

Personal Testimony

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[0 : 00] What things were given to me, years I counted not for Christ, ye doubtless, and I count all things but lost, for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord, for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and to count them but done, that I may win Christ and be found in him, not having my own righteousness, which is of the law, but the righteousness which is through the faith of Christ, the righteousness which is of God my faith, that I may know him, and the power of his resurrection, and the fellowship of his suffering, that I may be made conformable unto his death.

And especially that last verse, that is my testimony still. I know Christ, but I still have a tall heart, the desire that I would know much better.

And it's a great privilege for me to just, in a simple way, tell what God and the Lord Jesus has done for me over the years.

I always feel there's a great danger in a Christian believer giving testimonies. All too often when I have listened to testimonies, I felt that the I, rather than the him, has been what stood out.

And the I would wish and pray, that what comes across to you, is not that I am in any way a special person, but that I have a very special saviour.

[1 : 42] I was brought up in a Christian home. I was the youngest of six of our families. And my father, when I was a little boy, I remembered him preaching.

We always had family worship in our house. We had many of God's people come and visit us. Every Sunday, teachers had their dinner with us. And some of my earliest memories, in fact, have been carried over the hills in the highlands of Scotland to a little hall, little church, in a neighbouring village where there was a service every Sunday at three o'clock in the afternoon being carried on my father's shoulders.

as a wee boy, when my legs were not strong enough to carry me up the hill. My mother was actually converted under my father's preaching.

He was converted in a revival in our community under the preaching of a man whom some of you I know have heard, the late Reverend Duncan Campbell. He was there as a young man conducting a mission.

And it's the most westerly point in the British mainland. It's called Arden-Murchen Point. You'll remember. Arden-Murchen Point, it's in northwest Argyll.

[3 : 05] And there, my father, at almost 40 years of age, was converted when he was, in 1921. He began preaching. He and many of the other young men who were converted in that revival began to hold meetings.

They began to preach. And in 1924, my mother went from Glasgow to look after a man in Arden-Murchen. And she was converted under my father's preaching.

And they married fairly shortly after that. And they seemed to get on very well together because there are six of us to prove that. And, in essence, all I'm saying is that we were, we were, I was born into and brought up in a very happy Christian, believing home.

and today, perhaps more than ever before, I thank God with humbleness of heart for the home into which I was born. And, I believe that from the time I was very young, God spoke to my heart.

I can still remember when I was probably about four years of age, or just under four, sitting on a seat in that little hall and listening to our ministers, a very godly man whose face was just shining with his love to the Lord, preaching on judgment.

[4 : 33] And upon the people from that passage in Matthew where, where Jesus said that on the judgment day or when the end of the world came, men would, would be asking for mercy and calling on the hills to cover them from God.

And right outside the window there was these great highland mountains hills and huge rocks on them and I had a very vivid picture of what would happen because our minister, he was a very vivid picture.

He would run over from the desk that he preached at to the window and he said, see all these stones up on the mountain? They'll all be coming tumbling down and people will be asking, asking the mountains to cover them from the wrath of God.

And a little boy a three and a half felt the power of that. And I can remember when God seemed to come into my life in a very special way when I was eight years of age.

We had family worship every night and one Sunday night we were singing the, the medical psalms. We had them in the box of our Bible in Scotland. These were our hymns.

[5 : 42] And just in family worship we were singing the 40th psalm in the medical version and it goes like this, I waited for the Lord my God and patiently did bear at length to me he did incline my voice and cry to hear.

He took me from a fearful pit and from the mirey clay and on a rock he set my feet establishing my way.

And a little boy of eight felt that there was something wonderful in these words and I believed that in some way God actually came to me that evening. And I believed, I very firmly believed that I had been converted that night.

I told my parents about my experience and I told my friends at school and until I was twelve years of age I really believed that I was a Christian.

I read my Bible and I prayed and I tried to avoid swearing and bad language. and then it was through that period that I had to first of all leave home.

[6 : 50] When the area in which we lived if one wanted to be educated at all then one had to leave home to go to secondary school. So when I was eleven years of age just coming up eleven I left home to begin secondary school education.

I had gone to primary school when I was four and a bit so I was a little younger than most people when I went away from home but I left home just before I was eleven years of age and I as I said looked at myself as a Christian.

