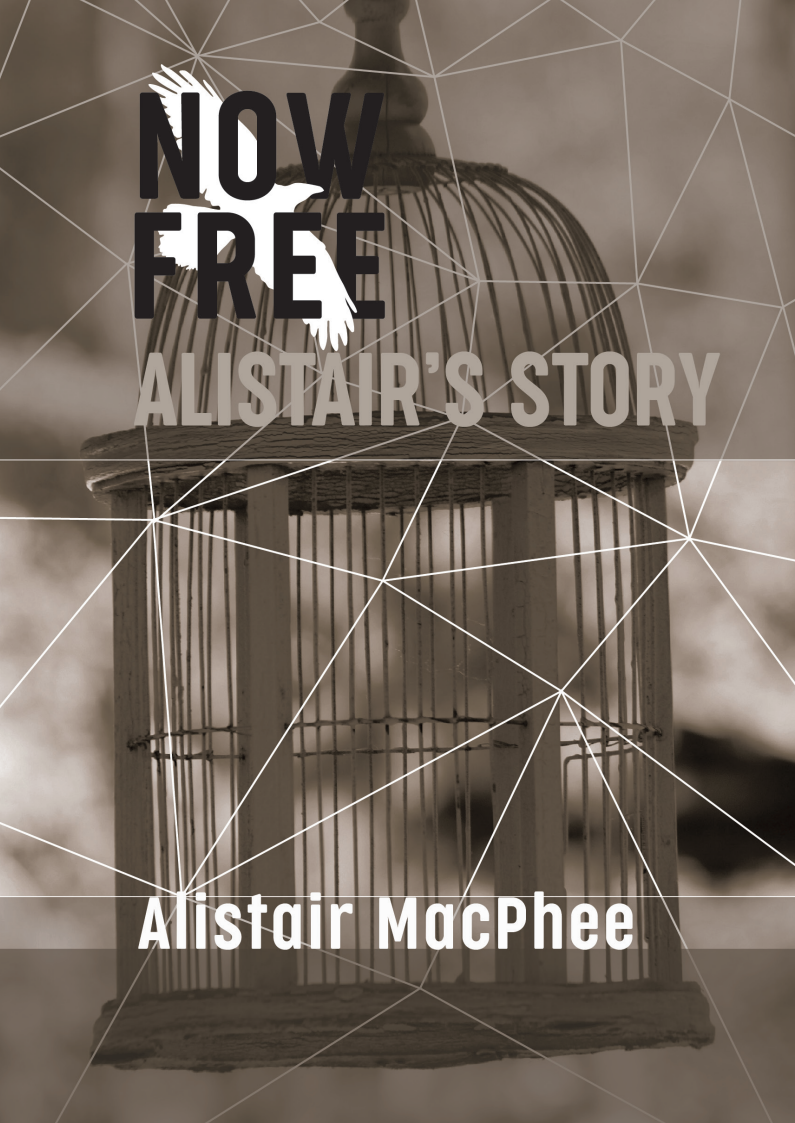




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ALISTAIR'S STORY

Alistair MacPhee

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**ALISTAIR'S
STORY**

ALISTAIR MACPHEE



MY STORY

It was a Friday night in November 1990 and I was with my mates in Fat Jim's house in Gorbals on the south side of Glasgow. The room was filled with smoke and that sweet smell of weed was in the air.

Kipper was there. So were McGinty and big Tackleberry, named after the guy in Police Academy, the cop who would pull out a Magnum 3.57 gun to shoot people. About six foot three and built like the side of a house, he was always threatening to stab or slash someone. He was the kind of guy who would pull an axe out of his jacket and ask, 'Right lad, what do you think of this one?' We would say, 'Aye Charlie, it's a belter.'

Suddenly, uninvited visitors crashed through the front door. Before I knew it, I'm on the floor, handcuffed and charged with possession and intent to supply Class A drugs.

... [I was] charged with ... intent

to supply Class A drugs.



I was brought up in the south side of Glasgow. I always knew that I was loved, but our family was rather chaotic. My Dad owned scrap yards in the East End of Glasgow and you can guess what that involved. I remember him bringing guns and knives home. He even had a set of knuckledusters that had been specially moulded into the shape of his fists, with tiny serrated edges along the front. I recall playing with them as a wee boy, wondering what they were for.

