

Lambs Among Wolves

By

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Learn of Me

The Life of Victory

His Cross and Mine

Does God Care?

"Go your ways: behold, I send you forth
as lambs among wolves."

Luke 10:3.

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Foreword

To be a genuine Christian means to be, in character and life, like Christ. Many who profess to be Christians and are members of a church show little difference in their lives from those who make no profession of religion. But one who, through the grace of Christ and the transforming power of the Holy Spirit, has become a real Christian reveals a striking contrast to those who are not true Christians.

The real Christian climbs the narrow path, with relatively few companions, toward the City of God. Kind, loving, unselfish, he follows His divine Master and fulfills God's purpose for him. One who is not a Christian travels the broad way, with the fellowship of the great throngs, who are interested in selfish pleasures and worldly ambitions and hold little regard for eternity.

With infinite love and mercy God is seeking in every land and among every nation to draw fallen human beings from darkness to light, from death to life. When through the influence of the Holy Spirit a soul is awakened to sense his sinful, lost condition and to long for salvation, with the peace and joy and victory that God promises, and turns from the broad downward road to the narrow upward path, he comes face to face with new and perplexing problems.

In this little book an attempt has been made to make plain and simple the answers to some of these problems. It has been written for the benefit of those who are earnestly longing and seeking to follow the Master, to develop a Christlike character, and to accomplish the work God has for them.

M.M.

Chapter 1

The New Life

WHEN the temperance question was being agitated all over the United States, "turning over a new leaf" was a common expression. Many who were slaves to liquor or tobacco were urged to quit the practice, especially at the beginning of a new year. In fact there are people who still talk about it as regularly as January 1 comes around. The plan sounds rather simple, and many people are intrigued by it. They say, "I am going to turn over a new leaf and quit smoking and drinking." Many have tried it again and again, but they are forced to admit that it is not so simple as it sounds.

This expression was probably invented by the enemy himself. Every human being "turns over a new leaf" every night and starts off with a clean, unspotted page every morning. But within a few moments the page may be smeared and blotted with sin. Satan knows how helpless a sinful human being is to keep from sinning, and he is well satisfied with those who are forever turning over a new leaf and trying to be good.

What we need to understand is that our only hope is in obtaining a new *life*. The pages of our life's record will continue to be blotted with sin if we do not seek and find it. On this point no greater mistake can be made than to delay gaining this new life. According to the words of Jesus, when the door of probation closes forever, many will knock at the door and cry, "Lord, Lord, open to us," but He will answer, "I know you not." "Saddest of all words that ever fell on mortal ear are those words of doom, 'I know you not.'" —*Christ's Object Lessons*, p. 413. Every intelligent human being should place the matter of his eternal destiny above every other consideration so that the infinite sacrifice of Christ in his behalf may not be in vain.

When we have determined to obey the words of Jesus and seek "first the kingdom of God and his righteousness," the next great question is how to obtain the new life. In this matter we are to be earnest and prayerful, studying God's Word rather than accepting some pleasing human theories. The enemy does not care how many people think they are starting for heaven if they start in the wrong direction.

Concerning this latter point, I well remember an experience I had many years ago. After spending a few days with friends, I boarded the night train for home. About midnight I arrived at the junction where I was to change trains. I waited in the station for my train, which was due at three o'clock in the morning. I little noticed the many trains coming and going, as I was occupied with reading. At three o'clock a train rolled in, and I hurried out and climbed on board. Soon the conductor came and took my ticket. Looking down at me, he said, "Young man, this train is going back to the place where you bought your ticket." He signaled the train to stop at a little station, and I walked back three miles and waited for the next train for home. I learned that it is important to make sure one is going the right direction.

Meeting the Problems

For many years I traveled over the country, visiting churches, schools, and other institutions, and talking with thousands of people. I appreciated having the young people talk with me freely

about their problems and difficulties. One reason for my interest and sympathy toward the youth is the fact that I had some serious problems as a youth, which I have never forgotten.

