

From Darkness To Light



Life Changing story
of Larry Power

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*"The grace of God does not find men fit for Salvation but makes them so."
(Augustine)*

Ephesians 2 v 8-9

*"For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of
yourselves: it is the gift of God: Not of works,
lest any man should boast."*

My sincere prayer is that, as you read these verses of scripture your eyes may be opened and God's way of salvation be revealed to you through faith alone in Christ Jesus.

My Childhood

I would like to give you a brief sketch of my own background, i was born on 9th February 1953 into a traditional Roman Catholic family. I spent the early part of my childhood with my parents in Clogh, Co Kilkenny not far from Castlecomer famous for its coal mining colliery, which at one time employed up to 500 men. I am the eldest of 12 children, 7 boys 5 girls. As you can imagine there was no debate about what we would have for breakfast whether it was Corn Flakes or Rice Krispies in fact there was no choice. You had to get stuck in or all would be consumed very quickly. From my earliest years my mother took me to mass. One of my first memories of the chapel is that of an old lady just in front of were I sat fainting. I got the fright of my life as she was carried out for air. As a young boy I learned a very important lesson never to stare at anyone. On another occasion an old man sat beside me in the church I hadn't seen many old people up to that point as I stared at him he said *"son, do I owe you something?"* I didn't stare again.

I recall kneeling on one knee before what was called the tabernacle on the altar, that little box in which the host is kept, thinking that Jesus was locked up there. At any early age I went to live with my grandfather and aunt in the little village of Luggacurren, Co Laois about 8 miles from Gogh. Like every village it had its characters there was an individual that was nicknamed *"the bog lark"* so named because he was fond of singing around the neighbours' houses especially if there was a cup of tea on offer. There was another character whom we called *"the hoppy Delaney"* who was born with a turned up foot He rang the chapel bell for masses and funerals. Our primary school teacher was the red headed Mrs Cooney originally from the West of Ireland definitely not one to be messed with, though I must say she taught us good standards of behaviour. A little way up the road was the Protestant primary

school teacher, a woman of rather large proportions whom we called "*the bear*". One of the local farmers was a man by the name of Victor Bennett who was known widely as "*the bishop*" because he spoke to people about their souls and the importance of being saved.

First Communion

It was here in St Patrick's Primary School with a number of others I made my first communion. There was the element of mystery and fear about the whole event. The local priest would come in occasionally to test our knowledge of the catechism though he was not a hard man by any means but kind and sympathetic I afterward learned that he had some contact with the gospel. This would be the first time that the wafer which is supposed to be the body and blood, soul and divinity of the Lord Jesus Christ would make contact with my tongue. We were instructed therefore not to allow contact with our teeth because it would bleed in our mouths. This thought filled me with dread and fear.

In this tradition I grew up attending mass faithfully, confessing my sins to a priest. The veneration of Mary, the worship of the saints, hoping they would pray for me and help me earn a place in heaven. I was chosen with others to be an altar boy, which was considered to be a great privilege. Mrs Cooney had the unenviable task of teaching us Latin because back then the mass was conducted in that language. As children, church and school taught us that we possessed the one true faith outside of which there was no salvation. Protestant churches were looked upon not as true churches in the true sense of the word.

Providence of God

I believe it was in the providence of God that I came to live in this village at an early age. Nothing happens by chance God governs the world and directs all things according to His own wise counsel. In Acts 17 v 26 we read, "*He (God) has determined the bound of our habitation*". He has laid out the place of our birth and the place of our residence.

First Job

When I left school at the age of 14 I went to work for a farmer, Victor Bennett whom I mentioned earlier. He was a Protestant belonging to the Church of Ireland, he was my very first contact with the gospel and the way of salvation. The gospel, which is the good news that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners. My idea of getting to heaven was through the church, the sacraments and the priest. As far as I was concerned with my background and teaching this man was not a proper Christian at all. He was "*not the real thing*" as we would say, how ignorant and blinded I was. I expected then to have to spend a period of time in purgatory for my sins, but of course the Bible has nothing to say about such a place. Victor Bennett's testimony was different he related to me how he himself had become a Christian by putting his faith and trust alone in Christ as Saviour. He often told me in his own words that I needed to trust the Lord to save me and if I really and truly trusted Him He would save me.

He surely told me the truth because this is what the Bible teaches Acts 16 v 31 *"Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and thou shalt be saved and thy house"*. He taught me another valuable truth that I could go directly to God through the Lord Jesus Christ who is the only mediator between God and men. I needed no man on earth. Dear Roman Catholic friend listen to what God has to say in His word. You may look this up for yourself 1 John 1 v 9 *"If we confess our sins He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness"*.

