

*This is my
Story*

AS GIVEN BY REV. J. D. CARLSON
ON THE BROADCASTS
OF THE SUNRISE GOSPEL HOUR
FROM CFCN, CALGARY, ALTA.

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As we send forth this first edition of "This is my Story", we are praying that God who used it to win men and women to Christ when it was preached, will make it even more fruitful as it now appears in printed form. That many of its readers will be led to Christ and His Salvation through this story, is our prayer.

Yours to Make Christ Known,

J. D. Carlson



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This is my Story....

"Come now, and let us reason together, saith the Lord: though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they be red like crimson, they shall be as wool."—Isaiah 1:18.

I feel led of God to acquaint you with the story of my life. This I am anxious to do because of the amazing transformation which has come to me since I accepted Jesus Christ as my Personal Saviour. As I tell you this story of my life, I will be praying that God will use the testimony of His child and servant to honor and glorify His dear Son, a glorious Saviour, Jesus Christ.

The Psalmist said, "let the redeemed of the Lord say so", and that is what I want to do now. I want to tell you how "this poor man cried" and then I want to declare to everyone everywhere that "the Lord heard him and saved him."

As I give this story of my early life and of my conversion to Christ, I am compelled by the nature of the message to speak of myself and thus I must use the personal pronoun "I" much more than I would like to. However, please remember, in referring to myself I am earnestly seeking to exalt the Lord Jesus Christ, a Great Saviour, who saved me, a great sinner.

This is my story—I was born in Minneapolis, Minnesota, in the United States of America. My Mother was a godly woman who, when she was very young, came from Sweden. After arriving in the States she began working in a sewing factory in Minneapolis. After several years had passed by, she, Augusta Carlson—that was her maiden name—met a young Swedish carpenter, whose name was also Carlson. They saw each other once, twice, several times, and then wedding bells rang and they were married. Of course they lived happily ever after.

On April 7, 1915, there came a new addition to the Carlson family. I was that new addition. My Mother tells me that long before I was born she had

daily prayer meetings in which I was dedicated to God. She says she prayed like this: "Oh, God, make this child a minister or a missionary and use him or her to preach Thy Gospel." When I was born I was given a Bible name—"Joseph"—and I was again dedicated to God to be used as a minister or a missionary.

When I was nine years of age I took my first piano lesson, and when I was ten years I began taking vocal instruction. I forgot to tell you that by this time there had been several more additions to the Carlson family. Now there were three more boys and one girl who shared my happy childhood.

I was eleven years of age when I sang my first song in public. The song had been chosen by my Mother. She had taught me to sing—

"Softly and tenderly Jesus is calling,
Calling for you and for me.
See on the portals He's waiting and watching,
Watching for you and for me."

My Mother says that as I sang that song God spoke to her and told her that her prayers would be answered and some day I would be a preacher of the Gospel. This first singing engagement opened the door into other churches, and soon I was going out night after night singing the Gospel. I was then known as the "boy soprano of Minneapolis."

One of the greatest thrills of my childhood came when I was chosen to be one of four boys who were given the privilege of singing in the afternoon and evening grandstand productions at the Minnesota State Fair. We sang before thousands of people twice each day. This was a thrill I will never forget.

When I was eleven years old my Father, a carpenter, came home from his work one day and as he sat down at the dinner table he caused us children to become excited and Mother to become frantic when he said, "Mother, I believe we will move out on the farm; I can trade our home here for a fine farm." These were his arguments: "I am not as young as I used to be and it will be good for me to be my own boss for a while; also it will be best for the children. They are growing up and this city life offers too many

temptations for them." My Father kept on talking like this, and soon the day arrived when he signed the necessary papers which completed the transaction.

This farm which my Father gained in trade for his Minneapolis home was located in the State of Wisconsin. To be sure that everything would be ready at the farm home for the coming of Mrs. Carlson and the children, Father went to our new home several days before we departed from the city.

How well I remember our trip to that Wisconsin farm. A friend had offered to drive us to our new home, so early one Winter's morning Mother and we five children, plus as much baggage as we could get in the car, started out for Wisconsin. We had driven for about an hour when we encountered a severe blizzard. Our driver said, "Mrs. Carlson, I am sorry but I cannot go any farther in this storm. If I keep on going I will be stranded in some rural section and I will not be able to get back into the city for several days." What do you suppose he did? He took us to the next town and when he had found the depot he told us to catch the next train which would take us to our destination. Then he quickly left for Minneapolis and a warmer climate.

After what seemed to be a long time of waiting, the train arrived. What a sight we were as we boarded that train. Mother had the smallest of the five children in her arms. The other children were loaded down with baggage until you could hardly identify them. I remember Mother had purchased a new broom a few days before leaving Minneapolis, and as we were too poor to throw that broom away, Mother pushed it over her shoulder like the soldier she was, and it surprised me then and now that the conductor ever allowed us to get on the train.