One of these problems was my violent temper. I sometimes wondered whether anyone else had as bad a temper as mine. From early childhood my mother had told me Bible stories and explained the promises of a home in heaven to those who are good, and the awful doom of perdition to those who are bad. I never doubted a word of the Bible and early developed a deep desire to be a good boy and go to heaven.

But all my high ideals and desires did not seem to have any effect on my temper. When I went to church and heard a stirring sermon, I was troubled, especially when the preacher declared that we must gain the victory over our sins if we ever expect to enter heaven. Sometimes he mentioned such things as liquor drinking, tobacco, dishonesty, and a bad temper. I would be frightened and try harder than ever to get the victory, only to realize that my temper was steadily growing worse.

In my anxiety and longing for help, I sometimes asked older people what to do, and they told me I must *try harder*. Finally this made me angry, for I had tried as hard as I could. I felt resentful, for it seemed to me that if a Christian told a sinner he would have to stop committing a certain sin or be lost, he should be able to tell the man how to stop; otherwise it would only make him feel more discouraged and hopeless.

When I began traveling about and discussing these things with others, I found that many felt just as I did. They were trying hard to overcome their sins, but were compelled to admit that often they failed notwithstanding their earnest efforts to do right. As I studied the Bible, I found statements which did not seem at all in harmony with the information I had been given. For instance, there was 1 Thessalonians 5:23, 24:

"And the very God of peace sanctify you wholly; and I pray God your whole spirit and soul and body be preserved blameless unto the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ. Faithful is he that calleth you, *who also will do it.*"

I wanted my "spirit and soul and body" to "be preserved blameless unto the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ"; that was the goal I was striving so hard to reach, but here the apostle says that the God who calls me to that experience "will do it." Evidently I was trying to do what God proposed to do. In fact I was trying to do what only God could do. For years I studied this problem of how to gain the victory, and it finally awakened in my mind another basic question.

Why Do We Sin Anyway?

It has been said that "of all living creatures on the earth, man is the biggest fool." By way of illustration, if a wild animal is caught while young and has its paws burned a bit in a fire, it could be set free, but never as long as it lives would it approach a fire. But man—with all his wonderful intellect, knowledge, and reasoning powers—will sin and bring disease and suffering and misery upon himself; and then as soon as he recovers, he will go back to the same sin again. And he has been doing this for ages.

Has any human being in the world ever committed one sin that was a real blessing, help, and uplift to him? The Word of God says, "The wages of sin is death." This text compelled me to

face the question resolutely and seek to find the answer to why men sin. When I got a clear, definite answer from the Bible, I felt that I had taken a big step toward the solution of the sin problem.

Our Nature Governs Our Life

Let us consider this statement of the Apostle Paul: "Among whom also we all had our conversation in times past in the lusts of our flesh, fulfilling the desires of the flesh and of the mind; and were by nature the children of wrath, even as others." Ephesians 2:3.

We understand that the expression "children of wrath" means that we are under the condemnation of the law of God, under the sentence of death, that we are born into the world with a fallen, sinful nature.

Adam and Eve were created in the image of God and were perfect physically, mentally, morally, and spiritually. They were pure and upright in mind and body, and it was as natural for them to love and obey God as it was to breathe. But when they yielded to temptation and disobeyed God, sin wrought a terrible change in their nature.

Every living thing has its own characteristic nature, and that nature controls or is the source of every thought and motive, every word and act. Had Adam and Eve retained their likeness to God, that divine nature, they would have transmitted that same nature to their children, and it would have been perfectly natural for them to do right in every thought and act.

But after the parents sinned, they could transmit to their children only their fallen, corrupt, degenerate nature. Since, as a result of sin, our first parents lost to a great extent the image of God, *it* was no longer possible for them to be pure and upright and obedient to Him.

