

TESTIMONY OF WESLEY (EPITOMIZED VERSION)

I am the second child and first boy of Mr. & Mrs. Abel.

The strict rules of the family and the prayerful atmosphere at home did not prevent my natural craving for choosing bad things in life. As I grew up in age, my evil desires also grew. The punishments of our parents could not stop it.

I was always a bright student standing in the first few ranks in my elementary and high school. But after going to college, my concentration started diverting as a result of my desire for the pleasures of this world. My father, after noticing the loss of my enthusiasm in the church activities and the word of God, warned me to be careful – as it could lead me to fall behind in every activity of life. At that time, as a teen-age boy, I did not pay much attention to his words.

In intermediate and degree, my grades dropped even further as I was unable to concentrate on my studies.

Since my life was not in accordance with the word of God, some people started ridiculing me. Being a very sensitive boy, I felt deeply hurt and I tried to get away to avoid their presence by going to the outskirts of the town to sit and feel sorry - all alone for the situation I was in. When it was late in the night, I used to go back home. When my parents used to ask me as to why I was getting back home late, I used to tell them lies. And even after going to bed, I used to spend the rest of the night without any sleep or peace of mind. Our parents could not understand as to what was going wrong with me, as I never used to be like that before. At that time, I was badly in need of some time out to be in a place far away from home. Though I was not at all doing well in my studies, the Lord miraculously helped me through His grace to finish my B.Sc degree.

I got a seat in Andhra University, about 400 kilometers away from our hometown. Since I was desperately looking for an opportunity to be away from home, I left.

At the University I had to stay in students' residence halls (*hostel*) for the first time in my life. The condition of my heart coupled with the new adjustment problems made me fall back still further in studies. Months later, as it was exams time, I skipped writing all exams.

The second semester started, but there was no improvement in my situation, again I skipped exams!

During this time all the things I had learnt at home because of the family traditions and customs like – going to church every Sunday and not going to movies continued. When people used to see all this, they used to get surprised as to why I was not doing well in

studies - being a person with regular church going, and with no smoking or even going to movies.

In the second year things got worse even though I moved to another building with better accommodation. In the afternoons and evenings I used to go and spend time aimlessly on roads and streets. In the nights I was without sleep, and it was a nightmare whenever I thought of studies!

Days passed by swiftly and soon it was going to be the end of yet another semester (*third*)! With the constant thinking of the situation I was in, life became bitter. I became mentally very upset. Many times, I used to cry within myself and often even aloud (*when none was around*). I used to return back to my hostel late and in order to forget the pain and mental agony, atleast temporarily, I used to go to bed; and this had become my routine life.

It was then that I thought of committing suicide to end up my life, as it was neither useful to me nor others. Then, as I thought of my parents, I cried aloud as I could hardly control my emotions. The love of our parents was too valuable for me to trade anything with it.

During that time I went home one day to my parents and when I was getting back to the university, as usual my mother prayed for my journey before I started. As I paid attention to her prayer, she said, "Lord, let this son of mine come back home next time becoming your child!" After hearing that prayer, I was deeply disturbed within myself remembering all the troubles and turmoil I was going through in life for several years, and the latest desire in my heart to end up my life. My parents, being praying people, though were not happy with my performance in my studies, they were very patient to wait in the presence of the Lord and to pray for me. But at that time when I heard my mother praying like this without knowing the condition I was in, and the desires of my heart, I was deeply hurt and left back with tears.

As days were heavy like this, on a Sunday afternoon, I thought of watching a movie for the first time in my life so as to forget my pain – atleast temporarily. Up until then, all my classmates knew that I never used to go to movies – as our parents taught us not to, right from the beginning (*as they believed that there was more harm than good in them*). My classmates, up until then, many times used to bet on taking me to a movie. But now, because of the perturbed state I was in, I went to one of my classmates and asked him, if we both could go for a movie. He thought that I was joking. Several minutes later he was convinced and agreed to go with me.

We arrived at a famous movie theater in the heart of the city. It was an English movie. Right from the beginning I could not follow even the story, as I started thinking of my parents at home, and the situation that had brought me there for the first time in life. Moreover, it was a Sunday afternoon, when I always used to be in a church except that day! As the movie progressed I became even more restless.

Finally the movie was over but contrary to my expectation I was in a worse mental state. We returned back to the hostel and I started thinking of all the problems that engulfed me from every side.

I went to bed that night like any other day with no peace of mind. When I was sleeping, in the early hours at about 2, an evil spirit came and started tormenting me with suffocation as I tried in vain to wrestle with it. I was trying to cry out for help, but my mouth was shut and I was unable to utter any word. After a while, as the evil spirit left me my hand hit the wall hard next to me and I suddenly woke up. It was all silent and when I looked around, my room-mate was sleeping sound in the bed-lamp light. I could hardly sleep for the rest of the night.

In the morning everyone got up and after finishing breakfast, they left for attending classes. But I stayed back in room. As I was in the lowest of my moods and completely in a state of disappointment and despair, the mailman was coming around in the hallway dropping mail into rooms. He dropped some mail even in our room. I picked up mine and started reading them. After reading one of those letters, which was from a friend of mine, God revealed to me that the things I was seeking in this world, and for the sake of which I could not give my heart to Jesus up until then, were like mist in the air with temporary existence. I questioned myself if that was the world I have been living and waiting for! I felt that the things I was looking and living for so far leaving me all alone in a desert with nowhere to go. It was hard for me to control my emotions. Fortunately no one was around as they all left for classes. I bolted my room from inside and cried for the way I was deceived by Satan! I realized the mistake I made in life.

