

My God is Real

The Story of a Lifetime

by

L. A. ANDERSON, F.C.A.

*"To God be the glory,
Great things He hath done!"*

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Contents

PREFACE	6
INTRODUCTION	7
BEFORE I WAS	9
FAMILY TRAINING	14
YOUTH AND ITS WAYS	16
YOU HAVE BEEN WARNED!	20
SAVED TO SERVE	25
A SAD BLOW	31
HAPPINESS AND HARDSHIP	38
TRAVELLING DAYS: A PROBLEM SOLVED	42
WITNESS AND WAR	49
COLIN'S CALL	55
FAITHFUL FOR EVER	62
A PERSONAL CHALLENGE	67

Preface

GOD has worked in my family in a wonderful way, and the story of His faithfulness and the strange mixture of faith and failure on our part may be of real help to you in your experience. This is the purpose of this book.

I hope that it may be used of God for His glory and in blessing to the younger generation which is beset with so many difficulties and problems. With this prayer I send it forth and leave the result in His tender hands.

I desire to express my sincere thanks and gratitude to both the publisher and the printer for their most helpful suggestions in connection with the publication of this book.

L. A. ANDERSON.

“BODA”
HASLEMERE
SURREY

Autumn, 1962.

Introduction

THE house shook as the German bombers struck. "Not far off that time!" we thought to ourselves, as we huddled together in the none-too-secure shelter. God was with us; we knew that, for that was His promise. But we were still human, and fear is so natural especially as we knew that the striking power of the R.A.F. was so feeble compared with the might of the Luftwaffe. Britain was so unprepared for war in 1940.

A further explosion, even nearer if muffled, brought little comfort to us. We could hear distinctly the sound of the incessant artillery fire, but obviously many enemy planes were getting through. Try as we might we could not quieten our trembling hearts.

And then the dreaded moment came. The house around us shook to its very foundations and crumbled above us. Great chimney stacks came crashing to the ground and with a mighty, deafening roar one whole side of the house bulged outwards and crumbled into a thousand pieces. The windows were long-since gone and ceiling after ceiling found affinity with the floor beneath. And yet, in our cellar hide-out we were safe: saved by the mercy of God because He wished us to live on for Him. Twenty-two years ago? Yes, but memories die slowly.

Life is not all excitement and danger, although most dangers are unseen. The routine and normal responsibilities of life are sometimes hard to endure: monotony and boredom those voracious giants that stalk throughout the length and breadth of the world holding millions in their iron grip. I

have known something of these and would, like thousands more, have been pessimistic and cynical about life if the grace of God had not made God Himself real to me.

My God is real, and if you care to follow me stage by stage in my life story now to be told, my God may become real and perhaps more real to you.

So let's start on our way.

Before I Was

THE old village of Isleworth in Middlesex. Mid-nineteenth century. The days of the Victorians! Church on Sunday. Uncomfortable, hot, sticky, bored, fidgety. Lace-ups, starched collars, greased hair, curiosity unabated, black looks and silent scolding.

Church-going then was the right and respectable thing to do on Sundays, but my father found it irksome. The church he attended with his father, mother, brothers and sisters was "high" in its tradition, with emphasis on ritual rather than reality. My father learnt almost nothing of the sublime and wonderful truths of the Word of God, the Bible. How tragic!

He was youngest but one in the family, and grandfather was strict and austere, and though he had no lack of money his children judged him to be rather mean.

Nor did the home life help my father at all, for grandfather was a heavy drinker, an obsession that cut short his life: father was fatherless at the tender age of nine.

Luxury gave way to relative penury. The six faithful household servants were paid off, and the lovely house was sold! A bitter blow for the family!

From his youngest days my father had a strong sense of duty, and it was he more than the others that rallied to his mother's side: "apron-strings", his brothers and sisters called him! Once his elder brothers and sisters had married, the remainder of the family then moved to Hackney, in the north-east of London.

These were days in which father spent much time in attempted self-reformation: he had yet to learn from God, as do we all, that it is not works that save the soul but faith in Christ. His Bible reading and attempts to keep the ten commandments brought neither joy nor peace.

His heart seethed with unrest. He had learned from the Scriptures that the favour of God is gained by simple trust, but still he had no peace of heart. As today, all the efforts of well-meaning friends to persuade us that all will be well on the judgment day, simply because God is love and nothing more, brings no relief at all to the conscience burdened with a sense of personal guilt. Outwardly, like the Apostle Paul, father was blameless and his life worthy of praise, but of real peace and inward strength he had none.

Even his reading of the Bible as one of the "good works" of men brought no relief. He just could not shake off that growing sense of inadequacy and failure. Life became almost unbearable in the drudgery of daily self-examination and effort, but what alternative had he but to continue with his striving?

Perhaps, he thought, the Temperance Movement might provide the solution; so he threw himself wholeheartedly into its activities, only to find his misery increasing yet more. The only advice his acquaintances could give was that God asks no man to do more than his best, and that with this behind him, he could count on God's mercy at the end.

In the secret recesses of his heart a great struggle raged. His sense of dissatisfaction with himself grew larger and larger and increased acts of kindness and more and more efforts to live the good life seemed to produce the opposite effect. The standard set by God seemed unattainable. Neighbours and friends commented amongst themselves on his goodness and thoughtfulness for others: but the praise of men is at best a snare and a delusion.

The Lord Jesus Christ finally met his need, as one day in his regular Bible reading he read and weighed up the "Gospel in a nutshell", John 3:16.

“For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish but have everlasting life.”

At last he had that peace with God for which he had longed! The Spirit of God moved upon the face of the waters of his heart.

He was still only a “babe in Christ” and had to learn that conversion to God is only the beginning, and that the conflict between the new nature and life we have from God and the old sinful self lurking within is fundamental and real. My father tried his hardest to be perfect: but of course he failed *in himself*. The temptation soon came to him to throw everything overboard and to trust himself to fortune’s smile. But the Holy Spirit within him would not allow him to follow such a foolish course. He was kept by the power of God!

How important it is to witness at home! Father’s older brothers and sisters all subsequently confessed to faith in Christ, although none ever became so devoted to Christ’s cause as he. His younger brother, however, of whom he was particularly fond, turned out far otherwise. Dominated by the lust for drink, his family life was ruined: his wife had been warned of this besetting vice prior to their marriage, but had chosen not to listen. His business life collapsed and it was only the generosity of his relatives that enabled him to live at all.

Meanwhile my father had become more and more active in the things of the Lord. He had a great trust in the ability and willingness of God to guide him through life, by means of His Word. Visitation and tract work occupied much of his free time — both are so necessary in our day too. The Scripture says, “Cast your bread upon the waters and you will find it after many days”. A wonderful promise indeed!

Picture a man, old and haggard, lying dying in his room in East London. In his heart is a longing to know true peace with God, but who could show him the way? His wife did not know the Lord, yet as she heard his groanings

there flashed into her mind the memory of a Christian gentleman who, years before, had paid many a visit to their home. Where he was she did not know; but God did, so in her despair she knelt and prayed for His help. Day succeeded day and still no answer came.

My father was that visitor of bygone days! Just at that time he had been granted a few days leave of absence from work and had booked a room in Brighton, already a popular resort. Yet he was strangely ill-at-ease about the whole arrangement. A voice within him seemed constantly to say, "You've made your arrangements, but you haven't asked Me!"

After earnest prayer he became convinced that at least he should *not* go to Brighton. Simultaneously there came to him a deep yearning to resume the door-to-door tract distribution which he had so much enjoyed. More than this, the needs of one family in particular pressed themselves upon his conscience. He could not remember their name but could still vividly visualise the position and style of their house.

To plan is one thing, to carry out the plan another! As he later told me, it was with much inward fear that he approached the door of this house, without knowing the occupants' name or even being sure of the reason for his mission! Imagine his surprise and joy when, after knocking somewhat timidly at the door, the lady of the house addressed him by name and said, "I've *prayed* that you would come": prayer is a real thing!

Through the mercy of God the dying man put his full faith and trust for salvation in the Lord Jesus Christ. We must all trust where we cannot see. Yet death-bed conversions are not frequent: do not delay to accept God's forgiveness.

Christianity works too in everyday affairs for everything in the Christian's life matters to God. My father was a commercial traveller and on one occasion a full fortnight passed without his having taken a single order. Things could not go on like this! Was it the hand of God in discipline upon him, he wondered, for backsliding or sin? No, it was merely a test of his faith, for the following week his orders were treble those of a normal week. God is still on the throne!

Shortly after, this trial, surmounted by faith, gave him the power to bring great comfort and encouragement to a fellow Christian who was facing similar problems.

Family Training

ARE you fond of walking? My father was, and on one particular holiday walked almost the whole length of the coast of Essex and Suffolk. The Scripture bids us "redeem the time because the days are evil": so he would distribute tracts freely and prayerfully en route.

One night, having under-estimated the distance between two towns, he had to take shelter in an old and disused boatshed. Not exactly a peaceful night, although the rather eerie sound of "footfalls" that awoke him proved to be only the scratchings and burrowings of rabbits!

What a pleasure he always took in speaking to others of his Lord and Saviour. He thought it a great privilege to be able to write to a poor fellow languishing in the condemned cell of a local prison — a murderer! In a short time he would be "out of time and into eternity". Laymen often cannot gain access to such men, but father prayed long and earnestly, and then wrote the condemned man a letter, pleading with him to come to the One Who came not to condemn but to save. Did God's forgiveness reach down to this man in his need? At least one daily newspaper recorded the reality of his "eleventh-hour conversion". Like the repentant thief on the cross he would have passed to be with Christ in Paradise.

