

Echoes In Witnessing

by Manford G. Gutzke

Witnessing in Word

"But ye shall receive power, after that the Holy Ghost is I come upon you; and you shall be witnesses unto Me, both in Jerusalem, and in all Judea, and in Samaria, and unto the uttermost parts of the earth." (Acts 1: 8).

This promise given by the Lord Jesus Christ to His disciples has been cherished by believers throughout all generations. It is His will that we be witnesses to Him as our Savior.

I was not born a Christian. I grew up in unbelief, so far as Christ and the Gospel was concerned. I became conscious of this doubt while I was in High School. During my boyhood the whole scope of Christian experience was quite unknown to me. I was aware that some people professed to believe in Christ, but I was skeptical about the reality of what they claimed to believe. In the course of time, in the providence and by the grace of God, I became a believer.

I have written a booklet entitled "Out of Darkness," which tells the story of how I came to faith. It is my personal testimony of how I became a Christian. After I believed in Christ and accepted Him as my Savior, I began to learn a whole set of new ideas, of things that belong to a Christian. There were many things about Christian living that I had never thought of. I expect that many a person when first married has had a similar experience. From the moment the wedding is over there are many things to learn which neither the bride nor the groom ever thought of before.

Much of what I learned as a Christian came to me in my own heart through my own reflection. Part of what I learned I came to me as a direct result of situations that I was led into by the providence of God. Part of what I learned was told to me by some other believer telling me what I should know and do. In these few pages I would like to share with you some of my early memories of my own spiritual experience which I will call, "Echoes in Witnessing."

I came to believe that Christ Jesus was truly my Savior one Thursday night at about eleven o'clock as I was walking home along a country road. The next morning I went to my friend to tell him what had happened. I had never heard that a Christian should talk about his faith and did not talk to my friend because I thought I ought to do it. I just wanted to share the joy which now was mine. He was out at the barn feeding his horses. I went to him and told him that the most wonderful thing in the world had happened to me the night before. I had come to believe that Christ Jesus had died for me. I had found out that God was going to save my soul. I was sure now that I was not going to hell.

I think I expected my friend to laugh at me. I was really astonished when he listened quietly and then instead of laughing he said humbly, "I wish to God I could say that." Right then I learned an important fact. Many people who do not believe are hungry for the truth; they would like to be Christians.

The farmer who had helped me so in my coming to faith insisted that I come with him to tell a Christian friend of his the next day. Sitting in his home I told him of my experience in becoming a Christian. He asked me to stay with him over-night and then to go out with him the next day when he went to preach the Gospel. This man taught school, but had personally developed three preaching points in different country schools where he went on Sundays. I accepted his invitation to spend Saturday night with him.

The next morning with horse and buggy we drove to the first service, which was at 9:30 in the morning. As we drove along he said to me, "I will conduct this first service, but at the 11 o'clock service I want you to get up and tell the people how you accepted Christ and became a Christian." I felt trapped, and said, "Oh, no! That's something I'm not going to do." "Well," he said, "I think you should." I said, "I don't have to do that. All I had to do was to believe, and I do believe that the Lord is my Savior, and so that's that." Then he said to me, "Well now, the Bible says that 'Whosoever confesses Me before men, him will I confess before My Father which is in heaven.'" That gave me pause for thought. Then he quoted, "Let the redeemed of the Lord say so." Then he kindly pressed me: "Say so!" As we drove along, he quietly added, "Whosoever believeth in Him shall not be ashamed. Just think about that."

We went into the school house for the worship service. As he preached, I faced all these things he had said. I could not get away from the fact that if I confessed Christ before men, He would confess me before my Father in heaven. Finally I made up my mind. When we resumed our journey, though feeling very uneasy, I told him I would do it (adding in my heart, "just this once").

When we came to the next school house for the 11:00 meeting, the room where I was to give my testimony was filled with people. As I looked out across the gathering I saw several people I recognized. One was a young man with whom I had spent Saturday a week before, in town playing pool. He had been my pool partner. Then I noticed a young woman, with whom I was not well acquainted but whose box supper I had bought at a country dance two weeks before. There she was looking at me with surprise. Also there was my old school-mate, whom I had not seen since we had prepared for the teaching profession. He had shared my skeptical doubts in those days. Now he was sitting in this room, looking at me and wondering. How could I get up in front of these people and talk about the Lord! My friend had told me that I need not speak more than five minutes: even less would be all right.

Any of you who know me will smile when I tell you that I sat down in one of the front seats so that I would not have to walk so far down such a long aisle. I was scared to death, because I had never done anything like this before. When Mr. Delgatty, my friend in charge of the service, announced there was a young man who had something to say, a quietness came into my soul. Some of you will smile again when I tell you that it took me thirty minutes to tell my story.

When I sat down, Mr. Delgatty got up and said, "I have been talking to many of you about accepting the Lord. Now you have heard this young man's testimony. I wonder how many of you can say right now that during this talk you realized you could believe on the Lord, and have done so." Seven people raised their hands. One of the seven was my pool playing partner. He became a Christian that day. One of them was my dance partner. That young woman became a Christian that day. I never saw her again. One was my skeptical classmate. He is now retired as a school teacher up in Canada. He is an elder in the church, and is still giving his Christian testimony. I have kept in touch with him. We exchanged cards with him this past Christmas. I had been blessed in this marvelous experience that Sunday morning!

I went along with my friend to his evening meeting also, and here again he asked me to give my testimony. It was a smaller crowd, but when Mr. Delgatty asked for those who would indicate that they had accepted Christ, two more persons raised their hands. So on that first day, nine persons having heard my witness and testimony were able to say that they had come to faith. I was greatly blessed, and rejoiced in the power that God could exercise. I was filled with the joy of the Lord at the blessing which had resulted, because I had "said so."

The sooner a believer lets it be known publicly that he believes in the Lord Jesus Christ the better it is for him. I would like to leave this thought in your heart and mind as you live your life before other people. You need not make any great claims for yourself. You need not tell anyone that you are going to

be an angel, or make any promises about your conduct. Just letting people know that you believe, and simply testifying and witnessing to your faith wherever you are, will bring rich blessing into your soul and life, even as it will help some to believe.

I have no doubt there are many "secret believers." I expect that in our day and time especially there are many people who deep down in their hearts really do believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of the living God, but who never "say so." They believe in God and they believe in heaven. No doubt many are looking to the mercy and grace of God to save them. It may even be true that they confess their sins to God, but all of this is kept quiet. They miss the blessing of open confession and others go on without ever hearing what God will do for a believer.

A believer who does not witness openly, who does not let it be known that he is a believer, can be compared to someone who is secretly married. I admit a secret marriage can be real. A young couple can get truly married secretly, but I think they miss a great deal. Such secrecy is a handicap to them. Just so, a person who is a believer and keeps that a secret, develops a pale, anemic kind of experience. Such a person will lack real joy in his spiritual life, because he has never openly taken a stand before people to confess his belief. I would urge every Christian on the basis of my first experience in witnessing, to let people know what it means to him to be a believer. This does not mean that every Christian will preach. I certainly never dreamed of preaching in those days. But something good happened to me personally when I openly confessed before the people I was living among that I was really and truly a believer in the Lord.

This kind of news spreads around. I remember the first time I came to my home community after I had become a Christian. I was at church when we heard that they had no preacher that Sunday. But someone had heard about my spiritual experience, and so the elders said to one another, "We'll ask Manford to preach." I had never preached in my life, but that Sunday I got up in front of my neighbors and told them what the Lord had done for me. By the way I used John 3:16 "For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in Him shall not perish but have everlasting life." When it was over I heard the men out in the yard talking. They were all excited about hearing this neighbor boy who had gotten up and given his testimony. I remember one man who had originally come from England saying to the others, "When I was a boy that's the way I heard men preaching." Then I knew that the Lord had definitely used me.

Witnessing by Actions

When I came to faith I stood alone in my witness in the community in which I lived. I was a school teacher at the time, boarding with a farmer family in my school district. Before I became a believer, I used to enjoy the normal round of social activity in that community. I did whatever the other young people did, whatever was customary. They were fine young people and I would say that life in that community was above average. Open immorality or anything like it was very rare.

