



“You will know them by their fruits.” Mt. 7:16

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Last Sunday afternoon I climbed the mountain that stands like a silent guard over the valley in which I spent most of my childhood.

The little Walnut tree is still standing on the summit where God first definitely spoke to my heart. Tears coursed down my face as wife and I joined hands and fell on our knees before the Lord who, on this spot, had called me to preach when I was a lad nine years of age.

As we arose from our knees and viewed the valley at our feet, I relived that beautiful July afternoon of many years ago.

I was a barefoot boy in overalls going across the mountains to bring home the cows. In my pocket I carried a copy of “God’s Revivalist,” the only religious paper in our home for three decades.

The little saddle mare I was riding was tired from the long climb, and welcomed a rest upon arrival at the mountain top.

It was then that I viewed green fields of growing crops, winding streams, short horn cattle and a white flock of sheep in the fields and on the hills around me. My childish heart was filled with ancestral pride and secretly (and I think I said it out loud) I hoped I would some day be a lawyer like my Daddy and have farms like his.

It was a peaceful afternoon. The birds fluttered in the near-by woods. The air was stirring in a cool, refreshing breeze. Old Topsy (the little black saddle mare) lazily ate the tender grass, and the world seemed at peace. Lazy clouds were here and there in the blue sky. East Fork and Williams Creek joined a little way from me toward the west and both looked like silvery ribbons entwined to make a giant bow for a verdant corsage.

Topsy was still panting, so I took the “Revivalist” and began to read and look at the pictures. I had seen Mother read it and cry. I had watched her save dimes to fill coin cards for the Bible School’s Annual Thanksgiving Dinner. I had seen her disregard other pieces of mail and hungrily feast upon the contents of the priceless little paper.

Daddy and the work hands on the farm usually referred to the “Revivalist” as “Mother’s paper,” (Would to God Daddy and the work hands, too, had heeded the truth “Mother’s paper” contained.)

I became curious. I would see Mother cry. Then she would laugh and cry at the same time. I never knew what she was going to do, for while I secretly watched her rejoice, I would say “I don’t understand Mother sometimes,” but I know she knows the answer to my question. Then I would hear her say, “Well, bless the Lord!” and it had a ring to it that made my heart beat until it seemed it was coming up into my throat.

Daddy, a backslidden evangelist of more than twenty years, opposed any religious progress in our home. He criticized, and freely said slurring things about holiness and holiness people, but, “Mother’s little paper” had holiness all over it and it made her so happy, and its messages helped to lighten her heavy load. So as soon as I was old enough to detect the attitude of Daddy and the spirituality of my Mother, I came to the conclusion that holiness couldn’t be too bad; after all, Daddy fussed and Mother

shouted. Daddy raved and Mother prayed. Daddy worried and Mother trusted.

So, anybody with an ounce of judgment and reason, and sense enough to come in out of the rain could see one had religion and the other didn't.

Now, I was too young and immature to understand why Daddy felt so about religion. I couldn't even have told you what a backslider is. But I wanted to have a good look at Mother's Little Paper myself. I wondered if I'd cry like Mother when I read it. I was sure I wouldn't take Daddy's attitude, so I stuffed it into my hip pocket to read when I got away from everybody. So if I cried and shouted and had a spell like Mother did on wash-day (The Revivalist came on Monday, usually) then no one would hear me. (That even sounds like a lot of grown-ups).

I sat there looking at the pictures and reading the children's page and finally came to the Missionary Section. There was a great crowd of children and native workers pictured together and there were crude buildings in the background. I thought they had terribly funny clothes, and then I figured that was the way they were used to dressing.

I began reading. Somehow, I forgot the farm, forgot the sheep, the cattle and silvery trees. I forgot the whole world except Africa. Before I knew hardly what was happening tears began to flow for it was dawning upon my mind and soul that there were millions upon millions of people who had little or no clothing, no home, no food and most tragic of all – No Jesus! A little child was pictured with outstretched hands saying, "Won't you help us?" I thought – and spoke out loud, "Millions who have never heard the name of Jesus!" My heart was aching! I cried harder than ever, and there on that mountain top in eastern Kentucky, that afternoon God broke my heart for a lost and dying world.

The Power of God seized me. I staggered and fell to my knees with one arm around that little Walnut tree and the other raised toward the sky I promised God if He would let me live I would tell the world of Jesus!

I rode down the hill, preaching as I went. Startled cattle looked at me and started up the trail home. I imagined I was preaching to thousands. I prayed and sang until I was so weak I could hardly stay upon my horse. By the time I reached home, tears and dust had made my face and hands a mess, but within my heart I had a secret that was more precious to me than all the wealth of Boyd County, Kentucky.

I sang as I did the chores. I lay awake at night thinking about my strange and unusual experience over in the cow-pasture. For several days I rejoiced as I rode over that mountain for the cattle at milking time. It became a hallowed spot and I spent many a happy hour getting acquainted with the Lord as we talked together about the work I would do when I grew up to be a man.

