

Chapter 14

Thorborn Methodist Church

I was overjoyed to be placed upon the path again and plunged once more into the duties from which, for a time, I had felt separated and confused. It was about this time that our little group, having added to its numbers and enlarged its scope, felt the need of expanded quarters. We therefore began the construction of a brick edifice on the Seven Mile Road at Bloom Avenue, which would later be known as the North Detroit Baptist Church. My husband was out of work at this time, and he took over supervision of the parsonage.

I continued to teach the Sunday School class, rocking the handle of Harry's buggy to keep him still while I talked. We set a certain portion of the day aside for visitation in the suburbs where we lived. We put little Harry in a small wagon and away we would go every day, visiting the sick and helping people who were in distress. The study of the Word was very precious to our hearts. From time to time, God began to give us the revelation of Himself in the Word until we found it in our hearts to give everything we were, or ever hoped to be, on the altar of service to Him.

Here I labored faithfully and happily for a few years, supervising the commissary work, teaching the adult Bible class, and taking charge of a Junior Church which embraced some two hundred children. I enjoyed our work here very much - since teaching was always a joy to my heart, and the work among the poor and the training of children, a blessing and a delight.

In addition to these duties, I assisted the pastor as a church worker, as well as in the ministry of the Word. The Lord graciously allowed our work here to be most fruitful. Many adults' and children's souls were saved. Some of the children have since graduated from the Moody Bible Institute and have gone into the field of labor for the Lord, leading

others along the same happy road upon which it was once my privilege to set their own small feet. I often look back fondly upon my ministry with those precious people as a very bright and happy milestone along the long path of my walk with God. However, "God works in mysterious ways His wonders to perform," and, at this very time, He was again meeting and moving. I became aware that He was slowly and surely leading me away from this type of ministry, although into what I did not know or understand.

I was very loath to leave this group, for they seemed surely to be my people, but when the Lord is moving, one has to move right with Him, whether we move hard or peaceably. It was then I discovered that God can put hornets behind you. Although He may not make you go against your will, He certainly can make you willing to go – because of the hornets I mean.

When I held back unwillingly against His leading, distressing circumstances began to present themselves thick and fast. Had I obeyed God when He first spoke to me about leaving, I would have been saved much of the unpleasantness and the heartache that followed my act of disobedience. Finally, a day came when I had no further choice but to pull up stakes and move on. I felt like Abraham, called to go out but where I did not know.

Note: When the little Methodist Church received a new pastor with a contrary view of the Baptism of the Holy Spirit, Myrtle and her friends were no longer welcome. So many in this congregation along with Myrtle became part of an undenominational group who built the small church on Seven Mile Road., which became known as the North Detroit Baptist Church. But after a time, another minister took over the pastorate. When he learned that Myrtle had received the Baptism of the Holy Spirit and was teaching the "full gospel," she was removed from teaching her Bible classes and found herself without a church. (Patricia Beall Gruits)

For fully one year the Lord allowed me to sit as a woman forsaken and desolate. It seemed He permitted no one to comfort me in this lonely hour. There was even no church I could attend, no solace to be obtained, and why, I did not know. The friends who loved me, and whom I loved, were separated from me and I from them without any of us knowing the reason for the separation. But for the time, God caused us to be estranged from one another so His purposes in my life might be fulfilled.

I was mindful of the Scripture:

“Think not that I have come to bring peace on the earth; but I have come to bring division. I come with a sharp sword to separate in homes a mother from her daughter and a daughter-in-law from her mother-in-law.” (*Matt. 10:34*)

It was at this time that I learned that God is a jealous God, that He will have no idols, that He wants those that are His to be separated unto Himself. He was teaching me spiritual balance according to the Scriptures:

“After you have suffered awhile, I will strengthen, establish and settle you.” (*1 Peter 5:10*)

“A false balance is abomination to the Lord.”
(*Prov. 11:1*)

I did, indeed, suffer awhile, but gradually I became aware that the Lord was restoring spiritual balance and had indeed settled me.

