

# THE FAITHFULNESS OF GOD

Autobiography By W. M. Tidwell 1946

## FOREWORD

It is with reluctance that I give this testimony lest I seem egotistical, however, the Lord is my Judge. I sincerely feel that I am the most unworthy of all. I can certainly share the feeling of Paul when he said, "Lest that by any means, when I have preached to others, I myself should be a castaway." I know some say that Paul was only fearful that he lose his crown or reward, but I also know this is a false interpretation. He did not say his crown or reward but he said, "myself." Let any unprejudiced mind decide what it means to become a "castaway." Many of my friends have insisted that I write a word along the thought of this booklet. I have hesitated and refused. However, recently, the impression, and I trust it is from the Lord, has grown into a conviction. This week, July 18, 1945, during a practically sleepless night I had a rather strange experience. I felt so burdened for a lost world and was overwhelmed that I had, personally, done so little. Feeling that my little day would soon be over and wondering and asking the Lord to show me if there were any little thing I could do before going hence that might be used in some little way for His glory, the definite conviction came that I give this testimony to the faithfulness of God.

In order to do this it will be necessary to make some personal references. For this I beg pardon.

I am only seeking, notwithstanding unworthiness and insignificance, to call attention to the goodness and faithfulness of the Lord. All that He has done has been in spite of my shortcomings. To the divine Father, Son, and Holy Ghost be all the glory.

Unworthily but sincerely yours in Him,

## 1. FAITHFULNESS IN JUSTIFICATION AND SANCTIFICATION

I love to think of that wonderful verse in the grand old hymn, "Amazing Grace," which says, "'Twas grace that taught my heart to fear, and grace my fears relieved; how precious did that grace appear the hour I first believed." Here we have the convicting grace of God and then the saving grace that brings relief. "How precious did that grace appear the hour I first believed." Jonah was right when he said, "Salvation is of the Lord." Praise the Lord for preventing grace, the grace that kept us out of hell before we were saved; for convicting grace; for saving grace; and for keeping grace.

"Grace that is boundless and free. Grace that is as fathomless as the sea. Grace enough for you and for me." The old lady, who was very poor and had to stint in everything, saw the ocean for the first time and cried out, "Thank God for one thing there is plenty of!" I praise the Lord for His faithfulness in conviction for salvation. The Holy Spirit began to strive with me at about the age of six. At that time I saw my first death and funeral. "Aunt Tabbie Fulghum," as she was called, died. After hearing the funeral sermon by the old Methodist preacher, and hearing them sing, "O come, angel band, come and around me stand, O bear me away on your snowy wings to my immortal home," and returning home, in the stillness of the evening, I felt strangely moved upon. I had heard that "Aunt Tabbie" had gone to that heavenly world because she was a Christian. I definitely understood that all must die and in order to reach that good land we must be Christians. I got off alone and cried and prayed. From that day, until I was definitely saved, the Holy Spirit was faithful. When I had done wrong I felt afraid and would weep and ask forgiveness.

At the age of nine, at old "Mount View," I attended a genuine old-fashioned revival. The crowds came. They came early. The men went off in the woods in one place to pray; and women, in another.

Such praying! They sang. They prayed, they shouted. They prayed through. Many were saved in these "grove meetings." They came to the church rejoicing, laughing, singing, and shouting; however, some came with heavy

hearts. They were under deep conviction. They wept while the man of God preached. When the “call” was made there was no persuading necessary. They were there on their knees praying. They took it by the job. If they did not get through, then they prayed at home, in the field, and “everywhere” till the victory came.

I would go to the grove meetings. I would sit toward the back of the church and weep. I was rather small for my age. I wanted to go forward, but feared they would think me to be too young. How I longed for someone to invite me. Don't neglect the children. But while I did not go forward, I sat there and wept and prayed. One night toward the close of the service, when I had been deeply convicted, I prayed earnestly to the Lord, and the burden rolled away. I was so happy. I was definitely blessed for days, but again Satan beat me out. He suggested that if I told it, they would think me too young. But I still praise God for that experience, but not confessing, of course, I did not live victoriously; however, I did live under constant conviction and the fear of the Lord. I went a few times to the old-fashioned, country play parties, but was never comfortable. Often while others were having what they called “a good time,” I would slip out in the dark and pray and ask God to forgive me for being there. This condition continued till I was about sixteen. Then I became greatly concerned about my soul. I was not victorious. I was thrown with wicked boys. Temptation began to call. I was alarmed. I was afraid to lie down and go to sleep lest I should wake up in hell.