The Christian's daily work should be of the highest standard, or else his testimony will be weak and useless. Father certainly earned the esteem of both his employer and fellow-workers as he allowed the light of Christ to shine

through him. He realised, too, the seriousness of marriage and, although I speak of my own mother, I only echo the feelings of others that he was directed by God Himself in the choice of a wife. I thank God for my mother's love, faith, self-control and self-sacrifice on our behalf.

We also had a deep love and esteem for our father. His hard life (mostly fatherless) had not left him bitter but rather resourceful. Happiness and contentment marked his household. Not the least of the lessons I learnt from my parents was that of devotion to the Lord in financial matters. Never did a week pass without his devoting at least 10 per cent of his income directly to the Lord. God is no man's debtor!

"And what of discipline?" you may ask. Father being often away from home during the week, it was no light thing for mother to cope with six vigorous juveniles! My father's system of good and bad marks carefully recorded during the week and fully rewarded at the weekend was painfully effective! What a vital thing discipline in the home is!

Do you memorise key texts from the Word of God? Father always insisted after Sunday morning breakfast that we each repeat from memory verses given to us to learn the week before. I have often thanked God for those texts, firmly stored away in my memory.

But discipline was *really* strict in those days. One of my elder brothers maintained that he really could not help his annoying habit of swinging his legs backwards and forwards throughout the whole of the Sunday morning service! A lengthy period during which he was tied hand and foot to a chair in my father's study proved a most effective lesson!

Boys will be boys, especially in school. My brothers and I were no exception. To drop woodlice into the ink and then to persuade them to run along the desks and over the girls' books was great fun — or so we thought! The whole story came out when, one evening, mother detected a woodlouse running on my younger brother's clothes as she put him to bed. His pockets were literally full of his "pet lice", as he called them. They were returned to the garden in haste!

Youth and Its Ways

I WAS the eldest of the family and remember vividly the day of my transfer to Melbourne House School, which was owned and run by two elderly ladies.

I cannot say that I was a model pupil. Poor Miss Morris, admittedly of an irritable disposition, never really forgave me when I rudely protruded my teeth in imitation of her most prominent upper set. But I can at least thank God for the grounding in music that I received there, which I have since been able to devote to the glory of God.

Life has its drawbacks, and my poor state of health prevented me from joining in sport of any kind, so that much of my time was spent in reading. At the age of ten my father bought me a handsome Bible, which I still use, with the inspired prayer of Moses inscribed on the fly-leaf :

“The Lord bless thee and keep thee :
The Lord make His face to shine upon thee
And be gracious unto thee :
The Lord lift up His countenance upon thee
And give thee peace.”

Numbers 6 :24-26.

Thirty years later my mother presented me with a pocket Bible with the same inscription. How true these words have proved through those years !

But the youthful mind often strays into paths that are not profitable. My father, thank God, kept a wise and affection-

ate eye on my reading habits. Do be careful *what* you read. It is so easy to make excuses for reading material which corrupts mind, heart and conscience. I always felt guilty, especially in my father's presence, when a book I was reading was not what I really knew deep down the Lord might have approved of.

* * *

Annual summer holidays by the sea or in the country were eagerly awaited. Maybe holidays don't mean quite so much to young folk today, but to us they were wonderful. We always went away together, and I remember how very often my father would be passing on the Word of Life to a bystander, or a cottager at his gate. He didn't forget us children though, and joined with us fully in all our fun and happiness.

What would you think today if two elderly ladies, too poor to have a holiday on their own, were invited regularly to join you on *your* family holiday? Don't despise or resent the old; they can be the best of company.

And then, of course, we had our escapades. I was an enthusiastic collector of wild flowers, until on one occasion I reached just that little bit too far for the meadow-sweet growing near the stream, ending up with my legs astride on the bank, my hands on the bottom of the muddy stream and my head *only just* above water level! Kind father! He saved me from a complete ducking.

One year we went to Filey — it was about 40 years ago, but memories of it are still vivid. On a foggy evening a tragedy occurred not far from the rocky promontory known as Filey Brigg.

A strong breeze, blowing from the sea, presently worked itself up to a very fierce gale. Indeed it was so strong that all kinds of coasting vessels, fishing smacks and barges were making for shelter.

Just off the coast laboured a ship, fiercely endeavouring to avoid being driven on to the rocks; a thankless and almost hopeless task in stormy weather. In spite of all efforts to avert disaster it soon became clear to the onlookers that the ship was in a really precarious position; so much so that the lifeboat men put out to sea, at no small risk to themselves. Yet the crew of the doomed vessel would not heed the warning and take advantage of the lifeboat. They were sure *they* were quite capable of steering the ship out of danger. The crew were several times warned of their peril but to no avail, for they were determined to stay on their ship; they informed the lifeboat men, politely, that their services were not required. Reluctantly the lifeboat men left the spot for the safety of the shore.

The next morning distress signals were heard indicating that the vessel was in great danger. Though the storm had abated considerably, it was obvious that the ship was on the rocks and probably fast breaking up. An exceptionally dense fog had now settled both on land and sea, which made it quite impossible for the lifeboat men to reach the wreck; neither could any use be made of the rocket apparatus, with the sad result that every one of the 14 souls on board perished. They might have been saved, but they refused the only means of escape. Spiritually, many men and women are just like that, for they wilfully refuse God's free offer of salvation from the guilt and consequences of their sin by trusting in the precious blood of Christ, and leave the matter until it is too late.

* * *

My life has not been all sunshine, for I have had my share of illness.

At the age of six I was smitten with partial blindness which persisted for 18 months. A disease of the bone in one of my legs also gave cause for anxiety. In fact my general physical

condition necessitated treatment by no less than twelve doctors before my tenth birthday, and the eventual verdict was that I was unlikely to live to see my twenty-first. As I write, I have passed my seventy-seventh year! Doesn't this prove that it is God Himself Who decides the span of our earthly life?

* * *

I wonder what Christmas means to you. Don't forget that, to keep things in perspective, we must always link the manger with the cross, and not treat Christmas in a sentimental way.

A few early reminiscences come to mind.

When I was ten my Christmas stocking contained all the usual good things — mostly edible! — but at the very bottom underneath some coins I found a note that, today, if not so much then, I value very much. My father had written out this couplet:—

“Whether you rise early or go to bed late,

Remember Christ Jesus, Who died for your sake.”

I still carry this note in my pocket-case today! The Lord Jesus Christ commended the small things that were done in His Name. Do you remember the story of the widow woman, who put the two mites into the treasury box and was commended by Him far more than those who had put in much and had much to spare? It seemed only a small matter to men, but the Lord looked at the heart and saw the motive behind it. Then there was the woman who anointed the Lord's head with ointment and so refreshed Him. It was only an ordinary kindness shown to a traveller on entering a house after journeying in the hot sandy country of Palestine, but the Lord noticed it and showed His very real appreciation.

You Have Been Warned!

AT the age of 11 I left the Preparatory School for the Grocers' Company School, a day school for boys. My six years there were full of hard work, and plenty of homework into the bargain! I am glad of that — even if I wasn't always glad then! Ours was a school where all but the lazy received real help and encouragement, and all were *expected* to pass their examinations at the end.

My behaviour was, of course, not always all it should have been. Well do I remember the day I was selected to do a piece of oral latin translation, with a pitiful result. The form master not being in a very good humour, I was instructed to report to him at the end of the period for a "black ticket". This would be duly presented to the Head Master who, after investigation of the circumstances, almost always wielded his cane to good (or bad) effect! I decided not to collect the ticket and to rely on the master's poor memory.

Wandering into the classroom after dinner, with a friend, my eyes lighted on the black ticket book lying open on the master's desk. Without a moment's hesitation my companion picked it up and threw it onto the top of a very high cupboard, immediately facing the door, where it stood, ominously, for all to see. The arrival of the master brought matters to a head. It was clear that he had seen the whereabouts of the book as he entered, but pretended not to have done so, and for some time fumbled about on his desk. He then appealed to the form for information as to its whereabouts, eyeing me

severely — somewhat, I must confess, to my amusement. Repeated requests and threats brought no response.

The matter was only solved by the culprit admitting his guilt: otherwise a lengthy detention for the whole class would have ensued. Both my companion and I received a "black ticket", but strangely enough, when I was asked by the Head Master during my "personal interview" whether I would prefer to make acquaintance with the thick or the thin cane, and had promptly replied, "Neither, Sir," he let me off scot free! Perhaps it was not good for me to have escaped the rod: at least we should remember that if Christians sin God *does* chasten them for their own good.

How guileless some adults are! It was the Head Master who one day instructed that a window be opened in a certain classroom. One boy persisted repeatedly in putting up his coat collar to avoid the draught — and then took three days off to rid himself of the "cold". He forged an absence note and even pressed for an apology from the short-sighted master! Let us always remember: "*God* will bring every work into judgment".

What would your treatment have been for a most irresponsible lad who, in the absence of the form master, perched the ink can in a precarious spot where the Head Master would inevitably knock it over? The Head found the answer: the scrubbing of the floor for a whole period! I wonder if the boy learnt his lesson?

