

# Personal testimony of call by grace

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Preacher: Wood, Clement (1920-2010)

- [ 0 : 0 0 ] Beloved friends, I have been asked if I would give a little of my personal testimony this evening.
- I seek in all that I may now say to speak to the honor and the glory of my Jesus who has done all things well.
- Not unto us, not unto us, but unto thy name give glory. I hope that you do not anticipate anything of undue exception.
- My spiritual life has been one of gentle leading and teaching from the days of childhood.
- I would first say and speak of the wonder of my life that has been spared.
- [ 1 : 1 8 ] I am now over 68. I name this because when I was five days old, five days old, I was put in my mother's arms for what they all felt was the last time.
- God saw fit to spare the life of that infant, the one that speaks to you tonight.
- I was blessed, what a blessing, with godly parents. And comparatively early in life, in my school days, I was brought into conviction of sin.
- A gentle leading but real. I knew I was a sinner. I had for a long time said a prayer.
- Now I began to pray. Now I began to seek for mercy.
- [ 2 : 5 0 ] And this was my prayer. Then, O my God, prepare my soul for that great day. O wash me in thy precious blood, and take my sins away.
- In school days, I did have a marked answer to prayer. I could not solve a problem in algebra.
- I could not see how to deal with the problem. And I prayed that God would show me.
- I woke in the middle of the night, and there I was shown the way to answer that problem. Oh, the compassion of our God in condescending to hear the prayer of one so young.
- I was first raised to a sweet hope in the mercy and love of Jesus Christ in my early teens, as I went to a weeknight service.
- [ 4 : 1 3 ] And my dear pastor preached from these words. For the Lord will not forsake his people for his great namesake.
- For it hath pleased the Lord to make you his people. It hath pleased the Lord to make you his people.
- That was the first time when I felt a good hope through grace, that the Lord in his mercy and by his grace had put me among his children.
- I did name this morning, but there are some here that did not hear it, a most solemn event in my teenage.
- I was in hospital, recovering from an operation. On the Lord's Day, a minister of the Church of England took a service. He spake of the words that all flesh is as grass.
- [ 5 : 1 3 ] When the service was over, the man in the bed next to me, a strong man making excellent recovery, ridiculed and scorned the word.

We went to sleep. I woke the next morning. The bed next to me was empty. I asked why. And the nurse said, he died in the night.

A very solemn warning from heaven. But like some young people, though I never turned from the house of prayer, where I worshipped God, but I began to get just a little restless, just a little unsettled.

I loved my pastor. I loved his ministry, but are we too narrow? Are we too strict? And the war broke out.

And the time came when I had to join up, join the Air Force. I can't go in all the details, the wonderful way in which the Lord appeared, but the night before I was due to leave home for serving in the RAF, I begged of the Lord for a word, a promise.

[ 6 : 38 ] We have at home, I do not know where you have it over here, a little book called Daily Light. There's a portion for morning and portion for evening. It's all scripture, just various scriptures put together.

In the back of the book is a page that's headed Times of Anxiety. It was so with me. Exceeding great and precious promises.

But there was one word that stood out, I will instruct thee and teach thee in the way that thou shalt go, I will guide thee with mine eye. Oh, how I begged of the Lord that that would be mine.

You may say, well, you should take it by faith. I believe faith laid hold upon it. But I begged of the Lord to confirm it. And the Lord did. Before I left home, my dear father, reading at breakfast table, read the very portion, the very word that God had spoken to my soul that night.

And I proved that word to be true. It was while in the Air Force, I was very, very ill.

[ 7 : 48 ] My mother was called to my bedside. I was not married then. There was the chastening hand of my God. It was to stop me from attempting to make a friendship that God would not bless.

I recovered and then was ill again. And attending a service in the Air Force. And I felt my heart as hard as hard.

I felt God was angry. The service was as dead as the seat I sat on. But the Lord appeared and the last hymn was this, Son of my soul, Thou Savior dear, it is not night.

if thou art near. He came to this wretched sinner. My heart was softened, melted, humbled.

Oh, my friend, he restoreth at my soul. An overseas posting, not knowing where it would be.

