

A very dear friend of ours, Dorothy Robison, wrote these words:

"My daughter's school bill was high. Realizing that she could not take her nine-weeks' test until it was paid, I prayed and claimed the promise, 'My God shall supply all your need.' Philippians 4:19.

"My husband and I dedicated our Income Tax refund toward this bill. We thought it would amount to one hundred and nineteen dollars, but we received only seventy-nine dollars. I was greatly disappointed, to say the least, but we managed to scrape together a little more money and the school allowed my daughter to take her tests, although the bill was not paid in full.

"Last year I had performed some services for which I received a fifty dollar gift. I assumed that the same amount would be forthcoming for the same services this year. This, also, I had dedicated toward the school bill.

"A few days ago I received a letter containing the gift. Instead of fifty dollars, it was only ten dollars. I was really discouraged, and shed a few tears. I know the Bible says we ought to 'leap for joy', Luke 6:23, when trials come, but I was ready to leap in anger. There was bitterness, resentment and discouragement in my heart.

"I said, 'Why, Lord, why?' I was not really accepting the trial which the Lord had allowed to come to me. I went around all that evening talking discouragement. I was discouraging everybody.

"During the night I realized I was doing Satan's work, and I asked the Lord for forgiveness. A peace came over me, and I know, mentally at least, what it was to 'leap for joy'. The Lord took away the bitterness and discouragement. I didn't know where the money was coming from, but I felt that the Lord would provide, and with this I went to sleep.

The following day another letter came containing a forty dollar check. It said that a mistake had been made and this was the balance of the fifty dollars that was due me. I then realized why the Lord had delayed this money in coming. He was testing my faith, and endeavoring to strengthen me.

"I praised the Lord that the bitterness and disappointment had been taken from my heart before He supplied the need. The bill is still not completely paid, but I have faith that the Lord will supply the rest of the money, even as He has promised. I know the bill will be paid in time for my daughter to take her final exams."

Dorothy sent me this postscript a few days later: "Not only has the Lord provided for the payment of the old school bill, but He has given my daughter a job for the summer which will pay almost all of her next year's school bill as well! Truly the Lord has supplied all my need, abundantly, more than I could ask or think. Praise His name! Never again will I ever hesitate to 'leap for JOY' when trouble comes my way. I know the Lord will see me through."

Out of the depths of her experience, Dorothy has written a poem (which has been set to music), and gave us permission to share it with our readers. It follows:

BELIEVE GOD'S PROMISES

Do not fail nor be discouraged,
As you walk the upward way;
For the loving arms of Jesus
Are about you as you pray.

As you kneel before your Maker,
Open now your heart to Him;
Tell Him of your trials and sorrows,

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Ask Him to forgive each sin.

Kneeling there in calm submission,
Let your eyes toward heaven look;
Ask God's Spirit now to guide you,
As you open wide His Book.

Tell Him of your joys and pleasures,
Tell Him of each trial and care;
And then read each precious promise,
He has written for you there.

Thou art precious to the Saviour,
On the cross He died for you;
All your past mistakes are covered;
Jesus' life hides them from view.

He has promised to forgive you;
He has covered every sin;
He has promised life eternal;
He has promised strength to win.

Turn, and read each precious promise,
And take courage now, anew;
For this is the voice of Jesus;
And it's speaking now, to you.

As you hear the voice of Jesus,
You may claim each promise true;
And then thank Him for the answer,
He has written there for you.

Ask, believe, and claim each promise,
Knowing God will do His part;
And you'll find a sweet peace filling
Each chamber of your heart.

God has given you the answer,
Sing a song of praise and love;
And when Jesus comes in glory,
He will take you home above.

—Dorothy Robison
December, 1960

Chapter 9

STRANGER THAN FICTION

THERE IS an old adage that says, "Never underestimate the power of a woman." After experiencing firsthand the determination of many sisters in claiming certain Bible promises, I believe there is something to it.

There is also a statement penned by my favorite author in the book "Evangelism", page 647, that tells us: "The interests of Christ's kingdom call for diligence and faithfulness." Again in Volume 5 of the Testimonies, page 109, she says, "Fervent prayer, humility, and earnestness must be combined with God's help."

Nina was a combination of all of these as she and her husband Ken knelt together to bring a serious problem before the Lord. She had her Bible opened to Matthew 21:22 which says, "And All things, whatsoever ye shall ask in prayer, believing, ye shall receive."

Husband Ken suggested, just before they prayed, "This will be a prayer of commitment, of course."

"NO," Nina answered with determination, "this will be a prayer of reception."

"But, Honey," Ken argued, "we just can't tell God what to do. I know we need the money we would have gotten for this job, but one doesn't paint in a heavy rain storm. You know that!"

"Yes, Dear, I know that you can't paint while it's raining. But it isn't going to rain! Even if the weather forecast does say so, God can and will hold back the storm. So, let's ASK, BELIEVE, and CLAIM this promise in Matthew 21 so we can also bring Malachi 3:8-10 before God. He means what He says in Mark 11:24. 'What things so ever ye desire, when ye pray, believe that ye receive them and ye shall have them,' doesn't He?"

Yes," Ken answered, still not fully convinced, but weakening a little under his Nina's earnest reasoning, first let's pray a prayer of reception and thank Him for holding back the rain."

"I overheard them arguing there on their knees—a rather strange procedure", confided Nina's father, who was visiting them at the time. "But neither Ken nor I were aware of the desperate situation that Nina had gotten into. Neither did we know that many others were also involved.

Nina was so right when she argued that God means what He says. She believed that the promised blessings in Malachi 3:8-10 were given on a strictly conditional basis. Especially did she know this because of the recent experience through which they were even then passing.

A few months previous Ken and Nina had received a terrible disappointment from an unsuccessful business adventure in the East. In fact, it was so frustrating to Nina, the family treasurer, that, even though the tithe check had been written, she decided not to mail it, because their bank account was depleted.

As a result, God could not keep His part of the bargain made in Malachi 3, and one thing after another occurred to keep Nina from repaying the full amount of back tithe.

Instead of being "the head, and not the tail" or "above . . . and not beneath", as the Lord promised in Deuteronomy 28:11-14, Ken and Nina were two months behind with the house rent and one month in arrears with the utilities. They had also received notice from the college that Ken could not matriculate for the second semester unless the eighty dollars he owed was paid, plus an advance on the next semester's tuition.

the exhilaration of forgiveness, he remembered there was one more call he must make—he and Helen were still not speaking to each other.

He decided he would take care of that problem a little later in the week. There were other problems that demanded his immediate attention.

John had been troubled for some time about being a card-carrying Union member. Since he was making things right, he thought he ought to clear the slate. With that, he picked up the telephone and notified the Union that he was pulling out of the organization. Several other minor matters were adjusted, and John realized that very little remained left to do before he had met the conditions to answered prayer.

Now that he was no longer a Union member, he could not rely on them for work leads. So he went to the printer and had a "flyer" printed up, that advertized the fact that he was an experienced painter and was anxious to do good work at a fair price. The printing was promised for Friday afternoon, which meant that he could distribute the leaflets early Sunday morning. Things were beginning to look good again. John's faith was growing, in spite of the fact that there was no work in sight.

That Friday night he found himself sitting next to his daughter, Helen. He thought several times that he would make things right and ask her forgiveness for the way he had treated her. But each time he attempted to speak, he could not find the words. The program was about over and he still had not found the courage to settle the matter with his daughter.

After the program Helen was engaged in conversation with some of her friends. And before he knew it, she was gone.

John returned home with a heavy heart. He could not understand why it was he had not just taken the situation in hand and spoken to his daughter. It was going to be such a simple thing. Now it loomed before him as the one thing that prevented him from claiming the promises of the Bible. As he lay in bed, tossing and turning, not being able to go to sleep, it became an ever-increasing problem. It was growing bigger by the minute.

Suddenly, in the stillness of the night, he heard a rap on the front door. He wondered who could be calling at that hour of the night. He stumbled to the door and unlocked it. There, before his eyes, stood his daughter.

"Oh, Helen," he said, "Come on in. I was just thinking about you."

Helen had barely crossed the threshold when she burst into tears and said, "Daddy, I couldn't stand it any longer. I've come to apologize to you for my bitter feelings I've held toward you for so long."

What a sight that was! Sitting there on the sofa, Helen and Daddy embraced, each forgiving the other and both so thankful for the effecting reconciliation. It was a wonderful experience that brought peace to both hearts.

Sabbath was a joyous day! How good it felt to be at peace with the world, thought John. The sun shone brighter, the birds sang sweeter, and everyone was so much friendlier it seemed as they enjoyed the day together.

Early Sunday morning John and his son distributed the leaflets that told of his desire for work. All day they worked passing out the news.

That night John prayed the prayer of reception and felt the assurance that God had heard his prayer. He went to sleep in complete confidence that the morrow would bring an answer—and work.

He did not have long to wait. The telephone rang early that morning, inviting him to come to work. By noon he was hard at work.

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Just after he left for work, one of the finance companies called to say that they must have their money by that evening or they would have to come and pick up the refrigerator. Mrs. Ash did not want to, but finally decided she must take the word to her husband.

John had done sufficient work by that time to make it possible for him to ask the man for whom he was painting, for an advance on the job. This request the employer gladly granted. Mrs. Ash went to the finance company and was able to make the payment just minutes before the office closed. It was split-second timing, but God had answered their prayer in time.

By Wednesday of that week, John had received contracts to the tune of five thousand dollars, and was a very happy man!

A few days later, after prayer meeting, he related his experience to Hugh James; and then asked the question: "Why do you suppose God let me get so low before He answered me?"

Hugh James answered the question, after a moment's silence, with: "Do you suppose it is because we are stubborn, sometimes?"

John did not reply to this question, for he knew all too well how long it had taken him to make things right. He knew he had been very stubborn about his situation.

I wonder how much longer it would have been had not Helen responded to conviction and taken the first step toward reconciliation.

Once again, Youth Leads the Way! Thank God for dedicated youth!

The prayer class was a blessing to Ivan Rash too. He had become very discouraged. In fact his faith was at its lowest ebb--so low that he had been contemplating giving up his faith in God and leaving the church.

About this time, the Lord directed his steps to the prayer class. Word had gotten around about the marvelous answers to prayer that people were realizing and relating at the meetings. Ivan and his wife decided to attend a class meeting.

Ivan was there with his burden and problems; and his wife sat there listening to the answers to prayer, with a burden on her heart, too. She was concerned about her husband and his spiritual condition. She knew how Ivan would often become annoyed over some of the attitudes and actions of his employer, who was also a member of the church. She had been praying for her husband for a long time before they had ever heard of the classes being taught on the Prayer of Reception.

In Psalm 119:165 God promises: "Great peace have they which love they law; and nothing shall offend them."

Ivan's wife prayed most earnestly that her husband might find this peace, and that, no matter what happened at work, he would not become offended.

At the third class meeting Ivan stood up to speak. His words were measured and full of meaning as he spoke of his discouragement. He felt ashamed to admit how far away from God discouragement had led him. Then he said, "Today my troubles are settled. When I approached the Lord this morning, I claimed the promises of His Word, and the Lord helped me to go to my boss today, and I've made things right with him." Then he told of his new relationship with Christ and his settled determination to stay close to the Lord in everything. "With God's help, I want to be faithful until Jesus comes," he concluded.

This was more than his wife expected. She could stay in her seat no longer, and so rose, and with tears in her eyes said: "I've been praying for my husband for a long time. God has heard my prayers and I'm deeply grateful."

There were problems that arose from time to time, but Ivan held fast (Hebrews 10:23), and God used him to be a blessing to others. His working partners recognized a change in him. His friends noticed the change in his attitude toward life in general. It was so contagious that many of his friends came to him with their problems and sought his counsel.

At the next class meeting Ivan had a different kind of a problem. "What do I do when my prayer list gets too long? Do I read each name separately and pray about each name individually? Or do I ask God to do for these people what needs doing, as a whole? These people have come to me for help as the result of hearing about my experience."

He told about some of the people who had come to him for help. One was a high school senior who had been in trouble with the law several times. This boy's driver's license was about to be revoked, and his fines would amount to more than a week's wages. He had been a very belligerent young man, and had found himself in serious trouble on repeated occasions. Now, after having had a long talk together, this fine young man was dedicating his life to the Lord and was seriously thinking of preparing for the ministry.

Some of the class members responded to this by saying, "Wonderful!" "Praise the Lord!" Ivan finished his story with the words, "I was really impressed. It was all the Lord's doings and not mine."

There are some experiences related here which have taken place so recently that we can now report only a part of the answers. The following experience is one of this type. It also has to do with our witness to Jesus Christ before others.

Every true child of God who obeys the unction of the Holy Spirit and finds sweet Communion with Jesus is filled with the compelling desire to have his loved ones share in his wonderful discovery.

Wayne was one of these. He had been attending the classes on prayer and had come to know something of its power. He immediately began praying and working for his mother who had a very bad smoking problem.

In speaking to her about her problem, Wayne said, "Mom, are you willing to give it up?" "No, Son," she said, "I've tried too many times. Three packs a day is an awful lot, but I guess there's nothing I can do about it now."

Wayne had learned some important things from the classes he had attended, and he knew that there was something that could be done. One of the things he had learned was that "God stands back of every promise He has made." (Christ's Object Lessons, p, 147). He quickly sent up a silent prayer for wisdom (James 1:5), confident that it would be given.

"Mom, would you be willing to claim a promise about smoking?" Wayne asked.

"Claim a what?" his mother responded, a little puzzled.

"Claim a Bible promise, Mother". And then Wayne sat down and for nearly two hours patiently explained the wonderful method of ASKING, BELIEVING, and CLAIMING the promises of God's Word.

To his great delight, his mother agreed to try the program, including a ten-point program of thanksgiving which he told her about which involves finding and listing ten things each day for which we are thankful, which is a wonderful way to calm jittery nerves.

Wayne carefully wrote out what she must do on a slip of paper which she could have handy.

A. Ask—Matthew 21:22.

B. Believe—Matthew 21:22.

C. Claim—and return thanks to God that you HAVE received the gift. I John 5:14, 15; I Cor. 15:57.

He gave her also three promises to claim:

I Corinthians 10:13—for smoking.

II Corinthians 10:5—for her nerves.

1 John 5:16—for life.

Two weeks later Wayne's mother told him, "Son, I'll have to admit this program really does work. I'm already down to only one pack a day, and I'm feeling so much better.

