

STRANGE EXPERIENCES OF THE DOCTOR

by

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CHAPTER SEVENTEEN

MAE FOUND CHRIST IN THE CHERRY TREE

This story will be found to be of unusual interest because it is such a typical case. The friend who is telling the story of her own conversion has unconsciously given to us the revelation of the working of a hungry heart from childhood until that memorable day when she met the Saviour in the cherry tree.

Let me ask the reader to watch carefully the progress and the steps taken by this lovely friend as she relates the circumstances that finally led her to the Lord Jesus. She will tell the story in her own language.

“Thinking back over the past years of my life, so many of them just wasted years, I recall the many times when I wanted to find God and to know Him. Mother died when I was just about one-and-a-half years old, and father also died when I was about five. There were five other girls, and I was the youngest of the six. My girlhood days were spent in the hills known as the Ozarks. The old home stood on one of these hills, with an old well some distance from the house, where I met father, and I with my two older sisters would see who could be the first in order to ride closest to the horses’ head so that we might hold the reins and guide them to the barn.

“I remember also a large apple tree that stood in the garden with a swing hanging from one limb. Many happy hours were spent there with my sister just older than I. We would take turns swinging, and had always to be very sure that we ‘let the cat die’ before getting out of the swing.

“It was here that I first heard the name of ‘God.’ Dora, or ‘Doe’ as we called her for short, would catch me giving an extra push to the swing to make it last longer for the ‘cat to die.’ I would try to hide it from her, and then she would say that if I told a story God would not love me. For a long time I would puzzle over the word ‘die’ and ‘God’ for I did not know who He was nor where He was. Doe said He was in heaven, and that heaven was up in the sky, but that was all I knew.

“About a quarter of a mile back of the home were some huge flat rocks, where I would often go with my sister, after having been punished by an older sister for disobedience. There we would lie on our backs for hours and watch the clouds, hoping to catch a glimpse of God.

“We always did this when we felt we had been mistreated. Often Doe would say to me, ‘If mother were here, they would not do so and so’; then she would tell me that mother had gone to be with God. That, too, was a mystery to me, for I was only one and one-half years old when mother died.

“After the death of my father, we girls were scattered; no two of us remained in the same town together. It was my lot to be taken by a man and wife who had no children, and they kept me for more than three years. During my stay with them, they sometimes took me to church, but the only thing I can remember about it is that I had to keep still. I sought various excuses to keep from going, because there was nothing there to attract me. During this period of three years I did find myself at times trying to find God. I was often told that if I were bad, and did not obey God, the devil would get me. I was very much afraid of him, and of course, wanted to know what he looked like. I had strange ideas about his appearance.

“I do remember that somebody told me that good girls went to heaven when they died, and lived with God. That of course, was my goal. I set out to go to be with God, and tried in every way that a little child of six or seven could try, to be good, but oh, the many mistakes and disappointments I experienced. In the front yard were two beautiful Catalpa trees, and I loved to park up in the branches of one of these, with my coat pockets full of cookies, and out of reach of the dog. I hoped that up there I would get a sight of God.

“On one Sunday, I was told to be extra good, and to think about God. I did not know how to think about Him, and so decided to get my needle and thread and sew dolls’ clothes. To my amazement and horror, I was told I had done an awful thing by sewing on Sunday, and that I had made God’s heart to bleed. Of course, the day was spoiled for me, and I cried a great deal. Finally I was told that it would be all right with God if I never did it again. This impressed me so deeply that I had grown up to be quite a lady in my teens before I ever dared to try it again.

“After three years, certain changes took place which caused me to go to live with another family, who took quite an interest in me, and gave me many privileges which I had not before enjoyed. This was a lovely family. All of them belonged to the church, and attended Sunday school regularly. I was not long in this home, however, when another couple who had no children requested that I be given to them, for they were so interested in ‘this little orphan’ and wanted to raise me for their own. These friends loved me very dearly, but were too busy on Sunday with the farm work to go to Sunday school, or to take me. The family I had just left lived on the adjoining farm, and they agreed to take me.

“During these interesting years I was carefully guarded, was not permitted to go out at night to parties or on buggy rides, and so had to find my pleasures and recreation at the Sunday school and with those who attended there.