He drank quite heavily and gave my Mum a hard time. Trained as a nurse, she was a gentle, kind and caring woman. Eventually, she divorced him. I was only about five at the time. I often went to stay with my grandparents. I didn't have a good relationship with my Dad; he often let me down when I was supposed to spend the weekend with him.

At school, my report cards became rather predictable: 'could do better' and 'easily distracted' featured frequently. I was told that 'I was a waste of space' and 'I would never amount to anything in life'. That only reinforced what I already believed – that I wasn't really good at anything.



I was told that 'I was

a waste of space' ...

Not surprisingly, I left school with no qualifications. But I did actually manage to learn to read and write, despite missing a lot of schooling.

As a teenager, I always seemed to fall in with the wrong crowd. I am not blaming anyone else; it was my choice to join gangs. That led to violence, drinking and crime. Then in 1987, with the arrival of the rave scene, I began taking ecstasy, speed, acid and coke. Now, I had found something at which I excelled – getting out of my head on drugs.

I sank further by doing things I vowed I would never do, such as smoking heroin. I was sure I would never become an addict – I knew my limit, so I thought. (Hasn't every addict thought that?!)

I was sure I would never

become an addict ...



Inevitably, the greater dependence upon drugs meant a greater need for criminal activity to feed my habit. And that meant I was constantly in and out of jail. I then crossed the boundary I promised myself I would never, never, never cross; I started *injecting* heroin. I was now 23, and my life was really spiralling out of control; I had periods on the streets and I was falling apart mentally, disturbed by voices in my head.

I was constantly

in and out of jail.

My most disturbing thought was to end my life. I hated myself; I hated the person I had become. My family had had enough; I had had enough too. They didn't want anything more to do with me. I had devastated their lives like a tornado; I had lied to them, stolen from them, and most especially robbed them of the peace they longed for.

I hated myself; I hated

the person I had become.



My Mum's constant fear was a phone call to inform her that I had been found dead in a tenement stairwell. She used to say to me, 'Son, I just want to see you happy and settle down.' That was all she ever wanted for me. I had no reason to think it could ever happen – that I would be happy and 'settle down'.

I decided to make a new life for myself elsewhere. The plan was to 'borrow' my stepdad's new car and go to London. There I would sell it to help fund me – mainly my drug habit of course. The plan did lead to a new beginning, although nothing like I expected and nowhere near London.

I didn't really get beyond Glasgow. I stopped to buy drugs in Castlemilk on the outskirts of the city. I met Patino who invited me back to his house. While taking heroin and smoking crack, I happened to glance across the room and a Bible caught my attention. I immediately concluded that Patino was one of those crackpots. (I learned later that he hadn't bothered to read it for years.)

... a Bible caught my attention.



The next day, I hung around while he was at work. Drinking coffee, my eyes were again drawn to the Bible – and I was unnerved by a voice in my head telling me to pick it up. I responded with a firm but inaudible, ‘No way!’ But the ‘voice’ persisted and, eventually, I did pick the Bible up.

**... eventually, I did pick
the Bible up.**

I found myself looking at Proverbs chapter 13 verse 20:

‘Walk with the wise and become wise,
for a companion of fools suffers harm.’

It was the most profound moment of my life. It seemed that God was speaking directly to me, opening my eyes to the truth; just about everyone I knew was a fool – as I was – and to say I was suffering was a massive understatement. I freaked out and slammed the Bible shut. I heard that voice again but a different message, ‘I can help you.’

‘Willing to help me?’, I thought, ‘Really, someone like me?’



It seemed that God was

speaking directly to me ...

I abandoned my plan and returned home. Thankfully, my stepdad was gentle with me. But I really didn't know how to pursue the idea that God could help me. Although I spent a lot of time reading the Bible, I knew that I really needed to find Christians who could answer my many questions. Not surprisingly, I didn't know any.

Some months later, I saw this guy helping somebody and I thought he might be a Christian. There was one thing I did know about Christianity – that Christians are known for their 'good deeds'! So, I asked him if he was a Christian. No harm asking, I thought. But I was wrong! Yet, I was close! His next-door neighbour was 'born again'. I didn't have a clue what that meant. He agreed to introduce me to him.