Note: “I remember this time vividly. My mother would sit on the swing on the front porch, weeping – lonely and confused by the separation.” (Patricia Beall Gruits)

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At last one day God caused an old friend of mine, Mrs. Woods, to be sent to me. She invited me to speak at a Ladies’ Aid meeting at the Thorborn Methodist Church at Hawthorne and Seven Mile Road, of which Reverend and Mrs. William Robinson were the pastors. I remonstrated with her, telling her that because I had been saved and had received the Baptism of the Holy Spirit according to Acts 2 and 4, I was sure I would not be welcome in this church. For much of the suffering which I had undergone in the previous church was on account of this experience of my Baptism, which was not a doctrine preached in either of these churches.

This was a matter which I could not quite understand. I did not know at that time that each church had the principle and belief of stressing certain doctrines and omitting others. Because Protestants are familiar with the Bible and encouraged to read the entire Bible, naturally I therefore supposed that everything that was in the Bible would be accepted by those who believed in reading it. I could not conceive why

I was regarded as being out of order when I expressed myself as believing those things that are in the Word.

The reason for my unwillingness to speak at the Thorborn Methodist Church was that I felt I would be no more welcome in that church than I had been in the other. But my friend protested that such would not be the case. She assured me that this pastor and his wife were spiritual people who loved the Lord, were unsectarian, and loved Christians everywhere no matter what the division of their ways toward God.

Her earnestness and the things she told me lent encouragement to my heart, so I consented to go with her to the meeting. When Mrs. Woods introduced me to Rev. Robinson, I immediately felt the bond of Christian love and unity that emanated from him. However, I felt I could not betray this good man's confidence, so I asked if I could talk to him frankly and confidentially first before I addressed the ladies as I had been invited to do.

He was most gracious and kind and, encouraged by his gentleness and understanding, I related to him my experience in the Lord. He listened to the details very attentively and respectfully, and I knew that this man had a deep respect and understanding of the things of God. When I was finished my story, he was very touched. He said he felt honored that God would send such a one to his church. He assured me that he believed, even as had the Methodist minister who had first encouraged me in my early experience, that God was truly going to use me to labor in His vineyard.

After meeting with Rev. Robinson and sharing my Holy Spirit Baptism experience, I consented to speak that afternoon to the Ladies' Aid Society of the Thorborn Methodist Church. The message was blessed of the Lord. Afterward the Rev. Robinson told me he was delighted with it and material I had given. As proof of his sincerity, he invited me to be the speaker at the Mother and Daughter Banquet to be held shortly afterward. I felt compelled to accept. At this banquet the Lord met us all most graciously. Before its conclusion, it had almost turned into a revival meeting. In fact, while we were praying with people at the altar, even babies were being dedicated. Everyone felt the approval of the Lord upon the assembly of mothers and daughters.

Rev. Robinson and his wife were most pleased with my work and the reception of it. At this time arrangements were made for me to hold Pre-Easter Revival Services at the church. This was the beginning of a long and happy association with the Robinsons, which amounted almost

to a tradition, for wherever they moved in all the years following, I always arranged to give them an Easter Meeting.

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At the risk of interrupting my narrative, I would like to tell here of the last meeting Rev. Robinson arranged for me to hold. It was at the Methodist Church in Pontiac, Michigan. After the details for the convention had been concluded, on a Sunday afternoon prior to its opening, Rev. Robinson who was resting in the parsonage just across from the church was notified that the church was on fire. Before the conflagration was controlled, it had done great damage to the church interior. This shock was too much for the gentle Rev. Robinson. In a few days, he had gone on to be with the Lord whom he so dearly loved. Rev. and Mrs. Robinson were never blessed with a family, and his passing was a terrible loss to her.

But in the midst of her grief at that time, she asked if I would still come for the Easter Convention, since she knew that was what her husband would have wanted. Of course I consented. For some time afterwards, while Mrs. Robinson continued pastoring, I went out to Pontiac and assisted in the Easter meetings which were held in their basement auditorium.