Seed Sown

I felt that I was right and at that young age I had a strong belief in the Catholic Church. Though I did not become a Christian then, nor did I understand the truth, but for all that, I did not forget these plain wonderful truths from the Word of God. There was a seed sown in my heart. After some time I left this mans employment and got out into the things of life, into bad company and did many things of which now I am ashamed. I remember praying on one occasion *"Lord give me help in this situation"*. God is so good and faithful because that prayer was about to be answered in the not too distant future. Having returned home to Luggacurren I met someone for the first time his name was Arthur Fennelly. He like Victor Bennett related to me the message of the forgiveness of sins by trusting Christ alone or to put it in the words of John 3 v 3 *"Except a man be born again he cannot see the kingdom of God"*, God spoke to my heart and put within me that longing to know Him and to have the assurance of salvation. That very night I trusted the Saviour and called upon Him in prayer and asked Him to save me and to take away all my sins. I believe He did because God is faithful, He says *"All that the Father giveth me shall come to me and Him that cometh to me I will in no wise cast out"*. John 6 v 37. Though there were many things I did not understand this one thing I did know I knew I was a sinner. That was back in the year 1975, Thank God for that year for my life has never been the same since. I had many things to learn and I still have a great deal to learn but our God is patient and kind.

Prayer Union

I began to attend the local Prayer Union, which was held in Bennett's home in Luggacurren every Friday night. That prayer meeting was a great help and encouragement to me and many others who were converted at that time. I did not possess a Bible in those early days. Someone gave me a copy of one of the gospels to read. I was rejoicing in God's mercy, I began to read and pray everything had become new as the Bible says in 2 Corinthians 5 v 17 *"Therefore if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature, old things have passed away behold all things are become new"*. There was trouble on the horizon, there is such a thing as the forces of evil and darkness. The devil hates the light of the gospel and wherever it appears he will fight against it and stir up people to oppose it, *"Men loved darkness rather than light because their deeds were evil"* John 3 v 19.

I knew within my own heart God was leading me out of the Roman Catholic Church. After I was converted I never confessed my sins again to a priest. The plain truth is that there is no such thing as a confessional box in the New Testament. Mark 2 v 10 *"But that ye may know that the Son of man hath power on earth to forgive sins"*. No priest or minister has authority to do this, I also came to understand that there are no

more sacrifices for sin, the work of redemption was finished, Hebrews 9 v 28 *"So Christ was once offered to bear the sins of many"*, and so in other words there are no masses in the Bible. There is of course the sacrament of the Lords Supper that simple yet profoundly spiritual memorial feast of bread and wine and this we are to do in remembrance of Him until He come. So this was my heartfelt conviction before God that this was not the church for me to be in. Though I had left home for a period of time I was back home again living with my grandfather. He belonged to the old school of Catholicism and was very devout. So when I broke the news to him that I intended leaving the church there was great indignation and anger. His sentiments were *"You will bring shame on your family and home"*.

Difficult Days

There were difficult days ahead, but I knew that many converted Roman Catholics had gone before me had suffered far more even to the point of losing their lives. Nevertheless to leave home is never pleasant for that was the option that was set before me *"change your mind or leave"*. There were threats and a lot of bad feelings in the village, only for certain restraints one Protestant family in particular would have suffered reprisals. Opposition is to be expected when God begins to work. There is always a conflict between light and darkness. I was taken along to see the local priest by my grandfather in order to persuade me not to leave the church.

You see there was this belief that anyone outside of the one true church which the Roman Catholic Church claims to be, is in fact lost. What an awful doctrine. My grandfather believed that, so you can understand his concern. When we arrived at the priest's house we were invited in. It was a fairly heated affair. The priest was not overly concerned and in a sense backed me and took the heat out of the situation. I remember quoting that verse of which we read the words of the Lord Jesus upon the cross *"It is finished"*. So I was asking the question, *"Why the mass?"* The priest said he had books that said differently. My grandfather was greatly disappointed with the whole affair but for me there was no other option. The break had to be made, difficult and all that it was. Through time I have come to understand in a much clearer light the relevance of the words found in Revelation 18 v 4 *"Come out of her my people, that ye be not partakers of her sins and that ye receive not of her plagues for her sins have reached unto heaven and God hath remembered her iniquities"*.

There was a great deal of bitterness around the local area and especially with my grandfather so much so that he said to me that he would not want to see my face on his deathbed.

Bible College

Shortly afterwards I felt called of God to join the Faith Mission Bible College in Edinburgh and after completing the 2 year course went out on missions. By this time circumstances had improved at home more so with my grandfather than with my parents. One day I received a phone call to inform me that my grandfather was ill and requested to see me. When I arrived he was very low, on a little table besides his bed was a statue of Mary and rosary beads and what is called holy water. All the trappings of religion but of what use are they? Anyone facing death and eternity need a saving

knowledge of Jesus Christ. He is the friend of sinners and the only one who can save, for apart from Him there is no salvation for the soul.

