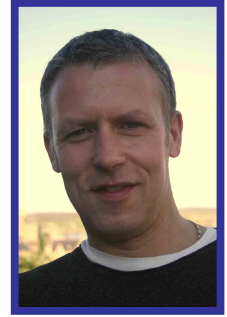


Freedom in Christ

By Peter Jamieson



My name is Peter and I used to be a drug addict and an alcoholic. For over 20yrs of my life, and certainly from about the age of 17, that is what I was. I am 40yrs old as I write this testimony today but now however life is very different for me. I no longer drink or take drugs and everything that it had once cost me has now been restored like my health, my family, my peace of mind, joy and happiness and much, much more, in fact, more than I ever thought possible! I am now the happiest I have ever known and instead of dreading the thought of another day I now awaken every morning with a smile on my face. Life is just so good now, it can still be challenging, and I won't say it is not, but I have this strength now that I never had before. This strength that I found has made me well, it has helped me to understand myself and it is within me now every minute of the day, guiding and protecting me. Jesus is that strength. He is my hope both for today and for tomorrow, and it is because of Him that I write this now.

If you are about to read this I can assume that you are probably looking for an answer to your problems, maybe the same problems as I had, and if that is the case then please read on with an open mind, but most importantly of all, with an open heart.

I was born and brought up in the Shetland Islands in a town called Lerwick. I was the youngest in my family with an older brother and sister who were both in their teens by the time I was born and two quite elderly parents. Life in Shetland was alright I suppose, probably a lot safer than a lot of places, but it did have its down points. Shetland is an island which is steeped in tradition and one of those traditions is drinking, there is never anything that goes on that doesn't include alcohol somewhere in its midst. There was very seldom, if ever anything, which ever happened without it being an excuse to have a party. My family was no exception and in all my growing up alcohol and socializing were the main factors. There was hardly a weekend that I can remember when there wasn't a party going on in our house but I do have a lot of happy memories of it all, in fact, some of my happiest childhood memories are of the many, many social gatherings that took place.

I soon became an abuser of alcohol and at a very young age was using it quite regularly. By the time I was about eighteen I was recognized as being an alcoholic. It was nothing new to me by then to be such a let down to people and so it never really bothered me too much what anyone thought but I did know that what I did wasn't right. People don't really seem to realize up here the affect that this lifestyle can have on you, it is almost looked upon as being normal to be a heavy drinker. That is something that Shetland has had a reputation for and nothing new but although I took to drink quite naturally at about the age of 14, I also around that time started to take to drugs. The alcohol thing is something that is just accepted as a part of our culture and there is not a family here that isn't affected by it and so it isn't

looked upon as being particularly a problem, but with my attitude towards alcohol and with the upsurge of drugs becoming more available in the mid-80's, it just became as normal to me to get heavily involved in that as well. It was just in my nature, I couldn't help it. What was normal to do with alcohol then became normal to do with drugs.

I soon became a drug dealer in our community and before too long was quite heavily involved. By 18yrs old I was running up and down to Newcastle and London and bringing back all sorts of drugs, Ecstasy, Acid and amphetamine, as well as kilos of cannabis. This life style of course hadn't gone unnoticed and soon enough I was being watched and getting myself quite a name. My parents who had struggled to keep me under control since I was a child didn't quite know what to make of me. They both knew what was going on but were at their wits end as what to do. I deeply regret now what I put them through at that time but I just couldn't seem to help myself. It just seemed that the more involved I got and the greater the stakes became, the more I couldn't let go. It didn't seem to matter who I hurt along the way, it was like a machine that took me over and I just couldn't stop. Shetland soon became too small for my little venture and with an attempt by the drug squad to bust me with a raid on my parents' home; it then finally sunk in that I couldn't carry on like this, it just wasn't fair on my parents. I made a move to Aberdeen at the age of twenty, after having totally lost the trust and respect of my parents, and tried again. Things however didn't really work out that way and I just became an even heavier user of both alcohol and drugs.

I was then in Aberdeen for about 16-17 years in various degrees of both alcoholism and drug addiction. Nothing ever seemed to last long with me then there after, relationships, work, friendships, and depression soon became a major factor. I spiraled before to long, in my mid to late twenties into heroin use and was involved in a lot of criminal activity, dealing drugs to support my habits as well as robbery. But I tried time and time again over the years to sort myself out but nothing ever seemed to work for me. I had been on methadone and had various different drugs agencies and no matter what I did nothing ever worked. It all kind of came to a head I suppose two years ago when I attempted suicide and was rushed into hospital. I was 38 yrs of age and I had just had enough. For about the last 7 yrs prior to that I had been working with gangsters from both Liverpool and Glasgow and had become one of the biggest 'cocaine dealers' in the city center of Aberdeen but the stress of it all and the things we were doing just depressed me even more.

