

RANDOM & REMINISCENCE

By
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Special Acknowledgement is due to Dr. and Mrs. Adam Thropay for their helpful ways; to Mr. and Mrs. Calvin Fletcher for their kind encouragement; to his daughter, Naomi W. Nickerson, for her thoughtful critique. All are greatly appreciated by the author.

Dedicated to the Memory of my Dearly Beloved companion for almost fifty-nine years, the wife of my youth, Eunice J. Williams, now waiting in His Presence for the glorious consummation and our Blessed Reunion.

Precious in the sight of The Lord is the death of His saints (Ps. 116:15)

As for me (Ps. 17:15)

Together with them (1 Thess. 4:17)

About the Author:

Theodore Williams, Sr., is a Gospel preacher, a shepherd, and a gifted Bible teacher. Born to a poor sharecropper's family in the deep south, he was led in a remarkable way to a deeply committed life of full-time service. The Lord has used him in many special and unique ways, for the past 60 years.

After his conversion, Theodore Williams felt the need of further study. He attended and matriculated from the Moorehouse Theological Seminary, Detroit, Michigan, with a Bachelor of Divinity degree. He was ordained as a minister in 1927. His potential gift as a minister was recognized by his peers. At the young age of 25 he was nominated vice-president of the National Baptist Convention.

Always an earnest Bible student, and fully committed to obeying the principles he found in the Word of God, Mr. Williams was led to make seemingly radical changes in the course of his Christian ministry. This book was written to share some of his experiences, and lessons graciously taught by the Holy Spirit of God.

The author and his late wife, Eunice, were blessed with eight children. Mrs. Williams, whom he affectionately called "My Queen", provided a steady, quiet, yet driving impetus to her husband's ministry. In that sense this book is a memorial to her. *She will do him good, and not evil, all the days of her life. (Proverbs 31:12)*

PREFACE

The title of this book sufficiently indicates its' purpose. It is one way of saying "EBENEZER" touching a few real experiences of the past sixty years. Another way of saying "MARANATHA" touching the reality of the future.

While intended primarily for any who may be exercised about pioneering on the Home Front or working in Fields still untouched by the Gospel of the Grace of God. We trust it may be helpful to some ministers who have marched out of the Seminary into "great pulpits" knowing nothing of the Tempestuous wind, called Euroclydon. As will be readily seen, considerable use has been made of poetic thoughts, old and new. A number of books quoted which were a great help and encouragement to us when nights were dark and the waters deep. If we have transgressed any copyright, it has been done inadvertently and we ask the owners to forgive us.

We know two of the best ways to commend the Grace of Christ, one is by precept and the other by example. The Apostle Paul taught Believers to follow him as he followed Christ. Thus showing how much he recognized the force of example. We are conscious of our limitations and our readers will doubtless discover more. We are simply presenting a few details of trials and tragedies in the way He led us so many years. So vast and deep, so wide and high, one feels the utter feebleness of effort to set forth some of the victories in this path. "Out of the spoils won in battles did they dedicate to maintain the house of the Lord".

But such as it is, I prayerfully commend it to God for His blessing. If CHRIST is glorified, souls saved and led on in His Ways, I shall praise Him forever.

TW. Sr.

INTRODUCTION

Over 75 years have passed since I discovered America, on the outer edge of a cotton field in Bibb County, Georgia. Today, my wall calendar reads May 8th. This date is very important to me because it marks 60 years since I saw my true condition before GOD, and was saved by His grace through faith in His ever-blessed SON, Jesus Christ. The following pages are from the pen of a twice-born man.

God said to his covenant people, ". . .remember all the way which the Lord thy God led thee." (Deut. 8:2) Memory is a remarkable faculty, but it does not hold everything. We have forgotten a lot of things that should be remembered, and we remember some things that might be better forgotten! But the Lord not only exhorted His people to remember — He authorized us to put some things in writing. After the battle with the Amalekites in Exodus 17:14, the Lord said unto Moses, "Write this for a memorial in a book, and rehearse it in the ears of Joshua; for I will utterly put out the remembrance of Amalek from under heaven."

Before beginning this brief memorial of how the Lord has led me, I would like to quote a well-known prayer:

"Lord, Thou knowest better than I know myself that I am growing old, and will some day be old. Keep me from the fatal habit of thinking I must say something on every subject, and on every occasion. Release me from craving to straighten out everybody's affairs. Make me thoughtful, but not moody; helpful, but not bossy. With my vast store of experience it seems a pity not to use it all. But Thou knowest, Lord, that I want a few friends at the end.

"Keep my mind free from endless details; give me wings to get to the point. Seal my lips on my aches and pains — they are increasing and a love of rehearsing them is becoming sweeter as the years go by. I dare not ask for grace enough to enjoy the tales of others' pains; help me to endure them with patience. I dare not ask for improved memory, but for a growing humility and lessening of cock sureness, when my memory seems to clash with the memories of others. Teach me the glorious lesson that occasionally I may be mistaken.

"Keep me reasonably sweet. I do not want to be a Sunday Saint; some of them are too hard to live with. But a sour old person is one of the crowning works of the devil. Give me the ability to see good in things in unexpected places and talent in unexpected people. Give me, Lord, the grace to tell them so. AMEN."

MY CONVERSION

Faintly I recall the sight of a very long procession of mule-drawn wagons bearing the body of my mother, Lula Wilson Williams, on July 20, 1908. My father, Arthur Williams, was left with eight children.

A very large family Bible rested on the little center table of our three-room house. But all I ever saw in that Bible was four-leaf clovers, birth records, locks of babies' hair, and pictures — of two-winged angels and of the devil with horns and forked feet. I never, never heard anyone reading from that Bible, although we were told that it was the Word of God. We also never heard anyone praying in our home. Sometimes we sang what is now known as spirituals. Somewhere along the way I heard of Jesus, but I did not know who He was. I always believed that there is a God above the sky, but never knew who He was, or how to get to Him.

I was spiritually awakened, I believe for the first time, in 1911. I stood with the children from my first-grade class of the Bibb County Public School on Lundy Road north of Macon, Georgia. Through the glass of an old horse-drawn hearse, I saw a black casket containing the body of a total stranger to me. . . I watched as they turned slowly from the main road to the trail leading to the old cemetery in the woods, where lay the dust of slaves and ex-slaves. Following behind that hearse, I kept wondering in my little mind where the man had gone, and if that were me, where would I be? I kept those thoughts to myself. The hush of eternity gripped my soul. At the top of the hill, six men took the coffin from the hearse, and bearing it upon their shoulders they walked slowly down the hill to an open grave of red clay. I can't remember a word read or spoken by the preacher, but recall only the words of an old dirge:

*"Hark, from the tomb, a doleful sound,
I heard a tender cry,
Ye living man, come view this ground,
Where thou shalt shortly lie."*

Who can forget that mournful cry, the awesome wailing echoing from the deep valleys and the red hills of that old cemetery? Even the mules were moved by the "doleful sound." Was it true that people had no hope?

Less than two years later, another voice spoke to me about eternity. During the noon recess at school, one of my classmates — a small girl — went home for dinner. While she was attempting to light a fire in the old-fashioned cooking stove, the kerosene oil exploded in her hands, and she perished in the flame. The next day a very large crowd of all the school children and many friends and relatives marched back to that same old cemetery in the woods. All I remember hearing is that heart-breaking phrase, "ashes to ashes, dust to dust," which humbles me to this day. The grief-stricken mother had to be restrained from jumping into the grave, atop the pine box which held the body of her daughter. "Farewell, farewell, farewell," she kept calling. I thought, there must be something on the other side, but what is it? Of course I did not know, because I was lost — spiritually dead.

In April of 1917, my 17-year old brother, Arthur Jr., was cut down in cold blood. The murderer was never captured. So once again I looked into an open grave, very near the spot where the little girl had been buried. Arthur had no hope of salvation, as far as I know.

Late in June of the same year, my father and I moved away from the little old tin-roof house by the dusty road, twelve miles northeast of Macon. July 4th found us in Detroit, Michigan — a new world to me, to be sure. Here I wandered in the slums of the lower East side, still in my sins, but with a deep longing to know something of the hereafter. The thought of eternity troubled me day and night. Of all the thousands of people moving up and down in Detroit, no one ever gave me a gospel tract or spoke to me about my soul. But someone, somewhere, somehow, left a little New Testament/Psalms where I could get it. I read Matthew, Mark, Luke and John. I had no interest in the epistles, and Psalms did not appeal to me, either. My first impression of the gospel was that it all seemed like a great drama — a play of some kind, where Jesus was the victim of foul-play and the Jews were wicked murderers. I know now that "the god of this world" had blinded my eyes. (II Cor. 4:4) At any rate, I did not find the answers to my questions. I was lost but did not know it. No one ever told me that I was on my way to hell. "Oh, if I only knew what it is all about," was my daily cry.

In those critical hours, I kept mostly to myself. Late one Sunday afternoon, I walked along St. Aubin Street. At the corner of Mullet stood a little old-fashioned frame church building, known as the

Macedonia Church. People were going in for the evening service. I went in and listened to the message, but what was said was not clear to me. The choir singing was good, I thought, even though I did not know the songs. No one spoke to me before I left, but I was minded to return there sometime to hear the choir sing.

The very next Sunday I returned to the Macedonia Church. A large crowd had gathered, and I had to stand in the aisle along with several strangers. The choir singing was simply wonderful. There might have been 75 or 100 singers. The pastor read and preached from what I now know to be Luke 19:10 — "*The Son of Man is come to seek and to save that which was lost.*" He kept repeating the words, "Lost, lost, lost." The truth of the verse began to dawn upon me, and as I stood in the aisle I said to myself. "Thank God, that Jesus came to save me, a lost sinner." When the invitation was given, all I knew was to accept Him. I handed my hat to a stranger standing beside me, and walked down that long aisle and took my stand beside that preacher, before a very large crowd of people, whom I had never seen before.

The pastor said, "Son, why did you come down here?"

"Sir," I said, "I want to be saved."

"Son, do you believe that God, for the sake of His Son Jesus Christ, has forgiven you for all your sin?"

"Yes, I do."

He turned to the seven deacons and said, "You have heard the testimony of this young man, and what is your pleasure?" Unanimously the deacons agreed to accept me as a candidate for baptism, and then for fellowship in the Macedonia Church.

On May 17th, 1921, I followed the Lord into the waters of baptism. Standing in the water, the preacher asked me, "Theodore Williams, do you believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God?"

"I do believe."

Now upon your confession of faith in Christ, I baptize you, my brother, in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit."

Once a lost and silly wanderer,
On the broad and crowded way,
Jesus died to have me yonder,
With Himself to endless day.

He is now my richest treasure,
Sweetest portion of my soul,
Soon I'll be with him forever,
While the endless ages roll.

Calvary's Lamb shall fill my vision,
In the home of sweet repose,
Heart and voice together sounding,
Priase to Him who died and rose.

Hasten Lord, that joyful coming,
When with Christ above the sky,
Free from pain and sin and sorrow,
Tears shall never dim the eye.

When Lord, shall this blissful moment,
Burst upon my waiting soul?
For that shout I've long been waiting,
For that mighty trumpet roll,

King of Kings in all His beauty,
Lord of Lords my heart shall own,
Oh, the thought my spirit gladdens,
Come Lord Jesus, quickly come.

Meanwhile Lord, I live to serve Thee,
Glorify Thy precious name,
Thou who for me bore sin's judgment,
Died upon the cross of shame.

Tread the footsteps Thou hast trodden,
Share with Thee reproach and loss,
Turn away from this world's glitter,
Count all else beside Thee dross.

On May 22nd, I was received as a member of the Macedonia church. On the first Sunday in June, for the first time I took the bread and wine in remembrance of the Lord Jesus Christ. What a joyful time it was!

Hail, sovereign love, which first began
That scheme to rescue sinful man!
His, matchless, free eternal grace,
Which gave my soul a hiding place!

Against the God who built the sky,
I fought with hands uplifted high:
Despised the mention of His grace,
Too proud to seek a hiding place.

Enwrapped in thick Egyptian night,
And fond of darkness more than light:
Madly I ran the sinful race,
Secure without a hiding place.

