

CHAPTER 3

THE NAIL IN MY PALM

The room I set aside as a sanctuary was as far from the traffic of the outside world as the house would permit. I also set apart one hour in each day for meditation and soon discovered that the best time to engage in this method of spiritual discipline was from eleven to midnight. Then, all interruptions ceased; no phone or doorbell disturbed me, no domestic activities intruded and I could feel entirely away from the world,⁷ even from the thought of it, and alone with God. In time I began to think of this as "my hour of Watch with Christ". I remembered His words to the disciples "Could you not watch with me for one hour?" and discovered there is a special significance in the period of one hour in our relationship with God. It seems that our personality is so constituted that we are capable of being *vividly* conscious of the Divine Presence for about sixty minutes—no more at a given time.

Thus to keep watch with Christ is to do more than just pray. The time for prayer has passed and one is reduced to silence in the presence of God. The sense of that presence is so definite that one knows exactly, to the very minute, without any watch or clocks, when the Hour ends. I have discovered that this feature of spiritual experience has an application much wider and beyond the Hour of Watch. If, for example, someone asks me to pray for a special case

and I fix the time of joint prayer, say ten minutes or half an hour, when I go into my sanctuary for that period of prayer, I do not need a watch to tell me when it is up. At the very moment of its passing, the sense of being in close contact with the Divine Power ceases and there is a strange feeling of emptiness. And this does not happen only in my sanctuary. To develop thus the sense of the Divine Presence is the essential duty of every Christian, but especially for those who wish to do special work for Him.

On entering the sanctuary I review the day's work in His presence submitting it to Him for approval. I beg forgiveness and cleansing and then ask for grace to sift the motives that urge me towards the Healing Ministry, seeking with all possible earnestness deliverance from even the suggestion of selfishness.

In the beginning I realised that I myself must be my first offering. Thus every night I offered Him my whole personality, my body, mind, and spirit for the high and holy purpose. The surrender of the whole personality became the most important feature of my preparation and it had to be tackled in a practical way.

Instead of offering in a vague general way my body, I went over my every physical feature, mentioning each by name, bones, muscles, sinews, glands, nerves, etc., indeed every cell, asking the Creator to re-create every part of me as He saw fitting in order to render me a suitable instrument in His Hands for the purpose in view.

With my mind I followed the same routine, detailing its every aspect, memory, imagination, intellect, will, etc.; then I offered my spirit about which I knew

nothing, except that it must be my real Ego, but which, with all its mysterious powers, is known to Him only.

Such was my method of special spiritual discipline; such my effort to become a medium of the spirit that was in Jesus Christ. This endeavour was not limited to my hour of watch. It also demanded a thorough search of the Bible for every reference to the Healing Ministry and for every passage in it that offered guidance. Such study of the Word, with prayer and meditation, often continued through the night, and always when I was alone during the day my thoughts reverted to spiritual matters. Life became in large measure a walk in heavenly places with Christ by my side.

For a whole year I carried out these daily tasks as faithfully as I could, always expecting something to happen that would make clear to me that the Lord recognised the personal private covenant I had tried to enter into with Him and call me to this Ministry. I could not expect such a call as Isaiah or Peter or Paul experienced; but I believed that God might in some more simple way let me hear His "Whom shall I send", with my own response "Here am I, send me".

But no such thing happened and I continued my special programme for a second year. But still there was no call other than my own wishful thinking.

A third year passed, then a fourth with the same result and I was tempted to give up. But, under the impulse of what must have been the Holy Spirit, for no other power could have sufficed to keep me going, I regularly continued my routine. Before the end of the fifth year something happened.

The sign came on the 17th of May, 1947, between the hours of 11 a.m. and noon, exactly thirty years to the hour after my ordination. I had been ordained to the Holy Ministry on the 17th of May, 1917, between the hours of 11 a.m. and noon in that dear Fifeshire church. It was the day after my thirtieth birthday. My life has been divided into equal periods of thirty years from my birth to ordination; thirty years after my ordination I received the call to the Healing Ministry. I have a hope—perhaps flattering to myself—that the Lord may grant me a third period of thirty years to exercise this Ministry and help re-establish it as a regular feature of every minister's work.

