

# The Man of His Counsel



Effie M. Williams



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**By Effie M. Williams**

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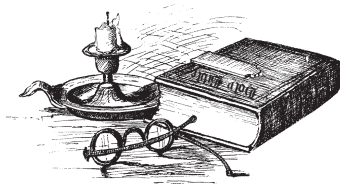
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## CHAPTER 1

### A MODEL FAMILY

JOE HOLMIER stood leaning against the door of his big bank barn, gazing across the well-kept acres of the farm on which he lived. Rich indeed had been the fruitage of his fields that year. His wheat, oats and hay had been harvested and stored away, and the corn, with stalks seared by the touch of early autumn, promised an abundant yield. His cattle were sleek and fat; his horses well groomed and in good condition. His young porkers, which he could see in the field some distance away, promised meat for Joe and his family for the winter.

Joe's labors on the farm that summer had been well rewarded and he had been blessed above many of his neighbors. The wool from his sheep had netted him a nice little sum, sufficient to provide clothing for himself and his family. The fowls in his yard had also been a great help. On the hillside Joe could count thirty-seven young turkeys that would be ready for the Thanksgiving market.

All this did not escape his eye as he stood there in deep meditation. The October sun was just sending its last faint rays across the meadow before it disappeared behind some trees fringing the river at the rear of his farm. Its slanting rays fell full upon the house, which stood some distance from the barn, lighting up its windows with a fiery glow.

Joe gazed about the place for some time, then directed his glance toward the house as he saw the curtains at the window separate and a little curly head appear between them. The rays of the sun fell full upon the curls and made them shine as gold. There was a wave of a child's hand at the window, which Joe returned, and which seemed to break the spell that had come over him. "God bless the dear little fellow," said he. "I have done as I desired to do for him and am glad that I have a good living for my babies; but all this has not satisfied me. There is something more that I want and just what that is I do not know. I must have something that will give me rest. My fields of grain, my stock and my money, have not brought to me the satisfaction that I desire. I mean to tell Susie tonight." At this he closed the barn door and started toward the house.

From his youth Joe Holmier was known as a good man. His morals were perfect. No one had ever heard him utter a profane or vulgar word, for none ever fell from his lips. He formed no bad habits and was strictly temperate; in fact, he was a leader in the temperance society in that community and had been for some time. He never used tobacco in any form and did not know the taste of intoxicants. Being religiously inclined from his earliest childhood, when sixteen years of age he united with a church which was near and to the best of his ability lived according to the teachings of his leaders in that particular faith. He was a very industrious young man and as he had to labor hard for the money which he possessed he considered well how it was spent. His name was upon the lips of many of the parents in that community. He was pointed out to some of the wayward boys as a model after which they should pattern. Mothers would often make the remark to their sons, "Oh, if you were only like Joe Holmier I would never have any occasion for worry."

Parents who looked well to their daughters of marriageable age often spoke of Joe as a desirable husband, and many glances were bent his way from the fair damsels of the community. But Joe seemed to be oblivious of it all and went about his business unconcerned. He never asked for the company of the young girls and all had formed the conclusion that Joe Holmier was destined to be a bachelor. None knew that while they were talking about his spending his life alone he had let his heart go out to Susie Dietrich. He was only waiting until he felt that he had accumulated sufficient means to provide a little home before he asked her to become his wife. Susie had been reared on the farm and was just the kind of girl to make a young farmer such as Joe a good wife; so at the age of twenty-five Joe decided that he was not destined to be a bachelor, for Susie promised to become his wife.

The Dietrich family were of the same religious faith as Joe and the father and mother rejoiced to know that Susie had been able to get the model young man of the community for a husband. Susie was also very proud of her husband, but she had been married to him but a few months when she was one day awakened to the fact that Joe had a very high temper and



sometimes could not keep control of it. It all came about because Susie failed to close the garden gate and the hogs got into the potato patch rooting up most of the potatoes; also destroying some other vegetables. Poor Susie regretted the loss as much as Joe and felt very bad indeed because of her neglect, but she was not prepared for the outburst of temper on the part of her husband. She burst into tears at his stinging, cutting remarks. After this incident Susie strove to keep Joe in a good humor but at best he would sometimes lose control of himself over the most trifling things. After each outburst, however, he would repent and ask her forgiveness, and as Susie was of an even temperament their married life together was quite congenial.

Although they worked early and late on the farm they were never too busy to be present at services. Each Sunday found them in their accustomed places, each attired in the plain dress of their faith—Susie in her white cap and bonnet and Joe in his broad brimmed hat. Both were members in good standing, and as Joe was a liberal giver, many a dollar found its way into the treasury box from his hand. All looked upon them as a model couple, and if their pastor had been asked to point out the best members of his congregation Joe and Susie Holmier would have headed the list.

## CHAPTER 2

### JOE'S AWAKENING

As has already been stated, Joe was of an unusually quick temper, which often caused him quite a great deal of sorrow. After he had lost control of himself he would always express himself as being weak, but perhaps there would be something in the sermon on the next Sunday morning that would be of help to him. As each Sunday came and went, however, Joe found himself not gathering strength from the messages as he so much desired. The sermons to which he listened were usually along the distinctive doctrines of that particular faith, and Joe and Susie were well schooled along the line of sobriety, baptism, honest toil, and plainness of dress. In all this Joe felt that he was truly a model to any member who might desire to look upon him as a pattern, but still his heart cried out for something that he felt he needed. So strong was the desire within his soul for something that he did not possess that he one-day called upon the minister for a conversation about his spiritual needs.

After listening for some time to what Joe had to say about the longing of his soul, the old minister said, "Now, Joe, I have known you for a number of years. If you have come to tell me that you are not what you feel you should be, I will have to say I do not know where to turn to find one who is really a servant of God. Do you not know that you have lived a life here in this community that is above reproach?"

"That may all be true," replied Joe, "and I am glad that I have lived a good, clean, moral life, but all that I have done has not brought me the relief nor peace of soul that I so much desire." Here he paused for a few moments and then related to the minister the many times when he could not control himself and would give vent to violent outbursts of temper. "This," said Joe, "is the thing that is troubling me. I want to get stronger along this line, for after I have those outbursts I have such a fear in my soul. I wonder if I should die if I could hope to enter Heaven."

"Why do you let such trifling things trouble you?" inquired his pastor. "Do you think that you shall ever become a man greater than the apostle Paul?"

"No, I do not think that I shall ever become such a man as he was," reluctantly replied Joe. "But that is not the thing I am seeking after. I do not care for greatness, but I desire to feel that I am truly a child of God and ready to meet him at any time. You know, a few days ago my clothing got fastened in a piece of machinery and if help had not been given me immediately I should have been ground to pieces. The first thing that came to me after the excitement had died down was, 'If I had been ground to pieces, where would my soul have gone?' I tell you, Brother Reinhart, this has become a serious thing with me and I want you to give me some advice as to what to do about it."

"My dear Brother Joe," said the preacher, Mr. Reinhart as he laid his hand upon Joe's shoulder, "did you not know that these are problems that confront all of us? The apostle Paul was not exempt from them, for we read where he had just such trials as you are now facing. Let me read you what he had to say about it." And opening his Bible, the pastor read Romans, the seventh chapter, beginning with the fourteenth verse. As he read the nineteenth verse he said, "Now, Brother Joe, that is your experience also. You do not want to give vent to your feelings, but you do the thing that you do not want to do. I tell you it is an uphill business all the way through and you can't go on your feelings. I must say that my experience is like the apostle Paul's also, for when I would do good evil is also present. Sometimes the things that I hate are the things that I do."

"But is there no way for us to know that we are ready to meet God at any time?" earnestly inquired Joe.

"We can know no more than the Bible tells us about such things," replied Preacher Reinhart, "and I shall read to you what the good Book has to say about it." So opening his Bible to Mark, the sixteenth chapter, the preacher began to read from the fifteenth verse: "And he said unto them, Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature. He that believeth," here he paused, and looking at Joe, said, "Do you believe?" "I surely do believe," said Joe. The minister continued, "'And is baptized,' and have you been baptized?" To which Joe replied, "You know that I have been baptized for you

administered that rite yourself.” But the minister continued reading without making any reply to Joe’s statement, “ ‘...shall be saved; but he that believeth not shall be damned.’ Now, if you believe and have been baptized the Bible says you **shall be** saved. It does not say you **are** saved, but **shall be**. You know there is much to come up against us and something that we have to do it.

“I want to read to you again from Paul’s writings to the church at Philippi. In Philippians, the second chapter and the twelfth verse, Paul says, ‘Wherefore, my beloved, as ye have always obeyed, not as in my presence only, but now much more in my absence, work out your own salvation with fear and trembling.’ You see, Brother Joe, this is a job you have to work at. You must work it out for yourself for it is your own salvation. I can only say to you as Paul said to the church at Philippi: as you have always obeyed and lived up to the rules and regulations of the church, just keep it up and work out your own salvation. I will have to say that I have about all that I can do to work out my own salvation, and then sometimes I think that I am not doing a very good job at it.”

“Well, if that be the case,” laughingly replied Joe, “I shall not bother you any more for I do not want to call you away from your job. I want you to make good.”

A few more remarks were exchanged between the two men and then Joe climbed into his wagon and started for home. Although the heaviness had not left his breast he consoled himself with the thought that his pastor had given; that he would not be damned for he believed and had been baptized. He said to himself as he drove along, “I shall work out my salvation more diligently than ever.”

Upon his arrival home Joe found his uncle awaiting him. He was very glad to see him. After supper was over and they were all gathered together in the living room his uncle told them why he had come. He owned a large tract of land in the Wabash bottoms in Indiana that Joe had asked to rent when he married. His uncle came to tell Joe that he might now have the place, because the current tenant was leaving. This was very fertile land and Joe desired to farm it very much. Because this was such a large tract he did not feel that he

could handle it all alone, and mentioned the fact to his uncle. His uncle told of a man and his wife who lived near him that he thought the very people Joe needed to help manage the farm. They could all live in the two-story house, which was on the land, while they farmed it for the first year. If all were satisfied at the end of the next year, his uncle would build a house on the place for the hired help. This place was so desirable for farming that Joe felt he could not let the opportunity slip by again: so before the uncle left he made arrangements to move onto the place the beginning of the next year.

The weeks that passed between the visit of his uncle and the move were busy ones. The first of the next year found them on their uncle's farm. There was much to be done after the move, preparing for the spring work and also to make preparation for the hired man whom they were expecting about the first of March.

As there was a church of their faith about two miles from their place at Steele's Crossing, Joe and Susie were soon settled as members of that congregation. Joe was no longer troubled about his spiritual condition, for he knew that he believed and had been baptized and was doing all that he could to work out his salvation. It was with this confidence within himself that he met Alfred and Tillie Giese when they made their appearance the first of March to take up the position of helpers on the farm.

It was quite late in the evening when the couple came. Joe and Susie extended to them hospitality in urging them to remain for the evening's meal. They also invited the Gieses to spend the night with them, as it was too late to think of arranging their own rooms in the house for the night. As they began to make preparation to retire for the night Alfred remarked that they always had reading and prayer before they retired and asked if there were any objections to their doing so now. To this Joe replied that he did not see how there could be any objections, as he had been a church member almost all his life. As Alfred opened his grip to get his Bible, Susie stepped into another room from which she soon returned with a little white cap on her head, after the custom of her faith.

When all were seated Alfred read from the third chapter of First John, and Joe listened very attentively. The four-

teenth verse sent a dagger into his heart, for he heard the words, "We know that we have passed from death unto life, because we love the brethren. He that loveth not his brother abideth in death." How those words rang in his heart and brought again that restlessness of soul, for he did not know that he had passed from death unto life. He did know that he did not love all the brethren, for he had remarked to Susie only a few days before that there was one man in the church whom he just hated. God's Word pierced him like a knife. But the Word was not all that gripped his heart, for the prayers that followed gave him such a heaviness in his chest that it seemed he could scarcely breathe. Alfred and Tillie Giese prayed as only those can pray who are fully acquainted with their God. There was no pleading for mercy and forgiveness or acknowledgement of sinfulness such as Joe had been accustomed to hearing, but praise and thanksgiving for sins forgiven and the peace and rest which comes through the knowledge of salvation. Joe thought he had never heard such prayers before, and when in their own room expressed himself to Susie as never having heard such. She replied, "I guess the prayer was all right, but I would have enjoyed it more if she would have had her head covered."

Joe laughed as he replied, "Her head was uncovered, but I believe she can beat you with your cap on."

## CHAPTER 3

### **ATTRACTED BY A CHRISTIAN LIFE**

Enough has been said in the previous chapters of my story about Joe Holmier to arouse admiration and sympathy as well as pity on the part of my readers. Joe's high moral standing, his integrity, his hospitality, and his having the name of being the best worker in the community merit the admiration of all. But as we see him—a man who cannot control himself and gives vent to outbursts of rage—he at once becomes an object of pity. Through it all, however, the better Joe was always seen, for he was always ready to make right anything that he did. But it seemed that none escaped his sharp tongue when once he gave vent to his temper.

I said none escaped, but there were two against whom no one ever saw Joe seem to get the least bit provoked. These were the two little jewels in the home—a little boy and girl. They were the idols of his heart, and none ever saw him the least bit stirred against them, no matter what they would do, although they did things that would often upset the mildest tempered man. Joe was never too tired to have a romp with the little boy or walk the floor with the baby girl long into the hours of night when she was screaming with the colic. Many times he would tell his wife, "If you take care of them in the daytime while I am working, I ought to be willing to care for them at night." And he did. But patient as he was with the children he could not control himself at other times. His neighbors, his stock, and even his good wife often felt the sharpness of his tongue when his anger was aroused. Then they saw him lapse into sullen moods which would often last for several days, from which he would emerge ready to make right the thing that he had done.

It did not take Alfred Giese long to understand what kind of man Joe was and the thing that he needed to make him the man he should be. Alfred and his wife Tillie began to pray that Joe might be made to see his need. One day as Alfred came in to dinner he remarked that he could see why God had so arranged it that he be on the place with Joe that summer. He could see that Joe knew nothing of what real Christianity was and felt sure that he was tired of the profession that he

had. But as Alfred could see that Joe was possessed of some conceit, he knew that he would have to advance slowly and cautiously else the seed that he was trying to scatter would be wasted. Much as he desired to converse on the Word of God he never mentioned it unless Joe inquired regarding his belief.

It would seem to my readers that as the two families lived together in the same house and under the same roof there would be almost the same familiarity between them that there would be with one family, but that was not the case. These two families were as much two families as though they were living miles apart so far as their familiarity was concerned. Alfred and Tillie had three rooms in the house, which consisted of a kitchen and living room downstairs and a sleep room upstairs. When Alfred's day's work was done he went to his home and was as far from the Holmier family as though he lived miles away. Tillie, too, lived in such a way that Susie felt she had a neighbor and could not regard her as one of the family.

Alfred proved himself quite as competent a farmer as Joe, so there could be no complaint made in any way. Although the two lived such separated lives in their homes Alfred and Tillie sought for every opportunity they could find to make themselves accommodating. Many times the two little ones were left in their care while Joe and Susie went to town to do some trading. Tillie was very fond of children and, having been the eldest in a large family of children, she knew how to care for the little ones. Susie felt safe in leaving them in her care. But much as she appreciated the company of the little ones, when Susie returned they were sent home. How wisely these two dealt with their neighbors that they might be able to win them to the Lord!

The sleeping room of Alfred and Tillie joined that of Joe and Susie, and the Holmiers had to pass the door of the Gieses before reaching their own room. Many times as Joe passed their door he would hear them reading from the Word and pause to listen. When he would do so he would often hear them in their evening devotions. He found that they never failed to mention both his name and that of his wife in prayer. He also found that they were desirous of Joe and Susie finding the peace that they desired. Joe never listened to their prayers



but that he did not feel disturbed in his soul and go to his room only to toss upon his bed unable to sleep. But much as the prayers disturbed him, the daily life of Alfred as they were thrown together in the field and in the other work about the farm disturbed him more, for he found Alfred possessing something that kept him when he himself gave vent to rage.

One thing happened while they were doing their spring plowing which caused Joe much disturbance and again made him seek his pastor for advice. While plowing he lost a bolt from his plow. In trying to insert the bolt through a hole in the plow beam he struck it with a hammer, causing the bolt to slip and the hammer to strike his finger. Immediately, he threw the hammer with all the vengeance he could. The hammer came so close to the head of one of his horses that it jumped to one side, turning over the plow; then he jerked on the lines, setting both horses back on their haunches. Joe then gave the plow a kick, turning it over again. All this Alfred saw from the other side of the field and when he came to see what had happened to cause this outburst he found Joe nursing a finger which had a large blood blister near the nail, and Joe was in a very unpleasant mood.

"I wish I had an ax to cut this old plow in splinters and knock out the brains of those old horses," said Joe as Alfred approached, "and just for two cents I'd do it, too."

"Well, I'd rather give you two dollars not to do it than to give you two cents to do it," said Alfred as he walked around and patted each of the horses' necks and then righted the plow. It took him but an instant to see what was needed about the plow and he called for the hammer that he might drive the bolt through the plow beam.

"I think you will find it over there close to those bushes," said Joe rather shamefacedly as he saw Alfred meant to fix it for him. Alfred found the hammer but had no better success in driving the bolt through the beam than Joe had. At the first lick the hammer slipped again and caught Alfred's thumb, bursting the skin near the nail, causing the blood to flow freely. He, too, let go the hammer, but only to fall at his feet, and as he was kneeling on one knee near the plow he bent his head

over on the plow beam and groaned aloud, grasping the injured thumb tightly in the other hand. He remained in this posture a few moments, then raising his head and looking Joe straight in the face said, "Praise the Lord." Had a bomb exploded at Joe's feet it would not have surprised him more than the "Praise the Lord" which came from the lips of Alfred at this time. Joe stood open-mouthed, wide-eyed, and speechless, for he took in the situation at one glance. Alfred's thumb had received a harder lick from the hammer than his finger had, for the blood was dripping from the injured thumb and he had only raised a blister on his finger, and here Alfred was saying, "Praise the Lord." For some time Joe stood speechless then said, "What made you say that?"

"Sit down with me on this plow beam and I shall tell you what made me say that at this time," said Alfred as he seated himself on the plow, holding his hand out from him so the blood could drip onto the ground. Joe sat down beside him and he began, "I said, 'Praise the Lord.' for He alone is to be praised at this time for my actions. I could not have done it within myself, but as I knelt there by that plow I could not help but recall an incident of my early teens. I was building a wagon for my little brother and he was standing near me when the hammer slipped and I mashed my thumb as I did today. But no sooner had I done it than I threw the hammer as you did and in doing so I threw it in such a way that it struck my little brother just over the eye. For three days he lay in an unconscious or semi-conscious condition and when he emerged from the shadows the first words that he spoke were, 'What made Al do that?' Of course, I could not tell him what had made me do it other than I just got so angry. I had something to remind me of that outburst of mine for my brother carried a deep scar just above his eye until he died and as I looked at his cold form in the casket that scar was still a reminder of my uncontrolled temper. Not only in this incident, but many other times I lost control of myself. But I am glad to say, 'Praise the Lord,' for one day I heard that there is power in the blood of Jesus, and I sought the Lord with all my heart. When He came into my heart I found Him a present help in time of need. When do we

need Him more than at times when we are not the masters of ourselves? I do not know what I should have done today had I not had the Lord to help me, but since He has so completely filled me and helped me to be an overcomer in times like this, why should I not say, 'Praise the Lord'? I do not enjoy being hurt any more than you do. Even now the pain is severe, for my arm is aching to my shoulder. I know that I shall have a very sore thumb for several days, but I can say, 'Praise the Lord,' for sustaining grace and for the keeping power which I have found in Him."

Tears were streaming down Alfred's face as he related his experience to Joe and Joe felt the hot tears coursing down his own cheeks. He would have liked to inquire more into Alfred's life, but his throat seemed to close and he could not find voice to speak one word. For some time they sat together in silence, but the Holy Spirit was doing His work in Joe's heart. Over and over he said to himself, "Here is a man who really knows God."

At last Alfred arose and went to the house to have his thumb dressed and Joe picked up the hammer and after several trials drove the bolt through the hole in the plow beam. All the anger was driven from him, and as Alfred again came into the field and resumed plowing Joe could hear him whistling, "Take the name of Jesus with you." And this only deepened the conviction in his soul.

The next Sunday Joe again sought advice from his pastor. After the morning service, as Preacher Brumbaugh was leaving the chapel, a very anxious member confronted him at the door. He listened for some time to the inquiries of a troubled soul as Joe related the happenings of the week, which led to the interview. But if Joe hoped for encouragement he was sadly disappointed, for he received none. In his interview with Preacher Reinhart he left with the consolation that he believed and had been baptized and if he only continued faithful to the end he would be saved, but Preacher Brumbaugh failed to give him the least bit of encouragement. After listening to Joe's story he said, "Uh-huh you mashed your finger and threw the hammer and your hired man saw you do it. He comes along and

mashes his purposely so he can put on a sanctimonious air with a 'holier than thou' attitude and then relate a sob story to you. The thing you should have done was to let him know that he was your hired man and not your master."