Thus the eternal counsels ran:
"Almighty love, arrest that man!"
I felt the arrows of distress,
And found I had no hiding place.

Indignant justice stood in view!
To Sinai's fiery mount I flew,
But justice cried with frowning face:
"This mountain is no hiding place."

On Jesus, God's just vengeance fell,
Which would have sunk a world to hell:
He bore it for a sinful race,
And thus became my hiding place!

Should seven-fold storms of thunder roll:
And shake this globe from pole to pole,
No thunder bolt shall daunt my face...
For Jesus is my hiding place!

A few more rolling suns at most,
Shall land me on fair Canaan's coast,
Where I shall sing the song of grace,
And see my glorious hiding place!

Did I have any doubts? Yes. Not long after my conversion I read something in the Bible about perfect love, and I knew that I did not have perfect love. Today, I know I was looking in the wrong direction for it. Because, "as he is," in respect of judgment, "so are we in this world." (I John 4:17) Some have observed the progress in the blind man's comprehension of Christ. (John 9) First, he said, "a man named Jesus." Then, "He is a prophet." And thirdly, "a worshipper of God." He worshipped Him. To know Him is to worship and to serve Him. It was not long before I knew something of Galatians 5:17 — "the works of the flesh," and Galatians 5:22 — "The fruit of the Spirit." Finally all doubts were settled, by the written Word of God.

Settled forever, sin's tremendous claim,
 Glory to Jesus, blessed by His name.
 No partway measure does His grace provide,
 Finished the work was, when the Saviour died.

Now after 60 years, I say boldly, "The blood applied, satisfies God." The Word satisfies me, and a changed life satisfies the world around us.

Oh happy day in my life, when I could say with another,
 "In peace let me resign my breath and Thy salvation see;
 My sins deserved eternal death, but Jesus died for me."

"These things have I written unto you that believe on the name of the Son of God, that ye may know that ye have eternal life." (I John 5:13)

MY CALL

Soon after all the doubts were settled regarding salvation, my heart became heavy at the thought of others still in darkness. I had one deep longing to bear the message to others, that they, too, might be free. That was all the "call" I knew. When the Lord Jesus freed the maniac of Gadara, he told him, "Go home to thy friends, and tell how great things the Lord hath done for thee, and has had compassion on thee." (Mark 5:19)

My first official appointment was to teach a junior Sunday School class, a task which I greatly enjoyed. After the class, I began doing duty as an usher. I always enjoyed meeting people, especially strangers. Sometimes they seemed surprised to have someone greet them warmly with a smile.

While serving as Secretary on the Board of Deacons of the Macedonia Church; I got up enough courage to tell the pastor and deacons of my exercise to preach the gospel, and to my surprise, no one seemed startled at the announcement. The pastor asked me, "And what is the gospel that you are going to preach?" My answer from I Cor. 15:1-3 satisfied him.

"You know," he said, "I will do all I can for you, to help you along."

I requested a Sunday afternoon trial sermon, but that was denied. However, a date was set to hear me at a prayer meeting on Wednesday night. The next task was to tell the woman "whom Thou gavest to be with me." What would she say? How would she react? Being the daughter of a lay-preacher, there were questions in her mind about her young husband going out to preach.

She said, "We have enough Jack-legged preachers now," — meaning those who preach without any formal training. It left me silent, as I indeed had no training, just a deep longing to tell what I knew of the truth of the Gospel.

"Well," she continued, "I am going to hear you on Wednesday night, and if anyone laughs at you, I'll join in the laughter." I said nothing. I had only a few days to get my sermon ready and written out. I chose Romans 10:9, 10 for the text. But once on my feet before that curious crowd (including my wife and our young son, Theodore, Jr.), I could not read one line, and all I was going to say had left me. So I just had to trust God. I knew from the silence of the place that God was sealing my testimony concerning His blessed Son. I remember closing my remarks with Peter's confession of Christ in Matthew 16:16. I was very glad when it was all over. In his final prayer, the pastor prayed for me. Then I reached over the front seat, took little Theodore from his mother's arms, and walked swiftly out of the side door, heading for home. Not a word was spoken en route. Once inside the door, my wife put the baby to bed, and we sat down in silence, staring at the floor. This woman of a meek and quiet spirit opened her mouth at last.

"I am sorry for what I said to you the other day. It was a stinging criticism..." and I knew before she finished her confession that God had sealed my call to her. It was truly a memorable night, never to be forgotten. She continued, "If the Lord has called you to preach, I'll never hinder you." A great woman; a wise woman; she looked well to the ways of her household, and ate not the bread of idleness. "*Her children rise up and call her blessed; her husband also, and he praiseth her.*" Prov. 31:27.

OFF AND RUNNING

Armed with my license to preach and burning zeal, my only thought was to preach. One night I took a street car with a one-way fare across town, to a little store-front church, where I hoped to preach and to get carfare home that night. To my bitter disappointment, another young man preached, and of all scriptures, he used, "*Whatsoever he saith unto you, do it.*" I could not concentrate on the message, for wondering how I would get back home. Near the close of the meeting the pastor, then a railroad Pullman porter, looked up at me and said, "Rev. Williams will preach for us next Sunday night." Then I began walking slowly over to the Chene St. street-car line, south of the Detroit River, just a stone's cast from Windsor, Ontario. I walked all the way home, and found my wife pacing the floor, well after midnight, wondering what had happened to her preacher-husband.

"Oh," I said, "I'm going to preach at Rev. Toomes' church next Sunday night," and I did. The collection? 47 cents.

LEARNING

I had to learn the hard way. An experienced pastor advised me to stop running around here and there, to stay under my pastor until I learned a few things. But I wouldn't listen. I thought that since I was a licensed preacher, I had to keep at it. One Sunday afternoon, in the lower East Side slum district, I found a little so-called Holiness Church. Everything going on within could be heard outside, as I stood on the sidewalk. I went inside and sat down in the back. It seemed like everyone was saying "Amen, amen, amen, Praise the

Lord" all at once. I could scarcely tell what the preacher was saying. I was hoping I could get a shot at it, and sure enough, one of the elders motioned me up to the pulpit, and asked me if I had anything to say. As I read Romans 5:1 — a word about justification by faith, and peace with God — a strange unearthly silence filled the place. I couldn't understand why no one said Amen to my preaching!

The man who followed me in line got up with an "Amen, Praise the Lord, Praise the Lord." He told a story about a little boy who lived on a farm. One day he was going to the city with a live rabbit for his brother, who was sick in the hospital. Near the city limits, the rabbit jumped from the wagon and ran toward the city. "Come back here, rabbit, come back here...you don't have the address of the hospital! Come on back — we've got the address." The moral of this little story was very clear — "Williams, you don't have it!" Or, what they had did not fit in with Romans 5:1. Everybody started back on "Amen, amen, glory to God, Amen."

This experience cooled my zeal somewhat. From then on, I found more time for the church, under the wings of the pastor. Being that he was getting older, I was needed there. So I became a sort of assistant pastor.

During my time as assistant pastor, I had the joy of seeing many souls saved, and also the high honour of baptizing 19 believers in the same baptistry where I had been "buried with Him" in 1921.

MOVING UP

"Give attendance to reading" now became my motto. Soon, armed with the knowledge of the 18 articles of the Baptist faith, I sat down before the Detroit Baptist Council, for a rigid examination required of all candidates for ordination to the ministry. My mark was 95, with a failure in church history. A resolution was passed to send me back for more study, at least for one year. However, because the pastor was ailing, the church demanded my ordination at once. This took place on December 20, 1927. I was appointed assistant pastor of the 900-member Macedonian Church.

During the next few years, I attended Moorhouse Theological Institution for further training and graduated with a Bachelor of Divinity degree on June 7, 1933.

Up to this point, I had never had a brush with modernism, and I was shocked to the core when I heard a lecture on Comparative Religions, and the speaker lumped together Buddha, Breene, Confucius, Gandhi, and Jesus. Professor Chandler, a Calvinist, was up on his feet immediately, and took issue with the statement before the entire class of about 30 or 40 preachers. The ensuing battle simply drove me to the Book. Without knowing it then, I became like the Bereans — *"These were more noble than those in Thessalonica, in that they received the Word of God with all readiness of mind, and searched the scriptures daily, whether those things were so."* (Acts 17:11) I had been taught as a child that the Bible is the Word of God, and I still believe so. I've never doubted its full and final authority in all matters pertaining to life and godliness, for time and eternity. *"Forever, O Lord, Thy Word is settled in heaven."* (Psalm 119:89)

In 1931, I accepted a call to the First Baptist Church of West 8 Mile Road, a subdivision of Detroit. I was still learning — and this first lesson was very bitter. In seminary, we had been taught Pastoral Theology — how to counsel, how to perform funerals, how to pay hospital visits, etc. — but in that large congregation of people with various backgrounds, pastoral theology was quite a different thing. The methods I had been taught simply did not work.

The next hard lesson was a very sad experience for me. I found that a good number of the congregation were actually not saved at all. The first clear instance of this came to light one Sunday right after the morning service. While Mrs. Williams was preparing lunch, a member of the church came in and threw himself down on the couch in our living room. He seemed worn out and restless. I asked him, "Tell me, how did you get saved?"

"Well, Reverend," he said, "down south, some years ago, I went to a revival meeting way out in the country. The man preached, and he asked us to come up and join the church; I joined that night, but when I went home I was not satisfied about it, so I prayed and asked the Lord to show me by some sign that I had really got religion. The Lord showed me my cousin Daniel, (who had passed away 3 weeks before) sitting under an oak tree, wearing a red striped sweater, and playing his banjo."

At that point he broke down and wept, so I said, "Go on, tell me how you got saved?"

"That's it," he said, and kept weeping.

"Tell me," I asked, "what did the man preach about that night?"

"I don't know, but he sure did preach!"

I replied, "Well, Mr. _____, it is my painful duty to tell you here and now, you are not saved at all," I thought he would rise to the situation and tell me what I wanted to hear. But he told me point-blank that he would die with what he had.

With that, questions began to form in my mind. All this time I simply had taken for granted that those who walked up the aisle and joined the church were Christians. The man did not stay for lunch, and, of course, I was too troubled in soul to enjoy a meal that day. Could it be true, that there were people in my church, **not saved?**

At the regular evening service, before a large crowd I preached the gospel with what I believe was special help from God. But there was no stir that I could see. All that week I had deep soul-searching exercise before God. The next Sunday morning, the church was crowded again, with some having to stand in the aisle. The gospel was again preached clearly, and it was plain that some were troubled. But for some reason I felt reluctant to give an invitation, even though I knew that the Holy Spirit was working in that place.

On Monday, the pastor's day off, I went fishing. A member came to the parsonage to see me. Mrs. Williams told her that I was expected home early that evening, but meanwhile could she help in any way?

"No," said the lady, "I am troubled about my soul." With that she drove away. When I returned home, my wife told me about the lady, and asked if I intended to visit her that evening.

"No," I replied, "I'm not going yet — she is "dying," and I want to give her plenty of time."

Early the next morning Mrs. _____ drove up, walked into the dining room, and got right to the point.

"Brother Williams, I'm troubled about my soul. I have no rest." We turned to Romans 10:9-17, and read the verses slowly. She did not seem to understand it, and went back home. In the garage, she got into her back seat and tried to get saved, but to no avail. On Wednesday night at prayer meeting, the visiting preacher, who knew nothing of her soul trouble, spoke from Matthew 16 concerning the signs of the prophet Jonah, and preached a faithful message in the gospel. The closing hymn was:

*Who's that knocking at my heart's door,
 Seeking to make me whole?
 Who's that troubling my soul?
 Surely it is Jesus knocking,
 Seeking to make me whole.*

Suddenly Mrs. _____ jumped to her feet and joyously acclaimed, "I'm saved!"

She came over to me and asked, "Rev. Williams, did I confess Him?"

It looked like God was going to visit that church in His mercy. This woman was a church member long before we knew her — in the choir for 25 years.

The following Sunday, the usual crowd gathered in for the service. Again, there was power from the Holy Spirit, the gospel was clearly and simply preached, and the invitation was given. Who should walk down from the choir, but the organist! She told how she had joined the church when just a child, but now stated that she was receiving Christ as her personal Saviour.

