

A Christian Testimony – Conversion Experience

by James Christian Petzold

This is a personal testimony of some life-changing events which took place in my early twenties and which reveal the faithfulness and goodness of God. I hope this will be of interest particularly to those who can relate to some extent to the first part (my early life). I have therefore tried to set down everything in order and as accurately as possible as it happened. I have included quite a lot of information which may seem trivial but I feel this is necessary to put the events in their proper context.

It is quite obvious that in spite of some really good things in the world, there is a lot which is evil, depressing and dangerous. Most people, it seems to me, live a less than contented and fulfilled existence and many are living in complete misery in some way or other. However, I am utterly convinced that God has a committed interest in each one of us and that this state of affairs was not His original intention for mankind. I do not think that we can always expect to understand the bigger picture, but what we do know we must hold on to.

I believe that Jesus Christ is the answer to the human condition and the reason for this will become clear in the following. In spite of the state the world is in today, I believe God knows and loves every man, woman and child in the world who is living now and who has ever lived. I also believe that free will is necessary and is His choice for us.

My early life

I was born in 1950. I had two brothers and a sister, but they were a lot older than me and, from the time when I was three years old, they spent most of their time away from home. My father left the family home when I was three and a half years old and set up home with another woman. My mother was recovering from the breakdown of her marriage and, after some years and major disappointments, she descended into a state of depression which, although well covered up, finally ended in her suicide in 1960. I believe that she cared for me as any mother would and there were occasions which I well remember where she made a great effort to bring some joy into my life but, due to her mental state, she was not able to cope with a small boy who was always up to mischief the moment her back was turned. Her relationship with me was rather distant. Between the ages of seven and ten, I was frequently left to my own devices at home while my mother went out to work part-time. Had she known, many of the things I did with other children in the neighbourhood when she was not around would have upset and worried her, even by today's standards. From the age of five, I was sent to a series of boarding schools and, for the first three years, this included the summer holidays as well. These years were particularly unpleasant. The boarding schools I attended were a stark environment in which to grow up and in one case, was filthy and unhygienic. Discipline was enforced with the cane, a hefty smack around the head and other punishments. Bullying was frequent and more difficult to cope with than the punishments administered by masters because it was more personal. It was impossible to escape from the feeling of powerlessness. Justice had its own peculiar meaning and there was no form of human affection. For me these schools were more a form of prison which had to be endured than a place of education and enlightenment. Although I was often punished for crimes I had not committed I was rarely found out for those which I had. I learned to become very devious. School life was ostensibly intended to 'make a man of you' but actually taught me how to ignore my own emotions and made me insensitive to the pain of others. I know there are some who are content with institutional life but it did not suit me at all. However, I found some escape and release in music as I was a keen violinist.

When I left boarding school at the age of eighteen, I appeared to be an amiable and generous sort of person with a very strong sense of humour but what was going on inside was quite different. My motives were, to a large extent, self-centred and I found I had a number of seriously disabling social

inadequacies. I was lonely and fairly proud. I did not make friends at school because of the atmosphere of distrust. In my hometown, people of my age had already formed their own social groups and there was no way I could easily break into them. In some ways, I was used to living my life in isolation. Emotionally, my years in boarding school had left their mark. I trusted no-one in my own generation. Girls, of course, were a different matter; I saw them as angels sent from heaven! (In 1970 or 71, when I was crossing an empty car park one Sunday morning on my way to a spiritualist church, I was suddenly confronted by a beautiful girl I knew with long blond hair who asked me where I was going. When I told her, she said that in the book of Deuteronomy in the Bible, God calls trying to contact the dead an abomination and that we are not to do it. Had the person who said that to me been male, I would have argued but, as it was, I immediately turned on my heel and went straight back home!)

My inability to make friends meant that I started to take refuge in drink. This resulted in some drink-related offences for which I found myself before the magistrate on two occasions. After work, I practised my violin for a couple of hours every evening and, although I was not a very good violinist (since I lacked the patience for proper disciplined practice) that did not stop me from struggling with pieces which were too difficult for me to play. After one such session of frustration expressed in sound, I remember my father waiting at the bottom of the stairs with his hair awry and looking as though he had just undergone a period of severe mental strain. He looked at me and asked if I had had a bad day at work! I also joined a local amateur symphony orchestra, not that I liked playing in orchestras particularly but, like a lot of young men, I imagined that my only hope for personal happiness lay in a meaningful relationship with some lovely female (the amateur orchestra having a fair number of them) - although I lacked the emotional maturity to make such a relationship actually work. I joined a political club for the same reason.

Beginnings

In November 1972, I was twenty-two, and would have never imagined how events would change me over the following two years. It is these events which I am about describe in detail.

At the beginning of the month, my girlfriend decided she wanted to go out with someone else. The relationship was only a few months old and I had stopped drinking as a result. I did not feel the need for it any more. Although my girlfriend never intended the relationship to get too serious, I still had to take two weeks holiday from work and stay with an aunt to recover from the emotional pain and feeling of rejection. I was surprised at the way it took all my energy as I was normally a very active person. In spite of this, I did not take up drinking again but resolved to find a replacement for my girlfriend – along with some extra ones to dampen the emotional consequences of another possible rejection!

Initial beliefs

At that time, I was also on a sort of personal spiritual quest and had read about and tried different forms of spiritual experience other than those of the Christian faith. From the religious education at the different schools, I understood God to be a sort of father figure. **I had no doubt that Jesus Christ was His son, miraculously conceived and born from a virgin. Nor did I ever doubt that Jesus rose from the dead after He had been crucified.** I had no trouble in accepting the first four books of the New Testament as fact, but that was the limit of my beliefs. I used to recite the Lord's Prayer (slightly altered) and read three chapters of the Bible every night, even when I was 'blind' drunk and the words were swimming before my eyes. I somehow thought this would do me good, although I didn't understand a lot of what I read. So, I had some religious inclinations. However, my beliefs had no impact on my life and my behaviour was no different to anyone else's of my age – except that it was somewhat more eccentric. Twenty years later, I discovered that some of my eccentricities were due to nature rather than nurture – we inherit more aspects of our personality

than I had at first realised. However, as far as God is concerned: my mild eccentricities have never been an issue with Him.

