

# HeartCry

## Charo's Testimony

*On the 24th of September of this year, my wife Charo became a child of God. I am sure that the news is a shock to many of you who know her. She professed Christ at a young age, graduated from Bible College, and served as a missionary in Peru for nearly ten years. In spite of Charo's impeccable "Christian resume", she began to see that something was wrong. The Spirit of God began to work in her life and she saw her great need of conversion. The following is her testimony in her own words. An audio version may also be heard or downloaded from our website: [www.heartcrymissionary.com](http://www.heartcrymissionary.com).*

When I was fourteen years old, my parents enrolled my sisters and me in a Baptist school led by American missionaries in Lima, Peru. Their motivation had nothing to do with religion. The classes were given in English and my parents thought it would be beneficial for us to learn another language.

My parents were not particularly interested in anything "Christian". The only reason we attended the Catholic Church even sporadically (i.e. Christmas and Easter) was to please my grandparents who were practicing Catholics. The fact that our new school was "Evangelical" bothered my grandparents terribly, but my parents thought that a little bit of religion would not be harmful regardless of what the religion was!

Before attending the Baptist school, I had very little knowledge of religion. My mother had been affiliated with the Jehovah Witnesses for a short time. I remember a lady who came to our home once a week to study the Bible with my mother. Another lady would always come with her to teach me Bible stories. Any knowledge of Bible stories that I ever had as a child came from these meetings.

In the Baptist school, we memorized entire chapters of the Bible in English and in Spanish, attended chapel once a week, and heard about the Lord on a regular basis. At the end of each chapel service, an invitation would be given, but I did not feel any need to "receive Jesus as my Savior". I thought that since I did not "hate" Jesus, He must be in my heart.

Little by little, most of my friends went forward and the teachers persuaded them to pray with them to be saved. I felt awkward about the whole thing, but one day during the invitation I raised my hand to simply get it over with! Many of my friends and teachers were pressuring me to do it and I did not want to be the odd man out. I prayed with a professor that took me aside after chapel and felt relieved. I was not relieved of my sin, because I had no conviction of sin. I was simply relieved to be safe from hell and in the same group with the rest of my friends.

From that moment on, I was active in church, youth



groups, youth camps, and most of my friends were Christians or missionary kids. I enjoyed all the "Christian" activities and served in the church, as much as possible.

Having grown up in a home where my parents were disciplinarians and taught us right from wrong, I had no problem following the rules and the "do's and don'ts" of the Christian LIFE. I never questioned my salvation because I was just like the other Christian kids around me. I had always been a "good kid" who did not do drugs, alcohol, attend wild parties or have wild friends. I was fine when I compared myself to those around me, but I never compared myself to Christ.

The church I attended was small and there was no such thing as discipleship. The young Christians simply learned what they could from the Sunday services and youth group. We were not taught to study the Scriptures and I never asked anyone questions because I was too embarrassed.

When I was sixteen, I felt that God was calling me to be a missionary. I had read about Mary Slessor, the Scottish missionary to Calabar, Africa and my heart was stirred! I was enamored by a single woman risking life and limb to go to a forsaken place to tell others about God! I read everything I could get my hands on that had to do with missionaries: Hudson Taylor, William Carey, Amy Carmichel, etc, etc. I joined a group of Christians from the Church of the Savior and began to minister to street children. We would feed them, bring them clothing, and tell them about Jesus. I thought that I had found my place in

life and that God wanted me to be a missionary. I have always liked learning languages and I even thought that I would become a translator and use my ability to translate the many good Christian books that are only available to English speaking Christians. Looking back on everything, I now realize that I was driven by the romantic thought of missions. It was all a work of the flesh and nothing more.

When I was seventeen, my family and I moved to Paraguay and I remained strong in my desire to serve God. I attended several Christian camps and helped out as a counselor. I was disciplined by a godly women and grew in my knowledge of the "do's and don'ts" of the Christian life. I was active in church and in my youth group. I now realize that I was motivated to continue on the Christian life by the love of the group I was in. It was a great place to be with good people and good friends.

As my desire to be a missionary grew, so did the turmoil in my home. My parents were antagonistic toward the idea, but I prayed that God would open the doors for me to study at the Word of Life Institute in Argentina. By God's providence, when I was eighteen years old, I was granted a scholarship to a Bible College in Mayfield, Kentucky. I was excited to finally be able to train as a missionary!