Needless to say, Satan got very busy at this point. There was quite a stir in the church, as many others were there with empty professions of salvation, and not willing to give them up. We learned that the offense of the Cross has not ceased, and "the entrance of Thy Word giveth light." In 1925 I had prayed, "Lord if You show me light from Thy Word, I will walk in that light." The Lord indeed did give light, a little at a time, as I was able to grasp it.

The next glimmer of light was concerning a regular salary. Giving it up never bothered me, as in those Depression years we seldom got the full amount, anyway. For two years, we simply took what was left for us on the table at the door of the First Baptist Church. With this, I also maintained a weekly radio broadcast on a local station.

What really led me into the radio ministry was a new revelation from the Book. An old classmate from theological school, weary with the "church set-up" drove over to my house one late afternoon, and said, "Theodore, I've got the truth."

He was referring not to the gospel, which we both knew and loved, but to the Rapture of the church — the coming of the Lord for His Bride. I had never heard of it before. It is indeed strange how one can learn so much in Bible school, and never hear about the Lord's

coming. No words can describe the shock it was to this post-millennial preacher when the fact of the imminent coming dawned upon my soul. It is a wonderful truth that makes me feel more urgently the need to "work, for the night is coming." We are looking for the Morning Star, which will rise before the sun rises.

I arranged for this classmate to take six consecutive Sundays of Bible studies on the Rapture and the return of the Lord to take up Israel again. We also began a weekly radio broadcast, to reach beyond the limits of the First Baptist church. Soon the church officials and denominational connections became wary and a little suspicious of the young men who were preaching these new doctrines over the radio.

Now, I was a young pastor growing steadily weary of a mixture of religion and politics in the church; greatly disturbed over the number of church members without Christ; and preaching a new and not favourably-regarded doctrine. I had also seen from Acts 20:7 that the Lord's Supper should be held every first day of the week, but the deacons of the church voted to hold to the first Sunday of each month, according to the tradition — "the way we always had it," they said. It seemed that the life of a pastor consisted mainly of walking a political tight-rope, and an endless round of church collections, church suppers to get money, musical entertainment to attract people to the church, etc. It was all a waste of precious time — time that should be used in spreading the gospel and bringing glory to God by obedience to His Word. After an agonizing reappraisal of our position, our decision was firmly made. It was not easy to step to the microphone and say, "Farewell." But "I heard the voice of Jesus say, 'Come unto Me and rest' "... "take my yoke upon you, and learn of Me."

A very able gospel preacher, Mr. B.M. Nottage, spoke on the same radio station in the afternoons. He heard my announcement that I intended to sever my denominational connection, and take a stand on New Testament footing. We were going to begin in the open air, on a vacant lot at West 8 Mile Road and Cherrylawn. Early Monday morning I received a letter from this brother saying he was praying for us; and he enclosed a small gift to help with the radio time. My classmate, J. McG _____, had heard this powerful preacher and Bible teacher before, and had, on occasion, brought

him to our church to minister. Mr. Nottage offered us the free use of his gospel tent for our New Testament church, to save us from being in the open air.

On Saturday, June 2, 1936, Mr. Nottage helped us to raise the 60 by 40-foot tent. Then he left us alone to carry on. The name Berean Tabernacle identified the work for the radio station the next morning.

And now with the church and congregation behind us, we jumped into deep waters, either to sink or to swim. With a young wife and three small children to care for, I sometimes wondered at the wisdom of it. Friend and foe alike told us the same thing — you don't know what you are doing, you aren't wise, look at what you've left behind, etc.

The first Sunday morning, twenty-five people came to hear a young man preach on Hebrews 11:8, "*And he went out, not knowing whither he went...he staggered not...*" We had no song books, so the singing was by memory.

At the close of the service, we invited all who wanted to be identified with this movement to come forward and stand in a line, to answer a few questions. We asked each to tell how and when they were saved. Although we knew them all from the Baptist church, we did not want to take any chances of having unsaved people in this New Testament church. All the testimonies were fairly clear, except one.

As we were walking out of that first meeting, a stranger came up — Mr. J.C. Beattie of Barry, Ontario in Canada. He had heard us somewhere, perhaps the radio. He looked at the very small offering on the table and said, "What a pity," and then these words: "Now, Brother Williams, you should still go among the people you left in the church, and love them just the same." Of all the words, in the day of our crisis! That advice from Mr. Beattie has never left me — "Love the people, just the same." I have often read Deuteronomy 33:3, "*Yea, He loved the people.*"

While Mr. Beattie never attended any of our meetings, he offered us a number of canvas seats free, together with some gospel hymn sheets, which he had used for many years in tent meetings. This was our first contact with what we now know to be 'brethren' preachers, with the exception of Mr. Nottage.

The following Sunday, only sixteen of the twenty-five came back; ("Where are the nine?") But we had realized our dream of having a New Testament Church. The people had at least given good testimony of being born again. The gospel preaching went on under the canvas all during July and August, along with the radio ministry.

BACK TO THE WORLD
(Or the Christless Professor's Unmasking)

Like the dog that return to the vomit,
Like the sow they go back to the mire,
For God and His Word and His people,
They never had any desire.

They return to the sects and sermons,
To the carcass where eagles have part,
To the choirs and the organs and solos,
For the Gospel they never had heart.

No Christ in the preacher or sermons,
Both the cage and the birds are unclean,
Which a soul that has trusted in Jesus,
Would loath as all empty and mean.

The heart gathered out unto Jesus,
Delights with God's people to be,
While the ear and eye of the vulture,
Wants something to hear and to see.

Among saints they once sat at the Table,
Partook of the Bread and the Wine,
But the heart all the time was in Babel,
They longed for the husks and the swine.

They are at home in the Valley of Darkness,
Among bones that are bleached and dry,
Not a breath of God's Spirit among them,
No message of power from on high.

There will soon be an awful awakening,
 When empty professors at last,
 Must acknowledge with all their religion,
 I'm unsaved and my harvest is past.

“There is a Way to Hell from the very gate of Heaven”

Wm. J. M. Candleless

REVELATION

Early in September, Mr. Nottage dropped by to see how we were doing and invited me to go with him to Cleveland, Ohio, the next Sunday. At about ten o'clock that morning, we walked into an old dilapidated theatre building on Central Avenue. There was a small sign over the door — “Central Gospel Hall.” Once inside, we saw in the dim light (these were the terrible days of the Depression) a circle of about twenty-five to thirty people sitting in silence. All heads were bowed. In the center was a little table with a large loaf of bread and a silver cup. I was struck with the stillness of the place.

I sat in the little circle with Mr. Nottage, who handed me a book — the Believers Hymn Book. I had never seen or heard of one before. I began thumbing through that little book, reading the hymns, and “my soul was all transported.” Fully thirty minutes passed, and not a word was spoken. That morning, for the first time in my life, I saw tears falling in silence.

At 10:30 promptly a brother stood to his feet and gave out a hymn. I had never heard the strange tune, but they sang well, to my thinking. But then, there was another long silence. What could this mean? What were these people doing anyway? I knew that they had met to break bread, but the order was entirely new to me. For about an hour, one man after another stood and prayed in a manner I had never heard. Their prayers were all about Christ and His death on the cross. Some of the brethren were far from intellectuals, but their words lifted us heavenward.

Finally one man stood and said, “Let us give thanks to the Lord for the loaf.” My, how the words of that prayer just rolled out of his mouth. Then another stepped up and with reverence, broke the loaf

and passed it around the circle. A good few more minutes of silence passed and then another brother said, “Let us give thanks for the cup,” and back to Calvary he took us, to linger there till my eyes were melted to tears. A revelation? Yes. I knew this was the thing I most desired. It seemed like a burden was lifted from my heart. I was fully satisfied with the profound simplicity of this divine ordinance.

RETURN TO DETROIT FROM CLEVELAND

From the warmth of that company in Cleveland, I returned to the little tent in Detroit. Like the returning spies of Kadesh-barnea, I sat down and told the sixteen believers what I saw with my eyes and experienced in my soul over the weekend. One man, a former deacon, suggested that we do just the same. Off he went down town, and bought a large silver cup. Another believer agreed to get the loaf. So in late September, 1936, sixteen believers sat down to carry out His request “in remembrance of Me.”

At the beginning of the meeting, two young men from Bethany Gospel Hall, Detroit, came into the tent and sat down. They listened to mainly gospel hymn-singing for nearly an hour. One hymn which we loved in those days was:

“Man of Sorrows, what a name
 For the Son of God, who came
 Ruined sinners to reclaim
 ‘Hallelujah! What a Savior!’ ”

We knew nothing about corporate worship, in the scriptural sense of the term, and those two brethren could see that. When they got a chance, one rose to his feet with the exact words we had heard at Central Hall, “Let us give thanks for the loaf.” He took us right to Calvary; then stepped forward, broke the loaf, and passed it around the little circle.

The second brother stood up with these words, “Let us give thanks for the cup.” How he warmed our hearts as we lingered around the cross and the empty tomb of the Lord Jesus Christ. What a day it was, under the canvas, in the sawdust! All we knew was that we were a proper people in a proper place, and at a proper time, doing the proper thing. Blessed be God, our God.

Over forty years have passed since that Sunday morning, and a lot of water has gone under the bridge. More than that, a lot of bridges have gone under the water. The Berean testimony born that June day in 1936 still, in some measure, remains.

We began to pray about getting a permanent building to meet in. A tent would never do in the winter months. We went to the Grace Harbour Lumber Company and spoke to the president, Mr. Leach, who was, incidentally, an elder of the Central Presbyterian Church on Grand River Avenue, Detroit. He was deeply impressed by our simple faith that God would supply all the need for the building. He accepted \$10.00 down on a lumber bill of over \$600.00.

"Mr. Williams," he said, "if you pay \$10.00 every month on this bill, I will pay another \$10.00 out of my pocket." His office secretary handed me a cash receipt for \$20.00.

Early the next day, the lumber was delivered at the spot where we erected the building with our own hands, with help from a few others — one block north of West 8 Mile Road on Reimanville Avenue. When the building was nearly complete, a Mr. Marion, who had been a regular listener to our radio program, came along and expressed a great interest in the work. He asked some questions — where did we get the lumber; where did we get the money to buy the lot, etc.

Three days later, Mr. Marion returned and handed us a receipt which stated the lot had been paid for in full. (We had purchased it with \$10.00 down.) The next day, the mailman gave us a letter from the Grace Harbour Lumber Company, signed by Mr. Leach.

"Dear Mr. Williams,

A man came to my office today and paid your half of the bill for the lumber, and I kept my promise to pay the other half. Please find the receipt enclosed — 'paid in full.' "

He also stated that "the man" thought I needed money for my little family, so Mr. Leach had added a check for our personal needs.

The little testimony was made into a corporation under the religious laws of the State of Michigan.

STILL LEARNING

We understand from the book of Hebrews that the life of Moses was divided into three parts of forty years. He was forty years learning all the wisdom of Egypt; then when God took him up, he was forty years "unlearning" in the wilderness — for forty more years of service for the Lord.

Now my question was, **who** were those people I had met at Central Hall in Cleveland? I was told that they were Christians. Yes, but what else? There must be something behind all this — thus I reasoned. What was it? That small sign on the building, Central Gospel Hall, made me a little suspicious — fearful of another denomination with its religious machine and politics. But a few things so deeply impressed me that my suspicions were overcome.

First, there was a notable lack of officialism. Secondly, no public collections were taken; no word about money. Thirdly, there was such reverence, albeit nothing to attract but the Word of God and the Person of the Lord Jesus Christ. Fourthly, the warm fellowship — everyone was called brother or sister. And lastly, such hospitality was shown. Truly, this was the place, and these were the people, but who were they?

One brother knew that we wanted an official identity. "These are the 'brethren,' he said. It seemed so strange. I had never heard of 'brethren' even though I had studies in church history and comparative religions. I let the thought simmer a while — "Brethren, who are they?"