[ 9 : 01 ] I went home on embarkation leave. We had a visiting minister and he spake of dear Jacob, Thou saidst, pleading the promise that God had given him at Bethel.

My pastor came back on the Wednesday and preached and took the very same two words, Thou saidst, what a word, what a confirming, what a strengthening, what a renewing of the promise that God had given me.

It was to Canada and I spent a year in Canada mostly around Medicine Hat. Again, I must not detain you at length nor go into much detail.

But, I had chicken pox and was given three days sick leave and I travelled to Banff. It was pitch dark, I didn't see any approach to the Rockies.

I went to the place I was staying and in the morning I drew the curtains and I gasped at the sight of the mountains, snow covered, sun shining, blue sky, but it was more than that.

[ 10 : 09 ] My God was with me. As the mountains are round about Jerusalem, so the Lord is round about his people forever. Oh, the sacred sense of the presence of God, the goodness of my God.

Oh, my friend, it was a Bethel. I just add here, little did I ever think that I should see that spot again.

It has been my privilege while I've been here to visit that spot. Oh, the memories. I spent a leave in Winnipeg with some godly friends and one New Year's evening we sung the hymn there is a fountain filled with blood drawn from Emmanuel's veins and sinners plunge beneath that flood lose all their guiltiest veins and I feel there a sweet sense of the love of Christ, of pardon and of peace.

The return home, the dangerous voyage of the troop ship across the Atlantic, the zigzag course because of the danger of U-boats.

But when we got near port some hours out we observed we were no longer zigzagging and yet surely an open target for the submarine because they would lurk near port knowing that the boat must come in a certain radius.

[ 11 : 44 ] But the secret was this, two destroyers were convoying the boat to port. Oh the teaching of the Lord when the saint reaches glory comes to that desired haven there will be dying grace in a dying hour.

A posting then to Singapore even there shall thy hand lead me and thy right hand shall hold me. The war ended back to my cause.

Now all the time I was away from home practically all the time I was right away from our churches. So I know from experience going to many different denominations but the mercy of God he kept me.

So that at the end of that wartime experience I came back to my old cause longing to hear the truth not that I was not blessed at times God did bless me some sweet memories but how I longed for my pastor's ministry and there the Lord confirmed the work of his grace in my soul.

Hearing the late beloved Mr. John Gostin Lord all my desire is before thee and my groaning is not hid from me. It gathered me in. It confirmed my soul.

[ 13 : 11 ] And oh the times of blessing under the ministry of my pastor. And so the time came when I was burdened and exercised about coming to tell God's people obedient to obey his voice in the ordinances of his house.

But I was held back. There was one big thing that stood in the way. How could such a vile sinner as I come to the table of the Lord? How could I partake of the bread?

How could such a vile sinner as I drink of that cup? My pastor knew nothing of what was going on. But one night he spoke of a woman at a communion service, well known, a godly woman, known to the minister.

She had taken of the bread and when the elder handed her the cup she shook her head with tears. She was so tempted and so tried was this dear godly woman.

And the minister went up and took the cup out of the hands of the elder and said, woman, it's for sinners. Friend, it gathered me in. It broke the barrier down.

[ 14 : 18 ] And then the final confirming word for my soul, fear not for I have redeemed thee, I have called thee by thy name, thou art mine.

And so I sought to come before the church and there my cup ran over. just prior to that I had such a blessing of heaven in my soul.

Under the ministry of the pastor it was a blessing after blessing after blessing after blessing that my friend, it was like heaven on earth, my cup ran over.

When I was baptized it was with this, on the word thy blood has sealed, hangs my everlasting awe. I pass on now to my marriage.

God gave me a beloved partner in a wonderful way but time would not permit to tell you of the providential way in which he was brought to me.

[ 15 : 19 ] I thank God for her, a love that we've shared now for over forty years, a love that has deepened as we pass through joys and we pass through many sorrows, a true helpmeet to this unworthy one.

My pastor died. I witnessed his death. He died on the strength of the truth he preached, all fear removed, a glorious entrance into heaven.

