

# Providence In Preparation

by Dr. Manford George Gutzke

## My Circumstances

Being called into full-time service in the gospel was a distinct surprise to me. I have oftentimes said I wasn't born to be a preacher. I would have counted this to be an impossible thing before I became a Christian. If anyone had told me as a boy that some day I'd be a preacher, that's the last thing in the world I would have believed. But perhaps after becoming a Christian I realized that the most incredible thing was true - God would give His Son to die for me. I think after that I could believe almost anything. And yet, it was hard for me to accept as true that God actually would use me to communicate the gospel. Now after years of service, I look back and I am amazed at the evidence that God was getting me ready for service

Perhaps, as you live your life, you may sometimes feel that this is not what you expected to do and not what you were prepared to do. I'd like to make you mindful of this: in all probability God has already prepared you in some way for the work that right now is before you. The chances are that He has led you along a way that has prepared you to render the service that He has in mind for you right now.

This idea was brought out to Jeremiah. Look at Jeremiah 1:5. "Before I formed thee in the belly I knew thee; and before thou camest forth out of the womb I sanctified thee, and I ordained thee a prophet unto the nations." This lays emphasis upon the fact that God knows what He is doing long before it comes to pass.

As I tell you of the things that happened to me, I bear testimony to the providence of God, who can and will do this in our affairs. I am going to be talking about myself. I want you to understand that in so doing I am only using myself as an illustration. I am going to go back to the beginning and talk about various circumstances that existed in my life, things that I can see now were part of God's readying me for the ministry that He wanted me to perform.

Every one of us, of course, has a background to our own immediate family. I look back on my family and think of my great-grandfather, a man whom I never knew. I wouldn't know even what European town he lived in. But I know one thing about him: he collected enough money to send his three sons away into the new world. When I consider it being in a man's heart to send three sons away that they might have the opportunity and the privilege of making their way in a new world, sons that he would never see again, that I realize it takes a certain attitude of heart and mind . . . I think self-denial.

Then I think of my grandfather. I only saw him when I was a child. He settled in the hardwood, what you might call bush country, in Ontario, Canada. He literally hewed his farm out of the forest. He was a poor man, and he probably got this land, as an immigrant, for nothing. He cut down hardwood trees to make farm land.

I think of my father, moving away from the community in which he was reared, where his father had lived before him. He moved away from there into a new Canadian area because he wanted his children to be thoroughly Canadian. I am mentioning all this to you because I have a feeling that there is something of our family in us. I know it's human, but it's from God. It's something to be appreciated.

Then I think of my home. I had an experience that a good many people would say was hard. My mother died when I was three and a half years old. I am sure a good many people would feel that was a terrible thing. But even as she died she left a light burning in my consciousness. She said something to me

when I was three and a half years old that later on was the light that led me out of the darkness of unbelief into the very presence of God.

My stepmother, who married my father when I was about five years old, was faithful in training me. I learned much from her and received a very fine upbringing. She was the kind of person that would personally demonstrate self-denial in her work. She was frugal in her habits and had integrity in her manner which she tried to share with us. So, when I think back concerning my home, I have reason to thank God and to realize that God was preparing me for responsibility.

I want to mention something else along this line - my country. You have heard me say I was born in Canada. Perhaps you do not know that nation so well. Let me just say that when I was born in Canada, it was a land of opportunity. It was a land where any man could make something of himself, if he would just work. The weather was harsh. It was a challenge to the fortitude of anybody just to live in it. But in that country there was a tradition of law, a responsible conduct, and a public tradition of honor that I remember to this day. I must say that deep down in my heart I appreciate the land of my birth, Canada. God did that for me. I was favored.

I think of my school, the school that I went to as a boy, a rural, one-room school. I suppose many people would think that it was very limited. But in a way, that one room situation, where all the grades were together, permitted rapid advancement. I often think I probably never would have gotten as far in my education as a boy if it hadn't been for such an early start. The teachers that we had in that little one-room school somehow got ambition into us and they gave us ideals.

Then I went to high school. Here again in the providence of God I was very favored. I was in a high school that I consider one of the best. It had an honor code among the students that was really remarkable. It challenged students to do their very best. In that high school there was a pride in performance and a way of recognizing it. As I look back on it, I know it was unusual.

By the way, let me tell you one little thing that I hope I can make clear to you because I want to suggest to you what an important training this was for me. In this high school the teacher that we had in my own particular room was very anxious that we should correct our speech. She was very anxious that we should screen out grammatical error in our talk. And so she set up a little system that we called a grammar box. Every time a member of the class made a mistake in grammar, the person detecting your mistake put your name on a slip of paper and put it in what was called "The Grammar Box." At the end of the month you paid a one-cent fine for every mistake in grammar that you made. I will confirm there were months when I paid more than all the rest of the class put together. That would tell you two things. I talked more than they did, and I made more mistakes. Oh, I got mad about that at the time. It just provoked me so much. But I look back on it and I have to admit that it trained me to carefulness in speech. If you hear me make any grammatical error now, it'll be my own fault. I wasn't brought up that way. There was a tradition of achievement in, that school, and a good record of performance was emphasized.

Then I think of the community that I grew up in. It was a community that had a fine public spirit. There was a feeling abroad in the community that the people who had the means should do something for the people who didn't, have anything and couldn't do for themselves. Maybe it's changed now, but when I grew up that's the way it was. Now, so far as the churches are concerned, I am sorry I can not speak enthusiastically about them. They were traditional churches. But I want to say they made an impression on me without my knowing it. There was no personal Bible study. I never dreamed you were supposed to study the Bible. There was no personal practice of prayer, or seeking to get anything done by prayer. Preachers prayed; nobody else prayed. It was a respectable community with a high level of

performance as far as men were concerned. I know now that it was humanistic in its values and traditional in its ways of doing things. That was the kind of a community that I grew up in.