"But, Brother Brumbaugh," said Joe, "he does not take the position of master, for there could be no better hired hand than Alfred. And I am sure that he did not strike his thumb purposely."

"If you will take my advice," replied Preacher Brumbaugh, "go on home and act like a man instead of a baby and do not let such trifling things trouble you. I have not found anything in the Word of God yet that says anything against throwing a hammer away when you mash your finger. In fact, we do not know what the Lord would have done in such cases for the Bible is silent about it. When the Bible is silent we ought to be silent, too. Our Lord was a carpenter and we do not know how many times he threw the hammer away when he mashed his finger. We are not told all things that he did, in fact, one of the writers tells us that if all that he did had been written the world could not contain the books. When we remember that he went into the temple and with a scourge of ropes drove out the moneychangers, we might picture him throwing away a hammer if he should mash his finger. Our Lord was human as well as divine and the human part of him had feelings as well as you or I."

"I can understand why he should drive out the moneychangers but I cannot think of him throwing away a hammer because of a mashed finger," replied Joe as he turned away.

"Well, we do not know that he did not," said Preacher Brumbaugh laughingly.

Joe could not understand why his spiritual adviser should answer his inquiries as he did that day, but had he been with him a few weeks previously he could well have understood. He, too, had lost control of himself and had thrown the hammer away because of a mashed thumb; so the preacher could not have given advice other than he gave. His advice, however, did not help to lift the load from Joe's heart. He repeated to himself again and again, "Alfred has something that I know nothing about."

While Alfred was convincing Joe, Tillie in her quiet way, was letting her light shine. Often it was through some word or act of hers, though done unconsciously many times, making Susie to see her real need. While Joe was keeping his convictions to himself, Susie was doing the same. Both of them were ashamed to confess to the other because both had been members of the same church for so long. Many times Susie would pass Tillie's door and hear her voice lifted in prayer and often her own name was mentioned. In this way Tillie kept such victory that her daily life was a real light to her neighbor. How Susie longed for such an experience, yet she never mentioned it to her husband! And Joe in turn longed for such an experience as Alfred had, yet he never mentioned it to his wife. Both of them were being attracted by a real Christian life.

## CHAPTER 4

### JOE UNLOADS

Although the advice given by Preacher Brumbaugh was not what Joe had desired it proved to be very helpful to him many times. The admonition to go home and act like a man and not be a baby rang in his ears many times when about to give vent to his temper. This would come before him and he would say within himself, "I will be a man." And many times, too, when thinking of the occasion of his outburst with the hammer, Alfred's story would come to him. He then would try to comfort himself with the thought that if such tragedy had ever befallen him he, too, would have learned to control himself. But all his reasoning could not lift the load from off his heart nor bring the peace in his soul for which he longed.

Often when alone, and thinking about his condition, Joe would groan aloud. How he longed to tell Susie, but it seemed something held him back. He felt too proud to acknowledge himself a sinner after having been a member of the church for so long, classed as a good member by his pastor, and pointed out by many as the model man of the community. Much as he tried to control himself, there were times when Joe found that he was not the master of himself. This would only make the load heavier. Poor Joe, he had not learned the secret of unloading.

As Alfred and Tillie lived in the country, far from any church except the one of which Joe and Susie were members, they did not have the church privileges they desired. So, Alfred went to several of the neighbors and began to inquire about having some prayer meetings. He found a hearty response from many of the neighbors. After ordering a number of songbooks they began having their weekly meetings. Because Alfred was the one who first mentioned such meetings in the neighborhood, he was appointed leader of the prayer band. As each week advanced he sought the Lord earnestly that he might read the right scripture and give comments on it that would feed the souls of those who attended. For a few weeks there were only a few people who attended the meetings. As reports went over the neighborhood of the enjoyable times spent together more began to attend until, in many of the homes where

the prayer band met, furniture was carried out of the house to make room to accommodate the people. Alfred and Tillie gave good reports of their meetings. They always invited Joe and Susie to go with them. Although the invitations were received courteously, there was always an excuse made for their remaining at home. When the prayer band was to meet at the home of Alfred and Tillie they could not be so discourteous as to refuse to attend, for the meeting was under their own roof.

At an early hour the crowd began to arrive. Some came in buggies, some in wagons, and some on horseback, while others living near came on foot. Joe could scarcely believe his eyes as he saw each room filled and still more coming. There was nothing left to do but to open his doors that the crowd might be accommodated. This he did, and the crowd filled all the rooms. At the beginning of the singing Susie slipped from the room unnoticed and returned wearing her little white cap. The first song ended with Joe and Susie as listeners, but both joined in the second song—Susie with her clear soprano voice, and Joe in his rich, deep bass. The more they sang the better they enjoyed it. The song service had not ended until Joe decided that if this were the kind of meetings his neighbors were having he would not miss another one.

A number of songs were sung and then Alfred arose and, opening his Bible began to read the scripture lesson for the evening. He read the twenty-fifth chapter of Matthew, pausing many times to comment on the parables that are given there. He dwelt especially on the five foolish virgins, and the man who buried his talent. Joe sat spellbound as he listened to his hired hand expounding the Scripture. The Holy Spirit was using an entrusted talent and Alfred was putting it out to the exchangers that it might be doubled. The words that he spoke were having their effect on his hearers. After the scripture lesson Alfred said, "We will now have a season of prayer. After Brother Holmier leads us in a few words of prayer I shall ask for a few volunteer prayers. Let us all bow while Brother Holmier leads us in prayer." Joe looked from room to room and saw all kneeling, waiting for him to lead them in prayer. At first he felt that he would just quietly withdraw from the room but

on second thought knew that would not do for the whole community regarded him as a Christian man, a real model. Such an act would never do for him. So he knelt with the rest, thinking he would say only a few words. But his tongue seemed to cleave to the roof of his mouth. There was profound silence for some time and Joe felt the beating of his heart shaking his whole frame. He must do something, but he could not think of one word. It seemed he was kneeling for an hour and that all eyes were turned upon him, but such was not the case. All were in a worshipful attitude before the Lord and the time had been but a few seconds. At last Joe collected himself sufficiently to repeat the prayer that the Lord had taught his disciples to pray. He was surprised at the close of the prayer to hear Alfred's "Amen." A number of others prayed and then Alfred led in prayer with such fervor and earnestness that Joe felt a tightening in his chest and found it difficult to breathe.

The prayer service over another song was sung, but Joe did not join in the singing. He felt little. He was sure that all there knew now that he was not the man that he had been posing to be for so many years. If the floor had opened and received him out of the sight of all it would have been a welcomed event to him. How miserable he felt.

But there was still more in the meeting to drive home the truth his soul needed. The service was turned into a praise meeting and all were given the opportunity to tell what the Lord had done for them. The testimonies differed according to the respective persons. Some rose with a real praise and thanksgiving to the Lord for deliverance and for real victory, finding real pleasure in the service of the Lord and encouraged to go on in the way. Others testified to a hard time with their ups and downs, but asked the prayers of all that they might not give up but continue faithful to the end. Joe's testimony was even briefer than his prayer, but as all were having some word of praise, he, too, felt that he must say something. So he said in a shaky voice, "I thank God for this meeting for I feel that it has done me good." Alfred's testimony was full of praise to his God for complete and constant victory. As Joe was thrown into Alfred's company daily he knew that Alfred was not testifying any higher than he lived, for his life was one above reproach.



How Joe coveted a like experience, but he was too proud to acknowledge his lack. The meeting was truly helpful to Joe, but it took something more to break his stubborn will and bring him to the place where he would seek for that which his soul was longing.

Among the work animals that Joe had was an old mare he called "Balky Fan." She received this name because she often balked and no one could get her to move. She was a good work animal until she took a notion to work no more and then her work for that time was done. After Alfred had shown such an even temper when he struck his finger, Joe made the remark to his wife that he would like to see what Alfred would do some time if old "Balky Fan" should take a spell with him when Joe was trying to work her. Joe had tried everything that anyone had told him to do to break her from balking but all to no avail. He could never deal with her without losing control of himself and Fan would get a hard beating. Yet this did no good. Joe really desired to see just what Alfred would do should she take such a spell with him. But when Alfred was working her Fan always behaved herself well. The next day after the prayer meeting Joe told Alfred to hitch up old Fan with another one of his horses and haul some blocks up from the woods, for he wanted his winter's wood all ready before the cold weather set in. Alfred had hauled two loads and old Fan had behaved well, but just as he came into the lot with the third load, in trying to back the team old Fan refused to move. Alfred slapped her with the lines but she only stood stock-still and did not move, except to shake her head and bite on the bit. Alfred then got down off the wagon and walked around intending to pat her on the neck and try a little coaxing, but when he touched her she reared up and threw her fore feet across the back of the other horse, which made the situation all the more puzzling. Joe stood witnessing the situation and came up to where Alfred was standing and said, "Now, what are you going to do about it?"

"There is but one thing to do, as I see," replied Alfred. "And that is to get the other horse out of there for she may injure him if we do not. If you will loosen those traces I will unbuckle the neck yoke and we will get him away from her.

Then perhaps we can do something with old Fan." And Alfred began to unbuckle the harness.

"Now is when I feel that she ought to be knocked in the head," said Joe as he gave her a kick in her side.

"That would do no good," replied Alfred, "for the horse is probably not to blame. She may have been ruined in breaking. The man who broke her for the harness is perhaps responsible for all this. Few dumb animals would take such balky spells had they been handled right in the breaking."

"That may all be true," replied Joe, "but that does not help us now. I just can't help but want to knock out her brains when she takes these crazy spells."

Alfred coaxed and petted, but Fan would not get up. All the time that he was working with her Joe noted the evenness of his tone as he spoke to her and saw that he was not the least bit angry. After each trial he wondered what Alfred would do next. At last when it seemed that all means were exhausted Alfred sat down on the wagon tongue and buried his face in his hands as if in deep thought for some time. Then raising his face he looked Joe in the face and said, "Joe, we can't make old Fan get up, but there is One who can. I do not know what to do but He does, and that One is the Lord. He has promised me to be a present help and I need His help now." Walking to Fan's head he took hold of the bridle rein and said, "Come on, old girl." And as he lifted on the bridle rein the old mare got up, much to Joe's surprise, as docile and meek as if nothing had ever happened. Alfred stood patting her neck and the old mare turned her head and began rubbing her nose on Alfred's shoulder. He then hitched the other horse to the wagon and came on into the lot with his load of wood. All of the balk was gone from old Fan.

Alfred worked old Fan all the rest of the day. That evening, after he had finished feeding the stock, he went to the house, leaving Joe standing in the open doorway of the barn, where he stood for some time in deep meditation. He gazed far over his well-kept fields, looking at the fruits of his summer's labor. He had labored hard, early and late, but it had not brought satisfaction for which his soul longed. At last he turned

his eyes toward the house. There he saw a little curly head in the window and the wave of a little hand. This seemed to bring him to himself and as he closed the barn door he said, "I'll tell her all about it," and at this started for the house.

He found Susie busying herself with the evening's meal. Walking up to her, and laying his arm about her shoulder, he said, "Susie, there is something that I want to tell you and I want to tell it to you now."

Susie looked up into his face with a very questioning expression in her eyes. She had never heard Joe speak to her in any such manner. When she saw the earnestness in his face she said, "All right, I am sure that I shall listen to you. What is it?"

"I hardly know what to say or how to say it, but I must tell you. I have been carrying such a load around for some time. I have been too proud to come and tell you what I really should have told you long ago. I am a miserable man, and I want you to help me. I have belonged to the church for a number of years, but I am no Christian. I am not right with God and not fit to enter Heaven. I know you are a good woman, and I have not treated you right, but I mean to be a better man. I can't pray, but I know you can pray for me. I want to get to God, but just how to do it I do not know. I want you to help me and pray for me."

"Oh, Joe," exclaimed Susie. "I know you are as good as I am and I do not feel able to pray for myself."

"No, I am not as good as you are," hastily replied Joe, "for you know the many times that I have been so angry and said such ugly things to you, and then have been so pouty. You have always been so good to me in times like that and have never spoken cross or angry words to me. I know you are much better than I am, and I want you to help me."

"Oh, Joe," said Susie, as she began sobbing on his shoulder. "Do not talk to me like that, for you have so much more patience with the children than I have. I know you are as good as I am, and I think much better."

"Well, this thing I know," said Joe in a positive tone of voice, "I am no Christian and I am unloading my profession as such. I shall never lay claim to it again until I know that I am

right with God and fit to enter Heaven. I want to be able to pray and to live right every day and I want you to help me.”

Susie placed her arms about his neck and as she kissed his cheek said, “I will help you all I can.”

## CHAPTER 5

### **SUSIE PROVES A HELPER**

Three weeks passed and each day left Joe more miserable than he had been the day before. How he longed to find the peace for which his soul was craving! Nothing else seemed to occupy his mind, and this was the only topic of conversation between him and his wife. So serious had the matter become to him that Susie became very much alarmed about him. She finally decided the best thing for her to do was to let him know again that she thought him the best man she knew. But when she began to tell him of his good graces she found that he could only see the worst part of himself. All her words only brought deeper conviction. Each Sunday morning he would say to Susie as they would prepare to attend services, "Surely I shall hear something today that will help me to find the peace for which I long." In this, however, he was disappointed, for the sermons consisted principally of an admonition to observe the rules of the church, to dress plainly and be industrious, to stand steadfast in the faith; for the one who endured unto the end was the one who would be saved.

Among all the hearers there was none more attentive than Joe was, for he was searching for that which would bring the peace for which his soul was longing. But it seemed that no light dawned on his soul. Instead the way became darker and darker. Although he was desirous to be a real Christian he did not confide in Alfred. But he was free to speak on the subject to his wife, for he felt that she was really a Christian and could give him the needed help. The more she tried to assist her husband the more the arrow of conviction was plunged into her own heart, and many times after trying to encourage him she would sit in deep meditation, asking herself many questions. Usually the question that came first to her was, "How can I instruct him when I am no nearer right than he is?" In this manner the two fought the battle together, neither confiding in their neighbors who were able to instruct them and show them the way to God and to the peace for which they both craved.

Alfred and Tillie were not blind to conditions in the Holmier home and many nights when unable to sleep they

would arise from their bed and spend much time on their knees praying for Joe and Susie. They felt that the more they prayed the more miserable the two became. Although so burdened for them, they never mentioned their soul need to them in any way but went on about their labors on the farm as usual. How wisely they dealt with their neighbors, waiting for that moment when they could speak to them of God. When they felt that they needed help they went on their knees to talk to God, asking that He would send the Holy Spirit to talk to Joe and Susie, knowing the instruction given them would be effective.

Alfred and Tillie often went to services with Joe and Susie. One evening, three Sundays after Joe confided in his wife his need of a real experience, the two went to spend the evening with a neighbor who had a very sick child. Because of this, they did not go with Joe and his wife to church. The trip to Steele's Crossing was made in almost complete silence on the part of both Joe and Susie. As they neared the little chapel where they had attended services since the first of the year Joe remarked, "Susie, I feel that I shall hear something tonight that will be of benefit to me and help me to get the experience I so much desire."

"I truly hope that you do," replied Susie, "for I feel that if you get something good I shall, too."

"But you do not need it as I do," said Joe, as he assisted her to alight from the wagon. "If I were only as good as you I would not feel that I needed much more."

"Oh, Joe," said Susie, and her voice trembled; "if you only knew just what you were saying you would not speak as you do. I feel so little and unworthy and feel my need also."

"That has always been the trouble with me," replied Joe. "I thought I was all right and did not need anything, but awakened to the fact that I do not have what I really need. I only wish I were as good as you are." And with this remark they entered the little chapel.

Joe felt confident that he would hear something that would be of benefit to him. But the preacher gave out a sermon on the peculiarity of God's people—how they were different from anyone else or any class of people. He dwelt especially on the thought that they did not follow the fads and fash-

ions of the world. He stated that if anyone, even a stranger, should come among them, he could readily tell the ones who had separated themselves from the world by the manner of dress that was worn. Joe felt more burdened than ever. For a number of years he had worn the plain dress of his particular faith, but he could not say that it had brought him the thing for which his heart craved. He decided that it took more to be a Christian than to attire oneself in any particular mode of dress.

The trip home was not made in such abject silence as that to the chapel had been. Joe talked freely to his wife about the longing of his soul and how hungry he was really to know God and feel that all the wrongs he had done were blotted out. "But what shall I do?" asked Joe as he entered the lot and the team came to a standstill. "I do not know what to do. God knows I would do anything that is required of me so that I could feel that I was right with Him and everything that I have done that is wrong has been forgiven. There surely must be some way, but what it is I do not know. Can't you help me? You promised me that you would help me all you could and I want you to help me now. I cannot go on in this manner much longer. The burden is getting so heavy that I can scarcely bear up under it. Is there no way out?"

Tears were streaming down his face as he pleaded with Susie to help him. How she wanted to tell him that she, too, felt the need of help, but refrained from doing so, fearing it would discourage him. She knew that he had made her his sole confidant and was looking to her at this time for help. How she longed to be a real helper. For some time they sat in the wagon and neither spoke. All at once a passage of scripture which she had read a few days before came to her and she said, "There surely is help or you would not have been made to feel your need. I think when we do our part God will surely do His part. Don't you?"

"It seems that is the way it should be," replied Joe, "but what does He want me to do? If I only knew what He wanted me to do I would surely do it."

"I think God works just as His Word says, don't you?" inquired Susie.

"I do not see how He could work otherwise," replied Joe. "But what does His Word tell us to do when we want to know we are right with God and all that we have done is forgiven?"

"I can only tell you what I read a few days ago," said Susie. "'If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness,' and '...he that cometh to God must believe that he is, and that he is a rewarder of them that diligently seek him.'"

"That sounds good to me," said Joe. "But I know that I have confessed the best I know. God knows I would do anything that is required of me that I might obtain that peace for which I long."

"You might have confessed," replied Susie, "but failed to seek Him diligently. I am sure when we do our part that God will do His part."

"That may be true," replied Joe. "I might not have been as earnest about it as God requires me to be. But wherein I have lacked and whatever I have failed to do I mean to do, for I shall not give up until I know there is no hope for me."

"That sounds to me like diligence," said Susie as Joe alighted from the wagon and began to unhitch the horses. After caring for the team the two went to the house, each carrying a child in his arms, and as Joe laid his sleeping boy on the bed he said, "If I were just as innocent as he is I would be all right."

"Yes," replied Susie very slowly. "I read where Jesus said one time to some certain people, '...Except ye be converted, and become as little children, ye shall not enter into the kingdom of heaven,' and I believe that is what He meant. We are to be just as innocent before Him as our little children are before us."

Poor Susie, how incompetent she felt of giving instruction, yet unconscious of the fact she was giving the enlightenment that was needed. After the children were undressed and in their nighties Joe said, "I wish you would take the children and go on to bed and leave me alone for awhile. I know there will be no sleep for me if I do go to bed." So Susie took the two children and went upstairs to their bedroom, leaving Joe to



himself. For some time he paced the floor back and forth through the living room, through the dining room, and then into the kitchen. Only those who have had a like experience can understand the battle that was raging in his soul.

At last he sat down on a kitchen stool, and resting his elbows on his knees he buried his face in his hands and groaned aloud in his anguish. He sat there for some time. Then he arose and entered the little pantry and fell on his knees. As he did so he felt so little and so mean that he could not lift his head. Falling over, he buried his face in his hands on the floor and again groaned aloud. He seemed unable to utter a word. The words his wife spoke to him, "If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us of our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness," kept ringing in his ears, and as he would think of them he would again groan aloud. At last the wrongs that he had done began coming up before him. This brought gushing tears and he said, "Yes, Lord, I did it, but I am sorry. Forgive me." These were the only words of prayer that he could utter. He thought himself all alone. But as Alfred and Tillie came in at a late hour Alfred heard heavy groans coming from the region of the Holmier kitchen and he went to investigate. As he entered into the dark room he heard Joe say, "Yes, Lord, I did it. Forgive me," and knew what was going on. So he withdrew as quietly as he had come. Then he and his wife on their knees in their own home prayed earnestly for God to give Joe the needed help.

Joe kept confessing and asking forgiveness and at last found words to cry out, "Now, Lord, I have done all that I know to do. What more do I lack?" Immediately the words of his wife came to him, "...he that cometh to God must believe that he is, and that he is a rewarder of them that diligently seek him." For sometime he remained quiet, then again groaned aloud. He cried out, "Lord, I believe Thou art, and Thou art a Rewarder of them that diligently seek Thee, and I have sought Thee diligently." As he spoke these words his faith took hold of God and he felt the load lifted from his soul. He arose from his prostrate position and, going up the stairs two steps at a time, he cried out, "Susie, I have found it! Susie, I have found it!"