I was then attending a so-called day-release course from work. (As a young person, you were allowed one day a week at college to obtain some qualifications which were relevant to the job.) After the two-week break at my aunt's in November, I attended the technical college on the Tuesday as usual and fell into conversation with a Christian girl who was attending the same course. Then, I did not see that there was anything special about being a Christian and considered myself to be one anyway. I told her that I was embarking on experiments with transcendental meditation and that I was about to be baptised (the custom in the church that was to baptise me was to dab a cross in water on your forehead) on that Thursday morning before carrying out my spiritual experiments. She said that she would pray for me – which seemed a very odd thing to say at the time – and that I should leave the transcendental meditation well alone. I invited her out to dinner. She accepted, providing I would attend church with her that Sunday.

Declaration

According to plan, I took a couple of hours off work to be baptised on the Thursday morning. The service was taken by two witnesses. Part of the service involved declaring the following statements, which I did in all sincerity, addressing them to God and the spiritual world (which I believed to be present all around me). The words I was asked to say included the following: ***"I will renounce the devil and all his works, and constantly believe God's holy Word, and obediently keep his commandments and live as a soldier of Christ."*** As I left the church, I definitely felt that something profound but very subtle had changed in my life and that my action had not gone unnoticed. Although I did not understand this at the time, God had taken what I had said during the baptism service seriously.

I took my new friend out to dinner on Saturday evening as arranged. Among the many things we talked about, I outlined what I would be looking for in a wife. (She tells me that she wondered whether it was a date or an interview for that position!) However, she made it clear that, since she was only twenty years old, she was not looking for a husband. Anyway, I kept my promise and attended her church that Sunday. (During my discussions with the person who baptised me, I had remarked that the New Testament did not appear to agree with the arrangements in his church and in some cases seemed to contradict them. For example, why was there an altar in the church when the altar was supposed to have been dispensed with after the crucifixion, since Jesus was the ultimate sacrifice and the previous animal sacrifices were simply an illustration to the Jews of what was really going to be necessary to reconcile them to God? Rather, why wasn't there a communion table instead with the congregation sitting round it like the last supper described in the New Testament, etc?) When I entered my friend's church that Sunday, I was amazed to see a communion table in the centre with the congregation seated in a semicircle around it – instead of candles, there was a cup and a plate placed in the centre of it, almost as I had imagined how it should be!

After that Sunday, my Christian friend and I started to see each other. She then set about correcting some of the misconceptions I had about the Christian faith. As I saw the way she and her friends prayed and expected to see and saw their prayers answered, I decided that all of the accounts in the New Testament should have a direct impact on my life also. Most importantly, **I realised Jesus' command to become like small children in our approach towards God was crucial.** He said that we would see nothing of the 'kingdom of heaven' unless we did. I therefore took this approach since I reasoned that I could not expect anything from God unless I followed his instructions precisely (except where it was a clear case of exaggeration to get the point across – there is no record of a Christian cutting off his hand to avoid temptation, for example). At this point, my new girlfriend gave me a book which was written for people who were learning about the Christian faith. This book dealt with the subject of being **'right with God'** – in its simplest terms, this is a piece of

jargon used to describe the state of having a clear and open relationship with God and following His instructions. From reading this book, I understood that if I really wanted to enter into a relationship with God, **that relationship would have to be entirely on His terms**. I reasoned that since he is a God of love and wisdom, I should have nothing to fear from entering into a relationship with Him on that basis, although I was still dogged with a sort of irrational fear about the whole business.

Born again

One evening towards the end of November, with a feeling of apprehension and embarrassment, **I got down on my knees in my bedroom and surrendered my life to Jesus. I admitted to Him that I could see nothing good in me to recommend me to Him nor had I done anything that I could point to in order to justify myself in any way, instead, there were many things that I had done which had made me His enemy rather than His friend – I fully acknowledged that I was a sinner, through and through. I asked Him to forgive me for all the things I had done. I accepted that He had come into the world, which he had made, as a baby miraculously conceived and born of a virgin, had lived as a man on the earth and was brutalised and executed on my behalf. I understood that God cannot have anything to do with sin, so it had to be paid for. I asked Him to take full control of my life and be my Lord i.e., refer to Him whenever making important decisions, and Saviour.** (The old fashioned word for all of this is repentance which, strictly speaking, must include my renouncing all evil, which I had already done in the baptism service described in the previous paragraphs.) I also asked Him to spare me of some things about which I was fearful, but this was not a condition on my part. I had decided to trust Him implicitly. And I asked Him for a wife, a woman to share my life with and to love and care for. That was the sum of my prayer.

What happened next was totally unexpected. Immediately after my prayer, I felt the powerful presence of someone who seemed to be of great age, older than time itself and who was full of profound wisdom and had great power. It seemed as if He was standing about three or four feet away in front of me although I could not see Him with my eyes. Although I did not know Him, He knew me. I could feel Him looking right into my soul as if it were a block of clear glass and I could sense that He knew and understood me and my motives to an immense depth, far more than I understood them myself. He showed me that He knew me before I was born and from before He had made the world. Words are insufficient to describe what happened, it was extremely powerful, frightening and wonderful all at the same time. He did five things for me: He totally forgave me for all the sins I had ever committed. He filled my inner being with light – where previously I felt I was in total darkness. He showed me that I now had an eternal existence from before the world came into being and would continue into infinity. He took away the fear of death which had plagued me from childhood, (this fear has never returned since). He opened my understanding of the Bible – when I looked at the New Testament which was lying on my bed in front of me, I found that I was able to understand it as if every word was clearly and personally addressed to me. Even the print appeared clearer!