We Cannot Change Our Nature

Everything God created, both in the animal and in the vegetable world, has its own peculiar nature, and neither animal nor plant can possibly change it. That this truth applies to human beings was illustrated by the Saviour when He said, "Do men gather grapes of thorns, or figs of thistles? Even so every good tree bringeth forth good fruit; but a corrupt tree bringeth forth evil fruit. A good tree cannot bring forth evil fruit, neither can a corrupt tree bring forth good fruit." Matthew 7:16-18.

Jesus was speaking about the condition of sinners. He meant that we human beings are "by nature the children of wrath," born with tendencies that cannot possibly enable us to be good and keep God's commandments. In our distaste for this condition we see a true Christian who has peace, joy, and victory. So we decide to be like that Christian, and we resolve and try and struggle; but our wrong thoughts, desires, and habits are stronger than all our resolutions. Then we see that there is only one possible way for us to be saved, and that is to have a different nature.

God's Wonderful Plan for Us

As the result of sin the image of God has been well-nigh obliterated from the human family, and man has been controlled by a fallen, sinful nature. God's plan for our salvation provides a way by which we may be entirely freed from this nature and have His divine nature restored

within us. It brings about a complete transformation in our lives and the restoration of His image in us. The Bible states, "Whereby are given unto us exceeding great and precious promises: that by these ye might be *partakers of the divine nature*, having escaped the corruption that is in the world through lust." 2 Peter 1:4.

Our sharing in His nature is made even more personal in Weymouth's Translation:

"He has granted us His precious and wondrous promises, in order that through them you may, one and all, become sharers in the very nature of God, having completely escaped the corruption which exists in the world through earthly cravings."

With our degenerate nature it is not possible to resist temptation and cease from sinning; but when we are born again and completely yield to the control of the divine nature, the sure and never-changing promise of God to us is, "Sin shall not have dominion over you."

What Jesus Taught

It is plain that all our thoughts, motives, and actions spring from our nature; therefore we cannot live contrary to our nature. This nature every living creature inherits from its parents at birth. So Jesus tells us there is only one way to be saved from sin: "Verily, verily, I say unto thee, Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God." John 3:3.

We are born physically when we come into the world, and life begins for us as human beings. The Saviour does not mean that we must be born again physically, of human parents, for that would in no way change our nature. But we know there is a natural, or physical, world and there is a supernatural, or spiritual, world. No human being has entered into the natural world since Adam and Eve were created except by physical birth. And it is equally true that no one has entered the spiritual world since Adam and Eve fell except by spiritual birth. So Jesus said to Nicodemus, "That which is born of the flesh is flesh; and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit." John 3:6.

This spiritual birth is described in John 1:13: "Which were born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God." Therefore, as we inherit our sinful nature from our human parents, so when we are born again, born of God, we inherit the divine nature. We cannot be the children of God unless we are born of God, and when we are born of God and inherit His divine nature, that nature will produce the same life and character in us that it did in Jesus when He was here on earth.

When all this became clear to me, I understood why I had made no progress while trying so hard to overcome my bad temper and other sinful habits and tendencies. I had been trying to make a fallen, corrupt, sinful nature do what only the divine nature can do. I could find no place in the Bible where God said I could be good if I would only *try* hard enough. But I did find statements which showed how mistaken that idea was. One of them was Jeremiah 13:23: "Can the Ethiopian change his skin, or the leopard his spots? then may ye also do good, that are accustomed to do evil."

Indeed, it is no more possible to make a sinful nature do right by trying, than to make a black skin white by trying. "Who can bring a clean thing out of an unclean? not one." Job 14:4. Our

hope of salvation is not in our trying but in being born of God and inheriting His divine nature. An illustration may help us to realize this.