Because I was a school teacher and had more time, compared to others, I was often one of those who organized the next community dance. This event would be a gathering of folks who knew each other. It was always well-behaved. I never knew of an occasion when liquor was present, and there was never any rough stuff.

Although these were very decent people, since coming to faith I no longer attended the dances. This was truly a strange thing. Nobody had ever told me that it was wrong. I had never heard any criticism of dancing. I had not thought of it being wrong. My staying away was just natural. I was just not interested

in that kind of thing any more. I was interested in talking to my friends about the things of the Lord, but not in anything else.

I found that my staying away from the dances was more or less expected by the people. This really surprised me, because I had never raised any questions about the dances, nor had anyone else ever said anything against them. For them it was their amusement, and they went ahead with it, while I stayed home. Once in a while the young man who lived in the same house with me would ask whether I would ever come back to the dance. And I'd say, "Well, I don't know for sure," which was the truth.

At the same time I was manager of the local baseball team. This meant mainly that I had the time to pay attention to these things. I taught school from nine to four for five days in the week. The farm lads worked from daylight to dark. Once a year the ball club put on a social night to finance the team and raise the necessary budget for the year. This annual event was a big affair. It would begin with a concert of local talent. Then we would have a debate. This was followed by a box social. The selling of these boxes, provided by the ladies and sold to the highest bidder, brought in the funds for the team. After the supper there would be a dance. The program began at about eight in the evening and ended about four in the morning. It was the big event of the year.

Because was manager of the team I helped plan for this event in the first year after I became a believer and was there when the program started. My friends welcomed me and assured me that everyone was glad to see me present. People seemed to be genuinely happy that I had come. While we were moving around I heard one young man say to another, "Gutzke? He's here? At a dance?" He sounded surprised. Then I knew that my presence mattered more to them than anyone admitted.

During the evening there was singing, a skit and a debate. I bought a box for supper and paid four or five dollars for it. In those days that was big money. Today that would be twenty-five or thirty dollars by comparison to what that money meant to us.

When supper was over it was about midnight. They began to clear the floor for dancing. I went for my coat to go home. The boys on the team gathered around me and protested: "You can't leave now." I said, "I think I want to." They continued to protest: "You're the manager of the team. You play with us, and we want you to stay." I said, "Well, I think I want to go home."

The boys looked across the room to where my best friend was sitting. He was a young man with whom I had spent many good times together. He had a farm of his own. I often visited him and he had spent many an evening talking long into the night. We were known to be good friends and so when the boys went over to him to ask him to persuade me to stay, my heart sank. I dreaded this above all else. He was a man of real integrity and decency, and if he asked me to stay he would not understand my reasons for leaving. I could see that he was reluctant to ask me to stay, but finally he apparently felt that he should, and he got up from his chair and came over.

In the meantime I was thinking things over while the boys were talking to him, and the issue became clear in my own soul. I knew that I was going to walk out of that dance because I was a servant of a new Master. This did not mean that I had any particular objection at that time against dancing. I had nothing for it, nor anything particularly against it, but I was being led to leave. Well, my close personal friend came over and said rather quietly and soberly, "Surely you are not going home. The boys want you to stay. You really ought to stay." I asked, "Are you going to stay?" He answered, "Yes." I asked, "Why are you going to stay?" He said, "Well, I want to." And then although I knew I would lose my friend, I said, "That's exactly why I'm going to leave. It's because I want to go." He did not become ugly. He was not unpleasant, but we never were together again as friends.

I knew that the loss of his friendship was involved, and yet I was able to put on my coat and to walk

out of that place. I had a glorious two mile walk home. It was early spring and some snow was still on the ground. I walked along the snow covered road and felt the presence of the Lord very near indeed. He walked that road with me.

Two days later I was at the home of a young school teacher and heard a wonderful thing. I heard her testimony. I had talked to her about the Gospel many times. I had explained to her, as I had to all my friends, about becoming a Christian. She was a fine person but she just could not believe that the Gospel was true. She could not believe that because Jesus had died for her sins, she could be saved. No matter how much she wanted to believe, the Gospel just did not seem real to her.

She asked me whether I had noticed her being at the dance. She told me that she had wondered about my being there. She had observed with interest the boys asking me to stay, particularly as she knew that I had stopped going to dances. She had begun to feel that my testimony and my Christian experience probably had been just a flash in the pan, so to speak. When she saw me go for my coat and overshoes, she began to get concerned. Did this mean that I would really leave? Suddenly she began to feel that if I left that crowd, there might be something to the Gospel after all. When the boys began to pressure me to stay, she thought, "Now it's going to show up. Now I'll find out. If he turns away from those boys, it must be real." When she saw them approach my friend, she thought, "That's unfair. Why that's his best friend! If he can walk out on his friend then it is real." She said, "The more they talked to you the straighter you stood up. You walked out of there like a king." I remember that I had only had in mind to do the thing the Lord wanted me to do, but when she saw me walking out -- to her it meant that the Gospel was real. That night she could not go to sleep until she accepted Christ as her Savior.

It does matter how a Christian acts. The boys and girls at those dances were decent folks enjoying themselves, and yet strangely enough they did not think that I should be there. God used my leaving to being the reality of the Gospel into another person's life.

You may not think it, but people will watch you when you become a Christian. They will watch how you talk and how you act. Even your family will watch where you go and how you spend your money. They will see when you go to church. They will see when you read your Bible, and when you pray. They will observe every single thing you do, and everything you do may affect them. It does make a difference how you as a believer act.

Witnessing Under Pressure

"But before all these, they shall lay their hands on you, and persecute you, delivering you up to the synagogues, and into prisons being brought before kings and rulers for my name's sake. And it shall turn to you for a testimony. Settle it therefore in your hearts, not to meditate before what ye shall answer: For I will give you a mouth and wisdom, which all your adversaries shall not be able to gainsay nor resist. And ye shall be betrayed both by parents, and brethren, and kinsfolk and friends; and some of you shall they cause to be put to death. And ye shall be hated of all men for my name's sake. But there shall not be an hair of your head perish. In your patience possess ye your souls" (Luke 21:12-19).

In these words Jesus of Nazareth explained to His disciples that if they witnessed and testified for Him, they would suffer persecution.

Some months after I had become a Christian, when I had come out of darkness into His marvelous light, I volunteered for military service. That was in World War I. By the time of my enlistment I had come to see that my relationship with God was in Christ, my relationship among men was that of being

a man. I had my life to live in this world. I knew that by the grace of God I had become a member of the Body of Christ. I believed in Him and my citizenship was in heaven. In this world I was a pilgrim and a stranger. Heaven was my home and that is where I would one day be. But I was here living under the law of the land as other men did. My spiritual union with Christ resulted for me in the grace of God working in my heart to do His will, and to do His good pleasure. So far as my outward conduct was concerned, it would be judged and valued just like that of anyone else. By enlisting in the army I felt that I was rendering unto Caesar the things that were Caesar's.

At that time I was not a member of any church. No church had sought me nor cared for me. To my young mind there seemed no good reason why I should join something as dubious as the congregation and the church life I had seen as a boy.

When I joined the Canadian Army Veterinary Corps, I became a new recruit in a unit of 12 to 25 men. These men had heard before I came that a school teacher was joining up. In the part of the country where I grew up, a man school teacher was regarded as a sissy. When I arrived, I am not sure that I quite filled the picture. I was a healthy young man and quite athletic. They had evidently planned some sort of a reception to take care of me as the new man. Our work was with Army horses, we took care especially of sick horses that were being treated for wounds, cuts and bruises, and that sort of thing. The men already in the unit began the treatment by assigning me to all the menial tasks in the barn. I was given all the dirty work to do. I did not mind that at all. I grew up in the country. As a boy working around a barn had been my daily life. They assigned extra work to me when there were extra things to be done and this I did not mind at all. That was better than sitting around with nothing to do. There was not very much to do in any case. Two men could have done what ten were doing.

In the barracks they gave me the least desirable bunk, one that was on the second tier back in a dark corner. I did not care about that. All I wanted was a place in which to sleep.