Oh, there came after that death such a sense of desolation and loss. And I begged of the Lord for a word and one of God's servants came, O Israel, thou shalt not be forgotten of me.

Oh, what a word it was to my soul, what comfort it brought to my heart. And on another occasion I begged of the Lord for a blessing, show me a token Lord for good and then the devil got hold of me, shook me, tempted me, tried me.

You've no right to pray like that, you've no right, I was a deacon then. Oh, my friend, the darkness, oh the perplexity, oh the tossings. And God's servant not knowing anything again what had taken place in his sermon, I don't remember what his text was, the spake of a deacon who was dying.

[ 16 : 50 ] And they asked him, what hymn would you like us to sing? Choose a hymn for the Lord's day. And he said this, show me a token Lord for God. And that dear man made a wonderful entrance into glory.

My friend, I cannot explain it to you. Those that are godly may understand it, but the devil fled. Thou preparest a table before me in the presence of mine enemies.

Oh, the sealing of his love to my soul, unworthy sinner. Now it was at this time I was exercised about the solemn work of the ministry.

And matters started to come to a head. I shrank from it. I said, Lord, what is it? Keep me back.

Let me not think another word upon it if it is not thy will. And I so begged of the Lord that night for a token. I said, Lord, if this exercise is right, if this call is from heaven, give me a token tonight in the ministry of the word.

[ 18 : 00 ] A visiting minister knowing nothing of my case. His text was in the book of Ruth. I said to myself, that's the end. Nothing about the ministry here.

But before long, God's servant was speaking about the reapers, the preachers, the ministry of the word, and my soul again felt this seemed another token and yet I shrank from it.

A sense of my sinnership, a sense of my unworthiness, a sense of my unfitness. And the life of Gideon was also brought before me and a sweet encouragement.

And these words, a door was opened unto me of the Lord. I felt I couldn't shut it.

And yet I felt, how can I go forward? Again I prayed to the Lord for a token. It was a prayer meeting. And the last hymn that was given out contained these words.

[ 19 : 11 ] Hast thou a lamb in all thy flock I would disdain to feed? Hast thou a foe before whose face I fear thy cause to plead?

The time came when I was away with my dear one having a rest, staying with another minister of the gospel, a beloved friend in the truth.

And I felt to open my heart to this dear man and he'd been waiting for it. That was the amazing part to me. And he had a Sunday, he was a pastor, had a Sunday, this was late August, had a Sunday, the third Sunday in August, in October, 20th of October, he sought for a minister to fill his place and he had me in mind.

And yet there I was, hadn't been called yet to the ministry. It was laid on his mind. time. And so arrangements were made for me to come before the church.

I had a letter from this minister late in the middle of September saying that he didn't wish to urge, didn't wish to push me, but he said he could not understand the solemn exercise and burden that he had concerning this poor man that he should stand in his pulpit on that day.

[ 20 : 37 ] A door was opened unto me of the Lord. And so arrangements eventually were made, I could not hold back, and our system is that we come before our church to give the call that we've had to the ministry to receive the blessing of the Lord.

It's the Holy Spirit that sends out a man, not the church, but the church, wishes that man, if they feel it to be of the Lord, God speed.

My pastor, I said, was dead. We had a visiting pastor, Mr. Tyler from Dicker. He took the chair. Oh, my walk down to the chapel that night, I prayed to the Lord, Lord, if this is not thy will, cause me to stop, break my leg, put me in hospital.

I felt the solemnity of it. But the Lord led me on. When I got to the chapel, I was expecting, of course, just to give my exercise. And the minister said, now, when you've given your exercise, and if the church feels that it is of the Lord, you'll preach, won't you?

Well, no thought had ever entered my mind that that night I would be called to preach. But I felt a peace. I thought I must commit it to God. I gave my testimony, and retired while the friends considered it.

[ 22 : 02 ] I thought then, if it was their will, that the Lord would give me a word. And two scriptures came to my mind. One was this, Jesus Christ, the same yesterday, and today and forever.

The other was, all that the Father giveth me shall come to me, and him that cometh to me I will in no wise cast out. I turned to the Hebrews for the first, and do you know, I couldn't find it.

