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THE STORY OF MY CONVERSION AND RELATIVE EXPERIENCES
By L. H. Ziemer, Toledo, Ohio

"When it pleased God, who separated me from my mother's womb, and called me by His
grace, to reveal His Son in me, that I might preach Him; immediately I conferred not with flesh and
Blood. -- Gal. 1 : 15-16.

The Toledo Gospel Tabernacle
Toledo, Ohio

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FOREWORD

In sermonizing we are apt to be professional. The art of preaching must be studied. This is not the ease however in testimony. In witnessing to the Lord's saving grace, we speak that which we do know.

"Ye are My witnesses."

"They overcame by the Blood of the Lamb, and the word of their testimony."

No story is so interesting, so thrilling, so inspiring as the story of the sinner's deliverance from the guilt and power of sin, and for the moment we refuse to differentiate between the sinner in the slums and the one who can sustain a form of Godliness, but who denies the power thereof.

In the Book of Revelation we read of "The Synagogue of Satan." And without doubt, according to the inspired Word of God, there is a wonderful and terrible system of worship under the direct leadership of Satan. In this connection we read of "Doctrines of Devils," "A Cup, A Table," "A Synagogue." And it would seem as though Satan's Church is being filled today, not with the openly sinful, but with those poor, deluded souls, who carry religion as a cloak, and who are absolutely devoid of inward truth.

Our brother Ziemer has testified truly. He has witnessed wisely and lovingly! May it please God to bless and make very fruitful "The Story of My Conversion."

-- A. W. Roffe

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PREFACE

In sending out this fourth edition of "The Story of My Conversion," it is still my only aim and desire to magnify the saving grace of my Lord Jesus Christ, who has brought me out of great spiritual darkness into the marvelous light of His eternal salvation. To God be all the glory forever and ever. Amen.

No harm or offense is intended to anyone. If others remain entangled with religious superstitions and inherited prejudices, that has nothing to do with my ease; neither will I be their judge. I cannot explain or tell WHY God has dealt with me as He has in any other way than to say that it has ever been His method and way, to choose men for himself through whom He proposes to carry on His work, -- and having chosen and called them, He prepares and fits them for His work in His own way. As Zinzendorf says: "He leads us on by paths we do not know;

Upward He leads us, though our steps be slow,
Though oft we faint and falter on the way,
Though storms and darkness oft obscure the day;
Yet when the clouds are gone,
We know He leads us on."

I do not mean to say that God is a respecter of persons. He has the right, however, to choose whom He will and pleases in order that others may be blessed. And so God chose me, the oldest son of a family of nine children (six sons and three daughters). In lovingkindness He drew me to Himself, after that He had washed me in the fountain of precious Blood and brought me to the Living Waters. And from that time on He has led me, just in the way I relate it in this story. Of His leading and providential care in my life, and the ministry He has brought me into, I have never been unconscious from the day in which He first witnessed to my soul of His salvation through the Blood.

It is needless for me to say that my earnest and sincere prayers accompany this Testimony of Grace; I pray that God may be pleased continually to use it to bless hundreds and thousands of precious souls everywhere. The Lord Jesus Christ can break every religious fetter of superstition and prejudice, and set the captives free.

Yours in the everlasting Covenant,
L. H. Ziemer

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01 -- MY EARLY CHILDHOOD

The earliest recollections of my childhood days are of a religious nature. My father and mother were Lutherans, and so were all our forefathers for many generations back. They adhered very conscientiously to all the precepts and teachings of the church. Consequently I was reared in a very strict, orthodox way, and was indoctrinated in all the principles of Lutheranism. From my sixth birthday on, until I was fourteen years old, I attended the Lutheran Parochial School of our Church Parish. It was a part of my training to commit to memory the Lutheran catechism, many of the church hymns as well as long portions of Scripture. The Bible and "Stark's Gebetbuch" (Prayer-Book) were read in our home morning and evening, as a religious duty, and father and mother and we older children went regularly to "the confessional" and the Lord's Supper. Thus we hoped to have our sins forgiven and to be reconciled to God.