Now I didn't go very far to go to school I actually went to one of the lovely I went to an island of all places to one of the loveliest islands off the coast of Scotland the island of Mull and I went to a junior secondary school there in the capital city of Mull it's a place called Tubermury lovely Tubermury Bay and there for a whole year I continued to live a kind of Christian life I thought and it was through my second year at school there that other influences began to affect my life very radically for example that was just after the war and a teacher came back he was demobbed from the naval service and he came back and he was really a teacher of Gaelic Scottish Gaelic and British history but among the other things he taught was Bible and he took the second year class for Bible and he began with us by saying that he didn't believe this book to be any different from any other book he didn't believe in

God but he felt that there was some wisdom in it and it was his duty to teach it to us and he would teach it to us but he did it from a very sceptical base and the way he taught it in a sense was very off-putting too because we had to learn we got absolutely no interpretation or explanation of what the Bible was saying all we had to do was learn huge chunks of the Old and the New Testament I can still begin with Proverbs and say where shall wisdom be found and where is the place of understanding man knows not the price thereof I can go to the New Testament and go through reams of scriptures but I learned under an atheistic agnostic teacher who really destroyed what faith we had in the scriptures of the word of God and then too

I became influenced I suppose by the fact that there were no other Christians or believers of my own age the very opposite was true and by the time I was 13 years of age I reckoned that I had really outgrown the whole thing I had come to the conclusion that there wasn't really a God at all and that religion was a kind of just a framework of belief that was imposed in people and in society just to keep everybody in order and I felt that I had been liberated and enlightened and that my parents I was way ahead of them they were really old fashioned and well religion was ok for them they were getting old they would be dead soon anyway and it wasn't for somebody like me now when I was almost 14 and really just had finished 2-3 years of education in secondary school

[10 : 47] I was taken out of school quite suddenly on the death of an uncle that was the first time that death really touched our family circle my father had been a building contractor when I was a little boy and then when I was 11 just about the time I was going through all that I've been talking about already he moved he bought a farm and he moved into a farm and we began became a farming family and we had a lot of sheep and this uncle took pneumonia or something over a weekend and he died very suddenly they were left with something like 2,000 sheep to look after and this uncle had been helping them with them so I was taken out of school in what was called a three month extension got three months off school until they got the whole problem of the logistics about looking after the sheep sorted out but in fact I never went back to school although I was still under the school leaving age and I never heard any more about it the education authority in charge of affairs was the

Argyle County Council Education Committee and I never heard anything about it from them at all although I never went back to school and it was perhaps because my father was the vice chairman of the committee I don't know but that was me my formal education was over I began life farming and shepherding with my father and the two older brothers our oldest brother the very oldest one he had worked at home on the farm for two years and he had gone off to vet school he's a veterinary surgeon today in Ayrshire and things went pretty normally until maybe halfway through that first year when my mother took ill and for the first time in my life experience illness and fear touched our family circle she had to go to Glasgow to have a breast removed and she was told that she had cancers and that she might not have too long to live

I was then about 14 and a bit and my mother actually lived until I was almost 18 until I was 17 and three quarters or something but through that she really had a very bad time and her illness and the pain and what I felt was the degradation that accompanied it all reinforced me in my view that there was absolutely no God who cared about people at all the last year of my mother's life was spent lying in a bed with her femur thigh bone broken cancer had gone into the middle of the bone it had become very brittle she had fallen out inside the house one night and she lived in terrible pain for the last year of her life the night she fell we telephoned the doctor our nearest doctor who was 25 miles away over a very narrow hilly twisted road he was an old man he was almost 70 years of age we telephoned him to say that my mother had fallen and obviously broken her leg that she was in agony and he said give her two afternoons and we'll come and see her in the morning he in fact my father spoke to him and he came and she was given a much more useful sedation in the event but that's the kind of medical attention we had and through that year I was really as I say reinforced in my disbelief in God a year or so before that or through that year too another man had come to our place he had retired or had been forced to retire on health grounds from the Clyde shipyard and he was what would be known as a red Clyde cider although he belonged to our place he was a communist and he lived in a little house over the hill from our farm and he had what I was very keen on he had all sorts of books and there wasn't very much for a young fellow to do in the winter months but read and before I was 16 I was borrowing books from him that I was later on to study at university