The Lord directed me to the other word. The church gave me their God speed, and by God's help, without meditation, the Lord helped me that night to preach.

Now, that was the Monday. I was due then to go to Cranbrook, that place where I was asked to take the service, morning and afternoon on the next Lord's Day, and I felt the Lord give me a text.

I was in my car on my business. I could take you to the spot in Sussex, where the Lord came to me. It was like a voice. These three words, this same Jesus.

[ 23 : 07 ] I felt it was a text, and yet I felt the Lord had given me a word for Cranbrook. What did it all mean? I got back home, a message had been received that the minister that we were expecting on the Lord's Day was ill and could not come.

I went to see my deacons, brethren, and they said, well, we want you to come back on Sunday night and preach for us.

We'll have a reading service in the morning. And there was the Lord giving me a text before I knew that I had to preach that night. It was a confirmation to my soul.

And thus, in his fear, I went forward. I hope I'm not taking too long, but I will now come to the call to the pastorate.

The Lord sustained this poor sinner in the ministry among the causes in England, traveling hither and thither and granting help.

[ 24 : 11 ] And my first visit to the cause at Tamworth Road, Croydon, that eventually gave me a call to the ministry. I'd never been there in my life.

I cannot go into the detail of the way in which the door was opened for me to go there for the first time. It was a wonderful way. But I went on this Lord's day and I had a most solemn word to take.

It was the parable of the wise and the foolish virgins. Now, in the evening, like before both services, the deacons would come into the vestry and one of them would pray for God's blessing.

In the evening, just prior to the evening service, there was a dear old deacon, he was crippled, he was at the age of 80, a godly man, and I observed his prayer, Lord, we know not thy will concerning thy servant.

From that first visit, he had an exercise concerning this poor man to become the pastor. My second visit, again, was a most solemn word.

[ 25 : 26 ] Gather the wheat into the barn, the separation between the tares and the wheat. We might say not an attractive ministry, but it must have touched the heart.

There was a drawing. The following Christmas, I took at their request the morning service, and I shall never forget that morning.

The text, we beheld his glory. Oh, the presence of Christ. Oh, the sight of the Lord, and this stirred up more deeper exercise with the people there.

Is this the man, they've been 20 years without a pastor? Is this the one that Lord thou art leading to us? That led the church in prayer. And that started a concern in my own soul too.

In February, I was due to take a weeknight service. There was dense fog, and I felt very unwell with sinus trouble. I felt unfit to go.

[ 26 : 33 ] But the Lord had given me a word, and I trembled at. What? Now, arise, be baptized, calling on the name of the Lord, washing away thy sins.

Why tarryest thou? Arise, be baptized. Well, I reached home, my dear wife of the little family couldn't come, but my parents came with me.

Now, two wonderful things, the fog lifted, and my pain eased, but that night I preached. My friend, I'm a cautious man, but that night was a memorable night.

I knew when I finished that the Lord had done something that night, and it was so. A dear friend came before the church to be baptized, and this was what the church was praying for.

This is what they sought for, and this is what I sought for, and so I received an invitation to serve with a view to the pastor, that is, to give as many Sundays in the first part of the year, and so that the matter could work slowly and prayerfully, and if it was the Lord's will, that I should eventually become their pastor.

[ 27 : 51 ] Oh, the burden of this, oh, the weight of this, oh, the solemnity of it. I went to see the dear minister that had taken a chair when I came before the church, and it was most remarkable.

You see, I felt so exercised, was it right for me to move from the course where I was to go to another course? And he said, well, on the day before, he had seen a lorry, or a truck as you call it, I think, loaded with branches, full of blossoms, cut off, and he couldn't understand, what is it for?

Didn't seem the time you'd cut a branch off, but he's told by a fruit grower, it was to pollinate another field, and oh my friend, what that meant to me, it was a word from heaven, that the Lord was taking me unworthy as I was nothing in myself, from one field, to another field.

