

WHEN I WAS A CHILD

A True Story of a Minister's Childhood Days

WHEN I was about five or six years old I lived on a farm in Southern California where it was warm and sunny. I could lie on the green grass and look far into the deep blue sky and see those white floating clouds move and change into different shapes as they travelled across the heavens.

I not only had the joys of farm life but I had another joy out there. I used to look up into the sky and say, "God, You are my Savior and my Father, and some of these days I am going to be right up there in Heaven with You, and then I really can see You face to face."

There were times when I would be out in the barn and I would look up toward the rafters high overhead and think of God. I cannot forget those days when I walked and talked with God; and much of the time I went around the farm whistling and singing the song I loved so well:

I'll do as He bids me, Whatever the cost: I'll be a true soldier, I'll die at my post.

I wondered about what it would mean to be a true soldier for Jesus. My mother was a Christian and had taught lessons to me from the Bible, so I knew that it partly meant to be obedient to my father and my mother, and it also meant to walk free from sin in this world.

My mother would read the Bible and also the Bible stories to us children, and I would think: Oh, if I could have a place in Heaven! if I could only get up there someday in one of those beautiful palaces, what a wonderful thing it would be! I had many happy days while I was a young boy. I found it a great joy to think of going to a Home in Heaven. I went on that way while I was very young, and oh, the joy that was in my soul! — until sin crept in and spoiled it all.

My Joy Spoiled

When I became a little older I began to run with different boys and learned the ways of the world and the ways of sin. Sin came into my heart and I went out into the worldly pleasures, but I never had the least bit of joy compared with the days when I could look up into the heavens, into the face of God, and tell Him He was my Savior. I went on in sin at that time but I always wished I could get back the happiness that I had in my early childhood.

Wanted to Be Tattooed

I decided that I would like to be a sailor boy and go out on the high seas and sail with the Navy. Then, too, I thought it would be fine if I could be a soldier for Uncle Sam. I liked to watch the boys when they passed by in their uniforms; and as I looked at the sailors I noticed that some of them had their arms tattooed. They had pictures on their bodies, and I thought: My, if I could only be tattooed like those sailors I would consider myself a real man!

I took my own pen and made pictures on my arms and I became so interested in the idea that I asked my mother if I could be tattooed.

Found the Answer

Mother got out her Bible and said, "Well, Son, let us see what God has to say about it in His Word." Mother always looked in the Bible to find the answer to hard questions or anything that we were uncertain about. Then we knew for sure what was right. She found the answer to my question and read it to me right out of the Bible: "Ye shall not make any cuttings in your flesh for the dead, nor print any marks

upon you: I am the LORD" (Leviticus 19:28). That question was answered; and from that hour I never wanted to be tattooed, because I knew it was wrong.

Open Gates

Right down in my heart I never did want to do anything that would keep me from going through the Gates of Pearl into our heavenly Home, into those beautiful mansions, into that City of Gold. But from what we had read in the Bible I knew that we could not expect to have a home there if we did not live to please God down here on this earth.

My mother told me that God had given us the Bible that we might read it and find out how to please Him. And if we would obey God's Word and do what He tells us, then those Pearly Gates someday would open wide for us and we could walk through into one of those mansions — more beautiful than anything our eyes have seen in this world.

Joy Returned

My mother taught me what a wonderful thing it would be if I would give my life to Jesus; and it was through her teaching and prayers that I gave my heart to Jesus when I grew older. I am glad I chose to serve God. He took out the sorrow and disappointments that sin brings into one's life. He gave me new pleasures and gave me back that joy I had when a child. I never again wanted to do the things that were sinful.

A Treasure for You

The time comes when all the children and young people must face the temptation of sin and they must choose for themselves what they will do. Choose Jesus while you are young. Obey His commandments. Ask Him to save you and make you ready for Heaven. Jesus said, "Ask, and it shall be given you" (Luke 11:9). God blesses and keeps those who trust and obey Him, and He answers their prayers. Many children enjoy the peace of Heaven in their hearts and they are true to Jesus every day at school, at home, and at play.

If you have the love of Jesus down in your heart you have a real treasure that you do not want to lose. There is a sweetness in your heart that gives you greater happiness in all you do. You will not need to listen to the crime programs, read the crime comics, or attend the movies or any sinful pleasure, to have a good time. You will find that your good times are changed to better times and that the best time one ever has is when he is serving Jesus. Look up into the heavens; think of God, and talk to God. — R. R. C.