“We gathered Sunday morning and interchanged notes secretly, with our minds taken up by everything else except the things of God. Often I never heard a thing the teacher said. He would stand before the class with his Sunday school quarterly in his hand, and most of the class did not know what he was talking about.

“He had no power with us because he did not know the Lord himself. He was an elder in the Church, but has continued even until now without personal meeting with the Saviour.

“At the age of seventeen, I professed to become a Christian, but nothing was clear in my mind. Two weeks of special services had been held, during which many of the boys and girls went up to give their hand to the preacher and join the Church. This gave me a desire to do the same thing, and also a desire to be baptized in order to be a full-fledged member. I was baptized, and shortly afterwards was given a class of twelve girls about twelve years of age, to teach. I did not know the Saviour myself, and of course, could not lead any of the class to Christ.

“In the course of a few short years I decided to study and train to become a nurse. Having made the decision, arrangements were completed for me to go to a nearby city and enter a hospital for the special training. The Christian friend with whom I had been staying, impressed on my mind not to forget to pray. My prayer life did continue for a short time, but those who were about me made no pretence to pray themselves, and would often make caustic remarks about my praying when I would kneel at night before retiring. This led me to say my prayers in bed; which, of course, was an utter failure, for I was soon asleep, and before very long I quit praying altogether. My ceasing to pray was soon followed by learning to dance and to play cards. I had always been forbidden to do so, but no one ever told me why. I could see no reason for refraining from the pleasures which others enjoyed, and so I was soon deeply engrossed in these.

“At twenty-one years of age I was married. My husband and I joined two card clubs and a dancing club. Many hours were spent together in this way. We would spend our Sunday morning in the park playing tennis, and then have our lunch together. On one of these occasions we began to discuss the value of the Sunday school and the Church, and decided that we would begin to attend. We did go for three Sundays; and on the third Sunday the announcement was made that the class would have a dinner to raise money for the church. The entire morning was consumed discussing the price, the menu, and whether it would be formal or informal. We had come to hear the Word of God, and were so disgusted by this performance that we decided to attend no longer.

“A short time after leaving the church, I went to another city to visit my sister. While there I was taken quite ill, and was rushed to the hospital to undergo a very serious operation. For ten days my life hung in the balance, and I suffered excruciating pain. God spared my life, and how thankful I am to Him that He did, for I was unsaved, and would have been lost if I had died. After several months I came back to my home and my husband, and we went on our worldly way with little or no thought of the Lord. We seemed to get deeper and deeper into the things of the world than ever before. Once in a while we went to a service, and often it seemed to me that the preacher was talking to me.

“Five years passed, and a precious little bright-eyed baby boy came to share our home. He later proved to be the instrument that the Lord Jesus used to bring me to realize my need, and to know that loving Saviour Who shed His precious blood for my sins and made a way for me to enter Heaven. The card parties and the dances were dropped, for I became occupied with my baby and the duties of the home.

“After about two-and-a half years I felt the need of the fellowship of the Church, and so we began to attend again, and took the little one to the Cradle Roll Department. I soon became acquainted with the various groups, enjoyed the fellowship of the class, and shared the activities of the church. I am sure that neither my husband nor I considered whether or not our names were written in Heaven in the Lamb’s Book of Life. We simply decided, when the minister gave the invitation, that we would unite with the church. Our names and addresses were taken, and we were handed an envelope in which we were asked to put our contribution each Sunday.

“My teacher here was a very godly Christian woman who loved the Lord, and taught that the only way of salvation is through the Lord Jesus Christ and His work on the cross. Most of the class carried their Bibles, and I always took mine. I mention this to show how it is possible to have the Word of God with you constantly, listen to it preached, have all the earmarks of a Christian, and yet remain a lost sinner.

“A few months after becoming members of this church, I was again taken ill and rushed to the hospital for an emergency operation. When the pastor called and asked me if everything was all right, I said, ‘Yes, as far as I know.’ I knew when I said it that I was telling a deliberate falsehood, but because I was a member of his church, I did not have the nerve to express just how I felt, and to tell him of my trouble of soul and heart. I prayed much about the operation, for it was to be a very serious one, and I asked the Lord to spare my life. I made Him many promises which I forgot after He graciously healed me, and I was out again in the world.

