

Chapter 8

The Great Physician, The Great Deliverer

For some the way to God is easier than for others. A simplicity of heart, a singleness of soul, and a life free of complications and perplexities help to make the way straight and smooth for such fortunate ones. Yet far from regretting the obstacles and the deviousness of the path that made my journey difficult, I thank God that He did not make the way too easy for me. As the stormy voyage makes the home port more beautiful and welcome for the sailor, so the traveler appreciates refuge to a greater degree when the highway has been rocky and tortuous.

God was surely leading me on, surely and safely, though slowly past the dangers of the steep and dangerous road to His grace. As I look back, I can see the pattern from the very beginning. From the very first work of conviction of the Holy Spirit that I ever felt in my heart, through days of trials and afflictions to the present day. I find all of His works are glorious and “all things work together for good to those who love God, who are the call called according to His purpose.” (*Rom. 8:28*)

Often we view the pattern of our life from the underside. We see there a tangled mass of colored threads and knots that are seemingly without plan or purpose, leading in all directions and emerging at random from many places – a meaningless and hopeless jumble. But from God’s side, we can see the beautiful embroidery of a life’s pattern as it is woven by Him, an elaborate and orderly network of threads of all color, every design different, yet all with singleness of plan and purpose which in the end completes His design.

Perhaps it is the Lily of the Valley, or the Rose of Sharon which emerges from His needle or some other picture of perfect symmetry and beauty. But we can be sure that every thread, every stitch, every tear and pain has a meaning. They are working into an exquisite pattern, a glorious wedding garment for that one who can stand quiet and patient, and let Him do His work.

The days that followed my conversion were glorious and at the same time terrible days - glorious through the realization of sins which had been forgiven, the reveling in His presence, and His nearness and His

love, but terrible because of the beckoning of the Spirit into uncharted waters and unmapped roads. *His Voice* spoke softly, encouragingly: “Come a little farther. Let Me take you into My chambers...” As a child who had never explored the chambers of God, there was within me a longing and wanting. At the same time there was a fear and a drawing back, the mixture of emotions which besets those stepping into the unknown and unfamiliar. Such a mixture of emotions was mine that I was confused and bewildered. I did not know truly who I was or what this new-found salvation was leading me to or what it would take me away from.

But loving Him supremely, I could only say: “You lead me, Father, for I have no other guide.” And so, step by step, moment by moment, He drew me out and on. Though I feared my unfitness and readiness for the place He had prepared for me, I was ever conscious and trustful of His loving Presence and His guiding Hand.

* * *

About this time, the goiter which I had suffered with from childhood became active. It became toxic and had begun to spread poisons through my entire system. I was in very poor health and was constrained to visit the University Hospital in Ann Arbor, Michigan for some metabolism tests. From these and other tests, the doctors deduced that I needed to enter the hospital for a thyroid operation. I had completed my tests on a Friday and was committed to enter the hospital on Sunday. At that time, although I had already learned a great deal about Him and His ways, I had not yet heard about divine healing.

On Saturday, the day before I was to submit to the knife, a Christian worker came to see me at my home. I had never met her before and knew nothing about her faith or her religious affiliation. After a short chat, she commenced to tell me that it had come to her knowledge that I was ill and suffering greatly. She assured me that if she prayed for me, and if I would believe that the Lord would Himself heal me, that I would not need to have the operation.

We had a bedroom just off the living room, and she suggested that we go in there, kneel together at the side of the bed, and she would pray for me. I assented, and we fell on our knees in the calm and quiet of the little room. As she began to pray, I suddenly became aware that something was happening in my throat and neck, an indescribable sensation which frightened me badly. In my fear of the unknown and

unfamiliar, I begged that she pray no more, that since my plans were made to go to the hospital, I would continue as I had planned. I was actually petrified with fear. I was sure that this woman must be a witch! I have often thought since then of the discouragement and disappointment which this good woman must have felt at my deliberate refusal of God's power and grace, which might have been imparted to me through her.

I knew nothing at that time of praying in the Spirit or of the power of God, even though I had the experience of being saved by it. But I have learned since then that there are many of God's servants who have been elected by Him to receive the gift of faith and healing - would that more of us could bring ourselves to take advantage of this great gift. As I look back upon this experience, I am now sure that if I had believed, if in spite of my fear I had trusted the powerful healing hand of God, that I would have been spared the awful ordeal of this operation.

* * *

The following day, Sunday, a few friends from the little Methodist Church visited to pray with me before I was to leave for the hospital. How well I remember that day! To me, it has always been one of the greatest moments of my life. My modest home was indeed Holy Ground. We were all broken in His presence. I left my home for the hospital fortified with renewed faith in God and in my salvation, for I was sure that He had heard the prayers of these good friends to bring me back to rear my family. My fear and trepidation were dispelled, and I placed my faltering hand in His with utmost trust and confidence, knowing that He would bring me through the darkness out into the light again to take up, with renewed health, my travels toward His goal.

* * *

“Many are the afflictions of the righteous, but God delivers them all...” (*Ps. 34:19*)

“The angel of the Lord encamps around them that fear Him and delivers them...” (*Ps. 34:7*)

These words of Scripture were proved to me in the days that followed. My operation was a serious one, and I hovered between two worlds for many days. There is a time of the night, before daybreak,

when the ill and suffering are conscious of a heavy darkness; when it seems that the powers of evil and death are fighting for the patient's mind and soul, spirit and body; when one wonders if he will see the light of another day. So it was with me in the days that followed my operation.

I remember one early morning just before dawn, when it seemed my body was being riven asunder by pain. I was powerless to move in anywise. Suddenly at the peak of my torture a little nurse entered my room. She silently slipped her hands under my back and lifted me up into a comfortable position. She seemed to know just where to place her hands, just where the pain and distress centered, and where release was most needed. I said to her wonderingly:

“My, you know just where it hurts, don't you?”

