

CHAPTER SEVEN

Walking In The Light

Affectionately I bade the Mott family "Goodbye." Had I been permitted to decide I would have stayed right there with them but my guardian thought it best for me to live in Kelowna, forty miles up the Okanogan Valley. In Kelowna I was to receive medical attention and hoped to be cured of a bad skin condition which caused me much embarrassment. The doctor was a friend of my guardian's from college days.

Through a chain of circumstances that was rather wonderful in itself, I found myself living in the home of Mr. and Mrs. John Lindahl. However, at the time it did not seem wonderful to me. The Lindahls belonged to a small, progressive church known as Evangel Tabernacle. It was affiliated with the Pentecostal Assemblies of Canada, sister-organization to the Assemblies of God in the United States. My bags were no more than set down when Mrs. Lindahl said, "We'll be going to church tomorrow night. Would you like to go along?"

Tomorrow was Tuesday. I thought, "They could have at least waited 'til Sunday. Now what do these people have that they are so enthusiastic about?"

Uppermost in my mind was the thought that now I was in Kelowna where the *true* Christians had several meetings weekly, I would be able to worship with

them. It would please my preacher greatly to see me attend their meetings regularly. They had rescued me in the country and to their cause my heart was bound with strong ties.

PERILOUS POSITION

In my limited experience as a Christian I had formed definite ideas on religion. Along the way I had been warned about the Pentecostal people. Of all the heretics in the world they were the most dangerous. I had been told that if hell had one place hotter than another they would certainly be consigned to it. Not only were they in error but they were extremely subtle about it. They had a way of snaring others so that they were completely trapped before they even knew it. At once I saw the danger of my position. I was living with Pentecostal people! It was true I had been wrong about the Holiness Movement and some of the Baptists but there could be no mistake about these Pentecostals.

At that moment my journey on the straight and narrow road that leads to life seemed more perilous than I first had visioned. There was need for prayer, "Please, God, help me stay on the straight and narrow road. I want to follow Jesus. Don't let anybody influence me the wrong way."

In the service at Evangel Tabernacle that first Tuesday night my prejudices prevented me from enjoying anything—well, almost anything. When we arrived home from the service Mr. Lindahl said, "Well, Bernice, how did you like it?"

My immediate reply was, "I didn't like it at all."

After all one could not afford to be polite to *heretics*. In the face of my impudence he had every right to slap my ears and trim me down but showing no aggravation at all, he continued,

“Didn’t you like anything about the service?”

“The orchestra sounded good,” I conceded, “but what was all that moaning and groaning about?”

Even though I had not the slightest inclination to be satisfied with any of their explanations, his reply seemed quite satisfactory: “When the preacher says something the people believe they say ‘Amen.’ That is like saying, ‘Preach it, brother! We’re right with you.’ Then too, God loves to hear our praises, so we make no apologies for the praises of the people.”

Obviously the safest way would be to stay entirely away from their Pentecostal church. I asked permission of my guardian, through my supervisor, to go to the *true* church. I believed that I was choosing the group with whom Jesus would have fellowshiped had He been in town. My guardian’s answer was clear, “You must attend church with the people with whom you live. How can you be part of their family if on Sunday you gather your righteous robes around you and go marching off to some other church as though you were better than they?” My arguments were of no avail.

They could insist I go to the Pentecostal church but they couldn’t force me to listen. I would be inattentive. Nothing they said would make any difference to me. Like a duck in the rain, I would let all the preaching run off. Nothing must soak in. I wished it were possible to plug my ears with cotton.

THEY PREACHED CHRIST

It was not easy to be inattentive—the meetings were much too interesting! They preached “Ye must be born again.” John 3:7. Why, that was the same theme my preacher spoke on in the school house! When the wind blew nobody could see it but the effect could be seen. It had been that way in the miracle of my own conversion. The miracle could not be explained but the results had been obvious to all.

Week after week the Pentecostal preacher exalted Christ, “Who his own self bare our sins in His own body on the tree, that we, being dead to sins, should live unto righteousness.” 1 Peter 2:24. From their pulpit it was often repeated, “Without the shedding of blood there is no remission of sins.” The more preaching I heard the more clearly I saw the power of the blood of Christ to cleanse from sin, and the marvel of His atoning death.

SPEAKING IN TONGUES

The odd thing about the Pentecostal people was their belief in the Baptism of the Holy Spirit with speaking in other tongues. That was what made them stick out like a sore thumb from other evangelicals. I was in the process of reconciling their seemingly correct attitude toward Christ and the atonement with their peculiar teaching about speaking in other tongues when along came an evangelist who preached for two weeks on the Holy Spirit. As he went through the Bible he was always pointing out some scripture on being filled with the Holy Spirit. When he got in-

to the New Testament it was written so plainly, nobody could miss it. He quoted the eighth chapter of Acts and Acts 10:46 "For they heard them speak with tongues, and magnify God." To this he added impressive evidence, Acts 19:6 "And when Paul had laid his hands upon them, the Holy Ghost came on them; and they spake with tongues, and prophesied." Not forgetting the personal testimony of Paul in 1 Cor. 14:18. "I thank my God, I speak with tongues more than ye all." His solemn warning was, "Forbid not to speak with tongues." I had been under the impression that there was not one verse in the whole Bible that dealt with speaking in tongues. But I was wrong. The Pentecostal people had not made it up—it was in the Bible!

Heaven was getting bigger all the time. It was clear to me now that the shouting Pentecostals would not be barred from that wonderful place where the saved of earth will sing in mighty chorus, "Redeemed by the blood of the Lamb."

DIFFICULT DECISION

I decided to go all the way with God, no matter what the cost. It meant going against the wishes of the preacher who had won me to Christ. As a result of my decision I sought the Lord and was soon filled with the Holy Spirit, speaking the praises of God in an unknown tongue. It was then up to me to write and tell my preacher what had happened.

For days I worried, afraid my preacher would cast me off as a friend, since so soon I had fallen in with *heretics*. Of all the people I knew, I loved her

most. She had been wonderful to me when I needed a friend. In return I gave her the devotion of my teen-age heart. Since she did not believe in the Pentecostal people, it was likely that my decision would mean a breach in our friendship. Furthermore, it seemed the height of ingratitude to turn my back on the ones who had rescued me in the country. But there was no reconciling the two groups. My preachers consistently refused to fellowship with anybody who associated with other religious groups.

With difficulty I set myself to writing a letter of explanation to my evangelist friend. The letter went something like this:

Dear Frances,

I'm sorry to have to write something I know will displease you but I don't know what else to do.

When I first came to Kelowna I rejected the message of the Baptism of the Holy Spirit as preached by the Pentecostal people. Then I saw the truth of it in the Bible and now I have the experience myself. It may seem to you that I have been side-tracked but I want you to know that I love Christ now more than ever. I must put God first.

Assuring her of my love and gratitude to God for the message she brought, I signed my name. It seemed I could hear the door shut on a wonderful friendship.

Anxiously I waited for her reply. When it came it was warm and affectionate, filled with tender regard and concern. I read the familiar handwriting, "I understand that these people have been in a position to influence you unduly. I will keep on praying for you that you will come back to the true way." Today she labors, preaching the gospel in Japan.

What a day it will be when we all get to heaven! Perhaps one day when we are walking down one of heaven's boulevards, she and I will meet at an intersection. She will look twice to make sure who it is. Then she will exclaim in surprise, "You here? Why I gave up all hope for you. I thought my labors were in vain."

With joy I will reply, "Yes, not only am I here but there are millions more of these Pentecostal people in heaven."