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From:
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Fundamental Baptist Information Service

May 5, 2010

From The Synagogue to The Saviour

May 5, 2010 (Fundamental Baptist Information Service, P.O. Box 610368, Port Huron, MI 48061, 866-295-4143, fbns@wayoflife.org; for instructions about subscribing and unsubscribing or changing addresses, see the information paragraph at the end of the article) -

The following is abbreviated from "Charlie Coulson: The Drummer Boy" by Doctor Max L. Rossvally (1828-1892). [See this link for copies.](#)

During the American Civil War, I was a surgeon in the Army. Following the battle at Gettysburg, there were hundreds of wounded soldiers needing immediate medical attention. Many were wounded so severely that a leg or an arm, or sometimes both, needed to be amputated.

One of the wounded was a boy, who had only been in the service for three months. Being too young to be a soldier, he enlisted as a drummer. My steward tried to give him chloroform before the amputation, but he turned his head away and refused it. He was told it was my order. He said, "Let me talk with the doctor."

"Young man, why do you refuse the chloroform? When I found you on the battlefield, you were so far gone that I almost didn't bother to pick you up. But when you opened those large blue eyes, it occurred to me that you had a mother somewhere who might be thinking of you at that very moment. I didn't want you to die, so I had you brought here. You have lost so much blood that in your weak condition you might not live through this operation. You'd better let me give you the chloroform."

He laid his hand on mine, looked me in the face and said, "Doctor, one Sunday afternoon in Sunday School, when I was nine and a half years old, I accepted the Lord Jesus Christ as my Saviour. I learned to trust Him then, I

know I can trust Him now. He is my strength. He will support me while you cut away my arm and leg.”

“Won’t you at least take some brandy?” I begged.

Again, he looked at me and said, “Doctor, when I was about five years old, my mother knelt by my side with her arms around my neck and said: ‘Charlie, I am now praying to the Lord Jesus that you will never know the taste of strong drink. Your father died a drunkard, and I’ve asked God to use you to warn young people against the dangers of drinking.’ I am now seventeen years old and I have never had anything stronger than tea or coffee. I am in all probability going to die and go into the presence of my God. Would you send me there, smelling of brandy?”

I will never forget the look he gave me. At that time I hated Jesus, but I respected that boy's loyalty to his Saviour. When I saw how he loved and trusted Him to the very end, something deeply touched my heart. Despite the urgency of the moment and all the misery around, I did for that boy what I had never done for any other soldier. I asked him if he wanted to see a chaplain.

“Oh, yes, sir!” was his answer.

When the chaplain came, he recognized the young drummer from his tent prayer meetings. Taking his hand, he said, “Charlie, I’m so sorry to see you in this sad condition.”

“Oh, I’m all right, sir,” he answered. “The doctor offered me chloroform, but I declined it. Then he wanted to give me brandy, which I didn’t want either. So now, when my Saviour calls me, I can go to Him in my right mind.”

“You might not die, Charlie,” said the chaplain, “but if the Lord should call you home, is there anything I can do for you after you’re gone?”

“Chaplain, here’s my little Bible. My mother’s address is inside. Send it to her and write a letter for me. Tell her that since I left home, I have never let a single day pass--no matter if we were on the march or on the battlefield,--without reading a portion of God’s Word, and daily praying that He would bless her.”

“Is there anything else I can do for you, my lad?” asked the chaplain.

“Yes, please write a letter to the Sunday School Superintendent of the Sands Street Church in Brooklyn, New York. Tell him that his many prayers and moral counsel I have never forgotten. His lessons have helped and comforted me through all the dangers. And now, in my dying hour, I ask my Saviour to bless and strengthen my dear old teacher. That is all.”

Turning towards me, he said, “Now, doctor, I’m ready, and I promise I will

not scream while you take off my arm and leg.”

I didn't have the courage to take the knife in my hand, without first taking a quick gulp of brandy to nerve myself to perform my sad duty.

While cutting through the flesh, Charlie Colson didn't even groan. But when I took the saw to separate the bone the lad, through clenched teeth, uttered, “O Jesus, blessed Jesus, stand by me now!”

