

Margaret MacLeod, Testimony

I am writing this to the Glory of God and in the hope that my story may bring some help and encouragement to whoever may need it. I am a recovering alcoholic and by the Grace of God alone, I no longer drink alcohol.

I was born into a warm loving Christian home my people were members of the Plymouth Brethren, in fact my father, uncles and grandfathers used to go out preaching. We were strictly brought up no playing on a Sunday etc. In fact I laboured under the impression in my young years that you only went to Heaven if you were in the Brethren!! When I was young I asked the Lord Jesus to come into my heart and be my Saviour. I was duly baptised and accepted into fellowship when I was about 12. I witnessed at school for the Lord and I said I wanted to be a missionary. By the age of 15 I was running around with young people who were trying out drinking and smoking, to be grown up I joined in, I began to feel guilty when I went to the meetings this was the start of the downward spiral into backsliding. It creeps up on you and it is not until you are too far down, that you realise what is happening, then it is very hard to go back. I think it is harder for the backslider to turn back to God than for the unsaved to become converted. But then nothing is impossible with God, as I and many others like me are proof of that.

By the time I was 17 I was really hooked on cigarettes and liked a drink in moderation, although looking back I see the warning signs now but I didn't at the time, I was always the one who was getting a quick drink in before closing time and always left the pub feeling I needed another drink. At this time I went to the nursing and stayed in the nurses home, I kidded myself that I wanted to help others but to be truthful it was the staying away from home that attracted me because I would have more freedom. At this point I stopped going to the meetings completely and I was read out of Fellowship.

When I was 18 I met and married my ex husband he was a good bit older than I was and needless to say a non-Christian, you can imagine how upset my family were at this, an unequal yoke. Anyway I was determined to marry him and my parents accepted it with good grace. It was an unhappy marriage, the only good thing was the birth of my two sons; there was violence and we stuck one another for 15 years, he left me when I was in hospital with depression. I would have stuck it out because of my upbringing, I believed that people should not divorce, but the decision was taken out of my hands which was a blessing in disguise. Anyway prior to him leaving me, my ex husband had been working on the rigs, I hated being on my own with the boys so to get to sleep at night when the boys were in bed I had a couple of drinks to relax me. When their father came off the rig he and I would go out drinking whereas he could control it I couldn't. It came to a head when one night we had been drinking and arguing and I took an overdose of pills I was rushed to hospital and had my stomach pumped. They transferred me to Bellsdyke Hospital and that was the end of my marriage. My ex husband took the boys; I was not fit to look after myself never mind two boys of 12 and 14.

I discharged myself from hospital they were treating me for depression, I went home to an empty house and tried to get my life together, I started drinking, sometimes a bottle of Bacardi a day and lager as well. As you may have experienced drink causes depression and I blamed

depression for my sorry state, when looking back it was really the drink. But as you know the addiction of drink is so strong that you will blame anything else but that for your problems. At this time I was really far away from the Lord, although when my ex husband had told me he was leaving me the thought came into my mind "good I can go back to the Lord now". But I didn't Satan's weapon the drink prevented that. My problem was that I was a binge drinker and they are the hardest people to convince that they have a problem. You see I could sober up for a few days or weeks, sometimes months would go by without me drinking. Anyway at this time I was drinking and unwell with depression, it got so bad that I decided to end it all, I took an overdose of anti depressants and tried to slit the arteries in my arms. The Lord was looking after me that night, I can't remember a thing about it, but seemingly prior to lapsing into unconsciousness I phoned my mother who lived about 25 miles away. She sensed there was something wrong and phoned the police who broke down the door and got me to hospital. I was on a heart machine and they didn't think I would make it through the night. I remember waking up and a male nurse bending over me and saying, "you are very lucky somebody up there really likes you"

You would think I would live and learn but oh no I still wasn't ready to come back to the Lord, I had a lot more drinking to do, you can't reason with alcoholics in denial. I had lost my children, my home and almost my sanity but I still had my old pal the drink, it wasn't to blame for my misfortune, oh no it was other people, ill health and just bad luck or so I told myself, the only person I was kidding was myself.

I carried on binge drinking and fell into a relationship with a chap I met at College, we moved in together in a croft up near Fraserburgh. The only job I could get was working in a fish factory, I used to work all week and spend the weekend in the pub drunk from Friday to Sunday night. Sometimes I took blackouts at work due to the heavy drinking sessions at the weekend. I wouldn't admit to a drink problem as I thought I was all right because I could stay off it sometimes. It all came to a head one New Year I had been drinking non stop for 3 weeks and I couldn't get off it, until the Lord in His goodness and mercy stepped in and lifted me out of the mire. I woke up one morning and staggered through to the kitchen there were empty bottles everywhere, I looked around me and suddenly a vision came before my eyes of me sitting in the gutter under the bridges in Glasgow drinking cheap wine, I stood there with the tears streaming down my face and looked upwards and whispered the words "please dear Lord help me". That was the turning point I phoned for help and admitted that I was an alcoholic and I needed help. "My help it cometh from the Lord whom Heaven and Earth hath made".

I started to read the bible and I prayed for nearly a year for the Lord to help me to come back to Him, I had to persevere sometimes I felt my prayers weren't heard it was hard going, but the bible says "when you seek Me with all your heart then you will find Me" The Lord provided a council house in Fraserburgh for me and I moved there myself. I intended going to the Baptist Church in Fraserburgh but due to my drinking I ended up in hospital in Aberdeen with Pancreatitis for six weeks. Anyway the first Sunday I was able to I attended the Baptist Church and the first hymn they sang was "A Wonderful Saviour is Jesus My Lord" and it was during this hymn that I was fully restored to fellowship with the Lord. At the part where it says "He hideth my soul in the cleft of the rock and covers me there with His Love" I could feel the Love of God wash over me and cleanse me in every part.

The next day I skipped all the way down to the fish factory (which I hated) and for the next few weeks I kept singing "My chains fell off and I was free I rose went forth and followed Thee" My family were delighted they had given up on me my mum used to say to me "you've forgotten the Lord Margaret, but He's not forgotten you".

I was really astonished when I got restored to the Lord that I wasn't the only alcoholic, as I always thought Christians were good, but we're only human with all our frailties and it's only through the Lord that we can be strong. Being a recovering alcoholic is not easy, temptation is everywhere so we have to keep close to our Saviour for His protection against the Evil One who is prowling about like a lion looking for prey. But thank God the battle has been won by Jesus on the cross.