

A FRIEND OF JESUS THE TESTIMONY OF DON LOVEJOY

(MAY 23rd 1935 – DECEMBER 2nd 2000)

Proverbs 3: 5-6

*“Trust in the Lord with all your heart, and lean not on your own understanding,
In all thy ways acknowledge Him, And He shall direct thy paths.”*

Thought Starter

“To God be the glory!”

Forward: By an Old Friend
(Saturday, December 9th 2000, updated Wednesday, 8th July 2009)

1) The testimony Don Lovejoy is a simple account of how one man's life was changed by the Lord Jesus Christ. The underlying theme in his account is the way divine love can rescue a person from immense spiritual and social degradation. It is refreshingly realistic in the way it shows how the Christian life is not necessarily free from affliction. Firmly countered is any notion that such a life is a life of ease or consists of one victory after another. Those who want a comfortable gospel will not find it here. Along with Don, I too witness to any reader of this testimony that the only way to personally know God and to receive freedom from those things destroying us is through placing one's faith in Jesus Christ as one's Lord and Saviour. That is the Gospel Don accepted and that is the Gospel you can accept. You too may come to know Jesus and enjoy His merciful, life-changing forgiveness.

2) I first met Don Lovejoy at a church house group we both began to attend in 1981. At the time of our meeting I was at low ebb. Although Don was not yet a believer, there was already evidence that God was starting to do a work in his life. The results of that work were to blossom out after his coming to faith in 1982. At the time of our first meeting, I was relieved that there was someone who seemed to be suffering from worse problems than myself! In appearance he resembled a benign Friar Tuck, complete with pudding basin haircut, round stomach and jovial mannerisms. He also wore a grubby, ill-fitting white raincoat, which I trust went the way of some occult books he used to keep. Wide of girth, Don was also wide of heart and his compassion for the poorer members of society was outstanding. He could even tolerate my own solemn lectures that were sometimes accompanied by a repeated jabbing of my finger into his stomach. (I think it was my finger that hurt more than his stomach.) What cannot be denied is that through Don the Lord did a marvellous work and influenced for the better the lives of many people. Gifted in personal evangelism and pastoral care, Don's calling was very much to emphasise the friendship that Jesus had for those '*written off*' by society and by the Church. He kept what I used to call the Don Lovejoy '*waif and stray society*.' Yet his concern for the welfare of others did not blind him to the need for sound theological input. He was one of the few people who would accept the teaching abilities I had to offer. At the time, I used to call him "*my one man audience*." His reply would be the famous Don Lovejoy grin – although whether it was a grin of appreciation or pity I could never quite tell! Thanks in part to Don's ability to listen and offer constructive feedback, I was able to develop those gifts to the point where they could constructively influence the lives of hundreds of people and do something to challenge the wave of deception that began to engulf the English Churches from May, 1994. Although he received only a very limited education, Don possessed a hunger for truth that was to serve him in good stead when the problem of spiritual deception began to rear its head several years after his move to Wales. I am especially grateful for the way Don consoled me in the Chapel of Leeds General Infirmary during a great crisis of faith in April 1984. At the time, I was near suicidal because everything in my life had seemed to go wrong. Being unemployed didn't help either. Thanks in part to his compassion, I was encouraged to overcome my despair and continue in the Christian life. It was also thanks to his advice that on Thursday, January 17th 1985 I took up some voluntary work as a Hospital Visitor. This continued until March 2005 when redundancies and cutbacks severely curtailed the chaplaincies' effectiveness. Only after an interlude of sixteen years did I get into a position to repay that kindness by placing his testimony onto the Internet. As I said to him during a telephone call discussing this testimony, "*I have a long memory for both good things and bad things*."

3) During the eighties, we often used to remark that the Lord had a funny sense of humour in putting the two of us together because in terms of social background and personality we could not have been more different. Where he was pastoral I was intellectual, where he had a ministry of caring for people I had a ministry of confronting them, where he possessed a mild disposition I possessed a severe one. Moreover, his focus was upon meeting personal needs whereas my focus was (and still is) on the purity of doctrine. Occasionally, when he felt that a member of his '*waif and stray society*' needed drastic correction he would bring him to my place to be given some blunt talking. We were though united by a strong desire to be used by Christ and we shared a hearty dislike of pretentious religiosity. To his credit, he saw where

things were going in the Church before I did and many of his warnings, which seemed extreme in the mid 1980s, have been amply fulfilled. Another noteworthy characteristic was his sense of humour. When laid back with a severe dose of flu in January 1985, he called round and visited me in my bedroom. Once there a mischievous grin broke out across his face, he then genuflected and with the pompous voice of a ham actor intoned, *"Bless you my son."* It was all I could do to prevent him from performing the last rites. In response, I exclaimed *"Don who needs the friends of Job with you around?"* His answer was the famous Don Lovejoy chuckle. He was a man you could be real with.

