

HEALED TO SERVE ON FOREIGN SOIL

LYING in bed one lazy summer afternoon while just a teenager, gazing up at the ceiling, I pondered the question: What could I do with my life to derive the greatest happiness?

It was not mere chance that the answer came very clearly: Become a worker for the Lord! What a challenge for a teenager! At age 14, I suddenly felt quite grown up — wasn't it time to choose my life's vocation? The unmarred, carefree childhood days of tree-climbing, swimming, hiking, horseback riding and playing baseball with the boys — all high on my priority list — were changing into days of responsibility.

There had been serious moments in my life, too: — Take for instance Saturday nights, when Mother showed us children a scroll of pictures of the life of Jesus. There was the Triumphal Entry into Jerusalem. And when Mother told us that a short time later Jesus was nailed to the Cross, how sad it made me feel!

— Or in bed at night tossing sleeplessly, my conscience nagging me, until I slipped over to my brother's bedroom (we had quarreled) and called his name. "Are you sleeping?" "No," he replied. "Will you forgive me?" He muttered half-asleep like, "Yes, will you forgive me too?" The sleeping problem was solved!

— Or when Dad took the family Bible from the shelf and insisted that we children lay aside what we were doing to listen to the Word of God. Then our family prayed together — twice daily.

— Children's meetings were another serious aspect of my life. When the lady in charge would say, "Now children, this is your meeting," I would be deeply touched.

Thus it was that while just a schoolgirl, I had a tender conscience. I had been sheltered from the deep sins of life by my wonderful Christian parents, but I knew I must repent of my sins and become a Christian if I wanted to go to Heaven. One night when I felt heavily convicted of my sins, I repented. Christ forgave me and made a genuine change in my heart. He took out all the rebellion and stubbornness and made me peaceable. He helped me to live a Christian life as I finished school. When I prayed about a job, He provided a good position during the depression years, where for nine years I could let my light shine for the Lord in one office.

My vacations, spent at summer camp meetings in Portland, were an inspiration to me. I was eager to study the Bible. I recall during the Bible teachings wondering, Why do they always teach about doctrine? I realize now that it was one of the things that helped to establish me as a sound Christian.

I was eager to answer God's call to service, but what would it be? My mother had taught me the precious lesson to always do what my hands found to do. One day while working in a prune orchard I told my mother, "I want to learn to play the violin and become a teacher." With the money I had earned picking prunes I bought a violin and walked two miles to my lessons. Later I also studied voice and the accordion.

What a thrill it was when at age 15 I was asked to play in the church orchestra. My dream was beginning to materialize. For many years I played my violin for the glory of God. Another great privilege the Lord granted me later was to help at the headquarters office in Portland, Oregon, from where the Gospel literature is sent throughout the world.

Teaching a Sunday school class was also a highlight experience. As we studied a lesson about Joshua who commanded the sun stand still, it brought to mind a new appreciation for the God of Joshua, who still lives today.

Proving God for Healing

Some years later when it seemed as if the "sun was setting" in my life, the Lord stepped upon the scene and took control of the situation that I might help to "fight the fight of faith" a little longer. A tumor was sapping my strength, and year after year it became more serious until I was hemorrhaging very badly and growing weaker. Finally, I spent most of my time in bed.

As I prayed and rededicated my life to the Lord and read His Word, He dropped a promise into my heart: "God is not the God of the dead, but of the living" (Matthew 22:32). I held to that promise, although little did I dream how near the brink of death I might be permitted to go.

Ministers anointed me with oil and prayed for me according to James 5:14,15. My Christian husband and members of my family often knelt beside my bed and wept and prayed for my healing. Still my condition continued to worsen. A doctor who examined me recommended that I be taken at once to the hospital for an exploratory operation.

Since infancy I had witnessed many marvelous miracles of healing through prayer. How could I doubt the healing power of God? My father had been healed instantly of appendicitis; an older sister had been healed of a goitre when her neck measured 17 inches; my little sister had had a broken arm. One day she went into the parlor and saw a picture of Christ with outstretched arms. Soon she came running into the other room with both hands extended and exclaimed: "This is the way Jesus does." Her arm was healed! One day I had a severe nosebleed which lasted for more than an hour. When my parents called for our pastor, he came and prayed the prayer of faith. The bleeding stopped immediately.

All this had made a lasting impression upon me and I knew that what God had done in the past He could do now.

My husband left the decision for surgery up to me. I reasoned: If God doesn't heal me, the doctors can't! Without hesitation I told the doctor, "We have always trusted the Lord, and I don't see why we can't trust Him now." We assured him that I would have the best of care and diet. "But," he responded, "it is too late."

When the doctor left the room he looked at me in pity, saying, "I wish I could help you." My husband followed him outside and tried to reimburse him for the house call. The kind doctor refused, saying he had done us no good, and added that what he feared was cancer.

Thank God, He is never too late! The people of the church continued to pray. I recall that one morning after a peaceful night's rest, I was told that the people of our church next door had prayed all night for me. Another morning I thought to myself, "I'm surprised to even be alive." At once the verse of Scripture came to mind: "But ye that did cleave unto the LORD your God are alive every one of you this day" (Deuteronomy 4:4).

Then came that memorable day when I had a visit from the Lord! One of our ministers and members of my family were in my room praying. Oh, how sweetly the Lord was blessing them! In my weakness it seemed as if I could not quite reach out in faith to touch the Lord. Then I turned my face to the wall, and from the very depths of my innermost heart I uttered a few words of total commitment: "Lord, I love You!"

Oh, the glory that filled the room!

THEN I knew that the prayer had gone through. Down came the witness into my soul — a great spiritual blessing! The hemorrhaging stopped. I began gaining strength and building blood.

Often I had looked at my pale hands and said, "My hands look just like the hands of a dead person." But soon the color began returning, I was sitting up and even standing, after having been so weak I was spoon-fed. The swelling soon diminished and the hard lump, about the size of a large cantaloupe, disappeared.

Thank God for His people who supported me with beautiful passages of Scripture such as: "I shall not die, but live, and declare the works of the LORD" (Psalm 118:17). That was my purpose in regaining my health — to give glory to God, and that is still my desire today.

The Missionary Call

At that time my husband was pastoring a small church. We felt a call to go into foreign missionary work, and soon had the opportunity to make a tour through the West Indies islands.

That was the beginning of our missionary efforts, resulting in the establishing of many churches throughout the islands. Twelve trips of several months duration each have been made into that area.

Another trip took us to West Africa for several months, where the response to the old-time religion was a thrill indeed. There was no greater thrill than to see sinners converted, feel with them the joys of sins forgiven; and to see the sick healed through the prayer of faith.

How thankful I am that I surrendered my life to the Lord when young. The joys of service far overshadow any sacrifices made for the Lord. These are but a few of the benefits unlimited which have accrued to me since I made my choice for the Lord when just a young girl. I have a bright hope of someday seeing Jesus. I recall traveling one day along a rough road in Haiti, a five-hour trip by truck. We were squeezed in, hot, tired and hungry. As I looked out to the side of the road, the song dropped into my heart: "Let me be worthy of the price He paid for me."

That is my prayer today: "Lord, let me be worthy!" — Sally Damron