The Wolf and the Lamb

Here are two active youths who love to go camping in the rugged mountains and are spending their vacation that way. This morning they are climbing the mountain, over rocks and through brush and trees, when they hear a faint noise. It is a baby animal crying. After a brief search they locate the little creature, which is crying pitifully and appears nearly starved. They do not know just what it is, but feel sorry for it and take it home and feed it generously, and it soon begins to grow and become active. One day an old neighbor comes over and asks with astonishment, "Boys, where did you get that animal? Do you know what it is?" They are thrilled when he tells them that it is a genuine timber wolf. It grows rapidly and is playful, and the boys are proud of their discovery.

In the spring the young wolf is running out in the field, when he comes to a flock of sheep, with many lambs just about his size. He is fascinated and wishes he were one of them. Finally he decides that he will try to be a lamb. He imitates their actions, jumping about and playing with them and nibbling the green grass. After a time the sheep lie down in the shade of the trees, and a little later an old sheep opens her eyes and, looking at the young wolf, asks, "Who are you? What are you doing here?"

"Why," he replies, "I am one of the lambs."

"What! you a lamb?"

"Yes, I want to be one, and I am trying the best I can. I am doing just like the other lambs."

Do you think that little wolf would become a lamb if he tried hard? I know you will answer, "Certainly not." Yet many professed Christians say just about what the little wolf said, "I am trying to be a Christian, trying to do right, trying to overcome my sins; I am doing the best I can."

Is there any way that the little wolf could actually become a lamb? Perhaps you would unhesitatingly say, "No, that is impossible." But there really is a way. God could re-create the wolf and make it a lamb. This crude illustration pictures the only way any sinful human being can become a Christian, a child of God. We have inherited through our natural birth a sinful wolf nature. We cannot by any human effort change that nature. That is why Jesus said, "Ye *must* be born again." This changes our nature, and so the Word of God says: "If any man be in Christ, he is a new creature: old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new." 2 Corinthians 5:17.

This "new creature" is a lamb, for the Lord calls all His children lambs, or sheep. (John 10: 14.) All others are wolves, for they are controlled by the fallen wolf nature; so when Jesus sent His disciples to preach the gospel, He said, "Go your ways: behold, I send you forth as lambs among wolves." Luke 10:3.

These vital truths are made plain in the following statement: "Jesus continued: 'That which is born of the flesh is flesh; and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit.' By nature the heart is evil, and 'who can bring a clean thing out of an unclean? not one.' Job 14:4. No human invention can

find a remedy for the sinning soul. 'The carnal mind is enmity against God: for it is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be.' 'Out of the heart proceed evil thoughts, murders, adulteries, fornications, thefts, false witness, blasphemies.' The fountain of the heart must be purified before the streams can become pure. He who is trying to reach heaven by his own works in keeping the law is attempting an impossibility. There is no hope for one who has merely a legal religion, a form of godliness. The Christian's life is not a modification or improvement of the old, but a transformation of nature. There is a death to self and sin, and a new life altogether."—The *Desire of Ages*, p. 172.

The Lord makes plain just what change must take place in our lives and the provision He has made to bring about this change.

"When the Spirit of God takes possession of the heart, it transforms the life. Sinful thoughts are put away, evil deeds are renounced; love, humility, and peace take the place of anger, envy, and strife. Joy takes the place of sadness, and the countenance reflects the light of heaven. No one sees the hand that lifts the burden, or beholds the light descend from the courts above. The blessing comes when by faith the soul surrenders itself to God. Then that power which no human eye can see creates a new being in the image of God."—*Ibid.*, p. 173.

Again and again we are given the assurance of God's purpose to produce in us this transformation of nature and thus give us complete deliverance and victory over sin. Without this change of nature, all our efforts will end in failure and defeat.

"When the soul surrenders itself to Christ, a new power takes possession of the new heart. A change is wrought which man can never accomplish for himself. It is a supernatural work bringing a supernatural element into human nature."—*Ibid.*, p. 324.