As he entered their bedroom he found a woman with a tear-stained face, and as he began walking the floor praising God she broke down and began sobbing and said, "Oh, Joe, pray for me, for I am not right." As Joe knelt down beside his wife he found his tongue had been loosed. He called on God to help and soon Susie's shouts were mingled with his as she too found that peace of soul that passeth all understanding. There was no sleep for them. The shouts had been heard in the adjoining room. Alfred and Tillie came in to rejoice with them in their newfound joy. Alfred then told Joe he had entered the kitchen unnoticed by him while he was in the pantry, to which Joe inquired why he did not try to help him. Alfred said, "I did not think you needed my help, for I knew the way you were doing that you would soon get what you were seeking."

At this Susie began to praise the Lord again and said, "The wonderful thing about it is that I found peace, too." After the second outburst had subsided Joe laid his hand on Susie's head and said, "How about your little cap?"

A look of surprise passed over her face as she exclaimed, "Ah, I did not have it on, did I?"

"No," replied Joe laughingly. "You forgot your little white cap but you did not forget to pray."

## CHAPTER 6

### **JOE MEETS HIS OPPOSERS**

Joe and Susie were so elated over their newfound joy that they wanted to tell it everywhere they went and to everyone they met. The joy within their own souls was so great and so wonderful to them that they felt all would be interested in what they had to say, but in this they were mistaken. Very few seemed to care to listen to their testimony. It seemed to Joe that Wednesday night would never come, so anxious was he to get to the prayer meeting.

When called upon Joe led in prayer. He came before the Lord with real thanksgiving for deliverance from sin and for the peace for which every hungry soul longs. Those present marveled at the prayer offered but were more surprised than ever when Joe added his testimony to the others'. He made a public confession that he had been a church member since a boy but had never known what peace with God really is until the Sunday night before when he had confessed all to the Lord and now knew that God had forgiven him.

Susie, in her little white cap added her testimony also, thanking God for a real knowledge of sins forgiven. Those present marveled at the noted change in the Holmiers but were surprised to learn that neither had been a Christian all the years they had been professing. Joe had come into their community with such a good reputation and stood so high among the members of his particular faith that the news of his conversion was a surprise to all of them. There were only a few testimonies given after Joe and Susie made their confession, for all seemed to be absorbed in thought. The meeting was dismissed at an earlier hour than any previous meeting, and if Joe could have listened to remarks made in the different groups that congregated he would have heard remarks as follows: "Now, what do you think about that?" "Don't that beat the world?" "Who would have thought it?" "Well, what will happen next?" The prayer and the testimonies of the Holmiers was a topic of conversation for the community for several weeks, some remarking that if the Holmiers were not Christians it would be a

difficult task for anyone to find a Christian in the entire community. Thus one can see how easily man can deceive man, but truly "God looketh on the heart."

Among those present at the prayer meeting was one of the members from the church at Steele's Crossing. He called on Preacher Brumbaugh at a very early hour Thursday morning to tell him of the confession made by Joe and Susie at the prayer meeting the evening before. The preacher, in turn, called upon Joe and Susie to make an investigation. He found Joe and Susie ready to welcome him and accepted their kind invitation to stay with them for the evening meal. Nothing was said of the prayer meeting the night before until the meal had ended and Preacher Brumbaugh was preparing to take his departure. Joe felt that his pastor had called to talk about the report that had reached him and inquire why he should make a public confession but refrained from speaking on the subject. He thought it best to let his pastor approach him along that line so that he would be better prepared to talk to him. At last the minister said, "I hear your hired man is holding cottage prayer meetings around in the neighborhood and having quite a large attendance and people are becoming interested. Do you attend these meetings?"

"I have only been to two of them," said Joe.

"Is that true?" questioned his pastor. "I guess I have been misinformed then, for I heard that you not only attended but took an active part in the meetings."

"I do not know just what you would call an active part and do not know that I have been real active," replied Joe. "I surely have not been as active so far as I shall be from now on, for I mean to be at every meeting unless I shall be hindered otherwise. I shall have to have a reasonable excuse to keep me away."

Preacher Brumbaugh stood twirling his hat in his hand, looking down at the floor for some time. Then he said, "That is all very well, and I think this a good way to get the faith of your church before the people, but one has to be very careful or he will be led astray. I fear even now that you have gone a little bit too far. I hear that you said you had never been a Christian until you began attending these prayer meetings. Is that true?"

Joe stood looking first at Susie and then at his pastor, seemingly at a loss to know just what to say. At last he found words to say, "It is true and it is not true."

"I do not understand you," said Preacher Brumbaugh. "Just what do you mean by its being true and yet not true?"

"I did not say that I had never been a Christian until I began attending the prayer meetings," said Joe. "But I was converted last Sunday night after we came home from services and for the first time in my life found what it really means to have peace in my soul. I know that I am right with God. I did not begin to attend prayer meetings until last Wednesday evening, so the report that reached your ears is therefore both true and untrue."

"Come, come, now Brother Holmier," said Preacher Brumbaugh. "You are not trying to make me believe that you have lived for so many years in the church and kept all its ordinances and have been so faithful in every way and still were not a Christian."

"You may believe it or not," said Joe, "but although I have been a member of your church for a number of years I never knew what it meant to be free from guilt and condemnation until last Sunday night. There in my pantry God spoke peace to my soul. I knew it then and I know it now, thank God."

"And neither did I," exclaimed Susie.

"I cannot understand," said Preacher Brumbaugh, "how you could do all the things that you have done and still say you were not a Christian. We are to know a tree by the fruit that it bears."

"It is not the things that we did which caused us to fail to be Christians, but the things we do not do," hastily exclaimed Joe; "and I would not exchange the experience of the last four days for all the years before. I have found more satisfaction than ever before in my life."

"That is my experience, too," said Susie as she stepped to her husband's side and laid her hand affectionately on his shoulder.

"You had better be careful in jumping from one thing to another, and be content to hold fast to that thing which has

stood for so long," said Preacher Brumbaugh. "You know I come as one to help you and I fear for you for I have seen others that have taken up with some new kind of religion only to find that it did not last. I am sure that is what will happen to you. It will wear off in time. You are only a little excited. when the excitement dies out the religion will die with it and I trust you will be your natural self again."

"God forbid," said Joe, "that I should ever have to go back to the heavy load that I have been carrying on my soul for the past few months, for that was torturous to me. And, Preacher Brumbaugh, would you want me to go back to such a life of misery when there is rest and contentment of soul such as I have found? Do you not know what it means to have the load lifted from your soul and feel the peace of God instead?"

"I know what it means to be a Christian like the Bible says," hastily replied Preacher Brumbaugh, "but as to these wildfire conversions I must say I do not care to take in with any of them, for they soon die out and I want something that will last. The Bible says, 'He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved;...' and I do not want anything better than the Bible has to offer."

"I, too, do not want anything better than the Bible has to offer," said Joe. "But I have found what it means to know God and that 'he is a rewarder of them that diligently seek him', for I sought him diligently and have been rewarded for so doing."

"Well, I guess there is no use in talking any longer on this subject," said Preacher Brumbaugh, "but I trust you will soon be convinced that the good old way is the best way after all."

"I have already been convinced that the good old way is the only satisfactory way," replied Joe as he walked with Preacher Brumbaugh to his buggy. After bidding him "goodbye" he returned to the house, where he met Susie. She was wearing a very troubled face.

"What shall we do now?" she earnestly inquired. "I felt that Brother Brumbaugh would be delighted to find that we

were converted, but I am sure that he is very much displeased. I am at a loss to know just what to do about it."

"I decided what I shall do about it," said Joe. Walking to the little stand table in the other room he picked up the Bible and, holding it up before his wife, said, "I mean to take this as **the man of my counsel** and go to it to find out what the Lord would have me to do. It taught me the way to God and I am sure if I take it as my counselor it will teach me the way to live a life that will please my God."

"But what if they will not accept us as we are in the church? Then what shall we do about it?" eagerly inquired Susie.

"I do not know just what I shall do yet, or what steps I shall take," said Joe, "but this one thing I have decided to do, and that is from now on I shall make this Book my counselor and shall go to it. I am sure if I walk as it says I shall please God and that is what I want more than anything else."

"I know," said Susie, "but they might turn us out of the church if we keep on attending the prayer meetings."

"Which would you prefer," queried Joe, "the experience of the last few days or the experience of all the years you spent in the church and were regarded as a good member?"

"I want to know I am right with God," said Susie as the tears sprang to her eyes. "Oh, may nothing ever come to rob me of the peace which I now have."

"I can tell you how I feel about it," said Joe; "if they choose to turn me out of the church because I got converted they may do so. For if they do not want me because I am a Christian I am sure they do not need me there, and the sooner they begin proceeding, the better. And as to the prayer meetings, I mean to attend every one that I can, for I am sure that prayer will do no one any harm. I feel safe when I say that I have taken this Book as **the man of my counsel**."

## CHAPTER 7

### **A MEETING WITH THE BOARD**

One week of victory passed for Joe, and as Sunday morning dawned he and his wife prepared to attend services as usual at the little chapel where they held their membership. This week had been an unusual week for them. Their home had been entirely different from what it had been heretofore. The day began with reading the Scripture and prayer and ended in the same way, or rather it was the reverse with them, for Joe said that he knew the Lord knew just what portion of God's Word he needed. Therefore before he began reading the two would come before the Lord and ask him to direct them to the portion of scripture they needed for that day; to enlighten them that they might know just what should be required of them that day.

On this Sunday morning as Joe opened his Bible after asking God to direct him his eyes fell on the tenth chapter of Matthew and he began to read from the sixteenth verse. Each verse seemed to bring new light to his soul. When he reached the twenty-eighth verse he could get no further, but laying his Bible down, he arose and walked to and fro in the room praising God. It seemed that Heaven had opened to him and the blessings of God were pouring down into his soul.

After Joe had become calm enough that Susie might talk to him she inquired into the cause of his great joy and he said, "Did you not read what I read?" And again opening his Bible he read. "What I tell you in darkness, that speak ye in light: and what ye hear in the ear, that preach ye upon the housetops. And fear not them which kill the body, but are not able to kill the soul: but rather fear him which is able to destroy both soul and body in hell.' Don't you see that is only a message from God to us?" said he as he again placed the Bible on the stand. "I feel that I can go to church and face anything that may come up before us, for God has said what he has told us in darkness to speak in the light. I mean to tell what he said to me last Sunday night in that little pantry and shall not fear what shall happen to me. The people can do nothing to me more than destroy this body. God will take care of my soul."

"But why do you talk like that?" inquired Susie. "Who do you think will try to do us any harm?"



"That I do not know," replied Joe, "but ever since Brother Brumbaugh called upon us I have felt that he might call us in question because we are attending these prayer meetings. You know how strange he acted when here a few evenings ago."

"Surely he cannot call us into question for attending prayer meeting," exclaimed Susie. "Why, what is there about praying that one should call another into question about? He has always exhorted the whole church to pray."

"I know that he has," replied Joe, "but remember we both testified on last Wednesday evening that neither of us had ever been Christians until last Sunday night when we found peace. That is the thing that displeased him and I have a feeling that he means to question us further in regard to it. But I have decided that what God revealed to me in the darkness, I mean to speak in the light that others may hear. I am sure there are others who hold membership in that church that are in the same condition that we were. We know they can do nothing more than to erase our names from their ledger. Thank God, they cannot reach our souls."

What Joe feared was really true, and after the morning's service, before dismissing the congregation, Preacher Brumbaugh stated that he desired to meet the official board of the church. As Joe was one of the official board, of course he remained with the others. He was entirely ignorant of the order of the meeting, but was kept in ignorance just a short time, for after the others had left Preacher Brumbaugh explained to the board why the meeting had been called. First he read Matthew 18:15-17, and then clearing his throat said, "It might be that some of you do not know why I have called this meeting, but I shall explain. I know that some of you understand, for I have fully explained it and have found some of you feel the same as I do, and believe that this meeting is necessary."

At this Joe spoke up and said, "I am sure that I do not know why it is necessary for a special meeting, but perhaps some of you may know and I am always willing to meet at any time. I am sure if it is to settle any grievance, that can be easily done on my part, for I have nothing against anybody."

"I wish that all were that way," replied Preacher Brumbaugh, "but as you are the one who has brought the grievance among us I trust you shall be as good as your word and be ready to settle it."

"I brought a grievance," said Joe in a surprised tone of voice, although light had begun to dawn upon him; "I am sure I do not know in what way I have wronged any of you and I am more than anxious to learn."

Preacher Brumbaugh seemed very nervous. Turning from one side to the other in his seat, he said, "We are coming to you as the Bible instructs us to come. I learned that you have not only disgraced your profession among us, but you have forfeited your right as a member of our official board and as a member among us, unless you can undo some of the wrong that you have done to yourself, to the official board, and to the church."

At this Joe rose to his feet and said, "If I have wronged anyone I am here to rectify that wrong if I possibly can, but I must first know the nature of that wrong."

"Amen," said Preacher Brumbaugh. "I felt that you had been just a little excited and would soon come to your senses. You have been too sensible a man to be led very far wrong. The charge against you is that of heresy, for you told me when I visited you last week that you had never been a Christian until last Sunday night, although you have been a member of our church for a number of years. In saying this you cast a reflection upon yourself, your official board, upon me, and upon the entire church. I have taken the steps that I just read to you. I went to you privately and you failed to hear me. Now I have you with these brethren here and we are ready to hear what you have to say."

Joe stood for some time at a loss to know just what to say. At last the Scripture which he read that morning came to him, that when he was brought before magistrates to take no thought of what should be said for God would give in that time the things that were needed. As he opened his mouth to make reply he became lost to his surroundings and to the passing of time. For a half hour he stood before those men, telling them

of his life, his inability to control himself at times, and of the longing that had been in his soul to really know he was right with God and ready to meet him at any time. He then told of his visit to Preacher Brumbaugh and his admonition and of the godly life that had been lived before him all summer. Then of his own surrender to God and the perfect satisfaction he had in his soul—the peace that had come and the week of perfect victory. At last, looking about him, he said, “Men, I want to tell you I never have been able to pray until last Sunday night. But after God spoke peace to my soul I felt that I was in touch with Heaven and I could pray. I never prayed before. I only repeated words, but I really prayed last Sunday night and have been praying all week and it has really brought satisfaction to my soul.”

Here Preacher Brumbaugh interrupted him by saying, “You are trying to get too good, but I don’t think that you have sprouted wings yet even if you do say that you touched Heaven.” The men all laughed at this but Joe found nothing to laugh at, for his soul was burning, he felt the presence of the Lord with him so strongly. Turning to Preacher Brumbaugh he said, “I do not fear that I shall ever be too good, but I see that I have been living beneath my privileges and I was not satisfied with such a life. I could never say, ‘I know that I have passed from death unto life because I love the brethren,’ for I did not do it. There are some in the church that I did not love and one on the official board that I hated until last Sunday night.” And, turning to Mr. Peters, he said, “Mr. Peters, I love you now.”

At this Preacher Brumbaugh said, “We have done all we can do, brethren. You see he is not willing to hear us; so we shall have to take the next step and bring it before the church.” Turning to Joe again he said, “Now, Brother Holmier, aren’t you willing to give up these ideas and be as you have always been among us? You know you need the church and the church needs you, but much as we want you to stay among us we cannot forfeit the faith of our fathers for some new-fangled whim. Now, all we are asking of you is to be sensible and be as you have always been. Aren’t you willing to do that?”

“God forbid that I ever shall be as I have been for so many years!” exclaimed Joe hastily. “I have been burdened

down with a profession of Christianity, trying to make myself think that I was all right because I had been baptized and lived up to the teachings of the church. I have carried a heavy load on my soul for some time, but I can say now, Thank God, I know what it means to be right with God. He has spoken peace to my soul and I can truthfully say, 'I know that I have passed from death unto life because I love the brethren.' In this I do not feel that I have wronged any one and I am sure that I shall never consent to go back to a life of burdens when there is such freedom in store for me."

Here Preacher Brumbaugh spoke again, "But Brother Holmier, in your statements you deny the faith of this church and by so doing forfeit all right to any fellowship among us. We have done all that is required of us thus far and the next step will be to bring the matter before the entire church."

"You may do as you like," replied Joe. "But the way I can see things, it seems strange to me that you were willing to extend fellowship to me when I know that I was not right with God; but now that I can tell you that God has pardoned my sins and the peace of God has come into my soul you are ready to set me aside. You may do as you like but of this thing I am sure—you cannot destroy my peace with God."

"That is all right and you may take your choice, but we cannot forfeit the faith of our fathers for some religious whim of one of the official board," indignantly replied Preacher Brumbaugh.

## CHAPTER 8

### A HERETIC

One would conclude after the meeting of the morning with the official board that Joe would not want to return and try to worship with such a people, but that was not the case. On the evening of the same day he again went to the little chapel for the evening's service, but as Joe passed Preacher Brumbaugh at the door there was no hearty response to his "good evening" and no hand shake. As Joe reached out his hand Preacher Brumbaugh was for some reason attracted by something on the other side of the room, and so turned and walked away. A feeling of sadness seized Joe as he sat down beside some of the brethren, for there was no one to extend a hand to him.

As Joe looked over the audience he could see knowing glances exchanged and as others came in and would look his way he could also see nudging of elbows. How lonely he felt and how much he desired to be near Susie, but it would be unseemly for him to try to get near her now. It was the custom among his particular faith for the men to occupy one side of the house and the women the other when they came together for worship. Joe's voice had always been heard during song service and his rich, deep bass was an asset to the singing, but this evening Joe's voice was not heard. There was no freedom for him. As they knelt for prayer tears flowed freely down his cheeks, for here he was among his neighbors and some of them refusing to look his way or give him a friendly handshake. While kneeling there among those whom he felt were trying to do him harm, Joe again lifted his heart to the Lord and felt an assurance that God had heard and all would be well.

Another song after prayer and Preacher Brumbaugh arose to deliver the sermon for the evening, taking for his text the eighth verse of the first chapter of Galatians, reading it the third time, and each time laying more stress upon it. "But though we, or an angel from heaven, preach any other gospel unto you than that which we have preached unto you, let him be accursed." It did not take Joe long to grasp what the trend of the preacher's thoughts for the evening's discourse was. He

had heretofore been very quiet in his mode of delivery, but now he began to tell the congregation of the danger that was before them. He began to wax bold, becoming heated with the thought of one coming among them teaching other than the doctrine that he had preached. He made no choice of words and some were shocked at the language he used. At last turning to Joe and pointing his finger at him, he said, "Do you hear what the Scriptures have to say about such as you—'let him be accursed'?"

Turning to the audience again, the preacher said, "We are taking the third step toward an offending brother—the step of bringing the matter before the church." He then repeated the results of his visit with Joe, alone and the conference with the official board that morning, saying, "And now we take the third and last step of bringing the matter before the church. It is with much sadness of heart that we do this, but if Brother Holmier, or rather Neighbor Holmier, had only been willing to heed the warning given by me and by others this step would not need to have been taken. Much as we regret this loss we must bear in mind that the faith of our fathers cannot be lightly thrown away for the religious whim of some particular individual. You have heard the grievances that have been brought before you, and so we shall now put it to vote as to what shall be done about it. Shall we keep one who is advocating false doctrine? Shall we forfeit the faith of our fathers for the religious whim of one member of our church? A little leaven leaveneth the whole lump, and unless the leaven is disposed of the entire body is in danger of destruction.

"We shall now take the procedure to have the church as a body settle the question. In this case it is not only one proving himself a traitor, but by his influence he has led his good wife astray also. We do not know how many more will be led astray unless we make him an example as to what will befall those who forfeit the faith of the fathers.

"It is supporters of the faith that we need. I trust that I have said enough that all may know that we are in grave danger unless some steps are taken to stop heresy among us. We can only deal with this offender as with a heretic or a trai-

tor. We now want the vote of the church. Shall we retain him or shall we exclude him from our midst?"

Joe sat as one transfixed while Preacher Brumbaugh spoke to the audience branding him as a traitor and a heretic, while poor Susie and some more of the sisters wept aloud. She saw the predicament they were now in; they must either deny their new found joy and the real knowledge of God or be excluded from the church. She looked at Joe as he sat across the room from her and her heart warmed to him as never before. She knew that it was not right for him to bear all the blame and she thanked God for such a husband that would remain quiet under such trying circumstances. She decided in her heart that as soon as services ended she would tell Preacher Brumbaugh Joe was no more to blame than she was and she wanted to bear part of the accusation and not have it all heaped upon Joe. She looked about the room that was now in perfect quietness. At last she saw Brother Metzgar rise to his feet and, leaning on his cane, he said, "I think before any of us decide what steps to take against Brother Holmier we should hear him speak for himself."

"I do not think that is necessary as it might only cause confusion and we are here to avoid all of that," hastily replied Preacher Brumbaugh. "We met with the Holmiers this morning and he plainly stated that he would not acknowledge any wrong on his part and would still have to say that he was living up to all the rules of this church and was no Christian until last Sunday night. I think that is bringing disgrace on this church and rank heresy and furthermore by these statements he has forfeited all rights to our fellowship."