I read Hill's theories of John Stuart Little's utilitarianism before I was 17 years of age I read Renan's Life of Christ and Strauss's Life of Christ very agnostic atheistic books before I was 16 I read Carlisle's Heroes and Hero Worshipers and stuff like that through the winter months I would read absolutely anything I could get and this man Donald Beattie he had a library to feed me and to feed my particular outlook on life so all the time I was being reinforced in a very ungodly and atheistic outlook world life view and then my mother died and in connection with her death I had two experiences that I can never forget about three months before she died my brother the one next door to me next up the grade he and I had been away playing at a dance we had started when we were quite young playing accordions he played a piano accordion

I played a button key accordion there was a man in Scotland then called Jimmy Shand and he was one of my heroes in life he played a three road button key accordion and my ambition was to be as good as Jimmy Shand well we were away playing at a dance probably 40 miles away from home these dances in these country highland areas went on to the early hours of the morning we got back home probably about half past four quarter to five and half past five I was going into the house in a nearly spring morning into her big farm house my mother was little she was downstairs just she and my father in the house when I opened the back door of her house I could hear my mother's singing she had a trained she had been she had a very lovely voice and she was a trained singer she had sung with groups in

[17 : 43] Glasgow and she was singing words from a psalm when I opened the door at early hours of the morning she obviously must have been in pain she couldn't sleep my father was up with her and here was her voice absolutely filling the house with the words of what's from psalm 118 I shall not die but live and shall the works of God discover the Lord hath me to skies and soar but not to death given over oh set you open as I opened the door of the house these were the words she was singing oh set you open unto me the gates of righteousness then will I enter into them and I the Lord will bless them I felt so overcome by hearing my mother singing at this start I didn't go into the house at all I had the way up the hill and I sat and cried and I felt you know that my mother was really she was there was something about her life that touched even my heart unbelieving heart and then just four days before she died

I went into a room it was in July it was very hot weather very uncomfortable she was in a lot of pain she was very weak I was actually seeing her alive and conscious for the last time although I didn't know it when I went in to see it and as I was chatting to her she said Douglas I would like you to read me some verses from the Bible there was a Bible beside her bed and I said yes what would you like me to read and she said I would like you to read John chapter 14 and I began to read just at the beginning I thought I felt quite self-righteous here was I doing a real good work reading to my mother and I began that chapter which has so often spoken to me since and which I'm sure you know and love too you believe in God believe also in me in my father's house are many mansions if it were not so I'd go to prepare a place for you if it were not so I would have told you if I go and prepare a place for you

I will come again and receive you unto myself that where I am there you may be also and then she said now Douglas that's enough just when I reached here and I said but mum that's not very much you could do with more than that I thought she would help her if I read the whole chapter she said no she said that's enough that is everything and then she said I want to talk to you about your soul I may never talk to you again and I really just want one question to be on your mind Douglas I am going to heaven very soon to be with Jesus and I want to know if you'll meet me there and just four days later she died seven days later I was standing at her graveside and I could hear a voice ringing in my ears will I meet you in heaven and I knew that if there was a heaven I wasn't going to it and I suppose

I had to harden my heart and I did and I think it was probably from around that time that another process began to work in my mind and my heart God began to deal with me in a different way I was shepherding I was most of the time and especially through the springtime when the sheep were lambing I was up there on these mountains and the mountains in my home place looped out over onto the Atlantic Ocean the nearest mainland of America and between America and me there were these lovely islands of the Hebrides and sometimes on the mountain tops leaving home in the dark going up on top of the mountains as the daylight was coming as day was dawning one was just in such an impressive world that it was awesome to experience and I am sure now that often in these mornings I knew the presence of

God around me I didn't know what it was I'd hear then and it would come and end with a strange feeling creepy sort of feeling I would look out onto the ocean and there was a beauty and a harmony and a balance about everything that made me cry inside and I began to ask myself questions like where did this all come from why is there such a harmony and a balance in what I see in the world around me what is beauty and what is there in me if I'm just a life that has evolved and is no different from any other life what is there in me that can respond to beauty and cry and I began to ask myself questions about things like that I used to remember sitting on top of a mountain one morning and looking out to the islands of Carl and Mull and Eust and

[22 : 56] Barra and Harris away in the distance the islands of sky the coolant of the sky and asking myself where on earth did this all come from who made it and I would say don't be stupid nobody made it it just happened and then I would say but how could it just happen and why is it just like this and why do I think about it and wonder about it and then I would ask myself I wonder if anyone ever sat here before and felt the way I feel I wonder if they asked themselves where did it all come from I felt sure that other people must have felt just as I felt their breath catching and wondering what life was all about and then I would say to myself where are these people now where's the mind that thought and wondered and posed questions where's the heart and the soul that was moved and then I used to ask myself questions like what space if there's no