From then on, I spent time studying the New Testament and praying every evening – this was no chore, it was food to my soul. Because of this experience and because He promises in the New Testament to answer prayers, I prayed with a great sense of expectancy. I saw very many of my prayers answered, and answered in unexpected ways. The experience of forgiveness was very strong. On one occasion, it was so profound that I had the sense that I had never sinned in my life; my sins and wrong-doings had been completely washed away. I was talking to another Christian about this at the time who had experienced exactly the same thing.

My new girlfriend and I were engaged within six weeks.

Public testimony

Jesus says in the New Testament that His followers must confess their allegiance to Him publicly and be prepared to give a reason for their faith whenever challenged. If they denied Him, He would deny them. Everywhere I went, I wore a badge which said 'Smile, Jesus loves you'. I was also given the opportunity on numerous occasions to describe publicly how Jesus had fundamentally changed my life. I truly nailed my colours to the mast in every respect, in public life, in my father's home and at the workplace – with some interesting but predictable consequences!

Baptised in the Holy Spirit

In January/February 1973, I decided that, now I had become a Christian, I should expect to experience some of the supernatural events described in the Bible in my own life. Having read about the gift of suddenly being able to speak in a foreign language, as described in the Acts of the Apostles and some of Paul's letters in the New Testament, I got down on my knees in my room as usual and gave Jesus three reasons why I wanted to experience this ability for myself. I can only remember one of the reasons I gave Him: I wanted the ability to speak in tongues as a daily physical reminder that He had acknowledged my faith. As soon as I had finished asking Jesus for this ability, I distinctly heard the whispering of what sounded like a crowd of hundreds of voices speaking all at once from about thirty yards behind and to the right of me. (My room was on the first floor of the house and they seemed to come from some point at the same level of my room but from outside in the garden. It was as if there were no walls to the house to impede the sound.) With astonishment, combined with a feeling of excited expectancy, I waited there on my knees with my eyes closed as the voices came nearer and grew louder. Within about five seconds, I was completely surrounded by the voices. I felt that I was in the middle of a small crowd of people all whispering loudly simultaneously. I opened my mouth to speak and immediately found that I was speaking fluently in a language which was completely unknown to me. I was able to start and stop speaking in this new language at will, just like deciding whether to get up and walk or sit down. This ability has stayed with me ever since and I use it in prayer. The way in which I received the ability to speak in tongues was really quite unusual – so far, I have never met anyone who has had a similar experience.

Presumption

So, after having received this ability, I suggested to the Lord that it would be a good idea if He also enabled me to speak German in the same way and that if I were to go down to my father (who spoke the language fluently) in his study and start speaking German, he would have to believe in God! I asked the Lord for this ability and, without waiting for an answer, went straight downstairs to my father. When he looked up to see what I wanted, I opened my mouth to speak my new language expecting God to have answered my prayer. What came out was my new prayer language that the Lord had originally given me and not German! "What's that?" said my father "gobbledygook!?" "It's supposed to be German" I replied. I was then given a lecture about how much hard work I would have to put in to learn a language etc. etc. Retreating back to my room and feeling about an inch tall, I considered my first lesson in presumption. It was another seventeen years before I attempted to learn German in the conventional way. As with everything I attempt, I prayed for and received a great deal of help. The timing was such as to provide me with a means of earning a living after losing my position as an industrial scientist.

Miracle

Another supernatural event involved my car. In this case, I needed to attend an interview for a new job but could not get my Austin mini van to start. Having drained the battery trying to start the engine, I left the car for half an hour for the battery to recover a little and asked God to help me get it started. I tried and tried again but the engine merely turned over a couple of times until it became completely lifeless. The battery was now definitely flat. I then hid in the porch of the house where no one could see me and started to get rather irate with God since He promised in the Bible that He

would answer anything that we asked in Jesus' name and anything, as far as I understood, included my car! I went out another two times to try the starter. There was still no life in the battery – there may as well have been no battery in the car at all. After returning to the porch and closing the door, I pleaded with God again and came out and tried starting the engine once more. This time, as I turned the ignition key, it was as if the engine had been connected to a power station – it spun at great speed for about three seconds and then started. I can think of no practical explanation why the car should have behaved in this way other than that God had answered my prayer. (I am familiar with the chemistry of batteries.) The fact that I was too late for my interview was an indication to me that, according to God's intentions, this was not the right job for me.

The consequence of ignoring the voice of God in my heart

It was about this time that I needed to carry out a repair to the starter motor on my car. The work involved compressing a powerful spring which was retained by a cast iron washer. The washer was cracked and needed replacing so I used two cramps to compress the spring so that I could remove the washer. Placing the cramps on the spring, a suggestion came into my mind that I should *oil the cramps*. I ignored this advice and continued to tighten the screws until one of the cramps slipped off allowing the spring to shoot the washer straight through my glasses, filling my eye with glass. Dropping the starter motor, I ran to the front door, struggled with the latchkey, fought off the family dog who wanted to greet me as if she had not seen me for a whole year and finally made it to the bathroom upstairs to wash the glass out of my eye. On asking the Lord why He had let that happen, His immediate answer was quite simply "*because I love you*". When I had finished working on my car, I went to the hospital to have my eye inspected by a nurse. There was no glass in it. So I thank the Lord for preserving my eye. I believe God was showing me how important it is for me to heed His voice.