As the train sped through the blizzard toward our new home we children were very excited. I knew the farm was located near Turtle Lake, Wisconsin, so every time the train would stop I would run up to the conductor and say, "Is this Turtle Lake?" After he had said "No" several times he finally became angry and told me not to trouble him any more. After what seemed to be a long time of traveling this conductor came over to me as the train stopped, and as

he glared at me he said, "this is Turtle Lake." I loaded myself and my other brothers down with baggage. As I did that Mother took the smallest child in her arms pushed the broom over her shoulder, and together we made our exodus from the train. When we stepped on to the depot platform you can imagine how happy we were to see our Dad waiting there for us. He directed us to a sleigh, relieved us of our bundles, and soon the whip cracked and we knew we were on our way. After we had driven for a while we saw our Father point at a home in the distance and we heard him say, "there is our house." We were glad to get settled in our new home and we felt we would love this new life on the farm very much.

Each night after the work had been completed, Mother would gather us children around the piano and she would help us with our singing. During these cold winter evenings she taught us how to sing four-part harmony as well as to sing solos, duets and trios.

One night my Mother had a dream, in which she dreamed we four children had presented a musical concert in the Turtle Lake village hall. What do you suppose Mother did the next day? This is what she did: She rented the village hall and also placed an order for tickets to be printed with a charge of thirty-five cents for adults and twenty-five cents for children. She also placed an announcement in the "Turtle Lake Times", our village paper, announcing that a musical concert would be presented by the Carlson children on a certain night.

Oh how we practiced! As I was the only one of the four children old enough to worry about the coming concert, I did my share of the worrying and theirs too. Finally the big night arrived. I said, "Mother, what if no one comes to hear us tonight? What will we do?" She said, "Do not worry, Son; I know of at least two people who will be there this evening." I said, "Who are they?" She said, "Your Father and I." But say, what a pleasant surprise was in store for us that night. The town hall was crowded out, and the concert was such a success that the people demanded a repeat performance. You may be interested to know we cleared over one hundred dollars on each of these concerts.

I can assure you that my childhood was not all joy. I had real sorrow, too. When I was thirteen and fourteen years of age I could not do what normal boys could do. I could not play football, basketball or baseball, because I could not run. This was my trouble—when I would try to run, I would lose my breath, fall down in a faint and almost die. My parents, brothers and sister expected I would die when these attacks came upon me. One day my Mother took me to a Doctor who examined me and said, "that boy will never be normal. He may die with one of these attacks. I cannot help him and neither can any other earthly Doctor, but Jesus Christ is the Great Physician and He can heal him." Then he prayed for me. I am glad I can say that I was healed that day even though I was not yet a Christian. God so touched my body that in High School I captained the baseball team from a second base position to a seven-game undefeated season. I also earned my basketball letter, too. I praise God for healing my body when I was still unsaved.

While I was in High School another great event took place. Our Principal asked me to represent our school in the district music contest which was held annually at River Falls, Wisconsin. This I gladly consented to do. Each day during the noon hour I would go to the United Brethren minister's home where his wife would play the piano for me as I sang. The song I was to sing was entitled, "The King's Highway," and as it had a high "F" in it, and I could only go as high as "D", I said to her, "No one will know the difference if you transpose the song one note lower. If you do that then I will be able to reach the high note in the song." I will never forget how she quickly replied, "Joe, I am a Christian and to do what you suggest would be cheating. I want you to know Christians do not cheat." What could I do? All I could do was to try in vain to reach the high notes in the song.

The night before the contest at River Falls I went to the parsonage for my last rehearsal. As I practiced I could not reach that high note in the song. Just as I was about to go home I noticed several of the church members coming in to the parsonage. The minister said, "Joe, please stay with us for a few

moments. We are going to have a prayer meeting and we would like to have you join us." Well, how could I do anything else? I stayed and I could not help but notice how they prayed for me and my part in the contest which would be held the next day.

Then dawned the day of the contest. I was to sing at eleven o'clock in the morning and I was there two hours before that time. Therefore, I had plenty of time to pace the floor and worry. Finally, the contest began. One contestant after another sang until it was my turn. On the first part of the song I thought I was getting along fine, but this is what I was worrying about—how would I ever hit that high note? When I came to that part I was amazed to find myself singing it just as easily as I had sung the lower notes. That is the one and only time I have ever been able to reach a high "F." My joy knew no bounds when during the noon meal the announcement was made that the Turtle Lake contestant had won first place in the contest. I had a few cents in my pocket and that was used to send a wire to our High School Principal informing him that our school had won first prize. Incidentally, the gold medal I received for winning this contest is one of my most treasured possessions.

