

HOW I BECAME A CHRISTIAN

DON STEPHENS



Neither of my parents came from Christian homes. They were both converted in the 1920s in Everton Valley Presbyterian Church, Liverpool. This building was later hit during the German bombing of Liverpool during the Second World War.

Both of them kept their faith till their last breaths. I hope to do the same.

I was a pupil at Quarry Bank High School (now called Calderstones). My time there in the 1950s partly overlapped with that of John Lennon. One day when in the 6th Form Common Room, a Christian student called Arthur Howe was attacked by the other boys for his faith. I ridiculed him along with the others. The school bell went and Arthur turned to me and said, 'With your background I expected some help. When you are at home you should read Ephesians 2:8-9.' He has no recollection of saying this to me.

But when I was home I found a Bible and read those verses over and over again – without understanding them.

My father, a veteran of D-Day, insisted on my Church attendance. To avoid family tension, a 'bargain' was made. If I went to an evangelical Bible class called Crusaders I could miss what I considered to be very boring church services. It seemed like a victory to me, but I had made a mistake. The Bible Class leader, James Belford, a retired grain merchant, was a man to be reckoned with.

One day he gave some of us a lift home in his Vauxhall car. I was the last to get out. Just as I was about to open the door, he mentioned my first name and asked, 'Have you received Jesus Christ as your personal Saviour?' Embarrassed, I said 'Yes,' knowing it was untrue and that I had no personal faith at all.

Perhaps he knew the truth. I don't know. But sensibly he said no more to me at the time. What he did matters more. He prayed for me. My parents were also praying. It is a privilege

to have people who care enough to pray for you, and in particular that you would have a personal relationship with the living God through His Son, Jesus Christ.

I was oblivious to all this. Life without God was going well. I had no known needs. I had my motor bike, enough money (though I was not rich); food, clothes, books – which were always important in my life. Add in being a member of the Royal Observer Corps. At this time I was active in getting what was to become the Merseyside Aviation Society off the ground with a circle of friends that I still have. There was no place for God, even if I had looked.

When I was nearly eighteen, my life changed in a very profound way: I became a Christian. It felt as if the living God was invading my life, drawing me reluctantly, to himself by grace and mercy. Looking back I can see that I had the marks of a new Christian life of faith in Christ. Only after this experience of God's grace did I have a sense of sin in my heart. Within a short time I felt the need to repent and openly admit to others that I believed the gospel of salvation by Jesus Christ. As a result of my new birth by the Holy Spirit, and Christ's sacrifice on the cross and his resurrection, I knew the blessings of adoption into the family of God, assurance of sin forgiven, and a personal relationship with God.

It must be emphasized that my becoming a Christian was not self-induced, or the result of good deeds or religious ceremonies. I insist that I became a Christian freely, being made willing by God's power.

Somebody like me, so evidently converted only by God's grace, does not find it difficult to believe in the total sovereignty of God. I have a God-centred view of salvation by faith in Christ.

From my conversion to the present I have read the Bible as God's true and final Word. The open secret of Christianity is in the personal pronouns. God is my Heavenly Father. Christ is my Saviour. The Holy Spirit is my Sanctifier. I trust only in the merits of the crucified and risen Christ credited to me. That is the reason for my solid certainty of grace and salvation. I fail badly. Christians are not perfect, but they are forgiven.

My goal is to be more like Christ, and to serve him. In my case the support of a godly wife, daughter and son-in-law, amount to treasure beyond counting. Life has definite meaning when lived with God and for God.

The residue of my life belongs to my Heavenly Father. His Word promises that he will never forsake me. So I know I am going to heaven to be with Christ when I die, emphatically not because of any good in me, but solely because of the grace of God.

Don Stephens
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Two years after writing his testimony, Don Stephens went to be with his Lord who he loved on 26th September 2019, having kept his faith.