As-I look back upon my childhood days, I cannot help but believe that God's hand was upon me for the Gospel ministry from the beginning. At any rate the earliest ambitions of my life, as I recall them, always were to be a preacher of the Gospel. Among my companions I was always "the preacher ;" and "playing church" was the most acceptable pastime for me. That may have been just a coincidence, but it can also be that the Spirit of God was then already beginning to strive with me for recognition and surrender.

But with all the religious influences and training of my childhood, I was and remained for many years to come an unpardoned and unforgiven sinner before God. In my heart I knew nothing of the peace a justified believer in Christ enjoys. From day to day I lived on in the uncertainty of salvation, and in the fear of death and the judgment. I was "very religious, but nevertheless unsaved." I had little and no understanding of the spiritual condition of the natural man in the sight of God (Eph. 2:1-3), and did not know that they "that are in the flesh cannot please God" (Rom. 8:5-8).

Religion! Oh, what a curse religion is without the living, indwelling Christ! What a terrible snare of Satan it is to blind men's eyes to the truth of God in Christ Jesus!

I verily believe that more religious people are lost and damned than open and out-broken sinners. And so it is today. Every where you go you will meet men and women who boast of their own goodness, belonging to this or that system of religion, but who know absolutely nothing either of the sinfulness of their own hearts before God nor of God's way of salvation for the lost through His Son, Jesus Christ. And it is always true, the man who is "up and out" is a thousand times harder to reach with the Gospel of God's salvation by grace than the man who is "down and out." To the self-righteous Pharisees of His day Christ said: "Verily I say unto you, that the publicans and the harlots go into the kingdom before you" (Matt. 21:31).

For two gracious providences I have always been very grateful to God, since the light of His love has shined into my soul. Firstly, because He, in His infinite mercy, even in the days of my darkness and sin, was watching over me and leading me to paths that I knew not of, -- even to a perfect knowledge of Himself and His great salvation. Somehow God watched over me and never suffered me to wander off into great and presumptuous sins. And secondly, I praise Him for His providential protection over me in times of great danger, which otherwise would have been fatal. No less than three times "the angel of the Lord encamped round about me, and delivered me" from the jaws of death. When but a lad God saved me from drowning just as I was about to sink for the third and last time. Another time (and I was very foolishly tempting God at the time) He saved me from being swept over the surging brink of Niagara Falls. And a third time God miraculously saved me from being run over by a fast express train. All these deliverances of my life were before I was saved. Surely the Lord's hand has been upon me for good. Hallelujah! How gracious are the wonders of God's prevenient grace. Grace, by which He goes before us and prepares our hearts and ways to draw us to Himself.

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02 -- TRAINED TO PREACH -- BUT STILL UNFIT

When I was seventeen years old my parents sent me away for academic training in preparation for the ministry. It was my first experience in life to be away from home alone. I was sent to Buffalo, New York, and enrolled as a student in the Martin Luther Theological College and Seminary. Certainly God was my "Goer-ahead" in those days, but I did not know it then, neither did I know Him nor His Son Jesus Christ as my personal Savior. Strange and pleasant memories pass through my mind as I recall those days at college.

After finishing a six years' course of study in theology, I was ordained to the Gospel ministry of the Lutheran Church, on December 6th, 1906, in Holy Trinity Church, Buffalo, N. Y. Two weeks later I was sent out to preach the Gospel of salvation of which I had no experimental knowledge myself. For six months I filled a preaching appointment in Kewaskum and Rosendale, Wisconsin. My first actual charge as pastor of a church, however, was at Elkton and Grand Meadow, Minnesota.

As a preacher I was quite successful, as the saying goes. But I was still unsaved. And how can a man give to others what he does not possess himself? How can he lead others to the light when he himself is walking in darkness? God's Word says: "The husbandman that laboreth must be first partaker of the fruits" (II Tim. 2:6). So I was in a bad way. As Jesus has so truly spoken: I was "a blind leader of the blind," and destined to fall into the ditch together with the people I was supposed to lead in God's way of truth and salvation. I thank God He has forgiven and cleansed me of my sins of ignorance of those days.