GOSPEL TOURS IN THE DEEP SOUTH, 1937 - 1939

Mr. Nottage, a native of the Bahamas and a convert of missionary enterprise abroad, shared our vision of the great need among the unevangelized millions of black folks in the deep south of the United States. Most of them had never heard the gospel of the grace of God. I believe that a great mistake was made by Christian churches during the reconstruction days after the Emancipation Proclamation. Ten million black slaves were set free, and then were left untouched with the gospel of redeeming love, while missionaries were sent off to the so-called heathen lands! Research shows no mention of 'brethren', as such, in the south during the period of chattel slavery.

We planned these trips prayerfully. We pulled a little gospel trailer along the highways and stopped at every place that would open to us — hospitals, public schools, prisons. When no door opened we kept to the streets, using recorded hymns with a public address system hooked up to the car battery. In cotton fields of rural districts, in overcrowded cities, hundreds and thousands heard the gospel from two preachers who had known their own need of a blood-bought salvation.

SATANIC OPPOSITION

The failure of the churches to evangelize former slaves might have its root in the gross misinterpretation and pitiful application of the Holy Scriptures. In the Scofield Reference Bible, 1909 and 1917 editions, the notes on Genesis 9:25 read, "...A prophetic declaration is made, that from Ham will descend an inferior and servile posterity."

This twist of scripture, along with the well-known statement that "all men are created equal" gave rise, I believe, to the racial prejudice found in both modernist and fundamentalist churches. It is gratifying to note that wise men rephrased the notes in the 1967 edition of the Scofield Bible. Conspicuous by their absence are the little "dig" words **inferior** and **servile**. The fact is, God never made an inferior man. Neither are all men **created** equal, for God created only one man; and, "*the rib which the Lord had taken from man, He made a woman.*" (Genesis 2:22) That is the story of creation. From that point in time, Adam and Eve took over the matter. Now we have not creation, but generation.

When the matter thus passed into the hands of men, the idea of inferiority versus superiority quickly developed. No doubt, Cain felt his superiority when, after losing his religious argument, he retaliated by shedding his brother's blood upon the ground beneath his feet. Murder and assassination, war and suicide — the whole history of human experience is full of genocide; men striving to demonstrate superiority over their peers. What puzzled me, how any one could feel superior and honored while his foot is "on the neck" of his fellowman in whose veins "one blood" (Acts 17:26) flows freely—from Adam to the very last baby born in the human family.

I lost a good number of friends when I finally got up the courage to say, "My skin is not black because God cursed Ham." God did not curse Ham; He blessed him, (Genesis 9:1) and God never blesses a person and then turns around and curses him. When Noah awakened from his wine he said, "Cursed be Canaan." Noah spoke of Canaan as an individual. Could this scripture, then, be interpreted to mean that God is in the business of making inferior people?

The great apostle Paul, speaking to the world's renowned philosophers in Athens, plainly stated, "*God hath made of one blood*" (natural generation) "*all nations of men for to dwell on all the face of the earth*" (not moon, not Mars) "*and hath determined the times before appointed, and the bounds of their habitation*" (Acts 17:26). God did not make inferior and servile people, but men of Cain's vision are working at it twenty-four hours every day.

This deep prejudice is what we found in our trailer evangelism tours. While preaching in one of the southern states in those days, I heard a most degrading, incredible remark — "Nigger ain't got no soul." Mr. Nottage said that he had heard it before, from the mouth of a professed Christian. The spiritual darkness there was so rife, we found what appeared to be the home of voodooism. There were many who trusted in signs, feelings, visions, and dreams, just like the man who had come to my church long before.

One day we drove through the cotton fields to an old shanty house. A woman about ninety years old sat on the porch, smoking an old clay pipe. She listened well to the gospel from my fellow-labourer. Then she said, "Well, this is the gospel, you say, and there is no other way. How come you're just now coming to us with it? My mother was a slave; she never heard this you're talking about; is she lost?"

What would your answer be to this question? That old lady refused the message of the gospel, and showed us a book left there by members of a well-known cult. That is a typical example of people in all thirteen States we visited during 1937, '38, and '39.

Righteousness exalteth a nation, but sin is a reproach to any people." (Proverbs 14:34) Can it be truthfully said that the evangelicals are entirely innocent of the great harvest of unrest and revolution, especially of the '60's? Can it not be said that the neglect of the former slaves gave birth to the Kings, the Abernathys, the Angela Davis, the Carmichaels the R.P.P. Browns, and all the rest?; the

church bombings, the cross burnings, and the rebellion against the Supreme Court decision in 1954 to level off in the field of education? It is one thing to have sound doctrine; it is another to put it into practice.

Someone once said, "Eleven o'clock on Sunday morning is the world's most segregated hour." Take, for example, the young black man in my home town who put a white church to the test. They had sent missionaries to this man's home in Africa with the gospel. He had been saved, then was sent to Georgia to be educated. One Sunday morning he visited the church which had funded the whole enterprise. He was met at the door by two deacons who told him frankly that he would not be welcome to worship with them.

He answered, "If Jesus Christ came to your church today, what would you tell Him? A newspaper reporter asked this young, educated African convert, "How does it feel to be rejected by the church which sent you the gospel?"

"Oh, I just wanted to make my point," was the reply.

A few weeks later, right beside that church, I handed a tract to a young black militant. He respectfully received it and asked, "What is this?"

"God's way of Salvation."

Glancing at it and looking over at the marble steps of the church, he asked, "Do they preach this in there?"

"Yes, I would think so."

"Well, why can't I go in there and hear it? Why do you have to come to me with the message?"

I was stuck for an intelligent answer to his question, knowing that he had heard about the other young man who had been turned away from that church.

The same day I gave a tract to a woman selling peanuts in the doorway of a large department store.

"What is this you're giving away?" she asked.

"A message of salvation," I said, "the way to heaven."

"Oh, I don't want to go to heaven," she said.

"Well, do you want to go to hell?"

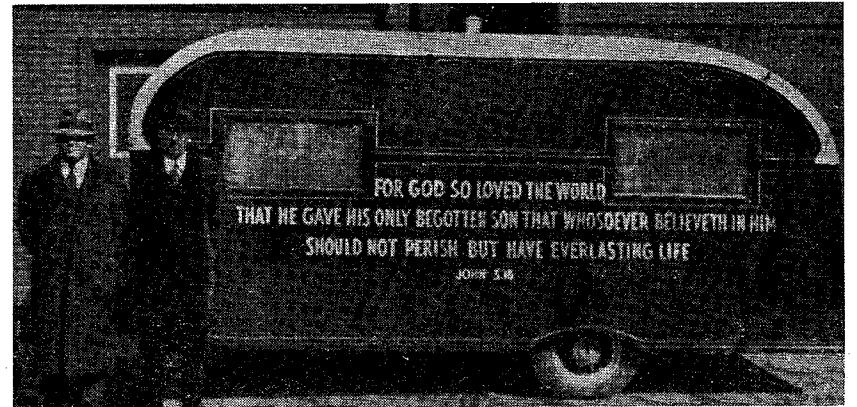
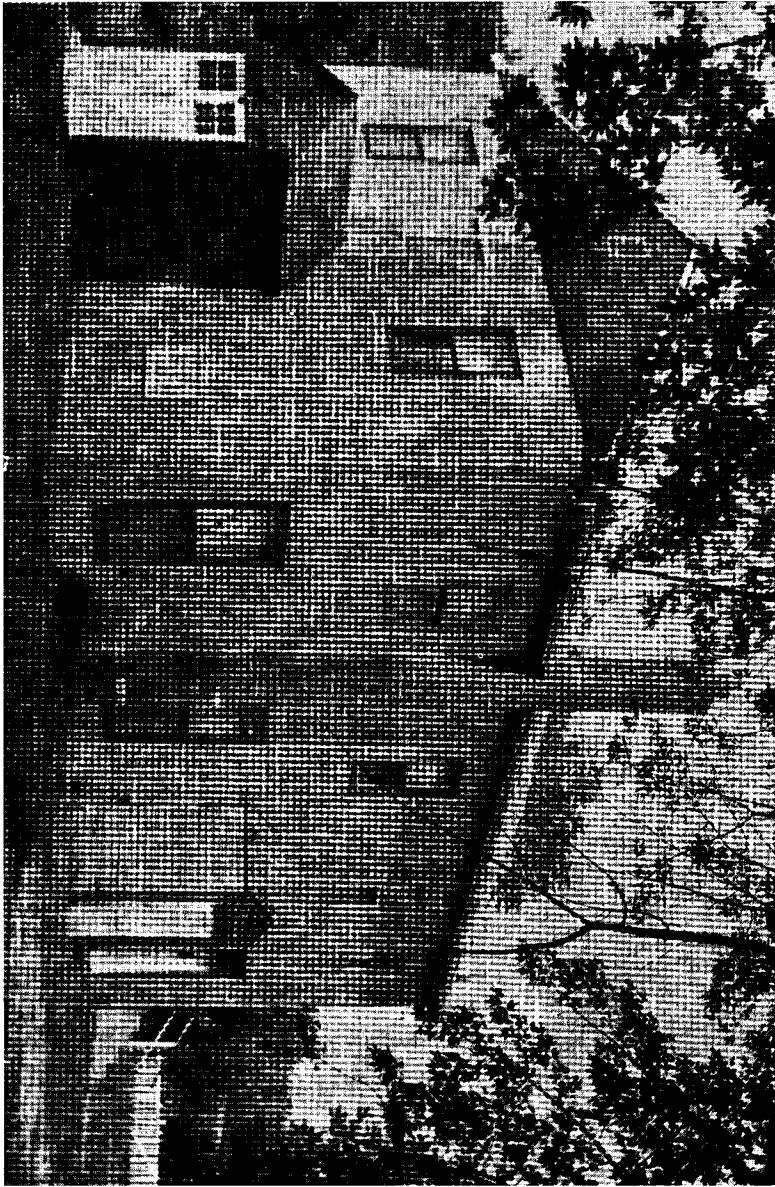
"Hell is right here in Macon, Mister." With that she closed up shop.



THE AUTHOR

Theodore Williams, Sr. was born March 3, 1903 in Bibb County, Georgia.

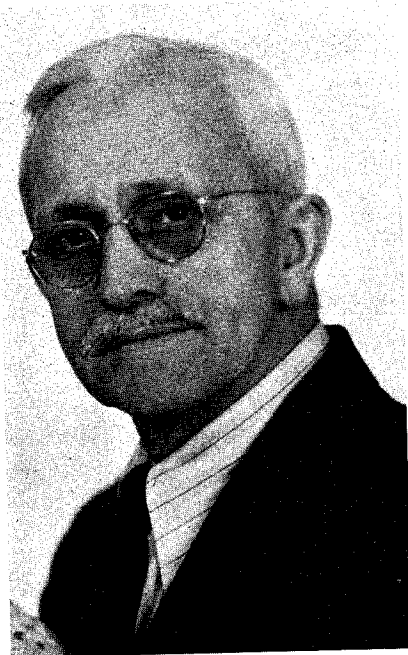
Berean Assembly (Detroit, Mich.) Built on the site of the first Tent gospel meetings 1936. S S rooms, etc.



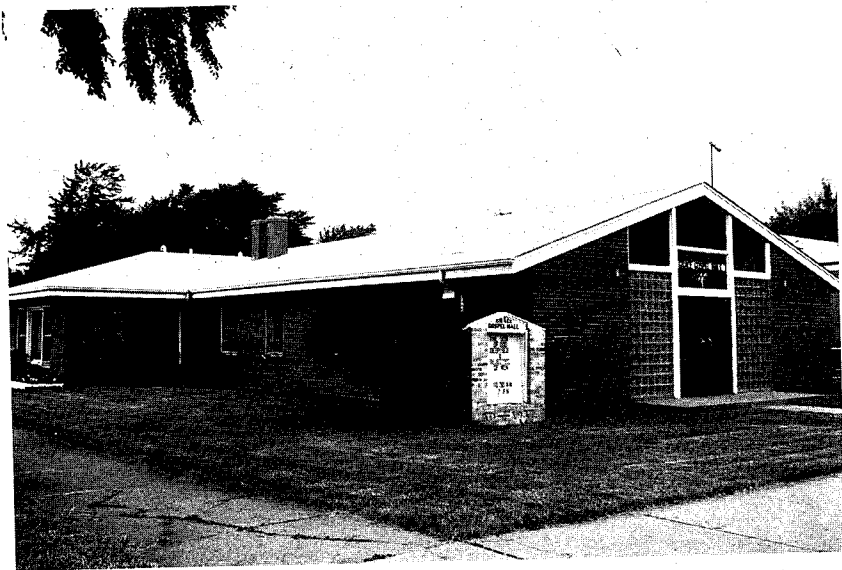
Gospel Trailer Evangelism 1938, '39 & '40, especially in the South. B.M. Nottage & Theodore Williams, Sr. Reached many thousands souls in the "out-of-the-way" places.