"But I feel that we should hear him for ourselves," replied Brother Metzgar, "for I should not want to act hastily and want fully to understand the situation before voicing my sentiments."

As there were nods from many others in the audience there was nothing left for Preacher Brumbaugh to do but to give Joe an opportunity to speak for himself. Joe arose before the people to tell his experience. He stood for some little time gazing about him while he lifted his soul to God in prayer for

help and strength. At last he began to speak and his voice shook with emotion, but he talked on, telling of his experience as one among them but of the heavy burden that he carried all the time. It seemed he left nothing unsaid and many were weeping with him and his wife (for his tears flowed freely as he spoke). When he came to that part of his story of his deliverance his tears no longer ran down his face; a light came there that was noticeable to all and he became bold in his assertions that it meant more to be really free before the Lord than outward form.

When Joe sat down all were surprised to see Susie rise to her feet and begin speaking. She had always been such a timid woman, but she too waxed bold as she added her testimony to that of her husband and concluded with, "I do not want any one of you to think that he influenced me to do anything, for he did not. I, too, have been burdened for some time but did not let him know anything about it, even though he talked freely to me about his own condition. I never knew until last Sunday night what it really means to be converted."

When Susie sat down there was no sound heard in the room except the heavy breathing of some of the little children who had gone to sleep. Preacher Brumbaugh sat looking at the floor, while others cast glances about them. At last Brother Metzgar arose to his feet again and, clearing his throat, said, "I will have to say as did Pilate, 'I find no fault in this man.' For if I should find fault with him I should have to find fault with myself, for he has given my own experience. I know what he means when he tells of the burden he carried for so long and I know what he means when he tells us that he prayed and reached God so that the burden was lifted. I find no fault with him, and if he was never a Christian until last Sunday night we should be glad to keep him with us now, for he can do more good among us."

"Not when he brings a doctrine with him other than the gospel that we have preached unto you." said Preacher Brumbaugh as Brother Metzgar took his seat.

Here Aunt Sally Pobst rose to her feet and in her squeaky voice said, "Yes, and I know what Brother Holmier is talking about, too. You all know me, for I have lived here among



you almost all my life and I have been a member of this church for thirty-five years. I joined this church with my husband when I was first married and lived in the church as a good member for ten years, but when my little girl died I became burdened like Brother Holmier said he was. I was afraid I was not ready to meet that little girl again and I did not want to have to spend all the rest of my life away from her and then not be able to go where she was. The more I thought on this the heavier the burden became and at last I just cried out to God to help me and make me to know that I was fit to go to Heaven, for I could not go on as I was then. I know what he is talking about when he says that he knew when the burden lifted, for I reached God and the burden left me, too. I have never felt that way any more for I knew then and I know now that I am ready to meet my little girl. I do not know what a heretic is but if that is what Brother Holmier is I guess I am one, too."

At this she sat down and before anyone else had time to say a word Preacher Brumbaugh was on his feet and as he stretched his hands out over the audience he said, "I am here as your leader and spiritual adviser. I am the watchman that you have selected to sound the warning when danger is near and I have sounded the warning. Shall we let the faith of our fathers be destroyed? All along through the Christian era some have had to be examples that others might take warning, and much as I regret to say it I feel that Neighbor Holmier must be an example for others. Shall we do as the Bible says, 'let him be accursed'? All of you have heard that he is telling you something that has never been preached to you before and we have preached the gospel to you. I see nothing else to do but to brand him as a heretic and an alien unless he shall come in as he has been heretofore and submit to the rules and teachings of the church."

"God forbid that I shall ever have to carry such a burden another day such as I have carried for the last few months," said Joe.

Here Preacher Brumbaugh's face reddened and, pointing his finger at Joe said, "It is not necessary to hear any more from you, for you have caused enough contention for one evening." Then turning to the audience he said, "We want to

see who will be loyal to the faith. If you are willing to stand by the gospel you will not stand by Neighbor Holmier for he is a heretic and traitor to the faith, as you have heard him state this evening. This is going to be a test of loyalty. All who feel that he has forfeited his right as one of us in that he has denied the faith and by so doing has made himself a heretic and a traitor to the cause and the faith for which we stand, will you please rise to your feet and stand with me?"

At this all the official board rose to their feet first and were soon followed by others, until sixty members were on the floor, standing until Preacher Brumbaugh could count the number. "That will do," said he. "Now, I shall give the remainder of you a chance to show your colors. How many of you favor retaining Neighbor Holmier among us—rise to your feet." At this Aunt Sally Pobst and Brother Metzgar both rose, and Brother Metzgar said again, "I find no fault in him." A number of the members present did not vote either way.

There was a pause for some time after the last expression among the members but Preacher Brumbaugh turned to Joe and said, "You see how impossible it is for one to be a heretic or a traitor to God's cause among such loyalty as there is here. I trust that you may be an example to others that they may fear to bring disgrace on the faith. You may consider yourself an alien and an outcast among us from this time on." Then, asking the congregation to arise, he pronounced, "And now may the love of the Father, the saving grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the fellowship of the Spirit, rest and abide with us all, now and forevermore. Amen."

Joe and Susie had very little to say to each other on their way home from services that evening. Each was busy with his own thoughts, but after they had put the children to bed Joe picked up the Bible from the table, gathered it to his bosom, and heavy sobs shook his frame.

The two knelt together and with their arms about each other, with the tears flowing freely over their cheeks they asked God to help them at this time and draw them closer to him and to each other. To give them grace for this trial and lead them into the thing that he required of them to do. They asked also for the scripture that they needed that evening. Joe opened his

Bible and began to read from the thirteenth chapter of Hebrews. As he read he felt that God would surely help him in this, his first trial. When he reached the latter clause of the fifth verse he let his faith rest on the promise, "I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee." At the close of the sixth verse he read, "So that we may boldly say, The Lord is my helper, and I will not fear what man shall do unto me." He could get no further but, walking to and fro in the room, he shouted the praises of God, for the blessing of the Lord flowed down into his soul. Again folding the Bible to his bosom he said, "I thank thee, Lord, that I can take Thy Word as **the man of my counsel.**"

## CHAPTER 9

### THE TEMPERANCE SOCIETY

The midweek cottage prayer meeting was well attended by the members of his faith on the Wednesday evening following the vote to withdraw fellowship from Joe and his wife. The news had spread in this local community and there were many curiosity seekers at the meeting desirous to find out just what Joe would do. He had been called upon also by several of his neighbors and friends and the subject had been discussed both pro and con among the neighbors. All were curious to know just what Joe would have to say about it at the meeting; so all were there.

Although Joe was hurt to the heart's core, with the hurt came a feeling of pity for his persecutors and he refrained from speaking about the subject to the neighbors who called. He felt that those who had dealt with him were in the same condition that he was in prior to his conversion and had it not been for the over-persuasion of Preacher Brumbaugh he felt that they would not have voted to excommunicate him. So he talked little but prayed much before the prayer meeting.

As the neighbors came together, instead of finding a man who was wearing a downcast expression they looked upon the face of a man wearing a sparkling countenance. Joe had risen above the trial and was rejoicing in the victory. He had opened his Bible and read, "Commit thy way unto the Lord; trust also in him; and he will bring it to pass." He had committed it all to God and was now just trusting Him to bring it to pass in the way that would please Him and be glorifying to His name. Joe's confidence in God inspired faith in Susie also and she stood by his side, promising to go through with him, come what may.

The clear soprano of Susie and the rich, deep bass of Joe were heard in every song, and their prayers were heard among the others. To the surprise of some they asked God to bless those who were persecuting them and in some way open the way that the light which now shone within their own souls could reach them. Their testimony was one of praise to God and of confidence in him. During the entire evening nothing was said about the church trial the Sunday evening before. As

those present looked upon Joe they concluded that he did not care what had been done to him, but none knew what a battle had been fought and what a victory had been won. Joe stood before that crowd that Wednesday evening as a conqueror, for such he was. He was asking God to direct him to a people among whom he could worship, for he knew it would be impossible to try to worship among those people again. How confident he felt in the Lord as he stood before these people on this particular night!

Among those present at the prayer meeting was a stranger whom no one knew. He came alone and did not arrive until prayer meeting had begun. As the services drew near to a close he made his way to the center of the room and began to tell why he was there. He had come to Newton, a small town near Steele's Crossing, as a representative of the Anti-Saloon League. While there he learned that there was a saloon at Steele's Crossing. Although Steele's Crossing was only a crossroad in the country with a store, a blacksmith shop, a shoe shop, a schoolhouse, a community house, post office, doctor's office and five dwellings. The storekeeper had charge of the post office, and the doctor's office comprised two rooms of his house; the main business houses of the little crossroads town were the store, the blacksmith shop, and the shoe shop, which was a little room adjoining the saloon. About one-half mile from the Crossing was the little chapel where Joe and Susie had been worshipping since coming into the community.

The saloon had been there for a number of years, and although many had spoken of it as a menace, none knew that there could be steps taken to rid the country of it. The stranger of the evening told his hearers how he had heard of the prayer meeting and thought it a good time to meet with them and arrange some plans for the closing of the saloon doors. He told them he would meet with them the following Sunday evening in the community house at Steele's Crossing and organize a Temperance Society. He explained that he had organized one at Newton and would send speakers from time to time and furnish information as needed to rid the community of the saloon. All hands were raised, as he called for an expression

from those present to meet with him the following Sunday evening.

They met. The news had spread all over the country, and the community house was full to overflowing. Every seat was taken; the aisles were full, and the windows and door crowded with listeners. The doctor was there, a prominent figure among them, and the saloonkeeper's wife and eldest daughter occupied one of the front seats. The visitor at the prayer meeting, who was Mr. Neal, asked for a song and opened the services. At the close of the song he pointed to Joe and, not knowing his name, he said, "We will ask this brother to lead us in prayer." Some knelt, some bowed their heads, and others stood up. Joe knelt and prayed as he would have prayed had he been alone with his God. After prayer Mr. Neal began to address the people of Steele's Crossing. Some had come thinking they would hear him bemean the saloon-keeper, but such was not so; for he only set forth the evils of intoxicants and the menace of the open saloon in the community, the danger of it for the youth. All listened attentively, and when he informed them as to ways to rid the country of this menace to their youth many were eager to get into the fight. He informed them that since meeting with them on the previous Wednesday evening he had made some investigation and found that the license for the saloon would soon expire. If they would only organize and follow the petition for the saloon with a remonstrance against it they could prevail on the court and no license would be granted. When he called for members, the doctor's name was enrolled first of all, followed by a number of others, among them Joe and Alfred. While some were enrolling Joe stepped over to Alfred and said, "Why could we not hold services here every Sunday night?"

"That would be a very good idea," replied Alfred, as a smile spread over his face. "I shall speak to the crowd about it before we dismiss." This he did, announcing services for the following Sunday evening.

Mr. Neal took his departure, but something else had started in that temperance meeting that would stir the entire community for miles around. At the first Sunday evening service the suggestion was made that they abandon the cottage

prayer meetings and congregate in the community house instead. This they did and soon not only were they having prayer meetings and Sunday evening services but a Sunday School was organized with Joe as superintendent. As Alfred was given the responsibility of finding someone to preach to them on Sunday evenings he was kept busy. Often he was unable to find anyone, so he had to take charge of the services himself, and in this way he advanced rapidly, and he did not lack for hearers.

Alfred and Tillie were good singers, and with some practice Joe, Susie, Alfred, and Tillie composed a quartet and rendered some special songs at each service. They were known as the "Steele's Crossing Quartet." They were kept busy, and so all were happy. Many calls came to them to sing at different meetings. Joe felt happy in his work, for he felt that he was doing something for God. Although he knew that he could not get such good thoughts to present to people as did Alfred, he felt confident within himself that he could sing the gospel as well as Alfred, for his rich, deep bass rang out clearly and he put his whole soul into his singing. He sang from the sentiment of his heart real praises to his God.

Although Joe's name and that of his wife had been erased from the church ledger, they still attired themselves in the peculiar dress of that faith. Joe still wore the broad-brimmed, flat crown hat and Susie the black bonnet, with the little white cap. But at the community house there was no question asked as to any particular faith. It was a community house, a community prayer meeting, and community Sunday school. All worked together and God worked among them. The meetings were well attended, and the speakers that were sent them by the Anti-Saloon League marveled at the number who attended the meetings at such an out-of-the-way place.

If Joe had been considered a model before his conversion he was looked upon as a marvel now, for he looked for the opportunity to return good for evil. He granted many a favor to those who had been his persecutors. In this way he won them to himself, and Preacher Brumbaugh saw his congregation diminish one by one as his followers attended services at the community house. Old Brother Metzgar and Aunt Sally Pobst

were Joe's strong supporters, and Joe's kindnesses to his neighbors brought many of them to the services. Joe said little, but prayed much. In this way he became powerful in prayer. He had his secret place of prayer in a room of his granary. One day one of his neighbors came to see him and inquired of Susie his whereabouts, to which she replied, "He has just gone to the barn, and I am sure that you will find him out there somewhere." The neighbor found Joe there, but he was in the granary, and the neighbor listened while Joe asked God to bless his neighbors and their children and then asked for grace for himself and his family. The neighbor stood for one-half hour waiting for Joe, and as he left he remarked to another neighbor, "That Joe Holmier is the prayingest man I have ever seen."



## CHAPTER 10

### A REVIVAL MEETING

One year had passed since Mr. Neal met with the folks in the community house at Steele's Crossing. The Temperance Society had not been organized in vain. When Jake Blaum, the saloonkeeper, circulated another petition to renew his license, leaders of the society circulated a remonstrance against it. When Jake went to present his petition to the court he found a number of the members of the Temperance Society present also. With more than a two-third majority of the population of the community remonstrating the license was not granted.

The old saloon was abandoned and the Blaum family moved away to a small town about ten miles distant where Blaum bought a saloon from another man and continued in the saloon business. The old saloon building at Steele's Crossing was only an empty hull now. As soon as it was vacated it became a target for mischievous boys, and the windows with their broken glasses told of a battle where rocks had been used as means of defense. Boards were nailed over the windows and the door, and the old building bore a dejected appearance. The old shoe cobbler moved his place of business also when Jake Blaum left the community and now occupied a small room in the rear of the store, which was also the post office.

The community house had also undergone a change, but not such as the saloon building. A new coat of paint had been given to it and the old benches had been replaced with comfortable pews. Cracked windowpanes had given place to new ones, a new carpet was laid in the aisle, and new chairs were placed on the rostrum. The woodwork inside the building was well varnished and the walls neatly papered. As this was a community house all felt that they could contribute to it that it might be repaired. Joe saw the Sunday school grow from twenty-six to an average of eighty-three. All the services were well attended. Alfred was a leading man among them. When no minister could be found to hold services Alfred was their leader. As he often had to take this responsibility he had become an interesting speaker.

Alfred and Tillie no longer lived in the house with Joe and Susie, for Joe's uncle had built a house for Alfred and

where they now lived. A baby boy had been added to their family and another baby girl had come into the Holmier home. Joe no longer went to church in the old wagon but in a new carriage, while Alfred and Tillie had a new buggy. The two men worked together during the week and then met together for worship on Sunday. It was easy for Joe to sit and listen to Alfred as he did his best to expound the Scripture, for Alfred's life was such before Joe that Joe knew Alfred was able to instruct others. All worshiped together in the little chapel without question of any religious differences. All were given freedom of religion and that without question. Joe and Susie needed not to be questioned as to their belief, for they still wore their peculiar dress. Alfred and Tillie had been converted in a Methodist revival and at the public altar and held membership in the Methodist Church; but this was never mentioned. All had confidence in the others.

Preacher Brumbaugh still pastored his little flock and was bold in exposing heresy and denouncing the mass of confusion that could be found at the community house at the crossing.

The Anti-Saloon League was not sending speakers to the crossing as often as when the Temperance Society had first been organized but the number who attended these meetings was reported through the neighborhood. As a speaker closed his service one evening he remarked to Alfred as he shook his hand before taking his departure, "I should think this place would be all right for some good man to hold you a revival. I have never seen such crowds in attendance in any rural district."

"I had thought of that," said Alfred, "but I do not know just what kind of man would suit this crowd. I am at a loss. Like a man at sea without a compass, I know not which way to turn. If I should select some ministers and they would come in here with their particular way of preaching and their certain doctrine I am sure that it would work havoc among us. I cannot conduct a meeting myself for I have not the time to give to study that it would require for such work. I should like very much to see a revival here, for I am sure that it would do us all good."

At this the speaker of the evening laid his hand upon Alfred's shoulder and said, "I know the very man that you need for this place, and if you desire I shall have him get in touch with you by letter. He is a man who preaches Christ and not creed, and that is what you want."

"Yes, that is what I want and what will satisfy all the others, I am sure," replied Alfred. "When do you think that he might be able to hold a meeting for us?"

"I am not able to tell you that," replied the gentleman, "but if he has no other meetings to conduct soon, no doubt he will make this place right away, provided you want him. His name is Reed, and he lives near me. I shall see him on my way home. So if you care to have him to hold you a revival I shall speak to him and he can write you regarding it and tell you just when he will be free to come to you."

"Speak to him, by all means," hastily replied Alfred, "for if he is as you have recommended him to be I am sure he is the very man for the place."

"He is an 'A-number-one' speaker. I am sure that you will not lack for crowds, for he is a great entertainer. I shall speak to him on my way home."

The following Wednesday night at the midweek prayer meeting Alfred mentioned to those present what the speaker of the Sunday evening before had told him. He said that he was expecting a letter from Preacher Reed just any time and felt sure that he could tell them at their next meeting just when he would be able to come to them. When a vote was taken as to whether they desired him to come and hold a meeting then or later everyone voted that he should come just as soon as possible. Alfred received a letter from him the next day stating that he had had to cancel one of his engagements in a certain town because of sickness and would be free to come to them at any time. Alfred wrote him that they would expect him to be present the following Monday evening and announced at the Sunday evening service that Preacher Reed would be there the following evening to begin a series of revival meetings.

Preacher Reed came, and the meeting began, with the crowds increasing from night to night until the house could not hold all those who came. Many could not get in to hear

him. As it was in late fall the weather was too cold for anyone to stand outside, so numbers would drive back home unable to get even standing room inside.

Preacher Reed was indeed a wonderful speaker. He spoke with liberty and as one who was thoroughly acquainted with God and lived in close touch with him. He had preached but a few times when he gave an invitation for those whom desired to seek the Lord to come forward. A number came and knelt at the altar for prayer. It was a real Holy Ghost meeting, where people became convicted of sin and knelt at the altar and prayed through to victory. Old-fashioned shouts were heard as God spoke peace to their souls. The meeting continued for four weeks and during this time hard-hearted men who had been at swords-points with each other met at an altar of prayer and, getting everything out of the way between them, prayed through. Long-tongued, "gossipy" women straightened up their slanderous lies and made peace with each other and with God. Little children wept out their childish transgressions before the Lord and felt the smile of the Lord upon their souls. The entire neighborhood was stirred. At the close of the meeting it was found that 104 had been to the altar, claiming the victory. Not all had come to the public altar, for a number found the Lord at an altar in their own homes. It was truly a wonderful meeting.

Joe and Susie attended every night, and drank in the Word eagerly as it came from the man of God that was laboring so diligently among them. But the tradition of the elders had stayed with them and when the invitation for seekers was given they would go home. No instruction had ever been given to them. They had found the Lord at home, and the church they had attended all their life had never had a public altar, but rather condemned it. They could not take part in such services, for they felt it wrong. Those who claimed victory at the public altar were looked upon by Joe and Susie with suspicion, while to those who claimed to pray through in their own homes they were ready to extend fellowship, for these had received the victory just as had Joe and Susie. Preacher Reed and Alfred felt badly about this and spoke to Joe about it, but

he only replied, "You will never see me at a public altar. God said 'Enter into thy closet, and when thou hast shut thy door, pray to thy Father which is in secret; and thy Father which seeth in secret shall reward thee openly.' And that is what I shall do. That is what I did do, and I can't have anything to do with the public altar. I haven't any confidence in those who have gone up there."

Alfred's face paled as Joe spoke these words, but he said to him in a kind tone, "Joe, have you no confidence in me?"

"Surely I have confidence in you, Alfred; you know that I have," replied Joe.

"Well, I found the Lord at a public altar," said Alfred, as a smile spread over his face. "God came to me just as real there at that altar as He did to you in your little pantry at your private one. And, remember your altar was not so private either, for wife and I listened to you as you prayed. You then helped your wife to get to God by praying for her."

Joe hung his head for some time, but he was not so easily defeated. "That is all true," said he, "but I was not out in the public eye so that I could make a show of myself like some of those folks at the chapel have done. I tell you again that you will never find me at a public altar. I do not want to hurt your feelings about this, Alfred, for I do feel that you are a Christian. You led me to God, and I shall pray for the meeting and help you with the singing and in every other way that I can, but I can't have any confidence in the public altar."

