

## CHAPTER SIX

### **The Lord Made A Way!**

My prayer to God had been for a way out. The answer came in a most unexpected manner. All of a sudden I was saying, "Goodbye" to everyone and everything I had ever known.

At the school house we were busy studying but there was an undercurrent of excitement because it was the day the report cards were to be given out. There was a knock at the door. The teacher opened the door and stepped out into the hall. Curious as we were we could not see who the visitor was nor how he had come. In a few minutes the teacher stepped back into the room, walked to my desk and said, "The school nurse is here. She wants to speak to you."

My preacher friend had told the right people about the plight of the thirteen-year-old girl whose adoption was a failure. The school nurse had come to take me away. I did not understand what it was all about but I willingly went with her after she assured me that I would never have to go back to my foster home.

#### NEW GUARDIAN

About eighteen years previous in British Columbia the problem of neglected children had become so

acute that two child welfare acts were passed in parliament. From that time on other steps had been taken to protect adopted and neglected children. With all sincerity I had asked God to help me. Now in answer to that prayer the provincial government was getting into action. After proper legal steps had been taken I became a charge of the Child Welfare Department of British Columbia. My guardian was Superintendent of Child Welfare.

After a brief session in court with my foster Father present, it was established that he had failed to live up to his side of the adoption agreement. My new guardian took me in her car to Vancouver. At one time on the journey I broke into tears. She tried to cheer me and said that the best days of my life were in the future. I clutched the report card the teacher had given me as I left the country school. All my marks were good. My guardian said, "Do you like school?"

"Yes," I replied, "school is wonderful."

With a smile she said, "You are going to have the opportunity to continue in school and get all the education you can absorb."

Confused as I was with so many things happening that I did not understand, I could not fail to feel the importance of what she said. What a wonderful promise!

We discussed the fact that I had stood to my feet in the gospel meeting. When she asked me why I did it, I said, "I wanted to be like the preacher ladies, pure and holy. That is why I gave my life to Christ."

## ALEXANDRIA ORPHANAGE

During all this time I wondered where she was taking me. When she said, "The Alexandria Orphanage," I couldn't believe my ears.

"But I don't want to live in an orphanage," I objected.

Then she explained that I would not be at the orphanage very long; just long enough for her to find a more suitable place for me to live. It occurred to me she might have in mind to take me there and leave me permanently but just wasn't saying so. But nothing could be done about it.

The Alexandria Orphanage was a large rambling building with a small and inadequate playground. I rather took to the place. My bed was in a dormitory where I slept with several other girls my age. There was a set time for rising, cleaning teeth, dressing, and making the bed. Someone taught me how to make my bed according to the rules.

Some of the older girls spent their time scheming how to get outside to meet their boy friends. Some wanted to run away and get married and others talked wildly of getting out and going on a good drunk. How any kind of a "drunk" could be "good" was hard to imagine. When one of the girls climbed out a window and secretly spent the evening with her boy friend, she was punished by solitary confinement. Many of the older children hated the Orphanage but there was no resentment in me against the Alexandria. Compared to what I had heard about such places the Alexandria was heaven. My conversion had resulted

in a changed attitude toward everybody and everything.

#### DREAM OF PREACHING

I read my New Testament as much as possible. Shining like a bright star in my dreams was the thought of going out preaching some day, just like my preacher friend had done. I would go through the country districts preaching in school houses, telling others what she had told me.

The head matron, whom we all feared, came upon a group of teen-age girls in the hallway. We were talking in our loudest voices. Not one of us had as yet found the tone and volume control on our speaking system. Sternly the matron told us to quiet down and try to act like ladies. She singled me out as one of the chief offenders. When she left I turned to the others, "My voice is too loud! That's what she thinks. It is all the better to preach with."

One day one of the matrons checked me up on a small mistake. I broke into a flood of tears and went screaming off into a corner. I heard her say to one of the girls, "I can't understand that. What is wrong with her?" I did not understand either why I exploded in such a violent outburst of emotion. I wished to make it right with the matron but what could I say? How could she understand that I felt all torn up by the roots?

My stay at the Alexandrian lasted just long enough for me to make a few attachments. I came to know and enjoy some new friends at the Junior High

School. Then my guardian made arrangements for me to go to the Okanogan Valley to live.

She was at the Vancouver station to see me off and told the conductor to take good care of me. She saw to it also that I was well fixed with spending money. Everytime the fruit and candy man came by he did business. Twenty-five cents for a pillow seemed quite a bargain. Several hours later when his shift was over and he got off the train, he took his pillows with him. I felt cheated. He explained that I had not purchased the pillow but only rented it.

My supervisor was at the Summerland station to meet me. She was a social service worker employed by the Child Welfare Department. We were to become well acquainted as she was the "go-between." She kept an eye on me in my new home, worked out problems between me and my foster-home and saw to it that my guardian's wishes were carried out. Most important of all she was a friend and counsellor. When everything went wrong with everybody else, one had the feeling that the supervisor had one's best interest at heart.

#### MOTTS, MY NEW FAMILY

The Motts, my new family, were at the station also. There were four children; the eldest of them was a year younger than I. They welcomed me to their home and spoke warmly about my being their new sister. Mr. Mott was then engaged in fruit farming. He had been a Holiness Movement preacher but moved to the sunny Okanogan when his wife's health failed. Their house was set on the side of a hill over-

looking beautiful Lake Okanogan. The entire countryside was luxurious with peach and apple orchards. The family table was laden regularly with fresh vegetables from the garden. In early childhood I had more than my share of beans and coffee; now I daily enjoyed the new-dug potatoes, tomatoes from the vine, freshly picked corn and all types of fruit. In their house there was no arguing, no profanity, no drinking nor smoking. The children had never seen a deck of cards nor smelled beer or wine. The family read the Bible and prayed together daily.