During the months April to July, 1947, my wife Netta and our three children, Rosalind, Richard and Carol, our youngest child, were living in our cottage on the heights towards the Strathaven hills. Rosalind had been ill and when she was almost convalescent, her doctor, a lady, discovered she had been suffering from pleurisy. The condition was dangerous and the doctor advised that a sojourn in fresh hill air was essential to the child's complete recovery.

Rose Cottage and its high situation met her need, and as it was only twelve miles from Glasgow, I could travel to my duties in church and parish with ease and comfort, but for the most part I preferred to stay by myself in our Glasgow home.

This particular day I was alone and between eleven and twelve was preparing lunch. What happened might have been expected in the sanctuary, a Cathedral or on some piece of holy ground. But it happened as I stood at the sink in the kitchen paring potatoes, a knife in one hand, a potato in the other.

What my thoughts were I cannot remember but I have no doubt that being alone I was talking to the Father about the work I wished to do. Whatever thoughts engaged my attention, suddenly I felt myself gripped by a strange benevolent power that filled me with an unspeakable sense of happiness. I seemed to be drawn up out of the body and did not know where I was, whether "in the body or out of it". It was supreme and final bliss! Joy filled my heart and overflowed in tears, helplessly I cried, like a child, the tears pouring from my eyes. All I could say was "Father, oh Father". I was the Prodigal Son arriving home and the Father had fallen on my neck and was kissing me. I had reached, I knew, the home of ultimate truth and all things were clear and plain. All doubts vanished. Every question-mark was erased and I knew, I simply knew, that God is and that He rewards all who diligently seek Him.

That experience verified for me many Bible texts formerly somewhat obscure and almost impossible to believe, and lit them with new meaning. There is the strange experience Paul records in II Corinthians 12, vv. 2-4: "I knew a man in Christ above fourteen years ago (whether in the body, I cannot tell: or whether out of the body, I cannot tell: God knoweth) such an one caught up to the third heaven. And I knew such a man (whether in the body, or out of the body, I cannot tell: God knoweth). How that he was caught up into paradise, and heard unspeakable words which it is not possible for a man to utter."

I can now *believe* that as an actual experience of Paul. Then there is another text, somewhat obscure, yet literally true, to them that have had the experience. Romans 8, v. 15: "For ye have not received the

spirit of bondage again to fear; but ye have received the Spirit of adoption, whereby we cry; ABBA; FATHER!"

These were the only words I could cry and they were uttered involuntarily, and in spite of myself as I wept, "Father; Oh Father". When I thought of the sheer joy and pleasure of the experience I recalled Psalm 16, v. 11. "In thy presence is fulness of joy; at thy right hand there are pleasures for evermore."

I recalled too the saying of Jesus that His fellowship with His Disciples and the words He spoke were meant to enable them to taste His joy, that their joy might be full. Was this the full joy He was referring to? I certainly was full of joy and running over.

My first reaction to the experience was the thought; "This was God indicating to me that He had accepted my offer. It was His call to the Ministry of Healing." Such, I write, was my conviction. But the devil of doubt, like all other devils, never is far from the mind of man. I began to analyse the experience and I felt it was beyond human comprehension; but I could ask myself questions about it.

Was it real, factual experience? Or was it the exercise of an overheated imagination? Was it wishful thinking? Or was I—as the sceptical psychologist might assert—an epileptic who, unknown to myself, had been suffering from the malady for sixty years? Was I a victim of mental derangement and qualifying for a mental hospital, or was it the devil himself?

I could not say what it was if not a baptism of the Holy Spirit. But experiences are like personalities—"by their fruits ye shall know them". Only one Power could clear up the situation for me—the Power that gave the experience—God himself.