So the meeting closed and Preacher Reed took his departure. Joe and Susie were skeptical of those who claimed to have found the Lord at the public altar and often spoke of them to each other in a doubtful way. After the meeting the crowds still came to each Sunday night service. Many times Alfred had to address his neighbors, for the weather became so bad that no minister could come to them from any distance. They all worshiped together. Joe and Susie found that with all their skepticism they had to admit that some of the products of the public altar were genuine. They saw some of the products of home conversion going back into their old paths of

ungodliness and saw some that were converted at the public altar standing true to the Lord.

One man in the community had been a hard sinner. He drank and abused his family shamefully. His little children did not have enough to eat nor clothing sufficient to keep them warm. He came to the meeting because he heard what an excellent speaker Preacher Reed was and he wanted to find some fault with him. When he came, the Spirit of God spoke to his heart and he trembled under the sound of God's Word as it fell from the lips of that man of God. His whole life was laid bare before him and the love of God was pictured to him. This won his heart, and he made his way to the altar and prayed through, rising from his knees shouting the praises of God. Joe watched him as he bought clothing for his family, attended services, and testified to the saving grace of God. One evening in prayer meeting this brother prayed and testified to the saving grace of God and how happy he was in the service of the Lord. He told of how God picked up the hard old sinner that he had been and made a new man out of him. As they returned home from prayer meeting that evening, Joe remarked to Susie, "I tell you, wife, I surely believe that man really got something that night at the public altar. He certainly is a new man."

## CHAPTER 11

### **ANSWERED PRAYER**

Winter waned and with the approach of spring came heavy rains and also much sickness in the Steele's Crossing neighborhood. The measles raged in almost every home, and following measles many contracted pneumonia. The Holmier children did not escape measles, and the eldest child contracted pneumonia also. The doctor was kept very busy, and many times when called upon he made no visit into the home unless the patient was really ill. Joe had not called for his services when his children came down with measles, as he had often heard that there could be nothing done for them. They used the simple remedies for such contagious diseases. But when Joe saw the little fellow very ill he felt that something should be done. Five days passed, and the morning of the sixth day Joe saw that the little fellow was very sick and must have something done for him else he could not get well. How his heart went out to his dear little boy, his firstborn. He had watched by his bedside all the night and had seen him suffer as only one can with that painful disease. When Susie came into the room that morning she saw the change that had come over the little fellow and, turning to Joe, burst into tears, saying, "O Joe, there must be something done or we shall lose the little fellow. I want you to go and tell the doctor that he must come, for our boy will soon die unless we can get him some relief some way." She walked up to the bed again but there was no response from the boy; just a groan with each breath, and a contortion of the face, and a cry of pain as he coughed.

Joe passed through the kitchen, and after doing his morning chores, went for the doctor. He did not know it just then, but as he left the house Susie fell upon her knees at the bedside of her little boy and asked God to show her what to do for him.

Joe reached the doctor's office but was informed that he would not be in for some time as he had received a call early that morning. He sat down and waited for him to come and was glad that he did when some few moments later the doctor came in unable to walk straight. The scent of liquor was on his

breath and his tongue thick from the effects of the intoxicant. He came in bleary-eyed but trying to carry an air of bravado with him and, slapping Joe on the shoulder, burst out in a loud guffaw and then began to relate some foolish story. But he found there was no laugh in Joe, for his mind had wandered too fast for that. He saw the doctor as he was with the crowd at the community house, the first to sign his name with those who joined themselves together to banish the saloon from their midst. Joe was indeed surprised to find the doctor in this condition, and he decided that his son was too precious to him to place him in the care of a man in such condition. As he turned to leave the office he said, "Doctor, I have a very sick boy and I came to see if you could not do something for him. But I do not care to trust him in your hands while you are in the condition that you are now in. I want a man to know what he is doing when he prescribes medicine for me or my family. I fear a man like you might give the wrong thing." He then walked out and, again mounting his horse rode back home.

Tears streamed down his cheeks as he rode along toward home, for he knew that his boy was very sick, and he was returning without anything to relieve his sufferings. How his heart ached as he reached sight of home and thought of the little sufferer there and nothing with him to aid in any way. He came into the house with lagging step and as he related the morning's scene to Susie she burst into tears and said, "O Joe, what will we do? Don't you see the little fellow is going to die unless something is done for him? You know we have done all that we know to do and he is getting worse all the time. I know he will not live through the day unless something else is done. Oh, what shall we do?"

At this Joe picked up the Bible that lay on the table in the room and said, "There is but one thing to do and that is to see what the Book says for us to do. You know we have taken it as **the man of our counsel** and there must be something in it now that will tell us what to do at this time." So kneeling Joe asked God to direct him to the very scripture that they needed for this hour. He arose and opening the Book his eye fell on the fifteenth chapter of St. John and the seventh verse, where he



began reading: "If ye abide in me, and my words abide in you, ye shall ask what ye will, and it shall be done unto you." He read no further, but sat looking at Susie for some time and then he said, "Did you not hear what the Book had to say? You know we are abiding in the Lord and you know that his Word is abiding in us. What is to hinder us from asking him to spare us our little boy?"

"I do not see anything else to do," replied Susie. "I feel that something must be done right away. Let us ask him now."

The two knelt by the bedside of their firstborn and there together poured out their hearts to God. Their tears fell fast as they asked God to spare them their son. Neither had ever heard that God was still working miracles and healing the sick, but as they prayed Joe became bold. He approached God in confidence, saying, "Lord, I believe Thou wilt do it because I have taken Thy Word as **the man of my counsel** and in it Thou hast said I may ask anything of Thee and Thou wilt do it."

Joe did not know that the Word said that among the signs that follow believers was one that they should lay hands on the sick and they shall recover. But as he prayed he laid his hands on the little boy's brow and asked God to take away the fever and the pain. When he said "amen" the little fellow took one long breath and turned over on his side, something he had not been able to do for two days. He closed his eyes and soon was in a natural sleep.

Joe left the bedside and went into an adjoining room where he paced the floor praising God. As Susie came into the room with him he said, "Our boy will get well," to which she replied, "I believe he will."

The boy slept for several hours and upon waking called for something to eat and asked that he might be allowed to get up, but the parents thought best to keep him in bed for the day. Every bit of fever had left him and there was no trace of the disease. The next morning the little fellow left his bed and dressed himself, as well as ever. As they seated themselves at the breakfast table that morning Joe looked across at his son who the morning before had been so sick and said to Susie, "You know, wife, I believe that God can do anything."

Joe and Susie had gone through the siege of their children's sickness alone, for at the beginning of their illness Tillie had also taken quite ill and Alfred had to remain at home to care for her. The two of them had been untiring in waiting on the sick, but the exposure had been too much for Tillie and she, too, became ill of a severe cold. Her cough was so severe she was unable to sleep at nights and as pneumonia had claimed several victims that spring they decided to use every precaution necessary to prevent a contraction of the disease. The next morning after God answered prayer in the Holmier home Joe went over to the Giese home to inquire about the sick and found Tillie propped up in a chair beside the fire only able to speak a few words between spasms of coughing.

After inquiring as to the condition of the sick Joe related his experience with the doctor and the condition in which he found him the morning before. "Alfred," he said, "you know that man is the president of our temperance society. I have decided that from now on I shall not be present when the society meets. I could never feel free again to have a man like that to preside over me. I am sure that I am not one with him and you need not expect me to be with you again when you meet." From this the conversation drifted from one thing to another and as Joe rose to go he said, "But I must tell you what we did that our little boy got well so quickly." And he told how he opened the Bible and was directed to the scripture and then asked God to give the needed help and how the little fellow was helped immediately and went to sleep, waking up a well boy. "And," said Joe, "I told my wife this morning as we were eating breakfast that I believe God can just do anything."

"Do you really believe that?" inquired Tillie.

"How could I help but believe it," laughingly replied Joe, "after seeing help come so quickly to my boy."

"If you really believe that, I want you to ask God to give me help right now," said Tillie. "It seems to me that you could pray for me with the same feeling that you had for your little boy, for my baby needs me more than you needed your boy. Poor little thing, I want to help it so much but am not able to do so." At this she was taken with another spasm of coughing which required so much of her strength that she lay back

among her pillows almost exhausted.

Joe was very much surprised at the request made, but as he looked at the poor little boy who really needed his mother's attention he felt confident in the Lord. Turning to Alfred, he said, "We will ask God to give her the needed help and you know he said what we ask for we shall receive. So the two knelt beside the chair in which Tillie was sitting propped up among the pillows and as Joe prayed he again reached out his hand and laid one on her head. He asked God to give the needed help to remove the headache and the cough that she might soon be well. He had not said "amen" when Tillie arose to her feet and, taking the bandage from her head, looked from one to the other for a few moments and then said, "It is done. I tell you it is done. I felt the headache go and the cough leave me while you were praying. I tell you I feel like a new woman, for there is not an ache nor a pain about my body." She then began to clap her hands together and sang:

"Tis so sweet to trust in Jesus;  
Just to take him at his Word;  
Just to rest upon his promise;  
Just to know Thus saith the Lord."

Alfred gazed at his wife in wonder and amazement and Joe was too overjoyed for words. Picking up his hat, Joe went to tell Susie how God had again answered prayer.

## CHAPTER 12

### WALKING IN LIGHT

A few days after Alfred and Joe had prayed for Tillie and she was raised up immediately Alfred came to Joe, informing him that Preacher Brumbaugh was very ill with inflammatory rheumatism and was unable to move himself. Alfred had been to see him the day before and reported him in a serious condition, stating also that they were in need of someone to sit up with him that night, as his own family needed rest. A happy thought came to Joe and he replied, "I can take care of him tonight and will be only too glad to do so if I can help them in any way. Are you going back to see him today? If so you may tell them I can stay with them tonight and if they care for my services you may let me know."

Alfred informed Joe that he was going to see the Brumbaugh family that afternoon and if Joe would spend the night helping to care for the sick he would go with him. Accordingly Tillie and her baby came to spend the night with Susie and her children while Joe and Alfred went to take care of the sick.

Joe had had no opportunity to meet Preacher Brumbaugh since the time of the church trial when he was pronounced a heretic and unworthy of their fellowship other than a chance meeting where he bade him the time of day and passed on. Now as he entered the Brumbaugh home and saw his former pastor lying on his bed unable even to raise his hand the past was all forgotten and his heart went out to him, for he saw a man in need of help. The disease had so fastened itself upon the man that he could not be touched and must be moved in a sheet. His swollen and inflamed joints told of his suffering, for he could not be moved without excessive pain. He lay groaning upon the bed as the two men entered, and only bade them the time of day. Joe did all that he could to relieve him and the family retired for the night, thankful for the much-needed rest.

The two men did all they could for the suffering one, but there was no rest for him. The midnight hour had passed and still he lay groaning upon his bed. At last Joe thought of the experience in his own home just a few days before and of

the help that came to Tillie and, much to the surprise of Alfred, he sat down beside the bedside of Preacher Brumbaugh and began to relate his experience. Alfred became bold also and spoke of the experience of his wife, telling why she had asked Joe to pray for her. Here Joe said, "And I believe just what I told her, for I believe that God can do just anything."

Preacher Brumbaugh remained quiet for some time and then, opening his eyes, he looked straight at Joe and said very faintly, "Yes, I am sure that God can do anything."

"Do you really believe that?" hastily inquired Joe.

"I do believe that," replied Preacher Brumbaugh, as his face contorted with pain and he began groaning again.

Joe sat quietly for some time and then said to Alfred, "Do you feel that you can pray for a man who says he believes that God can just do anything?"

"Yes, I can pray for him," answered Alfred; "that is, if he desires us to, but I do not want to impose myself upon him."

"Oh, yes, I am just willing for anything if I might obtain relief," groaned the suffering man.

At this Joe and Alfred knelt beside the bed and as earnestly as they knew how they asked God to give the needed help. God heard their petitions, for in a short time Preacher Brumbaugh was in a sound sleep from which he did not awaken until Joe and Alfred were taking their departure that morning. He found, too, on awakening that he could be moved without much pain and he began to amend from that hour.

Two happy men entered the Holmier kitchen that morning just as Susie was placing breakfast on the table, and before they sat down to eat, the story of the night's happenings was related. After breakfast they assembled in the living room and, kneeling together, Alfred led them in prayer. Then Joe opened the Bible to read the twelfth chapter of Romans. The blessings of God poured down into his soul as he read the twentieth verse: "Therefore if thine enemy hunger, feed him; if he thirst, give him drink: for in so doing thou shalt heap coals of fire on his head. Be not overcome of evil, but overcome evil with good." Joe had not fully understood the happenings of

the night until he read that chapter, but now he saw that he had taken the Bible route to deal with an enemy and felt assured that God would take care of results. How good he felt all day! He went about his work whistling and singing. He had found the joy that comes when one overcomes evil with good.

The following Sunday Alfred informed those present at the community house that there would be no services held there that evening as he had been unable to get anyone. He was going to Newton to attend a service conducted by Preacher Jennings, a man who had just returned from a visit into Palestine and the Orient. As it was quite cool the women decided to keep the children at home; so accordingly Tillie again came over to spend the evening with Susie while the men went to Newton to hear Preacher Jennings speak of his visit in the Eastern countries. After the lecture Preacher Jennings made known that he was selling a book that contained his experiences while traveling abroad. As Joe had enjoyed his lecture of the evening he bought the book that he might learn more of the manners and customs of the Eastern countries.

The next day as Joe came in from his work at the noon hour he noticed that Susie wore an unusual expression on her face. As he began to fill the basin with water with which to wash himself he was shocked to hear Susie say, "Joe, I want you to take me to town this week and get me a new hat."

Joe stood as if dumbfounded, for this was the first time in all their married life that she had mentioned such a thing. She had never worn a hat in all her life, and now to ask such a thing of him he could not understand it. He gazed at her with a puzzled expression and then asked, "What do you mean?"

"I mean just what I said," replied Susie. "I want you to take me to town this week and get me a new hat." "What have you done with your bonnet?" inquired Joe.

"I have put it in a place where I shall never wear it again," replied Susie, "for my bonnet and little white cap have both gone up in smoke. I put them in the fire this morning."

"Put them in the fire." exclaimed Joe, "why, Susie, what do you mean?"

“Come with me and I shall show you what I mean,” replied Susie as she led him into the other room where he saw the new book lying beside the Bible. Both were opened as Susie had left them when she went to prepare the noontday meal. “I want you to read that,” said she, pointing to an article in the book. He began reading.

“If some of the good sisters in America could only make a visit into some of the Eastern countries they could well understand what Paul meant when he addressed the Corinthian church as he did in the eleventh chapter of First Corinthians. Well do I remember when a boy seeing an old aunt of mine wearing her little cap. She called it a covering for her head. But when I became acquainted with some of the customs of the Eastern countries I found that she did not have her head covered at all and fully understood what Paul meant by saying she dishonored her head by praying or prophesying with an uncovered head. The third verse of this chapter tells what the head of the woman is: ‘But I would have you know, that the head of every man is Christ; and the head of the woman is the man; and the head of Christ is God.’ I find this is truly carried out in the Orient, for the man is truly the head of the woman. He thinks for her, he talks for her, and what he says she does. Many customs are the same today as they were in Bible times. Among the Mohammedan people the women are wearing the veil as a covering for the head. The entire head is covered and it is considered a disgrace to the husband (which is her head) for her to appear in public without her veil. No other man is to look on her face. As I looked upon these women I thought how far the little cap that my aunt wore fell short of being a covering for the head. It would not be accepted as such among these women for it would not cover her face, and no man is to look upon her face but her husband. How good it was for Paul to go further and in the thirteenth verse tell them to ‘Judge in yourselves: is it comely that a woman pray unto God uncovered?’

“I have never been contentious over the head covering worn by the sisters in America, but I am sure that if the women of the East should try to bind their head covering on the women

of America there would be some contention about the matter. The women would not have such custom. Among the churches of God now a woman does not dishonor her head (her husband) by not wearing the head covering of the women of ancient Bible times, although she did, judged by social usage in vogue in Paul's day."

[Editor's note: The fifteenth verse brings out the thought that a woman's long hair is her covering. She does not need a veil. Verse sixteen makes us know that a person need not be contentious in binding wearing a veil on others as there is no such custom in the "churches of God."]

"Isn't that plain?" inquired Susie. "I am so glad you bought that book, for everything now is just as clear as can be to me. I have always looked upon that scripture as dishonoring myself by not having my head covered, but you can plainly see that Paul meant by uncovering the head it was a dishonor to the husband, judged by social usage then. Joe, do you think that I would be dishonoring you if I did not wear that little bonnet and cap?"

"Well, no, Susie, I do not think that you would dishonor me in any way, but you see that you must be careful or you will let pride creep in and you will be just like the world," replied Joe.

"I have thought all that over, too," said Susie, "and as I began to examine myself I thought that I had far more pride in wearing that bonnet than the majority of women that I know manifest in wearing hats. As I came among them I had a feeling that I was a little better than they were because I was wearing a bonnet while they had hats. Joe, I was really proud in my heart that I was wearing that bonnet."

"But, you must remember, Susie, that the Bible says God's children are a peculiar people. Don't you remember having read that?" inquired Joe.

"Yes, I read it just this morning," replied Susie, "and received light on it also. Here it is in the second chapter of Titus and the fourteenth verse. 'Who gave himself for us, that he might redeem us from all iniquity, and purify unto himself a peculiar people, zealous of good works.' Don't you see Joe



that it is not in peculiarity of dress that we are known, but a peculiar people because of the work that we do? It is not natural for a man to do as you did the other night—go and sit up with an enemy and pray for him, return good for evil. Do you not think there is some peculiarity about such work as that? It is not like the majority of people would do nor like you would have done a few years ago. I am sure that you could not have gone to him and prayed for him.”

“No, I could not have done that,” replied Joe reluctantly.

“Well, do you not see then that there must be some peculiarity about you when you are desirous and zealous of good works?” inquired Susie. “You know that you were only too glad to go to Bro. Brumbaugh’s that you might do him some good. In this the works of God’s children differ from anyone else and make them peculiar, for sinners want to do good for good, and Christians want to do good for evil, making them peculiar and zealous of good works. Isn’t that plain?”

“I declare, Susie,” said Joe laughingly, “you have become quite a preacher and your arguments satisfy me, although I must say they do not thoroughly convince me. I should like to know where you have learned all this.”

“I have done just as you have told me to do,” replied Susie. “I have taken the Bible as **the man of my counsel** and am satisfied with it.”

“If that be the case,” replied Joe, “we shall go to town this afternoon and you shall have a new hat.”

The trip was made and the following Sunday morning many were surprised to see Susie wearing a new hat, the first one she had ever owned. Many surprised glances were sent in her direction and many remarks exchanged, but Susie was satisfied in her soul and rejoicing that she could walk in the light as it was revealed unto her.

## CHAPTER 13

### JOE FINDS HIMSELF

Summer months passed by and late autumn advanced at Steele's Crossing. The months had been crowded with work. As one looked over the fields the trace of the icy frost could be seen; the fields were brown and seared. Leaves were piled here and there and the branches of the trees were bare. Preparations were being made for Thanksgiving.

Alfred had announced that Preacher Jones, from Newton, would be with them at that time to begin a series of meetings, and all were looking forward to that event. He came, and the meeting began and was well attended. Joe and Susie were among the attendants, rendering what service they could through prayer, testimony, and song. No longer could they be known by the peculiarity of dress for the dress of their former faith had been discarded and instead of the broad-brimmed, flat crown hat formerly worn by Joe there was the derby. Both dressed very modestly and felt a freedom such as had not been theirs. The community were looking on their works and speaking of them as Christians, and their works were far more noticeable than their peculiar dress had been.

The meeting continued for several weeks. When nearing the close of the meeting Preacher Jones announced that he meant to organize a church there of his own faith, and on the next Sunday morning would set forth some of the doctrines. He wanted all to be present, stating he thought they had been long enough without some form of organization, telling them furthermore if they were organized as a church they would be mentioned at the next quarterly conference and would be furnished with a pastor. As the congregation left the house that evening Preacher Jones lingered near the door. As he held Joe by the hand he said, "Brother Holmier, I am expecting you to be one of the charter members of this society. Am I right?"

"I cannot promise until I hear your sermon on the doctrines of this church," replied Joe.

"Surely, surely," replied Preacher Jones, "but I know that you are a sensible man and not narrow in your views, so I am counting strongly on you."

