

I'm not too sure many people understood the kind of upbringing I had even in the 50s and 60s, and I'm absolutely sure it would be a mystery to most people today! My dad was an extremely hard worker: he was employed in a local factory where he worked shifts and in the evenings, no matter whether he was on day-shift or night-shift, he worked to keep his brother's small holding supplied with animal fodder. My mother had the constant day-to-day stresses of keeping a tight rein on my brother and me.

The timetable was rigid: up early enough to get the good of the day, regular wholesome meals and in at a decent time for bath and bed. I'm not sure that I was ever envious of others who were allowed to roam the streets more freely, but I did get embarrassed when I had to respond to the call to come in even when it was still light in summer. I would have to say that I do appreciate now that regular routine and even imposed it with only a few concessions to the late 20<sup>th</sup> century on my own children!

My mother was nobody's fool however, and she knew that underneath my oh-so-proper exterior lay a devious monster. She questioned anything that did not make sense to her and even much that did! And she was right: I was devious. I learned to conceal what I knew would incur her displeasure, never mind her wrath, and while modern-day psychology might argue that it was her own approach to life that made me that way, the Bible says that I was conceived in sin, so the deceitful nature was there first.

And it showed itself in lots of other ways too: I was moody, twisted . . . and lots of other things as well which it wouldn't be too profitable to go into in detail. But it was very obvious to me at least that there was something seriously wrong. At the time I often thought it was just me, but the Bible says that all have sinned and that I was just behaving in the way my nature led me to behave.

Things went from bad to worse until I was fifteen. There was nothing that would have made headlines in the papers but there was a great deal that needed sorting out. The only thing was that I couldn't sort it out. And the other crazy thing was that I knew there was only One Person Who could sort it out. Only I wouldn't let Him!

But I'm going too fast! The One Person who could sort it out was not my mother, by the way! But she had told me about Him. And my dad had made sure that I got to hear about This Person too. They'd found out about Him in the Bible, for that same Book that told me I was conceived in sin and that all had sinned, also told me that Christ died for my sins. And that He was the only Person who could get me out of my mess.

It was all very clear: Jesus Christ did not have the sinful nature that I had. The Bible says that He is God, therefore sinless. So of course He never did anything wrong. Yet men who did have a sinful nature and whose lives were full of sin crucified him. Not only that, but while He was being crucified He was punished by God! Now that doesn't begin to make sense . . . unless He was being punished for the sins of other people! And He was! And I knew this, but I also knew that if I were to benefit personally from what Jesus had done, I had to commit myself totally to Him. And that was scary. I had to rely on Him alone to sort out the problem I had with sin. I had to be prepared to follow Him as leader in my life and live my life to please Him. And I wasn't sure that I was ready for such a complete upheaval.

Eventually, however, I took a deep breath, like diving into water where I knew I could not swim, and did all of that: asked Him to get rid of all that was wrong and replace it with the good that only He could give.

That was when I was 15. What about now, more than 35 years later? Life's better than ever. If I'd not made that decision at 15, my life would be a bigger mess than ever and I'd have been facing punishment for my own sins in hell. But my greatest pleasure now is to find out from the Bible more about Jesus, the Lord Jesus, for He is Leader in my life. And that's just practice for heaven, where I'll be with Him, still learning about Him and thanking God for Him.