I poured out my heart to Ian. He prayed for me and I felt a peace for the first time in many years; I couldn't hold back the tears. I joined him at his church on the Sunday. It was not what I expected. Everyone seemed so happy, singing and clapping, some with their hands in the air. And they all looked as though their lives were perfect. And there was me with my life a perfect mess.

... I felt a peace ... I couldn't

hold back the tears ...

The pastor began to speak about God's love and His longing to have a relationship with us, whatever mess we may be in. He also explained that God can heal and restore people – even people like me.

But he also explained that our greatest problem is our sin and that we must repent and believe that Jesus Christ died for our sins. When he asked if anyone wanted to start a new life with God, I didn't need time to think; my hand just shot up. I then prayed to repent of my sinful life and ask God to



forgive me and save me. I now knew what it was to be born again – as a child of God. A couple of months later, in November 2004, I was baptised.

I now knew what it was to be

born again – as a child of God.

Not long after that, I flushed my heroin, methadone and valium down the toilet. I had been praying to God, asking for proof that He really had taken over my life. The answer came, with no withdrawal symptoms: no sleepless nights; no pains in my legs; no stomach cramps; no hot and cold sweats; no sickness; no voices. What I did get was what I wanted – peace.

I also made a remarkable discovery – that I wasn't an idiot and I did have a brain. I returned to a classroom and started studying accountancy, eventually gaining a professional qualification. I then got a job as a finance officer, at the same time starting my own business. And I have my own wife too – the most amazing, beautiful and kind woman.



... I wasn't an idiot and

I did have a brain.

I used to think that good things only happen to those who deserve them. Now, I know that is not true. God is full of mercy towards everyone who responds to His love and who is serious about wanting to know Him. He gave me a new report card. It tells me that I am His child, that I am now loved, accepted and forgiven, and that I will spend eternity with Him.

... I am now loved, accepted

and forgiven ...

Sadly, my Mum didn't get to know the new me. She had passed away after contracting motor neurone disease – just a week after the funeral of my biological Dad.



AS I LOOK BACK

When I look back, now 20 years since I was baptised, I am still amazed that God should have bothered with me. I had done absolutely nothing to deserve it. But that is the nature of God's love. The Bible calls it 'grace'; God gives us what we don't deserve and what we can never earn.

God performed a miracle in transforming my life. Firstly, He caused me to meet up with Patino and, of all the things I might have noticed in his room, I was drawn to the Bible. As Patino had lost interest in it years ago, why had it not been banished to a cupboard or bookshelf or a charity shop? It was because God had a purpose for it. He knew someone would read it one day; He was keeping it there for me.

God performed a miracle in

transforming my life.



Secondly, if I had not been invited to stay, I would not have had the opportunity to open the Bible when alone. Thirdly, it was not just a matter of luck that I was drawn to that particular verse.

Fourthly, surely it was only God who gave me the courage to ask a total stranger if he was a Christian! I half expected him to think I was a nutter and to hurry off. I know that it was God who directed me to him so that I would get introduced to Ian.

There were two very significant events over the winter of 2004/5. The first was the disposal of my drugs. Never before had I needed courage to flush a toilet! And never before had I watched flushing water like I did then. I now knew that I was free from my addiction. I had given up all hope of that freedom.

And the second was the discovery of an even greater freedom that I hadn't realised I needed. My eyes were opened to my greatest problem – my sin. Drugs had the potential to kill me. My sin meant that I was under God's judgment, and was facing His *eternal* punishment. But I left the church that day as God's child, forgiven and free from His judgment.



JESUS' STORY

Very briefly, here is Jesus' story in case you are not already familiar with it. Contrary to what many people think, Jesus, the Son of God, has always existed.

Just over 2,000 years ago, He left heaven to come to earth. He had the humblest of beginnings on earth, born in a stable to a virgin. We know very little about His childhood and early adult life. At the age of about 30, He chose twelve men to train to be His 'associates' or disciples.

For three years, Jesus drew crowds longing to hear His teaching and witness His healings and other miracles. He always had time for people, especially the sick, the poor and the outcasts of society.

However, He didn't have time for the religious leaders, who were self-righteous and looked down upon others. Jesus saw many of them as hypocrites, observing lots of petty rules but lacking genuine love, compassion and care for others.

Their hatred of Jesus grew until they wanted to get rid of Him. They had Him arrested on false



accusations of blasphemy, resulting in His most brutal and horrific death by crucifixion. It was the greatest miscarriage of justice in history.

