

A Christian Carol

Story One. It was a stressful week at work for Charles. Chuck and his wife worked hard to pay off their nice home. Now a few beers and good friends were a fun way to watch the super bowl on the big screen. At halftime Chuck fell asleep in his leather recliner.

And Chuck dreamed a dream. The *angel of the past* suddenly appeared. The next thing Chuck knew he was a young boy sitting with his mother. With an open Bible she was sharing with Charles that he was a sinner and needed to be saved by the Lord Jesus Christ. Chuck saw himself not disagreeing but thinking he wanted to have some fun first. When he is old like his mother perhaps then he would call on the Lord for salvation.

Chuck saw himself with his many friends as he often shared a smoke with them as well as dirty jokes. Chuck's friend, Cam, was a nice guy and told Chuck and his friends about the need to be born again with the gift of the *Spirit of Christ Jesus*. Chuck wanted to ask more. But his friends started to laugh and give Cam the dickens shouting, "humbug". Chuck then laughed too. Cam kindly said, "your friends can laugh you into hell, but they can't laugh you out". From that day on Chuck didn't have much to do with Cam.

But then the *angel of the present* emerged. Life was busy with the kids and his attractive wife. To keep physically fit Chuck played league basketball. He spent good family time with the kids. Other than a little pornography, a slip once or twice with another woman and one too many beers occasionally, he was a good guy. Oh, the angel reminded him of his questionable tax returns but Chuck said the government really owed it to him as they were extorting the people. And his salty language? Just passion for life, he explained.

Chuck saw himself dressed as Santa buying a plump turkey to give to a cripple. He felt good. There he is with his in-laws merrily singing, "Joy to the world" at the candlelight Christmas Eve service in the town church. He loved the Christmas spirit with silver bells ringing peace on earth and good will to men. While he didn't have *Christ's Spirit*, he wasn't anti-religious. He said, "All roads lead to God". If a religion helped people live a bit better, then he wouldn't judge. Life was good, and his team just made the super bowl.

Grimly, the *angel of the future* arrived. Chuck saw himself in an ambulance. He heard someone whispering about a rare heart attack for one so young. He opened his eyes. He was in hell! Flames leaped on him. The torment was horrific. Never mind a beer, he just moaned for one drop of water to cool his tongue. Chuck saw a couple of his friends burning there but he couldn't care less. Again, Cam was absent from the group.

Then Chuck saw himself standing at a great white throne and God was opening books. All roads did lead to God after all! The dead were present – none had the *Spirit of Christ*. Dreadfully, he saw all his sins still in God's book. They weren't forgiven for he had no Savior. The Lord checked for Charles' name in the book of life – it wasn't there. But his name was found on a hefty bank account on earth. He was then confined eternally to the lake of fire in the blackness of darkness with the smoke of his torment forever – and ever.

The crowd roars – "touchdown"! Chuck awakes with a start. What happens next?

Story Two. It was a stressful week for Cam. Cam and his lovely wife worked hard to afford their nice home. Cam fell asleep that evening in his leather recliner. Church could wait a week. God would understand in grace. After all it was the super bowl.

Cam dreamed a dream. The *angel of the past* suddenly appeared. The next thing Cam knew he was a young boy sitting with his mother. She was sharing that Cam was a sinner and needed to be saved. Cam saw himself getting on his knees and as a hell deserving sinner confessing to God. He then believed the Bible that Christ Jesus died for his sins and rose again as Lord. Cam by faith confessed God's Son as Lord and Savior. He was forgiven and now had the gift of the *Spirit of Christ* in him. He was changed and assured he was now part of heaven's kingdom for he trusted God in His promises from His Word.

Cam told his friends, including Chuck, about salvation. Some laughed. Cam saw himself gladly getting baptized and fellowshiping in the church of his parents. The church saw its mission as God's holy house designed for His pleasure. They believed the Bible was not only the authority for salvation but for the church also. The church meeting led by *Christ's Spirit* used a plurality of gifts, including Cam's. No single man got the glory and in simple love they remembered the Lord Jesus weekly at His Supper. The man provided and led in the church and the woman kept the home. Some said the church was too small or weak for them but Cam said "*Ebenezer*", meaning 'The Lord is my help', 1 Sam. 7:12.

But then the *angel of the present* emerged. Life with his wife was busy. To keep fit he played league softball. Cam didn't seem to study the Bible as much, as the trained man at the new big church was so gifted. The band entertained, the skit was funny, and the video message on the big screen inspired him to live without anger in his relationships. They taught biblical life principles but not every doctrine – too legalistic they reasoned. So Cam let the worship team (including women) lead for him, pastor Pat talk for him, and the Sunday school teach his children. He left relaxed, refreshed and happy. He put a generous amount in the collection plate to help the poor and support the church staff. Cam cared. This wasn't his father's church. This church had vision. It helped his needs.

Yes, the *angel of the future* arrived. Cam is on golden streets – in heaven! Indeed God kept His promise of salvation by grace. He is with the Lord Himself – joy! Then Cam sees himself standing before a judgment seat. Oh, it isn't to send anyone to hell, for Cam had sins forgiven and eternal life in the *Spirit of Christ*. It is to reward service unto God.

Cam saw his life replayed in full color. He saw it was more than activity that counted but "*how*" he did the Lord's work. Had he obeyed God's way according to God's wisdom in God's Word? Was it done out of love to the Lord and a zealous desire to glorify Him – or convenience and duty? Now Cam had to give a personal account. Then all his works went into God's fiery testing. Excitingly, he received rewards for the poor he helped and his faithful witnessing by *Christ's Spirit*, etc. Surprisingly, much of what was praised on earth wasn't praised in heaven as faith in the Bible way. Stunningly, Cam saw the fire burn up many works with those extra eternal rewards all going up in smoke – forever.

The crowd roars – "touchdown"! Cam awakes with a start. What happens next?

{Some Scriptures for **Story One**, Chuck – John 3:36 / James 2:10, Romans 3:28, 8:9 / Hebrews 9:27 / Luke 16:22-24 / Revelation 14:11, 20:11-15, 21:27. Some Scriptures for **Story Two**, Cam – Mark 10:14 / 1Corinthians 15:1-5 / Acts 16:30-31 / 1Jn. 5:13 / Gal. 4: 6 / Titus 2:1-5, / Acts 20:7, / 1Corinthians 3:16-17 / 11, 14 / Revelation 3:8 / 2Corinthians 5:8 / Revelation. 22:12 / 1Cor. 3:10-15 / 2Cor. 5:10 / Rom. 14:12.}