You'd say, "What was the providence in that?" So many people live in situations like that. Let me tell you about my country church. That church, in a negative way, taught me something too. It was used of God in the long run to help me. In that church there was no personal knowledge of the Bible on the part of the church members; nobody tried to understand what was in the Bible. I know what that's like. If I come across people today that don't know what's in the Bible, they're just like the folks I grew up with. There was no such thing as praying to achieve results. People suffered. People had trouble. They never thought of prayer. There was no personal testimony of experience with God. I never heard a neighbor, man or woman, ever talk about getting any help from God. All of which would mean that there was an emptiness of traditional religion, of formal religion. Later on I learned that you need more than these things. Now I have a great sympathy for people who grow up in the community where their churches are like this.

I would like to mention something else in providence that was very important for me, and that was the world of books that I had. As a boy I learned to read early. I had two sisters older than me and one brother eight years younger than me. Therefore, between the ages of ten and sixteen I was very much alone. We had a church library that had 126 books. Many of them were classics in the English language. You know what they would be like in a church library. I had a lot of time to myself and I began, to read those books, not so much for knowledge, but for interest. Those books were generally well written. Any ability I have to choose the right word for the right situation comes from the fact that I read so many books as a boy. During the time I was just a lad, the church exchanged its library with another church and got 108 new books. By the time I was fourteen or fifteen years of age, I had read over 225 books that were considered good enough to put in a church library. This was a marvelous way of preparing a man who was going to be speaking in public. I had no idea of that, but God knew those things.

Later on in the high school library, I realized how very early I learned so many things. I learned the theories about the universe that were different from the Bible. I read them in these books. I read about evolution in the books. And I read about the Bible and about the "mistakes" in the Bible. I often say I read Ingersoll, the American atheist, and his Mistakes of Moses before I read Exodus and Leviticus. I also read about world religions. Consequently, in the course of these books I got a good acquaintance with ideas. I was introduced to unbelief and to doubt, and of course I wound up as an unbeliever. But still when I did come to know the gospel, this is what had to be considered.

Now perhaps I'll take a moment just to tell you of something else that took place. It just happens that from the very beginning of my life I have time and again been a stranger. The neighborhood in which I grew up was an Irish-Scottish neighborhood. And the name Gutzke was a strange name. That's my name, and I am sure a good many of you, when you first hear it, can't spell it. Now you can just imagine what that was like. I was born in Canada. My father and mother were both born in Canada. But I declare we didn't sound like it with the name Gutzke. And so I was, in a sense, in a minority group of one family, and I know what it is to have the minority point of view. When I went to school in that little country school house, I was the new pupil and I was treated to the hazing that they would give to any new student. They didn't treat me nicely. Believe me I cried many and many a night when I would go home from school. In high school I was a country boy. There were only about two or three boys from the country in the whole school, and I was one of them. They made all kinds of fun about me as the country hick and so on. As you see, I was left the stranger. Even when I became a teacher and went out teaching school as a young man in the community I was treated differently. When I got in the army and they

knew I was a school teacher, you have no idea what they expected. I think they thought I should wear a dress. But in addition to that, by then I was a Christian. When I lived in the army I didn't use profanity. I used no dirty language and I didn't drink any liquor. I didn't even smoke tobacco. Now can you imagine what that would mean? I really was treated like an outcast all the way through. Even when I went to the Bible Institute of Los Angeles I was different in several ways. In the first place, I was a Canadian down in California, and in addition, I had been a skeptic. In all of this God was actually giving me the experience of being a stranger. I know what it is to be a stranger and a pilgrim.

Now I hope as I have reviewed these things with you that you'll be able to feel all the way through what I want you to recognize. God knew what He was doing. God was preparing me for the day when I should step out before the world to communicate the gospel, preach and teach the gospel, to my generation that they might come to know the lord Jesus Christ as their Savior.

## **My Schooling**

My present work is to preach the gospel. My one desire is to share the truth of Jesus Christ with other men. In so doing I may tell you right now I serve as an instrument in the hand of the Lord. I didn't make up the gospel, and I didn't bring the Lord Jesus Christ into the world. But I have been called to tell about it.

In my own experience I have seen how the ways of God have been active in preparing me for my task. The reason why I feel justified in talking about myself this way is that I feel that it is much the same with you. You've got a life to live. You've got work to do. You've got things to face. I am going to suggest to you that the hand of God has been in your affairs preparing you for this very day. If you have particular difficulties and problems, God has been getting you ready to face those things. If you have particular sorrow to experience, if you have burdens to bear, He has led you in things that will prepare you for this. He will not suffer you to be tempted above that you are able. He will with every temptation provide a way of escape that you may be able to bear it (1 Cor.10:13). God has ways of getting us ready. Because of this I feel that others will learn more about themselves as I humbly try to tell what the Lord has done to prepare me.

Now I want to tell you something about my schooling. Learning is oftentimes done in school. I am going to start out like this. Would you believe that English is not my mother tongue? Would you believe that when I was young I didn't talk English? I was born in Canada, that's true, and my parents were Canadian born. But for the first few years of my life I didn't speak a word of English. I spoke a German dialect. I had to learn to speak English. When you take a boy of four or five years of age learning a language, he learns to speak it word by word. He has to learn to enunciate. And I must say that because of that training, speaking clearly hasn't been so difficult.

By the way, I wonder if when you listen to me you would think that there was a time when, as a boy, I had a speech impediment? Would you believe when you're listening to me that there was a time when I stammered? God worked that out in my life too. All of which I say to show you that God caused me in His own way to be sensitive to the matter of utterance.