Grace Gospel Hall (Chicago, Ill.) 1947 Tent site.



Louis Hoy
 (of Arlington, Wash.)
 Co-worker and charter member
 1943 to late 1947



Grace Gospel Hall (96th & Dr. King Drive) Chicago, Ill. 1958

"UNLEARNING"

"Moses was learned in all the wisdom of the Egyptians, and was mighty in words and in deeds. And when he was full forty years old, it came into his heart to visit his brethren the children of Israel." (Acts 7:22) That is learning in the positive. During the first segment of his life, he was learning. But the result of that learning was that he took matters into his own hands, killed a man, and hid his body in the sand. Before this dreadful act, he looked this way and that way, but he didn't look up. Even Hagar, a simple Egyptian maid, in the hour of crisis said, "Thou God seest me." For Moses to get to this point, some "unlearning" was required — and that can be a very slow, painful process.

There are learned citizens who can spell and pronounce all the hard words of our English language, but did you know what words are definitely the hardest to say? "I'm wrong; I was mistaken; I'm sorry."

It seemed wonderful, for a time, to be identified with those known as 'brethren', but then we began to hear about plymouth brethren, brethren number one, number two, exclusive, open, closed, etc. It looked like somewhere along the line we had run into something else, with a very strong learning toward sectarianism. My former thought that "no weeds could grow in the brethren's garden" soon perished. We began to see a drift towards some of the very things I had left behind me, at a tremendous cost, in the Baptist church. The sweet simplicity of gathering around the Lord no longer seemed sufficient in some places. This brought grief to my soul.

The situation can be illustrated by the scene in Acts 27, with these key phrases:

- v. 4: "And...it was determined that we should sail into Italy"
- v. 7: "The winds were contrary."
- v. 9: "sailing was now dangerous"
- v.13: "the wind blew softly"
- v.14: "there arose against it a tempestuous wind"
- v.17: "we strake saile, and so were driven; and we being exceedingly tossed with a tempest..."

Notice that in Paul's adventure on the sea, there were seven different voices heard during the two weeks when neither sun nor stars appeared. The first voice was Paul's — "Sirs, I perceive that this voyage will be with hurt and with much damage." That was **common sense**, the voice which is usually ignored. Secondly came the voice of **officialism** — the centurion. Then, **influence** — "the master..." and **finance** — "and owner of the ship." Then there was the most dangerous voice in any crisis — the **majority** — "The more part advised..." Next, **experience**, "supposing that they had obtained their purpose" by the south wind blowing. But at last, at the climax of the great crisis, the voice of **God** was heard. Three times He said, "Be of good cheer."

To describe my own position and experience ecclesiastically, I am also going to use the illustration of a baseball game. Back in 1936 when I hit a slow roller down to third base line, I made it to first base standing up. From the Berean Tabernacle (first base) which we began upon leaving the denominations, we looked to second base, the "open brethren." The second baseman was ready to tag us, the umpires were keeping a close watch, but we managed to squeeze by. Then I stood on second base, bewildered, perplexed, confused, for nine years; with no earthly source of income; with a wife and 4 children to care for; and it was often preached to me by those who should have known better, that I was to "take nothing from the Gentiles."

Repeated attempts were made to pick us off second base. Representatives from various denominational groups came in with offers of good churches, good congregations, good support, etc. One large system even offered to support us on a local radio station. Here were some of the voices heard in Acts 27 — officialism, finance, influence, majority. But while on second base, we heard **His** matchless voice saying, "Be of good cheer...be of good cheer...be of good cheer."

Between second and third base (third base being the more conservative line of 'open brethren') we heard a strange voice called exclusivism. Three brethren of that connection came into our home, asking us to "judge the question." We quickly turned deaf ears to that voice, because we had nothing to do with the questions which brethren divided themselves over, 150 years ago.

Another voice was heard at this time in a Bible conference, of all places, when II Corinthians 6:14 was given as scriptural grounds for

separation from genuine believers whom we had known and enjoyed fellowship with on second base. They were called sects and systems of men, along with denominations such as Methodists, Baptists, Lutherans, etc. The "old paths" were said to be the distinguishing feature of scriptural assemblies. I looked up Jeremiah 6:16 and found that God referred to the old paths in connection with the children of Benjamin — there was not a word about a New Testament assembly there. My soul was troubled as I sat in that conference and began to realize that interpretation of scripture is one thing, but an unwise application of scripture is another thing, and it is very dangerous.

I sensed the grave danger confronting me now, between second and third base among brethren. God knew I wanted the right thing, and that I desired nothing else. But I simply could not accept that God would ever call His children, whom He redeemed by the blood of His Son, an unclean thing. It grieves me deeply yet, that some of my brethren have not been able to recognize that there is a difference between a system which God abhors, and His children who may be still associated with that system. Take for example the church at Corinth. How many assemblies were there in Corinth when Paul wrote this epistle? One. Then, from what were these believers commanded to come out from? Surely not from believers. It was from the heathen temple and the Jewish synagogue, the "golden calf" and the "mixed multitude" with which believers can never have any part.

The religious systems around us grieve our spirits, but the risen Head of the church said, "*by this shall all men know that ye are My disciples, if ye have love one for another.*" (John 13:35) Leave out the systems, while loving the saints still tied up in them. Try to remember that a **pattern** without **power** will not save us. Matthew 18:20 in the abstract will not save us! Without the person of David, the cave of Adullam was just another place, empty and cold.

"Come out," in Corinth, was from heathenism and Judaism. "Purge out" referred to those who had fallen into gross sin. There is nothing mentioned about **pulling** out and setting up another table. God never told anyone in the New Testament to leave an assembly. It is not pull out, it is purge out. And if conditions reach a point where we cannot carry out discipline, the matter is out of human hands. We must leave it in the hands of God.

The brother put out of Corinth could not run to another assembly, seeing there was only one. We must conclude that he simply sat back, looking on, as the breaking of bread and other assembly functions were carried on. He must have missed keenly his participation in the Lord's supper, as well as the fellowship of the other saints, for no one took him by the hand nor embraced him, when he was under discipline for known sin.

The purpose of discipline is the ultimate restoration of the person. I believe that II Corinthians 2:5-10 teaches that this brother in Corinth was restored and brought back into the fellowship of the assembly. "Sufficient to such a man is this punishment." Forgive him, comfort him, lest he should be swallowed up with overmuch sorrow. Discipline did its work, now it was time to heal up the broken-hearted, to confirm their love toward him — **not** to feed him with a long-handled spoon. That is where Satan can take advantage of us. And this is where shepherd care comes in.

We do not want all truth, nor all grace. All truth and no grace is legalism. All grace and no truth becomes religious grease. "The law was given by Moses, but grace and truth came by Jesus Christ," who was "full of grace and truth" — a perfect balance. This calls for godly elders, as in Acts 20:17, who would take heed to themselves and to all the flock, locally, over which the Holy Spirit had made them overseers (not the majority rule)... "to feed the church of God which He has purchased with His own blood." They were weeping elders, and watching elders — men of the Book, and men of prayer. Oh, may God give us shepherds to lead and feed us; may He deliver us from men who beat and bleed us.

Four people are interested in sheep — the owner, the shepherd, the hireling, and the butcher. The owner is seldom seen; the good shepherd gives his life for the sheep; the hireling takes off when he sees the wolf coming; and the butcher takes what is left — wool.

The widow returning from her husband's grave needs more than the rocking chair. She needs **cheer**. No butcher can cheer the sheep. "Visit the fatherless and widows in their affliction" is an exhortation much older than rest homes or any modern scheme. These things can never replace a cheerful visit.

A shepherd, then, is one who cares for the sheep. (I Peter 5) To separate them from the scriptural pattern is to make our own

pattern; and that is like David's new cart at the time of declension, in II Samuel 6. Separation is not from assemblies gathered to the name of the Lord Jesus, but from unbelievers, Belial, infidels, and idols. "What God has cleansed, that call not thou common." (Acts 10:15)

After the death of Solomon, the unity of the nation of Israel was destroyed by selfish interest, and endless problems followed. "Ye shall not go up nor fight against your brethren." (I Kings 12:24) In the religious confusion on Carmel, Elijah did and said some things which revealed the mind of God, even in the darkness among His divided people whom He loved dearly. (Jeremiah 31:3, Deuteronomy 33:3) He repaired the altar of the Lord, using twelve stones — speaking of unity. He poured on twelve barrels of water.

God's mind for His people is unity — not union. Unity is of the Spirit. Union is of men. "Behold, how good and how pleasant it is for brethren to dwell together in unity...there the Lord commanded His blessing, even life forevermore." (Psalm 133) Why ask for God's blessing when He has **commanded** His blessing on the ground of unity?

Elijah not only prayed, but he did something about the situation. During another crisis in Israel (Joshua 6:7-11) Joshua was praying, but the Lord told him "Get up" — there was something to be done.

We must not forget the exhortation from God, "Woe unto the pastors (or shepherds) that destroy and scatter the sheep of my pasture." (Jeremiah 23:1,2) Remember, God loves His gathered people. Although these scriptures were meant for Israel, there is a principle which is very applicable to these days of crisis in assembly testimony. Pastors scattered the sheep in Israel; Paul in Acts 20:17-38 warned the elders of the assembly in Ephesus that from among themselves men would arise to speak perverse things and draw away disciples after them.

Departure and declension never changes God's love for His people. The local assembly in Laodicea was told by the risen Head five things that they did not know about themselves — they were wretched, miserable, poor, blind, and naked. A deplorable condition indeed, but they were still considered an assembly; still He counselled them.

If the question were asked, why is there no local assembly in Laodicea today? — and the same question could be asked concerning Rome, Corinth, Thessalonica, Philippi, etc. — the answer may be found in Galatians 5:15, "But if ye bite and devour one another, take

heed that ye be not consumed one of another." This "devouring" I call ecclesiastical cannibalism. You who instead of showing love toward one another are always critical and catty, watch out! Beware of running each other down.

During the war years in Germany, the government ordered the brethren to join together. We happen to know the elder who was appointed official representative of the brethren assemblies during those dark hours in Germany, a godly man who still lives in Canada. We asked him what happened to that unity put on them by the government during the war. He replied that they all went back to their old positions...division and separation, as in the days of the judges when Israel was without a king. "Every man did that which was right in his own eyes"...do you recognize the thought?

God showed me during this time of questioning and wondering that the dreadful disease of leprosy is never mentioned in connection with either the body of Christ or the local assembly. *Leaven* is depicted in I Corinthians 5 as a principle of evil - not leprosy. Leaven does three things to a ball of dough; it sours, then swells, and then spreads rapidly, affecting the whole lump. On the other hand, leprosy does only one thing — it destroys. Leaven is to be purged out, but the assembly as a whole, retained. However, a house containing leprosy was to be totally destroyed. There is a big difference! Yet through the misapplication of the idea of leprosy, many local assemblies have been torn down, or broken up.

A widow once told me that her husband was criticized because he had never "planted" an assembly. I told her that on the other hand, he had never wrecked an assembly, either. Now judge what I say.

THE WORK IN CHICAGO

Believing firmly that the Lord was calling us to work in Chicago, we left Detroit where we had laboured hard for nine years. We arrived in Chicago on February 22, 1945. Like Abraham of old, we went out, "not knowing..." (Heb. 11:8) Near the close of the second World War, the housing shortage in Chicago posed a great problem. So we took a small room on the third floor of Poro College, a beauty institution headed by Mrs. Malone. It was \$10 per week for a bed, and we took meals at a nearby restaurant.

In connection with the work in Chicago, we made what I believe was a big mistake when we began to 'build on another man's foundation.' The little company of about eight believers was meeting in a small storefront at Langley and 47th Street.

