

THE TURNING POINT

ON a cold November night back in 1923, I sat alone in front of the fireplace in our old ranch home. My father, mother, brother and sister had gone to Dorris, California, about nine miles away. They were attending a tent service held by some Apostolic Faith people who had come from Portland and Medford, Oregon. My dad's old mother had invited them, saying "Bring your family over to hear these people who have the old-time religion." The roads were muddy and travel was difficult, but they had gone on several nights.

This night it got very late, and I wondered what had become of them. Finally about 1 a.m. they came, and the first thing Dad said was: "We prayed tonight and the Lord saved our souls. If I always feel like I feel tonight, I'll never take another drink of whiskey or have another smoke." He had been drinking and smoking for forty years. In fact, he gave me my first drink when I was but a lad, and we had travelled on in sin together.

My father had tried many times to quit his sinful life. He would make New Year's resolutions, turn over a new leaf; but I had never seen it last more than three weeks. Sometimes he would weep over his condition — he didn't want to live that way, but he was bound. He had a terrible temper and would fight and curse and make things very unpleasant when he would come home under the influence of liquor.

Though his mother could hardly read or write, she loved her Bible. And she prayed for us. We surely needed it. We never went to church — none of us. We didn't even have a Bible in our home, and we knew nothing about the Gospel. I didn't know that Jesus was the Son of God. I believe it was her prayers that brought us to this turning point

Now everything was changed. I wondered if it would last. After breakfast the next morning, my father did not light a cigarette as he had always done. And he never smoked again. I never again saw him angry or heard him curse. He bought a Bible and at night and in the morning they would read from it, and have prayer. But I didn't want to hear it and would go out.

I remember coming back into the house one morning about nine o'clock and hearing my mother singing as she swept the floor: "Is my name written there on that page white and fair . . . ?" I had never heard her sing before. Dad had been an old-time fiddler, and we would have dances and card parties and other amusements in our home, but never anything that concerned religion. As Mother sang that morning, God spoke to me: "There is a better life for you to live. If you don't give Me your life, you will suffer for it."

One night my parents persuaded me to attend one of those meetings. I'll never forget the sermon Brother Ray Crawford from Portland preached about the love of God — that Jesus loved me enough to die for me, and that if I would go on in my sins I would lose my soul in hell. Although I was impressed, I refused to pray. I went on living as I always had, but I was never the same after that. Often when on a dance floor or in my bed, I would think about it. I knew I would have no excuse if my soul would be lost.

I married a girl who loved the same things I did, but after about 15 months our marriage was almost on the rocks. Dance halls and whiskey were doing a good job of wrecking our home. One Sunday night when I came home, Ruth met me at the door and said, "I prayed today. I couldn't stand the strain any longer and I gave my heart to Jesus. I'm not going out with you anymore. If you go, you will go alone."

Then she asked me, "What are you going to do?" What could I do? She didn't know the turmoil that was going on inside me. I had been wanting to get saved, but hadn't had the courage to tell her. I was glad she had made the start, and I was willing to follow. I wanted to get rid of the heavy load of conviction I carried.

The next day was her 19th birthday, and I had a present ready for her. She had always used a lot of make-up, so I had bought her a beautiful vanity case with everything in it. I remember where she was sitting in the kitchen when she opened the package. There it was — just beautiful! She looked at it, then she looked at me and said, "I won't use this any longer." Nobody had said anything to her about not using make-up.

She just had different desires now. She wanted to please God in her appearance. She took out all the make-up and used the case for her handkerchiefs.

My parents were making every effort to get us to Klamath Falls, Oregon, to an Apostolic Faith meeting, and a few days later we went. A minister from Medford was there that night, and he preached a message that reached my soul. When he finished his sermon, he asked, "Is there anyone here who wants to be saved?" I raised my hand. That was what I had come for. It was a small group, about 25 people there that night, and I was the only stranger. I'm sure they were all looking at me — and God had His eye on me, too. I had seen enough of what the Gospel had done in my parents' home, and how my father now lived on the job, to know there was something to it, and I wanted it. But when we stood to sing the closing song, I was rooted in my tracks. I couldn't move. The minister came to me and asked if I wanted to pray. I said, "Yes, I want to pray." I could hardly walk, but he took me by the elbow and we walked together to the altar where I got on my knees. I didn't know how to pray, but as I knelt there I said, "Lord, if You will save me and give me peace, I will give You the balance of my life!" I meant it with all my heart. Victory came, and peace, from Heaven above. I felt the burden go. I told those who were praying with me, "I feel so good in my soul." They said, "The Lord has saved you." I knew He had done something! I had never felt like that before.

A few nights later, the Lord sanctified me. It took me longer to receive the baptism of the Holy Ghost. I had some restitutions to make that were hard. I had made restitution for some big misdeeds that could have put me behind bars, and all had been forgiven. But there were some little things that I needed to make right with my neighbours, and it just seemed I couldn't. One night when I was praying, the Lord asked me, "What are you going to do about it?" I got up and wrote two letters. When I went back to the altar, I felt clear before God, and He baptized me with the Holy Ghost.

The Lord gave us a happy Christian home, and he has been our healer. My wife had had trouble with her heart for 20 years, also suffered much with her back. In 1949 she was ill for seven months, right down to the jaws of death. She couldn't even feed herself, nor lift her knees in bed. The doctor said a valve was closing in her heart and there was no hope. It got so bad that if she let her legs hang over the side of the bed, they would turn blue to her knees. She could not turn her head sideways on the pillow, or blood would rush to her head and she would feel as if her nose would burst. She said, "It feels as if my teeth are being pried out." But we held on and prayed. Many others were praying for us, too. One time it seemed she was getting better. I put a pillow under her head and thought maybe she could raise her head a little. In only a few minutes she asked me to take it away; she was getting so sick! We had prayed many times, and such a sweet Spirit from the Lord would come into the room, we thought she might be going to Heaven. There was no fear in our hearts with Heaven so near.

That morning, instead of taking out the pillow, I just leaned over her bed and started praying again. I just called on God for help. It seemed God said, "I have healed her if she will just believe it." The assurance was in my heart. If she would only believe it! We prayed on. The pillow was still there. An hour passed. I said, "Ruth, tell God you believe that He heals you now." Finally she said, "I do believe." I told her, "Don't tell me. Tell the Lord." After a while she said, "God, I believe You heal me now." It wasn't two minutes more until she said, "The pressure is gone out of my head. If God has healed me, I'm not staying in this bed any longer." She sat on the edge of the bed and her legs didn't turn blue. I gave her housecoat, and with a little help she walked into the living room. (She had hardly walked for seven months.) There she ate her lunch, looking out the window, watching the autumn leaves fall from the trees. She thought she had never seen anything so beautiful. She sat there for several hours watching that shower of gold. The same Jesus who had saved our souls 30 years before was there to answer again.

She went back to bed, lay down on her left side and slept for two hours. She never ate another meal in bed. When the Lord touched her, He also healed her back which had caused her so much pain. She had better health than she had ever had in her life. And we are looking for the coming of Jesus!

— David McCollum