God and no creator what on earth is space and I would say to myself space is just and then I wasn't very sure what to add space is just it's just something that holds the universe and then my reading told me that there wasn't just one universe there were hundreds of universes thousands of them that there was probably more than four million suns that were bigger than our sun and the immensity of the universe that I had read about staggered my mind and I would say what on earth can space be and then I thought well space must be something in which all these universes are made it's just an emptiness and then it must end somewhere I couldn't conceive of space not ending somewhere but where did it end and how did it end and I thought well it must be pushing out still but what's it pushing out into more space and then you see I begin to get a sore head and I say well oh

Jesus I was asking myself in fact what what infinity was I was asking myself what eternity was and there were questions that the minds could answer and then I began to ask myself other questions questions about religious beliefs I began to read books and ultimately let me put it very briefly ultimately it became easier for me to believe that there was an intelligent personal living creator behind all the phenomena I knew and of which I was a part it was easier for me to believe that than to believe the atheistic philosophy I had accepted for the previous six or seven years there was absolute to accept the premises and the presuppositions of atheistic philosophy was to leave me was to find oneself in a world for which there was absolutely nothing but questions without any reasonable or mind satisfying answers that's what I felt and it's what I still feel and until

I began to profit a living wise intelligent creator the whole of existence was meaningless to me it was only then that things began to fall into place and cohere now I began to believe in a god and I wasn't too happy about it in many ways because as soon as I began to believe in a creator a personal wise all knowing creator and nothing else would account for the kind of universe I lived in as soon as I began to posit that and suppose that this question began to come in what if in fact that creator is the god that your father and mother believed in what if in fact that god is holy and righteous what if there are such places as heaven and hell what if the bible is the revelation from god what if the bible is true and the way

I was living these questions left me very uncomfortable I can remember sitting with five or six other fellows around a table in which there were six bottles of whiskey I can remember eventually fading out from their conversation because I was thinking asking questions like that what if all that I heard and learned when I was young what if it was always true but I always tried to put these questions away from me I didn't really want to face up to them and then one night I think I should say that perhaps my main interest in life apart from shepherding and working and reading philosophy my main interest in life was athletics and I had taken up hammer throwing when I was fifteen and by the time I was nineteen and twenty and twenty one I used to spend a lot of my time going round the Highland Games in the summer time tossing cabbers that's the way to say it not a cabber it's a cabber tossing cabbers big long sticks throwing hammers and putting the shot and I can remember being very excited when an American first of all reached over sixty feet with the shot putt he did it by turning his back on the problem and

[28 : 53] I began to turn my back on the problem and began to putt the shot further than other men I began to be among the best four or five hammer throwers in the Highland Games circuit and that was the kind of things that I lived for and then one night when I was in a local public house a boy said to me Douglas were you in church last Sunday and I said no not me oh he said you should have been in church last Sunday a terrific preacher there a young man a young man I said where did they get a hold of a young man and he said oh I don't I don't know where he's come from but you should go and hear him preach and I said I've heard it all already these fellows just put me to sleep you know it's very boring and he said oh no this guy you wouldn't get to sleep with this guy you should go and hear him so I said oh well maybe I will and just about that time it was the spring of 1955 another American had come over to Britain

Billy Graham and he was holding crusade and that was to have some significance too because people were talking about this Billy Graham and about conversion and so on I can remember finding myself one night getting into actually into a fight in a pub over Billy Graham's theology some fellas had come in there to our local pub and they were talking about Billy Graham and they said of course oh it's born again that it's just American nonsense and I said no that's what the Bible says that's what my father believes that's what I would minister believe and I'm finished up with somebody getting knocked down because they didn't believe in the new birth you see and I wasn't too hot on it myself but I was defending evangelical theology and didn't know it and things like that were happening and then the week after this chap had asked me in the pub if I had been in church

