

Testimony of My Salvation and Later Deliverance from Alcohol

by Shirley L Howell

Several years ago I heard a lady called Tommy give a wonderful testimony of how she was used as a vessel to introduce someone to the only one who has the power stronger than the power of Satan. Satan had dominion over this man, her uncle, and sadly over many of us humans through the misuse of an addiction to alcohol and drugs.



At a later time I heard another great testimony given by Debbie, whose reputation was that of being a "good girl." However, she was amazed to find the truth and she testified to the fact that "good people" also must have Christ to save them from the deceit of the enemy who would have us believe that our goodness is worthy of heaven. Now my testimony: I feel shame as I visit my past again but it also makes me feel so glad to witness to the truth that there is nothing too hard for our God. Our God can take a selfish rebellious bad girl who was glad to tell anyone that she hated God, and by just His love, rescue her from her self-imposed hell as well as the final hell.

Revelation 12:11: "And they shall overcome him (the accuser) by the blood of the Lamb and the word of their testimony." Testimony is to have proof by means of evidence that something is true, in this case it's one's own life.

I want to introduce this by quoting from Purging your House; Pruning your Family Tree by Perry Stone. There is a subtitle in chapter 1 entitled "Holes in the Soul." It speaks about Satan choosing his future victims while they are very young. He looks for those who develop holes in the emotions which are so often due to cruel words, abuse, anger etc; but also by physical or emotional abandonment or neglect which is interpreted by the child as rejection. Add to that spoken or unspoken criticism and the lack of demonstrated acceptance - love. Certainly it is not always true but so much of this darkness is passed on from one generation to another.

As this environment continues the holes get bigger and the person comes to feel unclean inside and unworthy. He or she will eventually seek some kind of recognition that can be construed as acceptance. Most often this will come through experiences involving sex and/or alcohol, drugs. As this continues a person comes to depend on the alcohol, the drugs and associated actions to dull/bypass his or her emotions and mind and so feel a kind of freedom while drunk or high.

Problem: person sobers up, comes down from this hope of escape from the pain. The holes in the soul are still there. Continuing to go for this "feel good", addiction takes - over. The alcohol, the drug becomes his or her companion but also the chimera on the ya HI back - no escape.

Now to start my story:

I. In the Beginning..... From the age of 9, the enemy of our souls found an easy target in me for serious instability and mental, emotional breakdown. I had inherited the curse of my father's DWO serious struggle with what would now be diagnosed as clinical depression. As well, if in school today, I would be evaluated as being ADD. Without today's knowledge, I was thought of as slow and a little short on intellect -- dumb. I was lovingly called Dingy Lou by my housemates in college. However, my immaturity with self-centered, hell-bent ways and self-pity continued well into my 30s. I had serious bouts with depression including postpartum after the birth of both children. A later and final bout, which came after salvation, brought about a 6 month leave of absence from my teaching position and the diagnosis of suicidal, agitated depression.

The truth is that suicidal, agitated depression in my case was also a fancy term for the condition I brought along with me from my past into this present situation which included all those attitudes of trying to live for self and failing while swallowing the lies of Satan. Mentally ill, yes, but still it includes the color of sin. Believe me, the chemistry in my brain was and, in many ways, still is screwed up, but early on I chose the patterns of thinking that took me along the pathway established by the way of my fallen, carnal self.

II. Salvation.....And getting to the reason for all this.....

As I came into my late 20s I was running on empty. I had by now tried all the usual things that are supposed to fulfill us -- higher education, marriage, fraternal membership, children, working, having my own home and, of course alcohol. I believed in a living God but knew nothing of His Son Jesus -- not much church in the formative years. I had come to wish I'd never been born, believing, that as none of us had asked to be born, the suffering in living was unjust. Sometimes, in my desperation, I "prayed" to this God that I hated, and sometimes I would sense a presence or an insight which seemed to be an answer; but, of course, not the answer I was looking for. But, oh, our amazing God! And I'm sure it was in great glee He orchestrated all the following -- as well as what had come before. Each event was leading to His magnificent salvation, the rescue from self-inflicted sin and death.

