

Irresistible Grace

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Through an intriguing chain of events we received, by an e-mail attachment, a lovely story of witness and conversion. Links in the chain included the translation and printing of our book, *The Bible and Islam*, into Russian, and a South African missionary presently working in the Crimea, Ukraine. He was able to contact us thanks to a Lebanese/American colleague, who gave him our email address. He asked about the English version of our book, as he felt that the Russian version, which he had read, might be a shortened form. We could then direct him to our web page www.safeplace.net/members/mer. He was able to print the entire book. In writing to thank us, he attached his wife's delightful testimony of her conversion to Christianity and the Lord's working in both her life and that of her mother.

The testimony began with the mother's conversion, and a sketch of the family situation at that time. This mother of four boys and one girl, had had a very unhappy married life due to the living arrangements which placed her in daily contact with in-laws who did not like her and never wanted their son to marry her. They were devout and conservative Muslims. We imagine that they belonged to the Indian Muslim minority of Johannesburg, South Africa. It was large enough to have its own "madressa" or school to make sure their children were well taught in the Quran, their holy book.

One day the mother was in such emotional distress, she ran to friends just to get away for a little while. She felt trapped by her situation and needed someone to talk to. As it happened, her friends were providentially unable to visit with her at that moment because they were listening to what a door-to-door missionary was telling them about the Christian faith. They invited her in and showed her to a room where she could wait, and as it happened, listen to all that was being said. The missionary was describing Jesus and the more she listened, the more she knew that she needed this Savior. "She was convinced that the One who said "Come to me all who are weary and heavy laden and I will give you rest" was able also to help her bear her present confusing and sad life." Right there and then she decided to follow Him and His Word. She surrendered her life to Jesus.

Her family noticed immediately the tremendous change in her outlook on life. She was a new person filled with tenderness, and loving-kindness. It took her some time to confess to her husband what had happened in her life and naturally he wasn't at all pleased. He made her promise that she would never go to church or have fellowship with other Christians and that she would continue to dress as a proper Muslim lady so that the rest of the family and their community, would not guess what she had done. She was so convinced that God could keep her by His power, she agreed to her husband's conditions.

Now, the daughter confesses that this event probably hit her the hardest. She figured that her mother had committed an unforgivable sin by leaving Islam and becoming a Christian. For months, even years, she watched her mother closely and she noticed that as soon as her father had gone to work her mother would listen to Christian programs on the radio. Out of love for their mother none of the children felt like telling their father about this. And thus began this remarkable life of witness to one's family. The mother would say to her daughter, "if you are ever afraid of something or uncertain about anything you can just call on the name of Jesus and he will be right there for you." She gently and lovingly used every opportunity to share about the One who had changed her life. She lived a life of patient witness to her new faith within her family.

Meanwhile the daughter held firmly to the beliefs of Islam, which she had been taught since she was four years old. She was one of the best students in the Madressa and was fluent in reading the Quran in Arabic and could recite most of it by heart. (Never mind that she did not understand what she was

reciting.) She knew all the prescribed prayers. She could not help being irritated by her mother's unmovable love for Jesus.

It was confusing. She began to question what the difference was between Islam and Christianity. Why did her mother find something there that wasn't available in Islam? What, indeed, was the attraction? Then one day she saw a TV program, which her mother was watching, in which many Christians were being baptized. "I was completely captured by the love and joy that the Christians shared as they embraced one another after being baptized." She realized that she did not have that kind of love and joy in her heart. Some weeks later, when she was still mulling over this dreadful dilemma, she decided to experiment with her mother's words. She took off her shoes and right there in the living room she attempted to pray to God.

You have to realize that such a thing is never done in Islam. You don't speak personally or extemporaneously to God. Prescribed Arabic prayers were something you recited and in her case, Arabic wasn't even her language, so she never understood what she was saying. She was just saying words. She begged the Lord to show her the right way, if she was truly on the wrong path.