For five long years I shared my secret with no one. It would have been easier for me had I confided in Mother – but somehow I didn't want Daddy to know about it.

One day, after many things had happened to alter the courses of the lives of our entire family, and after our home had burned and Daddy's health was gone and our financial status reduced to zero, I heard of a revival meeting being conducted in Ashland, Kentucky. Our neighbors, Brother and Sister Easton, asked me if I would like to attend, and offered me transportation in their family car.

For a few days I thought very little about the invitation. Then Mother borrowed a book from them entitled, "My Trip to the Holy Land," by Rev. A. L. Baldrige. I saw Mother shout when she read it. Then she cried. Well, I began to remember what had happened five years before when I had seen her read "her paper" and what had happened to me when I read it.

But curiosity finally conquered me and I set out for the hills with the borrowed book. When I was out of sight I opened it and began to read. That book pierced my tender heart. I began to cry. (I have always been a "cry-baby" -- but I will never pray for God to take away my tears). I would read and then walk.

Then I would sit down again. My heart was so hungry. I was yearning for peace within. I knew I must find God if I were ever to find rest.

I finished the few chores that evening and while Mother was in the kitchen cooking supper I walked in and asked if I might go to Church at the revival, and gave her the details. She looked at me and I shall never forget that sweet look that she gave me and told me I could go. A moment later her hands were above her head and she was praising God and saying, "Glory to God! At last my family is getting concerned about spiritual things." Her shouting didn't ease a bit of my load. I believe it made it heavier. Oh! I was miserable. I ate very little. I had my mind made up as I walked down that old country road to the neighbor's house, I knew that that night the quest of my soul would be fulfilled. I prayed as I walked, "Oh, God, if there is the least bit of rebellion in my heart when the invitation is given tonight, crush it down. I must be saved or I will die." Thank God for such Holy Ghost conviction! No begging and pulling is necessary when the Holy Ghost deals in this manner!

If I remember correctly this was the second revival service I had ever attended. I wasn't sure what they would do, but when Brother Elbert Marshall had preached he stepped out and stretched his hands toward me. I spoke to a neighbor boy and said, "Elmer, let's go." He shook his head. I pushed into the aisle saying as I went, "Then, let me out, I must get to God."

I fell at the altar weeping and praying. In a few minutes the load of sin was gone and I felt light and free! I cried for joy. The saints shouted. We sang and testified. I was new in this kind of a crowd – but I felt perfectly at home, and I have never felt strangely or cramped with God's people from that day until now. In spite of failures, short-comings and inconsistencies I still believe the Church people to be the best class on earth. No friendship or fellowship is so sweet as that which is experienced among those who have been redeemed from sin and are walking in the light. I John 1:7.

The worldly crowd did not seek my eternal good, but I have found friends in the Christian circle that have held me up in prayer and boosted me onward to richer realms of grace and Love Divine. Thank God for the "tie that binds our hearts in Christian love" and [for] the "fellowship of kindred minds [that] is like to that above." Thank God for my friends. I treasure them all.

The fall and winter of 1937-38 I attended church with the Eastons at the Christian Baptist Church in Westwood. This is the church where I was converted. There were many times I was discouraged, but always someone of those dear people said something to help me hold on. I shall never forget one Sunday morning when my spirits were low and the old devil was fighting me fiercely, the pastor, Brother Sam Creech, walked up to me and slipped his big, old, fatherly arm around me and said, "Sammy, I'm claiming you for a preacher. I'm counting on you to make it through and be a soul-winner." He will never know what those words meant to me. I went home that day and found a secret place of prayer in the hills and told God folks were counting on me to be a preacher, and if He still wanted me to preach -to lift my load and defeat the enemy of my soul.

No sooner had I asked Him than the load was gone. Blessed peace and joy flooded my soul and a major battle was won within my heart.

The next day after I was saved I walked into my father's law office in Ashland, Kentucky. I closed the door behind me and sat down facing Daddy. I opened the conversation by saying, "Daddy, I have something to tell you."

"What is it son," he asked.

"Daddy, God saved me last night," I said quickly.

"What's that?" he asked again, leaning across the desk toward me. Again, looking right up into his eyes I testified that on the night before the Lord had come into my heart.

He listened. Then looking up, quickly spoke again, "That's fine, son. We surely do need Christian lawyers, and you know you are going to be Daddy's law partner some day."

My head dropped. My father's strong personality and persistence of desire temporarily held me back from telling of my call to preach. But suddenly, I felt the fire of God burning in my soul. I remembered that afternoon when I was nine years old. I remembered my promise to God. I remembered the picture of the heathen in the Revivalist. It seemed I could hear the cries of lost souls perishing with few who care.

I lifted my head. I breathed a prayer, and with my shoulders back I faced one of the hardest tests of my Christian experience. Daddy was marking on a paper. When I lifted my head our eyes met. I spoke. God flooded my soul and tears streamed down my face as I said, "Daddy, I can't be a lawyer. God has called me to preach."