1. The only thing that had been keeping "poor little ol' me" from a permanent drop-out, was my two children, then 5 & 2 1/2. All praise to Him, for His plans included making sure that what they suffered, even after my birth into the kingdom of God, was covered by His loving care and protection. Today both, as well their family, are active Christians.
2. It is ironic, but at this time I started the 3 of us, the kids and myself, attending Sunday School at my hometown community and only church in town. I had also

decided I needed to get them baptized. My motive for this strange behavior was my intense desire that these two innocents, who, by the by, also "had not asked to be born," have a different chance at life than the way I'd taken. I didn't want them to suffer, or actually catch, my hatred, anger, and as I later found, the root of it all--fear. It's a wondrous thing, that according to Ecc.3:11, God had, at creation, "set a piece of eternity" in my heart as He had set in all men. Inside that place, I knew I was wrong and someone had to teach them the correct thinking about God. I was actually asking, bargaining with, God to do something I couldn't -- love them.

3. Of course, as arranged by God, I found, in the church's office, this wonderful, wise pastor. Brazenly, right up front, I told him that I hated God, but I wanted my children baptized. With God-wise simplicity he responded, "OK, but one of you, as the parents, must become a member of the church." || had made up my mind so I answered immediately, "I'll do it." Next came the special orchestration fore planned by the only one who could put it together so it could not miss His target. A new requirement for membership had just been started- a special series of basic Bible doctrine classes. And what a wonderful group! Some like me were new and some were members whom I had known as I grew up. Strangely, all accepted and obviously loved me just as I was. Oh, how clever our God is, for here's the truth: it was to be me who learned the correct thinking about God when I entered that church. I learned who God really is and what His Son had done, even for me, so that we could have life instead of death.

However, it wasn't to be that easy. I was so happy while going to those classes. After all I had finally found the answer, the Truth, a reason for living. But one last flurry of rebellion arose before I came to the end of myself. We came to the lesson that included "God's foreknowledge," I did not understand about His omniscience (meaning all knowing - He already knew what I would do.). I couldn't/wouldn't give up that. I did the choosing, not God. Now | wasn't just on empty, but with nothing left, not even fumes to run on. I was stopped right there in the middle of this road I had turned onto. I could not find a fix for this. I had already gone to the pastor who, again with sincere simplicity, said, "The Bible says it, therefore it is true." So with a sense of sadness I just sat down there in the road, and then I spoke out, loudly, "OK, God, I give up. I've tried to see it Your way and it's not working. I don't get it; don't like it. I'm just going to sit here and whatever happens happens. I'll stay on long enough to see that the kids' basic needs are taken care of. But no more Sunday School, no nothing!" And I started, then and there, doing just that --nothing.

4. But the next day was Sunday. I had forgotten to inform the friend who picked us up for Sunday School! Honk, honk! Can you guess? Just so happened we were up and even dressed. I thought, "It's easier to go than it is to explain. I just won't listen." I sat down 2nd row, outside chair, next to the door. And I didn't listen -- until I heard her say, "God does not hear nor answer the prayers of the unsaved." Suddenly I was speaking, "That's not true. I know someone who is unsaved and she prayed and He answered the prayer." She was startled, but she answered kindly and went on with the lesson. She had known and evidently cared about me from the time of about the age of 11. Her daughter and I played together, and she

was not fooled about who "someone" was in my outburst. He had arranged it all, because then came the event that sealed the fact that I am even here with you today.