“Just five months after I left the hospital, my precious darling baby was taken to that same hospital and was at death’s door. I promised the Lord then that if He would give me back the darling of my heart, I would settle the matter once for all, and would live for Him. The Lord heard again and answered; the little one recovered as I had prayed. Something kept saying to me, ‘There is something you are going to have to settle,’ but I went on in a state of confusion, trying to find out something without knowing what it was I needed. It seemed that I had to live so much better than I had ever done in order to know that I would be saved if I should die. My heart kept reaching out for something to satisfy that indescribable longing.

“My lovely little boy was again taken very, very sick, and during a terrific thunderstorm, the Lord saw fit to send His death angel and take my little one to Himself. It seemed to me I had never witnessed such terrific peals of thunder. I noticed that my baby was paying little or no attention to the storm, but seemed to be just sleeping peacefully. The nurse suggested that while he was sleeping I should take a little rest in the next room. I did so, but had just lain down when I heard the little one cough slightly. I rose quickly and ran to his bedside, only to see the life’s blood pouring from his nose and mouth, and the little brown eyes closed in death.

“I seemed to lose my sense of reasoning, and was only conscious of God. I knew that I was in His presence and that He Himself was speaking to me. The thunder and the lightning grew more and more severe, and it seemed as though all the heavens were falling. I wanted to get away somewhere and talk to someone, but did not know how or what to say. My cries brought a neighbor, who in turn called the pastor of the church. When he arrived he tried to comfort me, but nothing that he said helped me. I wanted to talk to God, but words failed to come, and I could not find God. I felt that I wanted to die too. Nothing in the world seemed to matter.

“I do remember that the pastor said that this sorrow would either make me one of the sweetest women that everyone would love, or else one of the vilest; he hoped it would be the former.

“Three weeks after this sorrow the cherries ripened, and I drove to the country to a relative who lived on a farm, to pick cherries. It was not so much that I wanted the cherries, but rather because I could find no peace. I seemed to want to spend time out in the open, looking at the things in nature, and trying to find out if God actually was real. I could not understand the Bible, nor did I believe what I did understand.

“It was while picking cherries that day that the Holy Spirit spoke to me, and brought the Word of God to my mind and heart. Four of us were in a tree picking when rain began to fall. At about twelve o'clock the other three went in the house for their lunch, but I had no appetite and no desire to eat. After they were gone I was sitting there meditating, thinking of God, wondering how I could find peace, when suddenly the words, ‘**The blood of Jesus Christ, God’s Son, cleanseth from all sin,**’ came to my mind. The Lord also reminded me that Jesus had shed His blood for me. Then I remembered John 14:1, ‘**Let not your heart be troubled: ye believe in God, believe also in Me.**’ I could not quote it correctly; neither did I know where it was found in the Bible, but the Spirit of God knew just what to bring to my remembrance. I could recall that over and over again the teacher had used these very verses as she taught the class. It was then and there that the light of the glorious Gospel of Christ began to shine in my heart, and I was brought face to face with my lost condition. Could it be that Christ really died for my sins? Did He really shed His blood for me? Has He really gone to prepare a place for me? Is He coming back again for me? I had been so blind and rebellious. I had been too proud to be honest with myself and to confess that I was lost.

“I sat on one of the limbs of the tree with my back against the trunk and my feet braced against another limb. There I asked myself over and over again, ‘Did Christ do all this for me? Did He find it necessary to take from me the dearest and most precious possession I had in all the world in order that I might be saved? Did He have to make my little baby boy shed his blood before me there in that storm to make me know and see that the Lord Jesus shed HIS blood for me?’ Oh the agony of it all. When this dawned upon my mind, I knew then that God had taken from me that which I had called my own, in order to bring me to Himself.

“Right there in the cherry tree I believed God and trusted the Lord Jesus Christ. All the way home I seemed in a daze, and the Holy Spirit kept driving home to my heart the truth He had first brought to my mind. A sweet peace and a sense of His nearness came over me, and I felt strangely quiet. Now it is my great desire to know the Word of God, to be able to teach others, and to bring others to the Saviour. May the Lord graciously reveal Himself to every unsaved friend who may read this story.”

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