

Chapter 16

A Church Begins

An ever-memorable day in my life was Sunday, June 14, 1934. Here began what would be known as Bethesda Missionary Temple but was then called the Bethesda Tabernacle. As I have related, we had no money left after we had paid the first month's rent on the little red brick building. No money left for chairs, a pulpit, or a piano. No money for song books or for any kind of furnishings or equipment whatever. And, of course, there was no money for announcing the opening of the church through a single handbill or newspaper advertisement.

With my children in tow, I walked down the street toward the empty building. With fear and trepidation the thought came to me, "Who will know today is the day of opening this church, and who, if anybody, will come to this first meeting?" In my doubt and wondering, my mind went back to an experience of about a year and half before where the call of God came to me to minister the Full Gospel.⁶

Although I was ministering in a denominational church, because I had received the Gift of the Holy Spirit I knew I wasn't free to preach the Full Gospel. I knew I would have to make a change. But this step I was loath to take. I feared the fanaticism of some Full Gospel churches, the emotion-stirring demonstrations of the flesh, the noise, and travail. Drawn by the summons of the Lord, with the tug of my heart on the one hand and my fears on the other, the battle within me became almost more than I could endure.

I did not know what answer the perfect will of God would be for me. Could God be in all of this that seemed contradiction and confusion, that seemed to be the Spirit and yet not the Spirit of God? Was God truly in the demonstrations I had witnessed in Full Gospel churches? How could I discern the truth in this apparent paradox? And so, my dilemma faced me. I didn't want to grieve the Holy Spirit, yet I

⁶ When Myrtle uses the term "Full Gospel," she means she would preach the gospel as it was in the Early Church with the Baptism of the Holy Spirit and the spiritual gifts as documented in the book of Acts. A Full Gospel Church would often be known as Pentecostal Church. (JHG)

wanted to be sure that what was supposed to be God's manifestation was really so.

One day while in prayer in search of the answer to this grave problem, I was impressed by the Spirit to go to the home of a friend in Grand Rapids. I sensed that if I could go there, and she would pray with me, I would know the perfect will of God. It was during the Depression, and my husband was not working, so I knew he could take care of the children in my absence. But transportation was the problem, as we were practically without funds at the time. Yet God, who is never too early or too late but always on time, sent a friend to me who was driving to Grand Rapids. She invited me to accompany her. Being sure God had sent her, and with my husband's consent, we agreed to leave in the morning.

Upon arriving at Grand Rapids, I found my friend had a houseful of unexpected company who were relatives but not Christians. I was dismayed and wondered how we would ever have the opportunity to pray under the circumstances. However, that night we agreed we would ask God to lead the way in the morning. Again God was faithful as we were directed to Bangor, Michigan - a little town across the state. My friend from Grand Rapids drove. When we arrived at my friend's home in Bangor, we found the family all packed and ready to move! Thus, again, it seemed that the purpose for which we had come was to be thwarted, but my friend assured us there was plenty of room and time to pray.

We explained to this Christian couple the battle that was raging within my heart, and how I needed an answer from God as to His perfect plan, will, and direction for my life. They understood my predicament. In great sympathy and with supporting faith, they knelt and prayed for me while I battled for the reply down among the packing boxes.

After a time, the struggle within me passed. I could say with perfect confidence and comfort, "Not my will, but Thine be done, O Lord." There a covenant was made between the Lord and me. I promised Him I would preach the Full Gospel faithfully, if He would be the Senior Partner and take care of all the demonstrations of the flesh and the spirit. As I made this covenant peace flooded my heart. I knew God had heard me. Just before I arose from my knees, I said with a smile, "Lord, who will know I have said "yes" to your perfect will to preach the Full Gospel?"

I was not long in learning that it is important only that God knows you have made the consecration. For upon my arrival at home in the early hours of the morning, I found a letter awaiting me. It was from the pastor of a Full Gospel mission inviting me to come and take her mission for a few weeks while she went on vacation. She stated she had prayed and asked God with whom she should leave the work, and the Lord had caused her to extend the invitation to me. She added, "Though you have had no experience in Full Gospel preaching, I think it is in the Lord's mind for you to begin."

Thus was my pilgrimage was fulfilled – a confirmation once again that when we pray in secret, God hears and rewards us openly.

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It was the remembrance of this experience which came to me as I walked along the street that day toward the little red brick building. It was clean, but bare of furnishings, bare of even the minor physical needs wherewith to serve God, and with no funds to spread the word in the public print that here was a new sincere, though modest work in His name. I wondered who would know we had opened the doors - that a meeting was to begin. I wondered who would be there, and how they would know to be there.

As I recalled my pilgrimage to Grand Rapids and Bangor, and the circumstances of my struggle, and the covenant I had made with God and His immediate answer, I knew God knew. And, whosoever God wanted to know would be there. Upon arriving at the building, I found a number of people had already gathered for the service. To my mind it was another one of God's miracles that anyone should be present. I saw in this congregation another confirmation of the faithfulness of God.



Bethesda Tabernacle - later to be called
The Mission Building
This picture taken years later shows the location of the
original storefront church.

