

By that chair I prayed, purposing that I was through with the old life. I meant to serve God, and He saved me!

The next morning the devil was there to tempt me again, saying, "You aren't saved. A backslider cannot get saved that easy." I listened, and decided he was right. I had not yet learned to use the shield of faith. I thought it could not be possible that I had really prayed through to victory in such a little while.

I yielded to the tempter, and went back to the poolroom, but I couldn't get interested in the game. Soon I hung up the cue and walked out of that place for the last time. God knew my heart. He knew I wanted to be a Christian. I did not want any more of the old life.

As I walked block after block, the Lord reasoned with me. He made Heaven and Hell very real. I had come to the crossroads of life, and my choice would mean eternal Heaven or eternal Hell for me. There was no more room for doubt; I knew that from that moment I would live for Jesus and believe His promises.

I turned and retraced my steps, giving the poolroom a wide berth. I threw away the package of cigarettes I had just bought. I was through with the old life forever. God forgave my momentary doubting and faltering. I had learned my lesson.

Never, through the fifty-four years since that day, have I turned back. Never did I want another cigarette or another drink of liquor. Never again did I go into the dance halls, the poolrooms, or the theaters. It did not come about by my willpower. God gave me the grace. He changed my heart and gave me new desires.

There have been trials along the way, and battles to fight, but the victories have been sweet. God was always there when I needed Him, answering prayer for me countless times.

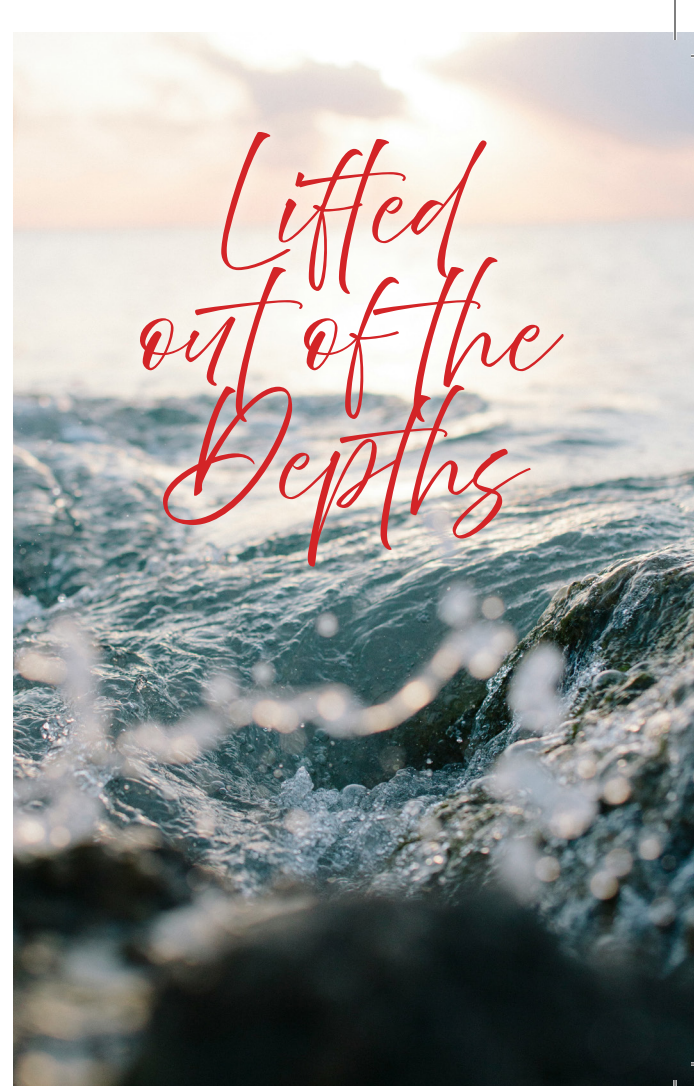
Words can never express the infinite love and mercy the Lord held out to this repentant sinner who had lost his way. My heart is filled with gratitude. — Andrew Haggren

Andrew Haggren was saved in the early 1930s, and following his retirement from work as a mason, he volunteered in the Apostolic Faith world headquarters mailing department until his passing in 1985.

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TR113-0624



I was four years old when our family came from Finland and settled in the small seaport town of Astoria, Oregon. A short time later, my father came home and said he had heard a street meeting given by the Apostolic Faith, and he believed these were people of God.

When I was nineteen years of age, I gave my heart to the Lord and lived a Christian life for a time. But through discouragement, I lost that victory. Instead of believing the promises of God, I believed the devil when he came around and planted doubts in my mind.

A Life of sin

For six years I went the ways of the world. We had moved to Portland, and I spent my time trying to find some enjoyment in pool halls, theaters, dance halls, and bootleg joints. I can't say I was happy. How could I be when I knew that Hell was awaiting me at the end of that kind of life?

One Saturday night I planned to go to a dance. Earlier in the evening I had gone to a bootleg joint for a few drinks, and I had also been drinking earlier in the day. So before going to the dance, I stopped at a one-man cafe for a cup of coffee.

More than luck

I remember leaving the cafe and stepping into a taxicab. Then I knew nothing more until

I found myself struggling to climb a slippery, moss-covered piling in the Willamette River. The shock of the cold water had revived me momentarily. I realized I could not climb the piling, and it came to me that on the other side of the river I could climb up the rocky bank.

I HEARD A VOICE CALLING OUT OF THE DARK, “GRAB THE ROPE!”

Without hesitation, I let go of the piling, intending to swim across the river. But I blacked out again. I don't know how long I was in the water. The next thing I knew, I heard a voice calling out of the dark, “Grab the rope!” I couldn't see anyone, but I felt the rope fall into my hands. I must have been floating on my back.

A tugboat had been heading up the river, playing its light from side to side, and the crew had seen me! After they pulled me aboard, someone said: “You are one lucky guy!” I knew it was more than luck. God had spared my life, and I thanked Him for it. I knew without Him I would not have had a chance in a million.

I was put ashore, and someone paid my taxi fare home. My money, identification, and even my house key had been taken from me. My landlady was shocked to see my condition when she opened the door for me.

How close to Hell I had been! That thought really frightened me, but I was not ready to give my heart to the Lord. Then, early one morning, on my way home from a night of revelry, I just looked up into the starry heavens and sent up an SOS to God. It was not much of a prayer—only, “God help me!”—but God heard it. I believe He had been waiting for my cry for help.

One Sunday afternoon I had no plans, but I believe God had planned my day. I went to visit my sisters, and they were just leaving for an afternoon church service when I arrived. They invited me in and told me to make myself at home. I sat down and began to read an Apostolic Faith paper I found on the coffee table.

The Spirit of God

I'll never forget how the Spirit of God began talking to my heart again. I felt the call of God as I had never felt it through the years that I had been away from Him. With tender cords of love He drew me to make another start for Heaven.