

HOT PURSUIT

CHRISTIAN MEMOIR OF A
FUGITIVE ONLY GOD
COULD CATCH



KEN BURTON

Hot Pursuit

The Ken Burton Story

My hair was very long toward the end of the 1960's. I wore an earring and a ring in my nose. I carried a crowbar and a meat cleaver, but later found a gun to be more practical. I used all kinds of drugs including LSD, speed, psilocybin, marijuana, hashish and alcohol. I rode around with a motorcycle club and wore the same dirty clothes month after month

I became involved in all kinds of crime. One day I might be making arrangements for a prostitute to turn a trick so I could have my cut of the money. The next day I might be planning to steal something or selling something that was stolen or selling drugs. It really didn't matter much to me what it was as long as I profited by it. I would hurt anyone that got in my way, even my own family. In fact I had grown so cold in my heart and so far from God that it would have been very easy to take someone's life. The truth is I planned on it on more than one occasion. However I had already been behind bars too many times. Not being certain I would get away with ending anybody's life, (without ending up in prison) it prevented me from carrying out the evil that was in my heart

Once when I was living in Rockford, Illinois and needed to settle a score with a man in Chicago I took three friends and drove south. When I found the neighborhood I wanted it seemed the streets were totally empty. We pulled into a gas station to get better directions and realized it was closed like everything else. We had decided to use the phone in front of the station when it seemed as if every cop in Chicago pulled into the station at the same time. They were in no mood for playing games as they tore our car apart. They searched me at least three times. They found my gun of course, but this seemed like such overkill that I couldn't understand it. If we had been listening to the radio we might have heard there was a race riot in progress.

Well, well, can you just imagine that? The Chicago police had caught four armed white boys who had come to their fair city for a short visit during a race riot. There was no point in even trying to talk to them. We were in a police wagon with an overweight cop and a shotgun (he had the shotgun) before we realized what was going on anyway. I seriously doubt Cook County jail has ever been more overcrowded. It took them forever to process that many prisoners. I was beginning to think we would never be fed. I believe it must have been when they were doing the paper work that Chicago's finest began to realize they had been a little over zealous. (Don't misunderstand, I'm not trying to be critical as I probably would have done the same in their position.)

We had after all broken no laws by attempting to use a public pay telephone. They had no legal right to search us or our car. What this all boiled down to is this. If the police turn up a gun during an "Illegal search and seizure" it is a simple matter to have the evidence suppressed. No weapon, no charges, Simple as that.

As it dawned on someone that we would eventually walk away from these charges a decision must have been made "to teach us a lesson". They used holding cells where prisoners can be held temporarily while processing the paper work or whatever. These cells might have been made for 30 or 40 prisoners but now were bursting with 75 or more. During race riots at least, the cells would be segregated. The Chicago police department placed the four of us in an all-black cell (No, I'm not trying to say it was painted black).

Once when I was in custody, I was taken to a lineup with a few other prisoners. We were told to repeat some phrases and it soon become obvious they were looking for a rapist. To my horror I heard a woman say "That's him". I hadn't been in that city long enough to rape anybody if I had wanted to. When I opened my mouth, a cop asked me if I would like to have my head rammed through a nearby locker.

This seemed to be an excellent time to exercise some discretion so I declined his offer and closed my normally loud mouth. I waited till opportunity presented itself and inquired as to the time of the alleged rape. When an officer informed me I could hardly believe my ears. I had been lost earlier in the day and had stopped (of all places to ask directions) at a police station. My visit to that station had coincided precisely with the time of the rape. To top it all off, I'm normally poor at remembering names, but this desk Sergeant's name I remembered. His name was O'Malley. A perfect stereotype name for a cop. Had it been anything different I doubt very much I would have ever remembered it.

I told the officer I had been at a station asking directions at the time in question and told him the desk Sergeant's name. He turned out to be a really decent guy and went to check my story instead of laughing in my face, which he could have easily done. Let's face it, the problem was mine not his! He left and made some phone calls to confirm my story.

Upon his return the officer put an end to the whole rape business. Thank God for that officer. It is an experience such as this that so graphically demonstrates how easy it is to land in prison.