About a week after that momentous prayer she was surprised when her father came home with an English translation of the Quran. Perhaps this was an answer to her prayer.. Now she could understand her religion better. She began to read it eagerly but to her dismay, the more she read the more confused she got. She was even surprised to find out how much is written about Jesus in the Quran. She decided to go back to her former state of "not knowing." She would wait for that answer.

It happened that this daughter attended a state school until mid-afternoon and then went to her Madressa for further Islamic education. One day when she was in ninth grade a foreigner came to the school and was allowed to preach what she felt was an entire sermon. He brought a music group with him. It was a rare occasion. At last she heard the Gospel. "The pastor preached about the life of Jesus, what He came to do here on earth and how He fulfilled his purpose here on earth". She listened intently and remembers being surprised that she wasn't becoming angry. On the contrary she found herself agreeing with everything that he said. Then, it happened. This preacher challenged the young people to hold onto the right anchor for their life—Jesus the Savior. She was becoming convicted of her need. The young group who came with the preacher put on a brief drama about the raising of Lazarus. She felt herself being called to life by Jesus and burst into tears of joy. She wanted to touch everybody and tell them: "Jesus is not dead, He's alive! He's alive!" Without hesitation she raised her hand high to indicate that she wanted to pray the sinner's prayer:

"Dear Lord Jesus, I acknowledge that I am a sinner and that I cannot save myself. Would you please come and forgive my sins. I believe that you died on the cross to pay the penalty for my sins and that you were raised from the dead that I might stand righteous and holy before God, fit for eternal life. I submit my life to you as my Lord and my Saviour. And please, by your Holy Spirit come and live in my heart that I might forever live for you. Thank you. Oh God, I pray all this in Jesus Name. Amen"

What would happen when she got back home? Would she be able to persist as her mother had done? Such thoughts and doubts entered her mind but upon considering again the awesomeness of God she experienced peace in her heart and she realized that to be a Christian meant all or nothing. There is no middle way. It was at that moment she recalled a verse which has been her mainstay ever since. It was God's promise "I will never leave you nor forsake you."

That is true for her ten years later.

We aren't told about the long lonely road of high school and the losing of old friends and making of new ones. We can easily imagine the bond which must have grown between mother and daughter. She went to college and met some beautiful Christians. Her faith grew and she fellowshipped with other believers. She met Christians whom she heard about from radio programs that she listened to. She took a year off to travel with a team of young people, as part of a mission group which was giving a year of their lives to serve Christ in evangelizing others. Finally she was baptized in a Dutch Reformed Church in Pretoria, South Africa. It was only then that her father found out about her conversion. He was extremely

angry and it became necessary for her to leave her home quickly before her uncles and the Imam arrived to persuade her to recant. She didn't see her family again for a long time.

But the story has a relatively happy ending. Before her marriage there was reconciliation with her father and the whole family attended her wedding. She is trusting God to do a great work in the lives of all her loved ones before they all stand at the judgement seat of God. "For God's Word says that there is no other name by which men must be saved. That is, the name of Jesus."

We have been encouraged to share this testimony with all of you because of their expressed desire to translate the testimony and use it in their evangelistic work. Here is how it ends:

"Dear reader, no man, yes no one in this world could convince you of the truth except the Spirit of god who alone is able to draw us to God. May this also be true of you, that you were known for seeking God with all your heart, with all your soul and with all your mind. And if you do this, I know that you will come to know the Lord Jesus Christ of Nazareth who died and rose from the dead for sinners like you and me. And His promise is sure, once you come to know Him He will never leave you nor forsake you. May God bless you. And remember His promised to His children: Hebrews 13:5 "...I will never leave you nor forsake you..."

. When we look over our monthly news letters written during the height of our radio work we see many examples of young men and women who have been caught by the beauty and love of the Savior and who use those same terms—about finding the right path, etc. Let us give thanks to God for all the many means He has put at our disposal for the spreading of His word. Certainly radio missions have been, and continue to be an important arm of evangelism.

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