

# *From Bowling Alley to Pulpit*



*"Thy Word  
&  
Faith"*



## **The Apostolic Faith**

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## **FROM BOWLING ALLEY TO PULPIT**

**"I FEEL** that if anyone has a right to praise God, I have. I was never taught to pray. I began drinking when just a little fellow. My poor mother pled with me never to start to drink and come home drunk as my father did, but I can remember how I would be so drunk I could hardly sit on the wagon seat with my father. I would stagger into the kitchen where my old mother was, and see her around the kitchen with the tears rolling down her face.

### **Leaves Home**

"I had a terrible temper. Many a time I said I would take my older brother's life. My mother would have to stand between us. I didn't know anything about God. I left home when a small boy and started for the very depths of sin. I landed in logging camps and the mining camps, where they put the liquor on the table just as we do the tea and coffee. I got to be a drunkard down in the gutter of sin. I would go into town Saturday night, and in the morning sometimes I would wake up lying in the wagon ruts, right in the road. I lived that way until the year of 1911.

### **Starts a Bowling Alley**

“After contracting all summer in a camp in northern California, I came over into the Rogue River Valley to spend the winter. I was very fond of bowling, so I rented a building in Ashland and started a bowling alley in it. But there is where I crossed the path of a few Christians who were planning on starting a Gospel Mission in the building I had rented. I thank God for that move because they began to pray for me and ask God to get me out and gave them the building for a mission.

### **Buys New Testament**

“Terrible conviction seized me until one day I left the bowling alley and went to a store a block away and asked the man if he had a Bible. I had never owned one and did not know a line in the Bible. He said he had no Bibles but he had a red-letter New Testament I didn’t know that was a part of the Bible, but I bought it because I saw pictures of Jesus and angels in it.

“I would sit in the bowling alley and read that Testament while the boys tallied their own games. I went to the country for a few days, and when I returned I found I had left my Testament in the country; so I bought a Bible.

## **Prayers Bring Conviction**

“Mind you, these people were praying all this time for me, holding cottage prayer meetings – sometimes until two o’clock in the morning. God was mightily convicting me of my sins. The day I bought the Bible He sent two of the same people right to the home where I was staying, and they invited me to their little meetings – I know that was God – never dreaming I was the man they were praying for.

“A desire seized me to go to their meeting that very night. I sat down in the back of the hall, brokenhearted and down-and-out in sin. I had a broken hand from a fight. A man told what God had done for him. He had been down in sin. He said, ‘I prayed and God heard my prayer, and I am saved.’ He could take you right to the spot where God saved him. God began to melt up my stony heart. They asked sinners to come up and pray. I heard the voice of God speak out of Heaven to my soul and say, ‘You’d better pray.’ I answered the Voice, ‘I can’t pray; I don’t know a line in the Bible; I don’t know how to pray.’ A second time God spoke to my heart, ‘You’d better go!’

“I trembled like a leaf. I stepped right out in the aisle and answered the voice of God that spoke to my heart, ‘I will go.’ I thank God I did go. I knelt at

that altar and asked God to help me. I prayed like a little child.

### **Chains Broken**

“In five minutes I was on my feet and I knew I was saved. God broke the chains and habits that had me bound. I knew that God was real. I knew He answered my prayer.

“It was wonderful for me to walk out on the streets and meet the old gang and let them know that Jesus Christ had saved my soul. I said, ‘Boys, I’ve joined the church.’ I didn’t know what to call it. Some of them came up and shook hands and said, ‘Stay with it.’ They were glad to see me getting out of the old rut.

### **“Bowling-Alley Man”**

“But still those Christian people didn’t know I was the bowling-alley man they had been praying for. It was not until the next meeting night that I told them. I was still so happy, and we all rejoiced when they learned I was the man – and I knew then why I had been under such conviction. A few days later I helped make the seats for the new mission hall and had the wonderful privilege of testifying in the same building where I had been drinking and reveling in sin.

“I had committed crimes against the government that would have put me behind the

bars for years; but I confessed them out after God saved me. I never again had a desire for the old life. The temper is gone, the drinking and carousing. I know I have the old-time religion. I have had years to prove it.

### **Called to Ministry**

“Later on God called me into the ministry, and I went back to the old country church where I had gone and had written in the Bible and left it there for the Christians to find. I saw the day when I stood in that same pulpit and saw the same old Bible there, with the erasure marks on the pages; and I could stand there and preach the Gospel and tell them what God had done in my life. I stood there and looked at the old crowd, and I asked them if they would forgive me for the way I had lived in that community. God gave us a marvelous revival, and I saw many of my old friends and schoolmates really born again.

“I went to the dance halls where I had staggered in and out for years; we cleaned them up, and God let us hold meetings in those places, and we would see souls pray through to salvation. For more than thirty years I have had the privilege of telling the wonderful story of God’s power to save.” – C. W. F.