At that moment the only choice before me was to stop going further in the way I was proceeding, and go back to the loving hands of the God almighty for His mercy to rebuild my life once again from scratch. After realizing how my longing for the pleasures of this world deceived me, I did not like to waste any time further. I wanted to go home immediately and set everything right before the Lord and my parents.

I knocked on the door in the mid-night and my mother came out to open the door for me to let me in. I asked if our dad was not at home, and she replied that he had gone to another place for conducting revival meetings and that he would be back the following day. I told her as to what had made me go there in the first place and without holding back anything I confessed all my deceitful life and asked for her forgiveness. My mother was so happy to know that she could get me back into the loving hands of the Lord, after wrestling in prayer for years. She prayed for me and asked me to take some rest.

Next day afternoon my father arrived and I was, by nature, too afraid to approach and talk to him. I went to solitary prayer with Mr. T. Prabhakara Rao (*an early convert of my father's ministry*). After we finished it, I came back to attend the fasting prayer service in our church.

Through the years, I sat in the church for several hundreds of times but never did I sit in the church with such a need and rapt attention. As my father began to preach, it appeared to me that each word that came through his mouth was meant only for me. After the preaching was over, and as everyone knelt down in fasting prayer, the spirit of the Lord came upon me and I began to cry aloud confessing my sins in the presence of the Lord without even worrying about as to who were around and if they were hearing. The mat where I knelt down became wet with my tears. When everyone prayed and finished, my father finally finished his pastoral prayer and gave the benediction.

After everyone left, I went to my father, revealed to him all my deceitful nature and asked for his forgiveness. We both prayed in that late night for a long time before my father asked me to pray alone so that he might pray for me in his room.

The morning broke and it was like a brand new day for me. I thoroughly enjoyed the presence and the company of God's children in the church services that Sunday.

The next thing before me was setting things right with people as well. Previously it was the most difficult thing for me even to think of doing. But now as I started and finished it, new hope and light started coming into my heart and joy started filling my soul.

This happened a few days before the third semester exams. The thought that I did not even appear for the first two semester exams was too hard that Satan started attacking me time and again with the doubt - whether I would be able to finish my studies at all with the situation I was in, at that time. Though it appeared impossible, I put my trust in the Lord. I left home and arrived back at the university.

As I entered the room, I prayed for the guidance of the Lord and for His leading in all my course of actions from then on. From then on, solitary prayer had become a habit for me morning and evening despite heavy work and schedules. There was hardly any time left for me to prepare for the coming exams; but I began planning and preparing for the exams. And I could see the Lord's hand leading me throughout. Many times, I had experiences of ups and downs, joy and sorrow, feelings of worthlessness and sometimes hope - one after the other. It needed strong commitment and hard work on my part to put my faith to work.

The third semester exams were over and I was surprised to know that I could do well and pass except one paper during that little time available to me. It was a great encouragement.

Then, the fourth and last semester started and finished pretty fast (*within two months*). I passed all but one of the papers with good marks. It took a little more extra time but finally, I got my degree. It was merely the grace of the Lord that enabled me to get through those situations without ending up my life.

Later I worked temporarily before getting a couple of teaching jobs in the Government - passing the state wide competitive exams. God had enabled me to succeed in my teaching profession, working in different colleges in India: He also showed upon me His grace to

maintain a good name in all the places I worked. Many times, I was spiritually weak, but when I turned to the Lord for help, He enabled me to look to Him for all my needs. There were many occasions when the Lord saved me from several dangers and horrible situations of day to day life.

From those days, which I described earlier, several years passed by. But the Lord never left me alone. The challenges of today are very different from those I had had then. But with God, life is worth living for His glory.

Today, when I am writing this testimony, I am married and we have a daughter. I give all the glory and honor to the Lord, who gives His peace of mind and hope to those who trust in Him. Church members who suffered for attending the prayer services

There was a professional fisherman's wife who had several children. She lived in a small village 'Gilakaladindi,' located next to the seashore. She used to come around into our neighborhood from late sixties selling fish. One day when she narrated her personal problems to our mother, she told her about the love of the Lord and immediately she accepted the Lord and started bringing her children too to the church, who, at that time were very young. The evil spirits started giving her a hard time! After praying for several days for her by our father and other evangelists, those spirits finally departed her.

Her husband used to give her a hard time for accepting the Lord and not following their religious customs and traditions. Despite getting constant beatings from him, she did not yield to the pressures but remained faithful to the Lord. Our father used to go to her village sometimes to tell him not to trouble her; though that man used to agree, he could not live up to his promise the moment our father left their village: and this continued for a long time. In a few years he died. But this lady continued to attend the church services until her last days in January 2006.

There used to be another family which suffered for attending the church services. The wife and children were harassed, beaten up and abused by the man of the family. It did not take much time before the Lord dealt with the situation to make the way clear for them to worship Him.