This was happy news! But there was more wonderful news to come. When he invited her to hear a tape that he had recorded of one of my sermons, she said: "Elder Coon? Why, yes. I want to hear it. I heard him speak at the Inglewood Seventh-day Adventist church just yesterday."

Wayne had not known of her interest in the church, nor of her attendance. His testimony at the next class was a complete confidence in the God of heaven that his mother would not only gain complete victory over the tobacco habit, but that she would soon be in regular attendance at the house of God. His heart was full of praise and thanksgiving.

God still lives! He is still answering the prayers of those who will fulfill the conditions. He is waiting to hear from you!

Why not take your problem to Him right now in prayer? He has answered others—He'll do the same for you.

Chapter 11

AFTER THIS, WHO COULD DOUBT?

WELL, THIS is it, for me," thought Helen when she heard the fateful words.

The kindly doctor returned and patted her hand as she tried to control the growing fear that threatened to engulf her.

"I'm sorry, " he said. "It seems you've had your share of trouble. But the X-rays are proof of what I've been suspecting for some time. You've had several surgeries, so you're acquainted with the medical term, sarcoma of the small bowel.

"I know what you're thinking, Helen. But let me encourage you to go to the Great Physician. Jesus can give you peace of mind and help you through this trying ordeal. And remember, I'll be praying for you."

During the long nights that followed, Helen lay awake for hours at a time. The tranquilizers, to which she had had to resort for several years, failed to give her the expected relief.

"What will happen to my children? Will others be patient with my teenage sons who need their mother's love and understanding? What about the younger ones? They're growing out of babyhood, but to me they're still babies. Why, God why?" So ran her worried thoughts as this young mother faced a dark and dismal future.

In her heart Helen was not blaming God. She just could not understand why this doom was pronounced on her when her children needed her so much. Yet it did seem unjust and unfair. But since God holds the master plans and allows calamities and trials to guide each life in the right direction, Helen decided to accept His will.

Helen's home was not a happy one. The uncontrolled temper of a non-Christian husband kept things upset and tense most of the time. But in spite of her weakened condition, and constant pain, Helen attended church as often as she could.

The first Sabbath after her doctor's report, I had been invited to be the guest speaker at the church which she attended. Both Helen and I feel it was providential that she was there that Sabbath morning when I presented the A, B, C's of receptive prayer.

As she listened to one experience after another of how God was answering prayer for young people and older ones alike, Helen felt as if a whole new world was opening up before her. She felt that in the power of the prayer of reception lay the answer to her immediate problem. She had faith that God could, and would, answer her prayer if she surrendered herself completely and claimed His promise with unswerving faith.

Helen thought much about what she had heard, and then decided to step forward in faith. It was a very important decision she made. She phoned her pastor and a few friends whom she felt were sincere, consecrated Christians, and asked them all to pray at home. The ministers offered prayers of commitment as we do for the sick, since we cannot know whether the sick have fulfilled the conditions to healing.

Because "the Lord is very pitiful, and of tender mercy" (James 5:11), and because He has promised in Psalms 50:15, "Call upon me in the day of trouble: I will deliver thee, and thou shalt glorify me", God heard and answered the prayers presented to Him in faith and submission, in Helen's behalf.

When I talked with her later, she said, "I prayed at home, claiming I John 1:9. I wanted my heart to be right with God. I wanted nothing to stand between me and God to prevent His answering my prayer. As the Holy Spirit came into my heart, and His presence filled my body, I prayed, with tears streaming down my face, claiming Psalm 103:3-5: "Who forgiveth all thine iniquities; who healeth all thy diseases; . . . , who crowneth thee with loving-kindness and tender mercies; who satisfieth thy mouth with good things; so that thy youth is renewed like the eagle's."

Helen continued, "Oh, what wonderful blessings God is waiting to bestow upon us if we but ask! I had felt completely at loose ends, not knowing which way to turn. But after that prayer, an entirely new feeling entered my body. The terrible feeling of heaviness and discouragement lifted, and a peace like I'd never known before filled my soul. I fully trusted in God, believing all would be well."

On Helen's next visit to the doctor, a second set of X-rays was taken to verify the first. Several days of waiting followed, during which Helen prayed constantly for guidance.

Once more a diagnosis was made. Finally the day came for Helen to go back for the doctor's report. As she entered his office, a smile spread over his face. Even before he spoke, Helen knew what the verdict was; her faith in answered prayer had never wavered since the day of special prayer.

"We see absolutely no further indication of the sarcoma we saw in the first X-rays," the doctor said.

Again, in her own words, I quote: "The dreaded sarcoma was gone! God had performed a miracle for me! What a wonderful thing to have experienced! My heart is full of thanksgiving. I want to shout it from the housetops, as it were, and tell what God in His loving-kindness, has done for me. I try to share this experience with others whenever I can, that His name may be glorified."

Helen shared her healing experience with her neighbor lady next door. "This is the kind of prayer life I want," she said, "would they allow me, too, to enroll in their prayer class?"

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Helen has shared her experience with all who are interested, and God is using her to bring courage and help to many discouraged ones.

"Faith is the key," says Helen, "but we must sincerely believe."

There is no limit to our usefulness in the hands of God, or to His blessings upon us, if we live humbly before Him.

One of the students in the prayer class was afflicted during the lesson study.

"Oh, if my back would only stop aching," thought Alma as she sat listening to other prayer students relate their experiences.

The tired muscles in her back were really beginning to give her trouble. Realizing that she was sitting in a straight-back chair, and knowing from past experience that, after a hard day at work something more serious might develop, Alma began to pray.

Immediately the promise found in Psalm 37:5 came into her mind, "Commit thy way unto the Lord; trust also in Him; and He shall bring it to pass."

The ache in her back became more intense. "Oh," she thought, "this pain is nearly killing me! How can I concentrate on this promise?"

But the Lord came to her rescue, and as she repeated the Bible promise over and over again in her mind, the troublesome pain began to lessen. This was something that had never happened before, and her heart was thrilled!

By the time the meeting was over, the pain was completely gone. Truly, "God does stand back of every promise that He has made." (See Christ's Object Lessons, page 147.)

Whether it is for the conversion of a soul, or a broken heart, a barbiturate addict, or an aching back, God is near and ready to hear.

Another example of answered prayer was that of Sonri. Although Sonri tried to conceal her emotions, she must have been the most unhappy person in the prayer class. Somehow, and for reasons unknown to her at the time, her thyroid gland had become infected. Not wishing to miss the prayer class, she decided to make the long drive with the others who also attended. She did not regret doing so.

No one can feel depressed in the midst of a happy group of Christians who are rejoicing and praising the Lord for answered prayer. Sonri was much encouraged, and when she joined her prayer band group, she told them of her problem. They immediately decided to petition the Lord and ask for healing for Sonri, claiming the Bible promise:

Who forgiveth all thine iniquities; who healeth all thy diseases." Psalm 103:3.

Wednesday evening was Sonri's appointment with her physician. As she talked with him, he explained how the disease affected the gland, sometimes destroying it. There was not really too much that he could do for her.

At the first opportunity given for relating her experience to the prayer class, Sonri had this to say:

"On Thursday I was feeling better, and by the following Monday the infection was completely gone. I feel God has definitely answered our prayers."

Everywhere we go we find fresh evidences of God's wonderful powers and willingness to answer prayer through Jesus our Lord. One very fine lady wrote after we had conducted a prayer series in her city:

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"After fourteen years of praying, you have shown me how to claim victory through faith in God's promises. One night my husband took the car and went for a short drive for his smoke before going to bed, I knelt by the living room sofa and prayed, 'Dear God, You have promised that if we bring our tithes and offerings to You, that You would rebuke the devourer for our sakes. Lord, I claim that promise. I believe You will do it. I believe You will help my husband to stop smoking. Thank You, Lord.'

"With that I went to bed. In a little while my husband came home. I expected him to announce as soon as he entered the door, that he had quit smoking and that he would never again touch a cigarette, But he didn't say a word when he came in.

"As I lay in bed, I thought, 'Lord, is it too soon?'

"Two days later my husband came home from work, it was on a Friday. When he walked in, he smiled real big and said, 'I haven't smoked all day. I'm through with them from here on out.

"Immediately I breathed a 'Thank You' prayer to the Lord for what He had done for my husband—victory through faith." Then she went on to relate a second experience:

"One morning, after my husband had left for work, I was suddenly taken ill. I was all alone and I didn't know what to do. So I prayed, 'Dear God, please send me some help.' As I finished my prayer, I heard a knock at the door. I invited whoever was there to come in.

"When the lady entered, I realized I had never met her, but knew that she lived just across the street from me. 'Thank God you came,' I said, 'I am in need of help. I've just become very sick.'

"In reply she said, 'I must tell you the experience I just had. I was getting ready to go to school (she was a high school teacher), and realized that I was already late, so I was just getting something hot to drink. As I raised my cup to drink, it seemed that a voice told me to come over here. This is the strangest experience I've ever had. I don't understand it. What can I do for you?'"

"I told her that I understood it perfectly. I told her how I had just prayed that God would send someone to help me. I told her that I knew it was a direct answer to the prayer of faith.

"Of course my neighbor lady gave me the help I needed, and I soon was feeling better. This is only one of many blessings that God has bestowed upon me in answer to the prayer of reception."

Is God interested, even in our adopting children? Listen to this.

"My husband and I were worried. It had been two years since we had adopted little Kimber and still she wasn't our own," said Minnie Porter, a member of the prayer class.

"Kimber was four months old when we first got her. Our attorney was having difficulty locating the real mother, in order to obtain her signature on the adoption papers. A whole year went by before it was secured.

"Then it seems, no matter what we did, or how many times we contacted him, the attorney kept putting off the signing of the final adoption papers. We had tried everything humanly possible to bring about the signature, but for another whole year we were being put off. This procedure should have taken a maximum of six weeks after the signing of the adoption papers. We were still waiting after two years!

"I was getting desperate," Minnie continued. "Suppose Kimber's father should come and try to claim the baby. I couldn't give Kimber up now. She was the light of my life. If only there was something I could do to force the attorney to act.

"About this time, Elder Coon conducted a series of meetings on prayer in our church. I was thrilled when I heard the first study. I wanted to learn more, but found that the class being taught on The Prayer of

Reception was restricted to the young people. My husband suggested that we begin claiming promises by ourselves, but I simply told him that I didn't know enough about it to do it intelligently.

"Then we heard of another class that was being opened in La Sierra. This one was open to all age groups, so my husband and I both signed up immediately. There we learned HOW to claim promises and pray the prayer of reception.

"In the morning we had our morning devotion and I was claiming the promise for 'life' for the party chosen by our prayer band. While in prayer, the thought came to me, 'Why not claim a promise for our little Kimber? God knows how much we love her and want to keep her.' So I started searching my Bible for a promise that I could claim.

"My eyes fell on the text in Psalms 37:5, 'Commit thy way unto the Lord; trust also in him; and he shall bring it to pass.' I placed my finger upon this text and prayed, 'Dear Lord, Thou knowest that I have fulfilled the conditions laid down in this promise. I have committed my way unto Thee, and I do trust in Thee. Now I ask Thee to bring it to pass as Thou hast promised. Provide a way so that the final adoption papers may be signed and our little Kimber will be truly ours. I believe that You are providing a way, and I thank Thee for it, in Jesus' name, Amen.'

"I wasn't off my knees for five minutes when the phone rang. It was the attorney saying, 'Come in and sign the final papers, and I will arrange for your hearing before the judge.'

"It was hard to believe. I had waited so long. But God was ready to fulfill my prayer in a matter of minutes. Kimber is ours now, and I could not be happier."

Our God is able! He is ready and willing to take care of small problems as well as the large ones. It is we who prevent His doing all He is willing to do.

Let us reach out by faith for all He is offering us.

Chapter 12

MARGARET PERSEVERED

ONE OF OUR very precious friends is Margaret Edge. Margaret Edge and Dorothy Robison are due a debt of gratitude for their faithful and loving assistance in doing "Youth Prays." Let us share first a scripture and then an experience Margaret thrillingly relates.

"For he is faithful that promised . . ." Hebrews 10:23.

Margaret was bubbling over with enthusiasm and joy as she told me of how the Lord had answered her prayer of reception and commitment. I did not even try to get a word in edge-wise. I just listened and thrilled with her as she told me of God's goodness. I'll just let her tell you that same story:

"It was Friday afternoon. While my daycare children were napping, I was hurriedly trying to catch up with the many and sundry duties that are so necessary in a busy household.

"Then the telephone rang, and all plans and ambitions to have the house and hearts in readiness for the Sabbath were suddenly taken away. The long-distance call, relayed to us through a relative, was to prepare us for the inevitable.

"Our niece's precious baby was seriously ill with a puzzling ailment. He had gradually been losing weight, was now down to fifteen pounds, and the doctors on the case had decided to operate. It was very discouraging, especially to the young mother, for Kevin was an only child and not quite one year old.

Youth Prays . . . God Answers

"It was very upsetting. My first impulse was to send a prayer heaven-ward; the second, to call a special friend, one whom I knew was in close touch with God at all times. She and her minister husband promised to have special prayer for little Kevin, and my sad heart was somewhat comforted. We had also been praying for the baby's mother who had left the church and had married out of the faith.

"This must be one of the means that will bring her back,' I thought as I continued my preparations for the Sabbath. The Lord has promised that, 'All things work together for good.' (Romans 8:28). I kept thinking; and He is 'not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance' (II Peter 3:9).

"Neither of these Bible verses contained a definite promise for healing, so I saw I could only pray the prayer of commitment, 'Thy will be done.' (Matthew 26:42), and 'Not as I will, but as Thou wilt.' (Matthew 26:39).

"Thus I reasoned and prayed during the remaining hours of the day: and thus I kept close to Jesus.

"In due time, the parents came for the day-care children. The holy Sabbath hours were drawing near as I sat down on the big, screened porch to watch the glowing colors in the western sky. I picked up some copies of the "Youth's Instructor" and glanced through the pages. My eyes fell upon the story of a young mother whose child was also sick. She claimed the promise in Psalms 46:1: 'God is my refuge and strength . . .' as she hurried to the side of her child. This text greatly cheered my heart.

"As the comforting darkness of Sabbath evening enveloped the house, I made my way to the bedroom and gave in to the flood of tears that just could not be held back any longer. This brought relief to tired nerves, and I could listen better to the still, small voice of God.

"God is my refuge and strength,' I repeated, 'a very present help in trouble.' Then I asked that my niece, Kevin's mother, whom I have always called 'my little girl,' would accept God as her strength in this great trouble.