* * *

How different the pleasure of the fortnight's holiday spent in 1898 in the care of the Chief Officer of a Coast Guard Station at Lydden Spout, near Dover. Well do I remember climbing down the roughly cut cliff steps and examining the large telescope and the semaphore signalling.

* * *

By now I was beginning — if not always systematically — to read the Word of God for myself and to pray more regularly. This was in addition to our family prayers. How important it is to memorise and understand the Word of God when we are young. The family reading and prayers are also vital if the family is to be kept united in the Lord. A good education in the things of God is of even more importance than education in the things of this world, considering the brevity of mortal life and the vastness of eternity.

What a tremendous influence my father had upon us all! How brave too was my mother in carrying on the daily family Bible reading and prayer in my father's absence, and later, after he had been called home to heaven. I would often imagine, as we all knelt around the table after breakfast, that I could hear father's voice reminding us of the One "Who was *delivered* for our offences, and was *raised* again for our justification", Who "suffered for sins, *the Just for the unjust*, that He might bring us to God". I may have appeared careless and uninterested, but I have never forgotten those words — even after sixty years. Don't fall into the snare of resenting your parents' spiritual care for your welfare: and if they don't practise family prayers try and persuade them to begin!

* * *

Let me tell you about a lad who had no time for God's Word.

This young friend of mine (whom we will call George), eldest of a family of six children, was brought up in a Christian home, in similar circumstances to mine and not very far away from us. He had been taught to respect Sunday, attending all services along with other members of his family, but sadly it was for him purely a matter of routine, and resented at that!

On leaving school George began his business career. He shewed little, if any, interest in the Bible and in consequence he had no guiding light to keep him on the right way — like a ship without a rudder he was bound sooner or later to make shipwreck. Seemingly, he was doing fine; he was fortunate enough to obtain employment in one of the large city banks where he soon made headway, for he was a smart and able lad. But, sad to say, his new companions had a bad influence on him and induced him to drink. News of his excessive drinking spread and a persisting in this lawless course led to his ultimate dismissal.

The same thing happened in his next job. He had no difficulty in tackling his tasks efficiently, but once again the drink-lust completely mastered him and he was dismissed. Yet in his sober moments his work was of a high standard and carried out with much consistent effort.

His third employer offered him excellent prospects and it was hoped that he had at last learnt his lesson. But no: he began to slip down, down and down again into his old ways. So once more he was out of work.

What of his home life? Misery! His father would not tolerate his coming home drunk in the early hours of each morning and threatened most solemnly to turn him out of the family home. For a while George really tried to turn over a new leaf, but then worse deterioration than ever set in. Poor fellow; he sunk so low that he lost all respect for himself and everyone else. How pointless and unkeepable are human resolutions! George's very features showed the signs of the mark of God's displeasure: as Paul says, "Be not deceived, God is not mocked".

Then came an additional calamity. Serious illness struck him down and he was confined to his bed. His position seemed hopeless. Memories of mother and home crowded into his mind, and in despair he wrote to his mother asking her to come and see him. But the letter never reached her: possibly it was intercepted by someone living in the same house. The heartbroken mother eventually arrived

but was too late to see her son. An upbringing at his mother's knee had taught George to reverence the Scriptures, but Christ as Saviour and Friend meant nothing to him. May every reader be warned, for Satan leaves stranded those who are taken "captive by him at his will". His promises at the start are all very attractive, but he cares naught once he has his dupes firmly in his grip.

Consider, reader, just what effect your life is having on others. You are being watched by many more than you realise who take note of what you say and do. How is your life influencing those younger than yourself? You become like your friends; be careful in your choice of companions. Don't drift through life, aimless and harbourless.

Saved to Serve

FROM early childhood I was brought up to attend Sunday School, thank God. I earned prizes and, I suppose, was fairly attentive; but quite honestly I was not very interested. How glad I am that all this while my parents were praying for me.

My attendance at the evening Gospel service was also regular, and in a sense I enjoyed hearing the various visiting speakers, while never coming to a decision for Christ.

Was it unwillingness to confess faith in Christ that kept me back? Perhaps it is the same with you!

But God was at work, seeking me out. At sixteen years of age, as a 'regular' in the young men's Bible class (one of some fifteen to twenty fellows), the need for salvation began to dawn upon me. My parents were considering what my career should be and the uncertainty of my approaching adult life made me feel most insecure. My father wanted me to be placed in an accountant's office, but finances did not permit it.

* * *

We always enjoyed Christmas. My brother and I had a standing invitation to stay with a kind friend at Brighton who always gave us a grand time. Two weeks of pleasure once more! — but it was not to be. Our stay was cut short by an urgent summons from my mother to return at once to commence work with a firm of chartered accountants. I had

been recommended to this firm by the school authorities, so I suppose my school career cannot have been quite so poor as I had imagined. My mother had attended an interview with the partners and had accepted a post on my behalf.

Now came the real challenge. I was leaving the security and warmth of home to assume adult responsibilities. I thought seriously: what would the world be like? I'd heard of lurking temptations, many and varied; how would I stand up against them?

I had reached a milestone in my life and had come to the parting of the ways. Should I travel life's journey with the Saviour to guide and help, or travel it in my own strength, and trust to chance that things would turn out all right in the end?

I was thoughtful and well knew the dangers of taking the latter course, which honestly did not appeal to me. While I was not "a bad lad", of one thing I was quite certain; I was frightened of the future. I knew that without a responsible guide and pilot, no ship can expect to reach every harbour in safety, but somewhere and at some time will come to grief. Should I risk it like many another and chance my luck in going straight? After all I'd had a very good home training. In my conflict of thought a quiet voice seemed to whisper within, "Well, you can take this course, but do you know exactly what will confront you, and will you be able to deal adequately with every emergency as it arises?"

The Sunday before I started this, my first job, I was unusually thoughtful in the Bible class, and during that afternoon's talk, there and then I decided to accept the Lord Jesus Christ as my own personal Saviour. I did not feel any different, except that there was a calmness and peace in my heart as I knew for the first time that I had a Friend at hand Who was able and willing to help me through all the difficulties and complexities of life that I would meet.

I cannot over emphasise the importance of that decision, made possible by the grace of God. Conversion to God is real and vital. If I had resisted the strivings of the Spirit of

God with me, I fear I would have gone right into the world with all its fleeting pleasures, tasting possibly of its most ghastly sins in the vain pursuit of satisfaction. *BUT* the

“God who is rich in mercy, for His great love where-
with He loved us, even when we were dead in sins”
came into my life at that critical juncture, and I was born again, a new creature in Christ.

Ephesians, chapter 2, verses 1 to 3, show us that when nothing else can stop us on our downward course, then God steps in. “*But God.*” Have you met God? He is seeking you today in love. Who can estimate the influence that your life might have on others if you yield it here and now to the Lord Jesus Christ?

* * *

But to return to my story. My father was away on business at this time and the only way in which he could give me advice was by letter. I have it still and would like to share with you its message. With great care and affection he wrote me from Kettering on a very cold winter's evening: it was a great thing to my father that I should receive all the help he could give at this, the beginning of my business career:—

7th January, 1902.

“My dear Leslie,

You are, as it were, making a start in life, entering upon another stage of your existence, going out to stand alone; I hope that you will stand in the *strength that God supplies* and so *never stand alone*; so many make *shipwreck of life* because they stand in their own strength. Let me impress upon you: ‘Be thou in the fear of the Lord all the day long’. I well remember when I started work, being surrounded by those who had ‘no fear of God before their eyes’.

Read the first Psalm; take it as a message *from God to yourself*. Commit your way to Him and *trust in Him*. 'In all thy ways acknowledge Him and *He shall direct thy paths!*

'Hold Thou me up, that my footsteps slip not' is a *necessary prayer*. The farther we advance in life, the more our temptations increase, and the more we need a friend in Jesus. You will meet with many who think differently — do not go in their ways, nor in any way which *allows or makes light of evil*.

You start with a good character. Maintain it and improve it by the grace of God. Forsake evil, follow righteousness; remember 'the way of transgressors is *hard*:' and remember that 'whatsoever a man soweth that shall he also reap'. Avoid evil, choose the good; — faithfulness to *God first*, duty to man next. Remember to do your duty to your employers in the best way you can.

I need hardly tell you, I know, that 'Punctuality is the soul of business' and is always appreciated. Energy, determination and perseverance will carry you over all difficulties. Learn all you can: 'knowledge is *power*'. Be diligent, obliging, considerate, *polite*: never give anyone a *chance* to tell you twice to do anything in the way of duty, nor having been once told let them find it undone.

'Act up to the light you possess,
Be true to yourself, neither more, nor less,
For your *deeds* have a tongue that *better* express
What you *are*, than an orator's thrilling address.
All good men will honour you nevertheless
If *brightly adorning* the truths you profess
You always act up to the light you possess.'

God go with you, guide you, keep you and bless you,
is the wish of

Your affectionate father."

Thank God for such fatherly advice. I was to be reminded very strongly in later years of the hardness of the way of transgressors. Where? Not such a very great distance from the very same town of Kettering!

