

Saint Patrick *Messenger of Hope*

Slave

Saint Patrick first set foot in Ireland when, as a boy of sixteen years old he was brought to this country by Irish raiders who had kidnapped him and some of his father's servants when they attacked the villa of his father, Calpurnius, a deacon in the Christian church. The raiders sold Patrick at a slave market in Ireland, where he was purchased by a sheep farmer. Patrick spent the next six years of his life tending this man's sheep out on the wild Irish mountainsides. His master did not treat him very well, which resulted in him suffering hunger and hardship which brought him almost to the point of death. He had **no hope** of things improving.

Sinner

Though his physical condition was miserable, his spiritual state was far more serious. Patrick had wandered away from God. Now, like a lost sheep, he found himself, as the hymn writer depicted, "Out on the mountains wild and bare, far from the tender Shepherd's care." In his writings, Patrick refers to his spiritual condition at that time. He says, "*I did not know God...I lay in death and unbelief...I took no thought for my salvation...I turned my back upon God*" Here was a young man who had grown up in a Christian home and was familiar with the Scriptures. Unfortunately, he had chosen to ignore the religious instruction he had received both from his parents and the Christian church. He had turned his back upon God. However, things were about to change!

Spirit

One day, as Patrick tended the sheep, he experienced a spiritual encounter which changed his life forever. The Holy Spirit began to deal with him and to make him aware of the seriousness of his spiritual condition. He revealed to the young slave the fact that he was '*without Christ... having **no hope**, and without God in the world*'.¹

Having been confronted with this revelation, Patrick felt the burden of his sin. He now realised that he had **no hope** of ever reaching heaven, **no hope** of eternal life. He had **no hope**, because:

- » He was a sinner: '*For everyone has sinned; we all fall short of God's glorious standard*'.²
- » He was already condemned: '*There is no judgment against anyone who believes in him. But anyone who does not believe in him has already been judged for not believing in God's one and only Son*'.³
- » As a sinner, he was subject to sin's penalty: '*For the wages [penalty] of sin is death*'.⁴

Substitute

However, the Holy Spirit also impressed upon his heart the good news that '*God showed his great love for us by sending Christ to die for us while we were still sinners*'.⁵ By dying on the cross as our substitute Jesus paid the penalty for the guilt of our sins. By paying this penalty on our behalf, Jesus purchased for us a pardon. This pardon will be put to our account when we repent of our sins and trust Christ as Saviour.

Out there on that wild Irish mountainside Patrick acknowledged the fact that he was a sinner and confessed his sins to God. He repented of his sins, put his faith in Jesus Christ and was saved by the grace of God. In his writings, Patrick records the transaction as follows: "*There (in Ireland) the Lord opened the sense of my unbelief that I might at last remember my sins and be converted with all my heart to the Lord my God.*"

His **hope** now lay in Jesus Christ, who had secured for him the salvation of his soul.

Summons

After six years of slavery in Ireland Patrick managed to escape and make his way home. However, some years later he returned to the country of his captivity. But what compelled Patrick to return to Ireland? The answer to this question can be found in Patrick's own writings. He records the fact that in a vision he 'heard the cry of the Irish'. They pleaded with him, "*Holy youth, we are asking you to come and walk among us again.*" Patrick recognised this to be a cry for help, and he responded by returning to Ireland, this time not as a slave, but as a servant of the Lord with a commission to preach the Gospel to the men, women and children of this country.