For a moment Father was still. Then his eyes and mouth narrowed and his countenance was determined. Then with a touch of anger he said, "Son, you have been listening to your Mother and Aunt 'Lizzie.' They have been influenced with that Holiness crowd, and furthermore, I can't let you be a Holiness preacher."

"Daddy," I said, "when I was nine years old God called me to preach, and you are the first person I have ever told."

He tried to talk me out of it. But blessed be the name of the Lord! When God tells you something, not even the dearest one on earth can make you doubt it. Glory to God! I have never doubted it! I will never doubt it! He is even blessing me now as I re-live that hour of testing when with God I stood firmly against the temptations of the devil and desires of my Father. It pays to serve Jesus! It pays all the way! The hour of trial had come and passed and God had given full assurance that He would help me, and He kept His blessed promise!

When it came to the choice of Daddy or Jesus, God gave me grace to say, "Take the whole world, but give me Jesus."

Eight months later Daddy was on his death-bed. He told the preacher who visited him that God had forgiven him and he was ready to meet God. He showed evidences of genuine repentance and would have made many things right with God and his family had he lived a little longer. But God took him around 3:00 A. M., May 17, 1938.

The news shocked me. My young heart was heavy. My Daddy was gone from me at an age when a boy so badly needs a Father's help. But God knows best.

We laid him to rest in the little cemetery in Grayson, Kentucky, on May 19, 1938. Daddy had made considerable money in his law practice, but lost it all in the depression. His real estate was under heavy mortgage. Many people who owed father money took advantage of his death and his collectable notes and securities were misplaced. Soon the little house that my sister built in her second year as a school teacher of a country school, was the only home we knew. God bless my sacrificial sister who assumed the heavy responsibility of supporting the family.

The farm was about two-thirds paid for, but the original owner foreclosed and we were homeless and penniless. Not one penny did we ever get back for the thousands of dollars paid into it. It seemed so unjust, and terribly unChristian, but Mother held onto the promise, "I have never seen the righteous forsaken nor his seed begging bread."

Mother instilled in us all the spirit of forgiveness toward all men.

We hold no ill-feelings, no grudges, nothing to be made right on death-beds. Nothing is there to hinder

our prayers! Glory to God that's worth more than a million dollars! The judgment is coming and I'm prepared to meet my God!

Two more years passed by and Satan fought more bitterly for my soul. Mother fasted and prayed. At last, in answer to prayer the way was made by my Aunt Elizabeth, my Mother's only sister, who gave me money to pay half my tuition for one semester at a Holiness School.

I entered school with surplus cash amounting to 5 cents above my registration fee.

My soul cried out to God for Christian fellowship. I yearned for a knowledge of His Word. This new environment was what I needed. My work in the school was to scrub pots and pans and the floors of the kitchen. It was a humble task, but it was helping crucify the carnal pride that had long been one of my chief enemies.

By the time the first semester was over I was in charge of fifty-some students who were working under my supervision in the kitchen and dining room.

I started every day with prayer and song, and many are the victories that were won among the students who came to the kitchen to work and whose hearts were hungry for God.

But, I had not been sanctified. I don't remember hearing a clear-cut message on second blessing holiness prior to the time I mention – 1940-41.

Camp meeting time came. I knew I was saved. I had had a struggle – doubts, fears, uncertainty, explosions of temper, pride and all the regular wilderness woes of the regenerated soul. I had been up and down. I wondered if I would ever become established. My soul was hungry for something. The first night of camp meeting came; Bona Fleming arose and preached. *That man pictured my need. He knocked me down and rolled me over. I was in agony. I prayed for him to stop preaching. I wanted to go to that altar. He finished and there was a surging forward of convicted humanity. Such weeping! Such conviction! Such praying! I was among them, dying out to self and sin. I had heard the glorious news that God could meet my need! I didn't have to be encouraged to pray. Brother, I meant business!*

At about ten minutes past ten o'clock, when despair was deep and hope was black, I made a final struggle toward Calvary and fell prostrate at the blessed feet of Jesus! Heaven opened! The Holy Ghost came! God's love flooded my soul with the light of the world chasing all darkness from every corner of my soul. I felt the cleansing wave!

Like an electric current the power of the Holy Ghost and Fire swept through every fiber of my being!

The work was done! I wouldn't have given an angel a nickel to come from Glory and tell me I was sanctified! I knew it and I believe three worlds witnessed it. I felt so clean. I was washed in the Blood!

No more uncertainty! Blessed assurance! No more backsliding. I am now anchored in Love Divine, for the Comforter abides with me!

Today as I sit here aboard the Queen Elizabeth, the world's largest ocean liner, and we are plowing the waters of the middle Atlantic, I thank God the experience I received that night is not dimmed, but has grown brighter all the way.

The Comforter is more precious now than He has ever been before.

Fade, fade each earthly joy, Jesus is mine. He satisfies every longing of my soul and the peace that is mine is akin to Heaven. Well, Glory be to God and His Son, unto whom be praise and honor, world without end!

Source: "I Met Jesus" by Samuel F. (Sammy) Sparks

[the Enter His Rest website](#)