

On the Other Side...



A NEAR DEATH EXPERIENCE!

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When I finished making my rounds on my ship, I took off my uniform jacket and put it on the sofa to use as a pillow. Then I made myself comfortable and fell asleep right away. When I woke up, the radio room guy was sitting with his knees on the upper parts of my arms holding a firm stranglehold around my neck. "Pettersen, I am going to kill you, I am going to kill you!" he said while he tightened his grip.

I tried to fight it, but I was not able to move. I struggled to breathe, but I could not do it. He was still holding the same tight grip around my neck. I started to hear a beeping sound in my head, a sound that soon became a horrific noise, while at the same time I could feel an enormous pain in my head.

Suddenly, it was as if my consciousness moved from my head and down to my stomach region. It was as if I was spinning around in my own stomach, with my body and soul, for a few seconds before I was pulled into a tunnel with walls that looked like they were made of wind.

The tunnel was relatively dark, and I was pulled upwards in it really quickly. The journey lasted a few seconds, and then I saw a blinding light approaching me with great speed.

I was soon out of the tunnel, and I landed softly and comfortably on my knees. I can't believe it, I thought. I am dead, but I am still alive.

Everything was quiet around me. I am 'dead', and now I am right outside of heaven, I thought. Wow, so it was true after all. There is life after death. In my vision, suddenly, an old man with white hair appeared where the shining path ended. He really looked like an old man with thick white hair and a white beard. In his arms he was carrying a great book, and it was opened. The man was tall, despite his apparent old age.

I was convinced. I had died and come before the judgment of God, and now I was going to die or go to hell. I could not say one word.



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Now, all I could see was the bright light that was shining from his face. He was carrying the book opened in his hands, while he was getting closer all the time. I heard a voice over the sky saying: "Nils Emil Pettersesn, missionary from Sandtorg". (Sandtorg is the old name of the place where I was born and where I grew up. I had never been a missionary. All I had done was being present a couple of times in Sunday School as a child.) The God-figure appeared to be looking for my name in the great book. Then he closed the book, put it under his arm and came running towards me.

"There you are. Have you come already?" He called out to me, rejoicing. It appeared He had found my name in the book, and He came running towards me to welcome me. Now I could see that this had to be the One I had heard about in Sunday School. It was JESUS!

There was no doubt in my mind. I had been strangled to death, and now I had been rescued from the eternal judgment and condemnation. Jesus had met me, and we were walking towards Heaven – towards Paradise.

"You have come far too soon; you have to go back because you have a lot of unfinished work to do," He told me.

Jesus looked at me, and his eyes were mild and He was smiling. Now it was as if an invisible force grabbed me, lifted me from the ground and pulled me backwards, towards the tunnel, and even through the tunnel that I had come through.

Back through the tunnel, I had a sinking feeling in my stomach, and I sat up on the sofa in one quick movement. I heard the door in the crew salon slam, and then I heard steps going towards the afterdeck.

Many questions were going through my mind.

Should I report this fellow sailor and what happened to the commanding officer? He couldn't be in his right mind doing something like that. Would the commanding officer believe me? What about death and the things I

had experienced there – should I talk to a minister about those things? Would he believe me? This was simply too much. I needed something to distract me. I had a lot to drink out on town that night, and I don't remember much of it.

But everything soon came back to me. I had been on the other side. There is life after death.

Days turned into weeks, weeks turned into months. I knew that there was a life after death, and that Jesus was the person who is the most alive in the universe, but I didn't have the guts to do anything about what I knew and believed. I didn't know any Christians that I could talk to, and I didn't dare to go to church. I was a coward.

In the spring of 1984 I drove off the road in my speeding car not far from where I lived. The car had hit a big hole in the asphalt with the front right wheel, and then the wheel and the front suspension was crushed. The accident happened just before the road took a left turn.

The car twirled around on the road, and I called out, "JESUS" with all my strength. In the same second the car was surrounded by a white cloud, and I could see an angel through the windshield. I had seen an angel, and there was no doubt in my mind that when I called the name of JESUS, the rescue had come to me that same second.

Despite my near death experiences, I was not sure if God would accept me should I die. I had not exactly lived as a Christian should live, and in my heart it felt like God was still far away.

I was having dreams in the night where I would feel like I was falling through my bed and down into the darkness together with the lost souls, where snakes and evil spirits tried to strangle me. Now I could see up through the roof, and I saw a hand from heaven that cut through the clouds and pointed at me. A voice said: "Nils, you have to choose heaven or hell."

I needed an answer directly from God. On Tuesday, January 6, 1987, I knew it. Today I HAD to get an answer. Tomorrow might be too late. I could not handle this any longer. I stopped at a kiosk to buy the local newspaper, and there it said that an evangelical church had a meeting... Bible and prayer at 7 pm. I drove to the church.

I could hear voices from inside the main hall. At that point it was as if the devil started to speak to me: "Are you stupid, Nils? Are you going to

become a Christian?"

I walked quietly back out the church door and walked towards the town center where the pub was. Then it was as if God's voice came to me on the inside and said, "You have never been as close to God's kingdom as you are at this point, and if you walk away now, your heart will become hard, and you will not be able to come back later."

I could feel a battle going on inside of me. I did want to become a Christian. I clenched my fists and decided to go back into the church. It was now or never.

The people who were there looked quite normal except from the fact that they were in a church. I could feel a sense of warmth in the room that touched my heart. I realized that these people had a sincere faith, and that God was there. The reason why I had come there was to meet God.

I released a sigh of relief when I walked out of there. Later that night, when I was at home, I started to think about the Christians that I had met in the evangelical church. They looked happy and content. I decided that I wanted to become like them.

I went down on my knees at the side of my bed and prayed, "God forgive my sin." Nothing happened. I tried to cry, but not one single tear came. My heart felt hard. Then it was as if I heard a voice speaking clearly from inside of me, "You have to pray to the name of Jesus, the same name the Christians prayed to."

I thought about what I had heard as I laid down on the bed. But how was I supposed to pray? I hadn't prayed to Jesus before. Then I heard the same clear voice saying, "And from the days of John the Baptist until now the kingdom of heaven suffers violence, and the violent take it by force." I thought about the words I had heard again, and I understood that I had to want to become a Christian with all of my heart, no matter what the cost.

So right there, from my bed, I stretched my hands up towards the ceiling and called out with all my strength: "JESUS, HELP ME. I DON'T WANT TO GO TO HELL; I WANT TO GO TO HEAVEN. JESUS, HELP ME!"

I was filled with an enormous love and peace in my heart. Tears came streaming from my eyes. Now I could hear His loving voice inside of me. I cried and thanked Jesus for saving me. Together, with my near-death experience, it was brought up to my remembrance that at the age of 8



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years old I had given God my promise to be a missionary if He helped me in a specific moment that time. He did! As I was a newborn Christian, I said to Jesus, "If you still have use for me I say yes to be a missionary for You."

Then just a few seconds later I was baptized in the Holy Spirit. A blowing wind came towards my house where I was living and it seemed to increase in power. I thought my house was going to blow away. Thank God I was saved in the last minute. It was just like the wind came into my bedroom and was blowing towards me and my bed. When it hit my head it was just like a soft warm little breeze and I felt a heat going down towards my body. When I came to myself, I heard somebody singing and speaking in a foreign language in my room, but I did not understand that it was actually me, until I was covering my mouth. Then the sound stopped. It was me talking and singing in other tongues. This is a supernatural power that Christians need in order to serve God. You don't have to go to the "other side" to have your life transformed! ■

"With permission from the author, part of this article is a summary of the booklet, "On the Other Side..." produced in company with Agape Folag AS."