4) Yet on pastoral matters he could be very wise. In October 1986, I found myself starting up a young men's group that was to last for over three years. During it, I took what were to be my first steps in real Christian Ministry; as it was being set up, Don shrewdly challenged me by asking, *"Whose group is it, yours or Christ's?"* By heeding that challenge, the young men's group became one of the most fruitful works of my life. I am still in contact with some of its members. In 1987, he advised, *"Try less to be the grisly bear and be more the honey bear."* He then emphasised the point by slapping his belly – a gesture that made me laugh. Much more could be said in favour of Don, there was for instance his astonishing courage in the face of suffering, there was his willingness to contribute to house group discussions and more generally there was his warm hearted exuberance, but now it's time to let him speak for himself. All that remains to be said here is that his life amply demonstrated the point that those *"who have been forgiven much will love much,"* (Luke 7.47). Don Lovejoy was a close friend of that saviour who Himself is a friend of every sinner who turns to Him.

Acknowledgements

1) The kind co-operation of Don and Sue Lovejoy in the publication of this testimony is gratefully acknowledged. Also acknowledged is their written permission to reproduce, publish and distribute this material either manually or through the Internet. For reasons of copyright, every bible quotation in this testimony has been based upon the 1611, King James Version. All paragraphs have been numbered in order to facilitate easy and quick reference of key points.

2) In this testimony the word *"grace,"* means *"undeserved favour."* More specifically, it refers to that freely given favour that is bestowed by God upon those who believe in Jesus Christ as their Lord and Saviour. In contrast the word *"sin,"* refers to that inherited, self-centred rebelliousness, which provokes the anger of God because it leads people to disobey the perfect commands He laid down in Scripture. Unless dealt with, sin always leads to eternal separation from God.

3) Out of respect for the privacy of his family one or two names has been altered otherwise nothing else in the contents of this testimony has been altered.

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THE TESTIMONY OF DON LOVEJOY

Part A: Hard beginnings

1) My name is Don Lovejoy. I was born during the pre-war years in Dagenham on May 23rd 1935. My Father died when I was just one. Times were so hard for my dear Mum that at one stage she even tried to sell me! Nobody wanted me! I grew up knowing a series of "dad's." My brother and I eventually had four more stepbrothers and sisters. Due to these difficult home circumstances I was often, even at the age of eight, responsible for looking after and cooking for my younger brothers and sisters. My Mum did her best. Christmas' were sparse, often with no presents and not much food. One Christmas we even had toad in the hole for Christmas lunch! Yet I still have some happy memories from those hard times!

2) As I came into my early teens in 1949, it was necessary for me to go and live with my Auntie Bertha and Uncle Tom, where my brother had gone years before. It was there that I had my only schooling of one and a half years. I was keen to learn and amazingly caught up very quickly despite years of being kept at home to look after the children.

3) I joined the Royal Air Force during conscription. This was a very happy time in my life, I belonged, and there was great trust and friendship amongst the men. The stability and comradeship helped me to develop and grow as a person during those happy days. My national service lasted from 1953 until 1955.

4) I married in 1960. As a result, I had two children, a girl and boy, but sadly it didn't work out, so once again I was suffering the pain of rejection. I was brought up a Roman Catholic, and amongst many superstitions, I found I could stare at the pendulum clock and will it to stop-and it did, much to my Auntie's annoyance! I realised that I had some sort of power, but I thought it must have come from God! At fifteen I went to have my palm read, but the fortune-teller who tried to read my palm said she couldn't, as I was already a "seer". She told me I had this gift from God and I should use it wisely.

Part B: Into the Occult

1) In 1968, I began training to become a nurse at Lewisham. In those days very few men took up this profession, so I was surrounded by female nurses asking for advice, whilst I wrote love letters for them. I began collecting lots of occult books. I found out I could read their palms and tell their fortunes, most of which came true. This made me very popular and encouraged me to read tarot cards and runes stones. All the time I believed this was a gift from God; I never took money for this. My interest in those things grew and grew, I didn't realise that I had entered the world of the occult and Satan's territory!