On the third day, Jesus was raised from the dead. After 40 days He was taken up to heaven to be with His Father. One day He will return to earth as judge. There will be no warning of His return; the Bible tells us that He will come like a 'thief in the night'. We must be ready for His coming.

One day Jesus will return to earth as judge ...

People may wonder why God didn't intervene to save Jesus from His enemies. Nothing went wrong; everything went according to God's plan. Jesus could have saved Himself, but He willingly sacrificed His life to save all who choose to follow Him. It was the greatest act of love ever; Jesus took upon Himself God's wrath on account of our sin.



[Jesus] willingly sacrificed

His life ... the greatest

act of love ever

I didn't understand when Ian told me He was 'born again'. But I know now that it is the only way into God's Kingdom. The new birth is necessary because sin is our rebellious and disobedient nature; we choose to live our own way and disregard God's rules. It includes pride, jealousy, envy, lying, anger, hatred, evil thoughts, sexual immorality and much more, as well as the breaking of the Ten Commandments.

We all stand guilty before God. Every person who has ever walked on this earth, apart from Jesus Himself, has sinned against God.

And because God is holy, He demands justice, which means He cannot simply ignore our sin; it has to be punished. That is why Jesus was crucified. He took the punishment that we deserve; if we repent of our sin, God forgives us, considers us righteous and welcomes us as His child.



THE BIBLE TELLS US -

we have all sinned ...	... for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God ... Romans 3:23
... but Christ took our sin upon Himself ...	God made him who had no sin to be sin for us, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God. 2 Corinthians 5:21
... giving us a new nature ...	Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, the new creation has come: the old has gone, the new is here! 2 Corinthians 5:17
... so we are forgiven, not condemned	Therefore, there is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus ... Romans 8:1



WHAT ABOUT YOU?

I have shared my story very briefly. As you have picked up this booklet, perhaps you have made similar bad choices to me and are longing for a new start. Or your life may bear no resemblance to what mine was like; you may be enjoying life to the full – and have every reason to think that God must be pleased with you. But the Bible's teaching is clear; without receiving the new birth that Jesus offers, you will be under God's judgment.

To receive that new birth, you must:

- accept that you deserve to be punished on account of your sin,
- believe that only Jesus can rescue you from God's punishment,
- confess the wrong things in your life and repent of them, that is, turn away from them,
- choose to live to please God as a follower of Jesus.

This is not a decision to be taken lightly. It may mean giving up some of the things you enjoy – and, possibly, friends too. And you will still encounter the disappointments, struggles and stresses that are a normal part of life.



But what you give up for a new life with Jesus is nothing compared with what you will gain – real purpose, meaning, contentment and peace and the promise of everlasting life with Him.

If you think you are ready to make this decision, you can do that now by praying this simple prayer.

Dear Father God,

Please help me right now as I really want to change.

I do believe that Jesus Christ is Your Son. And I believe that He died to take the punishment that I deserve, so that You can forgive me.

I am sorry that I have been living to please myself without any thought for You. I now want to start living to please You and to make Jesus the centre of my life.

Please forgive me and accept me as Your child and please help me as I start this new life as a follower of Jesus.

Thank you.

Amen



If you have prayed and really meant this prayer, God welcomes you into His family as His child. All your sins – past, present and future – are forgiven. Like me, you are a new person.

Don't worry if you do not feel any different. It is important not to rely on your feelings but on God's promises in the Bible. You will need support as you begin this new life. If you know someone who is a true follower of Jesus, ask them to help you.

But perhaps you are not ready to make a decision. If you have questions, I encourage you to speak to a Christian you know, or write to BeaconLight Trust who have published this booklet for me. Please do not 'sit on the fence' or close your mind to what is the most important issue we all have to face; it will be too late when Jesus returns from heaven to judge us.

I have never regretted my decision about 20 years ago. If you decide to follow Jesus yourself, as I do hope you will, I know you will never regret it either.

May God bless you.

Alistair MacPhee

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‘It was the most profound moment of my life.’ Alistair had felt compelled to pick up a Bible at a friend’s house.

What he read sparked a search after truth. It led him to faith in Jesus Christ, to be set free from his drug addiction and to a realisation that he was not a ‘waste of space’, as he had been led to believe.

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