Genuine Experience

One of the gravest dangers we all face in this matter of salvation is the natural tendency to rejoice in a knowledge of the theory of salvation, not realizing that it is not the theory of the new birth that saves us, but the actual experience. Let me illustrate: Suppose that one of the youth who has joined the church and is considered a "lamb" comes to the pastor for an interview. She says, "Pastor, I would like to ask you a question."

"All right. What is your problem?"

She hesitates and seems embarrassed, but finally says, "I am afraid to ask for fear you will laugh."

"Oh, no! I am interested in your welfare. I shall be glad to help you in any way that I can. You are a lamb, are you not?"

"Oh, yes; I was baptized and joined the church a year ago. I am trying the best I can. Well, the other day we were taking a ride in the country, and as I looked over in the pasture near the woods, I saw a dead horse. Do you really think it would be a sin if I should go over there and get a good dinner off that dead horse?"

The pastor looks at her in amazement and exclaims, "Why, my child, what in the world do you mean? You are just joking. Did you not say you were a lamb?"

"No, I am not joking; and of course I am a lamb; but lots of other young people are doing it, and I do not think it would hurt me."

"But is that not just what you used to do when you were a wolf?"

"Oh, yes; we used to have great times fighting over those dead animals."

Do you think that a person who, by the power of God in the new birth, has experienced the transformation from a wolf nature to a lamb nature would want to go right back and live like a wolf? How strange it is that so many professed lambs are always asking, Do you really think it would be a sin to do this or that? They are talking about the things they did before they professed to be Christians. I fear there are many who profess to be Christians, but they have not been born again and are continually trying to make the wolf be a lamb. That is why the way seems hard and little progress is made.

Becoming Spiritual-Minded

Have you ever wondered why so many who profess to be Christians seem to have so little interest in spiritual things? They may attend religious services every week and practice the usual ceremonies day by day. But although they are full of interest and enthusiasm for many things, they seldom converse on religious subjects or mention them. Jesus said, "Out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaketh." Matthew 12:34.

We like to talk about our friends, our sports and games, our hobbies, our social gatherings, our cherished possessions, and many other things which pertain wholly to this world. But how seldom do we get enthusiastic about our Saviour's love for us and our love for Him, about the wonderful joy and peace we find in fellowship with Him, and the glorious prospect of the future life with Him. Is not the reason for this clearly stated in Romans 8:5, 6: "For they that are after the flesh, do mind the things of the flesh; but they that are after the Spirit, the things of the Spirit. For to be carnally minded is death, but to be spiritually minded is life and peace."

By nature we have the carnal mind, but as we have noticed, when we are born again, we receive a new mind. The transformation of nature must take place in the mind. According to these words of Scripture, life and death are in the mind. Our daily life is a constant expression of what occupies our minds and, therefore, reveals whether we have experienced a real transformation of nature or have only a beautiful theory.

Facing the Test

Another lamb comes to the pastor with one of those questions so common to young people. This time it is about a book.

"Pastor, a friend brought me this book. She said that it is thrilling and that everyone who wants to be up to date should read it. Do you think it would be wrong for me to read it?"

The pastor looks the book over and finds that it is one of the popular novels which have created a sensation among novel readers. Then he asks, "Are you not one of the lambs?"

"Yes, sir. I am a member of the church and am trying to do right."

"Then I would like to ask you a question. Have you ever read your Bible through?"

"No, I have never finished it. I have started to read it through several times but never seem to get very far."

"Have you ever read the book *Steps to Christ* through?"

"No, I started that, too, but never finished it."

"What about *Messages to Young People*? Have you ever read that?"

"I borrowed one and read a few pages, but I had to return it, so I have not read it."

"I believe you said you were a lamb, did you not?"

"Yes, sir, I am trying to be, but you know one gets tired of green grass, green grass, all the time and wants a change."

"Strange," says the pastor. "I never before heard of a lamb getting tired of green grass and wanting to change to a dead horse."

