

# **John Harvey's Testimony**

## **(Born 1654, Died at approximately age 11)**

John Harvey was born in London, in the year 1654. His father was a Dutch merchant. He was piously educated by his mother, and soon began to hear divine things with delight. The first thing observable in him was, that when he was two years and eight months old, he could speak as well as other children do usually at five years of age. His parents thinking that he was then too young to send to school, let him have his liberty to play about their yard. But instead of playing, he found out a school of his own accord near home. He went to the school-mistress, and entreated her to teach him to read. So he went some time to school without the knowledge of his parents, and made a very good progress in his learning, and was able to read distinctly, before most children knew their letters.

He was wont to ask many serious and weighty questions about matters which concerned his soul and eternity. His mother being greatly troubled upon the death of one of his uncles, this child came to his mother, and said, "Mother, though my uncle is dead, does not the scripture say he must rise again? Yes, and I must die, and so must everybody, and it will not be long before Christ will come to judge the world, and then we shall see one another again. I pray mother do not weep so much." He was not then quite five years old. This conversation turned her sorrow for her brother into admiration and she was made to sit silently and quietly under that trying providence.

After this his parents moved to Aberdeen, they placed their child under a school-master there. His custom was on the Lord's Day in the morning, to examine his scholars, concerning the sermons they had heard on the previous Lord's Day. He added some other questions, which might try the understanding and knowledge of his scholars. The question that was once proposed to his class was whether Christ had a mother? None of the scholars could answer it, till it came to John Harvey, who being asked, whether Christ had a mother? He answered, no. As he was God, he could not have a mother; but as he was man he had. This was before he was six years old.

One day, when he saw one of his close relatives come into his father's house drunk, he went to him, and wept over him. He besought him that he would not so offend God, and hazard his soul. He was a conscientious observer of the Lord's Day. He spent all the time either in secret prayer, reading the scriptures and good books, learning his catechism, or hearing the Word of God. He was not only careful in the performance of these duties himself, but was ready to put all that he knew upon a strict observation of the Lord's Day. He was very humble and modest, and hated anything more than necessities either in clothes or diet.

When he perceived either his brother or sister proud of their new clothes, he would reprove their folly. When his reproof was ignored, he would bewail their vanity. Once he had a new suit brought from the tailor's. When he looked

it over, he found some ribbons on the knees and this grieved him. He asked his mother, "Would those things would keep him warm?" No, child, said his mother. "Why then, " said he, "do you allow them to be put there? You are mistaken if you think such things please me. I doubt, some that are better than us, may need the money that this cost you, to buy bread." At leisure times he was talking to his school fellows about the things of God, and the necessity of a holy life. That text he much spoke on to them was, (Matthew 3:10, Luke 3:9) "The axe is laid to the root of the tree, and every tree that bringeth not forth good fruit, is hewn down and cast into the fire."

After this his parents moved not far from London, where he continued till the year 1665. He was then sent to the Latin school, where he soon made a very considerable progress, and was greatly beloved of his teacher. The school was his beloved place, and learning his recreation. He had a word to say to everyone that he conversed with, to put them in mind of the worth of Christ and their souls and their nearness to eternity. So much so did he do this that people took enjoyed his company.

At about the age of ten, he bewailed the miserable condition of mankind in general and that they were utterly estranged from God. "Though they called him Father, " he said, "yet they were his children by creation, and not by any likeness they had to God, or any interest in him." Thus he continued walking in the ways of God, in reading, praying, hearing the Word of God, and spiritual discourse. He discovered by this his serious thoughts of eternity which seemed to swallow up all other thoughts. He lived in a constant preparation for it, and looked more like one that was ripe for glory than an inhabitant of this lower world.

When he was about eleven years and three quarters old, his mother's house was visited with the plague. His eldest sister was the first that was visited with this distemper. When they were praying for her, he would sob and weep bitterly. As soon as he perceived his sister was dead, he said, "The will of the Lord be done; blessed be the Lord! Dear mother, you must do as David did. After the child was dead he went and refreshed himself, and quietly submitted to the will of God." The rest of the family was well for some days and he spent the time preparing for death. Meantime he wrote several meditations upon various subjects, particularly upon the excellency of Christ. He was never more happy then when he was more employed in the service of God.

After fourteen days, he was taken sick. He seemed very cheerful though his pains were great. His mother, looking upon his brother, shook her head. At this he asked if his brother was marked? She answered, "Yea, child." He asked again, whether he was marked? She answered nothing. "Well, " says he, "I know I shall be marked. I pray let me have Mr. Baxter's book, that I may read a little more of eternity before I go into it." His mother told him, he was not able to read. He said, "Then pray by me and for me." His mother asked him, whether he was willing to die and leave her? He answered, "Yes, I am willing to leave you and go to my heavenly Father." She answered, "Child, if you have but an assurance of God's love, I should not be so much troubled."

He answered, "I am assured that my sins are forgiven, and that I shall go to heaven. For, " said he, "here stood an angel by me, that told me I should quickly be in glory." At this, his mother burst forth into tears. "O mother, " said he, "did you but know what joy I feel, you would not weep, but rejoice. I tell you I am so full of comfort, that I cannot tell you how I am. O mother, I shall presently have my head in my Father's bosom. I shall be there where the four and twenty elders cast down their crowns and sing hallelujah, glory, and praise, to him that sits upon the throne, and to the Lamb for ever!"

After this his speech began to fail him, but his soul was still taken up with glory. Nothing now grieved him but the sorrow that he saw his mother to be in for his death. To distract her a little, he asked, "What she had for supper?" But presently, in a kind of rapture, he cried out, "O what a sweet supper have I making ready for me in glory!" But seeing all this did but increase his mother's grief, he asked her, "What she meant, thus to offend God? Know you not that it is the hand of the Almighty? Humble yourself under the mighty hand of God.' Lay yourself in the dust, and kiss the rod in token of your submission to the will of God." Upon which, raising himself a little, he gave a lowly bow, and spoke no more! But went to rest in the bosom of Jesus.