Someone may ask: "But did you not believe on Christ at that time?" Yes, indeed, intellectually I believed everything I had been taught. I believed the Bible from cover to cover. (Remember, I was reared and trained in the Lutheran faith, and the Lutheran Church is not troubled much with destructive higher criticism.) But my belief had never been quickened nor energized in my soul by the Holy Spirit. To me it was just a "dead letter that killeth." I believed that Jesus was the Son of God and the Savior of the world; I believed that He died for the sins of all men and rose again. I never doubted any of these great truths. But none of these truths had ever penetrated into my heart, neither had I as yet experienced any change of heart. My whole trouble can be stated in just these few words: I had never been born again. I was after all trusting my own works and doing for salvation. I was depending, partly upon my calling as an ordained minister and partly upon the fact that I was religious, for righteousness. I was trying to be a Christian. I was doing the best I could and knew how to do, and hoped to be saved when I died.

Alas! Alas! what a sad condition and state of affairs this is. Perhaps you too, who read, are just such an one who is "very religious," and "a good church member;" or maybe you are also an ordained minister of the Church as I was. If that be so, my friend, I witness and testify to you that there must of necessity come a change in your life. You must have personal and individual dealings with God in order to be saved. The Church can't save you. Religion can't save you. Neither is there any salvation in the mere observing of the church ordinances. Nicodemus said to Jesus, "We KNOW Thou art a Teacher come from God, " -- but their knowledge was not enough. Jesus answered him: "Verily, verily, I say unto thee, ye MUST be born again." Every soul must have this experience or it shall perish. Dear reader, are you "born again"? Have you "passed from death unto life" experimentally? Have you ever seen yourself a poor, lost, hell-deserving sinner before God, on your way to eternal destruction, and have you confessed your sins to God and fled for shelter to the precious Blood of Christ? Verily, there is no other way of salvation for anyone.

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03 -- CONVICTED OF SIN AND SAVED BY GRACE

The Spirit of God began to convict me of my sin and need of the Savior under rather peculiar circumstances. A personal friend of mine was visiting us at the time. He and I were sitting in my "Study" talking about many things; presently, our conversation drifted to the subject of preaching. On the previous Sunday I had preached on the theme: "The Lutheran Church God's Saving Vessel." (The outline of this sermon for the most part was borrowed material.) In my message I pictured the Lutheran Church as a great Ocean Liner sailing across the ocean of time, fearing neither wind nor storm, and safely landing her cargo and passengers on the other shore. On the other hand I pictured other denominational churches as frail barks and little row-boats, trying

to make the trip across. And I stated that under very favorable circumstances they might be able to finish the journey, but why risk oneself to such frail and perishable vessels, when one might sail on the great, comfortable, safe Ocean Liner, -- The Lutheran Church. Of course I was much pleased with my sermon. Stinking ecclesiastical pride, that. And I was telling my friend all these details of my sermon with the applications. He listened to me without an interruption to the very end; but instead of commending me, and offering me the sop of human praise, he looked me straight in the eyes and said: "My brother, I want to ask you a question." "All right," I said, "what is it? Have you ever been saved, and do you know it?" asked he.

That question went to the very quick of my heart like a sharp and two-edged sword. My friend said no more to me that day, nor had I given him an answer. In fact he said nothing more to me at all about it, and the next day he bid us farewell and went on his way. Nevertheless, he was God's messenger to me, and the sharp threshing instrument in His hand to awaken and convict me of sin. He was gone, but the voice, and the question he had asked me was ringing in my ears. Over and over again I heard the words repeated in my soul by the Spirit of God, -- "Have you ever been saved, and do you know it?" For days I went on under awful conviction. I scarcely knew what was the matter with me. The storm was raging fierce and wild within my breast. Day and night God's hand was heavy upon me (Ps. 32:4), and I could find no rest anywhere. But, oh, the tenderness of our God and Savior when He convicts us of our sin! And how matchless is His patience with his erring, sinful children!