When I returned to school after winning this contest I had an entirely different view of life. Now I began to plan for the future. My school teachers talked to me about this and they influenced me in the decision I made. With their help I decided that after I had graduated from High School I would enter the Jazz Band field and also aim for a career which would some day lead me into stage and motion picture work. When I as a graduate was asked what my plans for the future were, I announced that I planned to enter the Jazz Band field and that I also wanted to go into stage and motion picture work. The answer I gave spread over that small town like a prairie fire and then it reached my Mother. I remember how she came to me with tears in her eyes and said, "Son, I dedicated you to God; He told me you would be a preacher of the Gospel. Now I hear you are planning to enter Jazz Band and stage work. Son, is that really true?" I looked away from her and said, "I know it breaks your heart to hear me say this, but that is exactly what I am going to do."

A few days after I graduated from High School I asked permission of my parents to go to Minneapolis. I told them I wanted to study music in one of the finest schools of music in that city. I remember how they reluctantly gave me their permission. Upon arrival in Minneapolis the first place I went to was this school of music whose course was the one I was most interested in. I was fortunate enough to come there just when they were needing a young man to do some work in the school. They asked me if I wanted the job. I said "Sure." What do you suppose this work I accepted was? It was to run the elevator. I can assure you I had my ups and downs while learning to operate the elevator. However, this work paid for my musical training and it also provided me with enough money to care for myself.

Now I approach the black page of my life story. Remember this, I was not a Christian. I was not saved. After my work and musical study for the day was ended I would spend my nights in the deepest sin. My mother and father soon learned about the life I was living and they moved back into Minneapolis and demanded that I come and live with them in their home. I did this, but I kept on working and studying each day and living in sin each night.

This is a page of my life story that I love to tell. My Mother—she who had gone down into the valley of the shadow to give me life; she who had dedicated me to God; she who had wept over my wanderings and grown white-haired over my sins—every night or morning when I would come home with the marks of sin and shame upon me she would be waiting for me. I remember how she used to say, "My Son, why don't you come to Jesus? Why don't you accept your Mother's God? I am praying for you."

Then came what I thought was a wonderful opportunity. The group I had been singing with had been singing in theatres. I had been receiving fifteen dollars for fifteen minutes in this work. One day this group of which I was a member won a radio station search-for-talent contest. We were given the promise that very soon we would visit the cities of the United States and sing for a well known vaudeville circuit. This seemed to me a wonderful opportunity.

Now you ask, "Were you happy in this kind of a life? Did the pleasures of sin and the things of the world satisfy?" My answer is, "No. No. A thousand times no. Sin does not satisfy. I did not know what satisfaction was. I was trying to hide from God, and the truth of the matter is, you cannot hide from God. I had a Mother who was praying for me." I want to declare this fact—if you have a Mother or a Father praying for you the only thing you can do is accept Christ and be saved. No, I was not happy nor satisfied in this life I was living.

While these contracts were being drawn up something happened to me which I will never be able to forget. I was saved. I accepted Christ and became a Christian. This is the way it happened. A young man who was training for the ministry in a Bible Institute in St. Paul heard the voice of the Holy Spirit say to him: "Go over to Minneapolis and see that young man you met a few weeks ago. He needs your help." That was all the urging that young man needed. In a few moments he was in my home talking to me about God, who gave His Son to die that even I might have my sins forgiven. After he had carefully told me how to be saved, he knelt down beside me and led me to Christ. That very instant I found peace, happiness, Salvation and Eternal Life.

I got up from my knees and said to this young man who had led me to Christ, "I am going to be a Gospel preacher and singer." He took me back to the school with him, and in less than one hour after he came into our home I was a student in that school studying to become a Gospel minister. I had three blessed years of Bible training in that Institute and after graduation I began travelling North, South, East and West telling men and women of the Christ who had transformed my life.

As this life story now is being given I have spent eleven wonderful years serving Christ. During this time of Christian service it has been my great joy to lead thousands of precious souls to the Saviour. And, even now as you hear this story of how Christ made old things pass away and all things become new for me, I pray that you will even now open up your heart's door and invite my Christ to become your Christ.

MY DECISION

Can you sign this honestly? If so, do it today.

Rev. J. D. Carlson,
Sunrise Gospel Hour,
Calgary, Alta.

Dear Brother Carlson:

I have just finished reading your life story. As I have read it I realize that I need to be saved through Christ and so here and now I sign this decision slip, understanding that only Jesus Christ can save. I throw away all my hopes that self-righteousness or church membership, or religious ceremonies can save me, and I will wholly trust in Christ to forgive my sins, to change my heart, to give me Everlasting Life. I here and now receive Christ as my Saviour.

My Name

My Address

(If today you have taken Christ as your Saviour will you write telling me so? Use the above form or use your own words and I will write you an encouraging letter).