It was amazing that with all the trouble I had gotten into, and the friends I keep, that my record was almost clean! I had one "unlawful use of weapons" and one "minor in possession" from a while back. The second charge came one day when I was 19 or 20 years old. I was driving with a friend named Jesse Witt. We each had a beer in our hand when we were pulled over by the police. I didn't think much of it, because the car was clean and there was no warrants for either of us. Jesse however had an intense hatred of the law. He had served a few years in Ionia (A Maximum Correctional Facility in Michigan) and swore he was not going back.

Jesse was normally very quiet and laid back, but could be fearless at times. Once when one of the clubs from Detroit came to my place to visit, (I think they wanted

to know more about us) Jesse went back with them alone to party. I think they had left before I even knew what was going on. A few day later he showed up and said they had given him an impressive tour. It was a crazy thing to do but Jesse wasn't good at backing down. I'm sure the police would have let us go with our can of beer, but normally "very quiet and laid back" Jesse couldn't keep his hatred inside, so I ended up with a "minor in possession" on my nearly clean record. I had helped him acquire a pistol (I think it was a 38) that he used in a shootout with the police. He was killed in that gunfight. He was a good friend that I trusted and still think of him often

One day I was sharing drugs with some friends of mine from the bike club. We were passing a marijuana pipe around when there was a knock at the door. I went to the door to find my porch filled with cops and my house surrounded. I gave a warning and delayed opening the door as long as I could. When I opened it, a cop informed me he had a warrant for Zip, (the name I was known by). He asked if I was Zip. Although they didn't know my proper name, I was too well known as Zip to lie about it. If they had a warrant, they must have had someone who could identify me. All past attempts to prosecute me for anything worth talking about had failed. I wasn't too worried about the cops and their warrant. I told them I was Zip and after a search of my place turned up nothing useful to them, we went downtown.

When I found out what they had on me, I thought it was a joke. That was a failure on my part to recognize how determined the state of Michigan had become in their efforts to remove me from society.

Remember this was toward the end of the 1960's when the whole world seemed to be smoking marijuana. In Ann Arbor, A collage town about fifty miles south of Flint, they had got to the place where they were writing tickets for possession of small amounts. For a few years, it seemed like everybody had turned to drugs. I had sold a nickel bag to some guy who had been busted for something, and was ready to do anything to keep out of prison.

The Governor of the state of Michigan had declared war on the bike clubs. This may have had something to do with it, I don't know.

The police informed me I had sold a teaspoon of marijuana to their guy, and he would testify against me. Apparently I had made a second sale they also knew about. The plan was to get me with one of the two sales. It seemed like such a waste of their time considering all the things I was mixed up in. In no time, I made bond and was back on the street.

This was a time in my life totally given to drugs. I was being destroyed by them. During this time I was living in an old and large house in a rough part of town. I had rented a second house nearby where I could go to hide or sleep. My main house had a third floor that was all one big room. I fixed up the third floor to hold my drug parties in. I had spent weeks turning it into a place people would never forget. It was filled with optical illusions and things to confound the mind at the best of times. I have seen people leave that were not on drugs because of all the optical illusions confusing their mind. There was an unending parade of people at the door hoping to gain access to the trip room. No one would think of visiting without bring a gift of drugs.

It was about a year before my trial date on that nickel bag came due. I was so high all the time that I didn't think a lot about it. My lawyer said they were charging me with something unusual. Law enforcement agencies were successful in taking down John Sinclair (Also born in Flint, Michigan) by viewing marijuana as a narcotic. In July 1969 Sinclair was sentenced to prison for 9 ½ to 10 years for possession of two marijuana cigarettes. Two-and-a-half years of legal and political battles culminated at Chrysler Arena in Ann Arbor on December 10, 1971, when 15,000 people attended the Free John Now Rally headlined by John Lennon and Yoko Ono. Just three days later, the Michigan Supreme Court, on its own motion, ordered Sinclair released and later overturned his conviction, upholding his contention that Michigan's marijuana statutes were unconstitutional and void.

