

A New Beginning 1982

As I write this, I am fast approaching my 70th Birthday, so this all happened half a life-time ago; but it is engraved on my memory as probably the most important thing to happen in my life.

I had begun to attend St Mary's parish church in Northiam, because I had given the vicar a lift in the rain! Howard had simply invited me, and I was prompted to accept his invitation. The services were familiar to me from my childhood in an Anglican church, but there was a world of difference between the old dusty vicar I remembered, and this young man. His enthusiasm for, JESUS, GOD the Father, and the HOLY SPIRIT, were obvious, and contagious. I began attending a Bible study at the vicarage, Howard and Helen's family home; where I was astonished to be taught from the Bible in a way that was illuminating and exciting.

There was a Mission coming up, I learned, in our villages and the town of Rye, led by a man called Colin Urquhart. He was at that time still an Anglican vicar, but "something" had changed him. He was preaching and teaching that GOD had shown him from the Bible that HIS gifts and promises were still available today! Healings and miracles seemed to be Colin's daily experience, and he was going around the Church to share his excitement. I read a book of his, "When the SPIRIT Comes", and couldn't wait to see him when he came to Rye Church; and I learned he was coming to Northiam too. The Friday night of 'Mission Rye' arrived; I left my daughter Chloe at home in the safe hands of my parents, who had come to stay with us for this week, and set off with my new friends from Church.

The Rye Church building is very old and grand, and huge inside; it was packed to the limits. I remember the current Bishop of Lewes, our diocese, getting up to introduce Colin Urquhart and then to my astonishment, he literally picked up his skirts and fled, pleading another engagement. How odd, I thought ... I don't recall the prayers at the start of the meeting or the songs that we sang, but then this man Colin stood up and started to read from his Bible. The passage was from the prophet Ezekiel chapter 36, verses 25 and 26, and as I heard the words I felt that they were speaking to me, directly to my heart. "I will sprinkle clean water on you, and you will be clean. I will cleanse you from all your filthiness and from all your idols ..." I began to think was this me? And as the voice continued, my heart and mind were in a turmoil ... "moreover, I will give you a new heart and put a new spirit within you, and I will remove the heart of stone from your flesh, and give you a heart of flesh..." That's me, that's what I need! My heart and soul were crying out within me to be clean; to get rid of my selfish ways and bitterness, blaming all my troubles on other people. At that moment I saw a vision of JESUS on the cross, vividly in front of me; He was looking straight at me, bleeding and dying in an agony of Love for me. I knew He had died for ME! He took MY sin! I wept uncontrollable tears of sadness and guilt, and I told Him I was so sorry for all my wicked selfish ways, and asked for His forgiveness. The human voice came again "... and I will put MY Spirit within you and cause you to walk in My statutes, and you will be careful to observe my ordinances ... you will be My people and I will be your GOD ..." At that moment I literally felt totally cleansed and filled with GOD's HOLY SPIRIT, and I rose up from my knees a new creation. The start of my Life with JESUS. What an adventure had just begun, but I was to find that becoming a real disciple, following JESUS in obedience to HIS WORD, would be a challenge as well as a blessing....