I was a young Christian. I did not have any clear idea how to witness, nevertheless I belonged to the Lord. These men soon found out that when they told dirty yarns I was disgusted. When they used rough speech, unclean speech, obscene terms, they offended me. I guess I showed it. I guess my face gave me away. I did not say anything, but I was angry. I had a feeling that when a man wants to play around in the mud that is his own business. If a man throws the muck in my face it becomes my business. When a man tells a dirty story and uses obscene language in my presence, he splashes mud into my face, and I did not like it.

Well these men found out how I felt and that started six weeks or more of constant pressure. I was angry because I knew that it was aimed at me. I resented their presumption. My response was to keep silent, but that did not stop them. One of them would tell a dirty joke and then they had a big time laughing at it. I'd sit quietly as though I had not heard and this added to their hilarity. I became the butt of their obscene yarns. This became a personal indignity and an insult to me. Anytime I came where they were, they'd start their dirty yarns. They did not stop this for six weeks - and they never repeated themselves one time.

This intolerable situation drove me to prayer. I prayed steadily that God would somehow stop them, that He would somehow deliver me from this thing; but they only got worse. I began to feel in the course of my praying that I was actually being treated this way because I was a witness for the Lord. I had brought my Bible with me, and in my bunk I'd read my Bible. I did not bring it to this barn where I worked, but I did read it in the barracks and I prayed. I'd kneel at my bunk and pray. I felt that this was the thing to do and I did it.

Finally as the days went by this treatment really got under my skin. I began to get offended in a nasty

way. They became so intolerable that I was irritated and aroused. I became desperate because I had not gotten anywhere by praying. I began to think in my heart and mind that I would have to do something. I finally felt free to say to the Lord, that if He did not stop them from talking, I was going to do something. I guess I actually intended to beat up the whole bunch. I planned to make sure that I'd hit each man once solidly in the face. After that they could throw me in jail or do anything else they wanted to do. It was not a pretty thing, but in six weeks I had gotten enough and more. I was filled up.

I decided that I'd give them the chance for three more stories and on the fourth I would start on them. We were sitting in the little office room we had. Twelve men were sitting around telling dirty jokes, while I was reading Victor Hugo's "Les Miserables." When they had told two dirty yarns, I closed my book and laid it aside. I became all quiet inside and I remember thinking "This is a terrible way to end my Army career, but I've got to move." I mapped out my strategy. I decided which one of the men would be the hardest to handle, and I would hit him first. I got all set. I knew exactly how many steps I would have to take, and how I was going to do it. It would have to be sudden. Someone started the third yarn and I edged forward on the bench where I was sitting and gauged the distance. I expected to be arrested and go to jail for insubordination and fighting but I had to do it. The thing that bothered me most was the fact that I had not received an answer to my prayers.

When that man finished telling the third story I was poised to jump. The next person who opened his mouth would get my fist in his face. At that very moment the emergency bell rang. Everyone had to turn out, and that was the end of the situation. This unexpected interruption came at the exact moment to make my plans unnecessary and I want to tell you that I was overjoyed. I knew that God was faithful. He had not suffered me to be tempted beyond that which I was able to bear. Right at that point when I could take no more, God intervened. The men never knew how close to calamity we all were. I never told them, but my anger was gone. They could tell their dirty yarns for the rest of their days and it would no longer bother me. I was truly rejoicing in the Lord.

One day as they were telling their dirty jokes, they suddenly fell silent. It seemed as though nobody could open his mouth, as if nobody could say anything. Finally one of the men said, "Well I guess we could do something else besides telling dirty stories." It must have been the release of pent up tension, but I laughed out loud. I went out into the barn shaking with laughter.

I served with these men one year longer and in that time I never heard one obscene term, or heard another dirty yarn, and very little profanity. If one of them used profanity, he turned to me and sort of apologized, even though I had never said a word. Later I went out preaching in that part of the country. One of the ringleaders of that group drove thirty miles to hear me preach.

Witnessing by Layman

"Behold, I send you forth as sheep in the midst of wolves: be ye therefore wise as serpents, and harmless as doves. But beware of men: for they will deliver you up to the councils, and they will scourge you in the synagogues: And ye shall be brought before governors and kings for a testimony against them and the Gentiles. But when they deliver you up, take no thought how of what you speak: for it shall be given you in that same hour what ye shall speak. For it is not ye that speak, but the Spirit of your Father which speaketh in you. And the brother shall deliver up brother to death and the father the child: and the children shall rise up against their parents, and cause them to be put to death. And ye shall be hated of all men for my Name's sake: but he that endureth to the end shall be saved"(Matthew 10: 16-22).

When I became a Christian I understood from the teaching of the Bible that I was now a child of the King. I rejoiced in the goodness of God, who had saved my soul. I think I had very little conscious burden for the souls of other people. I was happy to tell them about the Gospel, but somehow it did not come to me that I was really responsible that they should come to know the Lord. Perhaps I was not full-grown, not yet complete, but rather a child in spiritual things.

In my own experience among Christians, every now and again I find some who are enthusiastic in the matter of personal testimony and yet do not participate in activities designed to reach other people. I have been in places in other countries where just to be a Christian was a real struggle. To announce in such a place that one was a Christian resulted in persecution and opposition. It occupied the full time and energy of real Christians to maintain their testimony. There are many Christians whose witnessing is simply standing firm under fire. To maintain their testimony is all they can do. So it was with me in my early days as a believer.

In the year that I was in Winnipeg as a soldier there was great interest in the city over a Faith Healer, who was preaching in one of the local theaters. I went to the theater to hear him because I really wanted to learn more about the Gospel. He was an exceptionally intelligent man. Direct in manner, dressed in a plain business suit, he seemed to have a very practical approach to the whole matter of being a Christian. He talked very simply and plainly of the fact that God had given him the power to effect healing in many cases. If those who were sick wanted to come and see him about getting help through faith, he would pray with them and tell them whether they could be healed. I was very skeptical about this healing business, but I went to hear him nonetheless. As I listened to him I felt that he knew the Lord and that he preached the Gospel. In spite of my natural skepticism about his claims about healing I continued to attend and listen.

I will not go into all the details of the healing of a step-cousin of mine. He had been afflicted by a type of spinal meningitis and was unable to walk. He was twelve years old at this time and was carried in to the healer by his older brother. After several visits, that young man walked out and he is walking to this day. That is just a matter of plain ordinary fact. While I could not fully understand it, I admitted it. I had to admit it because that young fellow was walking around.

In addition to that, there was the case of the sister of one of my closest friends, who was scheduled to undergo an operation. This would be her sixth operation. The first five had been performed at the Mayo Clinic in Rochester, Minnesota. She went to see this preacher with much misgiving, but she was healed and lived for years without the operation.

After having attended this man's preaching in the theater, I went to the church services conducted by the group to which he belonged. They had rented a local church where they met after the theater meetings. This was my first contact with people who had the gift of tongues. I had never seen or heard anything like it and while it was fascinating I was not attracted to it. I never did participate in the practises but I listened to their preaching, and I found out one thing. They knew the Lord and they preached the Gospel. Even though I did not follow their way of worship, I have never felt free to question such persons. When someone comes along and gives testimony about what God has done in some miraculous way, I must keep quiet, because that is beyond me. It is more than I know.

Months after these experiences I was transferred from Winnipeg to Hamilton, Ontario. While stationed there I attended an independent church, where the preacher spoke of Jesus Christ as a person. Now this may seem strange to you but I had never heard a preacher in church talk about the Lord Jesus Christ as a person in my life. I had heard them talk of the way of Salvation, about Christianity, about virtue and vice and all these things. I had never heard of Jesus Christ as a person being alive today with

whom I could deal. At the close of that particular service, the minister invited anyone who had a question to come forward. I was surprised at myself, but I went forward. So many had come that the preacher himself could not see me, but an elder saw me and asked if he could help me. I said, "Yes, there is something I want to know. If Christ Jesus died for the sins of sinners and unbelievers, and they are forgiven, what about the sins of a Christian?" The kindly old man looked at me and asked, "Have you forgotten the story of the Prodigal Son? Anyone who believes in the Father and knows who He is can come back to Him." I have never forgotten his words. This is why I have always appreciated independent congregations that preach Christ.