I was being charged with "Sale of an illegal narcotic". John's possession charge got him ten years. My charge was "sales" which carried a 20 year minimum and a possibility of life if convicted. Yes, I said the charges carried a twenty to life sentence if convicted of selling a teaspoon of marijuana. As I said, they had me on a second sale. If I found a way to beat the first charge, they were going to prosecute me on the second one. I was looking at as much as two life sentences if they pushed it. I believe this law was intended for opium, heroin, or cocaine, etc. but not marijuana as it is not considered a narcotic.

I was under the influence of too many drugs to fully appreciate what the state of Michigan was trying to do to me. On the first day of my trial, I was still thinking I was invincible. As the proceedings began and I heard the evidence being presented against me, my invincibility began to dissipate. The judge asked me if I understood the seriousness of the charges against me. He said I was facing twenty years to life if convicted. He also made note of a second charge pending. It was about then I began to see the case was going to be of a more serious nature than I had anticipated. I was feeling more than a bit uncomfortable while the jury selection was taking place.

Obviously, they wanted me off their streets, so I began to formulate my own plan to accomplish this. As the day wore on, the drugs wore off. What seemed like many hours later the judge said "It's getting late in the day and I'm going to adjourn court till nine A.M. tomorrow morning". He called me to the bench and said I was still on bond and therefore free to go till nine A.M. the following day. Unlike John Sinclair, I had no plans to sit in prison and wait for laws to change, with or without my help.

I went home and made my plans to leave town. I stopped across the street at the pool hall to say good bye to Samson, who ran the place. When I told him I was going he emptied the pool tables and pinball machines and give me all the cash he could scrap up. He hugged my neck and told me to be careful.

It was late evening when Gypsy Jack pulled up in his hearse. Jack was a living legend among bikers. He wore a ring in his nose before I did. (Something unheard of back then) He was once featured on a TV show called "Real People". I told Jack I was leaving and he asked me if I wanted to climb into the back of his hearse with his old lady. (Not his wife, Peggy) I declined and we said our goodbyes.

I decided to go to Canada because the place was full of American draft dodger at the time. I hoped the Canadians would assume I was just another draft dodger hiding out from the Vietnam conflict. I got together a sleeping bag and what little cash I could find on such short notice. About midnight I was saying goodbyes and about ready to go when the neighborhood police showed up. They were young guys and new on that beat. They had heard about the trip room and asked if I would show it to them. They may have been told to keep an eye on me that night. We visited for a while and after they left, I did likewise.

A friend and my old lady drove me into Canada via the Detroit, Windsor border. We thought with more traffic at the Windsor border it would be easier to cross than at the Sarnia crossing. To my dismay I found Windsor too small to hide in. When my friend drove me to Chatham, the next city, it proved to be almost as small. They needed to hurry home before I was discovered missing. Chatham would have to do, because we were running out of time. I told my old lady goodbye knowing I might not ever see her, or our son again.

They continued the trail without me and the jury found me guilty. The judge sentenced me to 25 to 40 years in prison. He then issued a Federal warrant for "flight to avoid prosecution." For the next 10 years I was a fugitive with the police hot on my trail. I had a number of narrow escapes.

I was working at a record store in Toronto, Ontario one day when I had volunteered to run an errand to the office supply store across the street. On my

return trip I noticed a police cruiser pass on the opposite side of the street. Always alert for signs of trouble, I tensed up but continued walking. He thought he recognized me and made a U-turn on that busy street.

Leaping out of his car he confronted me there on the sidewalk as I was about to enter the record store. The odds didn't seem to be too bad against me since we were on Yonge Street near the corner of Bloor. That's one of the busiest places in the city. The sidewalks were full of people and the street was jammed with cars. I knew the subway was very close by and it was after all only one cop. He seemed a little unsure of himself and I thought I could bluff my way out of this.

As we sat in his car he started to tell me I was wanted. He had not arrested or handcuffed me so I knew he wasn't sure who I was. I told him he was wrong as he stared at me trying to remember. Soon he started to tell me how I had changed my appearance and he was right. I keep telling him he was mistaken and that I worked at the record store we were parked in front of.