He kept his promise. He never screamed.

I couldn't sleep that night. Despite the constant moans and weeping of the wounded, all I could see was Charlie's soft blue eyes. Even his words, “Blessed Jesus, stand by me now,” kept ringing in my ears. Between twelve and one o'clock, a strong urge came over me to see that boy again. When I got there, I was told that sixteen of the badly wounded had died. “Was Charlie Colson one of them?” I asked. “No, sir,” answered the steward, “he's sleeping as sweetly as a babe.”

When I came to his side, one of the civilian nurses informed me that at about nine o'clock, two members of the U.S. Christian Commission, accompanied by the chaplain, came to read Scripture and sing hymns. She said that the chaplain knelt by Charlie and offered up a passionate prayer. Then they and Charlie sang the sweetest of all hymns, “Jesus, Lover Of My Soul.” I couldn't understand how this young lad, who suffered such horrible pain, could sing.

Five days after his amputation, Charlie sent for me. “Doctor,” he said, “my time has come. I don't expect to see another sunrise. But thank God, I have no fear and I'm ready to go. I want to thank you with all my heart for your kindness to me. I know you are Jewish, and that you don't believe in Jesus, but I want you to stay with me, and see me die trusting my Saviour to the last moment of my life.”

I tried to stay, but I could not. I didn't have the courage to stand by and watch a true Christian die, rejoicing in the love of Jesus whom I had been taught to deny. So, I hurriedly left.

About twenty minutes later an anxious steward found me and said, “Doctor, Drummer Colson wants to see you again.” “I've just seen him,” I answered, “I can't see him again.” “But, Doctor, he says he must see you before he dies.”

So, I made up my mind to see him, say a few kind words, and let die. However, I was determined that no talk about his Jesus was going to influence me.

His condition had worsened. Asking me to take his hand, he said, “Doctor, I love you because you are Jewish; the best friend I have found in this world was also Jewish.”

I asked him who that was, and he answered, "Jesus the Christ, and I want to introduce you to Him before I die. Will you promise me, Doctor, that what I am about to say to you, you will never forget?"

I promised, and he said, "Five days ago, while you operated on me, I prayed to the Lord to save you."

His words pierced deep into my heart. I couldn't understand how, when I was causing him the most intense pain, he could forget all about himself and think only of his Saviour and my spiritual need. All I could say at the moment was, "Well, my dear boy, you will soon be all right."

I started to leave, hearing him sing softly, "I'm going home to die no more."

Twelve minutes later he fell asleep, "safe in the arms of Jesus."

During the war thousands of soldiers died in our hospitals, but I only attended one burial, that was for Charlie Colson the Union drummer boy. I ordered that he'd be dressed in a new uniform and like the burial for an officer, arranged that his coffin be covered with the flag he nobly served.

His dying words made a deep impression upon me. I remembered thinking how gladly I would have given all I possessed, if I could have felt towards Jesus as he did. But with the continuation of the cruel war and my company with worldly officers, I gradually forgot his prayer and my promise.

After the war and for nearly ten years, I fought against believing in Christ. But God continued to bring faithful and godly people into my life that spoke of Jesus' love. Finally, the drummer boy's prayer was answered and I accepted Jesus Christ as my personal Saviour and Messiah. It did come at a high cost. My family, in-laws and dear mother rejected me. Psalm 27:10, was a great comfort, "When my father and mother forsake me, then the Lord will take me up."