2) During this time I met my second wife. Married in 1973, we had two boys. Even during this time I was aware of a spiritual search going on inside me. We moved to Leeds in 1975. I looked at Eastern Religions and the Divine Light Movement caught my eye, but nothing seemed to satisfy my spiritual Hunger. I was working at that time as a clerical assistant with Leeds Education Department. I noticed that out of all the people who worked in that organisation, there was a man called Tim. He was so different! He didn't gossip, swear, or tell coarse jokes. I learnt that he spent time during his dinner break reading his Bible and praying, he was not ashamed in whom he believed. He believed in Jesus, the Son of God, he told me that he had a personal relationship with God through Jesus. He also divulged that he was a born-again Christian! I wanted to laugh, "*How could you be born-again?*" Gently, he began explaining it to me and slowly things began to make sense. I went along to his Anglican Church in Leeds a few times and God continued to work out His purpose in my life, even though at this point I could not see it. I didn't realise that things were so bad in my marriage until on July 4th 1981, American Independence Day, we had done a demonstration of goods we were selling. I was just looking forward to watching a big tennis match at Wimbledon on the television when my wife told me she had found someone else and no longer loved me. I was utterly shocked and in great anguish.

Part C: Meeting Jesus

1) I left my home and family and for a short time entered the world of the homeless! That night I experienced the feelings of emptiness and uncertainty as I laid my head down, my bed being a park bench! Later that week I stayed with friends and found myself a bed sit to base myself in while I tried to get my life back together. With hindsight, I can now see how marvellously God was working in my life at that point; through meeting Tim, I was being challenged with the Gospel of Jesus Christ and this path that would lead me into His Arms and a Spiritual new birth. I continued going to Tim's church with him and his family. In February 1982 I gave my life to Jesus! An appeal went out to anyone who wanted their sins washed away and forgiven, would they stand up? I said to myself there's no way I would stand up in front of all these people, only to find that God had other ideas! It was as if two sticks were put into my legs and I just had to stand up, the Holy Spirit was doing His work upon me! I felt as if I was being scooped up into His arms for I was filled with His love and peace and all the pain I had suffered through my broken marriage seemed to leave me. Incredibly, I was able to forgive the man who had taken my wife from me and even had love for him. This truly was the Love of Jesus that had entered my heart!

2) When God enters your heart He accepts you just as you are, then He begins to clean out bits that are not good for us. At that time I had been attending a spiritualist church, believing that I had this healing gift from God and was about to enter into a 'developing circle.' God showed me clearly that this gift was *not* from Him!

3) With the help of a loving, caring house group I saw the power of prayer and the need for me to repent and be delivered from all my occult background. The Lord graciously delivered me and set me free to serve Him and Him alone!

4) Another important thing that God had to do in my life was show me that my occult books had to go! Christian friends came and explained to me that they needed to be burnt. Foolishly, I thought maybe we could sell them, but I realised that we couldn't let anyone fall into the same trap I did, so burning them was the only answer! Shelves full of these books were bungled into the back of my friend's car, I gather the bonfire they made was a wonderful sight and Heaven would have been rejoicing too! I know for myself I experienced a loud popping sound as they left my flat and instead of a heavy feeling, a great peace now prevailed

5) A Christian brother kindly offered me accommodation and I began a wonderful new life as God continued to heal my hurts and take me deeper into Him. I learnt through Mike to trust again and grow in my new faith in Jesus. These two years at Mike's flat from 1982 until 1983, proved to be exciting and invaluable in many different ways.

6) In 1982, I helped to form a group called: 'GENESIS.' This was a group of unemployed Christians in Leeds who met together with the purpose of reaching out to a multi-faith community with the ministry of good works. It involved showing in many practical ways God's love to people of many colours and creeds. This raised morale for those who helped and eventually thirty-nine out of forty got jobs! We even had a personal letter from Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher to thank us for our efforts. The whole project lasted about two years.

7) My Mum fell ill in London and was diagnosed with terminal cancer. I longed to share my faith with her. But she was deeply entrenched in the Catholic religion that believed you got to Heaven by good works and penance. She had just received communion when I arrived there, but her face was drawn and heavy with the sin and pain of her life. God wonderfully gave me an opportunity to tell her that she could be released from sin by a free gift of His Grace as long as she repented and believed and asked Jesus into her life. She lay in her hospital bed, racked with the pain of cancer and past regrets. Afterwards, as I looked at her, her face became opulent, glowing with the freedom of cancelled sin. I was so grateful to the Lord! She went home to Heaven just six months later. That was in 1983. Although I had sadness in my heart during her funeral, it was mingled with joy, because I would now see her again as she too would be in Heaven.