Finally the burden and conviction became about unbearable and I began, in a new way, to seek the Lord. Well, He is faithful. Deliverance came. No revival was on now, just the faithfulness of the Holy Ghost. I was happy. The fear to go to sleep had gone. One morning, about this time, Mother and I were milking the cows. Mother stopped milking, looked up at me and said, “Son, have you not been saved?” I replied, “Yes, Mother, Jesus has saved me.” Well, a meeting broke out there immediately. Just the cows, Mother, myself and the Lord there; but that was sufficient for a good meeting. The cows did not seem to fully understand, but they knew something out of the ordinary had taken place. The following Sunday I went to church and gave my first public testimony. As I think of this, though it has been a long time ago, the fire seems to break out anew, and I feel like saying, “Praise the Lord for His faithfulness!”

Then the Lord was faithful in leading me into the experience of holiness. I united with the church immediately after being saved. When I was a little past seventeen they made me a steward in the church. I was so happy in the work of the Lord. I loved the people, the church, the work of the Lord, and above all the Lord. I was in school almost continually from the time I was saved until I heard holiness preached. At the age of about twenty I was teaching school. Some friends came along, where I was teaching, preaching holiness as a second, definite work of grace. They were wonderful people. Old-Fashioned Methodists, refined, cultured, and full of the Holy Ghost. I attended regularly, worked at the altar, and helped to pray seekers through. From the time a few years before, when I obtained the victory I was so blessed in the Lord and His service that I scarcely felt any further need.

It was my custom to pray each evening until I was conscious of the presence of the Lord. Usually this was up in the old log barn loft. But as the meeting progressed, and the truth on carnality came clear and strong, I began to feel my need. I took a few nights off during the meeting, went out into the woods and prayed much of the night. The Lord would bless graciously, but this did not satisfy. I became conscious of the need of a clean heart. I had a new heart, but I longed for a clean heart. I had life, but needed more abundant life. I had love, but I wanted perfect love. I had a clear, definite experience of justification, but I desired sanctification.

I think I was just a little prejudiced against going to the altar. Then many of my friends, among them my official church brethren and pastor, were opposed to “second blessing holiness.” However, this heart hunger became so intense that I began to lose sight of these hindrances. Then in an evening service, as I sat on the front seat and knew practically everyone in the crowded church, the Lord spoke to me. No, not audibly, but consciously He seemed to say, “If you will go forward and make the consecration, I will satisfy you.” At this moment holiness opposers seemed to vanish, and almost before I knew it, I was at the altar praying, earnestly, for the blessing. This did not take long. The “Comforter came.” There was little outward demonstration, but I was satisfied. My heart was clean.

I seemed to move into the vestibule of heaven. Christ, His word, and all things spiritual took on new life and meaning. It was all indescribable. The witness of the Spirit was clear. That has been many years ago. Much



water has gone under the bridge since then. Nights have been long, tunnels dark, and trials sore, but this blessing has held. Yet, justification and sanctification are real, definite, genuine experiences. Jesus is not a sin regulator or suppresser. He is a sin eradicator and exterminator. "He will crucify the old man and electrify the new man." He can save and keep as long as we will walk in the light and resist the devil. Paul said, "Neither give place to the devil." Even though we are sanctified we can still do this, and will unless we watch and pray, but the grace of God will keep every moment if we meet conditions.

Then the Lord was faithful in the call to the ministry. This call was not an instantaneous experience. Almost from the time I could remember I had felt this conviction. When I was saved, it became clearer; when sanctified, still more pungent. Of course, in making the consecration this was included. This feeling, that I must preach, for many years was a great source of trouble to me; I felt it was impossible. There was a natural timidity and shrinking from any kind of public speaking that seemed to make it impossible. Then there were no preachers in the family, of whom I had ever heard, on either side of the house. I spent many nights, practically sleepless, telling the Lord that I just could not do it. To imagine myself a preacher was humiliating. Never during those long years did I mention this thought to a human being. However, after the Lord sanctified me I felt that the time had about come and I began making definite plans toward that end. Just a few weeks before I felt I must begin, I "broke my mind" to my sister. She replied, "Well, I am not surprised, we have all been expecting it." Maybe I should say that after my sanctification that timidity seemed immediately to disappear. It was such a joy to pray, testify, and exhort. For years (I can't express this and it is almost too sacred to undertake to do so) very often a strange, indescribable presence and power would seem to possess me. Usually some text of Scripture would take hold of the very soul and for some time there seemed to be an inner power that would just preach through me. This would begin suddenly and end likewise.

After telling my sister of my intention soon to enter the ministry, it was quickly known throughout the community. One of our neighbors, living within sight of my father's home heard it. We had worked together many a day. Immediately he came to me and said, "Brother Will, I understand you are going to preach, and if so, I want you to preach your first sermon in my home." The fire was burning, and of course that just suited me. The night was set and when the time came the house, porch, and most of the yard were filled. Mother was there and, as her son was preaching, almost broke up the meeting. My text was, "Fear not little flock, for it is your Father's good pleasure to give you the kingdom." Think of such a text! Well, I could not preach any then and not much since, but I loved the Lord and love Him better now. I praise the Lord for His faithfulness in making the call so clear and definite that there has never been for one moment a doubt. Why the Lord would call me has been a mystery, but I know He did and nothing in my life has been more real.

## 2. GOD'S FAITHFULNESS IN OPENING DOORS

After obtaining the experience of holiness, and definite preparation fully to enter the work of the Lord, I was confronted with a real problem. I was a member of the Methodist Church. I loved the church. They were lovely to me. It was a joy to attend the conferences and other gatherings. During the revival in which the Lord sanctified me there were about eighty of the members who got the blessing. Our pastor not only did not believe in holiness, but bitterly opposed it. For a short time after the revival we had wonderful prayer meetings. The fire was burning; such testifying and exhorting that souls were saved. Our pastor seemed almost enraged. He had the doors of the church closed.

Services were not permitted to be held in the church. Did that stop the work of the Holy Ghost? Nay verily! We simply went to the school house and in homes and, like fire in stubble, it spread. But, now what should I do? My own church opposed what I had and must preach. Should I continue in the church, if permitted, and seek to win them, as some suggested, or should I seek a spiritual home elsewhere? I was very tactfully informed by some of the brethren that if I would just be careful about this "holiness business" and come right on that the conference would be back of me and that there was an unlimited opportunity. Also special offers, which seemed to lead to great success, were made.

But I was confronted with the fact that the program of the church was becoming more and more apostate. Plays, clubs, social functions, and entertainment in general were being substituted for the old-time Methodist and Bible

program, of spirituality and soul winning.

I was distressed. I had never heard of a holiness church. I did not want to be classed as a “come-outer.” Then if I left the church where was I to preach? If I went on, there were calls and open doors. If I left I seemed to close every door. To leave seemed like a foolish thing to do. Many of my Methodist friends felt that to leave was to act almost insanely. They were bold to say, “You will have no place to preach and no one to support you and will face starvation.” And it surely looked that way, but God is faithful. He says, “If any man will do his will he shall know.” I was anxious to do His will. I claimed the promise. After much waiting, the Lord was faithful and made His will as clear as heaven. We loved the brethren, but finally secured our church letter. The matter was settled. I immediately bought a nice gospel tent and began. No, I did not wait for calls from the “Home Mission Board” for that did not exist. I simply prayed and without waiting for calls shipped the tent where we felt led and began. I secured a nice camping tent and spent the summer in tent revivals.

In the fall we entered the Bible school at Nashville of which Rev. J. O. McClurkan was president.

It has for many years been Trevecca Nazarene College. Time will not permit me to go into many details in this connection, but I just want to say that this evangelistic work — going out relying wholly on the Lord — was glorious, and from the time I began to this day there have been more open doors than I could enter. The brethren said, “You will have no place to preach and will likely starve.” Now, I reluctantly make the following statements, but I do it for the glory of the Lord and to prove the devil is a liar. I can say that for many years I have had at least one hundred and fifty calls for revivals and conventions each year. Often many more than this. They said I would lose all my friends. Here the devil misrepresented it. Jesus said, “There is no man that hath left house, or brethren, or sisters, or father, or mother, or wife, or children, or lands, for my sake, and the gospel's, but he shall receive an hundredfold now in this time, houses, and brethren, and sisters, and mothers, and children, and lands, with persecutions; and in the world to come eternal life” (Mark 10:29, 30).

I would like to testify that He always makes good. I feel sure that I could leave Augusta, Maine, where I was preaching a little time back, in my car, and start west for California and spend practically every night with friends. I am sure that I could leave the Great Lakes, or almost anywhere in the North, and take three meals a day with special friends on to Miami, Florida. God is faithful.

He has given friends and opened doors beyond any thought we could have had. I say to any young man who is fearful of launching out into the work of the Lord, “Fear not. God is faithful.” Abraham went out not knowing where, but God saw him through. Be true. Give God the pre-eminence. Honor Him and He will be faithful.

### 3. GOD'S FAITHFULNESS IN SUPPLYING TEMPORAL NEEDS

When entering the ministry, I had a very limited amount of money. He might not lead all as I felt He did me, but I personally felt that I should wholly rely on the Lord. YES! So I disposed of all and went out depending on the Lord for everything. Many times I have been in a strange land, and a stranger to all, without a postage stamp. There were some testing times, but that was blessed. A few times funds would be exhausted in shipping and erecting tents and for a brief time “we had to get along on meager fare.” I found that oatmeal was economical and that it was easily prepared. At times there might not be milk for that, but, as far as I recall, I always had sugar! You know oatmeal with sugar and the Lord on hand was not bad! Solomon said, “Better is a dinner of herbs where love is than a stalled ox and hatred therewith.” Praise the Lord! When I think of those experiences I get blessed. “What matters where on earth we dwell, on mountain top or in the dell. In cottage or a mansion fair, where Jesus is 'tis heaven there.” The only safe, prosperous, and happy place in all the world is in the will of God. But these testing times were not so severe or protracted. I can now see they were of the Lord. Whatever comes to us, if we are true, comes by His permission or direction.

Whatever He permits or sends will be for our good and His glory. Many things may not be good within themselves but God works them for good. It was not good for Joseph to be hated, put in a pit, sold into Egypt, lied on by a wicked woman, put in prison. No, these were not good, but God worked them for Joseph's good. Joseph said to his brethren, “You meant it for evil, but God meant it for good.” Then he reaches the crest and exclaims, “God did send me.” He looked beyond all and saw God.



God was faithful. I gave up many friends, but God raised up more and better. I hesitate even to mention some matters, but will only do it for the glory of your covenant-keeping God. When arriving in Chattanooga, about thirty-nine years ago, I did not know a single soul. There was no one to whom I could look. No human backing. Some tests came, but God was faithful. God raised up friends. Soon after arriving we met Mr. J. F. Loomis. He was interested in the work I was in. He became a most faithful and substantial friend till the day of his death. He attended the services, taught the Bible class and contributed regularly and liberally in a financial way to the work. He was a great Christian and scholar, spoke a number of languages and was as meek as Moses. He contacted the holiness people in the North and enjoyed the blessing of holiness. Without ever asking him for a penny he sent a substantial check every month to the support of the work.

Another most helpful friend and brother was Mr. Harry Chapman. Someone had held a meeting in his church, and he had been sanctified. He was pleased to support a work along holiness lines. He had a large business. He never united with us, but was a regular attendant and loyal supporter. He contributed liberally for many years. Often he would phone me to come to his office and earnestly inquire about the needs. When informed, which I reluctantly did when he insisted, he would write a check for the amount. He would give a check in full with which to buy a large gospel tent. He was humble and Christlike, and was one of the finest altar workers I have ever known. He would stay and pray. A strange thing happened to him. Why God permitted complete loss to come to a man like that we may never know. But He did in the case of Job. Anyway, the depression came and Mr. Chapman lost probably half a million dollars—lost all. A short time before he left this world he sent for me and said, “Brother Tidwell, I have lost all that I had — every dollar. I do not have one, and I want you to have part in preaching my funeral and I just wanted to say that all I kept is lost and all that I saved is what I gave.” And then I was glad that he gave me money for the work till it was almost embarrassing, but now I am glad. His daughter was quite wealthy. He lived with her and every need was supplied. Thank God for such a character. The Lord raised up another friend, who was very faithful and kind. He could never do quite enough; When I would be leaving to go some distance to preach and maybe in some field where support was likely to be small, he would sign checks and hand to me saying, “Now, Brother Tidwell, you may need some assistance. These checks are signed, as you see, just fill out for any amount and get them cashed.” I rarely, if ever, used them, but it did make a fellow feel “kinda good” just to have these signed checks.

