

The Real St. Patrick

2 Timothy 2:2

Introduction

- “To most of us, Patrick is a mythical being, vaguely associated with a serpent exodus from the Emerald Isle. Other misconceptions are that he was Irish, that he was an emissary of the Pope and that his name was Patrick. All these are false. He was not Irish, he was in his honored grave 175 years before his name was even mentioned in Catholic writings * and his real name was Sucat, which means "warlike" in Modern Welsh.¹ For the sake of simplicity, throughout this message we will refer to him as *Patrick*.” – John Wimbish
 - *In correspondence with the Abbot of Iona, an Irish Catholic, by the name of Cummian, in 634 A.D., spoke of the "Cycle of our Holy Father Patrick."

The Story of Patrick

1. **The Writings:** Much of what has been written by historians has not always been accurate, but there are two documents by Patrick which are recognized by all parties as being genuine: his "Confession" or "Epistle to the Irish" and his epistle to the Christians under the cruel king, Coroticus. Then too, we should mention the *Lorica* or *Hymn of Patrick*, originally written in Latin and known as *The Breastplate*. These authentic writings in an irrefutable way support our convictions concerning the Apostle to the Irish.
 - According to David Bercot in "Let Me Die in Ireland, "our only genuine sources of historical information about Patrick are the two brief writings he has left us: his *Testimony* and his letter of excommunication to the British king, Coroticus."
2. **His Birth:** Patrick, in his own "Confession" tells us that he was a Briton, not an Irishman. He was born in the town of Dumbarton on the River Clyde in the south of Scotland about the year 389 A.D. (Some say 390 AD; others say 373 AD <http://www.theholidayspot.com/patrick/historyofpatrick.htm>.) His father was a Christian deacon and his grandfather a clergyman in the ancient church of Britain, which had never come under the yoke of Rome. (These facts in themselves practically crush the claims of the papacy.)
3. **His Capture:** At sixteen years of age, our hero was captured by a band of Scottish slave-dealing pirates who sold him to the Druid chieftain, Milcho, who reigned in the north of Ireland. For six years Patrick herded the cattle of this ruthless pagan chieftain. In his "Confession" he tells us: "*When I was a youth, I was taken captive before I knew what I should desire or seek, or what I ought to shun.*"
4. **His Salvation:** It was during this time of servitude in the bleak forests of northern Ireland that Patrick turned from his frivolous ways and came into a knowledge of Christ as his own personal Saviour. Of that period he says, "*Frequently in the night I prayed and the love of God and His fear increased more and more in me.*" Possibly it was while a

hidden onlooker of the weird Druid ceremonies that he was inspired of God to become a missionary to these heathen people.

5. **His Escape:** He relates how, after six years, he managed to escape from his master and, after a tortuous journey over sea and land, returned to his people in Britain. It must have been a beautiful homecoming as his mother embraced him once again and his father, in amazement, learned of the lad's experiences. They had long before given him up as dead.
6. **His Call:** Like the great apostle Paul, he received a clear and personal "Macedonian call" from the Lord of harvest to preach the Gospel in the land of his former captivity.
 - Patrick described his call in these words: *"Again, I was in Britain with my parents, who received me as their son, and besought me to promise that, after the many afflictions I had endured, I would never leave them again. And then, truly, in the bosom of the night I saw a man as if coming from Ireland, whose name was Victoricus, with numerous letters, one of which he gave me, and I read the beginning of the epistle, containing the Voice of the Irish.*
 - *"And while I was reading the beginning of the epistle I thought in my mind that I heard the voice of those who were near the wood Focluti, which is near the western sea. And they shouted thus: 'We beseech thee, holy youth, to come and live amongst us.' And I was greatly pained in my heart, and could not read very much more; and thus I was proved. Thank God, that after many years the Lord performed to them according to their entreaty."*
 - From these words it is evident that his call to go as a missionary to Ireland was not from any Pope or representative of the Roman Church. If our hero has been an agent of Rome, surely Popes Sixtus or Leo, who were his contemporaries, would have informed the Roman constituency of the astounding work being performed by Patrick and his co-laborers.
 - Dr. J. Lewis Smith, in his scholarly treatise, *"Patrick of Ireland Not A Romanist,"* says, "We have in hand now 140 letters of Pope Leo the Great and we have not found a line written by him or any other Pope or any other man rejoicing over the wonderful additions to the Roman Church by Patrick and his disciples."²
7. **His Mission:** At forty years of age, the amazing Patrick began his magnificent work on the Emerald Isle. His mission field was wild and primitive. The people who inhabited its primeval forests were animists and they worshiped such things as trees and stones and wells. They believed that spirits dwelt in these idols and they sacrificed their little children on heathen alters to appease the gods and to secure, so they thought, better harvests.