5. I was almost immediately aware of a presence. I could "see" a white, somewhat, opaque robe beside me. First thing, I checked around me. Everyone was still there, but no one was paying any attention to me or the presence next to me. Other than the teacher's voice, just audible in the background, it seemed strangely quiet. Just me and the Presence. Within only a few seconds I simply "knew" that it was Jesus. Then I became aware of His hand being extended out in front of me. I again within moments "knew" what I was to do, --- what I needed to do. I put my actual hand in His. Yes, a hand seen only by me. For the first time and it will probably be the best time here on earth I experienced peace and joy indescribable, all around me, in me. And no matter the detours I have taken, He never, never let go. So, yes, have let go, but He never. Great is His faithfulness, mercy and might.

III. After salvation.....still bondage.

This is where I hope to show that we are often brought to think/believe that with our salvation we also have all there is. This is true in that everything He has for us is now available, but we do not necessarily receive all He has or are going to need for our rescue from the wages of our sin, death. We have gone from death to eternal life having been forgiven by the covering of the blood of Jesus. We are written into the book of life in heaven. But this new life journey has only begun. It is likely that we have not realized that our salvation has two other facets: beautiful ones -- healing and deliverance from those demons that hang on so tenaciously from our past even from early childhood. Salvation is a gift and so is healing and deliverance but we need to learn of the power and authority that is living within us that is greater than the infirmities and the power of the evil one who will hang on until cast out / away. So, on with the story. After class I felt a strong desire to tell someone. I told my teacher. She, as you might guess, was delighted. Later on that morning I realized that His intention for me was to follow Him. I also understood quickly that part of His intention included being faithful in being part of a church. With delight I followed Him -- for awhile -- but, except for church, too soon, I was in no way consistent. I was pretty successful at hiding my drinking from most of my peers and the public. Being a school teacher, this was important; but no hiding from my family or, of course, not from God. I continued running down this road of self destruction until it was almost too late. I came close to pulling my husband and my children down with me. This to me proves the height and depth of His love more than any other proof that I can think of. He does not quit. I tried mightily to live the life He had given me my way -- still the rebel. However, it all came to a screeching halt, the final alcohol drenched crossroads in front of me.

IV. Deliverance..... from bondage to the strong spirit alcohol. Thad another vision. I was laying on a sunny hillside in soft green grass while surrounding my head were uncounted 6-packs of beer, with a bottle in my hand, I felt warm and "free." What a true lie. Sure, at the start, but whatever you know about bondage know this: on down the road -- cold and trapped. Leaving the vision and back into reality I already felt trapped. The truth: I was cold and stripped, all excuses voided. Almost literally His "handwriting was on the wall." {no wall available) and the choice was clear. Life or the inevitable death by this bondage in the here and now. I had wanted death before He took my hand into His. But it was not the same as then. I now knew the love of Jesus. If I choose the lie of the vision, I lose my family, home, my job, the church. I gain plenty of time to figure the way to my next beer. To quit my beer was to lose my ready, always agreeing friend. I had not until that summer begun drinking every day. There had been periods of time when I did