Forty years rolled by and, one Saturday evening, during the second world war I was in the town of Stourbridge distributing gospel booklets in the High Street. The street was crowded and it was not easy to notice every face. I did, however, become conscious of a young woman, possibly about thirty-five, perusing one of the tracts by the aid of a street lamp a few yards away from me. Presently she came towards me saying she had come from Nuneaton — a neighbouring town — and wanted to know what had prompted me to give her the booklet she had been reading. "For," said she, with tears brimming, "Oh, sir, your tract has made me think of my early days. I had a godly home and upbringing. My mother often sent me a tract like this when she wrote to me. Oh, sir, the way of transgressors is hard, very hard, and I have been beaten with many stripes, I have. I have been to places where the Gospel has been preached. I have met Mr. Harold Barker who lived in Coventry for many years, for he often went in to tea with my dear old aunt. She recently passed away at the age of 81 and was a real saint . . . the way of transgressors is hard, it is."

I told her that perhaps God had just sent me along at that moment to be a means of reminding her of bygone days, so that she might come to the One Who said, "Him that cometh unto Me I will in no wise cast out"; the God who is willing to forgive no matter what our past has been, if we turn to Him sincerely confessing our sin.

If you too have the advantages of a Christian home, do not despise them or you too may go the same way. Better by far to believe on the Lord Jesus Christ now and be saved.

So I started work in a small office, at the very slender wage of seven shillings and ninepence per week, but God was good to me, and I managed gradually to make progress and gain promotion in the firm as it grew. Business life requires patience, plodding along year after year, but what a difference it makes to have a grateful Master like the Lord Jesus Christ to serve. Whenever I turned to God for help I always received it : AND SO WILL YOU !

A Sad Blow

THREE years later, on the eve of my twentieth birthday, my father suddenly died. He had caught pneumonia and in a few days, after suffering a great deal of pain, passed away early on the morning of the 10th April, 1905, straight into the presence of his Master, Whom he had so faithfully served since the day when he had, as a young man, put his faith and trust in Christ.

My father's passing came as a bitter blow to me, for I was deprived of the one to whom I had always been able to go for advice, which I so often needed; and I was left with a great responsibility to care for my widowed mother and five younger brothers and sisters, and myself earning only twenty shillings a week!

My father was a perfect gentleman in every sense of the word, unselfish and always ready to do a kindness to anyone, no matter at what inconvenience to himself. He was also eminently just and fair in all his dealings both in business and private life. Furthermore, he had an unflinching store of humour and fun; though worried at times, he never seemed to show it, but always appeared to radiate happiness wherever he went. He was a great friend of all who knew him, except perhaps those who bitterly opposed his ardent witness for Christ. All this was more than mere superficiality and arose out of a real sense of the "peace of God" which was reigning within his heart. He had little room for a miserable long-faced Christian and always thought that a Christian should exhibit the joy of the Lord in every detail of life.

He has gone to his reward and the Master will rightly assess his service at His judgment seat.

I had always watched my father very intently and, although I would not presume to say that he made no mistakes in his life or that he had no failings, he certainly was upright and remarkably God-fearing and lovable. He would have been the very last to have laid claim himself to these qualities, realising how short he came practically of God's perfect standard. My loss was therefore acute.

My mother's grief too was almost unbearable to her, although she tried hard not to show it. She was a brave little woman and realised now that she must be both mother and father to her little family, so far as God gave her strength. (She was a widow for 28 years, until the 28th December, 1933, when a fall in icy conditions proved fatal.)

What was I to do now, and to whom could I turn? I could not bring myself to talk matters over with mother as she already had her own heavy burden to bear. But I had my Lord to Whom I could go and in Whom I could confide, for had I not known Him for three years as a faithful Friend? So, whenever I felt cast down, I would go either to my bedroom or into the garden when it was dusk, and spend a little time quietly with my Saviour. Not once did I fail to come back comforted in spirit.

Whilst time subsequently healed to some extent our irreparable loss, it was our faith in God that proved our real strength. God's goodness to the widow and the fatherless was again experienced, as thousands before us had found, for God does not change. Looking back, it was the small ways in which we could trace God's hand and care in our lives that perhaps helped us most. Above all else, we learned more of that "peace of God that passeth *all understanding*" and which kept and preserved us through the many years which were to follow.

On my father's tombstone, near the chapel in Ilford cemetery, is inscribed one of his favourite texts, on the truth of which he based all his hopes for eternity. "Christ Jesus

came into the world to save *sinners*" (I Tim. 1. 15). Is this Saviour *really* yours?

My father had a younger brother of whom he was very fond, and whom in his early days he tried to help in every way possible. This brother had many fine traits, being good natured, generous and of a very friendly, genial disposition, but unfortunately he never gave up drink, a thing his wife lived to regret for the rest of her life. At father's death, this aunt came to the funeral and, on arrival at the house, broke down and sobbed, "He was the only real friend I ever had and I refused to take his advice before I got married".

My cousins were undernourished and weak in body, for my uncle squandered his money, nor did they, as we, have the privilege of a Christian home.

I would recommend all young Christians to make a special study of the Book of Proverbs. My brother and I had been taken right through it in great detail by my father and it protected me from one particularly unpleasant situation. Don't neglect the Old Testament: it is full of the truth of God!

The firm for which I worked prospered, and rightly or wrongly I worked very long hours, often without my employers knowing. They were, incidentally, splendid Christian gentlemen. It happened that I occasionally missed the last train and had the choice of walking the $3\frac{1}{2}$ miles to my home or catching a late-night bus.

It was while waiting at the bus stop one such evening that I was approached by "a woman with the attire of an harlot" as Proverbs, chapter 7, puts it. How hard she tried to entice me to a night of sin! But, God be praised, I walked away. Have no doubt as to the sinfulness of your own heart, and be sure that there is only one remedy for temptation. The Psalmist said: "Wherewithal shall a young man cleanse his way? By taking heed thereto according to Thy word" (Psa. 119. 9). I thanked God for my father's frank and faithful teaching. Young people — keep yourselves pure!

The older I grew the more I proved the truth of the words, "Them that honour Me I will honour", and though I so often failed to live up to the standard of life that even I desired, yet God *never* failed, for in time of difficulty and trouble is not God "our refuge and strength"? — and the French translation of that verse in the Bible goes on to say, "*and always easy to find*"? (Psa. 46. 1). God encourages us to come to Him in a day and time when nobody else perhaps wants us, for He says "*Call upon Me in the day of trouble and I will deliver thee*". And you will notice there is no qualification or stipulation beyond that of calling upon God; so whatever our need and condition we may *come*.

* * *

The following is an experience that may strengthen your faith, and show you how necessary it is to take everything to God whatever the circumstances may be, even in small everyday things.

In one of the offices which I had to visit, there was a man who was chief cashier and bookkeeper to a large business house, the proprietor of which was a real tyrant. The cashier was expected to dress very well, be always at his employer's beck and call, and have any information ready whenever it might be asked for. He was a married man with one child and was paid just about half what the job was then worth!

One day the employer was annoyed with him over some trifle and discharged him, although he was an excellent worker and had held the post for many years. He had had little opportunity of saving any money, and before long he had scarcely enough even to afford to maintain a roof over his family's head. In the end a situation opened up for him in the West Country which he gladly accepted, although the salary was still only about the same as that he had been

previously earning. Until he proved himself satisfactory to his new employers he did not like to give up his home and move his family to the place of his new employment, so his expenses were necessarily heavy for a time.

Christmas was near and I had heard of the poor man's plight and felt very sorry for him, but then I too was only earning a small wage. As I was going home one evening the thought came that I should send ten shillings to this man who was so much worse off than I.

Now, quite honestly, I was not given to throwing my hard-earned savings away nor to spending them carelessly; but on this occasion I dashed into the nearest Post Office, purchased a ten shilling postal order and rushed home as fast as my legs could carry me.

It was not particularly easy to write a letter to a person so much older than myself and send the comparatively trifling sum of ten shillings. Having written the letter, wording it in such a way as not to give offence, I rushed out to the Post Office to post the letter, before returning for my meal. A few days later a very warm letter of thanks arrived: my "widow's mite" had been sufficient to enable my friend to travel and spend Christmas with his family, which he could not possibly have done otherwise. So God can and does guide us in such small matters as the writing of a letter. May we always take the smallest details of our daily life to Him in prayer and we shall not be disappointed.

As the years went by, my position in the firm became more and more responsible, and like everyone else I came up against more and more difficult business problems. When I trusted to myself things didn't turn out well, but in every case in which I asked God's help and guidance, even in minor domestic affairs as well as the larger problems, I can testify to God's help being given in love and faithfulness. Not, of course, that everything goes smoothly according to *our* plans.

While at school I had passed an examination which exempted me from sitting again for the entrance examination

before starting my real professional examinations, but owing to an alteration of the standard set, when I presented my certificate, the authorities refused to accept it as sufficient for my exemption. This meant that I would have to pass Matriculation standard ten years after leaving school, before I could really make a start. This was a task for which I had not bargained! However, by God's grace I was determined not to be beaten, and so I made a great effort to get through the whole syllabus in a period of five months, in addition to doing my ordinary business duties throughout the day.

My employers allowed me to spend the day immediately before the examination commenced at home, for general revision. The morning passed quickly, and then I settled down for a quiet intensive afternoon, there being no one else in the house at the time. I had not got very far when the doorbell rang, and on the doorstep stood a rather elderly lady whom I knew only slightly, an old friend of my mother's, who had come up to London from the country and had thought she would call on us. My mother was not due back home until evening, so the visitor said she would not wait but go straight back to London Bridge Station.