I thank God for the opportunity to speak to him about the gospel and directed him to Christ. I remember asking him the question *"Will you trust the Saviour?"* His reply was *"I will"*. As the hymn puts it *"there is life for a look at the crucified one"*. Shortly after this the priest was called for by the family he arrived at the home but did not stay long. The priest told me on his way out what my grandfather had said to him. His very words were *"he had nothing to say to me"*. A few days after he died, I believe I will meet him in heaven one day.

What Are You Depending On To Get To Heaven?

May I ask, what are you depending on to get to heaven? Is it your church or perhaps your priest or minister? You will find all these to fail, whether Protestant Church of Roman Catholic Church, Roman Catholic priest or Protestant minister.

May I finish off this brief testimony and leave a few thoughts with you. Above everything else hear what God's Word has to say to you, because He speaks to us through His Word today. Consider the following Acts 4 v 12 *"Neither is there salvation in any other for there is none other name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved"*. The salvation of your soul is secure if you trust Christ, He is God's appointed One. He will never fail those who trust in Him alone. My dear Roman Catholic friend, there is a very important question that may be on your mind just now. How can I approach a Holy God, a God of Justice who will by no means wink at sin? How can I know pardon for my sins past and present? Here is the answer God has done something wonderful for you and me. He has appointed a mediator, a great High Priest so that I am allowed to approach God, 1 Timothy 2 v 5 *"For there is one God and one mediator between God and men the man Christ Jesus"*. You ask, but what of Mary? Here is the answer - she is not a mediator, she is not to be worshipped or adored. We give to her the place assigned to her in scripture Luke 1 v 28 *"Hail, thou art highly favoured, the Lord is with thee, blessed art thou among women"*. We must also remember this that she needed to trust the Lord for salvation Luke 1 v 47 *"And my spirit hath rejoiced in God my Saviour"*. Never once are we commanded by the Lord Jesus or His apostles or even the early church fathers e.g. Polycarp, (pupil of John) Ignatius, Justin Martyr, Oregin to pray to Mary or the saints. So you see Christ is the only appointed mediator.

Confess Your Sins

You may feel crushed under the weight of sin. Is there a remedy? The answer of so many is this *"I do my best, hoping that my good deeds will outweigh my bad deeds"*. Now here's what the Word of God says 1 John 1 v 9 *"If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness"*. You can approach God through Christ and confess ail your sins to Him knowing that He will abundantly pardon and forgive. You have always thought very highly of the mass as I did. The church teaches that it is an ongoing sacrifice for sins but listen to what God's Word says Hebrews 7 v 27 *"Who needeth not daily, as those High Priests, to offer up sacrifice, first for His own sins and then for the peoples for this He did once when He offered up Himself"*.

Who is the great Head of the Church?

The Word of God tells us it is the Lord Jesus, Colossians 1 v 18 *"And He is the head of the body, the church"*. No pope or minister can claim to be head of the church, it belongs to Christ alone. So you see the plan of salvation then is so clear and simple, it's not by works or penance, it is by faith alone in Christ. Ephesians 2 v 8 *"For by grace are ye saved through faith and that not of yourselves it is the gift of God, not of works, lest any man should boast"*.

A Knowledge Of The Truth

Therefore my prayer is that you will come to a knowledge of the truth, for your soul is precious, Where will your soul be in eternity, heaven or hell? Come to Christ, trust Him to save you and He will. Pray from your heart for repentance and for grace to trust Christ alone. There may be yet another vital question on your mind; you ask can I be sure that my sins are forgiven and that I am going to heaven? The answer is yes, hear Gods speaking voice to you 1 John 5 v 13 *"These things have I written unto you that believe on the name of the Son of God, that ye may know that ye have eternal life, and that ye may believe on the name of the Son of God"*.

My Testimony

I have written these few words of testimony to you my fellow Roman Catholic because I want you to consider that there is such a thing as the true church and the false church. Would a true Catholic and Apostolic church have done those deeds to our people over the past number of years as so graphically revealed in the 'Ryan Report'? The answer is surely no for the Lord Jesus Christ came to save men's lives not to destroy them. The false church as described in Revelation 17 v 4 is indeed *"full of abominations and filthiness of her fornication"*. This is the Church of Rome, the papacy is an Italian Institution, it rose on the ruins of the Roman Empire using the name of Christ and His Apostles as a cloak for Christianity. Let me recommend one who will never fail you. I'm referring to the Lord Jesus Christ Hebrews 7 v 26 *"For such an High Priest became us, who is holy, harmless, undefiled, separate from sinners and made higher than the heavens"*.

*There is a fountain filled with blood,
Drawn from Immanuel's veins,
And sinners plunged beneath that flood,
Lose all their guilty stains.*

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