But she only smiled and left as quietly as she had come. After that night, she was my constant and regular visitor in the terrible hour just before sunrise. I always knew when to expect her - at the moment when the pain was about to become unbearable. Her hair was so fair, her skin so translucent, and her uniform so snowy white, that in my mind I called her “the little white nurse.” As time passed, I grew ever more thankful and grateful for her countless kindnesses and for the love and mercy she showed me. I looked forward to her nightly advent with great eagerness and expectance.

Then one morning, after she had as usual made me comfortable and soothed my pain, she whispered into my ear. I could feel her breath upon my ear and neck as she said:

“Now dear, you are going to begin to get well. Your temperature is going to go down now, and you are going to recover.”

A little later on this same morning, another nurse came in and asked me how I was feeling. As she prepared to take my temperature, I told her how the “little white nurse” had told me that my temperature would go down, and that I was going to recover. She asked, “What little white nurse? What did she look like?” I described her as best I could and told her she was the one who came to me every morning before daybreak to comfort and encourage me.

The nurse took my temperature wordlessly and left hurriedly, only to return in a few minutes with another nurse. Again she asked me to

describe the “little white nurse’s” appearance, words, and actions. I recounted how wonderful the “little white nurse” was to me, what she did and said. In a moment or two they left and came back again. This time they came with a doctor who also asked to hear the story.

By now I knew that something was amiss. I hoped and prayed that I had said or done nothing that would get “my” nurse in trouble. They left the room without comment. Later that day I was informed that my temperature was going down, and that I was so much improved I would be moved to a four-bed ward. I remonstrated, wanting to know if the “little white nurse” would be on duty in that part of the hospital. For some reason I could not account for, I felt that my very life was in her hands.

The nurse who was my informant very kindly sat down near me. She told me there was no nurse of the description I had given on that floor, nor ever had been. She suggested with great consideration that my comforter in the long night’s reaches might have been a heavenly visitor. I don’t know whether she believed her own words or was merely trying to quietly comfort me. But as I continued to regain my strength, I knew beyond the shadow of a doubt that my visitor was indeed of celestial origin. The Lord in His grace and mercy had sent His angel to minister unto me.

* * *

The patients in the four-bed ward to which I had been removed were very ill. I, too, became so weak that it frightened me. I thought, if I had not died before, I surely would now. The atmosphere was most depressing. The patients suffered visibly and audibly - some moaning, some groaning, others nauseated with pain.

It was about half-past ten in the morning. I had been made comfortable after having been moved. As was the habit of the staff, they cut a four-fold gauze into pieces and gave one to each of us as a handkerchief. Because of my fear and nervousness, I was perspiring and weeping. I took the piece of gauze I had been given and tried to shake it out so that I could wipe away my tears and sweat. Self-pity had overcome me, and I was beginning to give way to my sorrow and terror. When suddenly, through my tears, and in the midst of the misty folds of the white gauze, I saw the face of the Agonized Christ!

In terrifying detail, I beheld the very physical marks of His suffering, of the futility of men who did not know Him. There, in very truth, was

the thorn-scarred brow, the torn bleeding flesh where the thorns had pressed. There was the dust of the road, clotted and matted in the open wounds of his forehead. I saw how the blood and sweat flowed down his brow and into his eyes, which were swollen and blackened from blows and suffering. The same blood, perspiration, and dust mingled now with his tears, flowed down his cheeks into his beard, which had been roughly plucked from the tender flesh, leaving it ragged and bleeding. I saw his nostrils, distended and discolored from the blows which had struck him - the lips swollen and cracked. Yet through those lips, with those darkened and puffed eyelids, He smiled at me. It was a smile of supreme encouragement He gave me. I thought and remembered; "...and He opened not His mouth, as a lamb before the shearers is dumb." (*Isa. 53:7*)

When the vision passed, I felt such great shame at my small and selfish complaining, my distrust of His promise that I would recover, even after hearing the assurance from the mouth of one of His witnesses. I turned over on my side and said as I faced the wall:

"Forgive me, Lord. You will hear no further word of complaint from my lips. And if you will let me live and return to my family, I will go back as Your witness."

I am neither artist, nor poet, but if I could paint, I would be able to reproduce every detail, every line of the face I saw that day, for it has burned itself into my mind in such a way that it would be easy for me to draw it from memory. But since I cannot paint, I pray that this picture in words will stir the hearts of all who read it, that they may see again and know again how truly Jesus paid the terrible debt of sin for you and me.

* * *

In due time, I was dismissed from the hospital. However, I was not yet completely well. The incision continued to drain, and they had put a tube in my throat to draw off the serum. The incision, striving to heal, troubled and pained me greatly. Naturally I came home from the hospital unable to take up my household duties or care for my family. After a period, we all became very discouraged, as there seemed to be no progress in my healing.

My brother took me back to the hospital to see if there wasn't something, anything, they could do to help me. We were told by a kindly physician that they had done all they could do for me. He suggested that if I knew how to pray that I take this means of seeking recovery. Neither my brother nor myself appreciated this advice from a physician. We felt it was, as they say, a "brush-off." However, after I returned home, in the days that followed, the awful distress drove me to my knees. I pleaded with God for mercy, for it seemed I obtained no rest by day or night. But man's extremity is God's opportunity. In just a matter of days, God would reveal to me the good news that Jesus heals today as He did when He walked the shores of Galilee. I was about to be made known the truth of the words of Scripture which so encouragingly say:

"Jesus Christ is the same, yesterday, today and forever."
(Heb. 13:8)