8) I also enjoyed the privilege of hospital visiting, and helping at a hospital radio station in Leeds. God gave me such a love for people, especially those who had needs, whatever they were. We lived near St. George's Crypt. Ever since the 1930s, this overnight shelter for the homeless has been recognized for its provision for those who were unacceptable to society, or had chosen to opt out. Mike and I often went outside the old house we lived in with jugs of tea and sandwiches to talk and share the Gospel with many needy people. It was a precious time, which deepened my love for my Saviour and those He brought alongside me. As Jesus Himself promised, "*Inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these my brethren, ye have done it unto me,*" (Matthew 25:40).

9) I moved in 1984, and had my own special flat near the centre of Leeds that I called "*The Upper Room.*" Much fellowship went on there. At that time I also had the privilege of working with Down syndrome children. One child lost her mother and asked me how I felt when I lost mine. I was able to tell her very simply that she was in Heaven because she had asked Jesus into her life. She too wanted Jesus! It wasn't long before all fourteen made a confession of Faith. God heard their cry and answered them! During this time I was asked by my church to give hospitality to a young man for a few nights. He had just come out of prison and had nowhere to live. The days turned out to be six precious months, which turned out to be a very special time for us because we met with God together.

10) I was able to take part in Scripture Union Beach Missions and saw God move mightily in the hearts of children and parents alike! Often, I would spend time on the streets in the town centre of Leeds sharing the love of God with whoever would listen. Many seeds were sown. I prayed that the Holy Spirit would water them.

11) As I grew in my walk with the Lord I was aware that God had given me a gift to have a deep love for people. I also felt that He wanted to use my background in the occult to warn people of its many dangers. Furthermore, I could sense that much deception was coming into the Christian church. It seemed as if God put a commission upon me to warn people of any dangers that would come upon them as an '*angel of light,*' (2 Corinthians 11.14). Evidence of this calling began to emerge during the middle of the 1980s.

12) I saw my boys regularly and took them along to church so that they too would hear the Gospel for themselves. Despite all the activities and wonderful things God was doing, I still had a deep loneliness. When I shut my flat door I missed the companionship of a human being. I prayed that the Lord would give me a lady I could share Jesus with, a wife who loved Him as I did. I even prayed for a Welsh wife, as I had a grandfather who had been Welsh. I know now that God must have surely put this prayer in my mind.

Part D: The move to Wales

1) I went to a conference in Cumbria and '*happened*' to meet some people from Wales. They shared that I should get in touch with their friend whose heart for the needy was so like mine! We began writing and God developed a most beautiful relationship. In December 1987, I began a new life in Wales. In March the following year, I married Sue. God really does answer prayers!!!

2) I settled into my new life with a lovely wife who loved Jesus as I did. Despite being very much in love with one another, it would be untrue to say that this was an easy time! Gelling into the lives of Sue and her daughter Zoë, at a new place in the United Kingdom took time to get used to. I know that if God hadn't been in the centre of our lives it would have been a very different story! Just weeks after our marriage I developed a nasty chest infection that left me feeling very weak and exhausted; In fact, it continued for eighteen months when after many different treatments it was finally diagnosed as M.E. (Post Viral Syndrome), which I still have to this day.

3) We battled through many more difficult times; yet we saw the Lord moving greatly in the lives of those people that He gave us the privilege of influencing. We had a home called "*Shalom,*" which in Hebrew means, "*deep peace and wholeness.*" God really used this home for His purposes and we saw many hurting people bandaged up and ready to go on their way

again! After two years God moved us on to another “*Shalom*” and extended our tent pegs giving us more and more opportunities to bathe the wounds of those who were hurting, loving them and being “*Jesus in skin*” to them.

4) As the 1990’s progressed, I was very aware of so much deception entering the church. I could see that such movements as the Kansas City Prophets and the Toronto Blessing represented the kind of spiritualism that Jesus had delivered me from. Through these false movements Satan threw “*fairy dust*” into the eyes of many. My views were far from popular, but I felt that warning others about this problem was what the Lord wanted for me to do. We were given wonderful fellowship with other believers, which was always a source of great comfort.

5) However, I was still plagued with M.E. Also I had developed diabetes and had arthritis in some parts of my body. God remained faithful to us and provided for our every need in such remarkable ways!