I was beginning to feel a bit uncomfortable when he waved at another cruiser that happened to drive by. When that officer came up to his window he asked him if he could identify me. After a long hard look he said no. I kept on lying and soon had them convinced they had made a mistake. They decided to release me. However, one of them said he'd return to the record store where I was working and he'd show me a mug shot of my twin brother! Of course, I didn't wait for him to return with that photo.

On another occasion when I was living in a boarding house, I heard someone speaking in the hall way. Being on the second floor, I opened my door slowly and looked down the stairway to see who it was. The police had entered the building and were speaking to my landlord. I could hear them well enough to tell they were looking for someone. There was a small chance they had the building surrounded.

I was on the second floor and knew it would not be easy to slip away unnoticed. I thought my best opportunity for escape was to hide in someone else's room. I remember picking up a large kitchen knife as I hid myself in another room. I was prepared to end my life rather than be locked up forever. The police did not search the entire building and I was eventually able to make my escape.

One of my worst experiences was in northern Ontario where I hid at a farmhouse near Algonquin Park. I was standing in the driveway late one afternoon when two cars drove up, both filled with R.C.M.P. (Royal Canadian Mounted Police).

It was wintertime with snow deeper in places than I am tall. I dreaded running in the bitterly cold weather, and without snow shoes or food. I decided I'd better try to bluff my way through again.

I answered a few questions but soon realized the Mountie asking them was not believing my answers. Running seemed to be my only hope, so I made a dash for the distant forest. I knew a hail of gunfire could stop me from ever reaching the woods. I was unarmed and the odds were against me.

Evidently I took The Mounties by complete surprise. They thought I couldn't get far in such cold weather and deep snow, so they didn't pursue me immediately. They had underestimated my determination to elude capture. Apparently it didn't take them long to realize the seriousness of that error. I learned later that within hours they brought in dogs and tried to pick up my trail.

When I began running, I threw away my long fur coat because it slowed me down. That was a mistake I soon regretted. The icy wind threatened to freeze me to death as I ran. It seemed incredibly slow with every step a struggle against the snow and bitter cold.

I came to the shallow end of a lake with a huge marshy area covered with ice and snow. The marsh went right up to the road which by now I knew would be infested with Mounties. The lake was much too big to go around leaving me with only one unpleasant choice. I began crossing the marsh when my worst fears were realized. The ice was thinner than I had hoped and it broke. My feet were soaked. How long I wondered before they began to freeze.

I continued running as the odds mounted against me. The sun was going down, leaving me with no sense of direction. Running parallel to a road now became necessary. If I ventured too far into the bush and got lost, I ran the risk of becoming little more than an interesting article in the news when the spring thaw revealed my body. Freezing to death while lost in the "Great Canadian Wilderness" was not the happy ending I had envisioned for my life.

I worked my way parallel to a road as exhaustion set in. It had become fairly dark and I was stumbling more and falling often. At one point I rolled down a somewhat steep embankment. Had it been much bigger I might have been seriously injured or worse.

It must have been close to midnight when I was starting to hallucinate from the cold. I actually felt warm again when I realized I was freezing to death. Being totally exhausted and hungry didn't help the situation either. Refusing to lay down in the snow and give up, I came out on the road to look for help. The road had been plowed and that made walking a little easier. I had not walked far when I found a small cabin with lights still burning at that late hour. Dragging myself to their door, I knocked and hoped for the best.

I was greeted by a couple in their forty's. When I asked for help they took me in without any hesitation. They set me by the fire and wrapped me up in blankets. It took some effort to remove the frozen boots. Perhaps the constant running was

what keep me from losing my feet. Thankfully, I didn't lose so much as a toe even though the boots were actually frozen onto my feet! (Thank God!) They gave me some warm food and tried to dry my clothes.

I told them the police were after me and asked if they had seen them around. They said they hadn't. I told them I was going to try and make it to Barry's Bay, a small nearby town. When I felt nearly revived and thawed out, I got ready to leave. They asked me if I wanted to wait in the house while they drove into Barry's Bay. They said they could see if there was a roadblock or any police presents at all.

I welcomed their offer knowing this information could bring some peace of mind. They returned within an hour informing me the way seemed clear. I thanked these kind people for their help and continued upon my journey with renewed vigor.