Now let me go on and tell you some other things. I want to recall the grade school that I discussed in the last chapter. In that schooling experience, the Lord fixed it so that without my knowing what was happening, I was introduced to the idea of people. You know up until then I had just been a boy on a farm. You may not know how isolated a family on the farm can be. I was a little boy with a father and mother and sisters. That's all I was, until I went to school. There I met people and, by the way, I met

society. I met those who thought they were better than others. And among those people, as I was telling you, I was the stranger. They don't bother me any more, but I have bitter memories of the way in which I was treated as a little boy. The cruelty of children - maybe you don't know what it is, but children can be very cruel to other children.

I learned something right there that stayed with me to this day. People will dislike anything that's strange and they dislike anybody that's strange. If you're a stranger living in a certain community and you think your neighbors don't like you, don't think they're peculiar - that's the way people are. People just don't like anything different than they are. And then too, when people don't like you, they will abuse you if they can and abuse just comes easy and natural. I think that was my introduction to what people now call "group ethics." You know when people get together in a group, what everybody thinks is all right is all right. Well everybody thought it was all right to get after me; I can remember that. I had the experience of being in what is usually called the minority; I certainly was. And one way or another, God has left it so that I have been in the minority ever since.

It is not my purpose to run over the whole story. But you know, even as a Christian I am in a minority. Aren't you? Now if you're a Christian believer, don't you feel yourself in the minority? If you're a Christian business-man, don't you find yourself many times standing alone? If you're a Christian woman, if you're a Christian mother, if you're a Christian parent, aren't you oftentimes standing alone? If you're a Christian young person, if you're a high school student, or you're a college student and you're a real Christian, don't you often stand in the place of a minority? Don't be surprised about that. Joshua and Caleb were in the minority (Numbers 13:1-14:38). The people of the New Testament days (the Christians) were always in a minority.

It isn't all negative concerning my experience in school. With this small student body God had me close to the teacher. You might think, "Well now, was that good?" I tell you it was good. Most of those teachers were good women. They wanted to help. And you see in a small school when I was about 6 or 7 years old, there wouldn't be more than three or four other children the same age. That would mean that the teacher would give us special attention. And then too, that very same school, because it was a one room schoolhouse, permitted listening in on other people. I learned a great deal that wasn't in the book. But I learned from the teacher how to teach others. For this, I thank the providence of God.

Now let me go on to speak again about my high school. I was introduced to something else. If I thought I learned something about society in my grammar school out in the country, when I got to high school I learned something about sophistication. I found out what it is to deal with folks who think they're smart. Now we boys called them "smart aleeks." You know what I mean.

At the same time I came across the idea of evolution and thought it was wonderful. I expect I believed evolution for about a year or two, but even before I got out of high school I quit it. I gave it up in high school, and, by the way, I've met it ever since all my life. It's with us right to this day. The questions I raised in high school are still valid. I can still ask the same questions about it. With all that has been said about evolution in all my lifetime, nobody has ever produced one single illustration to prove it. That was the reason I gave it up way back there as a boy in high school. I have gone on through college, and even into seminary; wherever I have been around about it, I just stand in front of anybody and ask him, "Give me one case? If it is supposed to be a scientific fact, give me one illustration." I can tell you something, nobody has done it yet. There has never been one single illustration that can be put down as absolute fact.

I found out that it was supposed to be intellectually respectable if you were a skeptic. If you just said you didn't know, you were considered smart. Without being conscious of it I adopted the practical

agnosticism of the modern intellect. Today people that are real smart and think they're well educated feel that they have to doubt.

I went on from there to teaching school. When I got into education, I had sort of an in-service training that has been helpful to me even to this day. I learned how to talk and I learned how to teach. I learned how to share things with people.

After that I spent about two years in the Canadian Army. While I was in the army, I learned what it was to be under responsibility. This was good for me. I also had to learn something about discipline. I needed it. I learned, while living in the barracks, about the evil tendencies of men. Believe me, it's not just talk. I don't have to read a book on it. All I have to do is shut my eyes and think back over my days in the barracks. You don't have to tell me about man being sinful - I know. Furthermore, I learned in the army something about efficient performance. I was sent to the Headquarters of the Gymnastic Staff Training School. I had to be precise, on the dot, and on the spot with everything. That has stood me in good stead even to this very day.

Sometime later it was my experience to work in a law office. I had the experience of being associated with a very ethical man. Probably one of the most honorable men I ever met was the lawyer I worked under. I learned something further about responsibility.

After that I went to school at the Bible Institute of Los Angeles. I learned about witnessing. I had been a Christian for a number of years, but I had never actually seen people talking to other people about the Lord. Also, while down there I learned about preaching. My experience involved preaching on the streets. If your congregation is standing up, you know they can get mighty tired. They can walk off any time they want to. You are going to have to attract them and hold their attention. Also, while in Biola I learned about Bible interpretation. I learned that various people interpret the Bible various ways with various systems and ideas of Bible interpretation. I learned about church history. In reading church history I became conscious of the fact that people in the history of the church had all kinds of what I will call wild ideas.

Did you ever hear of such a thing as a heresy? Well believe me the Christian church has got it. The Christian church has heresies just like children have measles, and they happen over and over again. We have them with us to this day. All the heresies aren't gone yet. That makes me thoughtful; I have been prepared to refer everything back to Scripture. One word that came to my heart and mind in those days that I kept to this - "To the law and to the testimony: if they speak not according to this word, it is because there is no light in them" (Isa. 8:20). Test every idea by the Bible. If it's not according to the Bible - watch it!

After that I went to the University of Manitoba. I learned something about the various schools of thought among men. I was surprised how men have developed various ideas. Then I went on to finish my B.A. and M.A. at S.M.U., in Dallas, Texas, where I majored in psychology. My minor in philosophy and all my electives were in science. There I became acquainted with the modern mind.