But, following this, the temptations came so strong, that I have to say, did, I wondered whether I got a real religion, the devil so attacked my faith, how can you go, how can you preach, I shan't add more lest I do the devil's work, but I was in torment of mine, tortured, until the Lord appeared, and it was two words, Jesus only, and it came like this, Jesus only, my hope and my soul, my faith there, Jesus only, then secondly, my ministry, Jesus only, thirdly, just what the dear people would desire to hear, Jesus only, soon after, I was due to preach on a weeknight, the deacon choosing the hebs, not knowing anything that

I had gone through, started the service because I thought that was to be my text, Jesus only, and this was the first hymn that he gave out, there's not a name beneath the skies, nor is there one in heaven above, but that of sinner, of Jesus, can suffice the sinner's burden to remove, oh, the sweet confirming of it, I purse on then as I served the church, and we came to Good Friday of that year, and I took the service, and my text was in Joshua, and it was, give me a true token, the line of the scarlet thread, beautiful subject, Rahab, you know all about it, don't you, there I was, burdened over this call, Lord, what will thou have me to do,

[ 30 : 54 ] I had taken the reading, and I opened the Bible to find my text, now, right by the text in that pulpit Bible, who put it there, I know not, but it was ordered by God, was a little text card that you give to your Sunday school children, and what did that text say?

Lo, I am with you always, oh, the word of comfort that was to my soul, I felt the hand of God was in it, I then received a unanimous call to become their pastor, and I felt, how can I go, and yet, the dear godly pastor, a man now 90, that had been the previous pastor, now drawing near to the end, he saw it was so clear, my father could see it so clear, God's people could see it so clear, but oh no, I felt so trembling, so afraid, so unworthy, so unfit, and yet, these words came, rest in the Lord, and wait patiently for him, the margin is be silent, it doesn't mean to say not to pray, but it means having prayed, wait upon God, and I felt the time had come, that the Lord would say nothing further to me,

I must venture in faith, I took my pen, I wrote the letter, and as I wrote the letter, the Lord gave the final confirmation, the words, a door was open unto me, and it was this, of the Lord, I felt the seal of my God, was upon it, I do not think I should keep you longer, I could speak of other things, I've told some of the friends of my faults, and my failings, how the Lord has corrected me, and yet my God has been so good to me, times of darkness, you may not have thought because, well, the words flowed tonight, I hope God has been in it, but there have been times when, my friend, I've been brought to the end, how can I preach, Lord, I can't go forward, I haven't attacked, one night,

I was at wit's end, how could I preach to my people, and yet there I was driving in in the car, and my young girls, as they were in those days, were singing a hymn, and suddenly I heard this, Jesus Christ, your father's son, bid you, undismayed, go on, friend, it was a word from heaven, another occasion when there was much affliction among our people, my dear father was dying in a hospital 30 miles away, and my strength was gone, and yet I was in this hospital visiting a friend that had a major operation, begging of the Lord for strength, begging of help, begging that he give me a word to read to this friend, and it was as a voice spoke to me, read the last part of Isaiah chapter 40, this dear friend had been helped, and I said now before I go I'll read just a verse or two in a short prayer, and these were the first words

I read, lift up your eyes on high, my friend God came, you say how do you know, power, transformation, transformation, the weakness made strong, the mind cleared, the spirit refreshed, and I went in the strength of that for many days, and was even present with my dear father in a most wonderful way when he entered into glory, my friends I have nothing to boast of of myself, if anything, if the Lord has been pleased to bless the ministry, glory, it's all praise unto him, I'm a poor sinner, and nothing at all, but Jesus Christ is my all, and in all, for I determine not to know anything among you, save Jesus Christ, and him crucified, my first text as pastor, my prayer now, my determination now, as God is pleased to help, and spare one's life,

[ 35 : 33 ] I hope you've not looked at this poor man, all I've said, is as I would desire, to put the crown on my master's head, to say, Lord, having done all, I am unworthy, an unprofitable servant, but my friend, I speak to his glory, I'm a poor sinner, and nothing at all, but Jesus Christ is my all, and in all, there I must leave it, I must not detain you longer, one could add more, but I feel I must leave it there, and may I express my prayerful desires and love to you all, amen.

The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God, the communion of the Holy Ghost, be with you all, amen.

Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen.  
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Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen.