

There Shall Be Showers of Blessing

165

A HOT, STIFLING AUGUST NIGHT DURING THE EISENHOWER ERA. No cooling breeze stirs past the open, white collars of the men, nor past the full skirts of the women. The old stained-glass windows are swung wide to the cloying, oppressive humidity. Two oscillating fans hum on either side of the empty choir loft. Cardboard funeral-home fans wave like fluttering cottonwood leaves across the rows of wooden pews.

A young boy sits between his parents thinking about places he'd rather be. Instead of sitting in an uncomfortable church pew, sweating in his white shirt, black slacks and dress shoes, he could be outside playing with his neighborhood friends. He could be up in his tree house, up near the higher breeze, imagining himself the lookout on a pirate ship. He could be nestled comfortably in his bedroom or cooler basement, reading of heroes, and adventures, and wild beasts in Africa. But here he sits with his mom and dad, dog-eared hymnal in hand, singing the old songs with the rest of the congregation. Later the pastor will preach a Bible study, or perhaps there will be a visiting missionary showing his

grainy, 16mm film about a lost tribe of South America.

Many decades later the young boy is now a man flirting with old age. From time to time, but rarely now, he again hears the familiar strains of those old, Sunday night hymns—

"Love Lifted Me"

"Sunshine in My Soul"

"I Love to Tell the Story"

"Faith is the Victory!"

"When the Roll is Called Up Yonder"

—and immediately he is back in that un-

refrigerated church sanctuary on a hot August night. He can once again smell the old wood of the church, the fragrance of perspiration doused with perfume or aftershave. He can hear the electric buzz of the metal fans, the mellow, organic sound of the old piano, and the voices united in common bond.

And even as he is stirred by the music of those nostalgic echoes, he realizes that within his veins courses the very blood-flow of faith. It is *part* of him. It will never cease being a part of him.

For I am mindful of the sincere faith within you,
which first dwelt in your grandmother Lois and
your mother Eunice, and I am sure that it is in you
as well.

2 Timothy 1:5

Some might call what he feels the “Spirit.” Some might call it the “bond of peace.” Others more pragmatic might refer to it as the “fellowship of the saints,” or his “Christian heritage.”

Whatever it is called, he did not acquire it by osmosis. Though its roots extend back to his mewling days in a basket set between his mom and dad on the church pew shortly after his birth, it was not by inheritance from them that he gained his part in the church. But it *was* his faithful mom and dad that kept him in the place where the things of God would become natural and comfortable to him.

He would, over the years of his childhood and youth, inhale the abiding fragrance of old, substantial faith, of serious devotion to God, of the teachings and way of Christ. He would attend Sunday School, and stand on rickety risers to sing in the children’s choirs at Christmas. He would listen to the sermons, the choir anthems, and absorb the earnest lives of those his senior.

And after that day so long ago when he walked the aisle during the Invitation hymn, his

parents still kept him there, in the bosom of the church, listening to the well-worn wisdom of his elders, and singing the old hymns that even now connect him to that time and place.



Over those early years there were sermons and Sunday School lessons. There were times his dad hauled him out to the front steps to warm his bottom for misbehaving, and times he nestled pleasantly against the old smells of his dad’s suit coat. He doesn’t remember the words of the sermons he heard while growing up, but one day the pastor said something that triggered a response in his heart. He stepped out of the safety of those old wooden pews, onto the worn, patterned carpeting of the aisle. And he met the pastor down below the first step of the platform and took his hand.

One small piece at a time, the gospel of Jesus had been steadily poured into his heart, so that at the tender age of seven, he accepted Christ as his Savior.



All these influences came together to fashion a life—a *new* life—in Christ. In that holy, reverent setting of dark-stained wood and old smells, the pastor brought together in an orderly fashion all the pieces of evidence that, when in place, smoothed the way for the supernatural touch of the Holy Spirit.

Without the groundwork laid by family and friends, teachers and pastor, however, that Spirit call may have been rejected, or misunderstood. But because of the solid groundwork laid, that gentle Spirit needed only the briefest moment to nudge the boy into the Savior’s arms.



*Sing them over again to me, wonderful words of Life.
Let me more of their beauty see, wonderful words of Life.
Words of life and beauty, teach me faith and duty:
Beautiful words, wonderful words, wonderful words of Life.*

Philip P. Bliss



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