In the midst of my perplexity I remembered the Bible story of Gideon to whom an angel appeared as he threshed his corn and announced that God had chosen him to do special work for His people. Gideon listened attentively and doubtfully and after the Divine messenger had gone, he began to question the reality of his experience. Was it real? Was it truly a messenger and a message from God? Gideon was nonplussed, so he asked God to give him the two signs of the fleece, now wet, now dry, to prove the reality of the experience and truth of the message. God gave him the signs he asked. Formerly under the influence of the Liberal Theology of my day I had considered that incident merely as legend or myth; now I believe it really happened. It is the kind of thing that can happen when one is in the Spirit; for to be in the Spirit means to have one's spiritual faculties operating under the power of the Holy Ghost and under that Power all things are possible. Had others been with Gideon when the angel came to him, they would have seen and heard nothing unless they too had been "in the Spirit".

I reflected on Gideon's experience and it occurred to me that there was no reason why the Lord should not give me two signs that would verify the reality and purpose of the experience I had passed through.

I knew that in religious circles it is regarded as evidence of weak faith to ask for such signs. "Did not Jesus say," they argue, "this wicked and idolatrous generation seeketh after a sign but no sign shall be given it," and they stop there. But Jesus did not stop there. His actual words are "No sign shall be given it except the sign of Jonas. For as Jonas was three days and three nights in the whale's belly, so

shall the Son of Man be three days and three nights in the heart of the earth." Here he points to His coming resurrection as a sign and what sign could be greater or more effective in dispelling doubt?

The fact of the matter is that every new advance that was made in the progress of revealed truth, as recorded in the Bible, was heralded or confirmed by a sign of some kind. Even the shepherds of the first Christmas were given a sign to dispel their doubts and verify their experience. "This shall be a sign unto you. Ye shall find the babe wrapt in swaddling clothes lying in a manger." But in addition to all that, may it not be that those who boast of a faith that is independent of signs may in reality not have sufficient faith to ask for a sign in case they might not get one? Finally when Jesus said to Thomas "Blessed are they who have not seen and yet have believed," the implication is that those who both see and believe are twice blessed.

Satisfying myself with these reflections I asked the Lord to give me two signs to verify the interpretation I had placed upon my experience. He gave me those signs but I had to wait for them. "If the vision tarry, wait for it," says Habakkuk.

For the first sign I had to wait three months. In order to complete Rosalind's recovery, on the specialist's advice, we spent the whole of August that year at Prestwick on the Ayrshire coast. August is my holiday month so I was able to accompany the family. We booked accommodation in the North Marina Hotel, close to the shore but as it was crowded with other holiday-makers, my son and I slept in a chalet in the grounds. This had its advantages as we could go out and in at any time of day or night with-

out disturbing anyone. But for me there was one serious drawback. I had no means of creating a sanctuary where I could have my Hour of Watch with Christ. However, I soon found a glorious substitute. I discovered that from 11 p.m. till midnight a great stretch of sand by the beach was vacant and I could have it all to myself. The other holiday-makers then were in bed and I could walk alone with my Lord hearing nothing but the swish of the waters without and the sound of His voice within. At that time one particular thing worried me; if I should ever start the Ministry of Healing, how would I get it across to my fellow ministers.

If I were to tell my colleagues I was taking up this work, they might only laugh and think me insane. If I were to try to persuade them of the possibility of it, marshalling my arguments on the basis of Scripture, they very soon would argue me down. Yet my purpose was to get *all* ministers to take it up and the outlook seemed unpromising.

One night I was specially worried over the problem as my Hour of Watch ended. Thinking furiously I made my way across the sands to the chalet and just before I reached it, I was moved (I have now no doubt) by the Holy Spirit, to take a daring step. I know that it is neither lawful nor expedient to use the Bible as a book of magic, but I believe that in a crisis of the soul, or at some cross-roads of experience, God permits a man to do what I did.

As I approached the bedroom where my son was asleep, I said to God, "Father I still am in the dark and cannot see my way through this perplexing situation. How can I get this question of the Healing Ministry across to my brother ministers? When I

enter my little bedroom I will open my Bible. Please let the first words I see be a message to guide me," I entered our room, sat down on my bed and stretched out my hand to open the Bible lying on the dressing-table. I pointed my finger on a verse and was about to read it, when three pages turned over singly, one after the other, as if moved by an unseen hand; they remained in a naturally impossible position above my pointing finger.