How sad it is that so many who start out to be Christians do not understand the first step. They do not realize that the only way to become a child of God is to be born of God, and the evidence that they are born of God is a complete transformation of nature. The new nature produces a new life, a new existence altogether.

From the Old to the New

Here is another statement in which the Lord reveals the transformation that results from being born again: "That ye put off concerning the former conversation the old man, which is corrupt according to the deceitful lusts; and be renewed in the spirit of your mind; and that ye put on the new man, which after God is created in righteousness and true holiness." Ephesians 4:22-24.

We are to *put off* the old man, which we have been calling the wolf nature, and put on the new man, which we have called the lamb nature. It would be an amazing thing to see a wolf re-created and made a lamb. There would be little resemblance between a cruel, vicious, ugly wolf and a gentle, innocent lamb. They would be unlike both in looks and actions. Let me illustrate:

The pastor and I are walking down the street of a city when we meet two young ladies, dressed in the height of fashion. We observe the artificial color of cheeks, lips, and fingernails, the gaudy adornment on hats and clothing. The jewelry and dress give evidence of more vanity than modesty. To my surprise they greet the pastor, and he returns a pleasant "Good morning." So I observe, "You seem to know those young ladies."

"Yes, I have known them for some time."

"But surely they are not members of our church."

"The taller one is a member. The other one makes no profession of religion."

How strange, it seems, that I am not able to distinguish a lamb from a wolf when I meet them walking side by side! Do you suppose the Lord wants His lambs to look just as much like wolves as possible? The Bible says that sometimes Satan's agents will appear in "sheep's clothing," but inwardly they are ravaging wolves. (Matthew 7:15.)

I cannot believe the Lord is pleased and honored in having His lambs disguise themselves in wolves' clothing, by following the vain, or immodest, or ridiculous fashions of the world.

Having a Good Time

Many hear the ideals and standards of a true Christian life set forth and feel that they could not be content with such a life. They say they do not want to do anything really bad, but they like to have a good time—if they were to renounce their present pleasures, life would not be worth living. We can understand this when we think how unhappy a wolf would be trying to live like a lamb.

Imagine a wolf that is accustomed to prowling through the woods at night, killing and devouring innocent birds, rabbits, and perhaps a lamb. He is really enjoying himself—having a good time. The next day he is lying under the bushes, looking out on the green pasture where the lambs are playing in the sunshine and eating the green grass. Perhaps he is saying to himself, "How could I ever be satisfied with such a tame life? What pleasure could I have in trying to live like a lamb?"

Of course he would be right. Creatures of the night find little delight in sunshine; and grass would probably give a wolf acute indigestion. But if he were recreated and became a new creature—a real lamb—what pleasure would he then have in living the life of a wolf? No one can deny that a lamb has just as much pleasure and happiness as a wolf—but in a different way.

Some years ago I visited a well-known zoo, where I saw lions and elephants and many other animals. Suddenly I saw two large wolves in a pen. I watched them for some time, as I was thinking of them from the standpoint of wolves and lambs. They went to opposite ends of the pen. One trotted east along the fence; the other trotted west. Of course they met when about halfway across the pen. Every time they met, each looked toward the other and gave a sharp, ugly, vicious snarl.

I said to myself, I never saw two lambs act like that; but I am sorry to say, I have seen some church members perform very much like those wolves. What a pity for a person to be so deceived as to manifest the spirit of a wolf while he professes to be a lamb! When a church member indulges in criticism and faultfinding, or manifests resentment toward anyone, is he not actually denying his profession? How tragic for one to become a member of the church and still remain a wolf! "If any man among you seem to be religious, and bridleth not his tongue, but deceiveth his own heart, that man's religion is vain." James 1:26.

Marrying a Wolf

Another matter which every child of God should consider seriously is his relationship to those not Christians. The Lord has given this instruction:

"Be ye not unequally yoked together with unbelievers: for what fellowship hath righteousness with unrighteousness? and what communion hath light with darkness? And what concord hath Christ with Belial? or what part hath he that believeth with an infidel?" 2 Corinthians 6:14, 15.