"And so I prayed and wept for both of them. Then the Lord gave me a mental picture of two of my little day charges, leaping for joy (Luke 6:23), and saying in their childish voices, 'pwise da Ward! Pwise da Ward!' This came as a direct message to my heart 'It's time to praise the Lord.'

"I sat up, snapped on the light, and reached out to pick up my Bible. I wondered what promise I might claim for myself. But 'before they call, I will answer', (Isaiah 65:24) the Lord has promised, and His answer was right there beside me.

The Bible was open to Jeremiah 31. In amazement I carefully picked it up. What a feeling of joy swept over me as my eyes were drawn to the words in the 16th verse, the only one on the two pages that was underlined and marked:

"Thus saith the Lord; Refrain thy voice from weeping, and thine eyes from tears; for thy work shall be rewarded, saith the LORD; and they shall come again from the land of the enemy.'

"Now my heart could sing, and my lips could praise the Lord. Instinctively I began singing aloud a simple little melody which I've always believed God helped me compose:

I praise the Lord in the morning,
When the birds their carols sing;
My heart is glad, I can't be sad,
The air with joy does ring.

I praise the Lord in the morning,

And angels join the song!
We praise the name of Jesus,
We all to Him belong.

"During the following week an exchange of phone calls verified the fact that 'God stands back of every promise He has made.'"Christ's Object Lessons p. 147.

"Our 'prayer baby' was literally brought back from the land of the enemy. The doctors had postponed the exploratory surgery, and since the baby had gained back a pound, they allowed him to go home.

"Although I continued to pray for little Kevin and his mother, the cares of this life gradually crowded in and I failed to persevere in Prayer. Some days were more pressing than others, but I managed to send a soft, cuddly toy to Kevin for his first birthday, so thankful that he was still with us.

Before he received it, the 'enemy' struck again, and God allowed my faith to be tried severely. I forgot for the moment that the Lord promises in James 1:3, 'The trying of your faith worketh patience.'

"When the telephone rang at midnight, I was not prepared for the stunning message that I received. Kevin's mother anxiously told me that the baby was in the hospital again, this time with what the doctors thought was pneumonia. She said they would not let even her see him. I tried to comfort her by telling her that I would be praying for him, and that I loved her dearly.

"When I put down the receiver and slowly made my way back to bed, I was sick at heart. Was this God's way of saving 'my little girl' and bringing them back from the 'land of the enemy?' What about the promise that just a few days ago had seemed so definite: 'Thus saith the Lord; Refrain thy voice from weeping, and thine eyes from tears: for thy work shall be rewarded, saith the Lord; and they shall come again from the land of the enemy.' (Jeremiah 31:16). I began to ask myself where my faith and confidence had gone. It had been So strong just a few days before. Now I was back down in the doldrums of despair again.

"The answer came after I went to the Lord in prayer: 'Come now, and let us reason together, saith the Lord.' (Isaiah 1:18) The Lord is not slack concerning his promise (II Peter 3:9) 'Cast not away therefore your confidence, which hath great recompense of reward, . . . that, after ye have done the will of God, ye might receive the promise.' (Hebrews 10:23). Hold fast the profession of your faith without wavering; (for he is faithful that promised) (Hebrews 10:23).

"Then again I turned to Jeremiah 31:16, and with confidence and assurance in my heart thanked God for His promises, and for bringing Kevin back from the 'land of the enemy' once more.

"I continued to pray this way—'without ceasing' (I Thessalonians 5:17).

"Because no more telephone messages were received, I took the silence to mean that all was well. I continued to thank the Lord for making Kevin well again, and for all that his health would mean in the salvation of both mother and baby. One day as I was having my private devotions, I read something that I thought was so good. It was in the book, Early Writings, page 73:

"We should be much in secret prayer. . . I asked the angel why there was no more faith and power in Israel. He said, "ye let go of the arm of the Lord too soon. Press your petitions to the throne, and hold on by strong faith. The promises are sure. Believe ye receive the things ye ask for, and ye shall have them.

"I was rewarded for my faith, for in just a few weeks I received another phone call. This time my niece was calm and happy. The doctors had found the cause of the illness and had been able to successfully treat the baby. The baby is learning to walk and looks like a butter-ball, according to the last report I received.

"How good God is. He may test us and try our faith, but if we will but persevere, the reward for our faithfulness will be sure.

"I thank God for all He has done, and for all He is going to do in the days to come."

In all our prayer classes we make clear that the prayer for the sick is to be one of commitment. We also have made it a practice to hand each student several type-written pages explaining why prayer for the sick must be one of commitment. This is why Margaret, in relating her experience in praying for Kevin, stated that it was one of commitment as well as reception--commitment for the physical healing, and reception for the spiritual life of both her niece and Kevin. And how wonderful is our Father in heaven! He gave her a wonderful answer to the prayer of commitment; and some day, if she persists, we doubt not but what the Prayer for her loved ones will result in their being among the saved.

Chapter 13

ALL SUFFICIENT

Margaret picked up the lesson assignment and read the first part: "Bring in five Bible Promises that deal with everyday life." Then she closed her eyes and claimed the promise for wisdom found in James 1:5.

Since attending a few of the classes on prayer, Margaret was getting better acquainted with her Saviour, and it gave her quite a thrill whenever He sent a definite answer to a simple little prayer of reception.

"Everyday life?" She thought about it for a moment. "That's quite an assignment. I wonder how much time it will take, she thought. When my day begins, it really starts off with a bang, and I certainly need to keep going to stay ahead of a houseful of lively youngsters."

Margaret operated a day-nursery and her days were filled with a variety of problems. She never knew from one day to the next how many children would be present.

She looked at the clock. "Two hours before they start arriving. Let me see, how shall I do this? I know," she mused, "I'll write down everything we usually do each day and see how many promises I have need of. Thank You Lord for this idea."

Margaret was soon in a writing mood, and ideas came thick and fast. Realizing that with an increasing number of children coming, she would need an increasing number of promises, she recalled a typical busy day.

"I usually waken quite early, she wrote, so I have time to study my Sabbath School lesson, read and pray for my family and friends. Then I begin to think about the little ones who will be with me all day, and pray for each of them.

"Now what promise can I claim that will help me today? What do I need most? Patience! That's it--and plenty of it, what with five boys and two girls in constant motion!

"What does 'patience' mean? It means being calm, quiet, uncomplaining. Uncomplaining? Calm? When seven children seem to be talking at once, trying to show me a new dolly, a book, or handing me a bottle or a note. . . not to mention the ringing telephone, or having to rescue the puppy and settle an argument about whose turn it is to hold him. Yes, I need patience! The Lord says so, too.

"Promise No. 1: In Hebrews 10:36, God says: 'Ye have need of patience, that, after ye have done the will of God, Ye might receive the promise.' I'll need that patience in just a few minutes. The school bus will be here any minute, then I'll pass out crayons or magazines and books. I'll have to see to it that they are all entertained and busy before I hurry Walter across the street. Yes, I'll certainly need patience!

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"Then it's prayer time with the children. Some insist that they have just had prayer at home. I can insist that we pray again, or I can find another way.

"Now what promise do I need? I John 1:9, of course, '. . . he is faithful and just to forgive us . . .' even when we've been a little hasty with our tongues. I raised my voice before I left the house. I wanted to make sure that the children knew I meant what I said. I run outside, feel the crisp air, wave to the friendly bus driver, kiss my boy good-by, and thank the Lord for His many blessings to this point.

"I get back into the house, having claimed the promise of I John 1:9 and am ready for the next hurdle. (I like to call it 'hurdle' because the Lord says, 'leap for joy' when you're in trouble. And leaping is a good way to get over a hurdle, isn't it?)

"Promise No. 2: This is found in Isaiah 30:15, 'In returning and rest shall ye be saved; in quietness and in confidence shall be your strength.' From Isaiah 40:31, I learn how to be quiet and have confidence: 'They that wait upon the Lord shall renew their strength; they shall mount up with wings as eagles; they shall run, and not be weary; and they shall walk, and not faint.'

"Promise No. 3: James 1:5-8, 'If any of you lack wisdom, let him ask of God; . . .and it shall be given him.' This one I use most of all.

"Now the sun is up a little higher and it looks a little warmer outside. If one child decides to go outside, it's amazing how all of the other little cherubs decide they want to go out too. Everyone is shouting a request, 'Can I go too? Can I go too?'

"All right, what do I do now? Where is the wisdom I've just thanked God for? I tell myself not to waver because I know that I won't receive anything of the Lord if I waver. I must keep calm now and use the wisdom God has given me. God has promised to show me a 'more excellent way' (I Corinthians 12:3)

The easiest way would be for me to say, 'Fine, all of you get your jackets on and go out and play. I've got work to do.'

"But I don't do that because it is not the 'more excellent way'. In this case, and at the present moment the 'more excellent way' is found in Deuteronomy 6:6, 7, 'Thou shalt teach them diligently unto thy children.' Psalm 127:3 tells us that 'Children are an heritage of the Lord.' Since the younger members of the Lord's family need to be taught, the Lord's wisdom for me is to teach. Teach what? How? Right now? Right now, before the leader of this little flock turns into the Lone Ranger or Bat Man--or something worse!

"Promise No. 4: This one comes to mind easily and quickly. It is found in Isaiah 41:10: 'Fear thou not; for I am with thee: be not dismayed; for I am thy God: I will strengthen thee; yea, I will help thee.' And I say 'Thank You, Lord. Thank You.'

"Immediately I raise my hand for attention. When they are all waiting for an answer, I drop my voice and say very quietly, 'Whose turn is it to help me today?' Of course I don't expect them all to change into perfect little helpers instantly, but one or two of them shout, 'I will!' 'I will!' 'My turn!' The mob has been dispersed, new partnerships have been formed, and again I say, Thank You, Lord. Thank You.'

"And so it goes throughout the day. Each child is different, reacts differently, and so God gives the wisdom to fit the need. Sometimes we stop in the middle of a very important job to read a story, have prayer with a naughty little lamb, or get out the memory verse booklets and repeat some Bible verses.

"Promise No. 5 can be used more than once and in as many different ways. Philippians 4:19 says, 'My God shall supply all your need.' This promise has a partner found in Isaiah 65:24, 'Before they call, I will answer.'

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"As everyone knows, children need toys, the kind that fit their needs; little toys for little tots, and bigger toys for bigger ones.

"The day is far spent, and the hardest time of all is just before us. The older children have just returned from school, and the others are waking from their naps. If any one needs patience, courage, confidence, wisdom and some strength, I certainly do.

"But wait! What's that noise outside? Who's coming? Every child who can climb, tries to see out the kitchen window while the others rush to look through the fence and the back gate. The Lord is supplying our need in two ways. He's bringing something in a trailer, and at the same time giving us a new train of thought.

"As we watch, a voice calls, 'Do you want a swing set for that gang of yours?'

"To my great delight my dad and brother begin to unload the parts of three different sets and with plenty of volunteer helpers, very shortly have a wonderful big toy ready for action.

"Amid happy voices and waving hands, they drive away, and you should know by this time what I'm thinking. Yes, I'm saying, 'Thank You, Lord. It's exactly what I need.'

"Another great need that is so abundantly supplied, and which is given before we call, is the need for protection from different kinds of germs. Wherever there are babies and small children, we can expect colds, sniffles, earaches, stomach-aches, and all kinds of aches and pains. And we have our share. We are not immune.

"One of my two-year-olds just loves to give away some sweet, juicy kisses, regardless of colds and sniffles. And the 'flu-bug' doesn't care when or who invites him. He just comes, and at the most inopportune times at that. According to all health rules and regulations, I should have been counted among the unfortunate ones on the sick list.

"But I have a Father Who is daily sending protection. And for this, too, I am saying, 'Thank You, Lord. I have found Your promises to be all-sufficient in every experience through which I am called to pass.'"

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Two-year-old Betty Jackson looked at her mother, her eyes full of tears that threatened to spill over any minute.

"But I don't want to take a nap," she insisted. "I want to play with baby sister. She doesn't have to go to bed, and I don't want to either!"

Mother Jackson sighed. Why did this same performance have to be enacted day after day? There was no use trying to explain to a two-year-old that the baby had already taken her nap before lunch.

Mother insisted, so Betty tried to settle down as she was told. After what seemed a long, long time, a tired little girl could resist no longer and closed her eyes, gave a big sigh, and relaxed in sleep.

That evening, and again the next morning Mother did some thinking. "Here I am," she said to herself, "taking a course in the science of prayer, and can't even find time to study. I'm sure the Lord wants me to continue, because I do need to learn better how to pray. Well, He'll just have to help me find the time."

After praying for her family, Mother added this petition, "Lord, I need time to read the book that is required in the prayer class. I don't believe I am asking 'amiss' (James 4:3), or that it is a selfish asking; so please, Lord, provide the time so I can read. Thank You, Lord. Amen."

Then she went about her usual household tasks.

## Youth Prays . . . God Answers

When it was time for baby's morning nap, an unusual thing happened. Nine-month-old Susan' just could not go to sleep. If she could talk, she might have insisted on playing with Betty. But since that was not possible, she let Mother know in other ways that a nap was not to her liking.

"Well, if you won't, you won't," said Mother, who had many things to do and was hurrying through her work thinking the Lord would work something out so she could study for the class. Her mind was also on the book for required reading that she had gotten at the class.

After lunch, Baby Susan decided that a good long sleep would be just fine. Mother whole-heartedly agreed, and soon tucked her sleepy daughter into bed.

"You darling," whispered Mother. "Why can't your big sister go to sleep as quickly and as easily as you?" And then the thought struck her, perhaps this was the way the Lord had decided to answer her prayer.

Quietly closing the bedroom door, she went in search of Betty. She still did not want to take a nap and tried to persuade Mother that it was not really necessary.

But Mother was determined to help the Lord answer her prayer. The promise found in Matthew 7:7 came to her mind, "Ask, and it shall be given."

"Dear Lord," Mother prayed, "I believe You are answering my prayer for a quiet time to read the book. Please help Betty to lie down and relax now while the baby is asleep. You have promised that if I ask for anything, You will give it me. So I am asking You to let her go to sleep. I believe that she is going to go to sleep now; and I thank You for doing it. Amen."

While Mother was silently talking to the One Who says, "Suffer the little children to come unto me" (Mark 10:14), she was gently rubbing Betty's back and showing her love and attention. Then she began humming softly a familiar tune.

Under the subduing influence, the presence of Jesus was felt in the room, and immediately two-year-old Betty, who up to this time had never gone to sleep within the hour, closed her eyes and was fast asleep.

