



The path to my Baptism - July 2010

As I walked about in life, without real aim or focus I could see in the distance – right back on the horizon a hill. On that hill, although sometimes hard to see, was a cross. The cross looked interesting and I felt pulled towards it. So I set off on a journey towards the hill, but there were many distractions along the way. Even so I slowly made my way ever closer.

After a while I could make out the shape of a man on the cross, so I carried on getting ever closer. Yet still there was plenty to draw my attention away in this hectic world.

Then I arrived at the bottom of the hill and I started to climb. Now the going was harder, walking up hill. In some ways it would be easier to turn back, easier to walk in the familiar yet flat world.

But now as I started to climb I could see the man on the cross more clearly. He was been held there by nails penetrating both his hands and his feet. He hung in agony. So I climbed the hill right up to the foot of the cross – now needing to get to this man. If the climb seemed harder I didn't notice, all the busy worlds' distractions were gone. I got moving.

Then I was there. At the foot of the cross, the cross I had seen in the distance – the cross I had travelled to reach. At the foot of the cross I knelt. I did not look up I knelt with my face to the ground.

I knelt because I then really knew the truth. This man hanging on the cross was there instead of me. The man hanging there, held there by cruel nails was Gods only son – hanging in my place. Jesus.

I prayed for forgiveness, I cried out in shame because of my sin – the sin which he had gone to the cross to pay for. I prayed and he forgave me.

But I didn't look up – for a long time I didn't look up at him. But he kept calling down calling to me, so I pretended that I couldn't hear him. So he just called louder. In the end I had to say 'Yes Lord?'

'Look to me' he called. So very slowly I lifted me head, knowing that I had been forgiven but still feeling guilt and shame about my sin, my mistakes.

My eyes went passed his feet nailed into the wood, passed his broken and damaged body to his face. I expected to see condemnation, judgement and scorn. I thought he would at least be angry with me for putting him there.

But I didn't see that! I saw a face full of love a face full of gentle understanding a face full of compassion. I stood up looking at him amazed. Then I started thinking and talking 'Jesus maybe if I had done this or that' or 'Lord, I was thinking this or I thought that...' But again he called down to me and plainly said 'Paul, do not think – follow – follow me!'

So I did. I followed him and he led me beyond that hill with the cross, beyond the false burden of guilt and shame. To a whole new place, where he is king. To a new path where the wind of God's spirit blows on my face, a place where I am free not to sin.

Now I am forever free and will forever live with him. The man who was nailed to a cross on a remote horizon.

The very best part being, I didn't have to travel for so far and for so long, he is just there, was always just there. He is just there waiting for all to believe and pray. He is waiting, calling down 'Look to me'.

Paul