I was now faced with the question as to what I, as a Christian, should do. Of one thing I was quite certain: good manners demanded my putting aside my work at once and going with a good grace to see the lady visitor off at the London terminus. In this I was, perhaps unconsciously, following in the footsteps of my late father. On the other hand the burden of the need for the final revision pressed heavily upon me, and I argued to myself that I could not spare the time; but knowing what the *right* course was I decided to go off there and then and conduct the lady to London. After all, I reasoned, if I should fail in the examination, I would have the consciousness of having done what was right, and this was worth more than anything else. We have to remember that to do the right thing may often cost us a lot. As a matter of fact, to my own personal surprise,

I *did* get through the examination. I might just mention that I *never* did my ordinary study on Sunday. On weekdays, I generally rose at 5.30 and seldom went to bed before midnight, and this break on the Lord's Day, though I did not realise it at the time, probably saved me from a breakdown. For five months I scarcely stopped for meals and was studying in one way or another every available moment of the day. I do not, of course, advocate such limited sleep and rest as a general thing!

Put God first in everything throughout life. If He has the *first* place in your heart, all other things will fall into their proper place, you may be sure.

Happiness and Hardship

IN due course I managed to save up sufficient money to buy a house and provide a home. God led me to the wife of His choice and later blessed us with a family of four children — three boys and a girl. The eldest son, Norman, joined the Church of England. He contracted infantile paralysis after serving for several years in the second world war with the Palestine Police Force. I had to be assured again of the fact that God *is* love.

The circumstances were as follows:— After serving in the London Scottish regiment for some time, he resigned and joined the Palestine police. Shortly after he left these shores for South Africa, and eventually was drafted to Palestine itself. He wrote to us regularly about his experiences and conditions in the countries in which he lived. In-between-times he gained a considerable knowledge of Hebrew, Greek, Arabic, French and German as well as other subjects. In fact he was well in the running for a good post at the end of his term of service with the Police. He seemed very happy in his work, although the Palestine of that time was not without its dangers. Then came a letter saying that he had been studying so hard and had got on so well, that he was almost certain to pass the special examination that was to be held in the course of the next few days.

The very next day a telegram came through from the Colonial Office, to say that Constable Norman was seriously ill. This came as a terrible blow to us, like a bolt from the blue. Telegram followed telegram as the days passed, each one describing his condition as being more and more serious.

Our only Consoler was God, for until a letter came saying exactly what had happened, there was no chance of knowing what the real trouble was. A few days later a telegram arrived reading, "No Change", followed by another, "Change for the worse". All hopes of even seeing our son alive again were practically shattered. In the meantime letters had arrived saying that he had contracted infantile paralysis whilst on duty, and explaining the seriousness of his condition.

The following morning I left home feeling very downcast, realising that the end had possibly already come. I could do nothing at all, being so many miles away, and so I just committed the whole affair into God's keeping; remembering that passage in I Peter, chapter 5, verse 7—"Casting all your care upon Him for He careth for you"—a text which in boyhood days had been given to me by my Sunday School teacher, and which had hung over my bed for many a long year.

But God is the God of miracles! To our astonishment and joy the next telegram that arrived read, "Slight improvement", followed by another, "Improvement continued". Yet we later learned that when Norman was at the worst stage of his illness, not one who saw him expected to see him alive the next morning.

Do Christians have difficulties and trials? They certainly do have their share as others, but they have an Almighty God, a loving Saviour and a Comforter and Guide throughout the whole of their life. What a help and joy there is in Him none know except those that have had the experience of His matchless love.

* * *

My second son was Denis, the third Colin, and my youngest child a daughter, Margaret.

By God's help I have prayed much for my children and God has already answered some of these prayers in His own way and time. Some still remain to be answered; prayer is wonderful because it works. I have had so many wonderful answers, though they have not always come in the way I wanted or expected, nor can these happenings be explained away as mere coincidences as some folk would have us believe; they were far too numerous and far too remarkable to be coincidences; and again my father had blazed a path of prayer before me.

I have always tried to fulfil my special home responsibilities and not neglect them for Christian service. However, I always did my very best to attend a monthly missionary prayer meeting, even after we had left the suburbs of London for Brentwood, and later Haslemere.

It so happened that I was just nearing my home at about 10 o'clock one dark Saturday night, after coming from such a prayer meeting, when suddenly without any warning I was knocked down by a young cyclist who was dashing down the hill at a high speed in order to take the other side as quickly as he could. It all occurred so quickly that I remembered nothing of the actual accident, and because of the momentary panic of the cyclist, was left lying in the middle of the road, whilst the cyclist ran for the nearest doctor.

It transpired that the cyclist was a local telegraph lad, and the nearest doctor he knew was not an ordinary practitioner but a local Medical Officer of Health, who, strange to say, lived in the top flat of the very house where I lived. This was a remarkable thing, for the medical man, instead of taking me to the hospital, picked me up and took me straight to my own home in his car. My wife, who had considerable medical experience, was very capable in cases of sickness or accident. Nothing better could have happened than that I should have been brought to my own home, where I could be tended by my own wife and watched over from hour to hour! In all these details the hand of God was clearly to be seen.

It was similar to the case of Jonah who had to learn that God was at work in the commonplace things of daily life, such as the fish, the gourd, the worm and the wind. Read the little book of Jonah for yourself, and notice how God was working for the prophet's good in *every* incident, great and small.

A local medical man was sent for immediately, who, after attending to the ears from which blood had flowed most freely, diagnosed a fracture of the skull — a very serious state of affairs. Nothing further could be done apart from keeping the patient perfectly still and quiet, and my wife must just hope for the best, whilst being prepared for the worst.

Many fervent prayers went up to God for my recovery, for news of the accident travelled quickly.

On each of the doctor's visits he could not help noticing the extraordinarily rapid improvement in my condition. Within six weeks I was at my office desk, though for some six months afterwards I had to walk about slowly and very cautiously, never daring even to *attempt* to run for nearly twelve months after the accident. During the time that I was lying so desperately ill, my son Colin, aged two, who was to be such a comfort to me in after-years, used to creep up to the bedroom two or three times a day and clamber up at the bedside, slipping in beside me, doubtless wondering why his father was lying there for so long.

So once again God had spared my life, in answer to prayer. God does not always see fit to allow recovery like this, but *I* can certainly say that He is good!

Travelling Days: A Problem Solved

It is surprising what interesting personalities I have met as the result of contacts made through my habit of reading the Bible on train journeys, rather than my newspaper. It is one of those things not easy to begin, but which certainly bears fruit.

There was the happy acquaintance which was struck up with that very delightful old Quaker — Maurice Gregory. At that time he lived not very far away from my home in Muswell Hill. He was such a charming Christian, and possessed such a wealth of information. We had a lot in common.

Contacts do not of course always bear immediate fruit : we have usually to wait to see the harvest.

One day, I recall, I had settled down in a corner of the railway carriage, when, unnoticed, a tall elderly man sat down beside me. I became aware of my companion when, in a voice loud enough to be heard by all the other occupants of the compartment, he said :

“ You don't believe that Almighty God has any real and live interest in such insignificant creatures as you and me, do you? We are only mere atoms compared with all God's creation !”

What a contact! What an opportunity to witness for the Lord! The man was difficult and cynical, and although we met many times he cast Bible truths aside as being too hard for him to grasp. I prayed earnestly, and asked others to do

the same, but I never heard that this man, soured by experience, possibly as a result of a hard life and rough treatment by others, ever came to know Christ as his Saviour.

How important it is to realise that we all have sinned against a holy God and that we are lost, with no right or power to stand before God, unless we claim for ourselves the merits of the work of the Lord Jesus Christ — His dying for our sakes at Calvary.

I sent the old man a monthly Gospel magazine, until he moved away into the country, when he asked that I should stop sending it, as religion "upset his invalid wife". Normally I would have done as he asked, but this time I felt I couldn't. Sometimes convictions override courtesy.

It was about two years later that this same elderly man wrote to me to say that his wife, after considerable suffering, had passed away. He then went on to say that she had often read the magazine which had been sent, and that her last words were — "Infinite mercy, infinite mercy!" How much I hope that she had seen her need of a Saviour, and had come to trust in Him!

* * *

But God meets the need of old and young alike.

A young man, seeing my open Bible, confessed that he also was a Christian and one who loved God's Word. He told me the story of his conversion . . .

Although he had had a rough time as a lad, he had now risen to a high position in an Insurance Office. His father never attended church nor chapel, and it was no wonder that the children grew up utterly ignorant of the Bible. In course of time my friend fell in love with and married a Christian young lady. So often such unequal marriages lead to unhappiness, for they go against the teaching of the Bible and are forbidden by God. The usual consequence is

that the Christian partner backslides from God and the things of God are neglected. In this case the mercy of God prevented this.

My friend's wife regularly attended her chapel and prayed for her husband, but persuade him to go with her she could not! The arrival of a baby girl gladdened the home, and when the wife went to chapel on Sunday evenings, my friend was quite happy to look after his young charge. So the possibility of his ever attending the chapel seemed even more remote than ever!

One Sunday evening, however, a neighbour called in, and without further ado said, directly to him :

“ You go to the chapel with your wife this evening, I am going to look after your baby !”

Only a bow drawn at a venture, but it so took him by surprise that he somehow did not feel that he could refuse. Almost before he knew what he was doing, he was walking by his wife's side to the little country chapel.