I hope you will understand that I am entirely unworthy and am only seeking to show the faithfulness of God and that the devil simply can't be trusted at all. The Lord has so bountifully, for many, many years, far more than supplied every need. Offerings have come from many sources, constantly, in amounts from one hundred to one thousand dollars. I have sought to use all, or practically all, of this directly in the work of the Lord. He has enabled us to contribute, a number of times, as much as one thousand dollars at a time. We have one fine Presbyterian doctor here in the city, who constantly insists on giving large offerings. Recently, when going to Mayo's Clinic in Rochester, Minnesota, he insisted that I take a substantial check and then said, “Please let me know of any need while there. I will gladly send you a thousand dollars or any amount you need.” The Lord has and does bless the church, financially, beyond all we could ask or think. We forbear to mention just what the Lord has done here lest some misunderstand.

I only mention these matters to call attention to the faithfulness of God. They said, “If you take this holiness way you will starve.” Well, we have not starved yet and it has been many years since every need has not been super-abundantly supplied. Money for any cause needed, up to considerable sums, could have been forthcoming. We have reserved a very meager amount. Just sufficient to take care of Mrs. Tidwell for a while if I went hence. Then the brethren on the church board said, “Brother Tidwell will not take care of and provide for himself, and we will have to do it.” So they set aside, and put in the bank ten thousand dollars to be used any time I need or call for it. Well, I surely appreciate all of this, but one thing is sure I will never call for it unless absolutely necessary and I do not believe it will be. God has been faithful to supply every financial need. You can depend on Him. The devil is a liar and good folks often are mistaken.

## 4. THE FAITHFULNESS OF THE LORD IN BLESSING THE CHURCH SPIRITUALLY

When beginning the work in Chattanooga we rented an old church building, remained there a few months and then rented a hall some blocks away. Then after about a couple of years we rented another hall, where we remained until buying and building the frame building on Williams Street.

Attendance at first was very small. No morning service for a while, just afternoon and night. A dozen was a good average attendance. Open air meetings, cottage meetings and tent meetings were held.

The tent meetings were held for about twenty-five years. We began in May and never missed a night in the tent during summer except Sunday night. We would have meetings in the tent during the week and Sunday afternoon. After about a year we began the regular Sunday school and morning service.

The Lord was faithful in sending in the people. At the end of about two years the attendance had grown to about two hundred. After probably a little over four years we moved into the new frame building. This seated about five hundred. We had held tent meetings on this lot, before building the church, and at the first service in the new church it was crowded. This building was used for several years and there were few services for which it was not well filled, often to overflowing. During revivals it was impossible in any wise to take care of the crowd. Finally it was decided to erect a new building. This was a nice brick church which seated about one thousand. It cost, including some interest, around thirty-seven thousand dollars. This building was always filled, practically from the first, and often the room was insufficient. After some years in this building it became evident that we should change our location. We had a terrible flood, which overflowed much of that section of the city. White people began to move out and colored people moved in. Another location was secured and a new building erected. The building on Williams Street was sold, at great sacrifice, to the colored Methodists. The new building seats, by actual count, thirteen hundred people. Including the lot this building cost around sixty-five thousand dollars. Attendance has been good. The church often is full and at times will not seat all who come.

We think we often use the war situation as an alibi, but we are now confronted with a grave problem. We have over one hundred and fifty families, not all regular attendants, of course, but including friends who frequently attended, those who have left the city and gone to defense plants.

Then we have about one hundred and fifty young men, who were either members or friends of the church, who have gone to the army or navy. Nearly fifty of these were members. Most of these were very active, members of the choir, and otherwise engaged. Then we have four other Nazarene churches within the city limits. Two of these were organized with every member coming from this church, also a number in the other two. The Sunday-school attendance was between seven and eight hundred. Now if we average five hundred we are doing well. The church attendance has slumped.

If we have six or seven hundred at the morning service and not quite so many at the evening service, we are happy. For nearly twenty-five years the prayer service would average around four hundred, often many more. Now we feel that we are doing pretty well if we have two hundred and fifty. We have never worked so hard and made as many calls as now, but, in spite of all that can be done, this is the situation.

We are suffering greatly. Just what the outcome will be we know not. Just how many will return we cannot tell. Anyway we believe we can say that we are doing about the best we possibly can and will trust the Lord to lead. He is faithful. His blessings have been and are richly poured out upon the church and in the services these years. He has given an unusual spirit of harmony. In the election for the pastor there have been not more than three negative votes in all these years. At the last election, one year ago, when nearly 400 votes were cast, on a three year call, there were no negative votes.