With a heart full of thankfulness, Mother whispered, "Thank You, dear Lord," and hurried toward her book and a comfortable chair.

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Pearl James was frantic, and time was slipping away. Where in the world had she put those stamps? In the desk drawer? She looked again, without success. In the kitchen by the telephone? No, not there.

"Where, oh, where are they?" she whispered aloud. "They should be here somewhere. Things just don't disappear into thin air! Maybe ..." she glanced at the clock. "No, I'd never make it to the post office now. It's already closing time. But this letter must be in the mail tonight! I just have to find those stamps!"

Is this the way it is at your house occasionally? You may not be looking for postage stamps; it could be your Sabbath school lesson quarterly, or any one of a number of items. What do you do? Do you rely on your own wisdom to find them?

The Lord says, "Call upon me in the day of trouble: I will deliver thee" (Psalm 50:15).

After again looking in every likely place, Pearl decided to claim a Bible promise. "If it can work for others, the Lord can make it work for me," she said aloud as she walked over to the sofa where she planned to speak to the Lord.

At the next meeting of the prayer class, the members rejoiced with Pearl as she reported:

"I claimed the promise, 'Ask, and it shall be given you; seek, and ye shall find' (Matthew 7:7). Then I opened one of the drawers and lifted some papers, and out dropped the stamps!"

He who watches the tiny sparrow is interested in every detail of our lives.

"We should now acquaint ourselves with God by proving His promises." The Great Controversy, page 622.

Chapter 14:

WORRIED ABOUT CONDITIONS?

MIRIAM BROWN was a young, vivacious college sophomore who had recently learned of the Seventh-day Adventist faith and whole-heartedly accepted it. She was enrolled in the class on the Prayer of Reception, and it was my privilege to interview her one day.

We discussed the conditions to answered prayer. I wanted to know her attitude toward this matter of conditions to answered prayer.

Some of them are:

1. To feel our need. Isaiah 44:3.
2. Faith. Hebrews 11:6.
3. Harbor no cherished sin. Psalm 66:18.
4. Obedience. Prov. 28:9,
5. Unselfish purpose. Luke 11:1-13.
6. Persistence. Luke 18:7.
7. Diligence. Luke 15:8.
8. Through Christ. John 16:23.
9. A forgiving spirit. Mark 11:25, 26; Luke 6:37.
10. An uncondemning spirit. Isaiah 58:9-12; Luke 6:37.
11. Family harmony. I Peter 3:6-11.
12. Humility. Psalms 25:9.

In reply to my question, Miriam said, "In the church of which I was a member before I learned of the Seventh-day Adventist faith, nothing was said about conditions, In fact, very little was said about prayer."

Then she smiled as she said, "I'm so happy to learn about the conditions to answered prayer; for I feel now that I have a real assurance in prayer. I know now that as surely as I fulfill the conditions, God will fulfill His promise. It is most encouraging to me as I pray."

Then she went on to say that there are times when there is a struggle to surrender, to be willing to meet the conditions to answered prayer. "But", she said, "I know it is useless for me to pray unless I am also willing to fulfill the simple conditions."

Another student to whom I spoke about this same matter shared with me his reaction.

"To me, meeting the conditions to answered prayer is a way of life," he said. The conditions to answered prayer merely outline what a normal, healthy Christian life is like. If we are living the right kind of life in Christ, then we are also fulfilling the conditions to answered prayer." To him it was just that simple.

To illustrate further: One of the conditions to answered prayer is to have a forgiving spirit. This forgiving spirit should not be turned on only when we want an answer to a prayer. It can be, and should be, a way of life. In the same way the Bible tells us, "If I regard iniquity in my heart, the Lord will not hear me" (Psalms 66:18) If Jesus lives in our hearts, we will, as a normal and constant way of life, be devoid of harboring iniquity.

What is true of these two conditions is true of all the conditions to answered prayer. God does not ask the impossible, nor does He make it difficult for us to approach Him in prayer.

We have discovered in our ministry that even the most dedicated men have problems with which they must battle. Someone has done them a grave injustice, and they feel it keenly—sometimes to the point of retaliation.

Bitterness seems to have taken a hold of their feelings and they begin to turn sour in their entire attitude. This condition can creep up on us almost imperceptibly, even as we carry heavy burdens for God.

When someone maligns our purest motives, misjudges our most sincere efforts, and misrepresents our unselfish actions, human nature is going to feel it. To say we are not hurt is to ignore that we are human.

The James Whites had such an experience, and of this Ellen White wrote:

"Our property may go, and we will still rejoice in God, if it be used for the advancement of his cause. We have cheerfully spent the best of our days, the best of our strength, and have nearly worn out in the same cause, and feel the infirmities of premature age, and yet we will rejoice. But when our professed brethren attack our character and influence, by representing us as wealthy, worldly, and grasping for more, it is then that we feel keenly. Let us enjoy the character and influence we have dearly earned during the past twenty years, with even poverty and a slight hold on health and this mortal life, and we will rejoice, and cheerfully give to the cause the little there is left of us." —Testimonies, Vol. 1, pp. 607, 608.

This illustrates the effect injustices can have on the best of saints. These injustices are felt keenly by most everyone wronged this way. But there is a difference between being hurt and being bitter; between being wronged and being retaliatory. The Whites felt the hurt keenly, but they did not permit themselves to dwell in bitterness, brooding over these injustices. They recognized the hurt for what it was, but when they had aired their feelings, they went on in courage and faith, determined to be servants of the God of heaven.

Paul suggests that we "examine yourselves, whether ye be in the faith" (2 Corinthians 13:5), from time to time. This can be a painful process, but when we have gone through the experience, we realize that unless we have a companionship with Jesus, of ourselves we are most incapable of living a successful Christian life.

When we realize our need for the power of heaven to transform these hearts of ours, we live in the attitude of surrender and gratitude for what He has done for us. We begin to step out in faith and ask for still greater things from a God Who is willing to give us good things.

Some years ago I was thrilled to learn that every Bible promise is for me, personally. I learned it from studying the book "Ministry of Healing". On page 122 I read these words: "So with all the promises of

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God's word. In them He is speaking to us individually, speaking as directly as if we could listen to His voice."

Then on page 59 of the book, "Christ's Object Lessons", I noted these words: "only he who receives the Scriptures as the voice of God speaking to himself, is a true learner."

Since I, a minister of God and His Holy Word, considered myself a true learner, I also accepted the fact that I must receive the Scriptures as God's voice speaking to me personally.

"What a thrill to know this," I thought. "And what a feeling of joyous anticipation it is to study and read my Lord's messages to me personally!"

Someone reminded me that, "To every promise of God there are conditions." Education, page 253.

"There are certain conditions upon which we may expect that God will hear and answer our prayers." Steps to Christ, page 95.

After studying these conditions, I made another discovery. My own efforts to fulfill the conditions were not enough. Without God's help, it was impossible. So I began to pray earnestly, as I studied, to know just how to comply with these divine requirements.

Then I received an understanding of the whole problem that brought peace and joy to my soul. I realized that long before I was born, God had already prepared all the help I needed to do this.

As I share this knowledge with the young people in the prayer classes, it proves to be a blessing to them as it was to me, and as it continues to thrill my heart, I share it something like this:

First-God gave me a Saviour in His Son, Jesus. John 3:16.

Second-God gave me the Bible. 2 Peter 1:4. (It contains 3,573 promises.)

Third-God gave me faith to accept Jesus as my personal Saviour. Romans 12:3 (last part).

Fourth-God gives me repentance and forgiveness. Acts 5:31; 1 John 1:9.

Fifth-God gives me a new heart and a new spirit. Ezekiel 36:26, 27.

Sixth-God gives me love for others. Romans 5:5; Galatians 5:22.

Seventh-I must obey to receive answers to prayer, and God gives me the gift of obedience. Ezekiel 36:27.

Because God's love for us is so very great, and because He knows our great need for His saving grace in our lives, He freely gives us "exceeding great and precious promises" (2 Peter 1:4), and all the help we need to fulfill the conditions to them.

What less can we do than to Ask, Believe, and Claim by returning thanks to our wonderful heavenly Father that He has fulfilled His promises to us?

Every condition to prayer is itself a free gift promised by our Lord. So, let us ask Him to fulfill in us the very condition needed to receive still other gifts promised, and then use them all to be a blessing to others.

When I first realized that conditions to answered prayer are themselves gifts from God, I sat down and penned these verses which, I think, say what I feel:

CONDITIONS

Do God's conditions

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To answered prayer
Cause consternation,
And deep despair?

Look twice; you shall see
The conditions, too,
Are gifts from His hand
He has promised you.

For each condition
Is a treasure chest,
Which is, with its gift,
A blessing, and blest.

The two are twin gifts,
Each a precious one;
And God's choicest gifts
Are found in His Son.

But let us not pray amiss. For example, there is the experience of Wayne and Pat. They had been asking themselves:

"Why hasn't God answered our prayer? He knows how much we want to rent that house in Santa Ana Canyon. It's just what we need, with lots of room and different kinds of fruit trees. We've been claiming Bible promises. God tells us in Philippians 4:19 that He will supply all our needs. And in John 16:23 we have the promise that 'Whatsoever ye shall ask the Father in my name, he will give it you.' We've certainly been asking. So why doesn't God answer our prayer?" These were the questions that Wayne and Pat Ward were asking themselves.

"Wayne," Pat answered thoughtfully, "do you suppose we could be praying amiss? Maybe our prayers are becoming ritualistic. Let's claim the promise in James 1:5 for wisdom so we can pray aright."

"All right," said Wayne. And this they did, seeking God in all earnestness for wisdom to know how to pray and what to pray for.

Not long after this conversation, the two of them drove to La Sierra to obtain some application blanks for the prayer class. But the folk they came to see were not at home, so they chatted briefly with my wife.

Just as they were preparing to leave, I opened the door and walked in. You should have seen the smiles on the faces of those two young people!

"Pastor Coon!" Wayne exclaimed. "You're the answer to our prayer. The Lord sent you home so you could help us."

Then they went on to explain their problem. "It's about a particular house in the Santa Ana Canyon. Although we've been claiming Bible promises, the Lord has not answered our prayer. Why, I don't know. He has answered all the other prayers we have claimed promises for. We've fulfilled all the conditions. We have even been double tithing. So why hasn't God answered this prayer?"

Before giving any counsel I always pray for divine guidance. So after a few minutes of quiet meditation, I said, "Wayne, God has promised that if we ask, He will give. Perhaps we need a coat, but can we tell God that we need a certain, particular red coat?"

"Or perhaps we need a car. Should we say, 'God, I want You to give me the latest Cadillac'? God knows you need a bigger house. He also knows you would like to be out there near your wife's relatives so she won't be lonely. But do you have a right to tell God that you must have that one particular house?"

I could see from their facial expressions that both were following my reasoning, so I continued.

"God has told us in Jeremiah 33:3: 'Call unto me, and I will answer thee, and shew thee great and mighty things, which thou knowest not.'

"Now maybe this is not the house God sees is best for you to have. Maybe He has a better one for you. You can pray the prayer of reception for a house, but you must pray the prayer of commitment for a particular house. Then, you may reason with the Lord as He has told you to in Isaiah 1:18."

As Wayne shook my hand he said, "Thank you, Pastor Coon! Thank you. Do you know, your counsel has been a direct answer to our prayer for wisdom? The Lord be praised!"

Wayne and his wife could hardly wait until they arrived home so they could pray the prayer of reception for a house, and then pray the prayer of commitment for this particular house.

When they arrived home, they knelt in prayer. Before they rose from their knees, Wayne added, "Lord, please give us this particular house only if it will be to Thine honor and glory. Amen."

And Pat prayed, "Dear Lord, if it could be possible, could we get it for one hundred dollars a month? You know that is all we can afford."

Our conversation with Wayne and Pat was on a Sunday evening. The very next day they received a phone call concerning the house. They could have it, and for one hundred dollars a month!

Wayne and Pat are convinced this was a direct answer to their prayer of commitment from a loving heavenly Father.

Chapter 15: That Guardian Angel

THE TELEPHONE rang. Oh, it was Margaret calling.

"Dorothy? Would you like to go with us to Norwalk to hear Pastor Coon tonight? Mrs. Heintz plans to go and she says that there is room in the car for two or three more. How about it?"

Without a moment's hesitation, Dorothy answered, "Oh, yes, I'd love to go! Where shall I meet you? What time? At 6:30? Don't you think we should leave earlier? That freeway traffic can get awfully congested, you know, and we don't want to miss any of Pastor Coon's message. All right, I'll be ready. Thank you! Thank you for calling and inviting me. Bye now. I'll see you tonight."

And so began a chain of circumstances that changed the concept of prayer in the lives of several of our friends.

The author was teaching the ABC's of Bible prayer in one of the neighboring churches.

"In the prayer of faith there is a divine science; it is a science that every one who would make his life-work a success must understand." *Education*, page 257.

The speaker pointed out that just prior to the coming of Jesus, "we shall need an experience which we do not now possess." *The Great Controversy*, page 622.

Youth Prays . . . God Answers

These special studies that were being conducted in the Norwalk, California church were an attempt to share with the people the "how" of getting this experience. The attentive listeners were reminded, "We should now acquaint ourselves with God by proving His *promises*." *Ibid*.

"In the word of God there are gracious promises, from which those who are suffering, . . . may receive comfort and hope and encouragement." *Counsels on Health*, page 213.

Margaret and Dorothy were thrilled to learn the basic fundamentals--the "know-how"--of proving God's promises.

Just as they had to know the ABC's of learning before the knowledge of reading came to them, so the ABC's of prayer had to be mastered before they actually became acquainted with God. This amazing subject came from a Book they thought they knew pretty well.

Ask, Jesus bids us in Matthew 21:22.

Believe, that you receive, Matthew 21:22.

Claim, by *returning* thanks that we *have* received, John 11:41.

The speaker recommended that all who could obtain the book *Education*, should read and study the chapter entitled, "Faith and Prayer." He called it "the million dollar chapter."

Margaret and Dorothy wholeheartedly agreed when they read on page 258: "He [Christ] makes it plain that our asking must be according to God's will; we must ask for the things that He has promised, and whatever we receive must be used in doing His will. The conditions met, the promise is unequivocal.... for any gift He has promised, we may ask; then we are to believe that we receive, and return thanks to God that we have received."

