

NOW I CAN REJOICE! — TESTIMONY OF CLYDE RUFUS BROWN

I thank God each day for the life He has restored to me. Nine years ago, April 7, 1999, I walked into the Fred Jordan Mission. It was truly God's work and plan for my life. I met Mel Novak my first day there.

A fear of death or life in prison kept haunting me. I had done some unthinkable things to a lot of people and I was known by the police for my deeds. I had tried to change when I got out of prison where I was in & out for 30 years. I had studied the Bible in prison and even called out to God for help, but each time I was released, I went right back to my old ways. I feel that it was at that point His Spirit led me to where He was waiting. God sure loves me.

I walked into the Fred Jordan Mission & a young man at the desk told me that he was a disciple. I remember a peace coming over me. I said to myself that I wanted some of what he had, and he prayed with me. That night, I went back around the corner and bought more drugs and spent the night trying to get high, but it did not work. That night, I spent about \$160 on heroin and another \$80 on crack cocaine. At sunrise, I made probably the greatest choice of my life. I went back to the Fred Jordan Mission where I was taken into the Men Discipleship director's office. He said, "Welcome..." the most compassionate words I had ever heard. Cold turkey was my choice to kick the habit, (a living hell) because I no longer wanted any kind of drug in my body. On the third day, things were really bad. Outside my window was a drug corner. I told myself all I needed do was go outside and get a fix. But I cried out to God and asked Him to reveal Himself or I'd be lost. I picked up my Bible and started to read from the book of Psalms and in Psalm 62 I received my answer from God. In verse 2 (He only [is] my rock and my salvation; [he is] my defense; I shall not be greatly moved). For the first time in my life I realized I had not trusted anything other than my own strength and had never stood still. Then I read verse 6 (He only [is] my rock and my salvation: [He is] my defense; I shall not be moved.) For the first time in my life, the Word spoke to me in a way that I could understand. Now I had my answer and was willing to do whatever it took to have a life free of fear, drugs and crime.

I don't remember the next 5 weeks. The other men in the discipleship told me later that they would feed me, take me to the shower, as well as pray for me. There was a time during this period that I would just start to sweat, not the normal way, but from the top of my head and like a wave it would travel down to my feet and my eyesight would leave. You talk about fear.

I finally called my parole officer. I had not reported and could have been sent back to prison. Making that call was the first test of my trusting Him. When I talked with my parole officer, she was very surprised to hear from me because I had never done this in the past. I would just run until I was arrested. I told her where I was & that I had kicked heroin cold turkey. She said that I could stay and continue with the program for now. I put my total trust in God to repair my life. He went before me into the parole office, & when I arrived, my agent was glad to see that I had found a place where I could start to get control of my life. We (the men of the discipleship) were asked to attend an upcoming church event. I was standing outside with another man when I looked down the parking area and saw three of my brothers and my mother. My tears began to flow freely. At a church, far from skid row and God had reunited me with my family. The last time that my family members had seen me was when they had picked me up from prison years ago.

God continued moving on my behalf. Mrs. Jordan & her sons were at a restaurant & the waitress asked her what she did. Mrs. Jordan told her how her family ran a Mission downtown on skid row where they helped men and women get off drugs. This waitress, (my wife who had not seen me for 2½ or 3 years) showed her a picture & said, "my husband is down there somewhere." I knew that God was once again putting my life back together. I praise Him. I went into prayer and fasting along with renewing my vow to Him and my commitment to the Discipleship Program at the mission. I had no idea of how I would get back with my wife or even if we would. I just wanted to tell her that I was sorry for all that I had done and wanted to be her friend again, someone that she could trust.

I had had 2 weekend passes, which allowed me to stay at my brother's home (my pastor). I asked the church for forgiveness because I had been a Sunday school teacher, and wanted to be in service again. They welcomed me back. I talked with my youngest son who also forgave me. I asked him to talk with his mother on my behalf. I wanted to find work and court my wife. My wife came by his house & we went for coffee. With prayer & God's help, we went home. God had softened my wife's heart. He also touched my heart and we are together to this day. I am thankful for her & praise God daily for all that He has done. I am the Mission's Men co-coordinator & pray Mel's Arsenal prayer daily. I am a blessed man.