Just how this little work got started is not clear. As far back as 1937 such men as B. M. Nottage, his brother T. B. Nottage, and Edgar Burgess were associated with gospel efforts there. Some have suggested that the Christians in the old Robert Memorial Gospel Hall (at 86th and Bishop) were concerned about the nearly half-million blacks in the city; and they sent, in fellowship with various other assemblies, a white missionary named Joe Neighbor to the area. His faithful labours gave very few visible results. He left a few months before we came from Detroit.

We laboured there alone until joined by Mr. Louis Hoy, of Arlington, Washington. During the two preceding summers he and I had had tent meetings in Chicago and also in Flint, Michigan. While there were a few professions of faith, we didn't see any lasting results. Mr. Hoy took a room in the famous old Pacific Garden Mission, and we began working daily in tract distribution, open air preaching, and personal testimony.

A few brethren shared my vision to make Chicago the Thessalonica of the midwest, that from there the word of the Lord would sound out unto all parts of the country, especially to the south. The first step was to see a scriptural assembly established and growing. Seeing there were three other churches in the same block as our old, rat-infested, store-front, we suggested moving to a location further south and building a Gospel Hall. While looking for a lot on which to build, the little assembly met in a rented funeral parlour at 55th and State Streets.

The records show that the very first contribution made to the building of the new Grace Gospel Hall came from the assembly at 86th and Bishop. This we took as a leading in the right direction. We purchased a vacant lot and paid for it in cash.

On July 1, 1947, the Grace Gospel Hall was incorporated under the religious laws of the state of Illinois, with the original trustees being Louis Hoy, Frank W. Mullin, and Theodore Williams, Sr. the incorporation proceedings took place in the legal office of Fisher, Boscraft and McKinzie.

TEARS AND CASH

We felt strongly that with so few in fellowship, we could not afford a loan at a five percent negotiation fee and a five percent interest rate. It sounded like 10% on the dollar! So we decided to build "by faith," as we call it. A plus-cost contract was signed with a company composed of professing, fundamentalist Christians. "Pay as you go," they said. This was a fatal error, which I would earnestly advise should never be repeated by anyone. We paid them a total of \$19,500 of the Lord's money. When the building was up to roof height, construction suddenly ceased. The problem? "The cash had run out!" You could have found \$6,000 of it on a padded payroll, if you had looked hard. There is only one word for that type of dealing...and it came from two men carrying large Bibles and wearing long, pious religious faces.

The building remained without a roof for two years. In spite of much satanic opposition, the assembly grew to about sixty in fellowship. We were baptizing the new converts at the 86th and Bishop Hall, and this caused some problems because the neighbourhood feared that the water in the baptistry might turn black! A few miles away, at the Lafflin Street Gospel Hall where we also baptized some believers, the Sunday school attendance dropped down to nine. The neighbours called the elders of the assembly and asked them if they were going to sell the church to "niggers." If so, they said, they would keep their children home.

TEARS AND CARROTS

On third base now...these brethren had a way of laying down the rules and making their wrath felt! A long silence developed from my going to Milwaukee to address the Youth for Christ meeting of about 5,000. The dearth was increased when a well-respected assembly brother who was a businessman persuaded me to take a week of noon-hour broadcasts from the Loop. One day that week, a brother stopped at a service station and heard the broadcast. Instead of going on, he drove to my house, where I had returned from the studio. "Brother Williams," he said, "I heard your message a few minutes ago, and I want to tell you something that I hope won't swell your head. You were never better."

"Thank you, Brother Fred," I replied. "My head can't swell because of the cracks that are already in it. Seriously, the danger is that my stomach is liable to swell from malnutrition. While you and others in four states were listening, only God knew that I had eight cents in my pocket and a very light breakfast before I went into the Loop."

He bowed his head and sat silently for about five minutes, with tears rolling down his face. Without a word he rose and went out of my basement side door. Three hours later, a car and a trailer pulled up, loaded with fresh vegetables of every description, mostly carrots. He piled them in my basement, then sat down in the same chair, weeping.

I said, "Fred, when I see that building standing there roof high, stopped completely for lack of funds, I feel like throwing the work in the garbage can and forgetting it."

"Brother Williams," he answered, "the work that you're doing on State Street will not fit into the garbage can." With that remark he left.

TEARS IN COURT

There was, sad to say, much internal strife and bickering in the assembly. We have already referred to Paul's warning in Acts 20 — "*also of your own selves shall men arise, speaking perverse things to draw away disciples after them.*" Bible readers know how soon this prophecy was fulfilled in Ephesus.

Dare any of you, dare any of you, dare any of you having a matter against another go to law? (See I Corinthians 6:1) Yes, some dared to do so, while carrying a well-marked Bible. Three brethren took three other brethren to court on a quo-warranto proceeding (meaning to show cause) to find out who the trustees of the Grace Gospel Hall were, notwithstanding the record on file of the affidavit of incorporation.

Now all "brethrenhood" threw up their hands — "oh, don't go to court! Don't go to court!" It was a real shock to me to find out how terribly weak some brethren are on I Corinthians 6, especially verse 7 which reads, "*Now therefore there is utterly a fault among you, because ye go to law one with another. Why do ye not rather take wrong?*" That question was put to the aggressors — those who thought their rights were violated. Those of us who were **summoned** to court had to go

— were forced to go. God tells us to submit ourselves to every ordinance of man. (I Peter 2:3) Thus the confusion deepened.

Rushing over to the home of a highly-respected elder in one of the Chicago assemblies, we asked counsel of him in the matter that was pending in the court.

"Brother Williams," he said, "it is simply terrible to have to go to court in the face of I Corinthians 6, but if you have been summoned, it is clearly your duty to appear and do the best you can."

Ezekiel 47 will describe in some detail the ordeal which followed. Waters were to the ankles; waters were to the knees; waters were to the loins; when the waters were risen there was water to swim in, a river that could not be passed over.

The three aggressors, whom we will name Sanballat, Tobiah, and Eeshem, after the men by those names in the book of Nehemiah, used for their scripture I Timothy 1:8, 9 — "*We know that the law is good, if a man use it lawfully.*" We leave that, of course, to the judgment of the reader, except to say that in the three court cases which followed, the judge and jury did not find the summoned men lawless, disobedient, nor ungodly sinners!

The aggressors lost the case in a mis-trial after thirteen days. Upon the appeal, another seven days were spent in court under another judge. The verdict was "not guilty of any wrong-doing." The aggressors then petitioned the Appellate Court to overthrow the decision of the Circuit Court. After eleven months, the previous verdict was confirmed rather than repealed.

THE HALL COMPLETED

Meanwhile, in the tender mercy of our God we succeeded in securing a first mortgage loan of \$5,000 at six percent deductible. A local contractor put the roof on the hall. But there were still no windows or doors, and no electrical or heating systems.

In August of 1951 I went to Arlington, Washington, to attend the funeral of my fellow-worker, Louis Hoy. In October I was at the Bible Conference in Vancouver, British Columbia. One morning session of the conference was given to me for a report of the work in Chicago, of which the Brethren there knew very little. Vancouver believers, particularly those in the old Cedar Cottage assembly, welcomed us warmly, and others on the west coast followed their example. The Lord opened their hearts, with the result that several hundred dollars and a total of 27 doors were shipped to the Grace

Gospel Hall in Chicago. A brother in the Arlington assembly told me he got a word from the Lord indicating he should go to Chicago and help with the hall. This he did, at his own expense, and with his skillful help all the doors were installed. Even Sanballat, Tobiah, and Geshem "*were cast down in their own eyes; for they perceived that this work was wrought of our God.*" (Nehemiah 5:6)

Some of the Chicago assemblies installed the heating plant. The late Clarence Welsher, of Austin Gospel Hall, handed me the bill — "paid." The assembly at 133rd Street in New York paid for the plumbing and wiring. So, after seven years of struggle, an opening service was held to commemorate the first gospel ever built in Chicago to house what some were pleased to call, a "coloured assembly." Over 250 people attended that meeting, where able ministers of the Word opened the Book to us. Having obtained help of God, we continued to this day.

The late David R. Scott once warned me in a letter — "Brother Williams, I think you are working too hard on that Hall." then he said, "You must know that once it is finished and you move in, the devil will move in there with you." A graphic way of putting it, to be sure. We began like they did in Acts 27 — a gentle breeze, a south wind blowing softly. But soon that was followed by a tempestuous wind, a storm, a tornado and a hurricane!

ANOTHER SURPRISE

The highway department informed us that the whole block had been condemned to make way for a new super-highway to pass through. This was heart-breaking, but we had no choice. The road commission paid in cash the appraisal value of that building — nothing near what it had cost. The money was placed in escrow in the Union National Bank, at 111th and Michigan Avenue. The vice president, a Baptist man, wrote up the papers with us and with the Burnside Construction Company. We located and bought another lot, about two miles from the former site, and proceeded to build again.

Within one year we went to the bank, paid the last segment to the construction company, and had \$14.00 left for a balance. These things are all recorded officially. The new hall, located at 96th and King Drive, has never had a penny of mortgage on it. It is a fairly good-sized building, with accommodations for missionaries and full-

time workers. Various ones have come from time to time to warm our hearts and cheer us on the way with the ministry of the Word of God.

COURT AGAIN

Sanballat and Company, just as in the Bible, were furious when they saw the walls completed in spite of them. One of them filed a personal suit against Theodore Williams, charging him with extortion, misappropriation of funds, etc. Before a judge we stood and listened to the proceedings. "this could be a conspiracy," the judge remarked, and the case was struck down to rise no more.

With all these court cases lost, the efforts to destroy the testimony of Grace Gospel Hall did not stop. Letters were written on assembly stationery and sent to assemblies from coast to coast, stating that Theodore Williams had taken the assembly to court, sold the Gospel Hall, and built himself a mansion.

The slanderous letters were carried about, I regret to state, by preachers who should have known better; in some cases, for 20 years. It would have been no great matter to investigate the official records and find out whether the letters were true. What heartache, what loss at the judgment seat of Christ might be saved by exercising a little care and effort, born of a genuine love for God's Children!

A young brother in Christ stopped his tractor in the field one hot day and called me over from the roadway. He told me, "Brother Williams, if you have never been misquoted, you have never said anything worth quoting. If you have never been misunderstood, you have never stood for anything. If you have never been misrepresented, you have never represented anything." What a word in season it was, and this brother knew very little of the deep waters through which we were passing.

When King David returned from exile, Mephibosheth met him at the ferry. The accusations were made, critics were everywhere, but Mephibosheth stood his ground and only when David returned did the motives of Mephibosheth become apparent. Wonderful grace it was that brought Mephibosheth out of Lodebar to occupy a seat at the king's table, but that grace did not exempt him from trial, from slander and deception.

The Lord graciously gave me a word during that awful conflict, from Isaiah 54:15. "Behold, they shall surely gather together, but not by Me. Whosoever shall gather together against thee shall fall for thy sake. Behold, I have created the smith that bloweth the coals in the fire, and that bringeth forth an instrument for his work; and I have created the waster to destroy. No weapon that is formed against thee shall prosper; and every tongue that shall rise against thee in judgment thou shalt condemn. This is the heritage of the servants of the Lord, and their righteousness is of Me, saith the Lord." Also these verses were precious to me: "Evening and morning and at noon will I pray and cry aloud, and He shall hear my voice. He hath delivered my soul in peace from the battle that was against me, for there were many with me...Cast thy burden upon the Lord, and He shall sustain thee; He shall never suffer the righteous to be moved." (Psalms 55:17, 18, 22)

TEARS FROM HOME

I was holding meetings on the west coast in 1951, telling the saints how to face their crises, speaking on the secrets of spiritual effectiveness in difficult times...when for the first time in my years of travelling, a call came from home — "Please come, our son Curtis is dead." Curtis was our third son, nineteen years old, six feet four inches and an excellent swimmer. But he drowned at the bottom of Mirror Lake, on the east coast. He was to have gone to South Korea the next morning.