As the group of ladies continued to travel the eighty-odd miles from their homes to the series of meetings and back, many different opinions and experiences were recounted. They were thrilled with the knowledge and understanding they were receiving from these meetings. Their faith and confidence in Jesus seemed to be growing by leaps and bounds.

Then one Sunday Dorothy's telephone rang again. "Dorothy," Margaret said, "Pat and her husband want to go to the meeting tonight, and since Mrs. Heintz already has a carload, I'm planning to take my car. Would you like to ride with us?"

"Yes, surely," Dorothy answered. "I'll be glad to." Arrangements were made as to the time and place of meeting.

That evening, with Pat and Harvey aboard, Margaret started in the direction of Dorothy's home. As the car's engine began to warm up, a faint odor of gasoline could be smelled.

For several minutes nothing was said. Finally Margaret became worried. "I don't like this gasoline smell at all," she commented. Silently, a special petition was sent up to the One Who promises to give wisdom and protection.

When they came to a service station, Margaret decided to have the motor checked for possible gasoline line leaks. She knew from past experience that it is not a wise thing to lean on your "own understanding" (Proverbs 3:5). If help is available, the smart thing to do is to get it!

While the tank was being filled, a young man checked under the hood.

"He's almost too young to know what he's doing," Margaret was thinking. She turned to Harvey. "Would you mind checking to see what's wrong? And please tell the man to hurry. We'll be late unless we can get back on the road shortly."

Youth Prays . . . God Answers

When Harvey returned to the car, he said, "The gas line has a leak, but the man tightened it. I'm sure it will be all right now."

Again a silent prayer went heavenward--this time full of thankfulness. A few minutes later, with Dorothy in the car, they headed toward Norwalk and the evening meeting.

Just before they drove onto the freeway, they pulled off to the side of the road and claimed the promise found in Psalm 34:7, "The angel of the Lord encampeth round about them that fear him, and delivereth them." They offered a word of prayer and headed out on the freeway.

The Sunday traffic was unusually heavy. It was stop-and-go for much of the way. As they drove along, the gasoline smell seemed to be getting stronger. Even with the windows down, the smell was almost unbearable.

Margaret was becoming very uneasy. Trying to strengthen her own courage, she said, "The smell of gasoline must be coming from the little bit that leaked from the loose connection. I'm sure it will go away eventually."

Dorothy agreed somewhat reluctantly. The others made no comment. For a while no one spoke. All were busy with their own thoughts. Was the gas line really fixed? Then how was it the smell was getting stronger?"

Margaret was earnestly pleading with God, "Please don't let anything happen. We're not seeking foolish pleasure. We're seeking more knowledge of Thee. Please take the car to Norwalk and back home again without any trouble. Thank You, Lord."

Margaret felt no definite assurance that all was going to be well, so as long as the uneasiness remained she persevered in prayer.

As the miles disappeared behind them, and they neared the suburbs of Los Angeles, the heavy traffic made it impossible for Margaret to do more than glance casually at her friend beside her. Dorothy had been a great source of encouragement on many occasions, and she was certainly a big help again, even if she did not do much talking. Part of the time, Margaret noticed, she looked relaxed enough to be enjoying a nap.

But Dorothy had not been resting as comfortably as was supposed. Her thoughts were also on the One Who "stands back of every promise He has made." All the while that Margaret was praying for divine help, Dorothy was reminding the Lord of His promise and was asking for deliverance from danger. The fumes were definitely getting stronger. Again she prayed, "Dear Lord, You have promised that Your angels will form a camp around those who fear and obey Thee, to deliver them. We love Thee, Lord, and we know that You love us. We thank You for sending Your angels to keep us safe."

Why all this concern over a problem that supposedly had been taken care of? But then, you know what happens when gasoline comes in contact with a hot engine!

Margaret and Dorothy had real cause for concern. Their olfactory system was relaying a message to their reasoning powers that something was drastically wrong. Instead of the now familiar odor diminishing, it was growing stronger.

All were relieved when they reached their destination. They were all thankful to the One Who "commissions His angels to save His chosen ones from calamity." The Acts of the Apostles, page 153.

It was a good meeting. The speaker's confidence and faith in God in the evening message greatly encouraged all who were learning to claim Bible promises. There were smiles and happy comments at the close of the service as the "good-bys" were being said by the departing congregation.

All too soon it was time to begin the long journey homeward. They had almost forgotten about the problem while in the meeting. Now as they stepped into the car, the smell of gasoline once again reminded them of the situation. Once again they paused and asked God to take care of them on the homeward journey.

They wondered as they sat in the car before driving away, "Should they have the car checked again?" It would be hard to find a service station open now. Most of them had closed up already. After some discussion, it was decided that since the attendant had fixed the loose connection, they would consider the problem as having been solved.

Was presumption entering the picture? "Presumption is Satan's counterfeit of faith. Faith claims God's promises, and brings forth fruit in obedience. Presumption also claims the promises, but uses them as Satan did, to excuse transgression." *The Desire of Ages*, page 126.

"God's precious promises are not given to strengthen men in a presumptuous course or for him to rely upon when he rushes needlessly into danger." *Testimonies*, Vol. 3, page 482.

"There are certain conditions upon which we may expect that God will hear and answer our prayers. One of the first of these is that we feel our need of help from Him." *Steps to Christ*, page 95.

Margaret and Dorothy were complying with these conditions. Margaret, as owner and driver of the car, was as helpless as she was ignorant of mechanical devices. A "typical woman driver" she could only Ask, Believe, and Claim the promises God had made.

Margaret searched her own heart to be sure that everything was all right and that God could answer the petitions of her heart. She remembered that in *Steps to Christ*, page 95, it says: "When all known wrongs are righted, we may believe that God will answer our petitions." Yes, she was sure that everything was all right in this department.

"He that cometh to God must believe that he is, and that he is a rewarder of them that diligently seek him." *Hebrews 11:6*.

"There is necessity for diligence in prayer." *Steps to Christ*, page 98.

"Continue in prayer, and watch in the same with thanksgiving." *Colossians 4:2*.

"When our prayers seem not to be answered, we are to cling to the promise; for the time of answering will surely come, and we shall receive the blessing we need most." *Steps to Christ*, page 96.

Because Margaret and Dorothy had learned all this from the meeting and were obeying these injunctions, they could also say with confidence, "We `have done as Thou hast said.' We `present Thy promise, "Ask, and it shall be given you." ' *Christ's Object Lessons*, page 147.

As they committed their way unto the Lord, and trusted also in Him, He fulfilled His promise and did "bring it to pass." *Psalm 37:5*. The trip back home was uneventful.

The angel of the Lord did encamp around them and delivered them from a most dangerous situation, and from what could have become a burning, fiery furnace.

The next day a reliable mechanic checked the motor. Instead of a loose connection there was a definite break in the gas line. Evidently the service station attendant had broken the line when he tightened the connection. For over eighty miles, gasoline had been spraying out all over the hot engine.

When the repairs were done, Margaret received a certain thrill when she heard the mechanic say, "Your guardian angel must certainly have been with you last night. You could all have been blown to kingdom come!"

Surely we do have a prayer-hearing God Whose "children are never absent from His mind." The Desire of Ages, page 313.

"We may present our petitions to the Father, claiming all that He has promised. The honor of His throne is staked for the fulfillment of His word." Prophets and Kings, page 158.

Note: Margaret was so thrilled with this miracle that she gave me the above account, and we are happy to share it with you in her own words.

Chapter 16:

"I Found What I Wanted!"

"YOU MAY NOT remember me, but I was attending Milo Academy at the time you were there for a Week of Prayer. That one week meant more to me than any other week of my life. Although I enjoyed the services at the time, I did not realize until much later just how much I would use what I learned during that one week." So wrote Verna Highglow more than two years after the week she referred to.

Her letter of appreciation was brief—only one page—but that one page was packed with a joy that comes from a consciousness of answered prayer.

Verna cited two examples of answered prayer as evidence. One concerned her marriage to a godly young man; the other was that she had found the Lord Jesus in a very personal way. "I claim Him as my very personal Saviour," she testified. "I just had to write to let you know."

That same day we received in the mail another letter of appreciation for the good a lady had received from our book, The ABC's of Bible Prayer. This lady said, "I've been a conscientious Seventh-day Adventist all my life, but I had never learned to accept God at His word in a real, practical way until just recently. I have now received an insight into the science of prayer and my faith has grown. I am so thankful that God has revealed this to me. I want to be used of Him to help many others to understand the things that have so thrilled my own heart."

These two letters came in the mail just in time for me to use them in my Sabbath morning sermon the next day. I entitled my sermon, "I Found What I Wanted." I presented principles, on the basis of which the authors of the above letters could write in such glowing terms.

I shared with the congregation what I feel are some of the most thrilling passages of Scripture. The first passage I invited the congregation to read with me is found in Numbers 23:19:

"God is not a man, that he should lie; neither the son of man, that he should repent: hath he said, and shall he not do it? or hath he spoken, and shall he not make it good?"

This text precludes forever any double talk on the part of our heavenly Father. It agrees with the statement of our Lord Jesus Himself that "the scripture cannot be broken." John 10:35. It is also in harmony with the inspired statement of the apostle Paul, "For all the promises of God in him are yea, and in him Amen, unto the glory of God by us" (2 Corinthians 1:20).

Joshua, the leader of Israel, made a similar statement to the representatives of all the tribes just before he laid his burdens down. He said, "And ye know in all your hearts and in all your souls, that not one thing hath failed of all the good things which the Lord your God spake concerning you; all are come to pass unto you, and not one thing hath failed thereof." Joshua 23:14.

I like to call these wonderful Scriptures "supporting promises," because they support, or strengthen, our faith. They agree with the inspired Psalmist who quotes the Lord saying, "My covenant will I not break, nor alter the thing that is gone out of my lips." Psalm 89:34.

These "supporting promises" are not like the proverbial "straws" that the drowning man grasps for. They are "anchors" to the soul. As we drift along over life's sea--if we really are drifting--an anchor will change the picture. It is necessary to keep us steady in the battle and storm, in the fury and anger of the sea.

I well remember, early in my ministry, hearing an elderly preacher inviting our attention to a very important verse of Scripture. He said that when God and Abraham were talking together, God first made Abraham a promise. Then God backed up that promise by an oath: "For when God made promise to Abraham, because he could swear by no greater, he swore by himself." Hebrews 6:13. (Verse 17, margin, "Interposed himself by an oath.") Then the preacher went on to read the eighteenth verse, "That by two immutable things, in which it was impossible for God to lie, we might have a strong consolation, who have fled for refuge to lay hold upon the hope set before us."

I can recall as though it were yesterday, the thrill I received when I first took God at His word. The promise I claimed was 1 John 1:9 for forgiveness and cleansing. I repeated this verse over and over. It was not until I had been preaching for many years, however, that I let my faith reach out and do something I had never done before. I read 1 John 2:25 which says, "And this is the promise that he hath promised us, even eternal life." Now when I came to the word "us," I substituted my own name. Now it read, "And this is the promise that he hath promised Glenn Coon, even eternal life."

Next I turned in my Bible to John 3:16 and again inserted my name. Now it read, "For God so loved Glenn Coon, that he gave his only begotten Son, that Glenn Coon believing in him should not perish, but have everlasting life."

Then I went back and read again the promise of 1 John 1:9, this time inserting my own name: "If Glenn Coon confesses his sins, he is faithful and just to forgive Glenn Coon his sins, and to cleanse him, Glenn Coon, from all unrighteousness."

I cannot describe the assurance that inserting my own name in these promises gave to me. It did something for this heart of mine! I would recommend that you try this, too, and see what it will do for you. I now use the ABC's of receptive prayer as I do this. You remember them, don't you:

A-Ask. Matthew 7:7. "For any gift He has promised, we may ask." Education, page 258.

B-Believe. Mark 11:24. "Then we are to believe that we receive." Ibid.

C-Claim, or receive. John 11:41; 1 Corinthians 15:57. "And return thanks to God that we have received." Ibid.

Taking the promise of 1 John 1:9, for example, my prayer would now be something like this:

"Dear Lord, Thou hast promised that if Glenn Coon confesses his sins, Thou art 'faithful and just to forgive' Glenn Coon his 'sins, and to cleanse' me--Glenn Coon 'from all unrighteousness.' So I am Asking Thee to forgive my sins and to cleanse me from all unrighteousness. And because it is 'impossible for God to lie,' I Believe Thou art forgiving and cleansing me as Thou hast promised. Now I Claim, or Receive, this forgiveness and cleansing through the name of Jesus, Amen."

To make the promise still more personal, we recommend to our students that they do as did Augustine's mother. "She laid her finger upon the texts, presenting before God His own words, and pleaded as only a mother can.... and the Lord gave her the desire of her heart." Testimonies, Vol. 5, pages 322, 323.

The books, *The Desire of Ages*, and *Steps to Christ* give us the same simple formula for prayer. To help emphasize the importance of the "C," to claim or receive, I read from the book *The Desire of Ages*, page 200:

"When we have asked for His blessing, we should believe that we receive it, and thank Him that we *have* received it."

After reading that sentence, I turned to the pastor, who was seated behind me, saying, "Would you please come to the desk?"

So he came up beside me, wondering, I suppose, what was coming next.

"Pastor," I said, "would you look at this sentence and tell us if you notice anything different about the way the word 'have' is printed?"

"The word 'have' is printed in italics," he responded.

"Why is this word printed in italics, Pastor?" I inquired further.

"To lend emphasis to the word," was his quick response.

It is so easy for us often to overlook a most important word in a sentence. This word "have" is italicized so as to give it more weight in its meaning, and to help us comprehend its great importance in the mind of the author.

Then I read this passage from *Steps to Christ*, page 51: "So we may ask for these blessings, and believe that we receive them, and thank God that we *have* received them."

Again, the word "have" is italicized. There must be, therefore, a very special reason for our not merely asking, and believing, but also claiming by returning thanks that we have received. "He that cometh to God must believe that he is, and that he is a rewarder of them that diligently seek him." Hebrews 11:6.

The basis of the Prayer of Reception is found in Mark 11:24: "What things soever ye desire, when ye pray, believe that ye receive them, and ye shall have them."

There is only one way by which we can actually believe, and claim that we have received the answers to our prayers, and that is by asking for the things God has promised. The reason is more, however, than God's truthfulness. It is that: "As surely as the oak is in the acorn, so surely is the gift of God in His promise." *Education*, page 253.

"The gift is in the promise." *Ibid.*, page 258. As surely as every normal apple seed contains an apple tree trunk, two leaves and roots, so surely does God's Word, which is seed, Luke 8:11, contain the gift. "If we receive the promise, we have the gift." *Ibid.*, page 253.