The next Sunday morning Joe listened attentively as

Preacher Jones set forth the doctrines of his faith. "You know," said he, "man is the most peculiar of all God's creation. None are made alike nor constituted alike. All are of different temperaments, and what is pleasing and suitable for one is far from pleasing or satisfying to another. We are unable to please each other, but we are all able to please God, and when we with our different likes and dislikes approach God, he does not turn us away, but takes us in, even though we do not all see exactly alike. He will not turn away one who makes an effort to get to him. That is our conception of the church. We have made provision that all can obtain membership with us. It is not so much what you believe, as to obtain your fellowship and your support. If you believe in purity of heart and life we will not exclude you and if you believe that you cannot obtain purity of heart here in this life we will take your membership among us. We also let you have your choice in baptism. If you believe that one should be immersed we will administer the rite of baptism to you in that manner. If you believe it should be administered by pouring the water on the head or by sprinkling it on we leave it with the choice of the candidate and administer it either way. We are not narrow in our views; what we want is to get people organized so that they can work together. We do not exclude any, as you see, for an individual can believe almost any way and obtain membership."

After the sermon had ended he then called for charter members that he might organize a body of that faith at Steele's Crossing, and about thirty-five went forward. Joe was not among them. He was surprised to see Alfred and Tillie among the number who went forward, and found them joining by letter. Preacher Jones read the letters before the audience, stating he was glad to get some so highly recommended as Alfred and Tillie as charter members there, for he felt confident that they would push the work along.

At the close of the service the minister again spoke to Joe, asking him why he did not give his name for membership with the rest of them, expressing his disappointment in his not having done so. Joe replied, "I have not fully decided just where I shall give my membership, but when I do I want to be among a people who have something certain to believe."

As Joe and Susie drove home Joe could not keep back the tears and Susie said, "I do not think that you should feel so bad about it, for I am quite sure that we can still go to services and help."

"We will try to help just as we always have," replied Joe, "but I feel bad about it somehow for I feel that there has been a barrier raised between us and those people and we can never feel as free among them anymore as we did before."

The meeting closed that evening with thirty-five as members of Preacher Jones' liberal faith. He left with a promise to give their names at the next conference meeting that they might have a pastor visit them at an early date. Until then Alfred was given charge.

In the Steele's Crossing community there lived a man who was of a very quarrelsome nature. He could not get along with any of his neighbors and could keep hired help only a short time. When hiring help he would always require them to sign a contract. The wages were to be twenty dollars for the first month, thirty for the second, forty for the third, and fifty for the fourth month, and if the hired man remained the four months he would be paid a bonus sufficient to make the wage average forty dollars a month. He had never kept a man long enough that he had to pay the bonus, for usually in the fourth month he would get so quarrelsome that the hired help could not bear it any longer and would leave, thereby forfeiting his right to any claim for back pay.

A young man came into the community in the spring and inquired for work, but was informed that no one needed a hand except old man Sawyer. Because of the sour expression he wore on his face all the time, the young boys of the community gave him the name "Sour apple." It had become so common that one seldom mentioned his real name. When informed what kind of man he was the young fellow replied, "I shall work for 'Sour apple' and stay all summer. I'll get the bonus, too." Several people told him that it would be impossible to do so, but he said, "I shall show you that it can be done." And he went over to the Sawyer home and signed his name to a contract to work for Mr. Sawyer that summer with the usual wage to be given.

After signing the contract the young man then said. "Now, Mr. Sawyer, I have something which I wish to say to you that we may have a better understanding of each other. I have hired to you to do your work, and this I mean to do and do it well; but I mean also for you to regard me as a human being, as I shall regard you as one. I mean also to stay the summer with you. I shall not leave you, but if you try to do me as you have some of your former hired help, I shall give you such a thrashing as you have never had in all your life."

As Mr. Sawyer looked at the broad shoulders of the young man before him he felt confident that he meant what he said and was careful not to do as he had formerly done. The young man not only stayed the summer but also worked for Mr. Sawyer three years.

Although Mr. Sawyer could not get along with his hired help or his neighbors he was a great church worker and could pray louder and longer than anyone in the community did. He was not satisfied with the way Mr. Jones did at the close of his meeting, so a few weeks afterward he arose in meeting and announced that Preacher Brown would be with them after Christmas and would conduct a meeting.

Preacher Brown came and the meeting began. A number came forward for prayer and at the close of the meeting the doctrines of the church were set forth and a number thought it best to have another organization; so twenty-eight joined themselves together to stand by the faith of Preacher Brown, and among them was Mr. Sawyer.

Joe could not be persuaded to unite with them, for he said he could not unite with one body, and therefore raise a barrier to exclude another in whom he had confidence and knew was a child of God as much as he. As this faith believed and practiced close communion, Joe declined to give them his membership.

Alfred was very much surprised when Joe refused to unite with this body of people, and inquired of him his reason for not doing so. "I did not unite with them because I could not break the last tie between us," replied Joe. "You know that I have confidence in you. I am sure that you are as much a child of God as I am and I could not come around the Lord's table

and see you kept out. No, indeed; if there is ever a barrier raised between any other child of God and me it will be one he raises.”

“But what do you mean to do?” inquired Alfred. “You cannot go around all alone, can you? I should like to see you get settled somewhere where you can get in the harness just right and feel satisfied.”

“You ask me what I mean to do,” said Joe. “Well, I shall tell you. I mean to live by ‘every word that proceedeth from the mouth of God’ and be guided by it. As to working, I do not see how I could work more with any body of people than I am doing now. I am waiting on the Lord, and what He tells me to do that will I do. Do you not think that I am on the safe track? And do you not think that I shall be satisfied when I do just what He tells me to do?”

“I am sure that you will,” replied Alfred; “and as to a barrier between us, I am sure that I shall never raise one.”

“You have already raised it,” replied Joe quickly, “for I cannot speak with you in the organization to which you belong.”

“But that need not be a barrier between us,” hastily replied Alfred.

“Perhaps not,” said Joe, “but somehow it seems to me there is not the freedom there that has been formerly. I feel that these organizations are dividing God’s children. You know we had wonderful times and God met with us at the little community house when we were all together.”

“That may be true,” replied Alfred, “but there are some things we shall never understand,” and he turned and walked slowly to the house. Joe had aroused something within his soul.

A few weeks after this conversation Preacher Bronson came to the community house, spending a few days in expounding the doctrines of his faith. He also had a large following and forty banded themselves together as followers of that faith. Joe could not be persuaded to cast his lot with them. He had heard Preacher Bronson preach the doctrine that man cannot be saved without baptism as that is the act that connects man and God,

for baptism is for the remission of sin and there can be no remission without it. Joe well remembered the night in his little pantry when his soul was cleansed and he touched God, which gave him a real knowledge of pardoning grace. There was no water and no minister to administer the rite of water baptism but he knew that the blood of Jesus Christ had touched his soul and his sins were pardoned. With this knowledge he could not cast his lot with these people. Among them, however, were some in which he had confidence and he felt that another barrier had been raised to separate the children of God.

There was a baptismal service in a creek near by where Preacher Bronson baptized a number of his followers. As Joe and Susie were driving home from the baptismal services Susie said to Joe, "What are you going to do now? It seems that everybody else has found some church but us."

"What do you want to do?" inquired Joe.

"I am sure I do not know just what to do," said Susie. "I would not like to unite with any of these here, and we can't go back to the place where we were put out as heretics. But what shall we do?"

"Live by every word that proceedeth from the mouth of God," replied Joe. "That is what I mean to do, and I feel assured that if we do that we shall not come far short of hitting the mark."

Reaching home in mid-afternoon, Joe picked up his Bible while Susie prepared the baby for its afternoon nap. He read but a short time when he called to her. Light had come to him and his soul was rejoicing. He had opened his Bible to the first chapter of Ephesians. When he read the twenty-second verse he paused, for it mentioned the church and that was the thing that was concerning him so much just then. He desired very much to know just what church God wanted him to join. He read, "And hath put all things under his feet, and gave him to be the head over all things to the church, which is his body, the fulness of him that filleth all in all." As he had a reference Bible he turned to Colossians 1:18 and there read, "And he is the head of the body, the church:..."

As Susie came in answer to his call he read to her the scriptures that had brought light to him, saying, "Do you not see that Christ has a church and He is the head of it?"

"That may all be true," replied Susie, "but the thing that I want to know is which one it is."

"We shall search and find for ourselves," replied Joe, as he again began to turn the pages of his Bible. He soon began reading from Romans 12:4-5: "For as we have many members in one body, and all members have not the same office: So we, being many, are one body in Christ, and every one members one of another." Searching the reference again he turned to I Corinthians 12:12 and read, "For as the body is one, and hath many members, and all the members of that one body, being many, are one body: so also is Christ." He kept reading until the eighteenth verse, "But now hath God set the members every one of them in the body, as it hath pleased him." Here he paused, and, looking at Susie, said, "If the church is His body, and God sets the members in the body, and if we are the body of Christ, we must be church members, too."

"But what church is it?" inquired Susie.

"Let us keep on searching and find out, for I am sure that this Book will tell us," replied Joe. "Why is it that we have never thought of this before? I shall use my new concordance and see what I can find about the church. You read while I find the different scriptures."

Susie took the Bible and opening it to the scripture called, read Matthew 16:18: "And I say also unto thee, That thou art Peter, and upon this rock I will build my church; and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it."

"That is the church I want to know about," said Joe, "the one that Jesus built. Read Ephesians 5:23-27." Susie soon found the scripture and began to read, "For the husband is the head of the wife, even as Christ is the head of the church: and he is the savior of the body. Therefore as the church is subject unto Christ, so let the wives be to their own husbands in every thing. Husbands, love your wives, even as Christ also loved the church, and gave himself for it; That he might sanctify and cleanse it with the washing of water by the word, That he might



present it to himself a glorious church, not having spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing; but that it should be holy and without blemish."

"That is the church He gave Himself for," said Joe, "and it is one 'without spot or blemish.' Read Acts 20:28."

Susie soon found the scripture and began reading, "Take heed therefore unto yourselves, and to all the flock, over the which the Holy Ghost hath made you overseers, to feed the church of God, which he hath purchased with his own blood."

"The church of God," said Joe. "That must be the name of it, for in the last scripture that you read it says He gave Himself for it, and this scripture says He purchased the church of God with His own blood. But read I Corinthians 1:2." Joe's eyes grew larger as Susie read, "Unto the church of God which is at Corinth." She got no further for Joe interrupted her with, "That is the name; the one that Jesus purchased with His own blood." He then called for I Corinthians 10:32, 11:22; II Corinthians 1:1; Galatians 1:13; I Timothy 3:5, 15, which all mention the name of the church as the "church of God."

"Isn't that wonderful!" exclaimed Joe. "The church is His body, and we are members of it, and God sets the members in it as it pleases Him, and the name is the 'church of God.'"

"But where is there such a church, and how do you get into it?" asked Susie.

"Here is another scripture I want you to read," said Joe; "Acts 2:47." The scripture was soon found and Susie began to read, "Praising God, and having favour with all the people. And the Lord added to the church daily such as should be saved."

"Isn't that clear?" remarked Joe. "The Lord added to the church such as should be saved, and I am sure that means the ones who accept His salvation. He adds them to His church. O Susie, I know God has cleared this to me and I am satisfied to be a member of His church. I do not need to join anything now to be a church member, for when I accepted God's salvation He made me a member of His church and I have been a member in good standing with my Lord all these months. I have found myself a church-member and did not know it until

today. Thank God, I see now that when Preacher Brumbaugh thought he had turned me out of the church I had just got into it and God added me as a member. I see now also that these are only organizations of man, but Christ is the head of the church. Oh, I am so glad that I have taken the Word of God as **the man of my counsel**, for I am sure that it will guide me into the truth.

## CHAPTER 14

### **HUNGERING AND THIRSTING**

The little community house at Steele's Crossing which had been a center of attraction to many because of the fellowship and love which existed among those who worshiped there now became the attraction or center for those who desired contention and dispute. Each body of people felt that it should put forth its own particular doctrine. Preacher Jones had one Sunday of the month in which to set forth the doctrines of his faith and Preacher Brown one Sunday, followed by Preacher Bronson; he trying to show the erroneous doctrine of the two before him. The community house could well be called a place of confusion. So strongly was the contention felt among them that Preacher Brown and his followers withdrew from the rest and purchased the old saloon building formerly owned by Mr. Blaum. They remodeled it, seated it, and met there each Sunday to expound the doctrines of their own faith and to point out the errors of the followers of Preacher Jones and Preacher Bronson. A Sunday school was organized with Mr. Sawyer as superintendent.

This took a number from the community house, but it did not remove the contention there, for the Jones followers and the Bronson followers often had some heated arguments, as each side contended for its own point of view on some certain question. This was not true of all that worshiped there, for some remembered the times when all were together and God met with them, giving them His blessings, and all felt drawn closer together and felt a nearness of God. Many remarks were made by some of the more conscientious and pious worshipers that they could not feel the freedom now that they enjoyed there before they banded together in the different organizations.

Joe tried in every way that he could, as did Alfred, to keep the people together and worship together but so sharp did the contention become that Joe humbly tendered his resignation as their superintendent. A follower of Preacher Bronson was appointed in his place. As the Bronson followers outnumbered those of Preacher Jones the majority ruled and they now had control of the Sunday school. It was not long until they

voted to change the literature then in use and use the literature of the publishing house of the Bronson faith. This was more than the Jones followers could bear and they remonstrated stating if such should be the case they would no longer come to the Sunday school or send their children. The literature was changed and the Jones followers kept their word. They were granted permission to use the schoolhouse for their religious worship, which they did, organizing a Sunday school among themselves. They used the literature from their own publishing house, setting forth the doctrines of their own faith.

So the community house that had been the admiration of many whom visited it was now a divided house. Some were so hurt over the turn of affairs that they vowed never to step foot in the house anymore. When strangers came into the midst of the people of the Steele's Crossing settlement and went away they could not say as did the lecturers from the Anti-Saloon League—that they never saw so many people attending services in such an out-of-the-way place. But should they visit among them any length of time they could say they never saw a more contentious people than the people of the Steele's Crossing settlement.

When the Jones followers moved their meetings to the schoolhouse Alfred asked Joe to worship with them, but Joe was so sick at heart over the turn of affairs that he said he would remain at home until he learned what God would have him do. That evening as Joe opened his Bible for reading, after having asked God to direct him to the things in his Word that he most needed, Joe began to read from the first chapter of 1 Corinthians pondering over each verse he read. He read the tenth verse slowly: "Now I beseech you, brethren, by the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that ye all speak the same thing, and *that* there be no divisions among you; but *that* ye be perfectly joined together in the same mind and in the same judgment." Here he paused and, looking at Susie, said, "Did you understand that verse?"

"I do not know just what you mean," replied she.

"I shall read it again," replied Joe, which he did, and as he came to the middle of the verse, "and that there be no

divisions among you," he paused. The two sat gazing at each other for some time, when Joe said, "I have felt all the time that God was not pleased with the division of his people here at this place. You know what good meetings we all had and how we enjoyed ourselves before the organizations were formed. We were all together then. Now we are all divided and it seems we cannot work together, for each class of people wants to contend for its own views. I feel that this is all wrong and that God does not intend for His people to be divided but to be of the same mind and to speak the same thing and to be together. I am sure that I shall never consent for a barrier to be raised that shall separate me from any other child of God. I feel bad about conditions but what can I do? I see now that the ministers who have been here this winter have caused division among God's people, and I am sure that I do not know what the results of all these meetings will be. I am sure that God directed me to the scripture read this morning and I have decided to do what I can to bring all the people together again, for God cannot work among them as they are now."

"But what can you do to make conditions better among them?" inquired Susie.

"I do not know just what I shall do, but I mean to keep my heart open to the Lord," said Joe. "You know we are learning many things from Him and the things that He teaches us through His Word will be lessons which we shall never forget. You know it was through His Word that we found the way to God and the peace for which our souls longed. He showed us also that we were in the church that Jesus built on the rock and were full members. He is now teaching us that division among His people is not right, but that He wants us all to be of the same mind and the same judgment and to be together. I am so glad that He has taught us this thing for I am more determined than ever never to let any barrier come between any other child of God and me. But I have felt such a need lately of more of God. I know that I am His child but there is emptiness in my soul that I feel needs to be filled. I want to do more for Him and I mean to search his Word more diligently than ever before. Surely there is some work for which the Lord is preparing me."

"I have felt the same way too," replied Susie, "and I am not satisfied with conditions here at the Crossing. You know it seems that something has come between Alfred and Tillie and us. They try to be the same as they always were, yet I feel that something has come between us, and you know I love them dearly. I wish things were as they were before Preacher Jones held his meeting, for then we enjoyed the meetings and received a blessing."

"I feel sure there are blessings in store for us yet if we just keep ourselves where God can instruct us through His Word," replied Joe.

At this time a knock was heard on the door. Alfred had come to inquire what Joe had for him to do that day. Joe invited him in and related the conversation of the morning to him, also reading the scriptures that had brought light to him. Alfred sat for some time in deep thought. When Joe had finished speaking he said, "You have been no more concerned about the turn of affairs at the Crossing than have I. I, too, have seen what division has meant for the people here, but have not seen the remedy for it."

"The only remedy I can see," replied Joe, "is to be together as we once were, worship the Lord without human creed, and ever keep Christ before us. I am sure that is the way the Lord designed for it to be else He would not have said, 'Let there be no divisions among you.' As for me, I have decided not to let anything come between any other child of God and me. If there is ever a barrier raised it will be the one the other fellow raises, for I shall never raise one."

"I declare," said Alfred, "you are nearer the true church of God than anyone I have ever seen, but I wonder if there is anyone else in all the world that sees this."

"I am sure I do not know," said Joe; "but if so I mean to ask God to lead me to Him."

Alfred said, "I want to tell you something which I forgot to mention to you Saturday evening. While at Newton Saturday afternoon I met a man by the name of Myers who said he one time lived neighbor to you before you moved into the Steele's Crossing neighborhood. He said to tell you he wanted to see you and expected to drive over here some day. He lives

three miles on the other side of Newton on the old Reynolds farm.”

“Bill Myers,” exclaimed Joe. “Why, I declare. I didn’t know he was anywhere near here.”

“Yes. And he wants to see you,” replied Alfred. “He had spoken but a few words to me when he began to tell what the Lord had done for him. He told me that he had gone far on the downward way but the Lord had saved him and he wanted to see you very much to tell you what the Lord had done for him.”

“Bill Myers a Christian,” exclaimed Susie. “That seems too good to be true. He was practically an infidel when we used to know him.”

“I could not doubt it,” replied Alfred, “and I am sure you will be convinced there surely has been a change in him when you hear him talk. He said that not only had God saved him from his sins but that the Holy Ghost had come into his soul, sanctifying him.”

“Don’t you remember that Brother Reed mentioned sanctification several times when he was here holding his meeting?” asked Joe. “I have often thought of that and should really like to know more about it. But I can scarcely believe old Bill Myers is in our neighborhood and a Christian. I am glad to hear it, however, and am really desirous of seeing him.”

“I am sure that it will not be long until you shall see him, for he said he meant to come to your place as soon as he could,” replied Alfred. “And, Joe, he spoke to me about some of the things that you mentioned this morning. He does not believe in dividing God’s children and said that he had never joined anything but God and that had proved satisfactory to him. He also spoke of the church of God. I wanted to converse with him more but had to come on home as it was then getting quite late. I enjoyed his conversation very much, however.”

The two men went to their work, making preparation necessary for their spring plowing as soon as they could get into the field. There was much to be done, but the thought of Bill Myers was not absent from Joe’s mind. He was so eager to receive the promised visit from him, which he received the following Sunday afternoon.

Joe and Susie both stared in amazement when they saw Myers and his family. The trace of tobacco juice was absent from Bill's chin, a thing that they had never seen before. They were glad to see them all and gave them a warm welcome. A wonderful change had come over the Myers family, but the greatest change was in Bill. Susie noted that he used the kindest tones when addressing his wife and children. With this came the memory of times when she had heard him use rough language and heap abuses on his wife and little ones. As she thought of it all she said to herself, "There has been a wonderful change in this family, and only God could have brought it about."

An enjoyable afternoon was spent together, Joe telling about conditions in the community, even to the story of Mr. Sawyer's trouble with his hired help. At last he came to the question of the church which lay so heavily on his heart, and this opened up an avenue for Mr. Myers to tell him of his own experience. Joe sat wide-eyed and open-mouthed as he heard Myers tell how in a brush arbor meeting God convicted him of his sins, and, bowing at an altar of prayer, he confessed all to God and God spoke peace to his soul. "But that is not all," said Bill. "God not only forgave me of my sins but He took away the appetite I had for whisky and tobacco and I have not cared for a drink of whisky nor a chew of tobacco since. God cleaned me up when He forgave me of my transgressions. But that is not all either. Some time later I came to Him, as I felt a lack in my soul and knew that I needed more of his grace; and as I presented my body a living sacrifice to Him the Holy Spirit came into my soul, filling me and sanctifying me."

"How wonderful!" exclaimed Joe. "But I should like to know more about what you mean by sanctification. If your sins were pardoned, what does sanctification do for you?"