How strange that many who call themselves Christians refuse to obey God's instruction! How strange that a lamb should even consider marrying a wolf! Just the mention of it suggests that

the enemy is making every effort to deceive and ensnare the lambs in this vital matter. One who is a true lamb of God could not desire to unite his life with one of Satan's wolves.

If we have the nature of Christ, we shall love what He loved. We know that Jesus had joy and pleasure during His life in this world. So if Christ had a good time while here and found pleasure in His association with others, why should not we learn to find our happiness as He did?

"Enter ye in at the strait gate: for wide is the gate, and broad is the way, that leadeth to destruction, and many there be which go in thereat; because strait is the gate, and narrow is the way, which leadeth unto life, and few there be that find it." Matthew 7:13, 14.

If we go down the broad way with worldly people, we shall seek the same selfish pleasures which attract them. But we must not think that because the way of life is narrow and strait, it has no pleasures. God's Word assures us that just the opposite is true: "Thou wilt shew me the path of life: in thy presence is fulness of joy; at thy right hand there are pleasures for evermore." Psalm 16:11.

Deciding for Eternity

God has made us all free moral agents, and through all eternity we shall be what we have chosen to be while on earth. We may choose to remain as we came into the world, with our fallen Adam nature, and as wicked wolves be destroyed at last. Or we may choose to be born of God, partake of His divine nature, and develop characters that will entitle us to "follow the Lamb" as members of His redeemed flock through all eternity.

One night a little boy came to my church with his mother, heard this subject presented in the sermon; and then walked the long distance home. It was late, and the little fellow was tired. When he reached home, there was his father, who was not a Christian. Climbing up on his knee, he preached the sermon to him. His mother told me how astonished she was that he seemed to remember every point and that he brought them out quite clearly.

At last he finished. Looking up into his father's face, he said, "Now, Daddy, are you a wolf or a lamb? I know you are a wolf because you smoke cigarettes, and lambs don't smoke cigarettes." I have often hoped that that lesson brought conviction to the father and that the family will all be saved together.

How to Be Born Again

Let us notice again a few statements from the Bible and then consider how to be born again:

"By nature the children of wrath."

"The natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God".

"Behold, I was shapen in iniquity; and in sin did my mother conceive me."

"Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God."

"That which is born of the flesh is flesh; and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit."

"If any man be in Christ, he is a new creature: old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new."

I have been in heathen lands and have seen cruel, degraded savages transformed into kind, noble, unselfish Christian men and women. I have seen slaves to opium and other narcotics, and poor helpless drunkards, whose cases seemed utterly hopeless, open their hearts to the Saviour. By His divine power they triumphed over all their vices and evil habits.

This transformation is so amazing that some seem to think it must be something mysterious and difficult to understand. But that is not true. God's plan for helpless sinners, for whose redemption He made an infinite sacrifice, is simple. It would not be in harmony with His great love if He made the way difficult and perplexing to those He is eager to save. So He has made it plain and within the reach of all.

When I say that the way is plain and simple, I do not mean that it is easy and costs nothing. It costs everything. Jesus said, "Whosoever he be of you that forsaketh not all that he hath, he cannot be my disciple." Luke 14:33. The old "wolf" life must be entirely renounced and given up, and the new life in Christ must be appropriated by faith. Here is a simple statement of the new-birth experience:

"In like manner you are a sinner. You cannot atone for your past sins, you cannot change your heart and make yourself holy. But God promises to do all this for you through Christ. You *believe* that promise. You confess your sins, and give yourself to God. You *will* to serve Him. Just as surely as you do this, God will fulfill His word to you. If you believe the promise,—believe that you are forgiven and cleansed,—God supplies the fact; you are made whole, just as Christ gave the paralytic power to walk when the man believed that he was healed. It *is* so if you believe it. . . . Through this simple act of believing God, the Holy Spirit has begotten a new life in your heart. You are as a child born into the family of God, and He loves you as He loves His Son."—*Steps to Christ*, pp. 51, 52.