Later I went on to camp at Niagara-on-the-lake. By now I was in my second year in the Army, and I had become fairly well known as the heavyweight boxing champion of the Gymnastic School where I was being trained. As I became well known, there seemed little opportunity for me to witness about my Christian faith, and I found also that I was not very anxious to do so. I had lost my desire to testify to my faith. This could have been in part because I did not belong to a church. I knew no other Christians with whom to associate. This may have caused me to cool off and slow down.

One Sunday afternoon a business man from Toronto came to the camp to conduct a service. He had with him a tripod easel with certain charts that he used when speaking. A group of us got together and helped him set up his easel and pass out the hymn books. This man had a strong faith and a great joy that attracted me. I wished I could be like him. On one occasion he asked me to tell others who were there about my faith. It was months since I had spoken in public about my Lord, and I was reluctant to speak, but he asked me again and told me that it would be good for me to testify. Each time this man came to camp, I grew stronger in my faith. I do not remember his name. I don't know that I ever heard it, but I will never forget the man himself: a business man from Toronto spending his weekends, paying his own way, going to an Army camp to preach Christ!

It meant a lot to me to see him set up his charts and his little organ in a Y.M.C.A. hut and conduct the service. He led me very close to the Lord. I noticed that he wore a little blue and white button. He told me that he belonged to an organization called, "The Gideons." Since then I have met many others of this great organization whom I have appreciated, but foremost among them to me is the man who came from Toronto to tell about the Lord.

Witnessing by Church Membership

"Let us hold fast the profession of our faith without wavering; for He is faithful that promised; And let us consider one another to provoke unto love and to good works: Not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as the manner of some is; but exhorting one another: and so much the more, as ye see the day approaching" (Hebrews 10:23-25).

When World War I ended I was discharged and went back to teaching school. I needed to earn some money to go to law school, since I had decided to make the legal profession my career. I was teaching in Manitoba, east of Winnipeg. Although I had been a Christian for three years, I had never been a church member. At this particular time I was living in a rural community where there were no church services of any kind. I would have had to go for miles if I had wanted to attend a church. Sunday was a holiday and everybody regarded it that way. I had not gone to church for months. It was the easy way to do and that's the way I did it. I must say that I did not feel good about it, and I did not feel good about never speaking a word for Christ. But as the days went by it became easy not to say anything. Of course I had my own private life, my own devotional life, but I no longer testified to what God had done for me. I

just did not say anything about the Lord.

Because I was a school teacher my conduct was expected to be exemplary. I did nothing that was not right and proper. Yet in a way I was actually in that community incognito. People could not know unless I told them that I was a Christian.

One Sunday morning I was sitting in a one room railway station with about twenty-five other people waiting for a train. The train had been delayed by a snow storm so that it was about three hours late. It was too cold to go outside that one room. As we were huddled around the coal stove to keep warm, I overheard a conversation and joined in.

A man, I'll call Mr. A., was inviting another man, I'll call Mr. B., to attend church. In the course of his discussion Mr. A. was insisting that Mr. B. would be delinquent if he did not come to church. When he was talking like that he was touching my uneasy conscience because I was not going to church.

In spite of my months of silence my own testimony for the Lord was still very precious to me, so when there was a lull in the conversation I spoke up to say courteously, "Is this a private conversation or is it open to the public?" Mr. A. quickly and gladly said, "Oh it's open. You want to join?" I said, "Yes."

"You are asking this man to go to church. I'd like to ask you a question. Why? Why should he go to church?" So this man answered, "It's the thing to do." I asked, "Why? Why is it the thing to do?" After a bit he said, "To promote virtue. It will make people good." I pointed out to him that not everybody in church is good, nor is everybody outside the church bad. I pressed him for his reason for going to church.

So finally he became somewhat desperate and said, "Well, I'll tell you. It's to improve politics." That's really what he said. In fact he became quite eloquent about what good citizens should do for their country. Again he had to admit that there were many good citizens outside the church, that this also was not a valid reason for going to church. In desperation he became personal: "Why are you asking questions like this? You're an unbeliever."

This gave me the opportunity that I was probably waiting for. I told him that I believed on the Lord Jesus Christ, that He died for my sins, that He rose from the dead, that He was now in heaven, and that He was my Lord and Savior. The man was taken aback for a moment, and then said, "Well then you are just one of these free lancers." I told him "That is not true. If I were near a church that honored Christ as a Person and as Lord, I would join it regardless of its denomination." He snapped, "Have you ever seen such a church?" By now the whole group of people in that place were waiting for my answer. I said, "I have been in a church like that in Hamilton, Ontario." I told of the wonderful spiritual blessing I had received there. Almost sneeringly he asked, "What was so special about it?" I told him the preacher preached about Jesus Christ. That man made you feel that Jesus Christ was alive, that He was the most important person in the universe, that if you had Him on your side, you did not need anything else. To that preacher Christ was everything. He also urged his hearers to turn to Christ.

After a brief pause a lady spoke up. She addressed a man next to her. "What do you think, doctor?" I now noticed for the first time that this was an Anglican minister. I was crushed to think that I had said all those things before a preacher. But when he spoke I thought, that man actually knows, because he said, "I think the church very much needs to pray."

A younger woman then spoke up. "May I say a word?" Everyone was glad to listen and she continued. She said, "The church in Hamilton, Ontario this young man was speaking about is my home church and he has not told the half of it." She began to tell about their witnessing, their working in hospitals, in jails, and on the street. It was a tremendous testimony. Here we were three thousand miles from Hamilton, in a little one room railroad station, and suddenly the Lord became very real and near. We

talked for a long time and then the train came and we all went our ways.

I know now that there is a blessing in communion between believers. If the church members believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, it is a good thing to have fellowship with them. It is not good for man to live alone, at any time, anywhere. I am speaking very soberly and very personally when I say: "Get in touch with some professing Christians, and join them. Pick your church and join it. If you think the people are cold, you warm them up. If you think that they aren't doing anything, you go in and show them how to do something. They need you, the Lord can use you, and you need them."

Some churches are better than others, but just keep in mind that any church is better than no church. Some congregations are more active in leading people to the Lord. They show them the things of the Gospel. You will grow in their company and they will bring you a blessing that will actually show up in your life and in your work. I know that is true.

No matter what denomination it may be, if a church honors the Lord Jesus Christ, and holds the position in the community that its congregation gathers together to worship the Lord, it is better for you to join that church than to belong to no church. Remember that Peter and John went up to the temple at the hour of prayer. They knew a lot more about the Gospel than the folks in the temple did, but they went there at the hour of prayer. You see, I had not joined the church and that was actually what was the matter with me in those months when I had gotten cold in my witnessing. I had been alone and it is not good for man to be alone.

Witnessing to God's Keeping Power

"Whosoever therefore shall confess me before men, him I will confess also before my Father which is in heaven. But whosoever shall deny me before men, him will I also deny before my Father which is in heaven" (Matthew 10:32-33).

These words became very important to me in my own personal experience when I was just a young Christian. All who have read my testimony in the booklets I have written will remember that I had a remarkable experience coming out of agnostic unbelief into faith in Jesus Christ. After months and years of darkness I came to believe in Him in a glorious fashion. For many months after that, I walked with Him in joy and gladness and my heart was aglow with the blessedness of my fellowship with the Lord.

You will know from the previous chapter in this booklet that I did not join a church. I felt no need, no good reason why I should do so. I had never gotten any help that I could recognize from a church. No minister and no church had helped me to faith. I am sure that many ministers and churches do lead folks to the Lord, but I had not experienced this. So being uncertain about the church, I decided to leave it alone. For various reasons I did not attend public worship services, because the only churches in that part of the country where I was teaching school were foreign speaking immigrant churches. In those days I had no automobile to enable me to go to nearby towns to attend church.

In time, slowly bit by bit in my personal activities and my personal conduct, I changed back to patterns of conformity with the world. This led me to the place where I became aware of a great massive doubt. I did not have any doubt about God. I knew that God was real. I had no doubts about the Bible. I believed it was God's Word. I did not have any doubt about the Lord Jesus Christ. I believed that He was the Son of God. I had no doubt about heaven or about hell. My doubts were about my personal relationship with God. I began to doubt that I really believed. It all boiled down very simply to one question. Was I really a Christian? Did I really believe? Was I really saved? Having read my story you

will be shocked and amazed at these doubts, even as I am when I look back on them. With all the things the Lord had done for me, I should not have doubted, but I did.