Had all this taken place in a large city, the outcome may have varied greatly. People seem to be different in a rural area. Your life could easily depend on your nearest neighbor and vise, versa. I doubt the thought that I was a threat to them ever crossed their minds. Likewise I never gave way to thoughts that they could betray me, or return with the Mounties.

Most of the night I continued running. Just after sunrise I was able to contact a friend. He helped me change my appearance and bought me a bus ticket.

The tickets agents seemed quite interested in me. As I waited for the bus they kept looking my way. I boarded the bus and an hour later it stopped for lunch. A man whom I recognized to be a plainclothes policeman strolled into the restaurant for coffee and casually sat down by the bus driver. Evidently the ticket

agents had tipped off the police, and I knew they would be waiting for me at a roadblock a few miles down the road.

As we were boarding the bus the plainclothes officer got in his car. When the bus pulled out, the officer drove out ahead of us and turned in the opposite direction. So I saw my opportunity. I told the bus driver to let me off the bus, and I hurried back to the gas station next to the restaurant, where I called for a taxi. When the taxi came I jumped in and crouched on the floor, telling the driver to leave quickly. He did so, and informed me that the police were driving in as we were driving out! The taxi dropped me off at a little store several miles down the road. I contacted a friend who drove me to Peterborough, where I hid in a movie theater until there was a bus leaving for Toronto. Once in that big city I began to breathe more freely. Very few people could possibly understand the torment I suffered as a fugitive.

For 10 years I lived in fear, running for my life. The police were everywhere I turned. Relentless as they were in their pursuit, I found myself being pursued by an invisible Presence far more persistent. I know now that unseen Presence was the Holy Spirit. He reminded me of some things I had learned in childhood—of a place called heaven which God has prepared for people who love Him, and a place called hell for those who turn their backs on Him. I began to think a lot about the future life. After suffering so much in this life, I didn't want to spend eternity in a place of torment with no chance of escape!

I remember one time when I was out in the country, sitting on a fence. With half a bottle of wine in my hand and the other half in me, I started reflecting on my past life. Understandably, I had a deep seated hatred of my life. With a desire to dwell on something pleasant, my mind wandered to my childhood. There was a short time when I had attended church with my parents. In all honesty, most of what was said had slipped through my mind without taking a hold. There was a part that stayed with me. Those songs we used to sing never left me. It was not uncommon to find me singing one of them. Yes, I could still remember the words.

If you can picture this, I was sitting on a fence, drinking, wanted by the police, as wicked as a man could get, singing songs I learned in church!

“Jesus, hold my hand, I need thee every hour. Thru this pilgrim land, protect me by thy power. Hear my feeble plea, O Lord look down on me. When I kneel in prayer, I hope to meet you there. Blessed Jesus, hold my hand”².

As I sang my eyes began to fill with tears. Though I was a hardened convict, here I was fighting back tears when I felt the presence of The Holy Spirit. They told me later that was called conviction. It is the work of the Holy Spirit calling people to seek God’s forgiveness. I knew God was not happy with the life I was living, but I lacked understanding in these matters. What I did understand was what this life had taught me. “Never show weakness to anybody”³! If you can act cold and hard enough, nobody will want to try you. Have you ever considered the behavior of people behind bars, or in a bike club, or this type of situation in general? My lifestyle did not permit me to show signs of weakness to anyone, and I thought the tears were a sign of weakness. I wiped away the tears and resisted The Holy Spirit. He is mighty, but also very gentle; He will not force himself on anyone. He stepped back and let me go my way.

One day I heard a man talking about Jesus. He said that when Jesus spoke to the crowds some of the people would say, “He is a mad man! He has a devil!” while others would say, “These aren’t the words of a mad man. We understand what He is saying. These are the words of life.” I wondered what I would think of Jesus’ teachings if I read about them. Would I be able to understand what He said? I decided that if I ever had an opportunity to examine a Bible, I would look into it and see what Jesus had to say.