Life style

The remainder of 1973 was spent working, spending my free time with my fiancée, attending Christian meetings and taking part in Christian work. Each night, I spent some time reading my Bible and praying before going to bed. I was discovering new things all the time and I felt that I was on a supernatural adventure where literally anything could happen at any moment.

Water baptism

The New Testament also describes baptism as a declaration of faith which is accompanied by full immersion in water to symbolise death to the 'old life' and resurrection into the 'new life in Christ', which I was now experiencing. This was not represented by the baptism I received and I was determined to do it right, as described in the New Testament – understanding the full implications was not enough, compliance was what was called for. I did not want to miss out on anything that God was offering by being careless with His instructions. Since I could not claim to be an expert on spiritual matters, I was not in a position to compromise on anything which I was fully able to carry out. But first of all, I had to wait until they had rebuilt the baptistery (a sort of tank let into the floor) at the church I was attending. I was baptised in the autumn of 1973. However, reading the book of Acts, which describes the experiences of the first Christians, I believe that baptism should normally take place as soon as possible after receiving and submitting to Jesus as Saviour and Lord of your life.

Terror at night and the power of Jesus' name

It would seem that that things were quite straightforward from the time I handed over my life to God. This was not altogether true. On many occasions, I woke up in the middle of the night in absolute terror and with a strong sense of an evil presence close by me in the room. Just speaking the words 'Jesus Christ' caused the presence to retreat immediately. This happened a number of times. One night during my prayers before getting into bed, I asked Jesus if there was some passage of Scripture that I should read to deal with this problem. (I have to say that in spite of my having

read the Bible, I was still largely ignorant of what was written in it – in the Old Testament in particular.) As I prayed this prayer, the answer that came to me straight away was ‘Psalm 91’. This Psalm contains the verse ‘neither shall I fear the terror that stalks by night’ and although I still had the problem after reading the Psalm, I now had a promise that I should have no reason to fear it. Two or three weeks later, I woke up in a cold sweat and out of my mind with terror as I felt I was in the presence of the very Devil himself. I was too frightened even to open my eyes. I called to Jesus and as I mentioned His name, I heard an audible scream of extreme terror from this presence as it rapidly retreated from my room. Mentioning the name of Jesus had obviously scared the wits out of whatever had come to trouble me. At the same time, I felt Jesus speak the question into my heart ‘*what's the matter child?*’ with the implication that there was nothing for me to be afraid of now that I belonged to Him – fear, when you think about it, is a lack of faith in God's ability or will to care for us. It is quite clear that Jesus *expects* us to use our faith. I never had a visit of this nature from an evil presence again. I would like to emphasise that these experiences were not vague but extremely powerful and very frightening. I have seen two people testify that they had attacks at night after they had surrendered their lives to Jesus. In both cases, they had practised astrology – (as had I) before they became Christians. (I had also used Tarot cards for fortune telling before I became a Christian. When I disposed of the cards in an industrial paper shredder, the temperature in the room suddenly dropped and left me shivering with cold. I did not expect this to happen and had used the machine for shredding other documents just previously without any such effects.)

I see Jesus – conviction and acceptance

Some months passed as I continued with my new faith, attending meetings, Bible studies, prayer meetings and taking part in an 'outreach' in a small town in the South of England. My fiancée sang in a gospel group and I often went along as well and described what had happened to me in front of the congregation. I brought one person to faith and encouraged others – nothing spectacular.

My fiancée and I decided to take our honeymoon in North Wales as we wanted to meet some Christians we had heard about in the region who were similar to us in our beliefs. Like most honeymoons I have heard about, ours had its fair share of minor irritations (the hotel, for example, had not taken any notice of my reservation because I had made it by phone!).

I had been told by one religious person I knew quite well that marriage was second best and that, as a Christian, one should really live a celibate life. Although I had disregarded this as ‘superspiritual’ and considered that it may have been alright for him but I was not made that way, the idea had sown a doubt in my conscience which came back to me from time to time. The doubt was unreasonable but no argument would shift it. One such time was on the first evening of our honeymoon. For obvious reasons, I did not discuss the problem with my wife but, as with everything that bothered me in a very personal way, I asked the Lord. On opening my Bible at random, my eye immediately fell on a verse in the Old Testament as if it were highlighted: **He who finds a wife, finds a good thing** – and I knew the Lord was answering me. This problem has never occurred since and after more than 30 years of marriage, I can still say that apart from surrendering to Jesus, marrying my wife was the best decision I ever made.

My wife and I visited the small Christian fellowship on the Tuesday after the first weekend to introduce ourselves to the people there. The next day, as we were walking through the village, the pastor drew up in his car and told us that he felt that the Lord was prompting him to invite us to dinner the following day. We accepted the invitation and duly turned up for lunch on the Thursday. We sat at a large table with about a dozen other people. For some reason I ended up describing all my spiritual activities before I had become a Christian, how I had been telling fortunes using Tarot cards and astrology. They gave me their full attention as they listened in silence while eating their meal but afterwards the pastor gently tapped me on the shoulder and invited me to come into the next room across the hall (we were in a large Victorian house on the side of a hill with a splendid

view of the bay) and describe my experiences again to him in detail. We were accompanied by our wives and a single lady. Everyone listened attentively while I went through the whole story again. The pastor then told me that I should be prayed for by a Christian who was living a godly life. I believed that he was such a person and asked him to pray for me there and then. While he prayed for me and laid his hand on my head, I felt as if something which had been weighing me down for a long time left me immediately. (Although my experience was not very dramatic, I have since seen people screaming, shouting, speaking as different objectionable personalities, going into twisted contortions, squirming like snakes and behaving like animals when demons leave them. Thankfully, this has never happened to me.)