Now you may ask how that helped the gospel. It helped me to understand my people, the folks I talked to. A great many people go to college, and a lot of people are affected by folks who go to college. The modern college that develops the modern mind has placed great emphasis upon what is natural rather than spiritual, what is material and in this world rather than what is heavenly and in that world. In a general way, the natural mind is so given over to the physical and not to the spiritual that it is really not realistic. If you just take the average person going to the average university, you wouldn't think you had a soul at all. You begin to understand how important it is for the gospel to be known.

Finally I finished up with my schooling at Columbia University in New York City where I took my

Ph.D. You know what I learned up there? Men can be wrong. Smart men can be wrong. There are smart men that can figure, figure, figure, and never see. You know why? They've got their back turned to it. A man standing right by a mountain could actually have his eyes opened and never see it if his back is turned to it. I found out that in the university any number of people have their backs turned to Jesus Christ and never look at Him at all. My whole school experience prepared me to deal with people who have also gone to school and who live just like myself. In it all I can tell you one thing: whosoever believeth in the Lord Jesus Christ shall never perish but have everlasting life.

## **People I Have Met**

So much of our life, even as Christians, happens to us without our knowledge or consent, not only the things that happen but the people we meet. It gives a great assurance to the heart to be confident that everything that happens to a person is under control. I am not sure that I am going to say that God causes everything to happen that happens, but I will say that I am sure He overrules everything that does happen to make all things to work together for good. I want to recall with appreciation people I have met. I shall be listing these people in order as they come to my mind.

Above everything else I want to list my mother. She died when I was three and a half years old. I remember my father when he heard my testimony one time took me aside and said to me very gently and quietly that it would be quite impossible for me to remember the details. I was only 3 1/2 years old. I recall that I said to him, "Well, suppose I tell you about the room that she was lying in as she was on her death bed? Suppose I tell you where the window was and what was in the room?" So I went ahead and described where the bed was, where the head of the bed was, where the window was, and as I was talking, although it was many years later, I remember the tears filled his eyes and he nodded his head. He said, "You know, that's the way it was." Under God this woman, who was much younger than I am now, managed in the last time she saw her little boy to leave a light burning in his soul. She lit, as it were, a light in me that burned until the day came when it led me home. She said to me then, "You come and be with me where I'll be." I think that's a wonderful heritage for any one of us to remember our parents. You may have much more to remember than that. Cherish those things.

Right with her I want to list another person that I met, my stepmother. I lived with her much longer. I do not know that I can say fully and adequately all that she meant in my life, but if I repeat the words of my sister you'll get some idea of what she was like. When my sister and I were talking about her after she was gone and we were older people, we agreed between ourselves that she was the most belligerently moral woman we ever knew. She was a great one for doing what was right. And she wanted the blessing of God. She didn't understand the grace of God. She understood only the law of God. She had in her mind that if you did right, God would bless you for it. And she wanted to do right, and she wanted us to do right. She was hard on us to that end. But I look back and I recognize that God used her definitely in my life.

Then I think of my father. He lived to be past 89 years of age. Mind you, he did not come to know the grace of God until he was past 50 years of age. In fact he learned it from me. But I want to say that in all the years that I knew him, I remember he used no profanity. Now he was a farmer. He lived with farmers. I never knew him to take the name of God in vain. There was no desecration of the Sabbath Day. He honored the Sabbath Day all his life and refused to do one bit of work on the Sabbath Day. He was a man who had no indecency about him. He never said anything that was vulgar and ugly. You'll think that was strange, because he was a farmer, but that's the way it was. I oftentimes have said about

him that my sisters could have heard any expression I ever heard him use, and they would not have blushed to hear him speak. A very careful man that way, there was no deceit in him. Now I lived with him the way a boy lives with his father, and we met many, many strangers and many, many people with whom we did business. Many of these people cheated my father. I never knew a time when the man would lie; he was always honest. And he never told a dirty yarn. I never heard him use any obscene expression. I look back on that, and I realize I had a great heritage in him. Let me say one other thing about him because it belongs in here. He was always good to the poor. Now he had to work hard. When I was a boy we were poor people, but my father always remembered the poor, and our house was always open for a poor man.

When I think back of other people, I think of my high school principal, the man that I worked under for several years. He was the soul of honor. We used to say about him that he was a white flame going straight up - absolutely honest, decent and committed to loyalty. I have to remember as I think about that on those days, that he was not a member of the church. Yet he had these fine high principles that he shared with me. He meant a lot in my life.

Now I want to tell you about a farmer who moved into our community, a strange man to us. The man's name was Caruthers. Some of you have heard me talk about him. You know what made him so strange? The very first Sunday he was in the community he went to church. We boys all thought that a man had to get settled before he started going to church. The first Sunday he went to church he found out when Sunday School was held; the second Sunday he came to Sunday School. Not only that, but when he came to Sunday School he did something that other farmers didn't do. He came on time and he went into the Sunday School instead of standing out in the church yard talking to the neighbors. There were only two men that ever went in on time. One of those was the Sunday School superintendent. We never gave him any credit for it because he was the local politician, the only man that was ever elected to an office. So we figured it was a good campaign procedure. The other man was a rather strange person that we all appreciated but, due to his mildness, many of us used to think that he ought to be wearing a dress. He was a kind of a sissy; so different from other people. He was the treasurer of the Sunday School. Apart from those two, the only man who went in on time was Mr. Caruthers. You will not be surprised that the third Sunday he went to that church they made him teacher of the adult class. And he was a good one. All through the years that he was there.

Something else about Mr. Caruthers that struck us boys rather strange. He carried a Bible. We didn't trust any man carrying a Bible, except the preacher. If a preacher carried a Bible that was all right. It was his tool in his trade, but anybody else carrying a Bible we felt was a man you'd have to watch. But Mr. Caruthers carried a Bible. And it was said that in his own house he would return thanks at the table and on occasion was actually known to lead in prayer in the presence of other people. We boys used to try and figure him out. We decided that he was a genius in religion. Now we didn't know what a genius was. We knew that there were artists who were called geniuses but we had never seen one. And we knew there were musicians that were called geniuses. We had seen pictures of them, men like Beethoven and Wagner. But we decided that this man was probably a genius in religion. That meant that he was slightly touched, a bit off, because he seemed to pay so much attention to religious things.