When I came to the United States, I had the foolish notion that every citizen was a super-Christian. My wrong thinking came from the fact that most of the godly missionaries I had known in South America came from the United States. Much to my surprise, I soon discovered that attending a Christian College was not what I expected it to be. I was shocked at the way some of the students lived. I was very disappointed and simply looked forward to finishing school and returning to Peru as a missionary.

When I was twenty years old, Paul and I were married and we went back to Peru as missionaries. Things could not have been any better! We were working together in the place I loved, but after a year or so the romanticism of the missionary life began to wear off. I felt out of place, awkward, and ineffective, but I could not put my finger on what was wrong. I thought that it was simply the struggle and toil of missionary life. I thought that I was being immature and needed to grow up.

After a few years, Paul needed a total hip replacement and the doors opened for me to finish college. I thought to myself: "That is it! If I finish my studies I will be a more effective missionary and all will be well." I finished school in the allotted time, but the struggle continued. I saw that I had no ability to minister like the other Christians around me. I saw that deep down in my heart there was little desire for the things of God, no true joy or peace, and no ability to overcome sin. The things that are present in the life of every true Christian, were not present in mine. The only way I can describe my life at that time was complete frustration to fit into the mold of a true Christian...but I was still blind to my true need - conversion! I read my Bible out of duty, but not because I felt a deep need or longing for God's Word. I prayed for others to know Christ, for the work in Peru, and for the needs of

others, but I was unable to commune with God.

I was greatly bothered when I heard other share about their communion with God. I would ask, "Why can't I feel this way?" I would excuse the lack of reality in my life by saying that other people were just emotional and I was simply not that type of person. I had enough excuses to quiet my doubt, and yet I longed to have what other Christians seem to have - a special relationship with God and not just a neat list of do's and don'ts.

After several years on the field in Peru, Paul and I moved to the States. This only added to my frustration. I loved our church and friends in Peru and I did not want to live in the United States. I knew it was God's will for us and I never opposed Paul about it, but he knew it made me sad. As time passed, I withdrew more and more. I hid away in the Heartery office and had as little contact with people as possible. I blamed it all on the fact that I did not want to live in the United States. I thought that things would be different if I was in Peru again. It quieted my mind to think this way, but it was only an excuse.

Paul and others would ask me to minister or teach, but I would always avoid the opportunity. I would even use excuses that sounded very pious such as, "I am just not worthy!" or "I struggle so much, I should not be teaching anyone!"

Little by little, I began to be weary of other people who I knew were godly Christians. They simply made me feel uncomfortable because I knew that if they spent enough time with me, they would be able to see that I was void; that there was something wrong with me! Something I could not put my finger on!

Finally, about three years ago, I began to question my salvation. Doubts would enter into my head whenever I heard Paul preaching on the assurance of salvation from the book of I John. At first, I was able to quickly dismiss any doubt, but in time, the doubts began to overwhelm me. I would sit in the pew and desperately try to "convince God" that I was truly a Christian. I had no peace about eternity, and yet I was not struck with fear as I should have been. I was blind. I was blind to the fact that I had become a critical and angry person who had an excuse for everything that was wrong in my life.

Eventually a small light turned on in my head: WHAT IF I was not really a Christian? What if I had been deceived all of these years? What if I had been trying to fit into a Christian mold and had finally run out of strength or even desire to conform? Why was I struggling so much? A true Christian grows and changes, but I was getting worse. A true Christian can repent of sin and overcome, but even though I hated myself and cried for deliverance, I had no strength or power to overcome! What if I was not really a Christian?

Toward the end of September, Paul was invited to preach at an inner city mission in San Antonio, Texas. As he does in many places, Paul taught on biblical assurance of salvation from the book of I John. I began to do my usual squirming in my seat and wondered why he would not preach something else! Again, the same question came up in my heart. What if I am not a Christian? A Christian would not feel this way! A Christian would not be squirm-



ing on her seat about such things! Once and for all, I had to know. I sat there each night and applied each and every test from I John to my life without excuses. Halfway through the preaching, I knew that I was lost.

The church was small so we were meeting outside under a tent. It was nighttime and on the other side of the street a prostitute was walking up and down the sidewalk. I looked at her and I looked at myself and I knew that before God there was no difference between her and me. Here I was, the missionary's wife, dressed like a godly woman, sitting in church, having served on the field, having taught, counseled, witnessed, worked, given, prayed, and even cried for the work... And yet I was as far from God and as needy as the prostitute across the street.