It didn’t seem like that was likely to happen any time soon. There were no Bibles in my home and I’m pretty sure none of my friends owned a Bible. When it came

time to choose between buying alcohol, drugs and a Bible....well, you got the idea. However, you don't think those kind of thoughts without God acting upon them.

I was living in downtown Vancouver B.C. at the time and had gone to the Pacific Centre Mall which was a short walk from home. I was living with a woman named Marion who wanted to do some shopping and I had reluctantly agreed to tag along. We were walking down a long corridor with stores on both sides. She would enter a store while I waited in the hallway. When she returned, we would go down a few more doors, and I'd wait again.

I was sitting there waiting when I saw a booth where two Gideons were giving away new testaments. You know who the Gideons are if you've ever stayed in a motel or hotel. They leave Bibles everywhere but you so seldom ever actually see one of the Gideons. They tend to be "low profile – behind the scene" kind of people.

The Holy Spirit started speaking to me. "The answers to the questions and problems in your life can be found in that book" This was just what I wanted and the price was right. I'd take a free Bible, but the thought of purchasing one never once crossed my mind.

I was just about to approach the booth and receive my free Bible when I looked around and realized where I was. This was a public place with people all around me. I was so ungodly I was ashamed to let someone see me even touch a Bible. The Holy Spirit has to be the gentlest being in existence. He will never force his will upon anyone, great or small. He can however be very persuasive. He kept gently telling me I needed to get that Bible. I really wanted it, but there were too many people around and so I just keep walking past the booth. I'm thankful God doesn't give up easily. He keep tugging at me to get a Bible.

I had walked some distance past these gentlemen when I could resist the Holy Spirit no longer. I turned to Marion and asked her if she would mind going back to that booth and getting me one of those free books.

Well...I wish I could describe the look she got on her face. I told her not to come back and hand it to me, just put the book in her purse and I'd get it when we got home.

God must have been involved because it was probably the only time in her life that she did exactly what I asked her to do! Later when we arrived home, she brought the Testament to me. Looking me in the face she said "Listen, don't you go getting mixed up in something weird!" I assured her there was nothing to worry about, I was only curious about some things.

I began reading a portion each day. I started with Matthew and found what Jesus taught. I discovered the message of that Testament was not mysterious at all; I found it plain and easy to understand. Jesus is the Son of God and came to earth in human flesh so that He might redeem mankind by dying on the cross. A day of judgment is coming but there is forgiveness for anyone who will confess his sins and trust in Christ as his Redeemer.

One day I felt I could resist God's love no longer. On July 28, 1980, I knelt down on an old chair we had in our living room and prayed a short prayer. I told God I was sorry for the things I had done. I couldn't change those things, but I could change what I would do from now on. I knew I had hurt a lot of people and I regretted it very much. If he would forgive me like I read in the Bible, I would start doing things right. I told him I wanted to be a Christian and to start living like he wanted me to. I meant what I said. I did not feel like I had been struck with lightning, but something was different.

From that day on I have never been the same. What the Bible says in 2 Corinthians 5:17 is true: "If any man be in Christ, he is a new creature: old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new". I got up from my prayer and went to bed.

The first thing I learned the next morning as a new Christian was what Peter was talking about in 1 Peter 4:12 "Beloved, think it not strange concerning the fiery trial which is to try you, as though some strange thing happened unto you" I had changed sides in this war and the one I used to serve had become my bitter enemy. (Truth is, he always was my enemy) I lived in a downtown area and received my mail early in the morning. As I opened it I found out a man I had been doing business with had cheated me out of four hundred dollars. I became angry and started planning revenge. I wanted to choke him to death, or at least beat him senseless!

The Holy Spirit began speaking to me. If you want to serve me then you must do things differently now. I have forgiven you for so much, shouldn't you forgive him? I knew God was right. I still wanted to hurt the man as I began thinking about what it meant to be a Christian. This was on my mind day and night.

I was at work when I was handed my pay check. I took it to the bank intending to cash it. The Holy Spirit spoke to me again. I was the next one in line when he asked me whose name was on the check. I still had the pay check in my hand when I turned around and left the bank. God was showing me how my life was all built upon lies. I knew I couldn't serve God and go on tell these lies. As these thoughts went through my mind I began to realize some major changes were needed in my life. The Holy Spirit helped me understand that I could not go on living like I had been and still serve God. I knew exactly what I had to do. I would turn myself into the police and start life over again based on a different set of principles. How could I compare life in prison to eternity in hell? My life on earth would end one day, but eternity in hell has no ending.