For a whole winter this uncertainty haunted me. If you have ever lived in the north country you will remember some very lovely spring days, when the air is balmy and the sun is warm in spite of patches of snow still on the ground. One Sunday morning in the spring of the year I walked out into the quiet still woods determined to find out in my heart whether I was really a Christian. I walked with my Bible in my pocket and when I found a fine convenient stump, sawed off flat, I sat on it. I opened my Bible and began to read and to meditate and to pray for assurance.

The hours passed by as I reviewed the way I had searched to know God. I remembered the sincerity of my interest in seeking to find Him. I reviewed my coming to faith and the marvelous, glorious experience which had been mine when I could finally believe. I recalled how wonderfully God had used my first public testimony to bring a number of people to believe in the Lord Jesus Christ. I remembered God's answers to my prayers which I could never doubt. Then this passage of Scripture continued to come to my mind. "Every branch in Me that beareth not fruit He taketh away."

My conscience accused me of my careless conduct. Days and weeks has gone by without my being much concerned about spiritual things. I had become indifferent about the welfare of my soul, and the souls of others in particular. I had neglected prayer. It was true I had prayed regularly, but in a perfunctory manner. I no longer took time in prayer. I was fully aware of my apathy. All this discouraged and alarmed me. It seemed like evidence that I was a dead branch, ready for the discard. I felt a good deal like a tree in the north country during winter. The leaves were gone, and the branches stretched out to the sky stark and naked. I was like that.

Then I remembered the passage that says, "Though we deny Him, yet He abideth faithful. He cannot deny Himself." That lifted me, until I remembered again Christ's words "Every branch in Me that beareth not fruit, He taketh away." So it went on and on, around and around all day long. I never did budge from that stump, not even to get a drink of water or a bite to eat. I tried to face the Lord as a person. I humbled myself. I admitted my weaknesses. I freely confessed my sins and yet I felt no certainty, no assurance. I was ready to despair. I would not have blamed the Lord for throwing me away. I would have thrown myself away. But He was God, and His promises were sure. The memory of His grace was strong and I tried to hold on to His underserved kindness and favors toward sinful men.

About four o'clock that afternoon, when I had been there for seven hours, I could see very plainly that if my salvation depended on me, then I was certainly lost. No doubt about that! And then God revealed to me out of His own Word and by His Spirit that it did not depend on me. I could not save myself. God is my salvation. That's the meaning of the name, "Jesus." Now these wonderful words came to my mind, "Whosoever therefore shall confess Me before men, him I will confess also before My father which is in heaven." And I had confessed Him. I had stood before a congregation and told them that I did believe in the Lord Jesus Christ and it was the truth. The Scripture does go on to say "Whosoever shall deny me before men him will I also deny before My Father which is in heaven," but the truth was I had not denied Him. And now I was reassured, if I had not denied Him, He would not deny me. In this simple way this great marvelous truth came into my soul. I might falter, I might stumble, I might even fall down flat, but He would never let me go. He had laid His hand upon me and "He that hath begun a good work in you will complete it." I might deny Him. He would not deny me.

As I sat on that stump a quiet glory came into my soul. I was fairly lifted in the assurance that weak as I was, faulty as I was, barren as I was, I belonged to Him. That day I made a solemn vow, deep down in my heart. I said to the Lord, "Since You have given Yourself for me and you will never let me go, You

will keep me in Your hand because You are God. Now with your help from this day on I'm not going to be a dead loss in your service."

This may seem a strange prayer to many but to me it was a prayer that in a certain sense was the most decisive decision I have ever made in my life. My ministry to this day is a continuation of the vow I made in my heart that day when I realized that the faithfulness of God was my salvation. My being saved did not depend on me: it depended on Him. He had saved me for time and for eternity to the glory of His Name.

I still rejoice that throughout the years He has never failed to keep my soul. "I know whom I have believed and am persuaded that He is able to keep that which I have committed unto Him against that day." I praise God for this blessed assurance and for the understanding and sympathy He has given me for others who are troubled by doubts which will disappear when they look away from their own weakness to Christ who is their salvation.

Witnessing in the Pulpit

"Then they that gladly received his word were baptized: and the same day there were added unto them about three thousand souls. And they continued steadfastly in the apostles' doctrine and fellowship, and in breaking of bread, and in prayers. And fear came upon every soul: and many wonders and signs were done by the apostles. And all that believed were together, and had all things common; and sold their possessions and goods, and parted them to all men, as every man had need. And they, continuing daily with one accord in the temple, and breaking bread from house to house, did eat their meat with gladness and singleness of heart, praising God, and having favor with all the people. And the Lord added to the church daily such as should be saved" (Acts 2:41-47).

In the previous chapter I have told of the deep dark doubts which troubled me after I had become a Christian. Even though I had been wonderfully converted, I experienced doubts about my personal relationship with God. For various reasons I have mentioned, and some of these may have been valid, I had never joined a church. In this I had made a grievous mistake. I made this mistake honestly but in ignorance. In failing to unite in witnessing with others I personally began to lose my confidence. It is true in every aspect of life and also in spiritual things, that it is not good for man to be alone. It is written that, where "two of you agree on earth as touching anything ye shall ask, it shall be done of you." And again where "two or three are gathered together in My Name, there am I in the midst."

I know now that when I began to see the faults of others and their weaknesses, I was revealing symptoms of my own spiritual weakness. Probably it was quite true that these other people did have faults and weaknesses. As a matter of fact many of them who called themselves Christians were careless and indifferent. They seemed spiritually dead. Like the church of Sardis, "they had the name that they lived, and they were dead." No doubt this was true but I could not see that something else was true also. I was like a person who saw illness and sickness and went away saying, "Isn't it terrible that those people are sick." I went so far as to blame them for being sick and then left them alone. I was actually thinking and acting like a child. If you saw people who were sick, what should you do? "Get a doctor." If you saw a house on fire, you would not just say, "Look! That house is burning down. Isn't that terrible! Those people should not let their house burn down." You would sound the fire alarm!

I did not know, I did not realize that when I saw real weakness in others, I should have to move to help them. I did not recognize somehow, that being critical of others, I failed to be critical of myself. No

wonder then that I began to doubt my own salvation. I had become so involved in observing others that I had lost that "upward look." Now that the Spirit of God had revealed to me that it is God alone who saves and keeps my soul, I was determined to do something fruitful with the help of the Lord. I began to think of joining some church in worship and service. I did not appreciate the full importance of such a step, but I was led that way in my thinking.

At this time I was still teaching school in the Country, but I planned to be in Winnipeg that Fall to start work as a law clerk in a law office in order to prepare myself for my chosen profession. As I thought about joining a church I remembered something a sergeant, by the name of Porter, had said to me while I was in the Army about three years before. One evening, in the barracks, some of the men were questioning me because I did not go to church. I was rather sensitive and asked them, "Why should you talk to me about going to church?" They said, "Well you seem like a church - going person." That rather took me aback, because I had let down on my testimony.

Finally I told them that the reason I did not go to church was because all I'd hear would be politics and I could read about politics in the newspapers. I did not have to go to church for that. I'd hear about running the war, and I could read about the war in the newspapers too. That is when the sergeant spoke up. "I can tell you where to go to church where you won't hear politics." I was immediately alerted. This was a new thing to me. I had never heard anything like that. I said, "This is something new. Tell me where." Then he told me that if I went to a place called Elim Chapel, at the corner of Ellis and Sherbrook in Winnipeg I would hear the Gospel preached. He emphasized, "I can tell you when you go to that church that you won't hear about politics. You'll hear about the Lord Jesus Christ." That was the first time I had heard His Name mentioned in the barracks except in profanity.

I had been so impressed that now three years later when I did leave my school to go to Winnipeg, I remembered what Sgt. Porter had told me. I determined that the first Sunday I was in the city, I would go to this church. I must confess I went there prepared to condemn it. I did not expect it to be what that man said, but I was going to give the church a chance to prove me wrong.