Now it seemed like the heavens were brass and God had never heard me pray. With one moment to spare, I stepped on the last train bound for Chicago at 10:30 the same night. The next morning, while the train was stopped in Spokane, The Lord gave me Psalm 20:1-5 to rest on:

"The Lord hear thee in the day of trouble; the name of the God of Jacob defend thee; send thee help from the sanctuary, and strengthen thee out of Zion; Remember all thy offerings, and accept thy burnt sacrifice; Selah. Grant thee according to thine own heart, and fulfill all thy counsel. We will rejoice in Thy salvation, and in the name of our God we will set up our banners; The Lord fulfill all thy petitions."

Satan would whisper, "Yes, but that is not meant for you. What are you doing so far from home? Why are you aboard this train at such an hour?" The voice of Satan is always diametrically opposed to "thus saith the Lord."

Shortly thereafter, we stood over the open grave of my dear fellow-labourer, Louis Hoy. We took his funeral August 18, 1951. One of his favorite hymns was

"God moves in a mysterious way
His wonders to perform
Plants His foot upon the sea
and rides upon the storm.

Deep and unfathomable mind
And never-failing skill
He treasures up His bright design
And works His sovereign will."

TEARS AND CANCER

One evening at 6:30 the telephone rang. "Reverend Williams, Dr. Frank calling. Your wife has cancer with a 50/50 chance..." It seemed that something broke loose in my body. I couldn't tell her the news, for early in our marriage this was one point upon which we had disagreed. She felt that if ever she had a terminal disease that she should not know it. I took the opposite position — I believe one should know. Now again, would the Lord fulfill all my petitions? Would He now send me help from the sanctuary?

After a five-hour operation, the two doctors walked out into the waiting room with the welcome message, "We got it all."

TEARS AT A CONFERENCE

"A Bible conference is a good place to get away from God," said a veteran preacher. After a long trip by train, I sat in a conference to which I had a written invitation from the convening elders. Three days went by without a ghost of a chance to reach the platform, where it had been announced that the conference was open for the ministry of the Word as led by the Holy Spirit. A steady stream of preachers seemed to rotate and "sew it up." On the last day, I spoke for the last fifteen minutes of the afternoon session. After supper, I was called aside by Mr. Influence (editor of a well-known magazine) Mr. Finance, Mr. Experience, and Mr. Officialism — all preachers, along with two of the local assembly elders.

"Mr. Williams," said the editor, "you tried to make us look silly from the platform. You know there is no solution to the divorce problem." (I had not made the remotest reference to that subject in my message.)

I answered, "You left me fifteen minutes. There wasn't enough time to make you look silly!"

"Mr. Williams," he said, "it was never intended that you should move among white people, and as far as we are concerned, we will see to it that you don't."

There was much more said — the harassment went on for upwards of an hour. The two elders stood silently all the while. Even when I produced my letter of invitation from the assembly — which the others did not have — they had nothing to say.

A well-known singer was rejected from holding a concert at the Daughters of the American Revolution building. She was quoted as saying to a reporter, "There's nothing like being where you're wanted" (Her concert was held a few blocks away from the DAR) "and there's nothing like being away from where you're not wanted." Oh, you may say, that was in the world, out there. Yes; but the situation I was now in, took place at a **Bible Conference**, where over 500 Christians were gathered to hear the Word of God!

After this 'huddle' in the back room was over, my fellow preachers all exited by the side door and left the conference — got into their chariots and took off for the promised land. There were just fifteen minutes before I had to preach the gospel in the evening meeting. And I thought of the little town of Bethlehem, where there was no room for the Lord Jesus to be born: of the ancient city of Jerusalem, where He was rejected; of Calvary, where He was crucified. That awful phrase, "never intended to preach to white people" kept ringing in my ears. It certainly did not fit in with the great commission from the risen Head of the Church — "*Go ye therefore into all the world and preach the gospel to every creature.*" (Mark 16:15)

No one in that large audience knew about the moist eyes and wounded heart in the speaker before them, not even my queenly wife, who sat less than 50 feet from the platform. Two years passed before I told her about it. She wept and was never the same.

Like David, I sat before the Lord, pondering my way. Here we had the "old paths" we hear so much about 'a scriptural pattern, but no power. Is it any wonder the Holy Spirit is grieved? Is it any wonder

that with such drought in our assemblies there has sprung up a rash of coffee converts — 'Put-up-your-hand-and-say-yes-to-Jesus conversions? and other things which we condemn and despise? But with no power, dear brethren, we are not doing any better than they. It might be well for us to sit down and take another good long look at the Blessed One who suffered on Calvary. It might be well for us to search our too-often empty form, to discover if we really have the substance we profess to have. Out of that sad situation in Athens came a few Greeks (John 12:20) saying, "Sirs, we would see **Jesus.**" Christ not only **has** the answer, He **is** the answer! Do others see **CHRIST** in God's gathered people?

Have you ever wondered what it would be like today, if the assemblies had continued on in the light of Acts 2:42-44? *"Then they that gladly received His Word were baptized; and the same day there was added unto them about 3,000 souls. And they continued steadfastly in the apostles' doctrine and fellowship and in breaking of bread and in prayer. And fear came upon every soul and all that believed were together...and the Lord added to the church daily such as should be saved."* (V. 47)

"Fear came upon every soul." There is where we as individuals and as companies of believers lost power — when there was no fear of God. Apparently Ananias and Sapphira in Chapter 5 had forgotten about the holiness of God. They were both dealt with swiftly by the Lord, and we read again that great fear came upon all the church. Beloved, when we lose that, when our eyes become blinded to the holiness of God and we have no fear of the Lord, then we're headed for rocky shores.

TEARS AT A CASKET

In Detroit I looked into the casket of the oldest of my three brothers — the last of them to pass away. I had led him to the Lord in his home just a few years before. "Bob," I said, "you almost missed it."

Standing nearby was a tall silver-haired man whom I recognized as a boyhood playmate. After signing the visitor's register he turned to me and said, "I found Jesus."

"What! Let's go over and sit down. You tell me how it happened."

Leaning over to my wife, Eunice, he said, "Your husband has been preaching to me for twenty-five years." He held up a small pen knife, engraved with John 3:16, which he had received through the mail some fifteen years earlier as a result of my radio broadcasts.

"At the hospital," he went on, "the doctors told me one of my kidneys had a malignant tumour and I had a 50/50 chance. I asked him to come to my room the next morning for my answer. Alone, I got down on my knees and told the Lord, 'Jesus, I don't want to go to hell. If you can save me now after I have rejected You for all these years, please save me.' " At this point he broke down and wept.

"Go ahead, tell me what happened," I said.

"He saved me," was the reply. He told us his plans to go back to Georgia and raise peaches on the old family farm. Just six months later I stood over his grave in Georgia. I said, "Sylvester, you almost missed it."

Needless to say, those few moments of joy in the funeral parlour had helped to soften the blow of my brother's passing. Here were two men, one in the casket and one at my side, led to the Lord near the close of their lives. Now both are in heaven, waiting for the consummation of all things.

TEARS AT THE CLOSE OF HER JOURNEY

Ezekiel chapter 24 records a personal experience of the prophet. His wife was to be taken away suddenly by death; and he was not to mourn, that is, outwardly. That day he preached as usual, and in the evening his wife died. The next day he preached again.

In God's great faithfulness and tenderness, He spared to myself and our eight children a queenly wife and mother, for over fifty-eight years. After long years of intense suffering, she held my hand for the last twenty minutes of her earthly pilgrimage. She never had a moment of unconsciousness. Out of my arms she answered the call, "Come home." There she is resting in His presence, waiting for the glad and glorious reunion in the morning, without a cloud.

Nature and Faith

We wept... 'twas NATURE wept — but Faith
Can pierce beyond the gloom of death,
And in yon world so fair and bright

Behold thee in refulgent light!
We miss thee here, yet FAITH would rather
Know thou art with thy Heavenly Father.

NATURE sees the body dead,
FAITH beholds the spirit fled;
NATURE stops at Jordan's tide,
FAITH beholds the other side;
THAT but hears farewell and sighs,
THIS, they welcome in the skies.

NATURE mourns a cruel blow;
FAITH assures it is not so.
NATURE never sees thee more;
FAITH but sees thee gone before.
NATURE tells a dismal story;
FAITH has visions full of glory.
NATURE views the change with sadness;
FAITH contemplates it with gladness.

NATURE sorrows, FAITH gives meekness...
"Strength is perfected in weakness."
NATURE weeps, and dreads the rod;
FAITH looks up, and blesses God.
SENSE looks downwards; FAITH, above;
THAT sees harshness, THIS sees love.
OH! let FAITH victorious be,
Let it reign triumphantly!

But thou art gone!...not lost, but flown;
Shall I then ask thee back, my own?
Back, and leave thy spirit's brightness?
Back, and leave the robes of whiteness?

Back, and leave the Lamb who feeds thee?
Back, from founts to which He leads thee?
Back, and leave thy Heavenly Father?
Back, to earth and sin? Nay, rather
Would I live in solitude!
I would not ask thee, if I could;
But patient wait the high decree
That calls my spirit home with thee!

PRISON MINISTRY

There are a number of prisons that I visited with the gospel — in Los Angeles, California; in Dallas, Texas; in Okanagan, Washington; and in the great Cook County jail here in Chicago. We have stood among tens of thousands of those behind bars. God has warmed our hearts and cheered us on the way by saving souls and blessing saints.

One day when I was preaching in the open air at the corner of State and St. John Streets, a young man walked up to me and said, "Preacher, I want to tell you that I got saved." I asked him for details.

"A few months ago, while you were walking towards the elevator on the fourth floor at County Jail, quoting Romans 10:9,10, I called out from my cell and asked you to repeat that scripture. Before the elevator door closed, I caught the words: 'shall be saved!' And I got saved in my jail cell!"

This same young man, Mr. William Horn, later heard the call to serve the Lord in gospel preaching. He works in the Saginaw, Michigan, area; and he never loses an opportunity to tell when, where, and how he got saved. He began a letter to us on our 50th wedding anniversary with the words, "My dear father in the faith."

A BIRD'S EYE VIEW

A large map of North America covers the wall beside my desk. Pinpointed are some of the numerous places where I've travelled, bearing the message of the gospel and ministering to the saints, in full fellowship with those of like mind in the things of God. From the coast of Labrador and the province of Newfoundland, to the west coast at Port Alberni, British Columbia; from the far north in Anchorage, Alaska, to the Gulf states and several islands of the sea.

Reminiscence of Christian service which covers roughly 60 years would be impossible to record fully in these pages. To summarize, we

borrow the words of the apostle Paul when he wrote, "No man stood with me, but all men forsook me." (II Timothy 4:16) Truth has long been out of fashion. Noah built and voyaged alone; his neighbours laughed at him and perished in style. Abraham wondered and worshipped alone. Elijah sacrificed and witnessed alone. Jeremiah prophesied and wept alone. Daniel dined and prayed alone. And Jesus loved and died alone.

It is human to stand with a crowd. It is divine to stand alone. It is man-like to follow the people, to drift with the tide; it is God-like to follow a divine principle, to stem the tide. It is natural to compromise conscience and follow the social and religious fashion for the sake of gain or pleasure or applause. But it is divine to sacrifice both on the altar of truth and duty and responsibility. When we are alone, we can come into direct contact with the God of heaven. Alone with God the greatest of spiritual battles are fought, and by His grace the victory is won. "What shall we say then to these things? If God be for us, who can be against us?" (Romans 8:31) Blessed be His holy Name!

APPENDIX 1 — THOUGHTS ON PSALMS 42 and 43

"...my soul thirsteth for God, for the living God:...my tears have been my meat day and night, while they continually say unto me, Where is thy God? When I remember these things, I pour out my soul in me: for I had gone with the multitude, I went with them to the house of God, with the voice of joy and praise, with a multitude that kept holyday."

"Why art thou cast down, O my soul? and why art thou disquieted within me? hope thou in God; for I shall yet praise Him for the help of His countenance...As with a sword in my bones, mine enemies reproach me..."

"Why art thou cast down, O my soul? and why art thou disquieted with me? hope in God: for I shall yet praise Him, who is the health of my countenance, and my God."

Tested and tried saints through the ages have turned to these two psalms for refreshment and encouragement, and find in them an expression of their own feelings in times of great trial. But we must first interpret these psalms in connection with the godly in Israel, and not, as is so often done, apply them primarily to ourselves and our circumstances.