not drink, but, of course, I soon resumed when I would listen to the wooing song, whether happy, sad, or mad, of the desire to escape from my aching mind and emotions or to "celebrate," anything. Mostly I drank at home, occasionally we would go to a bar. It had been a long time since any parties. I was a faithful church member so didn't do those kind of parties. With this advent of daily drinking there was no way to deny addiction. I knew I couldn't stop this time. The wall I had hit. The wall actually was there and wasn't going to move. Since I was just sitting there against the wall, I did what I'd done before: called out to God very much out loud. "Lord, I do not want to quit. I love beer. I love the way it makes me feel. If you want me to quit then You will have to find something to take its place." That's where I stopped and I continued to sit, now completely devoid of feeling or any attempts to think. The kids and my husband were still attending their summer schools. There in my living room it was quiet with a sense of being really alone. My really desperate call out to God was the only thing there. But He had already started His unexplainable timing and staging for this lifesaving/changing event. As I sat, I became aware of a very "still, small" but firm voice speaking.... but within me, "Wait." I thought, "I heard that." I listened. Again, "Wait." inside. I leaned forward, alert as I realized this was real. I was sober and, probably, sane. I knew myself well enough to know I would not be telling myself to wait; not something I would tell myself in the best of situations; nor would it be a thought-arrow sent by an agent of Satan. He wouldn't be telling me to wait but to go out get a beer, a 6-pack of beer. So.... Is it possible? "Did You just say, 'Wait.' Lord?" I listened and quietly again the one word, "Wait." And then it came; I knew what He meant; so I said, "OK, I'll wait -- just as long as I can. I'll tell you exactly how long I can wait. If You don't bring something, stronger than my desire for the beer -- within that time, well, I'll go for the beer." You may shrink back and think, "In no way can you speak to God this way." But I can prove He honored my bargaining with Him. Also in no way could I imagine how He could possibly show up with something more powerful than the urge that would drive me to my "friend, my beer." I did set the time limit when the desire would start; then I sit down to "wait". He never failed. Something would happen or someone especially surprising and inevitably special would come. And always so obviously improvised under the direction of the most creative Director of Life ever. Some of these, what I guess you could call diversions, were uproariously funny, and one provided me with one of my closest and dearest of life-long friends. There are many stories to relate with the examples of His marvelous interruptions as He did the work of this deliverance from my bondage to alcohol.

He knew exactly when to stop this kind of intervention. He taught and guided me, to help myself, and later others, as well as to know when to ask help from others as when I especially needed a loving person just to talk to. Here's the clincher: I haven't had a beer since. Yes, I've a witness, so I must say I did have two small shots of the hard stuff a few winters ago. And it did stop the cough both times. However, that is another story. Enough to say I've not tried this again. Chemical dependency does not fade with age and temptation is trickier than one expects.

This deliverance I've in part described was in 1970; I was 39 years old and had been in bondage to alcohol 18 years. I came into my salvation in 1959, 12 years before I could declare freedom from the demon alcohol. Yet He loved me all the way! And, yes, He

showed me what the "something" is that is stronger than the spirit of strong drink. It had actually been the Holy Spirit behind all these miraculous events and it wasn't long after that I experienced His special introduction with His filling my heart so full of His Spirit it was overflowing. I know literally Ephesians 5:18-19: "And do not be drunk with wine, in which is dissipation, but be filled with the Spirit;.... making melody in your heart to the Lord.

Shirley's Psalm: Out of the Pit

You came into my darkness look at that light!
You extended Your hand to me.

 Risk!.....is this real or phantom????

In trepidation I put my hand
 Slowly into Yours-----

It's real!!! -----more real than anything that is surrounding me.

 Then this rocky journey started----

 Up awhile out --- Up
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 Into the pit again down.....

 Yet You kept me.

You kept me!!

 This impossible rebel; kept her from her impending
 Self inflicted, self-directed destruction,
Until at last-----I was able with You beside me
 To climb out the last time and stand securely
 On the Rock of my Salvation.

Shirley Howell

Born: May 8, 1932

Death: July 31, 2022



Shirley Tellefson was born in Oregon on May 8th, 1932 and lived her early life in Eugene and Pilot Rock, Oregon. She met her future husband, Jack Howell, while waitressing and going to college in La Grande, Oregon. Shirley graduated with a Bachelor's Degree in Home Economics although she actively disliked sewing and didn't care for cooking either. She had 2 children- Jack and Jenell. She spent many years teaching 5th grade, 8th grade, and later in life, adults wanting their GED. For many years, Shirley struggled with alcohol addiction, but with God's help was able to overcome her addiction. She often joined or started an AA group in whatever town she moved to. Her greatest passion was studying and teaching the Bible as well as writing about what she had studied. Shirley was known for her passion for the Lord and her biting wit. She moved to Austin, Texas after she had a stroke and her husband died within a week of each other. She was blessed to find a family among the residents and staff of The Renaissance, Austin, TX in her final days.