That night, I was telling my wife of my concern that I had not really demonstrated that I had surrendered everything in my life to God. I was really anxious because I thought that God required me literally to give up everything, including my marriage, and become a tramp to show there was nothing left in my life that I was holding on to. She said to me that that was not what God meant by being fully surrendered to Him and then she drifted off to sleep. **However, I was fully awake and casting about in my mind as to what more God wanted from me. Suddenly, I was confronted by a person dressed in white at the end of our bed. This person stood about six feet tall and was clothed in a white garment which was radiant like lightning. I could see His face and beard but could not make out His features because of the brilliance of the light. Although the light was so bright, I was not blinded and could still look at Him without having to squint. What was more terrifying was that this person was awesomely powerful and searingly pure, selfless and holy (like a sort of spiritual bleach) – words are inadequate to describe the experience properly. I realised what a disgusting and selfish creature I really was. I wondered how I could hide from this Holy Being, disappear or somehow simply cease to exist in order to get away since I could not tolerate His presence. As these thoughts filled me with a feeling of utter consternation, I began to sense complete forgiveness for my filthy, selfish nature. Whereas previously I had been thoroughly forgiven for all the selfish and unclean things I had done in my life, this time I was forgiven for what I was as a person. I was now shown that I had a right to exist simply because He had decided that He wanted me to exist. It had nothing to do with me. I then felt His utterly selfless love coming over me in powerful waves and envelope me with greater and greater power and intensity. I could see that He was looking directly at me and His whole attention was entirely focused on me. The power of His love increased so much that I felt as though I would be absorbed into Him and consumed out of existence. I then began to feel anxious and a little alarmed – I was not used to unconditional love, and certainly not with this power. I was not even used to ordinary love; it had taken some time for me to learn to tell my wife that I loved her and I was completely out of my depth here. I started to pull away from His love. He gently drew away and gradually withdrew from the room.**

The whole experience is impossible to express in words – it was too powerful and inexpressible. I really felt as though I was going to be completely taken out of this world into Him. The Jesus I saw was much greater, more full of complete selfless love, purity and power than I was able to comprehend from the descriptions in the New Testament. I am not saying that my experience was greater than those described in the New Testament, simply that human language is inadequate to describe Him, there is nothing in this world to use for comparison, so the writers of the New Testament were experiencing the same limitations in expressing what they saw. You have to look at the devotion of some of His disciples to get some idea of the effect of His personality on people. When I say selfless, I mean without any consideration for self at all – literally 100%.

It is now clear to me why His concern at His trial and crucifixion was focused on Pilate, His interrogator, the people who mistreated Him, the women who wept for Him, the thief on the cross beside Him and Mary His mother but absolutely not on Himself, in spite of His body being wracked

with searing pain from head to foot. While in the Garden of Gethsemane, once He had come to terms with what He was about to go through, His concern from then on was focused solely on those around Him. This is His nature.

Sonship

A few days later, as I was travelling home on the train, God again unexpectedly spoke into my heart. This time, He showed me that I was His son and nobody else's. My natural father was there simply to care for my physical needs. I spoke this out loud to my wife.

A sense of humour

As the train was cruising into the station, I stood up and put on my greatcoat. When my wife asked me why I was putting on 'that heavy greatcoat' with the sun shining outside, I replied jokingly, "this is England, anything could happen with the weather; it could rain or hail or even snow!" As soon as we got off the train, we were greeted with rain, snow and hail – all within a couple of minutes and all in brilliant sunshine!

Reassurance

Again, as I was puzzling over what it means to be "led by the Spirit", I got on my knees and asked Jesus what He expected me to do about a certain issue. He answered by flooding me with His love and with the assurance that it did not matter what I did. (Obviously, this was not a licence to returning to a life of sin.) This may seem trivial but, since I had pulled myself away from Him when He appeared to me because I could not cope with the power of His love, I had somehow felt that I had rejected Christ. God was now showing me quite clearly that He had not interpreted my response as my rejecting Him in any way.

Life since those days

Since that time, my experiences of God have been less frequent and certainly not of that intensity. We are, after all, called to live our life by faith and not to depend on signs and wonders. However, I believe that He gave me enough to get through testing times over the last thirty years and I still look forward to being in His presence in the future. There are many times when I experience answered prayer and, from time to time, I have been given unmistakable assurances from the Lord Jesus during difficult times. There was a time when I was considered to be unintelligent, even by those close to me. Jesus has unlocked the abilities I was born with and enabled me to achieve much, not to mention the grace that I have received from Him in the form of provision and opportunities. I can honestly say that 'I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me' (provided me with inner resources beyond what I would normally have to cope with difficult circumstances and achieve objectives – I have experienced this over and over and over again). From time to time, my wife and I work together encouraging others in their faith. I work full time as a technical translator and my wife supports my work (keeps me in business!) by proofreading.

What this has meant to me since

I believe that Jesus is interested in revealing Himself to everyone and what I myself have experienced, achieved and seen is only a little of what is really available from God. I can honestly say that deciding to invite Jesus into my life and submit myself fully to Him was the most important decision in my life and I have never regretted making that decision for a moment since that time. I have put this down in writing to persuade you the reader to consider seriously where your life is going and encourage you to consider Jesus and what He has for you.

God keeps His promises – analytical summary and references

I believe that all spiritual experiences must be checked against the revealed Word of God in the Bible. In no way can anything I do myself form the basis of justification except to believe and accept what He has done for us. I rely totally on His grace and forgiveness, and He has paid the price Himself for that forgiveness.

The following paragraph is an analysis of the events that I have described with scriptural references. The purpose is to give you confidence in expecting God to be true to His Word as you venture to comply with what Jesus has told us to do. Although certain aspects of your experience will be different to mine, the outcome will be the same. The way God has revealed Himself to my wife, for example, has been different to me but the message has been the same. So here is a bald description of the events as they occurred with the scriptures to show you why I did what I did and what happened as a result.