There came a time in our church when we took up our annual offering for foreign missions. That offering would usually amount to anywhere between \$2.75 and \$4.25, depending on how many nickels and dimes and quarters would be given in. I can remember the Sunday that the missionary offering was taken up and Caruthers gave a check for \$40. We just couldn't understand that. We argued about that up and down amongst ourselves. Finally, one of the boys spoke up and said, "I'll tell you he's got something



we don't know anything about. That \$40 - that's not being a genius. That's not being crazy. He's really got something we don't know anything about." We all felt it. In my own experience, when I was coming out of agnosticism to faith, this man Caruthers with his act of giving real money to foreign missions was evidence that I never could set aside. It was the evidence that a man who really believes really gets something out of it. Later he was used of God to turn my own heart in the direction of the light.

I want to tell you about another man I met. This man I knew very little, but his name was Billy Wilson. I met him when I was teaching school. He was a person that, in our part of the country, was called a "holy roller." It was a nickname for a person who belonged to the Holiness Church. He drew a lot of ridicule from the boys. I was a young man among them, and while I can truthfully say that I didn't ridicule him, I didn't say anything for him either. I just stood in with the crowd. They used to make fun of him because of his claim for answered prayer. I remember so well one Friday when there was a heavy hail storm, and it had ruined his crop. The next day was Saturday and we were all going to town when we met Billy Wilson. I recall that the boys I was riding with gave him quite a time. They asked him what the Lord was doing to let it hail on his place. Billy spoke humbly about it and said he didn't know, but he felt that the Lord knew what He was doing. While they were teasing him, he finally made a statement that I noticed. He said, "I told the Lord that if He didn't want me to have a crop, that was all right, but I did want Him to take care of my cattle and make sure I had fodder before the season as out. The grain should grow back enough so that I can cut it as fodder for my cattle." I suspect no one else paid any attention to it, but I noticed it. You know what happened during that summer? It was a rather dry summer but time and again when the showers of rain would come it rained on Billy Wilson's farm. When the fall came he was the only farmer that had feed for sale. And he sold enough feed for cattle to make more than the people who had their crops. That was an impressive thing to me. I was an unbeliever, but I never forgot the quiet patient way in which Billy Wilson bore his testimony and put his trust in God. Nor did I forget that in the course of time that's the way it turned out.

You may have heard me tell about the old farmer, the country postmaster, that I met while he was witnessing for Christ. He began conversations with me and drew me out wisely and patiently, talking to me, using illustrations, explaining to me about the gospel. In the course of several months he was able to show me the gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ.

Then I remember a man by the name of Delgatt. When, I did come to faith, the old farmer sent me over to this old school teacher and said, "You go tell him. You've got to tell him what happened to you." I went over there and I recall how that man said to me, "Now tomorrow I want you to come with me when I go out and hold a church service. I'll hold a preaching service in, the schoolhouse out in the country. I want you to come." When I came along he pressed me that I should get up and tell the people what happened. He was the first one that made me realize that you should tell about your faith. He got me to get up and give my testimony. I'll have to admit that it was a stirring thing. Actually on the day that I gave my first public witness, some eight young people professed faith in the Lord.

I wish I had more time to tell you about many others that come to my mind. Just now I want to tell you about a man whom I met when I was in the service. When I was in the Canadian Army in the First World War, of all the people that I saw and dealt with, one person stands out in my mind. I never knew his name. He was a Gideon from Toronto. He came alone to our camp on Sunday afternoon and conducted a service. He had us sing songs after which he told us about the Lord Jesus Christ. I was a young Christian at the time. He warmed my heart, and throughout all my lifetime I have felt a special blessing in my soul about the Gideons because of that man who sailed on a boat across the lake for three hours in order to witness for his Lord to the soldiers.

Certainly of all the people that I met, and I won't be able to do her justice, is my wife. I met her when she was a school teacher in Western Canada. She was a volunteer for the mission field. Perhaps all I need to tell you is that when we found we were both going to the mission field, it just seemed we ought to join hands and go together. Before I met her, I recall one time thinking about going to the mission field. I remember praying, "Lord, now that I have come to walk with Thee, I probably won't have good sense when it comes to dealing with people and I won't know which way to look for anybody to be my companion. If You want me to have anybody go with me to the mission field, You'll have to bring her." When I met this young woman and I had been with her for just a little while, I prayed, "Lord, do You mean this is the girl?" Well it was, and she's with me to this day. Her father, my father-in-law, was a remarkable man. Born a Jew, trained to be a Rabbi, converted as a youth, he had had a long life of service. This man patiently read Scripture with me and taught me so many things about the Bible that I teach to this day. You will find the next chapter devoted to him.

It was my privilege also to meet and to sit under Dr. R. A. Torrey. I remember the story of his life - a brilliant young professor in Yale University converted from the very brink of committing suicide. Dr. Torrey used to say, "In case you do have a good mind, use it for the people that don't have one. Help them to understand what you understand." I have met a great many people that have contributed to my own understanding of the gospel.

The main thing I want to share with you is this: In ways that I couldn't understand, going far beyond my knowledge, God brought into my life people who were used to help me see things about the gospel. I want you to have in mind that God brings people into your life who can show you things and help you. Look to them. Look to Him and trust Him.

