

I went back to my hotel and prayed all night. I read the Apostolic Faith paper that the church people had given me, and then got down on my knees. I prayed, “God, give me what You gave them.” Finally, the Lord showed me that I had done more than hurt my wife, my children, and society. I had hurt Him! When I had godly sorrow for what I had done, the Lord saved me.

What a change He made! I haven’t had a drink or a smoke since then. The Lord completely delivered me from all sinful habits. The desire for those things left me. My heart was so changed that I even thought differently.

I soon got a job and wrote my wife about what God had done for me. I received no answer, but I began to mail money home, and send the children clothes. The overseer of the church wrote to my wife assuring her that God had cleaned me up, inside and out. The day finally came when she started answering my letters, and eventually she took courage and came to Portland.

At that time, all I owned was a little table and a chair, but I found an apartment for my family. I’ll never forget that day. First, eleven women from the church came and cleaned that place from the ceiling down. Three men worked on electrical problems. Others brought furniture, bedding, dishes, stocks of food, rugs for the floors, starched curtains, and even

vases of flowers for every room. On the day of my family’s arrival, a good meal was being prepared for the family while I went to meet them.

About a hundred people waited with me at the station that morning. I caught sight of my wife first. The children came behind her, and with eyes sparkling, almost threw themselves into my arms. In that moment I knew all was well.

How I thank God for what He did for me! He gave me a different outlook on life and put a new look on my face. I made restitution for past wrongs, and for years I have earned an honest living. I am thankful that God specializes in impossibilities!

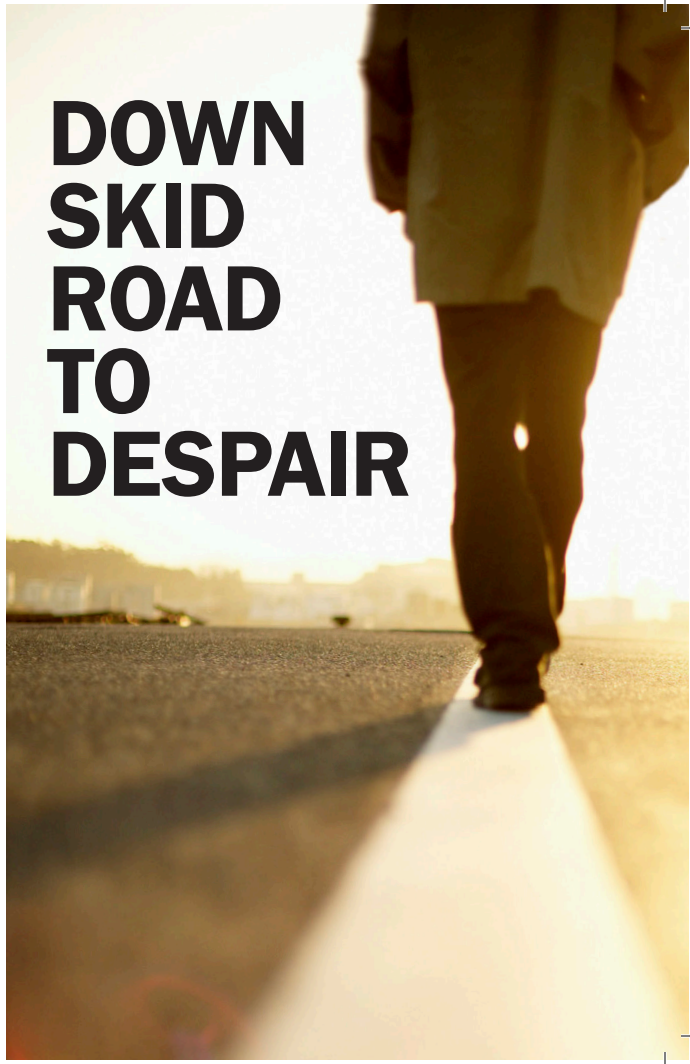
*Joel Wright served the Lord faithfully until his death in 1973 at age sixty-seven.*

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# **DOWN SKID ROAD TO DESPAIR**

A photograph of a person walking away from the camera on a paved road. The person is wearing a light-colored coat and dark pants. A long, dark shadow is cast on the road in front of them. The background shows a hazy landscape under a warm, golden light, suggesting a sunset or sunrise.

Some years ago, in a small town near Boston, Massachusetts, a brokenhearted mother lived with her four children. I was the father, and I had left my family because I was an alcoholic. They had heard little from me for three years.

Our home had not always been such a scene of despair. My wife and I had been married twenty-two years, and in that time I had changed jobs only once. I worked at the General Electric plant in Boston, was a councilman of the union, and seemingly had a bright future ahead of me.

But a few social drinks led to misery. As alcohol got a hold on my life, my wife would wait for me at the plant gate on paydays. I knew she would be there, so I would sneak out a side gate to get to a tavern.

Before long, my employer gave me two weeks' notice. It was a terrible shock, and I stopped drinking for two weeks. I got a position in another town, but the desire for drink was still with me. One day I could stand the craving no longer. I quit my job, drew my pay—sixty dollars—and went to the bar. I was trying to get up courage to face my wife, but I could not do it. I telegraphed her forty dollars and the words: “More when possible. God bless you all.” But there was no more.

How desperate I felt as I cut those ties. I loved my family, but the craving for alcohol was

## I LOVED MY FAMILY, BUT THE CRAVING FOR ALCOHOL WAS INESCAPABLE.

inescapable. The next morning I woke up on the skid road of Boston. I had ridden over it on the elevated rails for years and had never known what a skid road was.

From then on, I spent my time on skid roads, staying in one flophouse after another. I was in and out of jails for drunkenness, vagrancy, and disorderly conduct. Many times I worked in railroad gandy camps where there was time out for drunken sprees. Though I claimed five dependents, I never sent them money. The love my wife had for me changed to hate because of the way I had disgraced them.

After a year of this life, I gave myself up in New York, and said I wanted to go home. The authorities checked my records. Finally they said: “We have a warrant for your arrest for nonsupport and desertion. But we are not going to honor it. Your wife doesn’t want you back. Your family is better off without you. And we

don’t want you here in jail, near your family.” I had no more hope in this world.

Two years later, after spending time in jail in Seattle for drunkenness and disorderly conduct, I went to Portland, Oregon. I was helpless and hopeless. But while lying on my bed in a cheap hotel room, I heard music from a Gospel street meeting. I went out to listen, just to pass the time.

As I listened to those Christians, I leaned against a drugstore window with a pipe in my mouth and a sneer on my face. But God spoke to me and told me that the Gospel story I heard that day was as real as the sin I was in, and that those people were living what they were talking about. After that open-air service, I walked three blocks to their church, out of “Hell” into “Heaven.”

At the close of their service, I went to an altar of prayer. I told the men praying with me: “You don’t know who I am or what I’ve done. I have a wife and four children back on the East Coast and they don’t even know where I am. I walked off and left them because I had to drink. I sold my blood, sold my clothes, anything to get booze.”

One of them said, “Don’t tell us. Tell it to Jesus. He knows your heart!” I thought: *If God knows my heart, I had better get honest or get out.* I thank God, I got honest. I started to pray, but I didn’t get saved then.