6) In 1998, having gone through quite a time with family sicknesses the doctors discovered that I had a small malignant tumour growing in my oesophagus. This required chemotherapy, radiotherapy and extensive surgery. A period in intensive care on a life support machine was also needed. Part of my oesophagus was removed and my stomach was ‘*re-sectioned*’ in my chest region. It was a particularly difficult time, but through it all I knew the loving arms of our Saviour wrapped tightly around me. I made a slow but good recovery; surrounded by hundreds of well wishes in cards, phone calls and visitors. I discovered the reality of the Scripture: “*for when I am weak then I am strong,*” (2 Corinthians 12.10b).

7) Many times I found that when my body was very weak that God would use me most of all. All Glory goes to Him! If I had the choice of being fit and well without Jesus or to have a shortened life with cancer, I would choose every time to have the cancer! For I have no life and purpose without Him!

8) We had the most wonderful 1999. God provided many little breaks and we visited various parts of the United Kingdom, including Jersey where Zoe now lives. Time seemed to be extended for us; colours were brighter than ever before, life was so much more precious; each day was to be enjoyed to its fullness. We counted every blessing!

9) I met the new millennium in January 2000 with the awareness that I once again felt very tired and unwell. The scan proved that I had secondary tumours growing in my liver. Chemotherapy was an option that “*might*” put the cancer into remission. Once again we decided to give this type of therapy a shot. After the first session I became extremely ill and for the first time felt I was losing grip on life itself. It was decided that I could no longer continue with the treatment, as it would have killed me before the cancer would!

10) As I have been coming to terms with terminal cancer, knowing God could heal if He so wished. I have a peace knowing that His perfect will in my life is all I want. He knows best and for that I am eternally grateful! Both Sue and I are experiencing the most amazing peace and rest. We are sharing the fruit of many prayers, the result is that we are being kept and carried. What more can we ask for!

11) We have felt the need to get everything in order, and whilst we have set about doing this we have found a joy that has come from Heaven enabling us to even make the arrangements for my funeral, to celebrate the life He has given me on this earth!

Part E: Amazing Grace!

1) I know that I am Heaven bound and that I am a sinner saved by Grace. Also, I know that my times are in His Hands and that the day when He comes to take me from this earth to Heaven will be joyous day! I do have normal feelings, and parting from Sue and all those I love is a sad thought, but I do know that He will give me Grace even for that!

2) I close with the hope that whoever reads this testimony to the goodness of God will begin to see His Power and Majesty. May they quickly realize that no amount of good works could ever have brought me to become one of His children. The incredible fact is that God loved even a sinner like me so much that He sent His Son to die in my place that I might receive eternal life. John 3.16 tells us that, *“God so loved the world, that gave His only begotten son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish but have eternal life.”*

3) It is the same eternal life that he offers you please seek Him with all your heart and you will find Him. My sin once separated me from Jesus, but when I asked for forgiveness, he forgave me, washed me as clean as snow, and came to reside by the Power of the Holy Spirit into my life!

4) My prayer is that my life shared with you will show you the reality of Christ’s love and life-changing Power. As 1Timothy 1.15 points out, *“Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners of whom I am the chief.”* This is glorious good news if we believe in it.

5) The following words from a hymn by John Newton (1725–1807) sum up all I can ever say: -

*“Amazing Grace, how sweet the sound
Saved a wretch like me!
I once was lost, but now am found
Were blind, but now I see.*

*Through many dangers, toils and snares
I have already come
'Tis grace has brought me safe thus far,
And Grace will lead me home.*

*Yes, when this flesh and heart shall fail,
And mortal life shall cease,
I shall possess within the veil
A life of joy and peace.*

*When I've been there ten thousand years,
Bright shining as the sun,
I've no less days to sing God's praise
Than when I first began.”*

Source: Baptismal Hymnal.

Postscript

Around 7.50 AM, on Saturday, December 2nd 2000 Don went to be with Christ, peacefully at home. In answer to prayer, his mind and highly distinctive personality remained intact until the end.

Questions

- 1) What factors drew Don Lovejoy into the Occult?
- 2) What effects did Don's involvement in the Occult have upon his life?
- 3) What events did Jesus use to bring Don into His Kingdom?
- 4) In what ways did Jesus show His Love through the life of Don Lovejoy?
- 5) What spiritual gifts were particularly noticeable in Don after he became a Christian? How did these gifts differ from those gifts he had manifested during his involvement in the occult?
- 6) In what ways did the Holy Spirit help Don come to terms with His illness?
- 7) How can God help us face the prospect of death?
- 8) How can we respond to Christ's offer to forgive our sins and grant eternal life?