I was at a dance I was playing at a dance and during the dance some way through it I got up to dance with her again she was actually as it happens she was a sister of the boy who had spoken to me in the public house and I was waltzing around the dance floor with us and she said to me Douglas were you in church last Sunday and I began to feel quite persecuted I said no I wasn't in church and she said oh she said you should go and hear the man that's preaching he's a young man and you know what he was preaching on last Sunday night I said no she said he was preaching on a text from the bible that said your maker is your husband and I won't quite use the expression I used but in essence I said to him what on earth did he say about that and she said you come and I'll tell you what he said and she took me over to the side of the dance hall and we sat down and she gave me the preacher's three main headings and his four sub headings and she said you must go and hear this preacher and you know this solemnizes me right at this moment that neither that fellow nor his sister neither of these two who spoke to me in 1955 about going to hear this man preaching to the best of my knowledge they are still unconverted and probably are not even church going now but I didn't go to hear this preacher and I had no idea what he was like and then one evening a brother an older brother was away at a cattle show or something he had been converted when my mother died but I hadn't realized what had happened for the first year of his converted life when he stopped drinking and dancing and fighting and went round with the last

I thought he had taken TB tuberculosis and was gone into a decline and was dying until he did the cattle we had 50 cattle on our farm and I did the sheep and then he was away from home for a cell and I had to do the cattle and way up there in the stalls I discovered one day to my amazement a Bible and his name was in the Bible and then two days after my mother's death the date of her death there was a date in and he said converted to Christ and I suddenly after a year and a half almost realized what his illness was and he usually took my father to a weekly prayer meeting in the church village church which was five or six miles away from our home now he was away from home and the old man my father said to me now Douglas you have to drive me to the prayer meeting tonight and I said fine that's grand I was going to go and have a pint and then I was going to go and see a lassie and I would pick him up again he would be visiting some other

Christian and I thought that's good for the old man to get to the prayer meeting you know and I'll dive in there and as we were driving down to the village the church was just on the house of the village as we were approaching the church a brilliant thought suddenly struck me and I said who's preaching in the church tonight is it this young young the student the young preacher that the people are talking about and saying is very oh yes he said it will be the student that's preaching so I thought well here's a chance for me to go in and hear this guy preaching and find out what they're all talking about so when we reached the church I stopped the car and I started climbing out and my father said where are you going he said I'm going in here with you he said and he stared at me as if I had suddenly gone mad and he said very good he said in you come and you know as soon as I got into the church I thought I had gone mad because I was in there and there was nothing there but old people old ladies dressed in black black and old men like my father and I said what on earth am I doing in here the guys from the pub will find out that I've been at a prayer meeting and I won't be able to live with anybody for months after this and then suddenly the door up to the poop it was up again and the wall and the door beside the poop it opened and then came this guy and I got quite a shock because my vivid picture of preacher was of old men who were ready to crumble and go down into the grave and they were religious because there was nothing else left for them to do and one of my favourite pastimes was was wrestling we wrestled at the

[35 : 40] Highland Games and every time I saw a a a a really well built guy I used to measure him up and say well I wonder if I could break his neck or a field break my neck and here suddenly in the pulpit of our church at home was a guy who was not old but was young just a little older than me he had a broken nose and he had long curly hair and he reminded me of another of my current heroes of the time the light heavyweight champion of the world the cruiserweight Freddie Mills he looked just like Freddie Mills and I said to myself gee imagine this he was a guy standing in a pulpit and if you belted him one in a jaw he would probably belt you back and he might put you in your back what on earth what on earth grips a guy like that and he he obviously looked like somebody that had been around a bit you don't get broken noses for nothing do you and he was well built he just liked Freddie Mills and I thought well well what on earth grips a guy like that and I was prepared to listen and at first