These psalms are the language of the scattered remnant of Israel who were surrounded by ungodly, materialistic brethren and the enemies of God. They longed to get back to Jerusalem. It is not only historical, but also prophetic, concerning Israel. In a future day, a

remnant will have a deep soul thirst for their God. Their enemies around them will taunt, "Where is thy God?" Then comes that beautiful outburst of their faith and hope — "Hope thou in God, for I shall yet praise Him..."

Now I would like to apply the questions in these Psalms to four godly men in scripture, and see what lessons we can learn for ourselves from them.

JOB — CAST DOWN BY HIS PERSONAL EXPERIENCE

In Job 19:21, Job said: "*for the hand of God hath touched me.*" Job never gave Satan credit for anything — like the apostle Paul, who never said he was the prisoner of Caesar or of Rome. That divine touch affected Job in seven ways.

- a) economically — not from rags to riches, but from riches to rags. His financial security was wiped out in a day.
- b) domestically — bad news came rolling in. "...thy sons and thy daughters are all dead." How many of us have stood at the grave of 10 children, all gone at once?
- c) physically — his health was gone. This experience was like Morton's salt — when it rains, it pours.
- d) intimately — his wife could take no more. She may have said something like this: "Job, when you lost your wealth, I said nothing; when we lost our children, I stood with you. But this I cannot take — just look at you! Full of sores. What a sight!"
- e) socially — "my familiar friends have forgotten me." (Job 19:14) His friends may well speak of religion, dogmatism, tradition, human reasoning, etc. Not one sheds any real light on the subject of why the righteous suffer.
- f) emotionally — "For God maketh my heart soft, and the Almighty troubleth me." (Job 23:14)
- g) permanently — "I know that my redeemer liveth, and that he shall stand at the latter day upon the earth...yet in my flesh I shall see God." (Job 19:25,26) This divine touch got him beyond his friends, his kinsfolk, his household and his health. His redeemer was the solution to his problems.

The Lord gave Job twice as much as he had before - "for I shall yet praise Him..." He had 10 beautiful children — four generations jumping around his knee and 140 extra years to enjoy it all. "Hope thou in God..."

DAVID — CAST DOWN BY WHAT HE SAW

"And it came to pass when David and his men were come to Ziklag...that the Amalekites had invaded...and smitten Ziklag, and burned it with fire; and had taken the women captives..." "Then David and the people that were with him lifted up their voice and wept...and David was greatly distressed, for the people spake of stoning him...but David encouraged himself in the Lord his God...(I Samuel 30:1-8)

This was David's hour of depression. He was cast down by what he saw. This was a family crisis — his property was burned up, his loved ones were in the hands of his enemies. And as if that weren't enough for one man, the people for whom he had done his very best were making plans to stone him! But David knew his hope was in God, so he encouraged himself in the Lord. He inquired of the Lord for guidance — should he go and overtake the enemy? The answer came instantly, "Pursue; for thou shalt surely overtake them, and without fail recover all." The God who heard and answered David in this remarkable way, is the same today; His ears are still open to our cry. "Hope thou in God..."

ELIJAH — CAST DOWN BY WHAT HE HEARD

"And Ahab told Jezebel all that Elijah had done, and...how he had slain all the prophets (of Baal) with the sword. Then Jezebel sent a message until Elijah, saying, so let the gods do to me, and more also, if I make not thy life as the life of one of them by tomorrow by this time. When he heard that he rose and went for his life...a day's journey into the wilderness...and he requested for himself that he might die. He said, "It is enough, now oh Lord, take away my life, for I am not better than my fathers..." (I Kings 19:1-4)

Now, Elijah was cast down by what he heard. This can compare to the local assembly crisis, for that is just about how we assess things — by what we hear. Has it ever occurred to you that a great percentage of what we hear is not true? There may be some truth in it, but half-truth and little bits of truth —distorted truth is worse, far worse than the boldest lie, because it leaves people under suspicion.

Elijah had just been mightily used of God on the summit of Carmel, he had prayed earnestly in days past that it might not rain, and "it rained not:" then again, that it might rain, and his prayer was answered. "*The effectual fervent prayer of a righteous man availeth much.*" (James 5:16) He had great boldness and power from God, on the mountain top. But even Elijah had his deep valley, and the threat to his life seemed to unnerve him completely. What we hear affects us more than we think. In that hour of crisis, Elijah found out what we may find out, too — that he was not alone. God told him that there were 7000 others who had not bowed the knee to Baal. So we may find, in times of great discouragement, that there are many godly souls who refuse to be influenced by the latest "rumours." Their faithfulness will be rewarded by God in a coming day. "Hope thou in God..."

JOHN — CAST DOWN BY WHAT HE THOUGHT

"Now when John had heard in the prison the words of Christ, he sent two of his disciples, and said unto Him, 'Art thou He that should come? or do we look for another?'" (Matthew 11:2,3)

This was the same John who earlier had pointed out Jesus as the Lamb of God that taketh away the sin of the world (John 1:29). But surrounding circumstances now brought doubts to his mind. John was in prison for speaking against the social evils of his day. For the moment, he forgot his Master's message — indeed, lost sight of the Master entirely — and as his faith began to waver, he sent his disciples to find out the truth. The answer of the Lord Jesus might have surprised him — "Go and show John again those things which ye do hear and see." Simply take him over the ground again. John soon recovered his shattered faith. Sometimes we need a similar remedy — another look at Calvary, at the empty tomb, at the glorious ascension of our Saviour, and at His promise to return. "Hope thou in God, for I shall yet praise him, who is the health of my countenance, and my God."

APPENDIX 2 — THOUGHTS ON THE COMING OF THE LORD

All eight of our children profess to be saved. We've had the joy and high honour of sitting down with all of them, at one time or another, at the Lord's Supper. Each one has testified to the fact that they were awakened to their need of salvation by the truth of the imminent return of the Lord Jesus. There is no other subject in the whole Word of God that has had any more bearing upon our lives than this truth.

As to the fact of His coming, the Lord Jesus Himself said, "I will come again." Now, if no one else mentioned that by Himself, that would be sufficient for me. But then we have the testimony of heavenly beings in Acts 1:10, 11 — "*This same Jesus, which is taken up from you into heaven, shall so come in like manner as ye have seen Him go into heaven.*" This same Jesus!

We also have the testimony of the apostles, Paul, James, Peter, Jude and John. "...looking for that blessed hope, and the glorious appearing of the great God and our Saviour, Jesus Christ." (Titus 2:13)

Beside all these, we have the testimony of the Lord's Supper. "*For as often as ye eat this bread and drink this cup, ye do show the Lord's death till He come.*" (I Cor. 11:26) The Lord's Supper is not a permanent ordinance; it will be discontinued when He returns. It is a memorial feast — it looks back to the cross at the finished work of redemption, and forward to the coming of the Lord — the final phase of this great salvation.

The apostle Paul refers in his epistles to this great event at least fifty times. Someone has pointed out that on an average in the New Testament, one verse in every thirty refers to the second coming; also, in the Old Testament there are twenty times as many references to the Lord's return as there are to His first coming. How imperative it is, then, for this truth to have a bearing on the lives and service of those who profess His name.

Now I know that the word "rapture" is not found in the new Testament, nor is the word "substitution." You won't find the word "trinity", either, but all Bible believers readily acknowledge that the truth of such words is found in the Word of God.

"For this we say unto you by the word of the Lord..." (that's authority) "we" (the believers, the redeemed) "*which are alive and remain unto the coming of the Lord shall not prevent*" (or precede or go before) "*them which are asleep. For the Lord Himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel--(Michael, I take it) and with the trump of God; and the dead in Christ shall rise first; then (at that precise moment) we which are alive and remain (redeemed by blood only) shall be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air, and so shall we ever be with the Lord.*" (I Thess. 4:15-17)

I do not clearly understand what is meant by "in a moment" and particularly that phrase, "in the twinkling of an eye." Some have suggested it is the 80th portion of a second. However, I am frightened at times, at the very thought of the rapidity with which this great event will take place.

The rapture will be twofold, as we are told in these verses. First, the resurrection of the dead in Christ whose bodies have been sleeping in the graves; second, the transformation of those believers who are still living. The Lord Jesus revealed this to Martha when he was about to raise Lazarus from the dead. He said to her, "I am the resurrection and the life;" (Resurrection is not only a doctrine — it is a Person) "He that believeth in Me, though he were dead, yet shall he live." (That's the raising of the dead in Christ.) "And whosoever liveth and believeth in Me (those saints which are alive when He returns) and shall never die."

Although I do not fully comprehend this, I believe it. It **will** take place, for the Lord Jesus stated it clearly.

The most shocking thing about this rapture is that it will be a surprise. "*Therefore be ye also ready; for in such an hour as ye think not the Son of Man cometh.*" (Matthew 25:44) It would be well for us to make sure we are in the Lord's path for us, in view of this sudden return. How easy it is for us to get engaged in something out of the Lord's mind. When we remember Jonathan with all of his love and devotion to David — he gave him everything he had, except his shoes; those gave him a standing in Saul's court. he loved David but he never took his place with him outside of Saul's system. David kept his place in rejection, but Jonathan returned to the courts of Saul. Sad to say, he died on Mount Gilboa in the battle that was not the Lord's.

Let us ask ourselves the solemn question — are we engaged in the work of the Lord? or are we in a battle that is not the Lord's? *"wherefore, my beloved brethren, be ye steadfast, unmoveable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, forasmuch as ye know your labour is not in vain in the Lord."* (I Cor. 15:58)

LEFT BEHIND

The Word of God states clearly that there are two ways to die. *"Blessed are the dead that die in the Lord."* (Rev. 14:13) Wonderful place! Redeemed by the precious blood of Christ, depending solely on Him for salvation. But here are the most solemn words ever uttered by the Lord Jesus Christ — *"But if ye believe not that I AM, ye shall die in your sins; and where I go, ye cannot come."* (John 8:24, 21)

"Out of Christ, without a Saviour
Oh! Can it, can it be?
Like a ship without a rudder
On a wild and stormy sea.

Oh! to be without a Saviour
With no hope or refuge nigh
Can it be, O blessed Saviour
One without Thee dares to die?

"That if thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus" (or, Jesus as Lord) "and shalt believe in thine hearth that God hath raised Him from the dead, thou shalt be saved." (Romans 10:9)

Jesus is calling the weary to rest
Calling today, calling today;
Bring Him thy burden and thou shalt be blest
He will not turn thee away.

Jesus is waiting, oh come to Him now
Waiting today, waiting today;
Come with thy sins, at His feet lowly bow
Come and no longer delay.

Dear unsaved friend, if you'll come, as the hymn says, you won't be left behind, when Jesus returns.

THE COMING OF THE LORD

Through the press and o'er the air waves,
Will this news report be heard,
Something very strange has happened,
Called the coming of the Lord.
It's the great event of scripture,
Never was there such before,
Christ's great church to be completed,
At THE COMING OF THE LORD.

We must face the realization
That the hour is getting late;
Jesus Christ will be returning,
Though we are not told the date.
But He says it will be sudden,
With a shout He shall be heard,
And the saved, both dead and living
Rise — THE COMING OF THE LORD.

Oh, the horror of those people,
Who did long procrastinate.
When they face the realization,
Hell forever is their fate.
Though they heard the word so often,
Spoken clearly from God's word!
Spurned the Holy Spirit's urging,
Missed THE COMING OF THE LORD.

Sons and daughters who've resisted,
Though through life they often feared;
From a night of sin and pleasure
Have come home as morning neared;
Find the house so strangely silent
Never was like this before;
Dad and Mother have been taken,
It's THE COMING OF THE LORD.

Folks who every Sunday morning
Were found sitting in their pew;
Who through prayers and pious living
Thought good works would see them through;
Turned deaf ears to every effort
Of the Spirit through the Word,
Found too late their works were useless,
At THE COMING OF THE LORD.

Still the cross-work of the Saviour
Where for sin He shed His blood,
Is the hope of all who'll listen,
And receive this gracious One.
Yet, He calls the "whosoever,"
Simply come, is now His word;
Peace today and joy forever,
At THE COMING OF THE LORD.

S.D. McK. February 1973

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