So "we must ask for the things that He has promised." *Ibid.*, page 258. Then all the supporting promises can be presented to our Father in the fullest assurance of faith that we have received. Isn't that wonderful? But the most wonderful thing about it all is that it is available to each of us. These promises are given for you and me—and the fulfillment is for us, too! All we have to do is to fulfill the simple conditions to the promises.

Speaking of 1 John 1:9, our favorite author says, "There is a condition to this promise—that we pray according to the will of God. But it is the will of God to cleanse us from sin, to make us His children, and to enable us to live a holy life." *Steps to Christ*, page 51.

Notice with me three facts in this quotation which constitute, in part, God's will:

1. It is God's will to cleanse us from sin.

2. It is God's will to make us His children.

3. It is God's will to enable us to live a holy life.

As I have re-read this three-fold statement, I have wondered if, perhaps, I have in the past sometimes complicated the simple act of faith required of us by our Lord for cleansing, acceptance, and a holy life. Notice the emphasis placed on the simplicity of faith: "Through this simple act of believing God, the Holy Spirit has begotten a new life in your heart. You are as a child born into the family of God, and He loves you as He loves His Son." Ibid., page 52.

Now here is a very precious quotation that many have thrilled to when some minister or friend has shared it:

"Do not wait to feel that you are made whole, but say, 'I believe it; it is so, not because I feel it, but because God has promised.'" Ibid., page 51. Isn't that wonderful! How much comfort and assurance that should give us! Repeatedly we have used this thought as we have risen from prayer with some tempted, tried, afflicted but vanquished soul. We have said, "Not because you feel it, but because God has promised, do you believe He has delivered you?" Some clear their throats. Some hesitate. And a few sheepishly say, "I hope so."

Just recently I visited a lady who sorely needed the Lord. I suggested that we pray the prayer of reception. We reviewed the ABC's of Bible prayer. Then we knelt. When it came time for her to pray, instead of praying, "Dear Lord, I believe," she prayed, "Dear Lord, I hope so."

After we rose from our knees, I explained that the word "hope" is a wonderful word in its place, but when it is used as a substitute for faith, it is out of place; for it strikes a note of uncertainty.

The following day I returned and again knelt in prayer with her. This time she started to say, "I hope so," and caught herself mid-sentence. Under her breath I heard her saying to herself, "That's the way I used to say it." She corrected herself and exclaimed, "Lord, I believe it!"

Oh, how happy heaven must have been when she expressed her faith! The difference was in the simple act of believing. By this sincere act--the act of believing--we, too, may be forgiven, cleansed, and become the children of God. He will give us the power to live radiant Christian lives. Isn't this a thrilling prospect!

In the same city lived Jack Brown, a man who very much desired to become a member of the Seventh-day Adventist church. It was thought there was just one thing that prevented his realizing this desire. He was addicted to the cigarette. The pastor invited me to go with him to visit Jack and assist him as he had previously requested.

When we arrived in his home, however, we discovered Jack's problem was more than the cigarette. As we sat in his living room, Jack frankly confessed that he did not even profess to be a Christian. Now what would you do in this case? Would you talk about tobacco? or would you show him a better way of life and lead him to Jesus?

We would all agree that Jack needed an encounter with Jesus. So we presented to Jack, God's plan of saving us all through Jesus Christ. Did not our Lord say: "And I, if I be lifted up.... will draw all men unto me"? John 12:32.

I explained to Jack that we "all have sinned" (Romans 3:23); and that "the wages of sin is death." Romans 6:23, first part. But the fact is that Jesus died in our stead and paid the penalty of our sins; and now offers us the "gift" of "eternal life." Romans 6:23, last part. Now He invites us to come to Him, confessing our sins, and receiving Him as our Saviour. We opened our Bibles to 1 John 1:9: "If we confess

our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness." Also to John 1:12: "But as many as received him, to them gave he power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on his name." We then explained the ABC's of the Prayer of Reception. As Jack comprehended the simplicity of this truth, we knelt in prayer.

After the pastor prayed, I led Jack in a prayer of reception by saying a sentence ahead of him, and letting him repeat it after me, as he admitted he did not know how to pray. We Asked; we Believed; and we Claimed and received forgiveness, cleansing, and fellowship. He was now a child of God.

The pastor and Jack made a gesture as though they were going to rise from their knees. I deterred them.

"Now Jack," I began, "you have just been forgiven, cleansed, and have become a child of God, haven't you?"

Jack nodded his head in assent.

"You are now a Christian," I added. "Now then, we can ask God to completely deliver you from the tobacco habit before we rise from our knees. We shall claim the promise of John 1:12 for 'power' that God, through Christ, will give you complete and instantaneous victory over the tobacco habit."

After we had prayed, Asking, Believing, and Claiming by receiving, we rose to our feet. Jack was radiant with victory. He knew that God had given him the victory.

We visited Jack three times a day for an entire week. We did this to encourage him to continue the "simple act of believing." Jack was completely delivered, and in just two weeks' time he was baptized!

Oh, the power in the simple act of believing and receiving! It is so often neglected and we stand powerless against the onslaughts of the enemy. "Faith is trusting God." Education, page 253. It's just that simple. But oh, the rewards for placing our trust and faith in the God of heaven!

It is not enough for us to believe doctrines. It is not sufficient to accept the Sabbath truth, as important as it is. What we want is not merely to be able to trace the events at the beginning and close of the millennium, as satisfying as that is. Even to be able to give a profound study on the twenty-three-hundred-day-prophecy, as commendable as this is, is not, in the fullest sense, bringing the human soul what it wants and needs. I found what I wanted only when I found Jesus. "And ye shall seek me, and find me, when ye shall search for me with all your heart." Jeremiah 29:13.

"Here is where thousands fail; they do not believe that Jesus pardons them personally, individually. They do not take God at His word. It is the privilege of all who comply with the conditions to know for themselves that pardon is freely extended for every sin." Steps to Christ, page 52.

What a joy it is to hear the testimonies of those who have taken the Lord at His word and gone on to victory!

I suppose it is the greatest joy that can come to a pastor. To see an individual grasp the promises through the power of Jesus; then observe him living a triumphant life by the grace of Christ, becoming a dynamic witness, constitutes a "crown of rejoicing" to any minister or youth worker.

"Likewise joy shall be in heaven over one sinner that repenteth, more than over ninety and nine just persons, which need no repentance." Luke 15:7.

What a wonderful day it will be, when in heaven we can recount the experiences of life and realize how God has led us. Perhaps our guardian angel will reveal to us how circumstances were shaped so we could understand the miracle of faith. I hope this chapter has been a link in the chain.

May God bless you as you, "Let go, and let God!"

Chapter 17:

God Always Answers

"GOD DID NOT answer my prayer!" exclaimed an earnest Christian after we had finished one of our classes on the Prayer of Reception.

"I have served as an educator for more than forty years," began a minister of wide experience, "and I know God does not answer every one of my prayers." This statement was made after he heard several of our studies on the topic of "The Prayer of Reception."

"Sometimes God says, No," declared another sincere child of God. And he continued, "I know He says, No."

These statements are not merely partly wrong, but the atmosphere surrounding them is too negative. I never like to tell people, "God says, No." I feel that this is likely to give the wrong impression of our loving heavenly Father.

Rather, I like to explain it this way: God answers every sincere prayer of faith. Always. He always keeps His promises. Always. "The conditions met, the promise is unequivocal." Education, page 258.

"We know that we have the petitions that we desired of him." 1 John 5:15. In the light of this and other similar Scriptures, we can agree with the following statements from a great Christian writer: "When we have learned to do this [take God at His word, and fulfilling the simple conditions], we shall know that our prayers are answered." The Desire of Ages, page 200.

"Every saint who comes to God with a true heart, and sends his honest petitions to Him in faith, will have his prayers answered." Testimonies, Vol. 1, page 120.

"Your faith must not let go of the promises of God.... if we could look into His plan, we would clearly see that He knows what is best for us, and that our prayers are answered." Ibid., pages 120, 121.

"I saw that every prayer which is sent up in faith from an honest heart, will be heard of God and answered.... and it will often exceed his expectations. Not a prayer of a true saint is lost if sent up in faith, from an honest heart." Ibid., page 121.

Surely we may rest assured that the way to approach our heavenly Father is the way of faith, expectancy, and hope.

There is, however, an important law of God to which we need give study. And this is the law of choice. Every child of God will receive an answer to his sincere prayer of faith in exactly the way he himself would choose, could he, like God, see the end from the beginning. To know that my heavenly Father follows carefully this rule in answering our prayers is, to me, a wonderful solace. I am frank to state that my vision is limited, blurred. I cannot see, as God does, the end from the beginning. Therefore, I make it a practice to pray with this thought in mind, "Dear Father, I know You are giving me exactly what I am asking of You, or something better, much better." This takes--for me at least--the negative atmosphere from my communication with my Lord.

This eliminates the negative, the doubting, the skepticism that Satan would throw around our praying hearts. God is in process of answering every one of my prayers. Yours, too, dear honest, faithful child of God. He is not looking down His nose to any trusting, obedient, believing child of His and saying, NO! Period! "The prayer of the upright is his delight." Proverbs 15:8.

Many times through the years I have heard a sick saint of God whisper weakly, "I know God can heal me." Sometimes I reply with a kindly expression on my face, something as follows: "Do you also know God wants to heal you?" Then I develop the thought in mind. It is this: If God merely can heal me, but does not want to, then this is worse than as if God could not heal me but wanted to. I would prefer any day for a person to want to aid me, hindered only by his inability, than for a person to be able to do so and deliberately turn me down. I believe that statements like the ones offered by the sick, "I know God could heal me," are often the type which create around us an atmosphere favorable to doubt. I do not believe we should make such remarks.

It would, as I understand it, be much better, were we to say, when desperately ill, something like the following: "I know God wants to heal me. I know He has the physical power to do so. But I do not know whether God can heal me and still do for me that which is best for me personally." Or, "I know God loves me. I am certain of this because of Calvary. So I am confident that God is only interested in my very best good, and the good of my loved ones. I also know that God is doing for me exactly what I myself would choose to have Him do, could I, with heavenly vision, see the end of time from its beginning. Therefore, I do not feel it is a question of what God can do or what He wants to do for me. It is rather a question of what is best for me personally. What does God see I myself would choose, if I could see all things as He sees them? I am, therefore, confident that God's power to heal is limited only by His deepest love for me and my own eternal happiness. I know He is doing for me exactly what I would say, 'Dear Lord, do for me,' could I see all things as they really are. I know this because, 'The conditions met, the promise is unequivocal.' Education, page 258."

From the very first of the great controversy between Christ and Satan, the evil one has sought to picture God as a despot. When Jesus came to earth the first time, "The earth was dark through misapprehension of God. That the gloomy shadows might be lightened, that the world might be brought back to God, Satan's deceptive power was to be broken.... To know God is to love Him; His character must be manifested in contrast to the character of Satan." The Desire of Ages, page 22.

"Satan represents God's law of love as a law of selfishness. He declares that it is impossible for us to obey its precepts. The fall of our first parents, with all the woe that has resulted, he charges upon the Creator, leading men to look upon God as the author of sin, and suffering, and death. Jesus was to unveil this deception." Ibid., page 24.

So, as we are ill, or harassed by questions hard to answer, let us communicate to those around us more than such statements as, "I know God could solve my problem, but I do not know whether He will." Such statements surely must bring great delight to the forces of darkness. Let us rather declare with holy assurance, "I know whom I have believed, and am persuaded that he is able to keep that which I have committed unto him against that day" (2 Timothy 1:12). "He that spared not his own Son, but delivered him up for us all, how shall he not with him also freely give us all things?" Romans 8:32.

Therefore, let me begin a new communication, both to God and to my fellow men. Let me give a clear, ringing testimony to the effect that God's answers to my prayers are, as I obey Him, exactly what I myself would choose, could I, like my wonderful Father, see the end from the beginning. Let me say, "He is willing, but He is not able to do some things I ask, simply because if He were to do these things, He would not be the loving God which the Scriptures picture Him to be."

Every part of God is love. Even His discipline is that of love. Permissiveness is not love. Permissiveness is actually often cruel. Permissiveness often either leads, or permits, another to do those things which hurt his own soul, body, or mind—or all three. God is too loving, too kind, too wise to deal in permissive love. Every act of His is one of eternal love and blessedness. His object in every action is the good of His people, the happiness of His saints, and the eternal pleasure of all who trust in Him. So when we pray

for the sick, or the dying, let us remember to "commit" our "way unto the Lord; trust also in him; and he shall bring it to pass." Psalm 37:5. Let us obey the command: "Delight thyself also in the Lord; and he shall give thee the desires of thine heart." Verse 4.

With the above in mind, we can know that these desires are the desires we ourselves would have, could we but see the end from the beginning. Oh, how my soul cries out, "Oh that men would praise the Lord for his goodness, and for his wonderful works to the children of men!" Psalm 107:8.

When Mary, the mother of Jesus, prayed that her son would not die, God answered her prayer. He answered it exactly as Mary herself would have requested, could she have read the whole plan of salvation clearly.

When I stood at the bedside of a fellow minister, praying that he might be brought back to life, God did not see fit to restore his life that day. However, when I get home to glory I shall understand clearly the details of why God answered my prayer in the way that He did. God could not have done anything else and be a God of love. He could not have brought that fellow-minister back to life. He wanted to. Really. But God saw certain circumstances that my limited sight could not understand. So I was comforted. I never but once remarked to a friend, "God did not answer my prayer." And I was later sorry I made that remark. Why? Because God did answer it. But He answered it the way I would have desired Him to answer it, could I have seen and understood, what He saw and understood.

Chapter 18:

A Young Hero

YOUNG PEOPLE are not merely delighted with the thrills of answered prayer; there are those who are willing to suffer and even die for their Lord. Pastor E. L. Cardey, for many years a close friend of our family, shares the following experience.

"The pages of history are filled with accounts of men and women, boys and girls who gladly gave their lives rather than deny God and His truth. Sometimes, however, God uses great accidents and troubles, even where death is involved, to bring the light of truth to others.