8. **His Challenge:** About a year after his arrival in Ireland, Patrick did something that called much attention to his ministry. The *Encyclopedia Britannica* tells us that he challenged the "royal authority by lighting the Paschal fire on the hill of Slane on the night of Easter Eve. It chanced to be the occasion of a pagan festival at Tara, during which no fire might be kindled until the royal fire had been lit."⁴
- Ah, this should put iron in our blood! Glorious, audacious Patrick challenged all the forces of hell. Not a little flame did he kindle, but a bonfire! All the people were transfixed and King Loigaire was amazed at his daring and said: "If we do not extinguish this flame it will sweep over all Ireland." This prophecy proved true for it seemed that a holy fire fell from the altar of heaven and for years there were such tears of repentance as have seldom been witnessed by the angels of glory.
 - When the flames of the great conflagration on Tara's hill, ignited by Patrick, illumined the countryside, the king was curious to see what kind of mortal this Patrick could be, and he sent for him. The druid priests were infuriated and declared they would destroy the preacher by sorcery if he dared to come.
 - But in the dim light of that Easter morn, in the year 428 A.D., the valiant hero of the Cross and his assistant missionaries marched boldly into the presence of the monarch and told him that Christ was the light of the world and preached Jesus crucified and risen from the dead with such persuasive eloquence that the king was born again by the Spirit of the living God.
 - We are told that Patrick and his company advanced toward the Irish sovereign arrayed in white and carrying crosses and singing the evangelist's hymn in all its majestic cadence:

*"I bind to myself today
The strong power of the invocation of the
Trinity;
The faith of the Trinity in unity;
The Creator of the elements.*

*"I bind to myself today,
The power of the incarnation of Christ
With that of His baptism;
The power of His crucifixion
With that of His burial;
The power of the resurrection
With (THAT OF) the ascension;
The power of His coming
To the sentence of judgment . . .*

*"I bind to myself today,
The power of God to guide me,
The might of God to uphold me,
The wisdom of God to teach me,
The eye of God to watch over me,
The ear of God to hear me,
The Word of God to give me speech,
The hand of God to protect me,
The way of God to prevent me,
The shield of God to shelter me,
The host of God to defend me,
Against the snares of demons
Against the temptations of vices,
Against the lusts of nature,
Against everyone who would injure me
Whether far or near;
Whether few or many.*

*"I have set around me all these powers,
Against every hostile, savage power
Directed against my body and my soul;
Against the incantations of false prophets,
Against the black laws of heathenism,
Against the false laws of heresy,
Against the deceits of idolatry,
Against the spells of women, and smiths, and
Druids.
Against all knowledge that blinds the soul of
man.*

*"Christ protect me today,
Against poison, against burning,
Against drowning, against wound,
That I may receive abundant reward.
Christ with me, Christ before me,
Christ behind me, Christ within me,
Christ beneath me, Christ above me,
Christ at my right hand, Christ at my left,
Christ in the fort (when I am at home),
Christ in the chariot-seat (when I travel),
Christ in the ship (when I sail).*

*Of the Lord is salvation;
Christ is salvation;
With us ever be
Thy salvation, O Lord!*

*"Christ in the heart of every man who thinks of
me,
Christ in the mouth of every man who speaks
to me;
Christ in every eye that sees me,
Christ in every ear that hears me."*⁵