It was about noon when I walked off the job, telling my employer I had to get my life straightened out with God. I went home to tell Marion my plans and say goodbye. She asked me how I could desert her like that. It seemed likely I would die in prison. She did everything in her power to talk me out of surrendering to the police. As the fruitlessness of her efforts became apparent, I said I would like to go to church on my way to surrender. I went to a church and after talking to the pastor, he said he could baptize me before I left. After I was baptized, the pastor offered to take me to The Mounties. I thanked him and we set off to find a police station. When we had found the R.C.M.P. in Burnaby, British Columbia, The pastor and Marion walked me inside and up to the counter. The Mountie on duty asked if he could help us with anything.

My friends were bikers, rapists, thieves, drug dealers, prostitutes, forgers, burglars, etc. and they had planned their various business ventures in my presents. Everybody I knew hated the Man (The police). In the world I had lived in, it had always been us against them. I had been taught to do anything to keep from being caught. I had jumped bond and successfully eluded capture for ten years after encountering the police more than a dozen times. I had a full set of identification, a good job, a woman I had lived with for a few years with plans to marry. Now, two days after I had accept Jesus as my savior and been born again, I find myself standing in the police station about to do the unthinkable, that I might please God.

Yes, I said to the Mountie, I am here to surrender. My real name is Ken Burton and I am a fugitive. I have become a Christian and want to face the charges against me. I need to return to Michigan and serve a 25 to 40 years prison sentence I've been running from. Here is all my false identification. I have been living in your country illegally for ten years and have eluded capture many times. I will tell you all the names I have used and the jobs I have had. In fact, I will tell you anything you want to know about me, here I am! After listening to my story, that Mountie only wanted to know one thing. He looked me in the face and asked "Mr. Burton, have you ever had any psychiatric treatment?" To this day, I find it humorous that the officer was reluctant to lock me up. After some more

conversation and seemingly against his will, he agreed to take me into custody. The officer acted as if he were doing me a favor when it became apparent I was not leaving. He locked me up and they began checking my story. When they concluded I had been honest with them for the first time in my life, they were elated.

By the next morning they were bring people back to my cell to see me. “There he is. Walked in here last night on his own!! Said he had become a Christian and needed to start pleasing God with his life now”. They were all walking around grinning and shaking their heads. A man from the Department of Immigration came early in the day to interview me. It was then established that I had entered Canada illegally. Arrangements were made for my immediate transfer to isolation at their downtown facility. When it came time to be placed in the cell, I asked if I might have my bible. The officer in charge said no. Another officer said “Oh let him have it”². I believe he had heard about my surrendering after I became a Christian and was somewhat sympathetic. The first officer insisted “He’s not allowed to have it”. Who would have thought they’d have wanted to deprive me of my bible. Just look at the effect it was having on me in the few days I had been reading it!! After observing the effect God’s word was having on me, a wise law enforcement agency should have placed bibles in every cell they had. In a deficient and disappointed state I was led to my cell. A short time passed and that “somewhat sympathetic officer” opened the cell door with my bible in his hand. “Here,” he said with an outstretched hand. I said thanks as we seemed to have traded understanding smiles. There was such a desire in me to learn more about God, and from all appearances I was going to have the time to do so.

While waiting to be transferred to Michigan, I began to have doubts. Satan tried his best to discourage me. A pastor came to visit me. As we talked, he looked through the thick glass of the visiting room and could see I was crying, so he began to pray over the intercom. Suddenly the Holy Spirit came upon me! I felt as if I had been struck by lightning—something seemed to explode inside my body! I began jumping up and down, praising God! My doubts had all been settled.

The Canadian authorities delivered me to the U.S. border (It was the crossing at Blain, Washington). The U.S. authorities escorted me to Bellingham, Washington and to what I think was a county jail. My new accommodations consisted of one large room with a row of cells across one side, for sleeping.

