability exercise than a spiritual one. They held concerts on Saturday nights and you could also play billiards, one young lady said; Matty there’s plenty of young girls here you know.

Our home life began to deteriorate with no parental control and without any love or care. My stepmother received 3 shillings per week for her and 4 boys, she had twin boys by my father. The front room was let out for 6 shillings a week. Incidentally father died with heart failure when I was 13 and after a while my stepmother married again, and he died after about 9 months of marriage so the future was bleak and uncertain.

The years rolled by and I started to work in a furniture factory. At the commencement of one job, my work mates suggested I should accompany them on a Saturday night to Gosforth Dog Track, which I found very exciting. There’s an old saying it only takes one step to take a journey of 1000 miles so I made my debut on a downward spiral. I started to bet on horses as well. I saw the Epsom Derby and the Greyhound Derby at the White City in London. I travelled a lot to racecourses all over the country, and yet at times I used to ask myself whist attending the dogs “what on earth am I doing here wasting my life and my money.” I was in fact ‘Going to the Dogs’.

The Second Great War came and I couldn’t enlist as I was only classed C3. My stepmother died and the twins both joined up and I found myself in digs with a work mate and his wife and daughter. I lived with Jock and Mrs. Mac for about 13 years.

Leaving this sordid background behind let us go on to Higher things.

In 1955 I was feeling the urge for something I couldn't put into words, I took my first step in my search for something to lift me up, by going to the local library to look for something relating to the cross of Christ, as it was Easter time. Also, I felt the urge to go to some Church or Mission hall, and at odd times I would go to the Big Market where men preached the Gospel to a very large open air audience. Sometimes a young church group would take turns in reciting Bible verses and I used to gaze intently into their faces wondering what made them tick. I thought they were quite strange folk.

I started to go to Prudhoe Street Mission when it was situated in the town, and the Bainbridge Memorial Church on Heaton Road, 20 minutes from where I lived in Warwick Street. Whilst attending there I heard Joe Blinks, an associate preacher with Billy Graham, and I also heard Pastor Nic Moller, a German who was the only man to challenge Adolf Hitler about his evil ways, and how wrong he was.

I was beginning to show interest in the things of God, but I was still throwing good money after bad at the dogs. Observantly whilst waiting at the bus stop one day, my eyes fell upon a short poster stuck on the lamp standard which was at the bus stop and it read. 'We believe in Christ crucified, risen, and coming again' I thought that was amazing. I found later that the poster belonged to Bethel Christian Fellowship, which was right opposite the lamp post in Barras Bridge.

From the preaching that I had listened to I had learned I was a sinner and that I had need of a Saviour.

I had listened to many preachers, but this particular Sunday morning I heard the Truth concerning Eternal Salvation, that morning I gratefully received the Lord Jesus Christ into my heart and I had a profound peace, knowing that my sins were forgiven, to be remembered no more. For the scripture says in the first chapter of the gospel of John *'For as many as received him, to them gave he the power to become the sons of God, even to them who believe in his name: which were born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God'* I believe that no one else had a hand in this wonderful transaction, but it was between the almighty and myself. Shortly afterwards, I found fellowship with a lovely group of people called Bethel Christian Fellowship, (remember the poster) that met in an upper room at the top of some stairs in Barras Bridge for about ten years. There was a brother in their meeting called Jack Roy who preached in the open air. One day someone shouted out to Jack 'Hi you've cracked man' and Jack responded with 'Well you've got to be cracked to let the light in'. About ten years later I became a member of Somervyl Chapel on Benton Estate.

I always thought of myself as a confirmed bachelor, but in 1958 when I was 44 years old, I met a Christian girl called Lily (34) and we were married at the Central Hall in the West End of Newcastle. We started off our married life with a home up Stanhope Street, and we had a son and a daughter, Kathleen and John. Sadly my wife passed away in 1997 with Alzheimer's disease.

I am now worshipping at Bethesda Gospel Hall in Forest Hall and I love the Lord and I Love the Lords people.
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