"I can best explain it by using as an illustration your neighbor and his last hired man," said Mr. Myers. The Holy Spirit is to us what Mr. Sawyer's hired man was to him. He is more powerful than the enemy is. When the Holy Spirit comes into our soul He gives us power over all the powers of the enemy and we can live a victorious life all the time. I felt the need of this many times after I was saved. Some things would come



up that I would have to make right again. It seemed that I had not the power to overcome. But now I can say as did the hired hand, 'Old enemy, I am master here, and you shall get a thrashing, for I have power over you.'

"That sounds good to me," said Joe. "And if there is such an experience for me I surely want it. I have been hungering and thirsting for more of God for some time, but I should like to know more of this sanctification. I should like to have it explained to me."

Mr. Myers laughed as he replied, "The experience is for you, but you will never understand it fully. But God willed it to you, for we read in I Thessalonians 4:3: 'For this is the will of God, *even* your sanctification.' I have the experience, but I cannot understand it. It is a great gift of God, but I can tell you no more about it than you can tell me about how God gave you peace. You know He did it, but how He did it you cannot tell. We read, too, 'Blessed *are* they which do hunger and thirst after righteousness: for they shall be filled.' If you hunger and thirst I am sure that God will fill you."

"There is something else that I want to speak about," said Joe. "What church do you believe in, and with what one do you hold membership?"

Again Mr. Myers laughed but replied, "I believe I hold membership in the same church that you do. I belong to the church that Jesus built on the rock, that the gates of hell cannot prevail against. The one that He purchased with His blood and named the 'church of God.' I did not join it but God took me in as a member when He pardoned my sins. He then placed me in the body, which is His church, and I did not need to join anything to be a church member.

I am one of the great family of God and all other of His children are my brothers and sisters."

"God be praised," said Joe as he clasped Mr. Myers' hand. "I have found someone who is with me in the great church of God."

As the afternoon waned the Myers took their departure with a promise from the Holmiers to visit them at an early date. As the carriage rolled away Joe and Susie stood looking after them. When it disappeared around a bend in the road Joe turned to Susie and said, "That man is really a Christian

and has an experience that I know nothing about. With this he bent his steps toward the barn where in the secret corner of the granary he again poured out his heart to God.

## CHAPTER 15

### **DIRECTED BY THE SPIRIT**

Spring advanced in the neighborhood of Steele's Crossing and with it came the busy times with all the farmers. Joe and Alfred were both busy with their spring work. A number of visits had been exchanged between them and the Myers family, and Alfred and Tillie expressed themselves that they felt the Myers family an unusual one. Although Alfred had the oversight of the little congregation who worshiped in the schoolhouse, and often addressed them from the pulpit, he recognized a power about Mr. Myers that he knew he did not possess. Many pleasant hours were spent together reasoning on the things of God.

One day in the latter part of the month of May, Joe and Alfred were plowing in different fields. The weather had been unfavorable for some time and now each was pushing his work along as rapidly as possible. They worked early and late trying to complete their spring work, getting the ground ready for planting.

About mid-afternoon Joe hitched his horses to a fence post and started across the field toward the place where Alfred was plowing. He had gone but a short distance when he noticed Alfred's team was also standing and Alfred was coming to meet him. The two soon met and each asked the other, "What is wrong?"

It did not take Joe long to explain. He said, "I guess there is nothing wrong so far as I can see, but it seems that I am unable to work in peace this afternoon, for Bill Myers is continually on my mind. I have tried to dismiss him from my mind but he only comes back all the more forcibly. I left the team and went into that little woods yonder several times and prayed for him but I just can't dismiss him from my mind. I concluded at last there must be something wrong with him and he may be needing help. If so, do you not think it would be best for us to go see about him? I know we are very busy but I think we can spare a few hours of the afternoon to see what is wrong. I am sure if he is sick or in need of our assistance in any way he would appreciate our coming to see about him. But why are you leaving your team and coming to meet me?"

Alfred looked at Joe in amazement for some time and then spoke, "Joe, I am sure the Lord is trying to get something to us, for you have only spoken my feelings for this entire afternoon. I have scarcely been able to collect my thoughts sufficiently to keep at my work, and it seems that I cannot accomplish anything. I, too, have been very much impressed about Brother Myers and was coming to ask you if you did not think you could spare me from my work for a few hours that I might go to see about him."

"We shall go together," said Joe as he turned to get his team and then went to the house to inform Susie what he and Alfred had decided to do, and the impression each had had which led them to action. As Susie needed some things from the grocery store, she asked the men to stop on their way through Newton and bring back the groceries with them. There were some things that must be done about the barn before they could leave. After completing these chores they hitched a team to the carriage and started to Newton, and from thence to the Myers home, a distance of about eight miles.

Before leaving, Joe thought best to take some plow points with him to have sharpened at the blacksmith shop while in Newton and thus spare him this trouble the following Saturday afternoon. He waited at the blacksmith's shop for the work to be finished after getting the groceries which Susie had ordered (for there were several orders for work at the shop which must be completed before the blacksmith could do his work). The sun had set and twilight come on before his points were ready. Placing them in the carriage the two men then started on toward the Myers home, but night overtook them before they reached their destination. As they approached the house they saw it was well lighted; a lighted lantern hung on a nail just outside the door. They also noted quite a number of wagons and carriages about the place. Alfred said, "What do you suppose is wrong?"

"That remains to be seen," replied Joe, as he hitched the team, and the two started for the house. Nearing the gate they saw a large crowd congregated at the door and at each window. As they came near the door they heard singing; the old familiar song "Coronation" was being sung and it dawned

upon each of them what the crowd gathered there meant. Joe thought of the experience of the afternoon and although he had always been very quiet when in services, as he approached the door he cried out, "Praise the Lord." Immediately the crowd separated and Alfred and Joe walked into the room. As soon as Mr. Myers caught sight of them he too cried out, "Praise the Lord," and made his way to them.

The singing went on while these three made a few explanations. Mr. Myers told Alfred and Joe that the evangelist who conducted the meeting in the arbor when he was saved had come to his place that day and Myers had asked him to preach for them that night. He had consented to do so, and Myers had gone among the neighbors, telling them there would be services at his place that evening, and it seemed that everybody in the community had come. "I wanted to get word to you two," said Mr. Myers, "but after going around here in this neighborhood I could not go so far, so I just asked the Lord to some way move on you two that you would come over here anyhow, and here you are." This of course called for an explanation from Alfred and Joe. As they told Mr. Myers of their experience of the afternoon all were moved to tears as they realized God had been talking to Alfred and Joe that afternoon and they had come to the Myers home through direction of God's Holy Spirit.

After a few more songs and prayer the evangelist arose to address those present. From the first word all sat as if spell-bound, for he spoke with ease and as one having authority. "I have come before you this evening," said he, "to give you reasons for being what I am, and why I believe as I do. No one is anything in this world without first having some reason for being such. The farmer has a reason for tilling the land, else he would not do so. The merchant, the grocer, the mechanic, the bookkeeper, the lumberman, and even the rag picker of the alley all have a reason for being what they are. If you should listen to the reason for which they are such as they are I believe they could present logic sufficient to convince us their desire or their belief is all right for them, although we might not think it would fit in our particular case. Each of them has a reason for being what he is. And I have a reason for being

what I am and for believing as I do. That is what I want to speak to you about this evening.

"I am a holiness preacher and I want to give you several reasons tonight why I believe in holiness. I trust you will all receive it with the same courtesy you would receive the reasons of the farmer, the merchant, the grocer, the mechanic, the bookkeeper, the lumberman, or the rag picker, even though you might not think that it just exactly fits your case. I have several reasons why I believe in holiness and these I shall give you this evening. First: I believe in holiness because it is the only way that God has. We read in Isaiah 35:8: 'And an highway shall be there, and a way, and it shall be called The way of holiness; the unclean shall not pass over it; but it *shall be* for those: the wayfaring men, though fools, shall not err *therein*.' After reading this scripture I could not believe otherwise, for I find that God's way is a way of holiness, and no unclean thing shall pass over it; so if I want to travel on the way the Lord has I must be clean and I must be holy.

"Second: I believe in holiness because it is an attribute of God. In Exodus 15:11 I read, 'Who *is* like unto thee, O LORD, among the gods? who *is* like thee, glorious in holiness, fearful *in* praises, doing wonders?' I believe in holiness because the Lord whom I serve is holy. And if He be holy that which He imparts to us and all that we get from Him in this world must be holy also. Man is not holy of himself, neither can he cleanse himself, but the Lord cleanses, and when He gives of himself to the children of men, that which He gives to them is holy, for holiness is an attribute of God.

"Third: I believe in holiness because I cannot worship the Lord in any other way. In Psalm 29:2 we find these words, 'Give unto the LORD the glory due unto his name; worship the LORD in the beauty of holiness.' I want to worship the Lord and therefore I must believe in holiness, for that is the worship that He desires.

"Fourth: I believe in holiness and I desire it for it is the only becoming thing for a Christian. In Psalm 93:5 I shall read again, 'Thy testimonies are very sure: holiness becometh thine house, O LORD, for ever.' It is natural for mankind to desire that which is most becoming to them. In making selection of

any article of dress we try to select the one that is most becoming to us and it is only natural that we should do so. I believe in holiness and have attired myself in it because I find that God says it is the only becoming thing in which His house can be clothed. Not only in the time of David was this meant but the Word says it becometh the house of God forever. Anything that is becoming will attract someone else. When one is attired in holiness it is going to be so becoming to him that sinners will be attracted to him and then be won to Christ. The only becoming thing for a Christian is a life of holiness.

"Fifth: I believe in holiness because God calls us to it. In I Thessalonians 4:7 Paul says, 'For God hath not called us unto uncleanness, but unto holiness.' So you see God has called us to obtain the experience of holiness and I must believe in it because it is a call from God. As many as God calls he calls to holiness and the call is universal, for Jesus said in Matthew 11:28, 'Come unto me, all *ye* that labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest.' So the call is to all that labor and are heavy laden, and it is a call unto holiness.

"Sixth: God demands holiness of us. In I Peter 1:15-16 we have these words: 'But as he which hath called you is holy, so be ye holy in all manner of conversation; Because it is written, Be ye holy; for I am holy.' When our Lord was being tempted in the wilderness the enemy put before Him at the time He was hungered if He were the Son of God to command the stones to become bread. Jesus said to him, 'Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God.' If we take the Word of God as our guide and live by every word that proceedeth from His mouth, we then must be holy and believe in holiness, for as He is holy we must be holy also.

"Seventh: I believe in holiness because it is the fulfillment of the oath that God swore to Abraham. I shall read from the gospel recorded by Luke, in Luke 1:73-75: 'The oath which he swear to our father Abraham, That he would grant unto us, that we being delivered out of the hand of our enemies might serve him without fear, In holiness and righteousness before him, all the days of our life.' I thank God that not only did God grant this experience unto us but made it possible for us to

serve Him in holiness all the days of our life. So it must mean to serve Him here. Some folks think it will be all right to serve the Lord in holiness after they enter Heaven, but God expects us to serve Him in holiness in this present world, and every day of our life.

“Eighth: I believe in holiness because it is the fruit that should be borne in every Christian life. In Romans 6:22 I shall read what the Apostle Paul says: ‘But now being made free from sin, and become servants to God, ye have your fruit unto holiness, and the end everlasting life.’ I want my fruit to be such that the end shall be everlasting life and to do so the fruit of my life must bear the marks of holiness.

“Ninth: Not only do I believe in holiness, but I believe in more holiness, in a perfected holiness. For support of this reason I shall read II Corinthians 7:1: ‘Having therefore these promises, dearly beloved, let us cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of God.’ I believe in a perfected holiness. When man first comes to God convicted for his sins, and godly sorrow grips his soul, how careful he is in his life to do those things that he knows God requires him to do. When God for Christ’s sake speaks peace to his soul, pardoning his sins, he then enters into holiness, but when the Holy Ghost comes into his soul he has a perfected holiness. So we see holiness begins in conviction, is entered into in justification, and is perfected in sanctification. For further evidence of this latter point I refer you to Hebrews 10:14: ‘For by one offering he hath perfected for ever them that are sanctified.’

“Tenth: And now my tenth and greatest reason why I believe in holiness and strive for it is because I want to see God. In Hebrews 12:14 Paul says, ‘Follow peace with all *men*, and holiness, without which no man shall see the Lord.’ I want to see the Lord and meet Him in peace, and therefore I follow in the path of holiness. I am sure that we all want to see God, so let us put on the becoming robe of holiness which is the garment God designed for all His true children.”

Many more remarks were made upon the reasons for believing in holiness, and the hands of the clock ticked off two hours before the speaker closed his discourse for the evening.



Joe and Alfred sat spellbound under the sound of the speaker's voice. Many times they were moved to tears, as some wonderful truth of God's Word was revealed to them. At other times they would give vent to their feelings by an "amen," or "praise the Lord." The sermon for the evening was what was needed to better establish them in the truths of God. Joe had been convinced there was such an experience as sanctification and was earnestly seeking God to fill him with his Holy Spirit. Each day had found him in the room of his granary calling upon God to fill him with the Holy Spirit. The more he sought the Lord the hungrier he was for more of God. How he rejoiced because he knew God had directed him to come to the Myers home that night, in answer to the prayers of Bill Myers. More and more he could see God directing him.

At the close of the service Alfred and Joe met the evangelist, who was passing through the country on his way to a little town in northern Indiana where he was to begin a meeting the following Sunday and from thence to a camp meeting in Michigan. Upon the urgent request of the evangelist, Joe and Alfred promised to try to be at the camp meeting.

They started for home at a late hour, very tired from their labor in the field and the drive to the Myers home, but happy to know the Spirit of God had directed them there that night to receive food for their souls. How they rejoiced as they drove along in the stillness of night. God was pouring his blessing down upon their souls and they felt a nearness to each other such as they had never felt before. The experience of the afternoon brought greater confidence and love for each other, and as they drove along they conversed on the goodness of God. As they neared home Joe said, "Alfred, there is one thing that I mean to do from now on. When I feel a moving in my soul such as I had this afternoon I mean to give heed to it, for I am sure God wants to lead me into the things for which I am searching. I want you to be with me. Can I depend on you?"

At this Alfred grasped Joe's hand and said, "Joe, do not fear for me, for I am as hungry for the things of God as you are, and I shall ever keep my heart open that I may hear the voice of God and be directed by His Spirit."

## CHAPTER 16

### THE CAMP MEETING

Joe and Alfred had been busy men before the meeting at Myers', but now they were doubly busy trying to arrange their work that they might be away from home and attend the camp meeting. To do so someone must be found who would care for the stock on the place while they were away. Much as Joe desired to go he would always ask God in his daily devotion, "If it be thy will, Lord, open the way that I may go." The way was opened and in such manner that Joe and Alfred both felt free to attend the meeting without care or worry about the work at home.

Susie's brother, John, decided to take unto himself a wife. As they had not fully decided where they would locate it was an easy matter to persuade them to care for things on the farm while the Holmier and the Giese families attended the camp meeting in Michigan.

As this was before the day of the automobile or rapid and easy transportation, some thought and arrangement for travel must be made. The men thought of a way they might all go and with less expense than if they should make the trip on the train. Joe had a light farm wagon, and they decided to travel in it as the Western pioneers crossed the plains. Accordingly, bows were placed on the wagon bed and over them was drawn a tarpaulin and the schooner was in readiness for the trip. Much preparation was made by the women also, for they must see that the children were made as comfortable as possible for the trip. Arrangements must be made that they might take their daily nap, and provision made to satisfy the appetite of hungry children. Bedding was placed in the rear of the wagon, and this made a nice place for the children to ride as well as a comfortable bed for them when they took their naps. They packed lunch also, sufficient for one day, deciding to cook their meals on the old-fashioned campfire along the route. As it would take them about four days to make the trip, they would have to camp at night, and provision must be made for this also. It was decided that the women and children occupy the wagon for the night and Joe and Alfred would spread some horse blankets on the ground under the wagon and sleep there. After all

arrangements had been made and plans completed, one June morning bright and early the loaded schooner rolled out of the Holmier barn lot and the two families were on their way to the camp meeting.

The first day was ideal for traveling, and as the team was fresh and there was no need of stopping to prepare a meal they got well on their way. At nightfall they found that they had traveled forty miles. They camped beside a little stream, had supper, and then put four sleepy children to bed. After reading a portion of Scripture and having prayer, the parents of the children retired for the night also, the women lying beside the babies in the wagon and the men rolling up in their blankets on the ground under the wagon. All were soon sound asleep, to be awakened when the first streaks of morning light tinged the eastern sky and the birds began caroling their morning praise to their Maker.

After a hasty breakfast from the fragments of the lunch of the day before they were again on their way. Noon found them by a small stream. The women prepared their meal, cooking it on the open campfire. The sun had been riding in a clear sky, but in mid-afternoon clouds could be seen arising over the western horizon and the rumble of distant thunder told them that a storm was approaching.

It was soon upon them and traveling was impossible. Driving into a schoolyard they took shelter by the side of the school building, thereby breaking the force of the wind, but the rain fell in torrents and the wagon cover could not keep out the dampness. In preparing the bed in the rear of the wagon so the children might take their nap through the day the women would place all the bedding in the wagon and then cover them all with the horse blankets. This protected their quilts and pillows from the dust and dirt of the road and also from the trampling of the children's feet. After the rain had subsided the bedding which was used in the wagon for the women and children was found to be dry, but the horse blankets which the men used to sleep on under the wagon were too wet to use that night. So the men sat up in the wagon, as there was not enough room for them to lie down and in this position they took what little sleep they could.

The remainder of the trip was made without any inconvenience and on the afternoon of the fourth day they drove onto the campground. They found they had not been alone in their mode of travel, for a number of others there had also traveled by wagon. How strange everything was to them and no one was there whom they knew. It was not long, however, until the evangelist located them and they were meeting other ministers; and soon the strangeness began to wear off, for they saw a friendliness among these people such as they had never seen among any class of people before. The fellowship and brotherly love manifested among them was felt by all.

Joe and Alfred had always joined in singing wherever they had been in meetings heretofore, but as they assembled together in the tabernacle for services the first evening they could only sit and listen. Such singing they had never heard. They gazed in astonishment as the singers lifted their voices in praise with a shine of victory and glory on their faces. But much as they enjoyed the singing they became lost to their surroundings as they listened to the expounding of the gospel in the evening service. Many times they were moved to tears as they listened to the word of God delivered under the anointing of the Holy Spirit. As they left the tabernacle that evening Joe slipped his arm through Alfred's and said, "Did you ever hear anything like that in your life?" To which Alfred replied, "No, I don't believe I ever did, and somehow I feel that God has directed us to this place."

"I believe he has, too," replied Joe, "and if I get no more in the entire meeting I feel repaid already for all the trouble I have had in getting ready to come and for the trip here, even to the night I had to sit up in the wagon. Surely God is in this place and I am sure He wants to get something to our hearts."

Susie and Tillie were so worn out with the trip and the care of the children they decided not to attend services the first night, but to rest that they might be able to attend next day. So they remained in their tents that evening while the men attended, and when they returned with such an account of the meeting, both decided to miss no more meetings unless entirely unavoidable.

The meeting progressed and such truths as sanctification, unity, and healing were set forth in such clearness, and yet with such force that all must acknowledge them as Bible facts. Not only was healing preached, but many who were sick came, and as prayer was offered for them, healing came and they were made well. These four searchers for truth looked on in amazement as they saw the blind eyes opened in answer to prayer, and those who had to be led about by the hand of someone else go about seeing. They saw the deaf ears unstopped and those who could not hear rejoiced to know they could hear the slightest sound, even to a whispered word. Ankle braces and crutches were discarded and their users walked freely without them; wheel chairs were vacated and those who had not walked for years received strength in their weak limbs and leaped and shouted praises to God. Although Joe had prayed for a number of sick folks and had seen them healed, he did not know that it was a Bible doctrine. But as he saw the sick healed, the lame made to walk, the blind to see, and the deaf to hear, he rejoiced as never before to know his God was "the same yesterday, today, and forever."

Although Joe recognized the truths of God and knew he was among the people of God, he could not tolerate the public altar. He was seeking God with all his heart for the infilling of the Holy Spirit, and trying to get to the place where his vessel was entirely emptied that the Holy Spirit could come in. But as he would pray the question of the public altar would come before him, and often he would cry out, "Fill me, Lord, in the same way that You spoke peace to my soul. You did this in the privacy of my own room; now fill me the same way." But the filling did not come. One night as the invitation was given for those to come forward who desired the Holy Spirit, the first one to go was Alfred, and Tillie soon followed him. Both poured out their hearts to God, and soon arose with the glory of God in their souls, for they had obtained that for which they had long been searching. In the privacy of their tent that night Alfred approached Joe on the subject of his soul's need. Joe opened up his heart to Alfred, telling him he could never go to a public altar, as he did not believe that was the way God meant to get

things to his children. He also referred to how God had saved him when alone and he felt that was the proper way to come to God for any need of the soul.