"One day we received in the Bible school in Africa a request for our Bible lessons from a sixteen-year-old high school boy. He and his entire family belonged to a church. He soon became an exceptionally good student and accepted advanced Bible truth as it came to him. When he learned the Sabbath was the seventh day of the week and not Sunday the first day, he wrote that by God's grace, he would keep the true Sabbath. His parents and relatives were greatly opposed to his doing so and tried to stop him from studying the Bible lessons. Then came a lesson on the true form of baptism. He at once wanted to be baptized. His parents strictly forbade it. He wrote us saying that he would have to wait for baptism until he was of age, but in the meantime he would keep God's Sabbath regardless.

"Just a few weeks after this letter came from him, his mother wrote us, through her tears and sorrow, the following story. The boy's home was only a couple of blocks from the high school, so he rode his bicycle to school and back, and came home for lunch each day. The mother was watching for him one day when she saw him coming, another boy riding with him on the back of his bicycle. She then saw an automobile come down the road toward them. The boys rode their bicycle off the road to avoid the car, but it followed them and hit them while going at high speed. She, with neighbors, rushed to the scene of the accident, but it was too late to do anything. Both boys had been instantly killed. The mother did not know her son had been taking his Bible and Bible school lessons to school with him.

"When she saw his Bible lying on the grass, she went to pick it up and found it lying open at 2 Timothy 4. The following words were underlined in ink: 'I am now ready to be offered, and the time of my departure is at hand. I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith: henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous judge, shall give me at that day: and not to me only, but unto all them also that love his appearing. Do thy diligence to come shortly unto me.' Verses 6-9. This last sentence was underscored twice.

"On her knees there in the grass that mother said: 'Yes, Son, I will come. I will study these lessons and do what God wants me to do.'

"It is remarkable to relate that within another year the boy's parents, his own brothers, sisters, and in-laws had all accepted God's message of Sabbath reform and organized a Sabbath School of over fifteen members with the brother-in-law as the superintendent. The mother wrote us that it was strange to them that this young boy should underscore those verses. It appeared to them to be a message direct from God. If not, why was the Bible lying open at these very verses?"

Thank you, Pastor Cardy. And thanks be to God that His power and love are making heroes out of young men and young women all over the world. And the Word of God that changed the lives of this boy's precious parents is still changing lives everywhere.

Chapter 19:

This Is the Life!

PASTOR COON, would you like to go with me Thursday evening to visit a young couple, Sam and Sadie West, who are studying the Bible-in-Hand course?" asked Jim Hogan.

"I'll be glad to," I answered, happy to be of service.

"That's great!" Jim responded. "They are on the verge of making a decision to keep the Sabbath but want a little more information. There's something else I ought to tell you, though, before you agree for sure."

"What's that?" I asked, now a bit curious.

"Well, two ministers of another church are coming over the same evening. These ministers want to show Sam and Sadie West how dangerous the teaching of our church is."

I smiled as I said, "That doesn't change my decision one bit. I'll be happy to go."

On the appointed night, Jim and I made our way to the modest cottage where Sam and Sadie West lived. We were invited in and with real warmth made to feel right at home.

It was not long before another knock was heard at the door, and in walked the two fine Christian pastor's, whom I will call Jones and Smith. Pastor Jones was the spokesman almost from the first.

Scarcely were these good pastors seated before Sam started the conversation with a very direct question: "Pastor Jones, is the seventh day the Bible Sabbath or isn't it?"

It was evident that Pastor Jones had not planned on such a straightforward question at the very beginning of the confrontation. Undoubtedly he had had his own plan for the format of conversation that evening. But since Sam had asked the question, some kind of answer must be given.

The pastor replied, "Sam, the Sabbath is really one of the minor errors taught by Sabbath-keepers. This evening we want to expose some of their more deadly errors."

Then turning to me, this earnest pastor said, "Do you mind if I ask you a personal question?"

"Not at all," I replied as I smiled. "Go right ahead." I did not know what he might ask, but I remembered the text that says, "Sanctify the Lord God in your hearts: and be ready always to give an answer to every man that asketh you a reason of the hope that is in you with meekness and fear." 1 Peter 3:15.

I awaited the question. Pastor Jones fastened his eyes on me, closed them slightly, and with an intensely earnest expression asked, "Are you saved?"

How happy I was that he had asked that question, for that very morning I had been reading my Bible and had gone over some texts that gave me an unquestioned reassurance of the Father's will for me with regard to this very question. Now all I had to do was to share the experience of the morning. With a face that was radiant, I replied with a resounding, "Yes, sir."

The look on the pastor's face indicated that I had not given the answer he had expected. Undoubtedly he had thought I would beat around the bush and try to qualify an answer.

Pastor Jones was visibly shaken and mumbled a few words and ended by saying, "You are the first member of your church I have ever met who has said he was saved."

While Pastor Jones was searching for words to carry on the conversation, I felt impressed by the Holy Spirit to further develop my affirmative answer.

"I would like to explain why I can say, 'I am saved.' This morning when I awakened, I turned to a promise of the Bible which says, 'If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.' 1 John 1:9. I asked God to forgive my sins this morning. I then believed He had forgiven me just as He promised. Then I returned thanks that He had forgiven me. Then I took the promise just across the page, recorded in 1 John 2:25 which reads like this: 'And this is the promise that he hath promised us, even eternal life.'

"I asked God this very morning to give me eternal life, just as He here promises. I told Him I believed He was giving eternal life to me; and then I claimed eternal life by returning thanks that I had received eternal life, just as He promised."

Pastor Jones was listening. So were Sam and Sadie and the other pastor. I continued. "This morning I also claimed the Bible promise of John 1:12 which says: 'But as many as received him, to them gave he power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on his name.'

"I asked God to make me His son again for today. I believed He was doing it. I claimed it, and returned thanks that I had received continued sonship.

"Then I took another promise, this very morning. It was the promise of John 3:16 which promises everlasting life. Again I asked, believed, and 'claimed by returning thanks that I had received everlasting life. This is why I can answer, with no doubt, that I am saved-right now!"

Pastor Jones did not say a word. He just sat there in deep thought as I continued.

"Now we do not go around bragging, 'I am saved.' But we do like to declare the fact that 'Christ is my Saviour.' You see, the first expression puts self in the center. The latter points to our Lord, and makes Him the center."

I developed the thought a little more fully, all the while rejoicing that, "There is none other name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved." Acts 4:12. I was also conscious of the text that says, "Let him that thinketh he standeth take heed lest he fall." 1 Corinthians 10:12.

Perhaps fifteen minutes passed before the good pastor ventured another question.

He asked, "As you sit here in this home tonight, and think of a period of time, let's say ten years from now, can you, tonight, as you sit here, tell me that ten years from now you will be saved?"

"No, of course not," I replied, "but I can say this: If ten years from now I claim the same promises of my Lord which I claimed this morning, then I can have the same assurance ten years from now that I have today.

"You see," I continued, "our Lord does not compel the sinner to become a saint." Pastors Jones and Smith nodded assent. "Neither does my Lord compel a saint to remain a saint. But if the saint chooses to remain a saint and claims the promises of our Lord, he can have the same assurance of salvation every day of his life. God gives us faith (Romans 12:3), but He does not compel us to activate that faith. He gives us power to believe. He gives us the equipment, but we can choose to either believe or doubt."

Later that evening, as I pondered our visit, I wondered if these pastors had heard some of the same answers to the question of our being saved that I have sometimes heard. It is this: When some one is asked if he is saved, he may answer with a puzzled expression, "I hope so." That answer really gives me concern. In fact, it makes me shudder.

Let me explain. Let us suppose my son, Glenn Coon, Jr., is introduced to a stranger one day. Upon learning that his name is Glenn Coon, the man's eyes brighten as he asks, "Say, I heard a pastor Glenn Coon preach at the camp-meeting. Would he be your father by any chance?"

Then my son gets a rather sheepish look on his face, and in disbelief says, "I hope so."

You know, my friend, if word of an incident like that would ever reach us, both his mother and I would be embarrassed, and ashamed of our son. It would hurt us. And I think you can understand why.

Now, don't you think our heavenly Father feels a sense of hurt when we find ourselves unable to speak with any measure of conviction with regard to our relationship with Him?

There are those who think it a mark of humility to be in doubt as to their state of salvation. I submit to you that doubt with regard to our salvation has nothing to do with humility. It is my opinion that those who wander around in the maze of doubt and question with regard to this important matter have allowed Satan to steal something vital from them. Someone has worded it this way:

"Satan is ready to steal away the blessed assurances of God." "It is the privilege of all who comply with the conditions to know for themselves that pardon is freely extended for every sin. Put away the suspicion that God's promises are not meant for you. They are for every repentant transgressor." Steps to Christ, pages 52, 53.

The prayer of reception teaches us that we have a right, through Christ, to receive forgiveness, cleansing, assurance, and fellowship. We are given this assurance by the pen of inspiration. Notice these words:

"Every promise in the Word of God furnishes us with subject matter for prayer, presenting the pledged word of Jehovah as our assurance. Whatever spiritual blessing we need, it is our privilege to claim through Jesus." Thoughts from the Mount of Blessing, page 133. (1956 Edition.)

It is not my intention to go further into our visit with these two sincere preachers that evening. I met them on this one occasion only, but it served to bring some of these vital things to my mind.

I do believe, beyond any question, that God wants us to be able to declare, "I know whom I have believed, and am persuaded that he is able to keep that which I have committed unto him against that day." 2 Timothy 1:12. God does not want us merely to "hope so." He wants us to "know so."

Youth Prays . . . God Answers

The Apostle John had a great deal to say about this matter. Notice with me some of his statements taken from his first epistle that show the assurance we may have in Christ:

"I write unto you, little children, because ye have known the Father." 1 John 2:13.

"I write unto you, fathers, because ye have known him that is from the beginning." Verse 13.

"Ye know that every one that doeth righteousness is born of him." Verse 29.

"But we know that, when he shall appear, we shall be like him." 1 John 3:2.

"And ye know that he was manifested to take away our sins." Verse 5.

He also says, "Ye know that no murderer hath eternal life abiding in him." Verse 15.

This helps us to see that it is impossible for any man, while stealing, killing, committing adultery, or any other sin, to say, with any meaning, "I am saved."

There are many more verses in the writings of John which make clear that we have a right--a sacred right--to know our standing before God. Let me cite just one more:

"Hereby know we that we dwell in him, and he in us, because he hath given us of his Spirit." 1 John 4:13. We make it a habit to claim a promise of the Holy Spirit every day and sometimes several times a day. I make it a practice also to claim Him before I deliver every sermon from the pulpit, and before I make a missionary visit in the home.

Yes, I believe we have a right to say we know--right now we know! It is because right now we choose. It is because right now we claim His promises. God does not want us to give a questioning testimony of His grace or His saving power. He wants it to be clear and uncluttered.

We should always be able to give the world a ringing testimony of our personal Saviour. It is our privilege, with assurance that is born of faith in God's promise, to exclaim, "Behold, what manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon us, that we should be called the sons of God: ... now are we the sons of God." 1 John 3:1, 2.

Are you tempted to question God's willingness to save you? Are you tempted to think that salvation has too many prerequisites? Notice these words from a Christian writer:

"The Bible does not teach that the sinner must repent before he can heed the invitation of Christ, 'Come unto Me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest.' Matthew 11:28. It is the virtue that goes forth from Christ, that leads to genuine repentance. Peter made the matter clear in his statement to the Israelites, when he said, 'Him hath God exalted with his right hand to be a Prince and a Saviour, for to give repentance to Israel, and forgiveness of sins.' Acts 5:31. We can no more repent without the Spirit of Christ to awaken the conscience than we can be pardoned without Christ.

"Christ is the source of every right impulse. He is the only one that can implant in the heart enmity against sin. Every desire for truth and purity, every conviction of our own sinfulness, is an evidence that His Spirit is moving upon our hearts." Steps to Christ, page 26.

Yes, dear friends, salvation can come only from God. He is waiting, longing to give it to us if we will but let Him do it--if we will but cease resisting His working on our hearts. Allow me to repeat these few lines once again. I think they form the basis for a most powerful conviction of truth:

"The sinner may resist this love, may refuse to be drawn to Christ; but if he does not resist he will be drawn to Jesus; a knowledge of the plan of salvation will lead him to the foot of the cross in repentance for his sins, which have caused the sufferings of God's dear Son." Ibid., page 27.

Isn't it wonderful to know that we can respond to the call of His Spirit by asking, believing, and claiming His wonderful promises? Then we can with sweetest assurance declare:

"I know whom I have believed, and am persuaded that he is able to keep that which I have committed unto him against that day." 2 Timothy 1:12.

Now, I do not want to be misunderstood. I do not want to give anyone the impression that there is no battle to fight, no struggle in which to engage. On the contrary, we are engaged in a very real struggle. It will continue daily so long as we are on the Lord's side.

Says the Apostle Paul, "We wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places." Ephesians 6:12. We also fight an unending battle with self. We fight against doubting God's precious promises; against questioning His love, His mercy and His forgiveness. It is a fight of faith. It is a struggle, always whether to yield to, or resist His Spirit's pleadings. There will be no letup as long as we breathe the breath of life.

Neither would I give you the impression that once one reaches the height of a Mount Carmel experience, he may not soon be under a juniper tree, in complete discouragement, if he temporarily loses sight of God. Elijah, David, Solomon, Abraham, and other Bible heroes all had fabulous experiences with God, only to utterly fail later tests. Our failures only pinpoint our need to keep on with the ABC's of prayer when we have temporarily neglected our communion with God. And if, when we, like Elijah, fail miserably, let us not forget that this man of God was still translated to heaven without seeing death. So can we be that is, if Jesus comes quickly.

So by Asking, Believing, and Claiming His promises, we may cry out, "This is life eternal, that they might know thee the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom thou hast sent." John 17:3. And "I know whom I have believed." 2 Timothy 1:12.

I challenge you to make your claim--now!

Chapter 20:

This Can Change Your Life

AN INSPIRING picture has been painted on the canvas of my mind. As I share it with you, the readers of this book, I do so with mixed emotions. There is the element of eager certainty, for I am convinced that if I present this picture to you as the Lord has portrayed it to me, it can change any life. There is also the element of fear—a fear lest my inadequacy in using the pen may result in my giving someone the impression that the author of this book thinks he has almost attained unto "the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ." Ephesians 4:13.

It should be borne in mind that there is a vast difference between a firm acceptance of a truth and its full and final realization in one's life.

As regards the picture the author cherishes and the truth he shares, he is forced to admit that he is aware that but its first glimmerings have pierced his spiritual senses. Yet having seen the picture, he feels he would be truant to his trust did he not share its thrilling prospect with you in this our final chapter. This is a picture of what happened to eleven men—rough, ill-tempered, self-centered, sinful men—within a matter of three short years! And then what can happen to you and to me in an equally short period of time.