Praise God, after many days of darkness and distress there also came light and hope into my soul, -- the first ray of true Gospel light that ever shined into my darkened soul and spirit. My friend had given me a copy of Blackstone's little book, "Jesus Is Coming." I was reading it. And the reading of it brought me to my knees, and compelled me to read the Word of God in a new way.

But I must retrace my steps a little. Coincident with the visit of my friend, another of God's dear saints played an important role in my conversion. (God bless forever the memory of dear brother Jacob Young, of Defiance, ,Ohio.) This dear man came to our home frequently; I believe with all my heart that he was sent of God. And always he prayed with us when he came. By prayer he took hold of God for us and prevailed. Upon the occasion of one of his visits he presented me with a year's subscription to The Alliance Weekly.

A more valuable gift I have never received. In this magazine the writers declared from time to time that every believer, might know that he is saved; and to prove their statements, they quoted the Word of God very freely. Almost immediately the Holy Spirit began His blessed work of salvation within my heart and life, and graciously wrought in me the "godly sorrow of repentance to salvation not to be repented of" (II Cor. 7:10). He showed me the desperate wickedness of my own heart, and its deceitfulness above all things (Jer. 17:9; Mark 7:21-23). I prayed for light and spiritual understanding, and the blessed Holy Spirit helped me to find the truth. He revealed to me the fact, that the work of Jesus Christ upon the cross is a perfect and complete work for our salvation "once for all" (Heb. 9:24-28; c. 10:1-18). He also made clear to my understanding the deep significant meaning of Jesus' words upon the cross, "It Is Finished." Furthermore He convinced me in a new way that this salvation was for sinners like me (Luke 5:32), and that it was provided for us, not when we were good and doing our best, but "when we were yet without

strength, in due time Christ died for the ungodly" (Rom. 5:6). Self-righteous folks, who boast of their own goodness, have no place in God's program and plan of salvation.

The truth of the whole matter, it seems to me, is, and I say this very thoughtfully and reverently, God cannot save us and give us eternal life, until we stop working for salvation and justifying ourselves. But just as soon as we are ready and willing to accept salvation as His own free gift of love to believing sinners, He justifies and freely forgives us of all our sins. (Rom. 4:4-5).

As before stated, intellectually I was a believer long before this. But I had no assurance whatsoever of a present salvation through Jesus Christ. My trouble was the trouble of thousands today, I had no Scriptural faith; I did not believe "with the heart unto righteousness" (Rom. 10:10). Consequently, I was not saved, though I was very religious and giving credence to all the revealed truth of the Bible. Later on I came to understand that my trouble was largely due to wrong teaching and false believing. You see, I had been taught and trained to believe from my youth up, that as long as we live in this world, we cannot be saved from our sins nor from our sinning. Indeed, one of my professors once told us very solemnly, that "a little sinning is necessary for us in order to keep humble before God." And so day by day I repeated my "rosary" of miserable confession and subtle unbelief: "Almighty God, I confess unto Thee, that I have grievously sinned against Thee by thought, word, and deed." I was not actually doing that every day, much less was I actually engaged in "grievously sinning against God in thought, word, and deed," -- the devil himself could not beat such a record. This was what I had been taught to believe and confess before God always. And was I miserable, sick and tired of such a life?