I turned away from attending a spiritualist church, stopped reading Tarot cards and reading astrological charts etc.⁽⁰⁾.

I approached God as a little child⁽¹⁾. I got down on my knees in the privacy of my room⁽²⁾ and admitted to God that I was fundamentally evil⁽³⁾, I was His enemy⁽⁴⁾, although I was apparently a nice person to know, consciously and subconsciously my thoughts and actions were motivated by selfishness. I accepted that He had paid the price for the evil state of my soul⁽⁵⁾ by leaving His former exalted state in Heaven to be conceived supernaturally and born from a virgin⁽⁶⁾, become a man⁽⁷⁾ and be unjustly executed⁽⁸⁾ on a wooden cross⁽⁹⁾ where He took all the curses which were due to me. I believed that Jesus rose from the dead⁽¹⁰⁾. [I believe the crucifixion and resurrection of the Son of God to be the single most important event in the entire history of mankind. I strongly recommend that anyone not realising this yet treat it as a matter of urgency to discover its implications, and for themselves in particular.] I thanked Jesus for His love and sacrifice. I invited Him into my heart as my Lord⁽¹¹⁾ and **surrendered my life Him** to direct it as He pleased⁽¹²⁾. Jesus revealed Himself to me as an ancient and eternally wise being⁽¹³⁾ who was in existence before the world came into existence⁽¹⁴⁾ and knew me through and through⁽¹⁵⁾, although I did not know Him. He forgave me for all I had done⁽¹⁶⁾. He made my spirit come alive⁽¹⁷⁾. He gave me eternal life⁽¹⁸⁾. He opened my understanding⁽¹⁹⁾ so that I could understand the Scriptures (Old and New Testament of the Bible). He took away my fear of death⁽²⁰⁾. He gave me the ability to overcome temptation in my thoughts. He has enabled me to resist temptation and provided a way out even when I barely had the strength to pray for help⁽²¹⁾ and where I have failed, forgiveness and cleansing has been available for me to get up and start afresh. (I have found considering the cross of Jesus to be extremely powerful in eradicating the sense of personal guilt^(21a).) He gave me purpose to my life and helped me to make sense of it⁽²²⁾. I told people that I was now a Christian⁽²³⁾. I told people in public what Jesus had done for me and what He could do for them⁽²⁴⁾. I wore a badge at all times to show that I was associated with Him and provoke discussion⁽²⁵⁾ (I am not implying that the Bible tells you to wear a badge!). I spent time each day in prayer and reading the New Testament⁽²⁶⁾. I joined a Christian fellowship⁽²⁷⁾. He answered my prayers⁽²⁸⁾. I asked for His Spirit⁽²⁹⁾. He gave me His Spirit to live in me for the rest of my life⁽³⁰⁾. I asked for the ability to speak in tongues⁽³¹⁾. He gave me the ability to speak in tongues⁽³²⁾. I was baptised by immersion⁽³³⁾. He gave me power over evil spirits by using His name⁽³⁴⁾. He has healed many of my sicknesses and those of others that I know⁽³⁵⁾. He revealed Himself to me so that I could see Him with my physical eyes⁽³⁶⁾. He revealed to me the purity and holiness of His nature⁽³⁷⁾. He revealed to me my selfish evil nature. He justified my existence on this earth and accepted me for what I am⁽³⁸⁾. He revealed His unselfish love to me and drowned me in His love almost to annihilation⁽³⁹⁾. He has kept His promises. He has provided for me⁽⁴⁰⁾ and enabled me to overcome all problems and difficulties in my life⁽⁴¹⁾. Sometimes he has taken the problems away. I have asked for wisdom in countless situations and He has given me

wisdom to deal with them and overcome them⁽⁴²⁾. He has enabled me to study, provided for me and my family while doing so, enabled me to pass exams with distinction and earn a living (I am a post graduate scientist with a PhD and have worked in industry as a senior scientist)⁽⁴³⁾. He was with me at every stage⁽⁴⁴⁾. He is making me a whole person and enabling me to be a blessing to others⁽⁴⁵⁾. The number of answered prayers and times he has enabled me to do things is countless⁽⁴⁶⁾. God's faithfulness has been true in spite of a long period of disillusionment with my church experience, listening to and then unlearning misleading or unbalanced teaching and problems associated with inconsistencies and contradictions in my own personality which have take years to come to light but which are being resolved with God's help. But that is another story which is still ongoing and beyond the scope of what I wanted to describe and explain here.

As I said at the beginning, I believe that God knows and loves every man, woman and child in the world that ever lived and it gives Him no pleasure at all to see any one of them lost⁽⁴⁷⁾. I urge you to consider carefully what I have written so that you may receive what God has provided for you.

If you wish to contact me, please don't hesitate to drop me a line.

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References (God keeps His promises)

0) **Leviticus 19:2** "Speak to all the congregation of the sons of Israel and say to them, ' You shall be holy, for I the LORD your God am holy. **Leviticus 20:6** 'As for the person who turns to mediums and to spiritists, to play the harlot after them, I will also set My face against that person and will cut him off from among his people. **Deuteronomy 18:10-12** "There shall not be found among you anyone who makes his son or his daughter pass through the fire, one who uses divination, one who practices witchcraft, or one who interprets omens, or one who casts a spell, or a medium, or a spiritist, or one who calls up the dead. sorcerer, "For whoever does these things is detestable to the LORD; and because of these detestable things the LORD your God will drive them out before you. **Acts 19:19** And many of those who practiced magic brought their books together and began burning them in the sight of everyone; and they counted up the price of them and found it fifty thousand pieces of silver.