These men, filled with worldly ambition, eager for personal honor, ready to elbow all others to one side that they might become political favorites, began a special course of study—a course that was destined to change, not merely their lives, but the world picture, within a single generation.

Their experience, while enrolled in this course of study, appeared so casual that we doubt that any of them actually realized he was a very definite and intricate part of a study class—least not until after the three-year course was nearly completed.

The subject material, also almost unrealized by them at first, was not a mere topic, but a Person—an unlettered, unmarried, poverty-stricken young man. But He was different—different from anyone they had ever met; different in what He did; different in what He said—and how He said it; different in the manner in which He handled problems—of which they themselves were eleven!

His grace in the midst of disgrace; His kindness under abuse; His forgiving spirit under the most grueling, torturous, blasphemous insult—all attracted their attention, and sometimes their disapproval. But still they observed eagerly every word, weighed every action, and then talked about the merits, or, as they thought, demerits of all.

Actually, they were non-conformists, so far as their quick, positive approach was concerned. They possibly disapproved, far more than they accepted, most of His methods. It is true that they loved to witness His healings, as well as His victories over spies sent to entrap Him in His speech. They were thrilled through and through with His tremendous miracles; but they were exceedingly slow to accept His spiritual attitudes and responses.

Then came Gethsemane, judgment, and Calvary in quick succession. Then the resurrection, the forty pre-ascension days, then the upper-room experience and Pentecost! And now for the picture that thrills my soul! It is painted thus by my favorite author: "In mind and character they had become like their Master." Education, page 95. What an almost unbelievable transformation!

Then follows a statement of the fruit of such a training: "Then was there such a revelation of the glory of Christ as had never before been witnessed by mortal man." Ibid. "To every nation under heaven was the gospel carried in a single generation." Ibid., page 96.

This is the picture I wish to share with you; and that, "With such an army of workers as our youth, rightly trained, might furnish, how soon the message of a crucified, risen, and soon-coming Saviour might be carried to the whole world!" Ibid., page 271. This training will be one that results in a fulfilled promise: "We shall be like him," too. 1 John 3:2.

Now with the picture before us, our work is cut out—we are to launch out on a "Christ-centered" program of devotion. We are recommending to all our students that regardless of how heavy a daily program is theirs, nothing is so important as daily personal communion with our Lord. No set of ABC's theoretically received by the mind, can substitute for a daily personal encounter with our Lord. Rather, the ABC's of prayer are to be combined with this daily hour with God.

The devotional hour, however, will, from henceforth, be one of personal encounter with a personal Saviour. It will be far more than a mere study of the Bible, even of its great heroes. It will be an hour of fresh personal communings with the Lord; an hour in which the soul cries out repeatedly for more and still more of His likeness. Then throughout the day, before making any decisions, we ask ourselves often, "What would Jesus do?" In other words, our devotion has a double goal: first, that of observing Jesus in His Word, His work and His providence—knowing that by "beholding" we "are changed into the same image." (2 Corinthians 3:18); and secondly, to reveal Him in our lives to a perishing world.

In another work we have given a detailed report of how a "Modern Mary Magdalene" was changed during an eight-day therapy program. During this time we instructed her to fix her gaze on Jesus. She was to spend at least an hour every day in observing His forgiving love as it changed Mary Magdalene of old, Peter, Saul of Tarsus, David, Manasseh, and others. Then she turned to that same loving Saviour with her own need, saying: "I ask, I believe, and I claim for myself Your forgiving love. You loved all these others so much that You forgave them and changed them. I know, according to the promise of 1 John 1:9, You are forgiving me and changing me too!"

We had the blessed privilege of hearing from her own lips the truth: "I've professed Christ for thirty-five years, now I've found Him." Thus in her life there was experienced a partial fulfillment of the statement, "When once the gaze is fixed upon Him, the life finds its center." Education, page 297. She finally found the center, the lovely Jesus.

Part of our personal encounter with Jesus is found in following His example in claiming "exceeding great and precious promises" so we may "be partakers of the divine nature, having escaped the corruption that is in the world through lust." 2 Peter 1:4.

In conducting a special Week of Prayer series at a college, we emphasized three outstanding facts:

1. "Satan tempted the first Adam in Eden, and Adam reasoned with the enemy, thus giving him the advantage. Satan exercised his power of hypnotism over Adam and Eve.
2. "And this power he strove to exercise over Christ. But after the word of Scripture was quoted, Satan knew he had no chance of triumphing." E. G. White, (Letter 159, 1903).
3. That we should now become acquainted with, not merely our weaknesses and needs, but also matching Bible promises. Thus Satan's hypnotic power cannot control us.

"None but those who have fortified the mind with the truths of the Bible will stand through the last great conflict." The Great Controversy, page 593.

The eleven men failed miserably because: "The words which they needed to remember were banished from their minds; and when the time of trial came, it found them unprepared." Ibid., page 594.

So with us. "Temptations often appear irresistible because through neglect of prayer and the study of the Bible, the tempted one cannot readily remember God's promises and meet Satan with the Scripture weapons." Ibid., page 600.

Therefore, we recommend a daily encounter with God and a working out of a format of listing some of the weak spots in our lives. Then against these weaknesses place one or more "matching Bible promises." We have endeavored to prepare our hearts beforehand to meet these "common-to-man" temptations. And we have found that when we have humbly and prayerfully, through the help of the Holy Spirit, claimed these in a moment of sudden temptation, there is a completely different response on our part to Satan's temptations than there is when we have neglected to use the Bible defenses.

Here are a few of these common human weaknesses with "matching Bible promises," just to illustrate:

Weakness and Matching Bible Promises

1. Retaliatory reaction when criticized.

Romans 12:21. "Be not overcome of evil, but overcome evil with good."

Psalm 37:5, 6. "Commit thy way unto the LORD; trust also in him; and he shall bring it to pass. And he shall bring forth thy righteousness as the light, and thy judgment as the noonday."

Youth Prays . . . God Answers

Psalm 66:12. "Thou hast caused men to ride over our heads; we went through fire and through water: but thou broughtest us out into a wealthy place."

Luke 12:2. "For there is nothing covered, that shall not be revealed; neither hid, that shall not be known."

2. When evil thoughts knock at the mind's door.

Matthew 5:8. "Blessed are the pure in heart: for they shall see God."

1 John 3:1-3. "Behold, what manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon us, that we should be called the sons of God: therefore the world knoweth us not, because it knew him not. Beloved, now are we the sons of God, and it doth not yet appear what we shall be: but we know that, when he shall appear, we shall be like him; for we shall see him as he is. And every man that hath this hope in him purifieth himself, even as he is pure."

3. When tempted on the Sabbath to think secular thoughts.

Exodus 20:8. "Remember the sabbath day, to keep it holy."

2 Corinthians 10:4, 5. "(For the weapons of our warfare are not carnal, but mighty through God to the pulling down of strong holds;) Casting down imaginations, and every high thing that exalteth itself against the knowledge of God, and bringing into captivity every thought to the obedience of Christ;"

4. When facing financial worries.

Matthew 6:33, 34. "But seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you. Take therefore no thought for the morrow: for the morrow shall take thought for the things of itself. Sufficient unto the day is the evil thereof."

Philippians 4:19. "But my God shall supply all your need according to his riches in glory by Christ Jesus."

Malachi 3:9-12. "Ye are cursed with a curse: for ye have robbed me, even this whole nation. Bring ye all the tithes into the storehouse, that there may be meat in mine house, and prove me now herewith, saith the LORD of hosts, if I will not open you the windows of heaven, and pour you out a blessing, that there shall not be room enough to receive it. And I will rebuke the devourer for your sakes, and he shall not destroy the fruits of your ground; neither shall your vine cast her fruit before the time in the field, saith the LORD of hosts. And all nations shall call you blessed: for ye shall be a delightsome land, saith the LORD of hosts."

Our lists have, of course, been much longer than the one illustrated above. But these are given with the suggestion that you, the reader, study your own life, asking God to show you your weaknesses, and then, without dwelling long on these weaknesses, search His Word for "matching promises" which promise us Christlikeness and victory. Memorize these "Bible defenses." Then practice using them even before temptation strikes. This is something like war maneuvers. Thus the habit will be formed and the defenses of the soul be prepared for the onslaughts of Satan's subtle temptations. This is in harmony with instruction given by our favorite author, who suggests claiming promises when we are, for instance, the victims of "stinging, faultfinding words." In preparation for such a possible occasion, we are to: "Let mind and heart be stored with God's promises." Then, "If you are ill-treated or wrongfully accused, instead of returning an angry answer, repeat to yourself the precious promises:

"Be not overcome of evil, but overcome evil with good.' Romans 12:21.

"Commit thy way unto the Lord; trust also in him; and he shall bring it to pass. And he shall bring forth thy righteousness as the light, and thy judgment as the noonday.' Psalm 37:5, 6.

"There is nothing covered, that shall not be revealed; neither hid, that shall not be known.' Luke 12:2.

"Thou hast caused men to ride over our heads; we went through fire and through water: but thou broughtest us out into a wealthy place.' Psalm 66:12." Ministry of Healing, page 486.

A college instructor, listening to our study on "matching promises" to offset our weaknesses, was delighted. He exclaimed that never before had this occurred to him in such a striking manner. "Just to think," he said, "that God has so simplified the solutions to life's problems is indeed most encouraging. I now have really found something the Holy Spirit can use to change my life."

A portion of our morning devotions may be used to practice these "war maneuvers." By this we mean we can anticipate the approach of temptation, and review the matching texts audibly, or in a whisper, or even only in our minds. We can practice "darting" heavenward short promise-filled prayers.

Often I "dart" a prayer which, so far as words are concerned, is limited to the quoting of a Bible promise. But my soul is Asking, Believing and Claiming. The promise often is, "we shall be like him." 1 John 3:2. I find this a powerful weapon of the Holy Spirit in any emergency.

At other times I verbalize on the "C" of the ABC prayer. It, however, encompasses the whole idea of the ABC's in short.

To illustrate: When I was a boy a visitor once came to our home, and by invitation dined with us at our table. He used a sort of ABC request when he smiled and graciously said, "I thank you for the butter." That man had actually asked, believed, and claimed all in the one expression, "I thank you for the butter." The butter was then passed to him in response to his asking, believing, and claiming it.

Jesus offered this kind of prayer at the grave of Lazarus: "Father, I thank thee that thou hast heard me." John 11:41. So we also may use our ABC's in a variety of ways as we "dart" a promise-filled prayer to heaven. In fact, the biggest part is for our faith to actually claim, or receive.

Every now and then people express shock that some apparently very sincere child of God has utterly failed.

The manner in which they express this amazement reveals that they do not realize that unless the human instrument is in daily communion with God, he may be like Elijah; one day on miraculous Mount Carmel, but the next night under a juniper tree wishing he might die.

Writes our favorite author: "To the secret place of the Most High, under the shadow of the Almighty, men now and then repair; they abide for a season, and the result is manifest in noble deeds; then their faith fails, the communion is interrupted, and the life-work marred. But the life of Jesus was a life of constant trust, sustained by continual communion; and His service for heaven and earth was without failure or faltering.

"As a man He supplicated the throne of God, till His humanity was charged with a heavenly current that connected humanity with divinity. Receiving life from God, He imparted life to men." Education, pages 80, 81.

Now back to our opening picture—a picture of eleven sinful men in a short period of time becoming, through the power of the Holy Spirit, in mind and character like their Master.

I find in my soul a tremendous longing to be like my wonderful Lord. His purity, His peace, His unselfishness, and His forgiving love speak to my heart and soul. We know from our study of sacred history that over a span of six thousand years men have been changed into His likeness. We also know this truth from personal observation.

Youth Prays . . . God Answers

Even a small eight-year-old lassie tapped me on the shoulder one night. As I turned, I looked into an angel-like countenance. She spoke softly and with sweetness and poise in a delightfully confident, yet humble, manner: "Your meetings have changed my life."

By contrast in age there was the seventy-three-year-old grandmother whose daughter's sarcasm nearly drove her to distraction. I heard her personal testimony of her completely changed response as she claimed Isaiah 26:3: "Thou wilt keep him in perfect peace, whose mind is stayed on thee: because he trusteth in thee."

Then there is the student who declared: "This prayer class has completely rejuvenated my prayer life. It is the best thing that has ever happened to me! Never before have I prayed as I have since I entered this class. Never again will I pray a 'wish-washy-maybe-He-will-answer' type of prayer. I have learned that I—even I—can come boldly to the Throne of Grace, claiming definite promises from the Word of God. In them I find mercy and grace needed for any problem that may come. I now believe that my God will hear and answer."

But, most of all, I know from a very personal experience the change in my own life when I have lighted my taper at the altar of heaven. Now with the song writer I can sing:

"I'd rather have Jesus than anything
This world affords today."

Now stand, if you will, upon spiritual tiptoe. See! See a glorious gathering! Hear the songs of rapture! "What are these which are arrayed in white robes? and whence came they? . . . These are they which came out of great tribulation, and have washed their robes, and made them white in the blood of the Lamb." Revelation 7:13, 14.

Once they were thieves, murderers, adulterers, blasphemers, perhaps, with lives vile and sordid with every imaginable defilement of sin. Or perhaps their lives were filled with the so-called "respectable sins" of pharisaism, pride, and secret envy, etc. But now all is changed through the operation of the Holy Spirit. He has testified of Jesus, and they have "feared the Lord," and "thought upon his name." Of them heaven declares: "They shall be mine, saith the Lord of hosts, in that day when I make up my jewels; and I will spare them, as a man spareth his own son that serveth him." Malachi 3:16, 17.

Now here they are "before the throne of God, and serve him day and night in his temple." Revelation 7:15. The "Father's name"—character—is now stamped "in their foreheads"—minds. "And in their mouth was found no guile: for they are without fault before the throne of God." Revelation 14:1, 5.

Soon from the throne will come the fiat: he that is righteous, let him be righteous still: and he that is holy, let him be holy still. And, behold, I come quickly; and my reward is with Me, to give to every man according as his work shall be." Revelation 22:11.

Then in that glad hour, how grateful we shall be that we turned our eyes upon Jesus; for by "beholding" we "are changed into the same image." II Corinthians 3:18.

"Now unto him that is able to keep you from falling, and to present you faultless before the presence of his glory with exceeding joy, to the only wise God our Saviour, be glory and majesty, dominion and power, both now and ever, Amen." Jude 24, 25.