Still, despite my intense surprise, I did not move the finger but leaned forward and read Luke 21, v. 15: "I will give you a mouth and wisdom, which all your adversaries shall not be able to gainsay nor resist." This was on the last leaf that had turned over. So that was that problem settled, and the first of the two signs I had asked for.

For almost three months I waited for the second sign.

We returned to our Glasgow house at the end of August. The month had passed without a drop of rain—sunshine poured on us every day, which could not have been better arranged. Rosalind's cure was complete; the weather had revitalised the whole family, preparing us to face the coming winter's work with confidence. I resumed my regular routine of spiritual discipline—study of the Bible, almost constant prayer, walking the heavenly places with Christ, the atmosphere of prayer always blowing around my mind and above all my Hour of Watch alone in my Sanctuary.

Here I wish to emphasise that little word "*alone*."

To develop our spiritual faculties to a high degree and practise the consciousness of the Divine Presence effectively, it is absolutely essential to have our Hour

of Watch alone. Another personality present, no matter how close the spiritual affinity may be, acts as a disturbing factor to the consciousness of the Divine Presence.

Consider the method of Jesus. Time and again we read of Him going away into some quiet place to pray *alone*.

Even in Gethsemane when one would have thought the presence of spiritually kindred souls would have been helpful, we read of Him saying to His disciples, "Sit ye here, while I go and pray yonder." (Matthew 26, v. 36). After saying this we read that He took the three who were spiritually closest to Him, Peter, James and John, a little farther than the rest along that lonely road. But they had not gone far when He said to them "Tarry ye here and watch with me". Then comes, "And He went a little farther."

Jesus could not allow any presence, not even these three, to come between Him and the Father or to disturb His consciousness of the Father's presence at that vital hour.

Then there is His very definite guidance for prayer given in Matthew 6, v. 6: "But thou, when thou prayest, enter into thy closet, and when thou hast shut thy door, pray to thy Father which is in secret; and thy Father which seeth in secret shall reward thee openly." Make your sense of His Presence very vivid. Note the singulars "thou and thy", also the shut door. Unquestionably the Hour of Watch must be shared by none but God Himself if we are to obtain the best results.

During the month following, September, a new development disturbed me deeply.

One night, having finished my Hour in the Sanctu-

ary, which is in the basement of our three-storey house, as I reached the foot of the first stair, I felt it necessary to go down on my knees and speak to the Father about some idea that had occurred to me. As I did so, I felt myself charged with some power in effect very like electricity. The thrill of it filled my whole body but did not make me tremble and I was conscious of no sense of illness. I just felt charged with a strange force. Afterwards whenever I was alone in prayer, the same thing happened and as time went on and no ill effect appeared, I became convinced that the power had a spiritual origin. But was it from the region of spiritual light or spiritual darkness? I had been brought up in a sufficiently other-worldly atmosphere to make me fear that it might be of the devil. Only the Father could make the truth of the matter clear to me. But again I had to wait although my patience was threatening to give way. So one night, when I knelt down for a word of prayer before going to bed and this force seemed to be specially aggressive, almost in a spirit of impatience I prayed: "Oh, Father do something to let me know whether this power be of the light or of the darkness."

Then I did another daring thing, I suggested to God what He might do and so I continued my prayer: "Make this right arm and hand of mine move out of my control in an erratic way."

I watched to see whether my arm would begin to move and twitch in spite of my every effort to control it. But it did not move. God does not answer prayers to dictation. He answers them in a better way.

As I watched, still expecting my arm and hand to move out of control, I saw something very strange. My hand grew smaller, and became all bruised, as if

it had been hammered. Then down from the roots of the first two fingers and between them, a large nail appeared driven in to the very head; from it blood trickled down the lines on the palm and round the wrist. I cannot say how long the vision lasted for time did not exist for me. This vision made things clear and I knew that the power of which I was conscious was of light and not darkness. This, I knew, was the power Jesus promised when He said: "Ye shall receive power after that the Holy Ghost is come upon you and ye shall be witnesses unto Me."

The decks were clear for action and the only remaining question was, with whom should I start? To which sufferer could I go up and say: "I am conscious of a Divine Healing Power. I will give you a service. The Lord will heal you through me"?