I wanted to run out the tent screaming. I wanted to be by myself, I wanted to run and hide, but the service was soon over. I was like a zombie. I walked around and spoke with people, but I only wanted to go home. That night I had to ride home with the pastor's wife and all of the kids because the men stayed behind to minister after the service. When we got in the car, she asked me to share with her how I was converted! I wanted to jump out of the car! I knew I was lost that very night, but I shared with her the story of my conversion when I was fourteen.

Even after that night in San Antonio, I still wanted another confirmation that I had really heard from God. I struggled with my pride and the consequences of telling others that I was unconverted: "What a bad testimony it will be before everyone who has known us and the work. People will think that I was deceitful and I will ruin the work."

A few days later, Paul began to share with me about His joy of simply being in the middle of God's will. At that moment, I could not bear the burden any longer. I told him everything that I had in my heart and everything I felt. After I was finished, the only thing he said was: "On the basis of what you have told me, I cannot tell you that you are a Christian." That was exactly what I needed to hear! I needed someone to confirm what I felt in my heart. I needed another confirmation from God. I was not a Christian and for the first time I saw my sin like I had never seen it before. I was truly repentant. I had a desperate need for Christ and the life that only He can give.

That night I sat up until 12:30 AM and prayerfully read through the book of I John. I asked God to show me my life with greater clarity than I had ever seen it before. In one moment, I saw my life as never before. I came under a great conviction of sin and experienced a repentance for sin that I had never known before. Many times before I had "felt bad" and wanted to "do better next time", but I had never experienced true repentance like that night. I cried out to God to save me and change me. I acknowledged that I was unable to live the Christian life because I did not have the life of Christ. As I cried out to God, something wonderful happened - God shed abroad His love in my heart and granted me peace. I was converted by the power of God and given the strong assurance of salvation in my heart.

I shudder with fear as I look back on my life. How easy it is to be deceived and on the road to hell! Morality and religious activity alone, even missionary activity are not

enough to prove the validity of our salvation if there is no recognition of depravity, genuine repentance, faith in Christ, victory over sin, and a sincere desire to know and be known by God. I shudder to think of how many pastors, pastor's wives, and dedicated Christian workers are holding on to false hope and are yet to be converted. My only admonition is that which comes from the Scriptures:

*Test yourselves to see if you are in the faith; examine yourselves! Or do you not recognize this about yourselves, that Jesus Christ is in you -- unless indeed you fail the test?*

*II Corinthians 13:5*

*Therefore, brethren, be all the more diligent to make certain about His calling and choosing you;*

*II Peter 1:10*

A few weeks after my conversion, I came across the following words from Charles Spurgeon's Morning and Evening Daily Readings (November 4). It clearly communicates what I now know to be true:

*"In Thy light shall we see light - Psalm 36:9 - No lips can tell the love of Christ to the heart till Jesus Himself shall speak within. Descriptions all fall flat and tame unless the Holy Ghost fills them with life and power; till our Immanuel reveals Himself within, the soul sees Him not. If you would see the Son, would you gather together the common means of illumination, and seek in that way to behold the orb of day? No, the wise man knoweth that sun must reveal itself, and only by its own blaze can that might lamp be seen. It is so with Christ. "Blessed art thou, Simon Bar-jona," said He to Peter, "For flesh and blood has not revealed this unto thee." Purify flesh and blood by any educational process you may select, elevate mental faculties to the highest degree of intellectual power; yet none of these can reveal Christ. The Spirit of God must come with power, and overshadow the man with His wings, and then in that mystic Holy of Holies the Lord Jesus must display Himself to the sanctified eye, as He does not to the purblind sons of men. Christ must be His own mirror. The great mass of this blear-eyed world can see nothing of the ineffable glories of Immanuel. He stands before them without form or comeliness, a root out of a dry ground, rejected by the vain and despised by the proud. Only where the Spirit has touched the eye with the eye salve, quickened the heart with divine life, and educated the soul to a heavenly taste, only there is He understood. "To you that believe He is precious;" To you He is the Chief Cornerstone, the Rock of your salvation, your all and all; but to others He is "a Stone of stumbling and a Rock of offense." Happy are those to whom our Lord manifests Himself, for His promise to such is that He will make His abode with them. Oh Jesus, our Lord, our heart is open, come in, and go out no more forever. Show Thyself to us now! Favour us with a glimpse of Thine all-conquering charms.*

*Charo Washer*