The preacher was a real godly man, anxious to point souls to Christ, and the young man heard the way of salvation for the first time in his life. His fondness for singing was also a help. As he listened to the message the thought came to him that there might be something in his wife's religion after all; another thought immediately replaced it — why should he not continue to go on as he had all these years; he was not a really bad sort of fellow?

When the service was over the preacher asked all who wished to stay behind for prayer to do so. Although he could never quite give a reason for it, apart from the fact which he realised in after years that God was meeting with him that night, he whispered to his wife that he was going to stay.

As one after another offered up a prayer, he realised that he was feeling anything but comfortable, and presently burst out audibly in deep anxiety of soul (though in very broken language), asking the forgiveness of God for all his sins.

Do you think that prayer was heard? Oh, yes! And so will yours be if you come in the same way, crying from the depths of your heart :

“ God be merciful to me, a sinner ”.

Come to Him to-day, come to Him now, just *while* you are reading this book.

“ Remember *now* thy Creator in the days of thy youth, while the evil days come not, nor the years draw nigh, when thou shalt say, I have no pleasure in them ” (Eccles. 12 :1).

“ Behold, *now* is the accepted time! behold *now* is the day of salvation ” (2 Cor. 6 :2).

One Monday morning he did not board the train at his usual time. My concern for him grew and enquiries revealed that he was very ill with bronchitis and asthma. The following morning he was in the presence of the One Who died for him. His spirit had returned to God Who gave it, and his body awaits the day of resurrection, when the Lord shall come into the air. As I stood at the graveside with tears perilously near, how I wished that all present knew the Saviour as my departed friend did!

I thank God for these and many other happy contacts made on train journeys. Why don't you begin to read the Scriptures in the same way?

* * *

But life isn't made up merely of journeys. Daily business brings its problems and challenges.

The first world war had now come and gone some ten years, and life had settled down to normal, with less of the hectic rush that had been so apparent during the long, sad, dreary war years. It was at this juncture that I came up against a very formidable and unpleasant task in business.

I had been Articled for some years, and had now the experience of 20 years with a firm of Accountants behind me.

Amongst the many clients for whom for a long time I had acted and prepared accounts were two partners in a firm, both of whom were within sight of retirement. One day one of the partners came to my office, dumped down a large pile of papers and said :

“Here, you take these and do the very best you can for us; we are in a mess; we have been defrauding the Inland Revenue; you will be hearing from them very shortly.”

With this he walked out of the office and left me to it!

I was summoned the next morning to see one of the chiefs at the Head Office of Inland Revenue. There I listened to a very long explanation of the many serious offences committed over the previous eighteen years or so, which had now been brought to light.

Their frank judgment was that this was a very bad case indeed, and that prosecution was imminent. However, if everything were fully confessed to and suitable restitution and amends made, the gentlemen in question would escape the publicity and disgrace which such a prosecution would necessarily involve. The two offenders readily agreed to this, and promised faithfully to do everything in their power to help, a promise which I have every reason to believe they kept, although it was sometimes impossible for them to remember every detail over a period of eighteen years!

I was now faced with this, one of the most difficult tasks which I have ever had to tackle. On the one hand everything had to be honestly investigated in detail, while on the other hand I wanted to help my clients as much as possible. The course they had embarked upon was deliberately planned, and had not been done under the strain of illness or sudden temptation. In fact there was not a single mitigating factor which I could find. Nor could I plead ignorance on their behalf, for they were both highly intelligent men. I therefore explained the exact position to my senior in the office, in the hope, not only of soliciting valuable help and advice, but possibly getting him to take over the whole case, as I felt quite unequal to tackle the very long and complicated

position which had arisen. However, my senior simply replied :

“ I am quite sure you will be able to manage this case all right yourself and complete it to the satisfaction of the Inland Revenue and the clients !”

This left me feeling so utterly helpless that, at the end of the day, I once more cast myself upon God, asking Him to show me how to proceed. After this time of prayer, I set about drafting my reply to the eight-page letter (full of instruction and questions), which had by this time arrived from the Inland Revenue. It was 2 a.m. before my task was finished. I had endeavoured to deal with every point raised in a way that would satisfy the Revenue Officials that I was capable of handling the case. It only remained to commit the matter once more into the hands of God, and to ask that He would cause the letter to be favourably received, for I realised how much depended on that reply.

I learned afterwards that my letter made an extremely favourable impression, and paved the way for smoother negotiations.

Needless to say, it was no easy task to arrive at a full and satisfactory explanation of many matters, owing to the number of years covered by the records. Prolonged correspondence, delicate interviews and many involved calculations extended over a period of nearly two years, but in all I proved God as my unfailing resource and help, until the task was finally completed. Eventually a settlement was arranged with the Inland Revenue, payments being made amounting in all to a little over thirty-thousand pounds, this sum representing the duty underpaid with interest on those arrears, plus a small penalty.

Much tact had to be displayed throughout the negotiations, but the guidance of God was mine all the way along. When the matter was concluded, the official congratulated me on the way I had argued and handled the case, saying that it was entirely due to my untiring efforts that the two men had been saved from prison. My heart went up there and then in

gratitude to God for enabling me to bring the whole affair to so successful a conclusion.

Several years afterwards I happened to run across the local Inspector who had in the first place discovered the fraud. He asked how the case had ended, and on a summary of the result being given to him, replied :

“ I can't understand how you managed it.”

We sometimes pray to God with great earnestness when we are in a difficulty, but when the deliverance comes do we always remember to thank Him? We owe everything to Him.

Please do not think, though, that difficulties are overcome by prayer without action on our part. God expects us to put our intelligence to good use. He does not put a premium on slackness or laziness. By all means let us commit our difficulties, whatever they be, to God, and then rest in the knowledge that He knows and cares; but then go on to tackle the problem to the very best of our ability. A well-known preacher used to say :

“ There is one thing of which I am certain, and that is, that God never rewards laziness.”

And that is well worth remembering, for I am sure it is perfectly true.

There is a passage in Paul's epistle to the Philippians, chapter 2, verses 12 and 13, which illustrates what I mean —

“ *Work out your own salvation . . . for it is God which worketh in you.*”

Witness and War

HAVE you often missed opportunities to speak for your Master? I must confess I have. Frankly, I have always been rather shy and have been inclined, perhaps, to allow opportunities to slip.

Now it happened that in the same building as my firm was another concern, many members of which I got to know quite well, more especially so as the two firms had quite considerable business connections with each other.

One of these contacts was a Mr. Groundwater. He had always attracted me, being of an extremely happy disposition, very friendly, always inclined to give credit to the other person rather than himself, eminently fair in his dealings, and very business-like.

There were so many matters of business to discuss and not many real opportunities of talking about eternal realities, unless I deliberately turned the conversation into such channels. This I might have done with a little tact. Months and, sad to say, years went by and still nothing was said. Then one day Mr. Groundwater left the building permanently to go to another firm. I still met him occasionally: then a year or so later he fell ill. His illness was severe and he was only able to receive visitors by appointment, as his condition allowed.

I felt that I would very much like to see him, when perhaps I might use the opportunity to put clearly before him the way of salvation. Some of Mr. Groundwater's former business acquaintances used to visit him occasionally,

and one day I heard that one of them was shortly going to do so. The friend promised to mention that I would like to see him at some convenient time, and to let me know when the visit could be made. Days slipped by before I heard anything more. Then one day I was shocked by the news received by telephone that Mr. Groundwater had died the previous day. It seemed that the visiting friend had either not given the message or else had forgotten to pass the reply on, and the opportunity had come and gone, never to return. I would have given anything to have had another chance; for that missed opportunity would remain in my memory all my days.

But thank God for another experience seized, if nearly lost.

Business had taken me away from home for some days to a provincial town which I knew very well. I took a good supply of tracts with me for distribution in the streets after each day's work was done. A short bus journey took me to the spot where I had intended to start my distribution, but I was greeted on arrival with a heavy downpour of rain. Tract distribution would obviously not be possible that evening! Running quickly for shelter, I took refuge under some large thick trees whose foliage overhung the pavement.

Why had my programme been frustrated? Was it because I had attached too much importance to my side of the work, forgetting that it was God's work after all, and that He could order all things for His own pleasure and for blessing to others? Was it because I had relied on my past experiences too much and not prayed enough over my work for the Master? Or *what was* the reason?

Questions like this often come into a Christian's mind.

Several children had by now also taken shelter. I took the opportunity of handing them small booklets and speaking a few words. They were soon joined by a few more, because something was being given away! The congregation swelled to an audience of 40-50 children, gathered under the shelter of the leafy trees! No street-work for me that evening; the Lord had brought the young folk to me! What

better could I do than tell them one of the beautiful stories from the New Testament.

Still the rain came down and one story from the Bible followed another and, as they were so interested, I went on to tell them that the Lord was soon coming from heaven for all those who love Him.

For the last quarter-of-an-hour or so a man had been standing unnoticed on the outskirts of the crowd, listening to all that was being said. The rain slackened considerably and I thought I would move on, but before I could do so the stranger moved forward and began to openly deny everything that had been said about the Lord Jesus Christ's coming again. I was upset by this opposition, but I quoted different scriptures as they flashed into my mind to show that the man's arguments were wrong.

He certainly was polite enough to allow me to reply without interrupting, but returned again and again to the attack, the children listening all the while and wondering what the outcome would be. Ultimately my opponent walked off and I said goodbye to my young audience, being afraid that the intruder's action had spoilt God's work in them.