As a new Christian, there were many things I needed to learn. My understanding of the enemies tactics and weapons was about to increase. As the heavy steel door slammed noisily behind me, I was approached by the welcoming committee. Seems like prisoners always wanted to know one thing, "What are you in here for?" Well...I started telling my story and did not get very far before being interrupted. "HEY! Come over here, you gotta hear this one!" The committee grew in size and I was asked to start over again. This time I got a little farther into my story before I heard, "Wait a minute!" Are you trying to tell us, you had a job and a good set of false identification? You were living with a woman planning to be married. The police hadn't caught you in ten years. And you surrendered to serve a 25 to 40 years prison sentence and all the other charges they now have! To me it seemed like the most natural thing in the world to do. Yes, I answered, I have become a Christian and now I want to please God with my life. Another prisoner looked me in the face with utter disbelief and said "You ain't got a lick of sense in your head!!! You will never get out of prison alive!" (Looking back on this incident, I am able to see now that God had not sent them to encourage me.)

By the next morning I needed to think, and spend some more time in prayer. I decided to stay in my cell, instead of joining the other prisoners in the large room for the day. A life in prison was nothing to look forward to and I must confess to some self-pity and discouragement. As I began to focus more on my situation than on God's ability, desire and intent to work in my life, discouragement tightened its grip. An inability to meet a need, is not one of God's traits. Since having committed myself to him, I was rapidly learning he would always meet my needs, even without my asking. As I paced the small cell becoming more discouraged by the minute, help was already on the way.

A guard came to the door and shouted my name. "I'm here, I answered." A tall woman in uniform unlocked my door and introduced herself. "I'm Sharon Wagner from the sheriff's department. I'm here to take your fingerprints. We want to be sure that you are who you say you are." (Why on earth would anybody want to impersonate me?) The deputy led me out of my cell and to a room where she could take my prints. When Sharon saw I was downcast, she began to make some small talk. She soon asked me if I had accepted Jesus as my savior.

Yes, you're reading this right!! I'm in jail with a deputy sheriff taking my fingerprints when the cop wants to know if I'm a Christian! I was so thrilled to see another Christian I couldn't contain myself. Yes! I said, that's the reason I'm in this place. I started telling her my whole story. I told her about the way I used to live and how much trouble I had gotten into. I went on to explain how God had forgiven me, and how I had surrendered myself to please him. She may not have needed me to reveal my discouragement as it was not well hidden. When I finished speaking, she looked me in the face and said "You listen to me". I was once a prisoner on the other side of this building where they keep the women. Look what he has done in my life. Today I work for the sheriff's department. He will NEVER leave you or turn his back on you. It is written in God's word "...he who began a good work in you will carry it on to completion..." There is no need to be discouraged. Let's pray. We bowed our heads and Sharon prayed for me.

God is truly amazing. Who else would send a cop to encourage and pray for a convict? Needless to point out, I reentered my cell greatly encouraged. In a very short time I believe it became obvious to all that someone was laboring, behind the scenes, in my behalf. A few day later I was in my cell with 5 or 6 other prisoners answering questions about the bible. They had started reading them and wanted to know what I found in there. Sharon returned with some Christian literature and more encouragement. That had to be very startling to the other inmates as the deputies are not widely known for their love of the prisoners.

In due time I was back in Flint, Michigan, standing before the judge, He said, "I am going to resentence you," and I wondered what was coming. To my surprise, he threw out the sentence of 25 to 40 years, and gave me 3 years' probation. It seemed too good to be true! He also dismissed the Federal warrant. The Canadian authorities dropped all the charges they had against me for the 10 years I was running in their country.

I'm very thankful for the great love and mercy God has shown toward me. He turned my life around. I have the privilege of visiting many places across the country and sharing my testimony with various groups. I enjoy telling what God has done for me.

I was a loser, but now I am a winner since I teamed up with Jesus Christ. I'm glad I stopped running. How about you? Are you running from God? He is pursuing you because He loves you and wants to help you. If you will give yourself up, He will make you a new person. I know from experience that if you will put your life in His hands, He will give you a new start, and help you to be a winner.