

Testimony of John Jarman

I was blessed in being born into a Christian family with a dear praying father and mother. From a child I was brought up to attend the house of God every Lord's day.

However, the grace of God is not inherited from others, even from dear godly parents, and so despite all the services which I attended and the Sunday School teaching all my young life, I sadly have to confess that as I grew in my teenage years I looked forward to the day when I would be "free" and able to drop all my chapel and Sunday School attendance. Thankfully, I was never permitted to break away from it, even if inside I wanted to. As I took my final G.C.E. school exams I can well remember praying to God to help me, and I was thankful for passing sufficient exams to embark on a career in banking. I know this is merely what one might call natural praying.

It was not until a year or so before I was called up for my National Service that I realise the Lord started to work in my heart and gave me a hunger and thirst after the things of God. I began to listen to sermons in a way I never had before; to read the word of God and Christian books with a desire to know more. When reading a book about a soldier who served in the Crimean War and had been greatly blessed through the text *1John 1:7*

"the blood of Jesus Christ his Son cleanseth from all sin"

I had a great desire that my sins should be forgiven as his had been, and to know the Lord in the way that he did. I started to listen to ministers whom I had rather despised. On several occasions I felt that the Lord spoke to me through His word. During one sermon on *Acts 26:28*

"Almost a Christian"

I felt very searched by it. At another time after hearing a sermon on *Micah 4:13*

"Arise and thresh, O daughter of Zion"

, where this was likened to earnest wrestling with the Lord in prayer, I went home and as soon as I could went up to my room and just dropped on my knees and prayed to the Lord for His salvation as I had never prayed before.

About a year after this, the time came for me to go into the RAF to do my two years' National Service. As I went in it seemed as though I was divided in half. One half of me wanted to break away from everything to do with God, and the other half was crying to the Lord to keep me from falling away as I felt that if He let me go I would forever be lost. My mother gave me a Daily Light and I had written in the front and back covers a hymn by John Newton, and a prayer. The hymn began as follows

*Tis a point I long to know,
(Oft it causes anxious thought),
Do I love the Lord or no?
Am I His or am I not?"*

The prayer was from a card a dear lady at our chapel had given me (I am quite sure she prayed for my soul until the day of her death):

*"Lord Jesus make Thyself to me,
A living bright reality,
More present to faith's vision keen,
Than any outward object seen.
More dear, more intimately nigh,
Than e'en the sweetest earthly tie."*

My two years in the Air Force proved to be a wonderful blessing in at least two ways:

Naturally

I had led a sheltered life and I found it was very good for me to be thrust into a life so totally different from the one I was used to. I had to live and train with men from all walks of life and this experience was a very good learning process. I went into the RAF medical branch, and the medical training and subsequent work at a Station Sick Quarters on an RAF Camp in Berkshire has proved to be a great blessing in so many ways during my life. It has also helped me to gain an experience of the lives of many people which otherwise I might never have had. I found very great satisfaction in being able to help and care for people, which was so totally different from my banking career. When I came out after two years and returned to the City of London, I hated the confinement of an office and just longed to be able to do things for and help other people. (I had to wait a few years before being able to experience this again when we set up our small care home for the elderly, some 30 years later).

Spiritually

I knew it was the time when the Lord continued His work of grace in my heart and I came out a very different person from the one I was when I entered the RAF. On the day I joined up on 26th February 1959 (a date indelibly ingrained in my mind), my mother was praying for me and as she was reading the scripture she came to the verse in *2Kings 6:17*

“LORD, I pray thee, open his eyes that he may see. And the LORD opened the eyes of the young man, and he saw...”

and she just prayed this would apply to me. I can humbly say that this was indeed my experience.

I felt I was not a Christian yet longed to be a believer in the Lord Jesus. I knew the words of Jesus

“I am the way, the truth, and the life”

John 14:6, but at that time I just did not seem to know how I could experience the personal knowledge that Jesus was mine. Because I did not at the beginning have any other Christians to converse with, I just read the bible and prayed earnestly. The Lord graciously opened up to me more and more of the truth of His word and I came to the gradual realisation that I did not have to “do” anything to be saved, but to believe on the Lord Jesus Christ.

When I arrived at my permanent camp after my “square bashing” and trade training were completed I linked up with SASRA, a Christian organisation for men and women serving in the Forces. I was able to go on a SASRA house party to the Keswick Convention in 1960. This was one of the most blessed experiences of my Christian life. I just drank in the teaching and it gave me a love for dear Christian friends I made from various denominations, which I might never have had if I had stayed within my own denomination. It also challenged me very deeply concerning the prayerful and practical support of missionary work, and this has never left me. At the end of that week at the final service, although there were many thousands attending, it was just as though I was there alone before the Lord and I was greatly blessed. Afterwards all in our house party went to the shore of Lake Derwentwater for a time of prayer and praise, and there were many other little groups who had gone for that purpose as well. It still remains as a sweet memory that the beauty of the surroundings in the evening sunset and the sight of many other little groups also meeting with the Lord was almost like a touch of heaven on earth. As I came back from that week away, I can remember to this day an experience of joy in my heart which lasted for many weeks. The visiting minister at our chapel on the Sunday following took as his text *Job 19:28*

“seeing the root of the matter is found in me”

and I felt I could say I believed the root of the matter (belief in the Lord Jesus Christ as my Saviour) was implanted within me by God’s grace.

Shortly before I was demobbed, I attended the Annual Meeting of SASRA at Westminster Central Hall. Serving men and women had to sit in the choir stalls in their uniform. An opportunity was given for any to give a short testimony if they so wanted. I felt compelled to stand up and say what great things the Lord had done for me through being in the Forces.

So I completed my National Service – beforehand, I certainly did not want to do it – afterwards how very, very thankful I was for the whole experience both natural and spiritual.

During the year after I left the RAF I felt that I should join my local church in Croydon and confess Jesus through the waters of baptism. I could testify that despite my sinful heart the Lord had saved me and kept me from the sad evils that so many fell into. How I could praise His name and see how many of the Lord’s dear people were used as a means of keeping me. Often their kindness in inviting me to their homes was part of that means of keeping me, and I could truly say I knew the truth of that lovely verse in *1John 3:14*

“Ye know that ye have passed from death unto life because ye love the brethren”.

The Sunday before I gave my testimony to the church members our Pastor was reading from *Psalms 91*. As he read *verse 2* it just seemed that the words

“My God, in Him will I trust”

stood out in bold letters and I had that great sense of joy that this God was “my God”. I felt that the Lord had indeed opened my eyes like Elisha’s young servant to see wondrous things.

It is wonderful to look back on life’s pathway and to trace that same saving and keeping grace. O how I mourn that so many, many times I have failed Him but, praise His name, He has never failed me. How one longs for the dear young people that they too may be kept from the terrible evils and sins of the present day and to be brought to that same knowledge of the dear Lord Jesus Christ as their Saviour and Friend. Since the day when it was on the calendar as I took my first banking exams, I have always loved the verse in *Psalms 37:5*

“Commit thy way unto the LORD, trust also in Him and He shall bring it to pass”.

I can testify that this is true, and all who are enabled to commit their way to Him will find He will NEVER let them down.