But it *was* God's work, and I was only the servant. My despondency was dispelled when two little hands were put into mine, and looking down I saw two small girls, one of whom said :

"Please sir, I am not going to believe what that man said, I am going to believe what God says."

God's way is always best, if we only leave things to Him !

What of *my own* children?

I would like to relate God's goodness to them, especially since the outbreak of the second world war.

I have already mentioned that my eldest son, Norman, had joined the London Scottish Regiment, and had been later drafted to Palestine.

My second son, Denis, joined the Scots Guards for a time, subsequently transferring in turn to several other regiments. After serving some years he was sent to France where he was badly wounded at the battle of Caen, but he wrote home to his parents telling us not to worry; later on in the mercy of God he was again restored to full health and strength. He was sent home and after making a good recovery took up a position as master at a Grammar School, later emigrating to Southern Rhodesia with his wife and small boy.

We thought that Colin, my third son, might just have escaped war-service, but he made up his mind to enlist in the Navy. After six months' training in this country he was posted to H.M.S. "Roebuck", and was away for the best part of three years.

My daughter, Margaret, who was the youngest, remained at home with us during the enforced absence of her three brothers. I thanked God for her company especially in journeys to and from our place of worship all through the bombing. She confessed Christ as her Saviour and was baptized at the age of fifteen. In due course she qualified as a nurse, obtaining her S.R.N., and later married and had two sons.

How good God has been in drawing all my children into His family!



About 10 o'clock one evening in October 1940, my house was very badly damaged by bombs. Fortunately the family and neighbours had just taken shelter in the basement. No one was actually hurt, although one of our two cats leapt through a broken window and was not seen again for twenty-four hours! Glass was strewn about the house, doors blown off their hinges, the top floor was on fire and ceilings were down. Providentially part of the house could be, and was, used as living accommodation until the entire house had been repaired.

A few months later it was the turn of my office to be burnt to the ground, practically all documents being destroyed, including valuable private notes and memoranda compiled over a period of nearly forty years.

Not so very long afterwards the new house into which I had moved was seriously struck by lightning. My invalid son had been in the garden when storm clouds suddenly appeared. Before I could wheel him inside the house he was soaked by a heavy downpour, and I took him straight into the kitchen where there was a warm stove.

Had I taken him to his own room when he came in, he would have been badly injured, for the lightning struck his room, actually tearing down all the electric wiring.

What an escape! What a mercy! How I thank God that things were not worse.

You can probably imagine some of our feelings amidst these upheavals in domestic and business life; of course others were in as bad or even worse a plight than ourselves.

Do not be afraid to trust yourself to Christ, Who died to save you: if you will only allow Him, He will help you right through to the end. I cannot promise that your way will be smooth, but He *will* be with you in every circumstance.

All that is required is that you acknowledge your sin, claim the salvation which He offers you freely without money and without price; you will then have a faithful Friend throughout life.

The Lord Jesus said —

“ My sheep . . . shall never perish, neither shall any man pluck them out of My hand.”

He is worthy of all your trust.

Colin's Call

I WANT to take you back a few years now to the tenth year of my married life. That was the year of Colin's birth.

The older children had caused us little anxiety, and neither did Colin. He was a fine chubby fellow, full of fun and not at all averse to interfering with his older brothers' toys when the idea took him — very often to their great annoyance.

He too was to attend the Grammar School where his brothers had been before him. He did not, however, show a great interest in learning, and so left school earlier than his brothers had.

I thank God for the influence of my father-in-law who came to live with us for some years: a man of godly character and great energy. Colin grew to be fond of him, and there is no doubt that he had a good influence on Colin's life.

For my part I always did my very best to teach my children to love and respect God's Word and to pray; I could only leave the result with God. We know God says His Word shall not return unto Him void!

What effect did all this have on Colin? Like many young folk he seemed to find Sunday rather irksome. Why should he not be allowed to do just as he liked on that day? So when the time for the Sunday morning service drew near Colin would not feel very well, or would unaccountably be missing, just as the rest of the family were about to leave!

I therefore prayed all the more earnestly for him, that he might listen to the voice of God and grow up to be a bright witness for the Lord Jesus Christ.

I had to wait for the answer to my prayers!

On leaving school Colin took one or two local jobs and worked quite keenly and conscientiously. But the second world war continued much longer than was expected and Colin joined the Navy.

While packing his kit on the day of leaving home, I watched him thoughtfully, and after a silent prayer to God said —

“Colin, you will take your New Testament with you, won't you?”

“No, dad, I've packed my Bible,” was the reply.

What a relief this was to me, for Colin had not made any confession of faith in Christ, although he certainly had lately become more thoughtful and sober.

So Colin left home, and we prayed, and prayed, and prayed for him in his temptations and difficulties.

Just about this time a Rest Room and Canteen for the men and women of the Forces was opened in our town. A Mr. and Mrs. Leftley started the work and a real man of God, Mr. W. D. Searby, was in charge. This good man was an earnest soul-winner, detecting and helping many an anxious or enquiring soul amongst the young men and women of the Forces. It was Mr. Searby who was so very helpful to Colin just before he left these shores, and largely influenced him in his later making a definite stand for the Lord Jesus Christ. God's work in the soul is done through many agents!

What spiritual experiences Colin passed through during the next few months are best known to himself. He evidently made up his mind to do the right thing whatever it might cost; and what was far more important, he decided to place himself in the hands of the Saviour, Who alone is “able to keep”. So that most-necessary of all events took place in Colin's life — his conversion to God.

I well remember Colin's embarkation leave before being posted to one of His Majesty's destroyers, which was to be his “home” for the next three years. We left him with

very mixed feelings, as we wondered what the future had in store. He left — the subject of many prayers, that he might be preserved if it was God's will, and be brought back again safely; above all that he might be kept true and faithful to the One Who had saved him, not only for time but for all eternity.

We had to wait some days before hearing of his first experiences at sea whilst passing through the Bay of Biscay. Here is his first letter :—

“ H.M.S. Roebuck ”

August 1943.

“ Dear Father and Mother,

The reason for the delay in writing was sea-sickness, four-and-a-half days of it! . . . It was the first and, I hope, the last time that I shall ever feel so bad. The ship seemed to be doing everything except turn upside down. I not only wished myself dead — I wished I had never been born. I cursed the sea and my notions and headstrong ideas about joining up. Now, however, it is all over and forgotten — but not one thing!

As I lay there on the third day I began to think on these lines; just suppose I never recover from this sickness and that I die — sounds fantastic now it is all over — what would I like to do if my last wish were granted? And it amounted to this: 10 minutes at home to say ‘ Thank you, mother and father, ’ as I have never said it before.

There was a time, father, I am ashamed to say, when I almost came to regard you as one to be avoided, when I wanted to do everything *my way*, and of course when Sunday came round I used to hide away so as to avoid going to the service. How unjust, how unfair it seemed then. But I now have a better and clearer view-point on the situation. Although I may have avoided you then

and gone my own way, your wishes and desires and rules had *their way* in the long run.

How thankful I am — and I praise God too — that I had a father who would sacrifice a little kindness here and there to be firm. Your guidance has turned out to be the fuel by which the light that burns within me for *Him* was started. You have sown and I have reaped the benefit. I pray that, if it be His will, I may be given strength to be a help to you in your work in the hospital after the war. No, father, your prayers for me were not in vain, for I felt your prayers were with me when I first joined up. There is little more I can say, for my heart is full — thank you.

And I thank you, mother, for your fineness and your guidance which taught me what a gentleman is. Your smile has gone a lot further with me than any law or rule. Oh, the times I was rude and ungracious toward you when you corrected me —oh, how I regret them! But somehow I know you have already forgiven me, because you always have done so when I really felt repentant. So thank you, mother, and God bless you for what you are.

There is one other I would like to thank for his influence on my career, but I cannot, unfortunately. I cannot write about him, but tears come to my eyes. 'My cup runneth over,' he used to say, and he was certainly serving under the right colours. If I shine as brightly as he did, I shall do well."

This latter paragraph referred to his grandfather of whom he was so fond.

In the goodness of God Colin managed to find a congenial companion on board, Angus Parnaby by name, who had preceded him in the service by about two months. He was a pleasant fellow of about Colin's age and they had a good deal in common; best of all he too made a real confession of faith

in Christ soon after they met. Now they could study the Bible and pray together, which they continued to do until demobilization. When in port in South Africa, India or Ceylon, they would sometimes, to their great joy, find another Christian from one of the other ships. If Colin was on board and off duty and someone wished to find him, it became quite the usual thing to be told :

“ You will find him sitting on the deck with his Bible in one hand and a pencil in the other ! ”

So keen was he on studying the Word of God ; his knowledge of the Scriptures has proved invaluable since.

Colin was continually thinking of his fellow sailors. He loved their souls, and prayed for them. They saw he was genuine — sailors soon detect a person who is a humbug ! At times he would have one or another of them on their knees as he prayed for them, and more than one sailor said, “ He wished he were like Andy. ” If he saw one of the ship’s company dead drunk and rolling about the streets, his heart would go out to him in deep pity, and in one of his letters home the following sentence occurred —

“ Don’t be too hard on Jack, father, as you see him rolling down the street ; he is away from home and often gets drunk, just to drown his sorrow and forget the lack of companionship in his home. He needs our prayers so much. ”

When the coxswain left the boat for good in South Africa, he introduced Colin to the one taking his place and, putting his hand on the former’s shoulder, said :

“ This chap is a real, true Christian. ”

Thus even a junior on one of His Majesty’s boats, if he is a consistent Christian, will win his way in the end. We need young men today who are prepared to be good, practical Christians.

