

The Lord is not slack concerning His promise, as some men count slackness but is long suffering to us-ward not willing that any should perish but that all should come to repentance. 2 Pet. 3 v 9.

I was born the eldest of five children in Londonderry a long time ago and although not born into a Christian family I was no stranger to church going. While I did not attend church regularly I did go with my father and went through the Boy' Brigade. At that stage the most striking thing about church going was the architecture of the building and the dress and oratory of the preachers. Though I have no doubt the gospel was soundly preached it had little effect on me.

My first religiously emotional experience occurred in my very early teens. My mother was extremely ill and I vividly remember my father taking the five of us to a bedroom where we knelt and he fervently prayed for her recovery. My mother died and life went on but that was an experience one does not easily forget.

At the age of fifteen I was still attending my own church irregularly in the morning but more regularly I could be found in another church in the evening admiring a girl who sang in the choir. She still sings and I still love and admire her these fifty-six years later. I then left home at eighteen and though I was away from the constraints of family the 'World' had little attraction for me and somehow I developed the habit of attending church weekly, work permitting. I heard many excellent men of God preach the gospel and was moved by many messages but perhaps the 'fear of man' prevented me making a decision.

Aileen and married when we were twenty-one, had two children brought them up as churchgoers and that is how life progressed. Our life revolved around the church and our friends were Christians and churchgoers and I was very content with that so long as no pressure was put on me to change my life style. However things were about to change. Aileen was saved and had a new perspective of life and I have to confess I did not make things easy her because I did not want to be committed to anything outside my family and work.

When my own children were teenagers the nature of my work made things difficult for all of us. Many times I had reason to consider the brevity of life and the cruelty of men towards one another and though I knew I needed to be saved and that the matter of my soul's salvation was urgent I was busy and enjoyed my work so everything else was pushed in the background. Unknown to me a group of colleagues met to pray and they prayed for me amongst others. At this time during special weekend services in my church I came under great conviction of sin but instead of responding to the call of God upon my life I tried to ignore it and went home. Over lunch and into the afternoon I wrestled with God — what he was asking was just a step to far. In the middle of the afternoon I could resist no longer and simply asked God to forgive me and save me and He did. It was a relief to

have made the decision. It was as though a weight fell off and the peace I received made me realised I had been resisting for a very long time. When I reflect on that glorious day I often think of the hymn verse -

*He called me long before I heard,
before my sinful heart was stirred,
but when I took Him at His word,
forgiven He lifted me.*

Things changed for me as they had for Aileen, now I couldn't wait to get to church and the prayer meetings and I joined a witnessing group of colleagues in outreach. The present and the future were brighter and I praise God that he spared me and kept me through those years of disobedience until I finally took His at His word.