1) **Matthew 18:3** and said, "Truly I say to you, unless you are converted and become like children, you will not enter the kingdom of heaven. **Mark 10:15** "Truly I say to you, whoever does not receive the kingdom of God like a child will not enter it *at all*."

2) **Matthew 6:6** "But you, when you pray, go into your inner room, close your door and pray to your Father who is in secret, and your Father who sees *what is done* in secret will reward you.

3) **Luke 11:13** " If you then, being evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will *your* heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to those who ask Him?" **Mark 10:18** And Jesus said to him, "Why do you call Me good? No one is good except God alone. **Romans 3:23** for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, **Jeremiah 17:9** "The heart is more deceitful than all else And is desperately sick; Who can understand it?"

4) **Matthew 12:30** " He who is not with Me is against Me; and he who does not gather with Me scatters.

5) **1 Corinthians 15:3** For I delivered to you as of first importance what I also received, that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures,

6) **Phillipians 2:5-8** Have this attitude in yourselves which was also in Christ Jesus, who, although He existed in the form of God, did not regard equality with God a thing to be grasped, but emptied Himself, taking the form of a bond-servant, *and* being made in the likeness of men. Being found in appearance as a man, He humbled Himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross. **Matthew 1:23** "Behold, the virgin shall be with child and shall bear a son, and they shall call his name Immanuel," which translated means, "GOD WITH US." **Luke 1:34-35** Mary said to the angel, "How can this be, since I am a virgin?" The angel answered and said to her, " The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you; and for that reason the holy Child shall be called the Son of God.

7) **Luke 3:23** When He began His ministry, Jesus Himself was about thirty years of age, being, as was supposed, the son of Joseph, the son of Eli,

8) **Matthew 27:24** When Pilate saw that he was accomplishing nothing, but rather that a riot was starting, he took water and washed his hands in front of the crowd, saying, "I am innocent of this Man's blood; see *to that* yourselves." **1 Peter 2:22** who committed no sin, nor was any deceit found in his mouth; **2 Corinthians 5:21** He made Him who knew no sin *to be* sin on our behalf, so that we might become the righteousness of God in Him. **Matthew 27:35** And when they had crucified Him, they divided up His garments among themselves by casting lots. **Mark 15:24** And they *crucified Him,

and * divided up His garments among themselves, casting lots for them *to decide* what each man should take. **Luke 23:33** When they came to the place called The Skull, there they crucified Him and the criminals, one on the right and the other on the left. **John 19:18** There they crucified Him, and with Him two other men, one on either side, and Jesus in between.

9) **Galatians 3:13** Christ redeemed us from the curse of the Law, having become a curse for us—for it is written, “cursed is everyone who hangs on a tree”—

10) E.g. **Matthew 28:1&9** Now after the Sabbath, as it began to dawn toward the first day of the week, Mary Magdalene and the other Mary came to look at the grave.... And behold, Jesus met them and greeted them. And they came up and took hold of His feet and worshiped Him. **Matthew 28:16-17** But the eleven disciples proceeded to Galilee, to the mountain which Jesus had designated. When they saw Him, they worshiped Him; but some were doubtful.

Mark 16:9-12 Now after He had risen early on the first day of the week, He first appeared to Mary Magdalene, from whom He had cast out seven demons. She went and reported to those who had been with Him, while they were mourning and weeping. When they heard that He was alive and had been seen by her, they refused to believe it. After that, He appeared in a different form to two of them while they were walking along on their way to the country.

Luke 24:33-35 And they got up that very hour and returned to Jerusalem, and found gathered together the eleven and those who were with them, saying, "The Lord has really risen and has appeared to Simon." They began to relate their experiences on the road and how He was recognized by them in the breaking of the bread. **John 20:18** Mary Magdalene came, announcing to the disciples, "I have seen the Lord," and that He had said these things to her. **John 20:26** After eight days His disciples were again inside, and Thomas with them. Jesus came, the doors having been shut, and stood in their midst and said, "Peace be with you."

1 Corinthians 15:5-8 and that He appeared to Cephas, then to the twelve. After that He appeared to more than five hundred brethren at one time, most of whom remain until now, but some have fallen asleep; then He appeared to James, then to all the apostles; and last of all, as to one untimely born, He appeared to me also.

11) **Matthew 22:37** And He said to him, “ ‘you shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind.’ **Luke 4:8** Jesus answered him, “It is written, ‘you shall worship the Lord your God and serve Him only.’ ”

12) **Romans 10:9** that if you confess with your mouth Jesus *as* Lord, and believe in your heart that God raised Him from the dead, you will be saved; **James 4:10** Humble yourselves in the presence of the Lord, and He will exalt you.

13) **Luke 11:31** “The Queen of the South will rise up with the men of this generation at the judgment and condemn them, because she came from the ends of the earth to hear the wisdom of Solomon; and behold, something greater than Solomon is here. **Matthew 13:54** He came to His hometown and *began* teaching them in their synagogue, so that they were astonished, and said, “Where *did* this man *get* this wisdom and *these* miraculous powers? **Mark 6:2** When the Sabbath came, He began to teach in the synagogue; and the many listeners were astonished, saying, “Where did this man *get* these things, and what is *this* wisdom given to Him, and such miracles as these performed by His hands? **Daniel 7:9** “I kept looking Until thrones were set up, And the Ancient of Days took *His* seat; His vesture *was* like white snow And the hair of His head like pure wool. His throne *was* ablaze with flames, Its wheels *were* a burning fire.

14) **John 8:58** Jesus said to them, “Truly, truly, I say to you, before Abraham was born, I am.”