### **My Father-In-Law**

Have you ever noticed the strength of testimony in any converted Jew? "I say then, Hath God cast away his people? God forbid. For I also am an Israelite, of the seed of Abraham, of the tribe of Benjamin." These were the words of the Apostle Paul in Roman 11:1. Paul could say to everyone, "I also am an Israelite, of the seed of Abraham, of the tribe of Benjamin. And I'm a Christian, I'm a believer."

I have been seeking to share with you certain memories that I have of how God in providence overruled in my affairs; how God prepared me for the ministry He put into my hands. It isn't only a matter of being called. It's a matter of being prepared. I am hoping the idea of God preparing you for the service that you're to render, will grow in your heart and mind. You may not be called to preach. It may be that the service that you will render to Him is faithfulness in your own particular home situation, or perhaps in your office. I can tell you right now that so far as you're concerned, God has gotten you ready. There are things that He has done to prepare you for the situation that you face. It may be that you teach a Sunday School class. In that case, He has prepared you for it. It may be that you're an officer in the church or a worker in the church, and He, in that case, has helped you for this. It may be that you are now working in an office as a worker and you have a certain issue before you, a certain responsibility before you to act like a Christian. He has prepared you for that too. Maybe you're a man that does business with other people and you're having great difficulty in maintaining yourself as a Christian man should in the presence of all these other people. Well God has been making you ready for it. He has been preparing you.

Now I want to go on telling you my own story. Just after I felt called out of the law office to give my

life over to serve the Lord in the ministry of the gospel, thinking I was going to the foreign field, I met the girl who became my wife. I met her in Saskatchewan, and eventually I visited her home. I found that her father was a wonderful servant of the Lord. I didn't know when this girl and I got together and committed ourselves to getting married, that her father was a wonderful servant of the Lord. I knew He was a minister, but I had no idea who he was. In the next few years this man greatly affected my life. The Lord in providence brought me into the family of a man who had unusual experience in the gospel and unusual gifts as a minister.

His name was Bernstein, Emmanuel Elias Bernstein, and his heritage was of the tribe of Benjamin. He was a Jew born in Europe. He had been trained as a young man to become a Rabbi but was converted to Christ Jesus through reading the New Testament. He had studied under his grandfather, a very learned Jewish Rabbi. When he became a Christian, he endured the loss of all things, his family, his inheritance, his fortune. He endured this for Christ. He then went ahead to live his life.

I can only tell you that he lived as a layman, went into business, and developed a great testimony in Europe. In our family we still have as a family heirloom a gold medal given to him by the King of Norway as one of the three outstanding Christian laymen in Europe. He preached the gospel in several European languages. Among other things, I remember him telling about how twice he toured the prison camps of Siberia as an evangelist by special permission from the Czar of Russia. It happened in the providence of God that the fortune he had obtained was confiscated by one of the early outbreaks of the Bolsheviks - which afterwards became the Communist Party in Russia.

He came to America where he was ordained and served for a length of time as an evangelist in the western part of both the United States and Canada. He founded a number of churches in Western Canada.

Now this man began to share his insight of Scripture with me. If you can picture this man, who had come from around the world, talking to a young man as limited as I was. We used to read the Scriptures together and go into their meanings. I remember one time when we were reading the Book of Romans, we spent days reading the first six chapters. I mean literally days. We went verse by verse and word by word in reading the first few chapters. I can still remember how he used to come at me about it. After we would read a certain passage he would say to me, "What do you think this passage says?" He would make me speak out and say what I thought it said. And after we had talked about that and he had discussed it with me some, he would then ask me this question, "Now what do you think Paul meant when he wrote that?" That involved knowing all Paul had in mind and all of the Old Testament. I still recall those times.

Of course I read English and could understand it, and I could read and understand German. I also had a little acquaintance with Latin. But this man could read English, German, Hebrew, Greek, Russian and a number of other languages. He had the French translation of the Scripture too. We had six, seven, eight different European editions around. He would read one and then he'd read the other. He'd pick up something maybe that was written in German. Then again he would turn around and read it the way it was written in Russian. Then he would pick it up the way it was written in the Greek. He'd shake his head and say, "No, not that! No, not that!" I used to say to him, "How do you know? If you have all these different languages before you, how would you know?" Then he'd smile and he'd say to me, "You know in your heart. You can just tell if it fits all the other Scriptures that you know." I learned some wonderful things from him.

I remember one time we were reading in a certain passage and he said, "Now where else in the Bible do you know that?" I didn't at the time know of any other place. Then he said this to me, "If you can't find

another place in Scripture where it says it, don't you say it." I looked at him. He said, "It's true. But you may not know what it means." I said, "What do you mean?" He said, "In the mouth of two or three witnesses every word is established. It's when you know a thing in several places, then you can remember this. You'll see it here. You'll see it there. And you compare two, three, four passages of Scripture, then you'll get the truth. The truth is in the balance of Scripture." That's very, very profound.

One time he stopped me in my tracks when he asked me a question. Sitting in his office he said to me, "You're planning to go to the mission field. Why?" Well I thought that was a strange question for him to ask. "Are you going out there to teach? Suppose they won't listen? Suppose nobody comes to listen? Will you come home?" Well I didn't quite know what to say. He said, "Are you going out to help them?" "Well, yes." "Well suppose they don't want help? Suppose they'll never turn to you for help. What are you going to do?" he said. That left me rather baffled. He said, "I suppose you think you're going out to win somebody for Christ?" "Why, of course, yes, I am going out to win them," I said. He countered with, "Suppose you don't win anybody? Suppose you don't win one person?" When I, of course, felt rather upset by that, he said, "Well let us say it like this: you go out there, and suppose before you ever learn a language, you die. Was it a mistake. Should you not have gone? Should you have stayed home? It didn't seem like there was anything I could say. He didn't tell me that day, but the next day he very quietly told me, "Listen, when you go to the foreign field, remember that Jesus said, 'Go into all the world, and lo I am with you always.' He is with you, but He is in front of you. You go to be with Him, and if you're following Him and you go to be with Him, you won't ever make a mistake." God in providence brought this wise servant into my life.