We have stuck, tenaciously, to the old-fashioned Bible, Nazarene program. We feel clear that the mission of the church, as such, is not political, military, industrial, or social, but wholly spiritual.

There is a place for emphasis on such matters, but it is not in the church nor even sponsored by the church. There is not a word in the New Testament that permits or sanctions the old play, club, social, entertainment



program for the propagation of the work of the Lord. They are children of the apostasy. They were not included in the original program of the holiness churches. Some insist that we must have them to hold the young people. This is not true. We did not get the young people by this method, neither can we thus hold them. People come to us not because we have these, but because we do not. Probably they were a little excited, but many of our leading evangelists insist that they find here one of the largest and most spiritual groups of young people they have ever seen. They really put it stronger than this, but I will not. Ask any of them. But for these years there has been no desire for these worldly, apostate methods. They are happy in the work of the Lord where they find spiritual and social fellowship that satisfies. Personally, we ask just a little forbearance from our brethren, if we seem to be just a bit radical at this point. We became sick and tired of the old apostate program in the church from which we came. We are afraid of it. God has raised us up for such a time as this. To betray Him would be tragic. How happy I would have been when I felt I must leave the apostate program to have found a good, spiritual holiness church with which I might have become identified. I pray and weep bitterly, when I find some insisting that we go back and worship the defeated gods, "which could not deliver their own people" (See II Chronicles 25:14, 15).

Of Israel it was said, "We will go with you because we have heard that God is with you" (Zechariah 8:23). Yes, it is the presence of God that makes the difference. Moses said, "Wherein shall it be known that I and thy people have found grace in thy sight?" Then he answered, "Is it not that thou goest with us?" (Exodus 33:16). It was the presence of God that separated and distinguished them from all the people of the earth. Yes, it is the presence of the Lord, not a lot of special entertainment in the church, that attracts and satisfies. This is indispensable. The Lord has been faithful for these many years in giving this in the services here. He still does.

## 5. GOD'S FAITHFULNESS AMID TRIALS

Yes, there have been many burdens, cares, and sorrows along the way. This seems to be the heritage of the Christian. "Others had trial of cruel mockings and scourgings, yet, moreover, of bonds and imprisonments: they were tempted, they were sawn asunder, they were slain with the sword: they wandered about in sheepskins and goatskins; being destitute, afflicted and tormented" (Hebrews 11:36, 37). We hesitate even to mention any trials, and will not go into details that would be interesting, but simply give a brief reference to call attention to the faithfulness of God.

When we first began preaching we thought if we would be kind and careful we could preach all the truth without the displeasure of any, but we had not gone far before we were disillusioned. Christ had many friends, but also some bitter enemies. We notice all through the Bible that they would first oppose and resent the message and then the messenger. This was true of the prophets of old. It was true of Jesus, Stephen, and Paul. Paul said, "Have I become your enemy because I tell you the truth?" (Galatians 4:16). People have been very kind to us—far better than we deserved. We have had few enemies as far as we know, but some few were very bitter; however, the Lord is our judge, we have never had any ill feeling toward anyone. It has been easy to love any who had an ill feeling. Of course, when those we love the most and have counted upon become enemies, it hurts more.

As suggested, we have had few as far as we have known, who seemed to become bitter toward us, personally, and toward the church. We recall a few who were very actively bitter. Some of these resorted to unchristian acts. Some threatened acts of violence and stooped to very wicked and vile methods. Many of our friends insisted that the law was made for such offenders and that it should be resorted to, but always and every time there was that still small voice which seemed to say, "Leave it to Me." This we steadfastly did. It would be interesting to mention details here, but we forbear, leaving it all with the Lord; however, I will state, and the Lord, before whom we shall once day stand, is the Judge as to the exactness of these statements. These few have passed on. Those who were most actively bitter passed first. Others lingered on, but after much suffering, they too passed.

A few very bitter, but not so drastic, remain. They are in God's hands. We love them. You say, "Did the Lord do this?" I would answer, "I do not say or suggest that He did." I simply state the facts. I loved all of them and do this good day. I hope they were forgiven and will get to heaven and that I will be so fortunate as to meet them over there and then I know they will like me.

However, these matters, with others of a somewhat different nature, caused me great trial and suffering. I had one resort and that was to "wait on the Lord." Sometimes the burdens were so heavy that they seemed unbearable. My favorite resort was far out on the side of old Lookout Mountain.