On that very first morning service I attended, the visiting preacher talked about the Lord Jesus Christ. It may seem strange to you who belong to a church where the Gospel is preached, but this was the first time I heard an ordained minister in any pulpit talk about the Lord Jesus Christ as though He were present, as though He were right there. I had read of Christ in history. His name was referred to there. I knew His name was in the doctrines of churches and it was in the catechisms. But this man actually talked about the Lord Jesus Christ as though He were available right there to all who would accept Him. I was impressed, but then said to myself, "This is the visiting minister, I'll come back this evening when the regular minister is speaking and see what he says."

I went back to the Chapel that night and again I heard the pastor speak with conviction about the Lord. This was amazing! Imagine going to church twice on one Sunday and each time hearing the Lord spoken of as if He were a person with whom I could get in touch! At the close of the service they announced a young people's service for Monday night. Interestingly enough these young people had their meeting on Monday night because they did not want to miss the regular Sunday night service.

I determined to be present at that Monday night meeting of the young people. I expected a more or less social evening lasting for forty-five minutes followed by refreshments, and I expected about fifteen young people present. Imagine my astonishment when I got there to see about seventy-five young people assembled! Instead of the program I had expected, they had gathered to bid farewell to one of their number who was leaving to serve in the mission field. I found that she was the second young person in that group dedicating her life to full time service for the Lord. I remember her getting up to

speak of going to her assigned field. I remember that the rest of the group presented her with some luggage for her trip to a missionary school.

In my heart I was smitten and somewhat resentful. I did not see any reason why she should go. After all I was not going, and I too loved the Lord. During the farewell program a young man, a flier by the name of Taylor, got up to speak. He was enthusiastic as he told of the year he had spent getting ready to go to the mission field. This bothered me too. What did he have, I didn't have? He loved the Lord, but so did I!

Wednesday night was prayer meeting. Although I had never gone to a prayer meeting in my life, I decided to go and find out what that amounted to. I expected to see possibly ten, fifteen or twenty old folks present. No doubt two or three of them would lead in long prayers. Then would follow a dry message with Bible teaching and that would be the service. So I went to the Wednesday night prayer meeting.

I found over two hundred people present. Not only that but members of the congregation prayed. This was amazing! I went back to that church the following Sunday. The pastor talked about the Lord Jesus Christ at both services. This was astonishing to me. I went to the Monday night young people's meeting. They had a program in which they talked about Christian experience and Christian living. To them the things of Christ were important. It was important to them to know the Lord. I went again to the Wednesday night prayer meeting. Again, individual members of the congregation prayed.

Then I heard about a Saturday night prayer meeting of young people. I went to that just to confirm my suspicion that some place I would find what I expected to find in a church, something dull and dry and empty. Saturday I was at the young people's prayer meeting. They did not do anything fantastic. Soberly, intelligently and earnestly they prayed for the church. They prayed for the Sunday School which would meet the following day. They prayed for the preacher who would preach the Word of God. They prayed for the other churches of the city. First thing I knew, the hour was up.

I admit I was very much impressed with all this. You know today we often hear people say, "If the church just had more to do, and if there were more planned activity this would attract people." In my days of unbelief and agnosticism I could have been impressed by people running about and doing things for the good of the community. But when my heart was concerned about my relationship with God, when I wanted assurance that I had been accepted by Him, church activities were not what I needed. I needed a church that focussed attention upon Jesus Christ and the riches of God in Him. I needed to get right with God first, then activity would follow naturally. When I was still looking to man for help, church activity could have impressed me. But when I looked to God for help then I wanted to hear about the finished work of the Lord Jesus Christ.

I joined that church before I knew what denomination it was, because a personal participation in the things of the Lord Jesus Christ became very important to me. This church loved the Lord and wanted to serve Him. That was enough for me. I said to myself, "I will not ask what denomination it belongs to, because it does not matter." Membership in this Christ-centered church came at a time of rich spiritual blessing in my life.

Witnessing in Answer to God's Call

I began going to church deliberately to grow as a Christian. I realized my spiritual life had begun to wither. I still felt I had many valid reasons for not joining a church. But I had come to realize that because I did not associate with other believers and did not have fellowship with them in worship,

doubts of my own relationship with God threatened to overcome me. In the previous chapter I have told of the profound spiritual experience I passed through when my personal confidence in myself as a Christian was at the lowest ebb. This had happened while I was alone and had not united with other Christians. God had been faithful and gracious to me, and had assured me that I belonged to Him. As a result of this I began going to church. I wanted to become fruitful as a Christian with His help. This was a far more important step than I recognized. I know now that this was exactly what I had needed, although I did not fully realize it then.

I have described in the preceding chapter the truly remarkable church I found where the Lord was honored and the Gospel was preached. Here I joined a young men's Sunday School Bible Class. Most of these men were ex-G.I.'s. They were single men who had been in the Canadian Army and had been discharged after the war ended. They had returned to civilian life and they were members of this church. There were about twelve or fifteen men in the class. Each one of them had a very serious interest in being there. In this class I profited greatly by the discussions that took place. Every person in that class wanted to be a true follower of their Lord. We would raise questions that came up in the course of the lesson for the day, and often we continued our discussion after Sunday School was over.

In this particular church, Sunday School was held between two and three in the afternoon. Three o'clock on a Sunday afternoon in Winnipeg is a quiet time, so eight or nine of us would walk to a neighboring park and sit down and talk things over further. We were all interested in each other's views. Often we spent an hour or two in the park talking about the Scriptures and their meaning. This became a weekly experience with us. In the course of our discussions, one question came to the foreground again and again: How could we know if God were calling any one of us along a certain line of activity? How could we know if we were in the will of God?

We discussed this among ourselves and considered the various ways in which men of God in the Old and New Testament had been called. We talked of the men who had been called by God in dreams, and decided that in our day we could never be sure about our dreams. Someone suggested that God had used visions to speak to some chosen men. We had heard of some people who'd had a vision. Then came the question. If one of us had a vision, how could we be sure that it was sent from God? What bearing should such a vision have on our life? I myself had heard the personal testimony of men to whom the Lord had actually spoken. I must say that the hearing of a voice was involved in a profound spiritual experience for them. But as we talked about this we wondered whether this could or could not be a psychological experience. We decided that one could not know for sure by hearing a voice.

Someone suggested that by reading about the experiences of other Christians something would touch our hearts, and lead us into the will of God. We agreed that this kind of reading would be helpful. Next we considered finding the will of God for our lives by reading the Bible, and agreed that we would find real guidance there. But here too we were faced by a problem. Very few of us had read all of the Bible. If we depended on our knowledge of the Bible for guidance, we'd have to know so much more than we did at this time in order to be led. This would not help us right now if we needed guidance.

One day as we were walking along the street discussing these things, a man in the group, whose name was Fred Giles, suddenly stopped us in our tracks by saying, "We're just putting in time and talking. We don't mean what we say." This was rather exceptional and certainly different. Why would he say that? He said, "We just alibiing. We don't really mean it." That was an indictment of us all. I did not understand why he would say that. He went on to say, "We are talking about how we'd know whether God wanted us to do something." We happened to be walking along the bank of a river at the time. It was a rather wide river, and about four hundred yards away, in the middle of the river, there was a man

sitting in a boat. We could not see what he was doing. He may have been fishing. Giles pointed to him and said, "Now look at that man over there. Suppose that boat were to capsize, and that man were floundering around in the water, trying to hold on to the boat and calling for help because he could not swim." Then he pointed to a boat at the bank of the river with oars in it and said, "In such a situation would you need to hear a voice in the night? Would you have to see a vision? Would you have to hear your name called? Why we would be down there taking that boat and rowing out to that man at once. The need out there would be call enough." We were all very quiet after that.

The next week, Giles was not at the class. After the service we walked to the park as usual, and someone asked, "Where is Giles?" Someone else said, "Giles quit his job and went to Moody. He's going to go to South America as a missionary." I can remember how this touched my soul. I was deeply afflicted by the decision of this man, who was through talking and had gone out to do something.