When I came back to Shetland I didn't really have anyone to turn to other than my sister. My father had been dead then for almost 8yrs and my mother was in a home with Alzheimer's disease. It was just such a shock for my sister to see me in the state that I was in. I was about 9 stone in weight, just skin and bone from yrs of 'Crack cocaine' addiction; I was mentally and physically wrecked. My sister however, despite warnings from other family members, decided that she would take a chance on me and offered to support me if I promised her that I really wanted to kick the drugs once and for all. She then took me in and I was to live with her and my niece until they could figure out what to do with me.

After the weekend was over she phoned up the alcohol and drugs people and told them of our situation, that her little brother had turned up out of the blue and was in dire need of help. That same day I had to go and see someone and it was then plainly obvious to them that they would really have to do something with me so they made me an appointment to see a doctor. After a few visits to various people in the various agencies I was put on a detox program. I was to be on this program with the Alcohol and Drugs Advisory Service and be monitored over an eight day period. It didn't all happen right away I will add, we had to wait nearly a week before the program could start so my sister, who was already having to put me up on her sofa, had to give me at least a little money each day to go and do what I had to do just to get through it right up until the time for it to start. It was such a brave decision by her I have to say because she had no real idea as to what I might do but she had faith in what she was doing, it was up to me not to fail her, or myself for that matter.

Anyway, once I got the drugs I needed from the doctor I began the program and with the help of my sis and my niece, also with one of my oldest and very dearest of friends, I got through it rather effortlessly. The big question then became: How do they sustain this recovery? I was all set to try and return to normal life once I had finished the program, I would "get a job, get a flat, would only go to the bar at the weekends and I wouldn't touch drugs ever again!" Needless to say that idea fell on deaf ears and it was then mentioned that I would need to go into rehab. To be quite honest the idea of rehab terrified me, especially when I was told that you couldn't even smoke! But it was my sister who really pushed me into going, it wasn't that she wanted rid of me (or so she said) but because she knew only too well that I probably wouldn't last a week or two before I was back dabbling in things again and I now know how right she was. I wouldn't have lasted very long and if I had ended up losing her through that I would really have had no one I could turn to. I had to go and that was that. And so they got in touch with this rehab that was on a tiny little island in Shetland called Papa Stour. They came and saw me half way through my program and it was then decided that I would go with them the day after my treatment stopped.

The 'Papa Stour Project' was set up especially for people like me, young men (only 38 remember!) with drugs and alcohol issues, to lend them support and counseling through rehabilitation. It was also, funnily enough to me at the time anyway, a Christian based organization. I had never really had any religious leanings and so this was all a bit of a curiosity really but I was looking forward to that side of it. I was more than open to the idea that there was a God and so when I found that out I was rather excited to be going. "If anything was going to change me" I thought "why not God"

I soon got into the swing of things, having met all the staff, Andy, Sabina and this rather odd looking man all covered in tattoos called John who is now a very good friend, and I soon began to relax and enjoy myself. It is a working croft with sheep and vegetable gardens and so on and there was always work needing to be done. I would get up each morning and go and let the chickens out and collect the eggs, we would then have breakfast and a time of

prayer and worship. Then it was off out to do some work with the sheep and the lambs until it was lunch time and then the same again in the afternoon but nothing was too strenuous, you just took your time and did things at your own pace. But it was the gentle way that they began to teach me about Jesus that really started to make me feel and think differently. You see I didn't go there with this attitude that it couldn't be true but with this inquisitiveness for the truth. I have never thought of myself as a totally stupid man, I have had to use my wits on many occasions and gotten myself out of some right situations and so I wasn't going to just start rubbishing something simply because I maybe didn't understand it, no, if there was a God in Papa Stour, if there was God in Heaven, if Jesus was true and He was true to His word like they said He was, then, I was going to find out for myself!

And that is what happened. I started to read the bible and began looking for discrepancies and stuff like that, you know, if this is all supernatural and the things of the bible really happen today, then they should or could happen to me, why not? And the more I read the more it started to speak to me and the more it started to speak to me the more I wanted to know. In the evenings we would all gather upstairs in my quarters where the table-tennis and the pool-table was, on the sofas in front of the television and we would chat for an hour or so and it was one evening as me and Andy sat together and I was asking the usual difficult questions about 'suffering' and so on when He asked me if I "wanted to give my life to Christ!" "Well why not!" I thought "it can't do any harm can it!" and so that was what I did. He then said a very simple prayer for me to receive Jesus into my heart and that was that. Well nothing really happened and it all seemed a bit uneventful. There was no bolt of lightening or sound of angels singing and I was told that it was now up to God what He did, but Andy did say one thing that got me a little excited, he said "Now that you have given your life Jesus and if you press in and seek him, you WILL find him" "Wow, is that a promise?" I asked.