Many a night I have spent there alone with God. You may seem to be of fairly good size in a room 14x16 feet, but out on the side of this great mountain alone in the dark you seem very small. We have been there alone when the winds would blow and we have heard the wild animals as they prowled through the darkness, but God was there. David said, "As one whom his father pitieth, so will I pity you." Also he said, "As one whom his mother comforteth, so will I comfort you." A father can pity, but it takes a mother to comfort. Again the Lord has promised to "stick closer than a brother." So if the Lord will pity like a father, and comfort like a mother, and stick closer than a brother, I know, if I will be true, I can make it through. "Through many dangers, toils, and snares I have already come, 'twas grace that brought me safe thus far," and I know if I will be true, that "grace will lead me home." God set an impenetrable, devil-proof hedge about Job. He will for you if you are true to Him.

The Lord has given me unusual health for these years. During these forty-five years of preaching, in my poor way, till last November I never missed a single service on account of illness. I have preached when not well, sometimes with a pretty high fever, but the Lord helped me through.

Recently, when I had to miss, it grieved me greatly. I think missing the two Sundays hurt worse than physical suffering. I was in the hospital some days, but the Lord was graciously near. The operation was at Mayo's in Rochester, a strange city. I left Mrs. Tidwell in the hotel and spent the night alone in the hospital, before the operation. I think I was never so conscious of the presence of the Lord as that night. Mrs. Tidwell declares to this day that the Lord and angels came to her room in the hotel that night as she prayed. I would not undertake to describe her experience.

I am now past sixty-five years of age. It is not certain that the operation will be a perfect, permanent success, but I know, if I will be true, just how long I will be here. It will be till the Lord calls me home. I do not believe that the Christian just slips off accidentally. I believe he goes at the call of the Lord. That is better. He notes the sparrow's fall.

I thought when young if I would work hard, sacrifice all, that when I reached about sixty that I could look back and see what had been accomplished, just a little, but I have long since learned better. I have passed that milestone by five years and can look back and see that I have done nothing.

I think it is foolish not to take a vacation. Our board is so good. They ask me to go to Florida, California, or anywhere for a vacation, but we have never been able to take one. Heaven is so glorious, hell is so awful, souls are so precious, time is so short, that I just feel that I can't. I think you should. It will pay in the long run, but I have not felt that I could. I feel like the little girl, who had just one candle. She refused to stop. They said, "Why don't you stop and rest?" She replied, "I just have one little candle, and it will soon be burned out and I want to do what I can while my candle burns." "Only one life, 'twill soon be past; only what's done for Christ will last." I feel that I am the most unprofitable servant, if I may be termed a servant, at all. I almost envy the younger men. I never loved to preach so well as now. I have been preaching to some of the same folks for thirty-nine years. You say, "What do you preach?" "Preach the Word." It is not a question of getting something to preach, but getting an opportunity to preach the messages as they come. It was never so easy and delightful as now to get messages from the Word. I would like to start all over again. I know it will not be long now. The great band was playing when the piccolo player decided that he was not needed and would not be missed. So he ceased playing. The audience did not miss it. The great orchestra did not, but suddenly the conductor stopped and cried, "Where is the piccolo?" He missed it. After all, we are doing it as unto Him.

My father, when I was a boy, would be gone all day occasionally. In the evening he would come over the hill and stop where I had been plowing. When I came around he would look over the ground that I had plowed that day, and put his hand on my head and say, "Son, this is a fine day's work." Just to hear his commendation and feel his hand on my head was compensation for all the heat and toil of the day. So when Jesus comes "over the hill" in the evening, if we can hear Him say, "Well done" that will pay for all. Praise the Lord for all His faithfulness.



When Moses and the Israelites, from Egypt's land did flee, Behind them were proud Pharaoh's host, in front of them the sea, God raised the waters like a wall, and opened up the way, And the God that lived in Moses' time is just the same today.

When Daniel faithful to his God, would not bow down to men, And by his enemies was hurled into the lions' den;

God shut the lions' mouths we read, and robbed them of their prey, And the God that lived in Daniel's, time is just the same today.

When Pentecost had fully come, and fire from heaven did fall, Like mighty wind the Holy Ghost, baptized them one and all, Three thousand were converted, and were soldiers right away; And the God that lived at Pentecost is just the same today.

<http://www.enterhisrest.org/>