In telling Alfred this he felt he would be relieved. But the reply was such as to burden him more, for Alfred said, "That may all be true, but you must remember God dealt with you then because He knew the tradition under which you were brought up and the teachings of former years. It would have been a difficult thing to get you to a public altar then, but you now are to walk in light as it comes to you. Remember, if you ever get anything from God it will come God's way. As for me, I was so hungry for the things of God and felt such a need of something more in my soul that I was willing to bow in the pigpen among the swine if that was the place the Lord wanted me to that He might fill me. Joe, when you get to that place also, you will find the thing for which your soul is longing."

Alfred did not know how his words were striking home, but they sank deep in Joe's soul. Joe had always spoken so boldly against the public altar that now to humble himself and consent to go to an altar of prayer for some need of his soul was more than he could think of. But there was no sleep for Joe that night. Rising early before any others in the tents were stirring he went to a secret place, there to commune with his God and again ask him for the infilling of the Holy Spirit. As Joe knelt before the Lord he again petitioned Him as he had often done before to grant unto him His Holy Spirit. As he did so on this particular morning a vision arose before him, and he saw the altar rail of the tabernacle rise before him as a mountain. There were no words of prayer that he could form. He knelt there for some time sobbing like a child. He knew what he would have to do to get the desire of his heart, and as he knelt there, self died. He cried out to God, "O Lord, if that is what you require of me I shall bow at that altar this very day." He arose with that settled peace in his soul that only those know who have crucified self and humbly submitted to the will of God. That day he bowed at the altar, and as he cried out to God, "Now, Lord, I have completely surrendered; fill me with the Holy Spirit," the fire of God touched his soul and he arose

and shouted the praises of God. He did not care who heard nor who saw, for God had granted unto him the thing for which his soul had been longing for some weeks. As his shouting subsided he looked about him for Susie, but found she had gone to her tent, in which place he found her, she wearing a very puzzled expression on her face. It did not take long for him to explain everything to her, but it did not erase the troubled look from her countenance. She, too, was thinking deeply.

That afternoon the four of them listened to a message on "Water Baptism, the Mode, the Purpose, and Conditions." No one was stronger in his belief of water baptism than Joe. And he had boasted many times of his baptism and many times. He had mentioned the fact to Alfred, although the two of them could not agree, for Alfred had not received the kind of baptism Joe had received. But as the evangelist that afternoon led them step by step into the truths of God concerning this ordinance, many glances were exchanged between them. The first thought was on the ordinance of baptism, and the minister handled the subject well, opening to the minds of those who heard the truth that it was an ordinance of God entered into by the Son of God, practiced by the apostles, and bearing the approval of God. The mode was next dealt with; and such conciseness as to convince any unbiased mind. He read Romans 6:4, "Therefore we are buried with him by baptism into death: that like as Christ was raised up from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life." None could think other than of a burial where the body was completely put out of sight, as the speaker advanced with his message.

Next he spoke of the purpose of baptism and read Acts 2:37-39; "Now when they heard *this*, they were pricked in their heart, and said unto Peter and to the rest of the apostles, Men *and* brethren, what shall we do? Then Peter said unto them, Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost. For the promise is unto you, and to your children, and to all that are afar off, *even* as many as the Lord our God shall call."

“Here,” said the speaker, “is the real purpose of baptism set forth. Many have conceived the idea that as the text says ‘for the remission of sins,’ one cannot truly be changed unless he has been baptized, but such is not the case, for water baptism never actually cleansed a man from his sins and never will. We read in 1 Pet. 1:18-19, ‘Forasmuch as ye know that ye were not redeemed with corruptible things, as silver and gold, from your vain conversation *received* by tradition from your fathers; But with the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot:’ We must conclude from this text that water cannot actually cleanse the soul, for we are redeemed by the blood of Jesus and that is the only thing that can reach the soul of man. There is no strength in water to erase the stains of sin, and God did not mean the ordinance of baptism for that purpose. ‘For the remission of sin’ does not mean that they might be actually remitted, but figuratively remitted. Baptized ‘for the remission of sins,’ not that through the act of baptism the soul-stains are erased for through the blood of Jesus they were already remitted. In the act of baptism you testify to the world by this outward act, which is a figurative remission of sins, that there has been a work wrought within the heart and you are buried in a watery grave to rise and walk in newness of life with the Lord.

“We read in I Peter 3:21 another purpose of baptism; ‘...(Not the putting away of the filth of the flesh, but the answer of a good conscience toward God,)...’ If we want a clear conscience before the Lord we must do the things He commands of us. One of the commands is to be baptized.

“And now to the conditions for baptism. I refer you again to the sermon of Peter on the day of Pentecost where they asked him what they must do and he said, ‘Repent.’ So one who desires baptism must be an individual who has repented of his sins. And he must be a believer also. In Mark 16:15-16, we have the words of the Master as he sent his disciples into the world and gave them the last commission before he ascended into Heaven, ‘And he said unto them, Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature. He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved; but he that



believeth not shall be damned.' We see here that baptism is for the believer, the one who has been made new in Christ. Many have gone to the water's edge and have even been buried in the water who have never received real baptism. It is not a real baptism unless the candidate for baptism has really been born again and made a new creature by obtaining the remission of sins which comes only through the application of the blood of Jesus Christ to the soul."

Many other rich truths were brought out in the speaker's message, but those mentioned were the ones that struck a vital spot in the heart of both Joe and Alfred. Each saw where he had come short of real Christian baptism. Joe saw he had not been born again when this rite was administered to him and Alfred could not be satisfied to think of a few drops of water that had been sprinkled on his head as sufficing for a burial with Christ. As there was to be a baptismal service that afternoon on the campground, among those presenting themselves for baptism were Joe, Susie, Alfred and Tillie. As Susie came up out of the water the Holy Ghost came upon her and she cried out. "He sanctifies me, he sanctifies me." It was a precious baptismal service never to be forgotten by any whom were present.

The next afternoon Joe was surprised to see Alfred step onto the platform with Bible in hand as the speaker for the afternoon. He had often heard him speak to the audience at Steele's Crossing, but this afternoon he heard him really expound the Scriptures. In his message he mentioned how God had been leading him for the past few months. Since Joe knew the many times that God had directed both of them his joy knew no bounds as he heard Alfred relate those instances so precious to him to that large assembly of people. At the close of this service Alfred and Joe fell into each other's arms and wept like children. The evangelist approached them and said, "I believe you two men are enjoying this camp meeting better than anyone else here." To which Joe replied, "God knows the sacrifice we had to make and the hardships we endured to get here, and it is only the pay we are receiving from Him."

The meeting closed and preparations were made for the return home, but with a promise from the evangelist to give them a meeting as soon as possible. The return home was made without any incident of note, but Steele's Crossing was to be stirred as never before because of those in her midst who had attended the camp meeting in Michigan.

## CHAPTER 17

### **BARRIERS REMOVED**

Joe and Alfred returned home but not to sit idly down and keep to themselves those things which they had learned at the camp meeting. Each began to do what he could to get others to see the wonderful truths that had been revealed. Alfred began to work quickly. Preacher Jones was surprised to receive a letter from him stating that he could no longer depend upon him to care for his followers in that community, for he was doing all he could to bring the people together again such as they had been before his meeting! Furthermore, that he and his wife desired him to erase their names from the church ledger, for he had found that his name was recorded in the Lamb's book of life and that he was a full member in the church of God, the one for which Jesus shed His blood, and the one in which every child of God holds membership by right of a spiritual birth. He further stated that he meant to do all he could to get others to see the error of division and get the barriers removed so that the prayer recorded in John 17:21 might be brought to pass in this world, "That they all may be one."

Alfred had stood before the people of the Steele's Crossing settlement many times and addressed them, but as they came to hear him now they would go away saying, "Did you ever hear the like in all your life? I wonder what has come over him. He is some preacher." As those who worshiped in the schoolhouse were now without a leader, they began drifting back to the community house where Alfred preached three Sundays in each month; the fourth Sunday being the regular appointment of Preacher Bronson. As Alfred's messages were so full of the real fire of the Holy Spirit it did not take long for the residents of that district to see the difference between a God-sent message and a dry, stale one and soon Preacher Bronson had few to preach to.

Alfred's messages of Christian love, fellowship and unity were accepted by not a few of the residents of the Steele's Crossing community, for they had seen what division had caused among them. The followers of Preacher Brown could not leave the borders of "sin-you-must domain," so therefore remained in the old saloon building where they held services weekly.

Alfred and Joe had been held by the majority of the residents of their district as model Christians, but when they began advocating the thought of coming together and worshipping together some who were staunch supporters of their own pet creed objected and soon bitter persecution was heaped upon them.

Weeks passed and autumn waned, giving place to chilly winds of winter. Soon heavy snows covered the ground everywhere and the only means of travel was by sled or horseback. It was a cold, hard winter and there was much sickness among the people. As the snow had drifted in many places, making the road impassable, it was almost an impossibility to get a doctor to come to the Steele's Crossing community. As Alfred had preached divine healing among the people, he was untiring in visiting and praying for the sick. Those for whom he prayed were soon well, but among some of his neighbors he was not permitted to offer prayer and the suffering ones died. Joe and Alfred both rendered what assistance they could to all their neighbors and by so doing won some of their most bitter enemies.

Because there was so much sickness among the people no thought was given to church service or to Sunday school. But as spring advanced and the sickness among the people subsided Alfred and Joe were again found at the community house doing what they could to bring the people of that neighborhood together. Many of their former persecutors were present at the services also, for they had been convinced that these two men were real neighbors.

Summer advanced and with it there came a letter from the evangelist stating that he would be free to hold a meeting for them the latter part of August. As he would be passing through that community at that time he would give them a three weeks' meeting while there if they desired him to do so. A letter was forwarded to him immediately telling him to come.

About two hundred yards from the Holmier home was a little grove next to the public highway. It was very warm weather so Joe and Alfred decided to make a brush arbor in this grove and have the meeting there, as it would accommodate so many more people than the little house at the Cross-

ing. Accordingly Alfred was sent to town for some lumber with which to seat the arbor and Joe went to the woods at the rear of the farm for poles with which to make it. Passersby would stop to inquire what the building of such an arbor meant. In this way the meeting was well advertised before the arrival of the evangelist. Mr. Sawyer was one of the inquirers. He was passing by one day while Alfred and Joe were at work on the arbor and when informed that they were getting ready for a revival meeting and it was to be held in the arbor, he said, "And does this man teach holiness?" When Joe answered in the affirmative he then said, "Huh! There is no such a thing as a man living holy in this world. There never was but one man that did it and that was Jesus Christ, and I do not think that anyone can get quite so good as he is. I know that I sin every day and I believe you do too. I believe that preacher does, too. In fact, when he says he doesn't he tells a lie, for the Bible says 'He that saith he liveth and sinneth not is a liar and the truth is not in him.' "

Here Alfred spoke up and said, "I never read such a scripture as that in my Bible, but I have read, 'He that saith, I know him, and keepeth not his commandments, is a liar, and the truth is not in him.' I am sure if we keep His commandments we shall not come short of living holy lives."

Here Joe addressed his neighbor, "Mr. Sawyer, do you believe that Jesus Christ lived holy every day that He was here on earth?"

"Surely I do," replied Mr. Sawyer, "but He is the only one who ever did or ever will live holy, for we all sin more or less every day in word, deed or thought."

"Do you believe if Jesus Christ were here on earth today that He would live holy any place and under any conditions and at all times?" again inquired Joe.

"Yes, I do," replied Mr. Sawyer, "but Jesus Christ is not here on earth now. If He were He could live holy, for the Bible says He was without sin."

"Very well then," said Joe with a smile, "if you believe that, just let Jesus Christ in your heart and He will live holy there. You know, Paul said in Galatians 2:20, 'I am crucified with Christ: nevertheless, I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me: and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by the faith

of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave himself for me.' If we just let Jesus into our heart and then let Him live there He will live His own life through us and it will be an easy matter to live holy."

Mr. Sawyer's face reddened and, lifting the reins over his horses' backs, he clucked to them, saying, "Well, I do not believe you live holy nor anybody else, for we are all sinners, every one of us." And with this he started on down the road.

"Come to the meeting," called Joe after him. "It will begin next Wednesday evening."

Alfred and Joe were indeed very busy. A number of the neighbors in passing by found out what was taking place and lent a helping hand. In this way the arbor was soon completed and ready for the coming of the evangelist. The arbor was covered with heavy branches laid in such a manner as to afford a good shelter, and it was seated to accommodate about three hundred persons. A platform was built in the rear of the arbor and Joe arranged a goods box on the platform behind which the speaker could stand and upon which he might lay his Bible or other books that he might need. Behind the platform he stretched a strip of canvas to form a background and make speaking easier for the evangelist. Everything was completed on Tuesday morning and in readiness for the evangelist to begin the meeting the following evening.

The meeting had been well advertised. As the evangelist walked into that brush arbor the first evening of the meeting he found every seat occupied and the people waiting in readiness to hear the message which he had to deliver to them. His subject was, "The Love of God," and he held the audience spellbound as he addressed them for one hour on this timely subject. No man had ever come into the community with such a message. He spoke as one thoroughly acquainted with the God of whose love he was speaking to them that evening. His first message was a good advertisement for the meeting, and each evening found the arbor full of attentive listeners.

The meeting had been in progress a few nights and Preacher Brown came to the Crossing to fill his regular appointment there, but found so few present he felt it almost an

insult for them to think he should speak to so small a crowd. So on the suggestion of Mr. Sawyer they all decided to attend the meeting at the arbor.

The evangelist spoke on "The Purpose of the Atonement." As he advanced in the message Preacher Brown saw the props crumbling under his sin-you-must religion, for the evangelist presented his argument that the atonement put an end to sin in such logical order, backed by the Scripture, that none could gainsay it. Brown left the meeting at its close raving like a madman. He could well see what such preaching would mean for him and his followers in that community should it continue, so he was loud in his protestations against the preacher, warning all his followers not to attend, stating that such a man ought to be egged out of the country.

Old Aunt Sally Teeters lived near the Holmiers and attended the meetings. She was noted for her gossiping, trouble making, and contention in the community, and while no one had confidence in her she was a great shouter. She tried to attend every meeting held within access of the Steele's Crossing neighborhood and never failed to shout every opportunity she had. She was a follower of Preacher Brown and he spent the night at her home after his visit to the arbor. She too, had been greatly stirred by the evangelist's message, for her life was far from the life that had been held up by him. If the atonement meant what he had stated from the pulpit it had failed to serve its purpose in her life. She was greatly stirred and Preacher Brown's words did not miss their mark with her. So a plot was formed to be carried out the next evening.

The evangelist came to the meeting on Monday evening and sat in deep meditation while the crowd began gathering.

There were old men, young men, old women, young women, boys, girls and small children, each finding himself a place to his own satisfaction in the arbor. The older ones came near the front while the younger ones sat nearer to the rear and the sides of the arbor. The time approached for services to begin. Alfred opened the service by singing that old hymn, "Blessed Assurance." At the close of the last stanza of the hymn Aunt Sally Teeters was seen coming down the aisle looking for

a seat. As every seat was already taken a man who was sitting near the front arose and, motioning to her led her to his seat. This placed her near the pulpit and also near a post in the arbor. Preacher Brown was also there standing at the edge of the crowd leaning against a post. These two seemed very restless and would start at the least sound, looking first one way and then another as if in state of expectancy. The song service ended. Prayer was offered. The evangelist arose to deliver the message for the evening. He had been in the pulpit but a few moments when—"Whiz"—something passed by his right shoulder, hitting the canvas back of him and falling to the ground. Again something passed to his left, and then something struck the box behind which he was standing, and the odor that spread over the arbor conveyed the knowledge of what the missiles were.

The evangelist sensed the situation and hid behind the box while another and another passed over his head and others were burst on the box before him. Two struck the pole where Aunt Sally Teeters was sitting and she left the meeting very much spattered and carrying with her the odor of overripe eggs. Before men could get to the front of the arbor the assailants of the evangelist had gone.

There was no meeting that night, but the crowd was asked to return the next night and the meeting would be resumed as usual. Not one egg had struck the evangelist, but all trace of the broken ones must be removed before the meeting could be continued. This was done the next day. Those who attended the following evening saw three men wearing a star on the lapel of their coat, who patrolled the grounds to keep order the remainder of the entire meeting and, needless to say, there was no more disturbance.

The meeting continued, but Aunt Sally Teeters was not in attendance any more. The last week of the meeting a young man came forward to the altar for prayer and there made a confession that he had been urged to join in with the number of other boys to egg the preacher out of the country. He furthermore stated that Preacher Brown had formed the band and Aunt Sally Teeters had furnished them the eggs. After this confession had been made God spoke peace to this young man's



soul and he walked up and down the aisle of that old arbor shouting and praising God. When this news was spread over the community Preacher Brown took his departure and never returned.

The meeting closed but the effect of the meeting is still felt in that local community, for barriers were broken down and God's children came together as they had been before the coming of Preacher Jones. Differences of opinion, creeds and pet ideas were never agitated, but all came together as one family and worshiped the Lord. So strong were the ties between them and so great the fellowship that strangers who came into their midst would say, "Here is a people who have love one to the other." Thus they continued and many souls were convinced that Christ had truly come and was reigning in the hearts of those humble people in the Steele's Crossing community. By this sign of love they proved themselves real disciples of the Lord.

## CHAPTER 18

### CONCLUSION

Twenty years have passed since Joe Holmier settled in the Steele's Crossing neighborhood and many changes have come. The old saloon building which was used by Preacher Brown and his followers as a place in which to worship no longer stands at the crossing, for when he left the community his followers soon disbanded and the building was sold to a farmer in the community. The farmer used it for a few years as a storage room for his baled hay and to house some of his farming implements. Later he tore it down and erected a large hay barn in its place.

The post office is no longer connected with the store, as daily the deliveryman from Newton passes by to deposit mail in the numerous boxes along the route. The old school house has been torn away and a new brick building erected in its place. The community house is no longer standing, but on its site is a good church building bearing the engraving on a stone slab over the door, "CHURCH OF GOD, THE PILLAR AND GROUND OF THE TRUTH." As one enters through the doorway the following words greet the eye, which are to the right of the platform. "ENTER INTO HIS GATES WITH THANKSGIVING, AND INTO HIS COURTS WITH PRAISE: BE THANKFUL UNTO HIM, AND BLESS HIS NAME." Directly back of the platform are the words. "HOLINESS BECOMETH THINE HOUSE, O LORD, FOREVER." To the left one can read, "BEHOLD, HOW GOOD AND HOW PLEASANT IT IS FOR BRETHREN TO DWELL TOGETHER IN UNITY."

In this building the people of Steele's Crossing community congregate each Lord's day and the walls of the building resound with the praises of God as these humble people sing unto him from hearts made free from sin. Here they worship as one, held together by the bonds of the Holy Spirit.

Alfred and his good wife, Tillie, no longer live near Joe and Susie, as Alfred has been pastoring a congregation in one of the Western States for some years. Bill Myers and his companion have both been called to their eternal reward. Preacher Brumbaugh and Mr. Sawyer have both passed away. Aunt

Sally Teeters still remains; but she must be led about as she is blind. No change has been made in her spiritual condition and she is still a fighter of holiness.

June came, and Joe and Alfred met again on the great campground of the annual international camp meeting. They praised the Lord together as they recalled incidents of former days. At last Alfred said, "Oh, I want to tell you something. Do you remember that Preacher Reed who held a meeting at the crossing?"

"Yes," replied Joe. "He was the first man I ever heard mention anything about sanctification. But what about him?"

"Something good," said Alfred; "I had him with me in a meeting a few weeks ago and he is here at this camp meeting. He, too, is doing all he can to get God's people together and break down the barriers that are between them. He is a powerful preacher and a firm believer in unity. There he comes now." At this he motioned to the man whom he had pointed out to be Evangelist Reed, and he joined the two men. After the usual greeting Joe said, "Alfred has been telling me you were with him in a meeting. You know I love this man because he showed me by his life that there is something more in the service of God than just to belong to some church."

Here Alfred put his hand on Joe's shoulder, and said, "Yes, and I love this man, because he showed me the great church of God and that we are all one together in it."

"It is truly wonderful," said Evangelist Reed. "Truly wonderful to be together in the one great body of Christ with no barriers between us. Oh, how I thank God for the bond of fellowship, through the Holy Spirit, that binds us together and makes us one in Christ Jesus."

"Yes, it is wonderful," replied Joe. "But the most wonderful thing to me is to know it is all so clearly set forth in the Word of God and all may be able to see it if they will only take His Word as **the man of their counsel** and walk in the light which it gives."

The three turned and walked toward the auditorium as the great congregation began to sing:

“Back to the blessed old Bible,  
Back to the city of God;  
Back to the oneness of Heaven,  
Back where the faithful have trod.  
Back from the land of confusion,  
Passing the wrecks and the creeds;  
Back to the light of the morning,  
Jesus, our captain, leads.”

They reached the auditorium, and stepping inside the door joined in the chorus with the light of glory on their faces:

“Back to the blessed old Bible,  
Back to the light of its word;  
Be on our banners forever,  
Holiness unto the Lord.”

THE END