9. **God's blessing:** After the king believed, Patrick won and baptized multiplied thousands of converts and before his thirty-three years of ministry were finished, all Ireland was evangelized. Innumerable churches dotted its hills and valleys and from their ranks sent forth zealous missionaries to proclaim the message of redemption with incomparable passion to the pagan tribes of Scotland, England, Germany and Gaul.
- In his second lecture on Ireland, John L. Stoddard states: "During the sixth, seventh and eighth centuries, especially, this farthest boundary of the Continent held aloft and kept aflame the torch of Christian faith, and glittered like a star upon the dark horizon of the western world."⁶
 - Even so cautious and reliable a historian as Green, in his *"Short History of the English Bible,"* says: "For a time it seemed as if the course of the world's history was to be changed; as if that older Celtic race which the Roman and German had swept before them had turned to the moral conquest of their conquerors; *as if Celtic and not Latin Christianity was to mould the destinies of the Church of the West.*"⁷
 - This was the beginning of the golden age of Ireland. It is forever true that when the Holy Word of God is opened and preached to the people, the chains of illiteracy and vice are broken.
 - **The real Patrick was a Bible-reading, Bible-believing, Bible-preaching missionary and it was the unadulterated Gospel of the Son of God that lifted the Irish out of the darkness of paganism into the glorious light of the Truth.**
 - Hands that once grasped the sword were now folded reverently in prayer. The heathen stone idols, known as *Cromlechs*, that once marked their graves gave way to the cross of Jesus. Druid paganism was crushed and the "buffer state of Europe" became known as the "Isle of Saints."

- o Odriscol, who, incidentally, was an Irish Catholic, in his work entitled, "*Views of Ireland*," says: "The Christian church of that country, as founded by St. Patrick and his predecessors, existed for many ages, free and unshackled. For 700 years this church maintained its independence. It had no connection with England and differed on points of importance with Rome."⁸
- o It was not until the year 1172 A.D., at the Council of Cashel, that Henry II of England and the Pope prevailed over this people and another great victory was won for the Roman Catholic hierarchy. But from the days of Patrick to the fateful Council of Cashel, many glorious victories were won for the cause of Christ by the Irish Christians.

Things We Can Learn from the Life of Patrick

1. We are all sinners. (Romans 3:10)
 - a. "*I, Patrick, a sinner*" -- that is the way the "Patron Saint of Ireland" begins his own "Confession." He starts his letter to Coroticus in the same striking manner.
 - b. He ended his letter with: *I pray those who believe and fear God, whosoever deigns to look at or receive this writing which Patrick, a sinner, unlearned, has composed in Ireland, that no one should ever say that it was my ignorance if I did or showed forth anything however small according to God's good pleasure; but let this be your conclusion and let it so be thought, that--as is the perfect truth--it was the gift of God. This is my confession before I die.*
 - c. The late Dr. Ironside reminds us, "Whatever others may have thought of him or may think of him today, Patrick knew himself as a sinner and found salvation where only sinners find it, in the finished work of the Lord Jesus Christ."⁹
 - d. This is the way Patrick speaks: *"I knew not the true God . . . The Lord opened the understanding of my unbelief . . . I was not worthy . . . Love of God and fear of Him increased more and more . . . By the help of God so it came to pass . . . Because of His indwelling Spirit who hath worked in me until this day . . . Let who will laugh and insult . . . Though I be rude in all things . . . I baptize so many thousands of men . . . the Lord ordained clergy everywhere by means of my mediocrity . . . The Lord is mighty to grant to me afterward to be myself spent for your souls."*
2. We need to believe in Jesus Christ as His personal Saviour. (Acts 16:31)
 - a. *And there [in Ireland] the Lord opened the sense of my unbelief that I might at last remember my sins and be converted with all my heart to the Lord my God, who had*

regard for my abjection, and mercy on my youth and ignorance, and watched over me before I knew Him, and before I was able to distinguish between good and evil, and guarded me, and comforted me as would a father his son. Hence I cannot be silent—nor, indeed, is it expedient—about the great benefits and the great grace which the Lord has deigned to bestow upon me in the land of my captivity; for this we can give to God in return after having been chastened by Him, to exalt and praise His wonders before every nation that is anywhere under the heaven.