## **Lessons I Learned**

It's not so easy to remember that when we were born we knew nothing. Every thing that we ever know we must learn. I think sometimes we are inclined to blame people when they don't know and when they don't understand. It would be helpful for us all to keep in mind that if you haven't heard about something, chances are you probably don't know anything about it. When we get wise enough about these things we will turn to the Bible. We can learn from the Bible faster and more effectively than we can from experience. But even so, the Lord will lead us into experiences from which we learn. I realize that God has shown me things by leading me through experiences in which I would learn. Now some of what we learn is just plain good practical sense, but it's very important to know. And some of what we learn is just plain good practical promise of what God will do, and that's very important to know. Just because you hear a thing once or even read it once that doesn't mean you know it. You need to learn these things. Many times I was being shown truth that I did not recognize until afterwards when, I looked back and saw that I had really learned a big thing.

I have listed some of those now, and as you read them, I want you to be thinking in your own heart and mind of the things that the Lord has shown you. By the way, if you have the feeling deep down in your heart that you wish you knew more about the Lord, more about the gospel, I want to sympathize with you and tell you that I do too. At the same time I realize that as the years have gone by I have learned more and more. Many times God has shown me things that He wanted me to share with other people. As I think back in my life, I have picked out a few things.

The first thing is something that I learned when I was just a little boy. I found out that if you let the other fellow have it, that usually ends the quarrel. I wish I had remembered that all my life. Let me say that over again. Let the other fellow have it. That usually ends the quarrel.

The next thing that comes to mind I learned when I was going to school. You know among each other boys fuss and fight. They have trouble and tension. I always hated it, but we have it. But I learned this: let the other fellow go in first. That usually ends the race. It usually ends the strife.

Now you could have found this out yourself. You could learn it from the Book of Proverbs. It's all in there. But the Lord showed it to me in daily living, as a boy at school. I remember in that connection with this there was one boy just about my age and size. It seemed he always wanted to fight and, strange to say, I didn't want to. I really did not want to fight. In the first place, I might get hurt; in the second place, I'd have to hurt him, and I didn't have any desire to hurt him. I remember so well one time he got me into a situation and he just made a real point of it. He said something like this, "Well I'm just stronger than you are, I'm just a better man than you are." You know that's supposed to be fighting words. I found out I could let him say so. So I said, "Sure you are." You know what? There was no fight. Do you suppose that changed anything or made him better than I was? Why no. Don't pay any attention to what people say. Concede the point. What difference does it make? Then you can live at peace.

As I came to understand more about the gospel and about the things of God, I found this out: a person does not naturally know the gospel. You're not born with that knowledge. Paul says, "How shall they believe if they don't hear and how shall they hear if they don't preach?" No, you need to hear it. You could grow up to manhood or womanhood, and if you haven't been taught the gospel, this is no sign that you're stupid. It's no sign that you couldn't learn. But if someone hasn't explained it to you, you really don't know it. Do you feel right now that if anyone was to ask you what the gospel really is you would be able to tell them? I wish you would find out for yourself. It's believing the gospel that will save the soul.

I have something else I learned. You can feel sad about this, but it is the truth. I found that many preachers do not preach the gospel. Now I know it, but back there it was a new thing to me. I found out that you could listen to a man preach and listen to him and listen to him and you'd never find out what God was going to do for you. You wouldn't know that He gave His Son to die for you. Maybe that was in the hymns and maybe it was in the man's prayers, but he just never talked about it. Sometimes they'll tell you that they don't preach the gospel because they say the people want to hear something new. Do you know what I think about that? Do you want something else than air to breathe? Why that's ridiculous. Well so it is with reference to the gospel.

I also learned that the testimony of a dead church is misleading. You could be fooled. If you're in a church that is not alive spiritually, you could be fooled. You'll think that reading the Bible isn't important. It is! If you're in a church like that, you'll think that there's no use in praying. You could be in a church that doesn't read the Bible and doesn't pray and you could get the notion that those things don't matter. The testimony of a dead church is misleading.

Are you in a church that doesn't make something of Bible study? Are you by any chance attending a church that doesn't pray and doesn't make something of prayer. Well don't believe what you hear. I tell you right now that Bible reading and praying and seeking the face of the Lord is important.

Here's another thing that I learned. This is more or less personal. Believing is not a matter of knowing. It's a matter of putting your trust in, a matter of having confidence in. You'd have to know something in order to believe anything. But when you believe in a person you put your trust in him. You see I might look at a bridge and not believe in it. I could know the bridge is there but I might not have any confidence in it. I might know that such and such a man is a doctor, but I have no confidence in him. But when I have confidence in him I believe in him. That's the meaning of it.

Here's another word that I learned, and this was very important. Doubting everything is not

intelligent. Let me say that again. I had to learn this the hard way. To doubt everything - that's not smart. I used to think it was. I used to think that if I doubted, that meant I was clever. Suppose when your landlady brought you your eggs in the morning at breakfast, you said to her, "Now, Mrs. Cunningham, do you know whether or not these eggs have been poisoned?" While you're thinking about that, suppose I go to a store and a man gives me a \$5 bill, as my change. I hold it in my hand a minute and I say to him, "Do you know whether this is counterfeit? Do you know whether this is a real bill? Did you take it to the bank to get it certified?" Now while you're thinking about that, wait a minute. Suppose I go into an elevator and as I am going to get into the elevator I stop the elevator operator and I say, "By the way, did you have your cable checked since the last time you went up on this elevator? Do you know for sure it won't break?" Suppose a man invites me to ride with him downtown. I say, "Wait a minute, did you check your steering gear? Do you know your steering gear is all right? Have you checked the rear axle? You know it won't break?" Suppose I did that? Now mind you, these are exact things that I checked over in my mind when I was a young schoolteacher, when I was going on the idea that if I doubted, doubted, doubted, I'd be smart. I put these things in my mind and asked myself what would happen if I doubted everything that way? I tell you it made me self-conscious. You know what would happen? They'd be out looking for me with a net because I'd be as crazy as a loon if I was doubting everything. It's not intelligent to doubt everything.