Dangers to Avoid

We need to guard against two perils: One is the danger of thinking we must have some thrilling emotions along with the new birth, and then regarding the emotions as conclusive evidence of real conversion. We do not mean to imply that we can be born again without any emotions. On the contrary when we realize the awful nature of sin, we look upon it with fear and horror as we would a deadly poison. At the same time we have a growing love for and joy in God, who has provided a way of escape for us. But the emotions themselves are not the evidence of genuine conversion.

The second peril is that of being superficial. We may be sincere in confessing Christ and taking the first step, and then assume that "we have arrived" and nothing more is necessary. We need to remember that when we are born again, we are born spiritual babes, and certain conditions are necessary if we are to make normal, healthy spiritual growth into spiritual manhood and womanhood.

"The accession of members who have not been renewed in heart and reformed in life is a source of weakness to the church. This fact is often ignored. Some ministers and churches are so desirous of securing an increase of numbers that they do not bear faithful testimony against unchristian habits and practices. Those who accept the truth are not taught that they cannot safely be worldlings in conduct while they are Christians in name. Heretofore they were Satan's

subjects; henceforth they are to be subjects of Christ. Their life must testify to the change of leaders. Public opinion favors a profession of Christianity. Little self-denial or self-sacrifice is required in order to put on a form of godliness, and to have one's name enrolled upon the church book. Hence many join the church without first becoming united to Christ. In this Satan triumphs. Such converts are his most efficient agents. They serve as decoys to other souls. They are false lights, luring the unwary to perdition. It is in vain that men seek to make the Christian's path broad and pleasant for worldlings. God has not smoothed or widened the rugged narrow way. If we would enter into life, we must follow the same path which Jesus and His disciples trod,—the path of humility, self-denial, and sacrifice."—*Testimonies*, Vol 5, p. 172.

There Is a Battle

Since we said that the goal is not reached by "trying," some might think that there is to be no struggle, no conflict, in the Christian life. This would be a serious mistake, for the Bible says, "Strive to enter in," "fight the good fight of faith," "resist the devil." The important thing is to understand where and how this conflict takes place.

Let us suppose that there are two brothers living in a country that is at war. One of the brothers is to remain in the capital city, which is an impregnable fortress. He is to fight from that position of advantage, to maintain freedom and victory. He can never be overcome so long as he obeys orders. The other brother goes out with a small army unit and is soon surrounded by the armies of the enemy. To have victory, he must overcome the overwhelming forces of the enemy. These brothers are fighting from entirely different standpoints. One is placed in a victorious position, and his duty is to maintain the victory already won for him by his great commander. The other is struggling to overcome an enemy much stronger than he is. The first one represents the fight of faith of the Christian soldier. He is not struggling to overcome Satan, for that would be impossible for a human being. Jesus took our humanity and won the victory for us. He places us by His side in this victorious position and expects us, by faith and through union with Him, to make this victory ours day by day as we are assailed by the enemy. "This is the victory that overcometh the world, even our faith." 1 John 5:4.

Thus it is through constant surrender of the will to the indwelling Saviour that the divine nature controls, instead of our weak human nature. Every day the enemy will do his utmost to arouse the old nature and tempt us to yield to it again. So we see that it is in the realm of the will that the conflict takes place. "Everything depends on the right action of the will."—*Ministry of Healing*, p. 176.

We cannot expect to make a success of the Christian life if it is just "one interest among many." Religion must be made the one great business of life. Everything else should be held sub-ordinate to it. What other experience could come to a human being that would compare to the miracle of being "born of God" and becoming His child? Let us make sure that we have taken the first step, and keeping our eyes upon Jesus, let us cultivate the new nature which He implants within us. Beholding Him, we shall be changed into His image.