Incidentally, I'm not sure that Fred Giles ever got to South America. I do know he went to Moody for his training. Years later I heard that he was a pastor in Chicago.

After I had begun this radio program, "The Bible For You," a friend in Chamblee, Georgia, who had heard me refer to Fred Giles, called me. He asked me whether by any chance this man, Fred Giles, had come from Winnipeg. And of course it was the same man I had known. I found that he is now living in Wheaton, Illinois. I was told that he had lost his sight but that he was carrying on the Lord's work to this day as a blind evangelist. I wrote to him, and his wife replied. In my letter I had recalled the times when we were together as young men, trying to understand the will of God.

Carefully, prayerfully reflecting on the circumstances and the situation in which you find yourself will help you to realize what the will of God is for you. Ask yourself, as you review your own personal history, "What has God done in my life that points to the fact that He has a special task for me? Do I know of a special need that must be met? Am I where I could meet it? Do I feel an inward guidance, that this need is what I have been waiting for?" The very need which presents itself could be your call to serve the Lord. It could be that when you are thinking of serving the Lord in a certain place, someone may come and say, "We need you." You may be asked to do this thing you have been thinking about. All this will create in your heart and mind an assurance that "This is the way, walk ye in it."

Early in my own spiritual experience, I learned to ask, "How has God led me in the past? Has He laid His hand upon me in any particular way?" When you see God's hand in your affairs in the past, you will have evidence not only of what He has done for you, but also a guidance as to what He wants you to do now.

It could be that for no known reason, you think, of a certain problem. You find yourself in circumstances where you face work that needs to be done. You may wonder whether you ought to teach a Sunday School class. You may know of a Sunday School in your church which needs a teacher. This would be your opportunity to talk to someone about the Lord, and to teach the Word of God. Your desire to serve the Lord in this way may be followed by some one asking you to teach that class. All these things together will point you to what the will of God is in your life. Such direct guidance in my experience as a young Christian has led me into the very thing I am doing now. My present ministry is a direct result of God's call: a vision of the need, my desire to answer it, and the God-given opportunity to serve Him.

Witnessing by Obedience

In the previous chapters I have spoken of a believing person seeking guidance of God in his life. I

would like to point out again that before such a person can expect guidance, there must be on his part an intelligent spiritual commitment. Let me now tell you how this was illustrated in my case.

At a certain point in my life as a Christian, I began two new ventures at about the same time. In a practical way I began the study of law in Winnipeg, Canada. At the same time I began attending regularly public worship services and a Sunday School in a church where I was greatly helped spiritually. I was a young man, unmarried at the time, looking forward with anticipation to my life's work.

At this time the question entered into my thinking and planning, "Did God want me to be a missionary?" Actually I had begun to question whether the Lord wanted me to serve Him in a special way. I was a very sincere Christian and I looked for the guidance of God in my life. At the same time I looked forward to the prospect of becoming a lawyer. Finally the issue became something like this: "Does God want me to speak for Him? Does He want me to enter His service for life? Should I go as a missionary, or should I become a lawyer as planned?"

These questions occupied my mind and heart for many days. Since I was a member of the law firm's staff, I had my own key to the office. Night after night after I'd had my evening meal, I returned to the office. I sat down at my desk to study this problem which confronted me. My procedure was to take two plain sheets of paper. On the top of one sheet I'd enter the words, "Why I should go." On the top of the other I wrote, "Why I should stay." I thought and meditated and prayed. I'd find a good reason why I should go. Then I would find a good reason why I should stay. And so it went. One would balance the other. I could see very good reasons for going and I could see very good reasons for staying. When it got to be nine or ten o'clock, I would go home.

One Saturday night at the young people's prayer meeting someone got up to read a passage of Scripture from the Gospel of John, in which Jesus turned to Peter and asked, "Peter lovest thou me?" When Peter said to Jesus, "Yea, Lord, Thou knowest that I love Thee," my own heart responded by repeating word for word what Peter had said. Then came the word, "Feed my lambs." That struck me. Before I could get over that I heard the words of Jesus as He asked Peter the second time, "Lovest thou Me?" And again the words in reply to Peter, "Feed My lambs."

I do not know what else happened that night at the prayer meeting. I did know that I could not get away from the words of Jesus, "Feed My lambs." I said to myself, "That was written away back in the olden days. Those words were spoken to Peter." But in my heart I knew better than that. I knew it was the Word of God speaking to me. Then again I said to myself, "But everybody hears these words. Everybody here tonight heard them. They don't all have to go." Then I came back at myself, thinking, "But you're not everybody. You're just one, and you heard these words." I walked home that night under deep conviction. This must be my answer to my question. It had come to me as plain as day.

The following day was Sunday, and at the evening service our preacher spoke on heaven. Many things he said I cannot recall, but one thing stands out clearly in my memory. He said, "One thing is sure, when we get to heaven we will meet the Lord Jesus Christ face to face. It will not be too long for any of us until He calls us into His presence." I felt that on that day He would not ask me about my record, because whatever small thing I had done would be known to Him. But when my Lord looked into my eyes, there would be a question in His own. "What were you willing to do for me?"

I was smitten to the heart that night and walked the four miles home, again under deep conviction: What did I really want to do for the Lord. Saturday night He had spoken to my heart, "Lovest thou Me? Feed my sheep." Sunday night, "What were you willing to do for Me?" I knew I could argue myself into becoming a missionary, but I felt that this would not be right. This would not be good enough. I needed to know He wanted me to go.

When I got home and was ready for bed it occurred to me, "Why not ask the living Lord about it? Why not pray for guidance?" And so getting down on my knees at my bedside I asked the Lord, "Would you have me go as a missionary?" Then it came to me very clearly in my consciousness, as if the Lord were asking me, "If I called, would you go?" I did not want to face that question. I wanted Him to tell me whether He wanted me to go, and then I would make my own decision. But He is the Lord. He could say to me, "Before I ever tell you whether I want you to go or not, tell me, would you go if I called you? You can settle that right now, without moving." Here was the real problem, the real block in my soul. It seems almost funny now when I look back on it. I found out while on my knees in prayer that I really wanted to be a lawyer. I wanted an office of my own, my name on the door, to be a lawyer in some small town in Manitoba, Canada. I'd have prominence and prestige. Having been born and raised on the farm, being a lawyer seemed very important. I planned to have a position and money. I'd have security and the respect of the community. All these things would be mine.

In the presence of the Lord I began to wonder whether I should stay where I was in the law office. Then it occurred to me that I had signed a three year contract with this law firm I was working for. Surely the Lord would not want me to break a contract. However, I had studied enough law to know that a contract can be broken. One thing was sure, if one of the two persons who had signed the contract died the contract would naturally be void. I knew the Lord could take a man's life. I decided that God would not need to do this. I told Him that I could come to a conclusion quicker and better than that. Finally I said to the Lord, "I would go if You called me." At that point I had committed myself. I would answer if He called.

I was conscious of all the possible success I could have as a lawyer. I might even go into politics and become somebody prominent. On the other hand, I was conscious of all the loneliness, the distress and the hardship that I would have as a missionary. But I also knew that with the living Lord by my side, all things were possible. I realized suddenly that when I got to heaven, to see my Savior face to face, I wanted to be able to say to Him, "I tried to bring others into the fold."

Then it dawned on me, that if someone came to the office, competent and able to do my work, I would know that God had sent him, that He was calling me, and I would go. I remember so well that after reaching this decision my heart was at rest. For weeks I had been bothered with this problem. Each night before I went to sleep it was on my heart and mind. Each morning when I awoke it was my first thought. But that night I dropped off to sleep and slept like a baby. It was all settled. If He called me, I would go. I wonder if you will smile when I tell you that I did not really expect Him to call me. I knew I was not much. I knew that God can use anyone, but I just did not think that He would call me. I was relieved that I had settled one thing. I was definitely committed to obey His call if He opened the door.