and then they they quite soon got up they wanted to go and this preacher said well no he said before you go boys we'll we will we'll have a little worship i'm going to read to you an old mr mcmillan here he'll pray and he read this preacher and then he asked my father to pray and they all began to get down on their knees and i got down on my knees and one of my friends who who in fact was a free touchman he sits in the very front front seat of the free church at home he sat there he was the only one out of the whole group that didn't sit so i got a hold of him by the wrist and the elbow and i whispered hey jock get doing on your knees and i'll break your arm so he got down on his knees now to to cut a long story short i i i wasn't converted that night but i promised the preacher i'll go back in fact i didn't go back i don't know what kept me three sundays past and i didn't go back to hear that man preaching and then one day i was away with our our farm lorry doing something and i had given my father a lift after lunch i had given him a lift to a little village which was two miles on my way and where where the local post office was he was going for his pension and i was going off to do something else and i said to him now i'll be back here it was about half past two i suppose in the afternoon i'll be back here at four o'clock where will i find you and he said oh you'll find me over there he said in in the bungalow he was going to visit two two lovely old christians i said well i'll be back at four o'clock now i went and did whatever i had to do with the lorry and i was coming through this village when i saw the preacher that i hadn't seen for three weeks and he was carrying a calor gas cylinder i think it was in his hand something quite heavy and he had about a mile or three quarters of a mile to walk to where where the preacher's house was and i was going in that direction and immediately i saw him a sort of tug of war began in my mind will i won't i and it was mostly won't i i thought well if you stop now this voice was saying if you stop now and pick him up the first thing he'll say is you never came back to church and if you stop he'll begin asking you very awkward questions you better just go go roaring past them but something else in me was saying you better give the poor guy a lift he's got a long way to walk so eventually i stopped beside him and i said in quite a rough voice want a lift job and he said yes yes yes i'll take a lift and i said well throw that thing into the back and climb up here so he threw the gas cylinder into the back of the lorry and he climbed up beside me and we start we started off and the first thing he said was you never came back to church is it and i had known it would come and uh i said oh no no no no i've been busy you know he said you're a liar and i said that's not a very nice thing for a preacher to say he says but you are a liar it wasn't because you were busy am i right and i said well well i suppose you are and then he says you know what i think he was shouting over the engine of the lorry you know what i think he said i said no he said i think you're running scared he said i said i'm not scared of you and he said no you're not fighting in me but i think you're fighting i think you're scared you'll get converted he said and i said no no i'm not scared i said i would like to be converted but i don't think i can be what do you mean he said well i said since your night you were preaching i've asked

god jewish thee times to come back me and nothing has happened no he said is that so and just then we reached his house and he said come on in he said and we'll have a chat and my wife will make you a cup of tea now i had seen his wife just i didn't know who she was it turned out that his first encounter with me had been about five or six weeks before that uh some friends of mine and i had been repairing a sailing boat and after we had finished we had gone up to the public house and we were coming out the pub half past nine and a summer's evening may evening and this guy and his wife were actually talking to a grocer's van that came and it had dropped outside the hotel it was run by christian men and the preacher was inside although i didn't know it he was inside talking to to a a free presbyterian and very strictly living christian man and um his wife was standing outside a very attractive girl with long shiny black hair and a lovely sort of light beach court and when we were coming out of the pub i said hi fellas i said where did that come from and somebody immediately that's not quite the wording i used somebody immediately said that's the preacher's wife that's the minister's wife and i was just there i said where where did that minister get away for that and when he asked me to grin and have tea he talked to me as no one had ever talked to me before and we really got down to basics and at last day you see i was telling him that i had been asking god to convert me and nothing was happening and he said if you really serious about it how about coming down with me we'll go down the mountaineys and we'll ask god to do it he promises to do it and i stopped there i wasn't too keen to go down beside a preacher on my knees and then i thought like this i thought well you're saying that god won't have you it and all this guy is asking you to do is to get down on your knees beside him and try it out and surely your soul is worth more than a little embarrassment and if you're really in earnest you'll get down beside him god's spirit was saying to me in my heart so last i said all right i'll get down beside you i'll go to my knees i want this if i can get it and i wasn't very sure what i wanted all i knew was i wanted god and i wanted to be changed we go down and our knees and then he absolutely shocked me he said right he said now you pray and ask god to convert you and i said no man i can't pray you're the you're the one that's paid to do the praying you do it and he began to pray in a very simple straightforward and familiar way like somebody who really knew god and was used to speaking to god and while he was praying he quoted a verse of scripture that i had known all my life john p 16 god so loved the world that he gave his only begotten son that whosoever believes in him should not perish but have everlasting life and as he quoted that verse it was suddenly as though curtains were being taken off a dark room and light was coming in it was as though somebody had taken away a blind from in front of my mind and i was understanding these words in a new way that god had loved me really loved me and that he had given christ his son to die for my sins and that all i had to do was