Not long ago I was going to speak at a meeting of a certain club and I arrived early. There was a lady setting the tables who was the secretary of the club. After we had met each other, she said, "Oh, you're the speaker today." I said, "Yes, I'm the speaker." She went on setting the tables. She stopped again looked up at me and said, "You're a preacher?" I said, "Yes, I'm a preacher." She worked along a bit and finally turned to me and said, "Do you believe the Bible?" I said, "Yes, I believe the Bible." After awhile she said, "Who wrote Genesis?" I said "Well, I don't know for sure who wrote Genesis. I think Moses did, because that's the traditional idea. She stopped, "You mean you don't know for sure who wrote it?" I said, "That's right, I don't know for sure who actually wrote it." "And yet you believe it?" "Yes, I believe it." "Well, isn't that funny?" You know what I told her? I said, "Yes, but I'm a funny person. I have just been to my doctor and went to the drug store to have a prescription filled and I bought some capsules. I bought these vitamin pills." I took the little package out of my pocket and I showed it to her. "See these? You know what? I don't even know the name of the druggist who made them up. I really don't. I don't know the name of the druggist who put them things together. But you know what? I'm going to take them. I'm just funny that way." Yes, I want to tell you something. To doubt everything - that's not intelligent. But to believe upon sufficient evidence - that makes sense.

Suppose I were to stand at a bridge and wonder whether it would hold me if I drove over it. While I am sitting there on the side of the road a man driving a great big truck comes by. He stops and he calls out to me and says, "Hello there buddy, you having any trouble?" I say, "No, I'm not having any trouble, but I just don't know whether that bridge will hold me. I'm afraid to drive on it." He says, "Oh, it will hold you all right." "How do you know?" He points at his big truck that is loaded with rock, "I go over it every day. Watch me now. I'll go over it." I'd have sufficient evidence to trust that bridge even if I weren't an engineer. If that man can drive that truck over, I can drive my car over.

I learned something else. To believe everything you see is foolish. Did you ever think of that? You can't believe everything you see. While I was trying to understand about the gospel, I was insisting I'd only believe what I could see. Suddenly I realized that you can't believe everything you see. Did you ever stand on a railroad track? Did you ever look down about half a mile away from you? What do you see the rails doing? Now you never saw a railroad track like that that you didn't see those rails coming

together. Do you believe it? You know perfectly well they don't come together, but that's what it looks like. Have you ever seen a pencil in a glass half full of water? It looks like the pencil is broken. Is the pencil broken? No, it just looks like it. You see you can't believe everything just the way it looks. You have to believe it the way you understand it. These are lessons that I learned.

I guess the greatest lesson I learned in all of my preparation for the ministry was that Jesus of Nazareth, that you read about in the New Testament, that Person told about in Matthew, Mark, Luke and John, is right now the living Son of God who died for me. He was raised from the dead. He is in heaven right now waiting for me. This is the greatest thing I ever learned. This is a lesson I have learned that I can go on with from now on.

I also learned in that connection that the testimony of a new born soul carries great weight. It's a wonderful thing to give witness to the Lord. I told you of the first time I got up and bore witness and told in public that I had believed in the Lord Jesus Christ. Eight people were able to believe when they heard me.

Here's something else. I know it's true in Scripture and would be true anyway, but I had to learn it for myself. "Faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God" (Rom. 10:17). You read the Bible and read the Bible and read the Bible, and I'll promise you one thing. Faith will grow in your soul.

There's yet more I want to tell you. "It is not good that the man should be alone" (Gen. 2:18). I don't mean just the matter of getting married. I mean in the matter of having Christian fellowship. It's not good for you to be left alone as a Christian. Now if you are a Christian and you are more or less by yourself, that's not good. Find some other Christians and be with them. If you can possibly manage it, join some church and get in with some Christian people. It's not good to be alone. I know, because I was that way. In fact I got very chilled, very cold, very weak in my faith because I was alone.

Here's something else I learned from personal experience. "Whosoever therefore shall confess me before men, him will I confess also before my Father which is in heaven" (Matt. 10:32). This thing was brought into my very soul at a time when I wondered whether I was a real Christian. I actually wondered whether or not I was a Christian because I had gotten to be so cold. I wish I had time to tell you the evidence I have for the next one, but I will just put it to you very simply. God answers prayer. I learned it. I know it. God answers prayer. It doesn't mean that God gives me everything I ask for, for this reason: I don't always ask for good things. "We know not what we should pray for as we ought" (Rom. 8:26). But I want to tell you one thing. If I have been led in my heart and soul to pray for something that I feel is the right thing, I can tell you from experience that God answers prayer.

This next matter that I have learned strengthens me every day that I live. Listen to this: "Them that honor me I will honor" (I Sam. 2:30). There you are. If you honor the Lord, believe me, He will honor you. Honor the Lord by keeping the Sabbath Day, honor the Lord by going to church, honor the Lord by reading the Bible, honor the Lord by praying, honor the Lord by giving to His work. Every time you honor the Lord He will honor you.

I have time for only about one or two more. I learned one thing as I was getting ready for my whole life work. There is no such thing as a foreign mission field. It's the whole world. It's into the whole world we are sent, at home and abroad. And this is one thing for sure, "To as many as receive Him, to them gives He the power to become the children of God" (John 1:12). These are some of the lessons that I learned as God was getting me ready to preach the gospel.