15) **Job 21:27** “Behold, I know your thoughts, And the plans by which you would wrong me. **Psalms 139 1-4** O LORD, You have searched me and known me. You know when I sit down and when I rise up; You understand my thought from afar. You scrutinize my path and my lying down, And are intimately acquainted with all my ways. Even before there is a word on my tongue, Behold, O LORD, You know it all. **Jeremiah 17:10** “I, the LORD, search the heart, I test the mind, Even to give to each man according to his ways, According to the results of his deeds.

16) **1 John 1:9** If we confess our sins, He is faithful and righteous to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.

17) **1 Peter 3:18** For Christ also died for sins once for all, *the* just for *the* unjust, so that He might bring us to God, having been put to death in the flesh, but made alive in the spirit;

18) **John 17:2** even as You gave Him authority over all flesh, that to all whom You have given Him, He may give eternal life.

19) **Luke 24:45** Then He opened their minds to understand the Scriptures,

20) **Hebrews 2:15** and might free those who through fear of death were subject to slavery all their lives.

21) **1 Corinthians 10:13** No temptation has overtaken you but such as is common to man; and God is faithful, who will not allow you to be tempted beyond what you are able, but with the temptation will provide the way of escape also, so that you will be able to endure it.

21a) **John 3:14** As Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of Man be lifted up;

22) **Jeremiah 29:11** ‘For I know the plans that I have for you,’ declares the LORD, ‘plans for welfare and not for calamity to give you a future and a hope.

23) **Matthew 10:32** “Therefore everyone who confesses Me before men, I will also confess him before My Father who is in heaven.

24) **Mark 16:15** And He said to them, “ Go into all the world and preach the gospel to all creation.

25) **Luke 12:8** “And I say to you, everyone who confesses Me before men, the Son of Man will confess him also before the angels of God;

26) **2 Timothy 3:16** All Scripture is inspired by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, for training in righteousness;

- 27) **Hebrews 10:25** not forsaking our own assembling together, as is the habit of some, but encouraging *one another*; and all the more as you see the day drawing near.
- 28) **John 14:14** “If you ask Me anything in My name, I will do it. **John 16:23** “ In that day you will not question Me about anything. Truly, truly, I say to you, if you ask the Father for anything in My name, He will give it to you.
- 29) **Luke 11:13** “ If you then, being evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will *your* heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to those who ask Him?”
- 30) **Hebrews 13:5** Make sure that your character is free from the love of money, being content with what you have; for He Himself has said, "I WILL NEVER DESERT YOU, NOR WILL I EVER FORSAKE YOU,"
- 31) **Acts 2:4** And they were all filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak with other tongues, as the Spirit was giving them utterance.
- 32) **1 Corinthians 14:18** I thank God, I speak in tongues more than you all;
- 33) **Matthew 3:13** Then Jesus *arrived from Galilee at the Jordan *coming* to John, to be baptized by him. **Matthew 3:14** But John tried to prevent Him, saying, “I have need to be baptized by You, and do You come to me?” **Matthew 3:15** But Jesus answering said to him, “Permit *it* at this time; for in this way it is fitting for us to fulfill all righteousness.” Then he *permitted Him. **Matthew 3:16** After being baptized, Jesus came up immediately from the water; and behold, the heavens were opened, and he saw the Spirit of God descending as a dove *and* lighting on Him, **John 13:16** “Truly, truly, I say to you, a slave is not greater than his master, nor *is* one who is sent greater than the one who sent him. & **Mark 1:9** & **Mark 1:10**; **Mark 16:16** “ He who has believed and has been baptized shall be saved; but he who has disbelieved shall be condemned. & **Luke 3:21**; **Acts 2:37** Now when they heard *this*, they were pierced to the heart, and said to Peter and the rest of the apostles, “ Brethren, what shall we do?” **Acts 2:38** Peter *said* to them, “ Repent, and each of you be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins; and you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. **Colossians 2:12** having been buried with Him in baptism, in which you were also raised up with Him through faith in the working of God, who raised Him from the dead.
- 34) **Mark 16:17** “These signs will accompany those who have believed: in My name they will cast out demons, they will speak with new tongues;
- 35) **Matthew 9:35** Jesus was going through all the cities and villages, teaching in their synagogues and proclaiming the gospel of the kingdom, and healing every kind of disease and every kind of sickness.
- 36) **Acts 9:17** So Ananias departed and entered the house, and after laying his hands on him said, “ Brother Saul, the Lord Jesus, who appeared to you on the road by which you were coming, has sent me so that you may regain your sight and be filled with the Holy Spirit.” **1 Corinthians 15:8** and last of all, as to one untimely born, He appeared to me also.
- 37) **Mark 1:24** saying, “ What business do we have with each other, Jesus of Nazareth? Have You come to destroy us? I know who You are— the Holy One of God!” **John 6:69** “We have believed and have come to know that You are the Holy One of God.”
- 38) **Romans 4:5** But to the one who does not work, but believes in Him who justifies the ungodly, his faith is credited as righteousness, (work in this context meaning doing things in order to justify oneself to God).
- 39) **1 John 4:8** The one who does not love does not know God, for God is love.
- 40) **Matthew 6:33** “But seek first His kingdom and His righteousness, and all these things will be added to you.
- 41) **Philippians 4:13** I can do all things through Him who strengthens me.
- 42) **James 1:5** But if any of you lacks wisdom, let him ask of God, who gives to all generously and without reproach, and it will be given to him.
- 43) **Philippians 4:13** I can do all things through Him who strengthens me.
- 44) **Matthew 28:20** teaching them to observe all that I commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age.”
- 45) **Ephesians 2:10** For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand so that we would walk in them.
- 46) **Philippians 4:6** Be anxious for nothing, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God.
- 47) **John 3:17** “For God did not send the Son into the world to judge the world, but that the world might be saved through Him.

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