trust christ that christ had finished all that was necessary for for my salvation that i didn't have to work to please god or to save my own soul it was something i've been hearing all my life and yet had never really understood and never really believed until that moment when god opened my eyes and it seemed so new i thought it can't be as easy as that so i got i got a hold of this this guy who was praying by the arm and i said say that again and he was telling me afterwards he couldn't remember what he had just said and he said to me say what again and i said that bit you know about god loving the world say that again and he was staring at me and he repeated the text and i said does that mean that i don't have to do anything to be saved does that mean that if i just really believe that jesus was the son of god and that he died in the cross of calvary for my sins and if i trust him because he's done that that i'll be saved and he said yes that's just what it means and i said it can't it can't be as easy and as simple as that he said to me afterwards you know he said as soon as you said it can't be as easy as that i knew you were a new and it was god had done something in my life i understood the way of salvation and suddenly a great peace began to flood into my heart and soul and a great stillness began to develop in here and there's a sense in which it has never really gone away and then i thought well that's all right but you know what it will take to live like a christian you have to stop drinking you have to stop swearing you have to stop this i started thinking of all the things i would have to stop because i knew how a christian that was meant to live and he saw my face changing and he said what's wrong now he said well i said i don't think i can see i said it's wonderful and i can see that there's great peace in it and i would love to have it but i don't think i could keep it up i don't think i could live like a christian i would have to give up too much have to give up all the lassies have to give up the dinky in them he started listen he said definitely you go through everything you think that you would have to give up in order to be a christian take everything you've got think about it think about it very carefully and then over against everything think of eternal salvation he said let's do it in a very practical simple way in this hand he said holding out his right hand to me it was like a huge spade he said in this hand i'll give you everything you've got that you're afraid you might lose and in this hand i'll give you christ and i'm not very easy life because it's not easy to be a christian i'll give you christ and eternal salvation so he said there you are there's a choice in one hand everything you're afraid you'll lose and you know you'll have to give up and i lost eternity in this i'm jesus and not very easy life eternal salvation he didn't make it easy for me he said think carefully about it and i sat and i'm sure i must have sat there for 10 minutes thinking very deeply about all that was involved and then at last i just absolutely knew which hand i had to take and he told me afterwards

[53 : 14] at least 10 minutes seemed like an eternity to him he said i thought you would never make up your mind the last i said i know which one i'll take and he said which one i said i'll take christ i said it doesn't matter what else i may have to lose or give up it doesn't matter how difficult the christian life may be if i can really have christ for my savior and for my soul i'll take him and as soon as i said that and declared my decision in that way my heart was filled with absolute joy and love god came into right into my heart in an amazing way and i knew i was a new creature in christ i'm almost finished i want to tell you how i picked up my father because by the time this happened it was no longer four o'clock in the afternoon it was in fact about twenty past seven it was the 14th of june 1955 and i suddenly became i was very happy and i was full of joy and and i suddenly remembered my father and i said to the teacher my mom they said i i forgot my old friend and he's been waiting on me for for nearly four hours and he said your father won't mind can i come with you he said and we'll tell him you've been converted so he climbed into the lorry again and off we set and we go down to the little village to see it was on a lovely bay and i went to this little bungalow he stayed in the in the lorry and he said tell your father right away that you've been converted and i'll stay here and i said oh i can't tell him he said yes you tell him i'll pray that the lord will help you to tell him confess the lord jesus to your father he said and i went to this little bungalow and something amazing happened here that really confirmed my faith the lady came to the door and she said oh douglas she said your father's been waiting for you and i thought he would be almost out of his mind you know said your dad's been waiting you'll be glad you've come come on in i went in she stayed behind me closing the outside door i went in the living room door my father was sitting diagonally opposite me when i went in and as soon as i went in he got up at his chair and he walked across to me and he took me in his arms and he said douglas thank god i said why he said you've been converted i said how do you know and he said i could see it i could see christ in your face when you come in the door and i knew that my prayers were answered and i i'm always thankful that he was alive for two years after that he lived for two years and two days after my confession and he was a wonderfully wise father in christ to me too and i owe a great deal to him i was with him when he died i've spoken about his death just a little in the book the lord our shepherd and he was literally seeing into heaven on his deathbed and a fear of death which he had had all his christian life was taken away from him completely in the last three weeks of his life that's in essence my story and two years after i was converted i began to preach because yeah i just felt god speaking to me and calling me for example one place in the bible psalm 51 everywhere i went every meeting i went to this psalm was read or shung a verse that says then shall i teach thy ways unto those that