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To return to my story, these first Pre-Easter meetings with the fine people of the Thorborn Church were singularly blessed of the Lord. Many souls were saved and countless Christians re-consecrated themselves to the Lord. New members were also added to the church. In addition to his work at Thorborn, Rev. Robinson also pastored a little group further out called the Campbell Memorial Church. I gave this church a week of meetings during the Easter season as well.

My work with the Robinson's one night is marked especially in my memory. They asked me to speak following a children's program. As I sat on the platform during the program, I became absorbed by the thought that I was standing at the crossroads of my life - one of the turning points in my experience. So many demands seemed to me as though the drawing in various directions would be too much for me. My home was calling, my husband and children were calling, and God was calling. The call of God upon my life was as strong and poignant as was the call of my home and children, and the wish of my husband that

I should be only wife and mother. I realized that all three of these pursuits were full-time duties. How any woman who was a wife and mother could also be the complete servant of God, with a full heart of obedience to carry His message of reconciliation to a world in need, was a complete source of bewilderment to me.

As I sat on the platform that evening it seemed for a short space of time that I was completely overwhelmed by the hopelessness of the situation I was in. All seemed to be maladjusted. Whenever I was called upon to speak God's message to others, I felt confident and strengthened. It seemed my words accomplished much toward His work in others. At the same time there was no lessening of my love and concern for my family. This indeed was a time of deep and bitter trial. I was neglecting duties, drawn this way and that. I seemed unable to give my full heart to all my responsibilities. I seemed to myself unfit. Even the clothes I was wearing were anything but what could be called presentable for platform work, so shabby were they.

When it came time for me to minister the word at this meeting, I felt indeed like an empty vessel, but presently I felt God filling me with Himself, His love, His compassion, His burden, and His wisdom. There came from my innermost being a flow such as I had never before experienced. Surely the Scripture, "When I am weak, then am I strong" came alive to me. At the close of the meeting, when the invitation was given, every person in the church, young and old, found a place to make an altar for their consecration unto the Lord. Many were saved, and others found again the "Bethel"⁵ of their first love. Many times since that feeling of empty bewilderment, I have realized I was in God's school. I have learned that God can supply all my needs through Jesus Christ.

After the meeting, Mrs. Robinson inquired of the young people: "What was it she said that caused every one of you to go forward?" Their answer was: "We don't remember what it was that she said, but it was that certain look upon her face that made us feel the Presence of God and His call upon our hearts."

Rev. Robinson then rose up and said to the people, "I am going to prophesy that the world will hear from this woman." Everyone knew

⁵ Bethel was the place where Jacob first encountered God for himself. When Myrtle refers to people finding the "Bethel of their first love," she means that they revisited their first meeting with God and, as a result, a rekindling of their love for Him. (JHG)

that he was speaking beyond his own knowledge, for he surely spoke "as one anointed of the Lord."

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After I had spent some time ministering at the Thorborn Church, one day the Rev. Robinson spoke to me about affiliating with the Methodist Church and becoming a Methodist minister. He told me he was convinced I would have a very fruitful ministry among the people that he served. I was inclined to think so too, since I had been saved and baptized in the Holy Spirit while a member of the Methodist Church. I certainly felt a debt of gratitude to these people, and I consented.

Plans were begun forthwith to take me into the Thorborn Methodist Church as a member in preparation for my acceptance as a minister of that group. I felt the seriousness of the step I was taking and gave myself up to prayer and fasting during my days at home, so that I would surely know my mind in the matter. On the day when I was due to become a member of the church, while there in the meeting waiting to be called forth, the Lord spoke to me and also to Mrs. Robinson. When she came to me to ask what I had decided to do, I told her I was feeling a very definite check from this step. Mrs. Robinson was very kind and gracious as she told me she believed I really had received the mind of the Lord in this matter.

As the days went on, all of us including Rev. and Mrs. Robinson were satisfied that God was leading in my life and I should follow where I felt *His Hand* drawing me. God had other plans for me, though I knew them not yet. I was stepping very cautiously from one call of the ministry to another. Then one day, God made me to know it was at last time for me to enter upon the one ministry for which He had prepared me before the foundation of the world – the work that would be known as Bethesda Missionary Temple.