It was eighteen months after my salvation that the Lord had a special blessing for me. One evening while traveling through Brooklyn, I felt led to attend a prayer meeting in a small local church. It was a meeting when believers testify to the loving-kindness of the Lord. After several had spoken, an elderly lady stood up and said,

"Dear friends, this may be the last time I have a chance to publicly share how good the Lord has been to me. My doctor told me yesterday that my right lung is nearly gone, and my left lung is failing fast, so at best, I only have a short time to be with you. But what is left of me belongs to Jesus. It's a great joy to know that I shall soon meet my boy with Jesus in heaven. My son was not only a soldier for his country, but also a soldier for Christ. He was wounded at the battle of Gettysburg, and was cared for by a Jewish doctor, who amputated his arm and leg. He died five days after the

operation. The chaplain of the regiment wrote me a letter, and sent me my boy's Bible. I was told that in his dying hour, my Charlie sent for that Jewish doctor, and said to him, 'Doctor, before I die I wish to tell you that five days ago, while you operated on me, I prayed to the Lord to save you.' As I heard this lady speak, I just couldn't sit still! I left my seat, ran across the room, took her hand and said, "God bless you, my dear sister. Your son's prayer has been heard and answered! I am the Jewish doctor that your Charlie prayed for, and his Saviour is now my Saviour!"

"Having been frequently asked whether all the details of this story are strictly true, I take this opportunity of stating that every incident occurred exactly as related." Max L. Rossvally

Known facts

- * Rossvally became a worldwide Evangelist.
- * His wife, daughter and son eventually became believers.
- * He started a Hebrew Christian Association in NYC.
- * He is buried in Lawnswood Cemetery in Leeds, England.
- * His story has been translated into many languages.

Shortly after his conversion to God, Dr. Rossvally resigned his commission in the United States Army and opened a Mission for the conversion of his Jewish brethren. He met with much opposition at first, but persevered, and finally had the joy of seeing quite a number --rich and poor, old and young Jews and Jewesses--exclaim, with one of old: "We have found the Messias, which is, being interpreted, THE CHRIST" (John 1:41).

He afterwards made a prolonged evangelistic tour, and visited many cities in Europe, America, Canada, Germany, and many other lands, preaching the glad tidings of a free and full salvation in his forceful way to large audiences, his ministry being owned of God in leading not a few--Gentiles as well as Jews--out of darkness into light and from the power of Satan unto God.

A few years of happy service, a few months of severe suffering, and M. L. Rossvally was called to the higher service of heaven in October, 1892.

"He being dead yet speaketh," for several millions of "Charlie Coulson, the Drummer Boy," and some of his other tracts, have been scattered over America, Britain, India, Australia and New Zealand, France, Germany, Switzerland, Russia, and other lands, leading many to "know Him whom to know is life everlasting."

Surely this true and touching narrative of real life in our own day re-affirms the words of the most noted Jewish convert--Saul of Tarsus--who said: "For I am not ashamed of the Gospel of Christ; for it is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth; to the Jew first, and also to the Greek" (Rom. 1:16).

Notice it is not the Gospel of Christianity or Judaism, the gospel of any church, creed, or party, but the Gospel of Christ, the Gospel concerning the peerless Person of THE LORD JESUS CHRIST, Who died for our sins according to the Scriptures ... was buried, and ... rose again the third day according to the Scriptures" (1 Cor. 15:3-4).

"Wherefore God also hath highly exalted Him, and given Him a Name which is above every name: that at the Name of JESUS every knee should bow, of things in heaven, and things in earth, and things under the earth; and that every tongue should confess that JESUS CHRIST IS LORD, to the glory of God the Father" (Philippians 2:9-11).

The great question for each of us to consider is, Have I, like the drummer boy and the doctor, as an individual, realized my lost condition as "dead in trespasses and in sins" (Eph. 2:1) and accepted the Lord Jesus Christ as my own personal Saviour? And do I know that "God for Christ's sake has pardoned my sins?" If not, why not, like Jew and Gentile recorded herein, put the matter to the test? "Behold the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world" (John 1:29), and you will be able to say, "He was wounded for our transgressions, He was bruised for our iniquities, the chastisement of our peace was upon Him; and with His stripes we are healed" (Isaiah 53:5).

"For God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life" (John 3:16).

"Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that heareth My Word, and believeth on Him that sent Me, hath everlasting life, and shall not come into condemnation; but is passed from death unto life" (John 5:24).

"That if thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus, and shalt believe in thine heart that God hath raised Him from the dead, thou shalt be saved. For with the heart man believeth unto righteousness; and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation" (Romans 10:9-10).

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