transgressors be those that sinners are shall then be turned unto thee that was 1955 i'd begun preaching in 1957 i didn't want to go into the ministry i was dead scared of it i was uneducated and i knew that you had to go to university and college for our church it was very difficult but i thought i could be a farmer and a shepherd and still go on preaching i did that for a year and a half and then god gave me no peace until at last i said all right i'll go 1958 i left home went to edinburgh and began to study for university entrance i had six years of study to make up of school study and um in one winter i did the um what we call university preliminary entrance examination in higher english higher history and lower math and i had absolutely i didn't have very much money i had been making a lot of money but i hadn't kept it when i left home i had one good suit a very good motorbike i was a crazy guy for motorcycles i had 140 pounds in the bank i got a grant from a church of 70 years to keep of 70 pounds for a year and in order to keep me alive um the lord gave me a job i went to classes from nine o'clock until one o'clock with an hour off in between i did three classes for six months and then in the afternoon i drove i drove a seven-ton lorry from seven o'clock from two o'clock in the afternoon until seven at night i got paid four and a penny an hour when my driver's going rate was three and ninepence an hour the the lorry man wasn't a christian but he was a very fine man and he had come and he just by chance it seemed he'd come to visit me because he used to come and camp on our farm for his holidays he and his wife and his family they had come to see if i was settling in the very first night i was in college and one that's what he was leaving he said to me douglas one of my drivers is ill i wonder if you could give me a couple of hours in our lorry tomorrow and i said jimmy i'll be no use to you i don't know edmund well he said i'll be on the job it's just shifting some stuff away from a school that's been renovated i'll be there with one lorry it would be a great help to me if you could drive another lorry so i found myself because i'm dead and we're in a lorry and then when we were putting away the lorries that night he said to me anytime you're free there's always a spare lorry and i worked like that for six months and i think that that really god was very wise in giving me that because i've been used to hard manual work and if i just been left to study initially and nothing else i think i would have gone bonkers craggers but i did that for two winters and over and over the summer months i'll go back home and work in the farm in 1960 i i left home in 1958 in 1960 i began to study in aberdeen university in three years there i did a degree in art and then i came to theological college in edinburgh and did another three years there so i had eight years study i went to aberdeen to a pastorate a very small congregation that was the first sunday i preached there there was 11 people out in the morning and there were 22 at night and my wife said to me douglas what on earth what kind of place have we come to and i said it's pretty good we're there we're at 100% increase today and there god began to work a lot of young people were converted before i left i was regularly seeing 270 to 300 people our church got too small it only held 300 people a year after i left got to me out to return to another place they had to buy another church the

work is still going on and a new young minister just gone there two up and in still and i i came to glasgow after eight years in aberdeen i'm there where i have seen a lot of young people converted in aberdeen i saw a lot of old people converted in glasgow i can remember sitting in the pulpit it was a bigger congregation it was a huge building it would hold 12 or 1500 people there was an attending congregation of four or five hundred maybe and i can remember sitting there in the pulpit the first night in 1974 when i went and i was after the young people a church full of young people here with a church full of old people and i said oh lord this is like an even tied home for old folk and i i began to pray that very night that god would give me some old people the first person i saw converted in the congregation there was a woman of about 75. we saw a man of 85 converted over the years i was in glasgow we saw 40 or 50 people over 60 years of age converted and i was thrilled to see that so if you're over 50 or 60 or even 70 or 80 tonight let me say to you that there's hope for you still even though you're unconverted because god can save old people as well as young people and then two years ago our denomination had to choose a new professor of church history for the college for the where we played our ministers and much to my surprise and eventually the lot fell on me and i felt it was the lord's will for me at this time and we had to move from glasgow back to edinburgh it's the college i was taught in and i now have the privilege of being one of the men we have our staff full-time staff of five i'm one of the men who teach our future ministry ministry we have 25 a student studying for the ministry and we have some students from other places we've even got some from england uh from iron and various places and i'm free to to to um go out and preach on occasions like this and god is still good to me one of my fears the night i was converted was that i wouldn't be able to keep it up that's almost 29 years ago and i feel tonight that i have been kept by god and that's his promise to us all that he does keep us we are kept by the power of god through faith and to salvation i'm sorry i've spoken for far too long god bless you thank you for your peace gracious god and heavenly father we thank thee tonight for full free salvation in jesus christ and we thank you for the way the holy spirit comes into lives like ours and convinces us of our need and points us to a savior grant that each one of us here might put all our trust and in the lord jesus tonight and that we might know that peace that passes all understanding the joy unspeakable and full of glory that comes from knowing him in a real personal living way oh god watch over us all and savour god for his name's sake amen