Struggle

At that time the Irish people were living in fear. The Druid Priests held the Celtic people in the grip of magic, superstition and the worship of false gods. The people were ruled by tribal chieftains who showed no mercy. If things continued like this, the future held little **hope** for them. As bad as their physical struggles were, their spiritual condition was far more serious, for they were in danger of eternal damnation. They were '*without Christ...having no hope, and without God in the world*'.⁶

Shepherd

Patrick had a great love and compassion for the Irish and he spent over thirty years of his life ministering to people in many parts of the Island. This man, who had once tended sheep on the Irish hillsides now opened his Bible and told them of Jesus, who said, "*I am the good shepherd. The good shepherd sacrifices his life for the sheep.*⁷ *For the Son of Man came to seek and save those who are lost.*⁸ *Repent of your sins and believe the Good News!*"⁹

Servant

Patrick, God's faithful servant, brought the message of **hope**, salvation and eternal life to the men, women and children of Ireland. In his writings, Patrick records the fact that thousands of Irish people were converted through faith in the atoning work of Jesus Christ, the Son of God who suffered and died upon the cross on their behalf. To these Irish converts Patrick, the messenger of **hope**, could testify that '*Through Christ you have come to trust in God. And you have placed your faith and hope in God because he raised Christ from the dead and gave him great glory*'.¹⁰ Where once there was **no hope**, now there was assurance based upon the promises of God.

Dear Friend, this assurance of salvation can be yours today if you put your **hope** in Jesus Christ.

And this is our **hope**: '*Everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved*'.¹¹

STEPS TO FAITH IN JESUS

Jesus purchased for us a pardon by paying the penalty for our sins when He died on the cross as our substitute and sin-bearer. This pardon will be put to your account when you:

ACKNOWLEDGE the fact that you are a sinner, and that you cannot earn or merit salvation.

BELIEVE that when Jesus died on the cross He paid, on your behalf, the penalty for your sins.

COME to the risen Saviour in sincere repentance, confessing your need of His forgiveness.

DECIDE to reach out by faith and receive from God the gift of eternal life.

The following is a suggested prayer:

'Lord, I know I am not worthy of your mercy, but I believe you will not turn me away, for I come to you in sincere repentance, asking you to forgive my sins and to grant me the gift of eternal life. Thank you, Lord, for hearing and answering my prayer.'

STEPPING STONES

If you have trusted Christ as your Saviour you are now a member of God's family and can call Him Father. In order to grow spiritually it is important that you:

LISTEN to your Heavenly Father. God will speak to you through His Word, so Bible reading is very important.

LEARN to spend time with your Heavenly Father each day. You can speak to God in prayer.

LOOK to Him always for direction for your life. God's Holy Spirit, who indwells you, will guide and instruct you as you read the Bible and pray.

A PRAYER IN THE STORM

The storms of life, they took their toll,

And darkness has engulfed my soul.

Now as the waves of sorrow roll,

Lord Jesus, come and save me.

For many years I've gone astray

And tried to do things my own way;

Sin drags me under, night and day,

Lord Jesus, come and save me.

I now repent with bitter tears

For wasting all those precious years.

As I journey on, with mounting fears,

Lord Jesus, come and save me.

*I feel life's storms will soon be past,
But the fiercest storm will be the last;
So before I face death's icy blast,
Lord Jesus, come and save me.*

*Life's journey it has proved too great,
Now I hope my plea is not too late.
I am sinking! Please don't hesitate,
Lord Jesus, come and save me.*

*My guilt and shame were on you laid,
My penalty you fully paid,
Now, as the light begins to fade,
Lord Jesus, come and save me.*

*Thank You for Your love and care,
In listening to this poor sinner's prayer.
I'm in need of rescue and believe You're there
Ready to forgive and save me*

*Lord, I invite You to come in,
To cleanse my heart of every sin.
You gave Your life my soul to win
And rose again to save me.*

*I thank You for Your promise, Lord,
That a sinner's prayer can still be heard.
By faith I take You at Your Word
And ask You now to save me.*

Scripture References

1: Ephesians Ch.2 v. 12

2: Romans Ch.3 v. 23

3: John Ch.3 v. 18

5: Romans Ch.5 v 8

7: John Ch.10 v. 11

9: Mark Ch.1 v. 15

11: Romans Ch.10 v. 13

4: Romans Ch.6 v. 23

6: Ephesians Ch.2 v. 12

8: Luke Ch.19 v. 10

10: 1 Peter Ch.1 v.21

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