It was three days later and I had the most amazing experience ever. I was in my room and about to go to bed when I sat down on my chair and started to read a little of the bible. I suddenly felt this really big urge to start praying and seeking God. I didn't really know the first thing about it but I felt that I just had to really start apologizing for all of the wrongs that I had done. I began to cry rivers of tears from my eyes as I realized just how deprived and sordid my life had been. I sat there and prayed for ages, looking at myself in the mirror and wondering how on earth I could ever really be forgiven for the things that I had done. Then after what must have been a couple of hours I went to bed and tried to go to sleep. I then had dream in which Jesus came to me. He took me to what I now know to be His throne room and showed me about a little, He then sung me a song and when He was finished doing that He came and sat down with me and forgave me for all the wrong things that I had done. What He did was a lot more than just that, He helped me to realize what had been so wrong about my life. I then found myself confessing to Him all that I had ever been in my life, all the hurt and the pain that I had ever felt, everything that had been done by myself to damage me was taken away as was everything that had been done by others. I had been

forgiven and I could forgive. It was then that I burst awake from my sleep and from that moment on I knew that my life would never ever be the same again.

I left the project shortly after that and ended up staying at a house that belonged to them on the mainland in place called Scalloway. That was 2yrs ago now as I write this. I don't drink anymore and I don't take drugs, I don't even smoke and that was the power of Jesus. To know that Jesus is real has changed my life in so many ways. When I first went to see the doctor in Lerwick they told me that my liver was really damaged and then not long after I left the project they found that I also had Hepatitis-C and that I'd probably had it as long as 12yrs. Well as I say just so much has changed in me you wouldn't recognize me now from the man who had gone in there back then. Within a matter of weeks I had put on weight and was up to nearly 12½ stone, my family had all accepted me back and my son who is now nearly 19 is back in my life after having only ever seen him on very rare occasions when he was really young.

But I have since had some truly miraculous healings happen to me. I've had lumps from yrs of injecting disappear from my wrists and arms at a prayer meeting one evening. It happened right before my very eyes. I have had my liver completely restored much to the surprise of the nurse at the hospital who was ordered do a scan by specialists in Aberdeen. They found that within six months of stopping drinking and taking drugs that my liver had been completely restored to normal. Now the thing with the liver is that it can regenerate itself but only in a sense where it can function properly again, my liver however even had the appearance of a new liver, it was likened by the nurse who took the scan to someone's who had never had a drink before. I remember telling her as she was doing the scan that I was a Christian and that God was going to heal me and that everyone from my church was praying for me and all she could say was "well tell them to keep it up because it is obviously doing something!"

It was a little later and I was to begin treatment for hepatitis-C. The same sort of thing happened there. I would go back and fore every month on the airplane to Aberdeen to see the specialists who were dealing with my treatment and they could never understand how I never suffered any side effects. The whole thing was just a mystery to them really but I just said the same thing "I was a Christian and I have so many people praying for me" well they would just laugh when I said that, and so would I, but they couldn't knock it really, especially when only after 3 months of treatment the virus had completely vanished. It is now one year since I started that treatment and six months since I finished it and I have now officially been given the all clear, praise the Lord!

I really have so much to thank so many people for but the biggest thing to ever happen to me was to give my life to Jesus. Jesus has set me free and I now have a wonderful life with wonderful new friends and so much to look forward to. I just thank God for everyday now. When I open my eyes in the morning I praise God and ask Him to watch over me and when I go to bed each night I thank Him for doing exactly that. In between those times I

simply live and breath for God, speaking openly of my love for Him and serving Him as best as I can. My hope is that you will read this and find God for yourself too. Jesus is just waiting for you to call on Him so why wait.

If you want you can say that prayer with me right now, if you want Jesus then you can ask Him to come and He WILL, just say these words and begin the most exciting journey there is on this earth (and off of it!)

Dear heavenly Father,

I am sorry for the wrongs that I have done. Please forgive me. I have tried living my life without You and so I ask you now to take charge of my life from this moment on. I accept Your promise of forgiveness and I freely offer You my heart and my soul.

I believe that Your son Jesus died to set me free and I claim that freedom, in His mighty name.

I pray that you will send Your holy Spirit now to dwell within me as my friend and my teacher. I declare that I have been born again, that I am Your child and that I have eternal life, in the name of Your son Jesus Christ. Amen.

If you would like to get in touch with me about absolutely anything to do with this testimony then please feel free to do so. You can either contact me through the Church on Tel: 01595 695667 or E-mail me on: peter.jamieson@inbox.com
May God bless you and keep you safe.