- b. Whence I, once rustic, exiled, unlearned, who does not know how to provide for the future, this at least I know most certainly that **before I was humiliated I was like a stone Lying in the deep mire; and He that is mighty came and in His mercy lifted me up, and raised me aloft, and placed me on the top of the wall.** And therefore I ought to cry out aloud and so also render something to the Lord for His great benefits here and in eternity--benefits which the mind of men is unable to appraise.
3. God can use us despite our failures and limitations.
 - a. *As a youth, nay, almost as a boy not able to speak, I was taken captive, before I knew what to pursue and what to avoid. Hence to-day I blush and fear exceedingly to reveal my lack of education; for I am unable to tell my story to those versed in the art of concise writing--in such a way, I mean, as my spirit and mind long to do, and so that the sense of my words expresses what I feel But if indeed it had been given to me as it was given to others, then I would not be silent because of my desire of thanksgiving; and if perhaps some people think me arrogant for doing so in spite of my lack of knowledge and my slow tongue, it is, after all, written: The stammering tongues shall quickly learn to speak peace.*
 - b. *In the light, therefore, of our faith in the Trinity I must make this choice, regardless of danger I must make known the gift of God and everlasting consolation, without fear and frankly I must spread everywhere the name of God so that after my decease I may leave a bequest to my brethren and sons whom **I have baptised in the Lord--so many thousands of people.** And I was not worthy, nor was I such that the Lord should grant this to His servant; that after my misfortunes and so great difficulties, after my captivity, after the lapse of so many years, He should give me so great a grace in behalf of that nation--a thing which once, in my youth, I never expected nor thought of.*
4. Baptism is a very important step of obedience after salvation. (Acts 2:42)

- a. *When I baptised so many thousands of people, did I perhaps expect from any of them as much as half a scruple?*
 - b. *Hence it was most necessary to spread our nets so that a great multitude and throng might be caught for God, and that there be clerics everywhere to baptise and exhort a people in need and want, as the Lord in the Gospel states, exhorts and teaches, saying: Going therefore now, teach ye all nations, baptising them in the name of the Father, and the Son, and the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you: and behold I am with you all days even to the consummation of the world.*
5. Prayer ought to be an important part of our life. (1Th 5:17 Pray without ceasing.)
 - a. *But after I came to Ireland--every day I had to tend sheep, and many times a day I prayed--the love of God and His fear came to me more and more, and my faith was strengthened. And my spirit was moved so that in a single day I would say as many as a hundred prayers, and almost as many in the night, and this even when I was staying in the woods and on the mountains; and I used to get up for prayer before daylight, through snow, through frost, through rain, and I felt no harm, and there was no sloth in me--as I now see, because the spirit within me was then fervent.*
6. We should have a passion to reach the lost. (Mark 16:15)
 - a. *For I am very much God's debtor, who gave me such grace that many people were reborn in God through me and afterwards confirmed, and that clerics were ordained for them everywhere, for a people just coming to the faith, whom the Lord took from the utmost parts of the earth, as He once had promised through His prophets: To Thee the gentiles shall come from the ends of the earth and shall say: 'How false are the idols that our fathers got for themselves, and there is no profit in them'; and again: 'I have set Thee as a light among the gentiles, that Thou mayest be for salvation unto the utmost part of the earth.'*
 - b. *I must make known the gift of God and everlasting consolation, without fear and frankly I must spread everywhere the name of God so that after my decease I may leave a bequest to my brethren and sons whom **I have baptised in the Lord--so many thousands of people.***
 - c. *I testify in truth and in joy of heart before God and His holy angels that I never had any reason except the Gospel and its promises why I should ever return to the people from whom once before I barely escaped.*
7. We should endure persecution and hardship. (2Ti 3:12 Yea, and all that will live godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecution.)

- a. *Among others, a blessed Irishwoman of noble birth, beautiful, full-grown, whom I had baptised, came to us after some days for a particular reason: she told us that she had received a message from a messenger of God, and he admonished her to be a virgin of Christ and draw near to God. Thanks be to God, on the sixth day after this she most laudably and eagerly chose what all virgins of Christ do. Not that their fathers agree with them: no--they often ever suffer persecution and undeserved reproaches from their parents; and yet their number is ever increasing.*
- b. *And let those who will, laugh and scorn--I shall not be silent; nor shall I hide the signs and wonders which the Lord has shown me many years before they came to pass,*
- c. *Even so they laid hands on me and my companions, and on that day they eagerly wished to kill me; but my time had not yet come. And everything they found with us they took away, and me they put in irons;*

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