On arrival at their house my emotions were mixed. The new family was nice but the person I loved most was far away. I loved my preacher most because she had loved me when no one else did. She had been mother, father, brothers and sisters to me since the hour of my conversion. Her letters meant so much. Her interest made me believe in myself. My guardian was nice too but I had only seen her twice.

All mixed up inside and very lonely, I sat at the kitchen table and cried. It was silly to cry but the tears kept coming just the same. In an effort to comfort me Mrs. Mott drew me into conversation. She wanted to know why I was unhappy. That was a hard question to answer because I was glad to be at their house and could not explain why I felt upset—so lost. Then she asked, "Are you saved?"

With all honesty, I said, "No."

"All of our family are saved," she said, "right down to Preston. As young as he is, he loves Jesus too."

Looking at me again more closely she asked, "Don't you consider yourself a Christian?"

Without hesitation I replied, "Oh yes, I'm a Christian. I got converted through the school house meetings."

It struck me that there was something funny about this family.

#### CONVERTED OR SAVED—WHICH?

The people through whom I was converted never used the word "saved." They said nobody could know they were "saved" until they actually got to heaven. They believed that they were the only true followers of Christ in the world. Their ideas about what it took to be a real Christian were very definite. They said the true church could be identified very easily for they practised a number of things that set them apart from other groups. They did not build churches; their meetings were conducted in rented halls, school houses and private homes. The preachers did not receive salaries and went out preaching *two by two*. Nor were any collections taken in the meetings. If the number of believers in a city grew they formed new groups and met in several different houses.

When the Mott family told me they were "saved" and that they went to the Baptist church, I felt sorry for them. I wished that they belonged to the true church. "If only they could have been in the country with me and heard what I heard, they would be truly converted," I thought.

Their regular attendance at the Baptist church was a big problem to me. They insisted that I go with

them. When I said that I did not want to go to church, they thought that was a strange attitude for a Christian. It did not seem strange to me because to my knowledge the followers of Jesus did not build churches. I did not intend to have anything to do with anybody but the true Christians.

Resolved to settle the question for all time I wrote my preacher friend and said, "These people are trying to get me to go to the Baptist church. Didn't you tell me churches are worldly and wrong? Please tell me, is it wrong for me to go to one? If you say I shouldn't go, I won't go and they can't drag me." Anxiously I waited for a reply.

When the next letter came there was no mention of church. My guardian had told the preacher that if she gave me any advice contrary to her wishes, she would not be permitted to correspond with me at all. Thoroughly disgusted because I had to go to a place where they knew so little about the real thing, I went to the Baptist church. Sympathetically I wished all of them could hear what I had heard and be converted like I had been. The only thing I liked was the fudge the Sunday School teacher gave out each Sunday to those who learned the Bible verses.

Regularly in conversation at home the matter of religion came up. They labored to convince me that my ideas of heaven and who is going there were too narrow.

"Heaven will be very small if just you and your friends are going there." Mrs. Mott would say.

I had heard that the way to heaven was straight and narrow with just a few people on it, so I would



reply, "I don't care how small heaven is or how few are there. If there is just Jesus, the preacher and I, I'm going anyway!"

In vain they tried to explain that the true church was made up of believers from many different groups and denominations.

Every morning they had prayer around the family altar. All of the children prayed including the youngest. After some days Mr. Mott said, "Bernice, wouldn't you like to pray?"

I thought, "God can hear me even if He doesn't hear them."

Faltering and uncertain, I prayed my first prayer at a family altar. Cock-sure of myself in some ways I had sense enough to know that my prayer was no masterpiece.

The meetings in the local Baptist church were not evangelistic enough to suit many of the townspeople. Consequently certain of them conducted inter-denominational meetings Sunday afternoon where it was the custom for each person to stand up and testify. The leader had heard about my peculiarities so he said, "Bernice, you have been converted, wouldn't you like to testify?" Perfectly sure that God would be pleased with my testimony but that the rest of them were still outside the door of salvation, I stood up and stuttered out a few sentences. My thought was that what I said might help the others—if only they could have been with me in the school house!

#### ONLY A BABE

As time went on my short-comings became clearer

to me. The Motts were wonderful Christians. I had words in my vocabulary that a Christian should never use. They had never heard some of the expressions I used.

"Bernice!" said Mrs. Mott, "Be careful how you talk! The baby is copying you."

"But it's not swearing," I said defensively.

"No," she replied, "but it's the first cousin to it. Christians are different and don't use slang and worldly talk."

I tried to do better and then—"Oops! Out it came again!"

Then I felt ashamed.

Often when I sat down to eat by myself, I would be half-way through the meal before I thought of giving thanks to God. Somewhere I had heard that even pigs know enough to give thanks when they eat. They at least look up to heaven and say, "Grunt, grunt." The whole thing was causing me to wonder. I went to Mr. Mott with my problem. He was kind, and quite a philosopher. Worried I asked, "Do you think I really got converted?"

He said, "Bernice, if anybody ever got converted you did. But it takes time to develop Christian character. You are just a babe in Christ and have many things to learn. As you live for Christ and grow in grace you will acquire habits that are becoming to a Christian."

It took several months for the Mott family to convince me that what I got in the country and what they had were the same. The important thing was a personal knowledge of Jesus Christ as Saviour. Heav-

en was still small but not as small as I first had thought. The Holiness Movement people would be there and some of the Baptists. They were just nicely "in" when my guardian moved me to Kelowna, British Columbia.