Colin was exceptionally fortunate in obtaining shore leave most Sundays when the boat happened to be in foreign parts. When ashore, Colin always looked for a place where he

could be sure of hearing the Word of God faithfully preached; what a joy to have Christian fellowship when there was practically none on board ship! In fact he would have had none at all had it not been for his boon companion and friend, Angus Parnaby. How very kind Christians were to him, entertaining him in their homes and showing him different places of interest when on leave! The love amongst Christians is a very real thing.

Sometimes he would be taken to a service held amongst the Zulus or other tribes and he would be asked to give the message, which he did by interpretation. At other times he would speak to classes of young people in English, perhaps, giving his testimony; as a result some acknowledged their faith in Christ. This would give him great joy to think that God, by the power of His Holy Spirit, had used such a weak vessel for His own glory. He might never again have such opportunities during his lifetime; certainly he would never have the same ones, for opportunities once lost cannot be recalled; they are lost *for ever*.

As with most Christians who travel widely, Colin was not always so fortunate in finding Christian fellowship. Often within a church or chapel he would hear Christ put forward merely as an Example for men, and not as the One Who could and would meet the needs of a guilty sinner; and little, if any, reference made to the awfulness of sin in the sight of God. Let us urgently preach the full gospel of God's grace to sinners.

After meeting with many experiences abroad and having been used to the blessing and conversion of both young and old, he at last returned home, to our great joy. We now heard from his own lips how the Lord had kept and guided him even down to the very smallest details of his everyday life.

My desire is that my son may continue to be used to the glory of God wherever he goes. For three years after leaving the Navy he spent most of his spare time in and

around Brentwood, preaching the Gospel. Then in 1949 we moved to Haslemere and he felt the call to go to Canada where he stayed, serving the Lord, for five years before coming home again for a short stay at the end of 1954. In the Spring of 1955 he returned to his evangelistic work in Ontario, where he still serves God amongst both adults and young people.

CHAPTER XI

Faithful for Ever

A WOMAN'S work is never done! When that woman is a Christian wife and mother, what a wonderful privilege and influence is hers. My wife cared most wonderfully for her children. But father is needed also; marriage and parenthood is a partnership, and being often at my children's side God gave me a great love for them.

God never changes. What a comfort and joy. But we change, and our circumstances.

For thirty-six years my wife and I journeyed life's road together. Then without warning my wife had a stroke, and within two days was in the presence of her Lord. The date is of course indelibly impressed on my memory, 21st February, 1952. I have never experienced a sadder blow than this, but the words of Scripture came to mind :

"The Lord gave . . . and the Lord hath taken away,
blessed be the name of the Lord."

What a comfort to know that we are safe for eternity in His care. Are *you* safe for eternity?

* * *

I am now not far from my four-score years, and if you should ask me, "Does God answer prayer?" I could only answer, "I *know* He does."

I *know* that if I have been saved from all the conceivable crimes it is humanly possible to commit, it is due not to any

goodness in myself, but, from the human side, to the prayers of my beloved parents; and, much more, from the Divine side, to the grace of God, by which I am what I am. When I realise what I might have been, what perhaps I nearly was, and the experiences I have had; do you wonder that I am a great believer in prayer? Do you say, "There is nothing in prayer — I don't believe in it"? I say, "Prayer changes things." I have proved the power of prayer all my Christian life, and I continue to do so.

Would you remind me that my dear mother was left a widow with six mouths to feed and six growing children to provide for? I would tell you that this was just where God came in and showed His great love and care for the widow and fatherless.

I know how He did it, because I was the eldest of those children.

Do you ask me to recollect the many unpleasant things that have happened in my life and ask why ever God allowed them? I would reply:

"These trials bring God very near to me because I need Him so."

He has never let me down.

"But your house was bombed and your business destroyed and practically all the labours of years lost. You say your God *cares* what happens to His creatures?"

The Bible says:

"He is the Preserver of all men, especially of those that believe" (1 Tim. 4:10).

Reader — Trust Him even though you may be unable to explain all that happens. Experience His power in your life, His love and grace.

Does God answer prayer? "I *know* God answers prayer!" Do you remember my father postponing his brief holiday, and instead visiting a house where he found he was greatly needed? By God's grace I had a similar experience as recently as the year 1959, once again confirming to me that God still works, using one person to do His bidding, to meet

the need of another of His children, although up to that moment they may have been absolute strangers to one another.

* * *

I have made a point, from the time I left school, of putting by a certain proportion of my weekly earnings for the work of the Lord, and have been able to maintain this practice before God for just over sixty years.

Now, it so happened that in 1959 I had a larger sum in hand than usual, some months before taking my summer holiday: after having disposed of part of it to missionary and similar causes I still had quite a considerable sum left which I did not, for some unaccountable reason, feel free to disburse. I booked my holiday at a Christian Guest House, but was still most concerned about the surplus money.

The day before I was due to return home from my holiday the proprietor set at my table in the dining room a lady who was also returning home the following day: visitors were coming and going, necessitating this change in seating arrangements. I could not remember having spoken to this lady before, nor did I even know her name. She was accompanied by her three daughters, aged between eleven and fifteen.

In course of conversation I learned that she had lost her husband nine years previously and that this was the first real holiday the family had had since her husband's death. This set me thinking, and after leaving the dinner table I went to my room and prayed that, if it was God's will that some money should be given to her, I might in some definite way meet her before returning home.

I left the house with the intention of going for a boat-trip and there, just a few yards in front of me, was the very same lady! This seemed such a distinct answer to prayer that I quickened my pace, and somewhat timidly asked her if she

would be greatly offended if I were allowed to make her a small monetary gift. The extraordinary surprise on the lady's face as she said, "Oh, thank you, thank you," before she had actually been given anything, made me think more seriously than ever, because after all it seemed such an unusual thing to do as between two complete strangers. We then went our respective ways.

I reckoned up what my own holiday had cost me for the fortnight, and having multiplied this by four, realised with a shock how much the widow had had to pay. Without a husband and with those growing children to support, what a hard task it must have been for her all those years! She had had to go out to work, but even so expenses must have been great; I had sympathy as I remembered how my own mother had been left with six young mouths to feed. The burden of my responsibility grew.

After praying about the whole matter again that evening, it seemed to me that I ought to give her the entire sum which I had in hand. I therefore wrote a brief note enclosing a cheque for the amount, leaving the name to be inserted and asked that no enquiry should be made as to my address.

I discovered some months afterwards that the sum given was exactly what that Christian widow had desperately needed: she must have made every effort to give the young folks a good holiday, only to be faced, after making the arrangements, with some quite unforeseen expenses.

Who could have arranged that two absolute strangers, living 500 miles apart, should meet at that particular time, in order to fulfil a particular need, that the widow's faith in God might be strengthened?

This incident was one of the happiest of my experiences. Surely it is "more blessed to give than to receive" (Acts 20:35)! Again I say, God is indeed a prayer-answering God.

Whilst this book was in manuscript form in the hands of the publishers I experienced yet another case of God's preserving mercy.

Handing out tracts in a Midland town outside a large hospital on a Saturday afternoon, I was suddenly knocked unconscious by a motor cyclist. The first thing I knew of the accident was that of finding myself in the casualty ward of another hospital, with about 25 stitches in my ear and forehead. I was terribly bruised about the body but miraculously escaped permanent injury — at the age of 76!

Yes, I *know* He cares and that “all things *work together for good* to them that love God.”

A Personal Challenge

I HAVE finished my story, but before laying down my pen I want to ask you, young friend, how you stand in relation to God. I am interested in you, whoever you may be that read this book, and I want you to join me with many, many others, in that bright home which the Lord Jesus Christ has gone to prepare.

Perhaps you know the way of salvation but have put the matter off time and again, as I once did. Put it off no longer, delays are dangerous; come to the Saviour *now*. Remember, you cause joy in the presence of the angels of God by your act of repentance. Think of that! How wonderful it would be if today you cause Heaven to rejoice!

Deciding for Christ means deciding for happiness. God does not ask you to give up a life of pleasure, fun or amusements for the life of a hermit. God does not want that, *He wants you*. Honestly, would you not like to be Christ's own, and live down here on this earth to the pleasure of God? Come to Him as a poor sinner and take His salvation, which is offered freely to all.

Selfish pleasures will give way to a God-honouring life. True joy will be found in serving Him. Giving Him the first place in your heart and life, you will most surely find that the things you thought would be hard to give up, will drop away like the autumn leaves from the trees.

Oh, there is just *one other thing* — you will not be half-hearted about this, will you? If you are, you will not experience the sheer, unadulterated joy of a life given wholly to God. On the contrary life will be horribly miserable, being neither one thing nor the other.

If I can help you in any way, do write and let me know; I shall be only too pleased, by the help of God, to do anything for you, for His sake.

MARANATHA! — THE LORD COMETH!

L. A. ANDERSON has been a chartered accountant for many years. He has had a very wide experience in Christian things, and has a special interest in the young of Christ's flock that they may follow the Master more closely. *He draws on a wide experience.* His life-story should be of particular value to earnest, young believers.

FOUR SHILLINGS AND SIXPENCE