

A Little Child Shall Lead Them

By Willie Struhar



I am thankful that I ever heard the story of Jesus and His power to save all kinds of people. I wasn't brought up in a Christian home. When I was a little girl, we didn't live anywhere near a place where we could go to church, and we children were never sent to Sunday school. Sin had made our home miserable and unhappy, and I didn't know what peace and joy were.

Divorce seemed inevitable

My father spent his time and a great deal of his money in gambling halls and bars. At that time he was the constable in the little mining town in Arizona where we lived among a rough class of people. He mingled with them, and soon he started staying out night after night. He would leave town for days at a time, not telling my mother where he was. It kept going from bad to worse until she said she just couldn't stand it any longer. Divorce seemed to be the only answer, and plans were made to put us children in different places for care.

I was the oldest of four children, and though I was only nine years old at the time, I tried to help Mother bear her burdens. Our home was so unhappy it spoiled my early childhood. Mother didn't know the Lord. She didn't know how to cast her burdens on Him and so, of course, she couldn't tell me.

One day we received an Apostolic Faith paper that someone sent hundreds of miles to us. I read that paper, and then I sat there thinking about it. One true story was about a man who had lived a life of sin, and I remember thinking: Why, that is just like Dad. Then I read another about a woman who said she was brokenhearted and afraid to trust God with her children—and I thought: That is just like Mamma. Those people told how they had found the Lord, and they said they were happy in serving God.

A glorious change

I kept thinking about what I had read, and that night; as I went to bed I knelt and prayed. I didn't say anything out loud, but I just lifted my heart to God and told Him I wanted what I had read about. I wanted the Lord to make our home happy. There was no excitement and no one to help me pray; but I heard the Lord calling to me. I gave Him my heart, and He made such a glorious change! An amazing sense of peace and joy flooded my soul.

When I went to sleep I had a wonderful dream. I had never read the Scripture that tells of the great White Throne Judgment, but in my dream I saw it. Later in life I read about it in the Bible, and my dream was so much like the description there.

I saw the Lord in the midst of a throng. There were people of all ages and nationalities. As far as I could see there was just a great sea of humanity. The Lord stood there with white and flowing robes. His countenance was sweet to those who could look upon Him, but some were hiding their faces because the brightness was too great.

Accepted or rejected?

There was a huge crack in the earth, like a gulf, and smoke was coming up from a great hole in the ground. On the other side was the devil, and he seemed to be waiting for those whom the Lord would reject. A transparent stairway led up into Heaven, and on this stairway angels were hovering. As the people came up before the Lord, each one was judged, and either accepted or rejected. It just seemed to be a nod of the Lord's head or a smile that told the story.

When my turn came, the Lord smiled and motioned for me to go with the angels, but I didn't go. I hid by His side in the folds of His garment, and waited until my father came before the Lord. He was rejected! I began to pull on the garments of the Lord and beg Him to please save my father. Up to that time the Lord had not seemed to notice me, but He turned and smiled at me and said, 'Tell your father to get ready!' Then I woke up.

Dad listened

The next morning Dad came home. He had spent sixteen hours at the gambling table; and though he was drunk, he listened to me. He would not have listened to anyone else; because he was too stubborn and rebellious, and he didn't believe in God. But he listened to me, and I am sure my face was shining as I stood there and told him of that dream and that the Lord had saved me. I didn't know just what to call salvation, but I knew I had received what I read about, and that was what I told him.

My father realized that God was speaking through me, and he said, 'O God, if this is You speaking to me through this child, I will give You my life!' He fell across the bed and began to pray his heart out to God. The Lord saved him that morning, and that was the last time he ever came home in a drunken condition.

In the months that followed, I had no spiritual instruction except from the Apostolic Faith papers that were sent to us continually. I would read them and go off alone and pray. And always that dream would stay with me, and that wonderful experience that the Lord gave me on my knees. Our whole family had confidence in the experience that had come into my life. Mother had been trying to make herself believe there was no Hell. One time she asked me if I believed there was a Hell. I just looked at her in amazement and said, 'Why, of course there is. I saw it!'

A desire for baptism

After I was saved I wanted to join a church, so we began going to a little church where some people were having meetings. I wanted to be baptized, but it was against the rules of that church to baptize children before they were twelve years old. The minister came to our church to inquire about it, and I was called in from play. I told him what I had seen in my dream, and how the Lord had saved me. I guess that minister had never heard anything like that from a child, but he realized that I knew what I wanted, so he baptized me.

About three years after my salvation, my family moved to Portland, Oregon, to serve God among the Apostolic Faith people. My father had suffered from tuberculosis of the spine for seven years, and had gone through three operations. He was told that he would never get well, but when we came to Portland, he was prayed for and the Lord instantly healed him. The Lord did marvelous things in our home. My parents both lived Christian lives for many years before the Lord took them home.

I am thankful that I have had the privilege of giving the best days of my life to the Lord. The Lord has given me peace and contentment through the trials of life. I can truly say that I have found there is power in the Gospel to keep a young person happy and satisfied.

Willie Struhar was a faithful worker in the Apostolic Faith Church in Portland, Oregon until her death in 1994.