The very next morning a man came into my office and asked me where a young man could come into a law office to work toward becoming a lawyer. I was on the point of telling him that I was not acquainted in the city, and suddenly realized that here was the very thing I had asked for. I questioned him and found that he had taught school for two years longer than I had. I had been in the Canadian Army for two years. He had been in the service for four years. He had a B.A. degree. I had the equivalent of two years of college. Every single thing I had, he had more. Then as he was through talking to me, he said, "I have to hurry, I need to catch a train." Space does not permit me to go into the details of what followed. Just let me say that within twenty-four hours that young man was sitting at my desk.

I remember how I stepped out of that office, went down the elevator six floors and walked out on Portage Avenue in Winnipeg. I thrust my hands in my pockets in broad daylight and said, "Behold the world's prize fool. I have just given up the chance to have a profession, because I am going to be a

missionary. And nobody even knows I'm coming." I had not talked to anyone about my plans but as I walked up Portage Avenue, I could feel His Presence beside me. It was as though His hand were on my shoulder, and His Spirit spoke to mine, "I know why you did it. I know." That was all I needed. You see at the very root of this kind of a decision must be personal obedience and a willingness to do His will. Only then can you know what God wants you to do.

Witnessing in Prayer

When I became a Christian I had to learn everything about everything in spiritual living. One of the things I learned about more and more, and am still learning about, was and is praying.

Of course I had prayed from the very first, but not systematically. I had not really prayed to get things done. Largely I suppose I prayed in desperation, in times of perplexity and so on. I had prayed and the Lord had answered my prayers many times. But I had no real clear picture of the great possibilities of prayer. Much of what I had learned about praying had come from discussing the matter and hearing other people pray.

Before I had become a Christian I lived naturally without praying and planned my life without praying. When I became a Christian, I was overwhelmed at the magnitude of who God is. When I stopped to think that God made everything, holds and sustains and rules everything in the universe, I realized how little I knew, how little I could do, how little I understood. Knowing this, praying to an Almighty God seemed very important and very logical. Actually it should certainly be the most natural thing in the world for a human being, who by comparison does not know anything and who cannot do anything, to talk to someone who knows and can do everything, someone who is able to help. I would go to a doctor for help. I would go to a dentist for help. Why should I not go to God for help? Surely this would now be a natural thing to do.

What a tragedy that the vast majority of believing people live without praying! They completely ignore the potential in prayer. There are many earnest, sincere people who plan everything very carefully, but never think about praying. They are willing to go to any lengths, and make many sacrifices in planning for the future, but they have never learned to take time to pray.

The same is true on the other side. You can learn to pray, and by the grace of God I had glimpsed something of this. When I responded to God's call to leave the law office, to serve Him by telling the Gospel to others, I began praying regularly. I mean I prayed each day. I had certain times set aside for prayer and I followed through on that. At the same time I was wondering if my prayers were really as effective as they could be.

While these thoughts were in my mind, I had an illuminating experience that I want to share with you. After I left the law office my first position was at the office of the British and Foreign Bible Society. This is an organization that distributes the Scriptures making them available to all who are interested. After about six weeks of office work, I was asked to go from Winnipeg, Manitoba to Saskatchewan in western Canada. I was to replace an agent who had broken his wrist. This man had been driving a car which had to be cranked to get it started. It was cold weather in the fall of the year, and as he cranked the engine backfired, breaking his wrist. Because he needed several weeks to recuperate I was sent out to take his place. His program was all arranged and none of his engagements would be broken. It would be my first experience along that line of work. I substituted for him for several months until he was able to resume his duties, and then I went back to teaching school. I knew I would need a considerable amount of money to take care of my future studies, which were to prepare me for the mission field.

Some months after I had returned to teaching, this agent whose place I had taken, came by my school to see me. His name was Smith. He was a Presbyterian minister who was at this time working for the British and Foreign Bible Society. He came because he wanted to meet me and thank me for taking charge of his program while his arm was healing. In the course of our fellowship together, he gave this testimony about his broken wrist. He told me that when the car back-fired, and he felt a very sharp pain, he called out, "Oh Lord, help me!" Immediately the pain was gone! Throughout the whole healing process he had felt no further pain.

I wonder what you will think of me when I tell you frankly that I did not believe him. I just could not bring myself to believe his story. I figured he had been excited at the time. I decided his enthusiasm about prayer could account for it. No one could tell me that a man could have a broken wrist and not feel pain. I was sure of this.

Before the man left, just as he turned to the door, he said, "Let's pray." Of course I was ready to have prayer. He got down on his knees. It was a rather strange experience for me to see a man down on his knees in an empty school room, but I knelt down beside him. Then this man lifted up his voice to pray. I had never been in the presence of a man who shouted when he was praying. This man lifted up his voice and I think he could have been heard half a mile away. At least it seemed that way to me. He completely scared me, but he was totally unaware of this. He went on with his prayer, pouring out his heart in praise and thanksgiving and then asked God for His blessing.

When he finished praying I felt so awkward I could hardly say a word. That man had shouted in such a way that I was literally overcome. The few words I spoke were very quiet, just a little above a whisper. I kept remembering that he was a Presbyterian minister, but his loud voice had me completely shattered.

Months later I was at a social gathering in that country community. There I met many new people whom I had not seen before. Among them was a rancher, who had a large ranch about ten miles from where I was staying. When I met this man we entered into a conversation. As we chatted along he turned to me and asked, "By the way, do you know a preacher by the name of Smith?" I asked, "Do you mean a man who works for the British and Foreign Bible Society?" "Yeah, that's the guy. Goes around the country raising money to translate the Bible." "Yes" I said, "I know him." I had to admit that I had met him. But I was anxious as I could be to let this man know that Smith and I were made of different pieces of cloth; that I was not the kind of man Smith was.

Fortunately for me, before I had a chance to say anything, he began to tell me a story. He said, "You know last summer a strange thing happened. We had a line camp away out in the middle of a horse pasture. We had some work to finish and so we spent the night there. We had a cook with us and six or seven men working at the time. We stayed in this shack for the night, and about eleven o'clock, long after dark, there was a knock on the door and in came this man Smith, smiling and asking us whether or not he could stop for the night. I told him that we had a man in every bunk, and so were filled up, but he could come in and was welcome to stay where it was warm. He thanked me and went out to his car for some blankets. He brought them in to sleep on the floor. After he had moved in his blankets, he said, 'If it's alright with you, if you have any eggs and bacon, I'll cook myself some supper.' And that's what he did!" Then he went on to tell me more.

In one of the bunks an eighteen year old boy was groaning in pain. He had not been able to work for several days, the pain was so bad. He had an awful earache and they had not been able to take him to town to a doctor. The rancher went on with his story: "Mr. Smith looked over at the bunk where the boy was and asked, 'What's the matter with the boy?' Someone said, 'he's got a terrible earache.' Then the

preacher went over to the lad and said kindly, 'Son, is it hurting?' He got a surly answer, 'What do you think?' The preacher came back to his meal. Then he suddenly got up and went over to the boy, and asked, 'Would you like the pain to stop?' The lad said, 'Well, what do you think?'" Then the rancher looked soberly at me and asked, "You know what that man did? He asked this kid, 'Do you mind if I pray over you?' The young fellow said, 'No.' And so help me, that preacher put his hand on that young man's head and his other hand on the infected ear and while he prayed that boy fell asleep! He hadn't been sleeping for three nights, but he fell asleep. And would you believe it? He never had another pain in that ear! Now what do you think of that?"

I stood stock still and was silent but I'll tell you what I thought. I figured I'd just take out my mental file on a preacher named Smith and give him a higher grade. I up-graded Smith considerably. I decided that if God heard him when he prayed in that fashion, he could pray as loud as he wanted to. I had learned something. I found out that it is wrong and very foolish to criticize other people's way of doing things when they differ from the way we do them. Just because their way of doing is not our way does not make them wrong. Ever since that day, as far as I am concerned, if any man wants to open his mouth wide and lift up his voice to the Lord in prayer he can shout if he wants to. It's the man who gets answers to prayer that we need to know better and see oftener.

I learned this truth a long time ago, and it has stayed with me to this day. It is not my business to criticize anyone who is in the service of God. The Lord has some strange people of His scattered around the world. You will never know where you may meet them, but if they believe in the Lord they are His children. If they really seek His face, and if they have power through Him in prayer, if God answers when they pray, you'll know that you are meeting with one of His own.