To admit it, is saying the very least possible; yet the way out I knew not. But thanks be to God, after the Holy Spirit had convicted me of my sins, and shown me the glorious truth of a perfect and ever present salvation by the Blood of Jesus Christ through faith, I cast myself entirely upon the mercy of my God, once for all; threw aside all my trying, and hoping, and by simple faith alone accepted His free gift of grace, even Life Eternal through Jesus Christ our Lord. And did it work? Did this bring peace and rest to my poor, weary heart? Yes, HALLELUJAH! It worked in my case, and it works today. The great burden of the guilt of sin rolled off from my heart. I shall never forget that day nor hour, **THE HAPPIEST DAY OF ALL MY LIFE IT SEEMED**, throughout eternity. Words cannot express the "unspeakable joy" which came to my soul when the Holy Spirit first witnessed with my spirit that I was God's dear child. The same day I came across this little chorus:

"Singing I go along life's road,
Praising the Lord, Praising the Lord.
Singing I go along life's road:
For Jesus has lifted my load."

And I have been singing it ever since. There are no "blue Mondays" for me now. Glory to Jesus! I have not had a "blue Monday" since. Constantly I am rejoicing in Christ Jesus my Savior, who in His own body bore my sins on the tree, and "with whose stripes I am healed" (I Pet. 2:24).

Now I know in the innermost part of my being, that "there is therefore now no condemnation to them that are in Christ Jesus;" He, my Lord, took all my condemnation upon Himself, and has set me free (John 5:24; Rom. 8:1)... Now I know that I am saved, not by my feelings, nor by my experiences, -- although I have both in abundance -- but by the eternal Word of the eternal God which I believe. And does He not say: "As many as received Him, to them gave He power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on His Name?" (John 1:12). I know that I have received Jesus Christ as my Savior, and I know that I am now trusting Him who purchased my salvation on Calvary's tree, and that He now... saves me from all my sins. Praise His holy Name!

"Christ is my portion forever,
He is my Savior from sin;
He is my blessed salvation,
I have the witness within.

He is my Fortress and Tower,
He is my Guide and my King:
He is my Shepherd and Keeper,
Joyfully now I can sing.

Praise to the One who redeems me,
Praise to my crucified Lord,
Now I am saved, hallelujah!
Praise for His wonderful Word."

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04 -- IN PATHS OF RIGHTEOUSNESS

How truly, God's children can say with the Psalmist: ' He leadeth me in paths of righteousness for His Name's sake.' Soon after God had saved me, I, too, was led of God in righteous paths.

Early in life I foolishly acquired the use of tobacco, and soon became addicted to this filthy habit. I was an inveterate smoker, both of cigars and the pipe. A pound of tobacco and several dozen cigars a week was not unusual for me. The use of tobacco was having its evil effects upon me, too. Being a public speaker, my voice and throat became greatly impaired. But I was bound by the habit, and could not help myself. A miserable slave was I, and unable to free myself. But God was able to help me; and I pray that my deliverance may encourage other struggling ones to seek the Lord as their helper.

One morning while I was alone in my "Study" reading the Word of God, with my pipe in my mouth and tobacco smoke all around me, (I was reading I Cor. 3:16-17, -- "Know ye not that ye are the temple of God, and that the Spirit of God dwelleth in you? If any man defile the temple of God, him shall God destroy; for the temple of God is holy; which temple ye are. Let no man

deceive himself"). Suddenly I heard a voice speaking to me as distinctly as though another person had come into the room, and was speaking to me.

"What are you doing?" said the voice. I was startled and looked up and around me. I saw no one present, and started to read again, -- and another great cloud of tobacco smoke enveloped me. Again that same strange voice was heard, only this time it was louder and more distinct. "What are you doing?" I was unnerved, and with astonishment I said to myself in an undertone: "Why, I am reading my Bible; but how strange this is."

The voice spoke again: "What did you read just then?" With that my eyes rested upon the sacred page of God's Word, and there stood the text, as if in bold relief, lifted out from all the rest of the Scripture: "Ye are the temple of God ... if any man defile the temple of God him shall God destroy; for the temple of God is holy, which temple ye are." I still had the pipe in my mouth, smoking. Once more the voice spoke and said: "What have you in your mouth? And what are you doing but defiling the temple of God?"

Needless to say, the pipe came out of my mouth that very moment, and I dropped to my knees, and buried my face in the ground, and cried to God with convulsive sobbings, for now I understood that it was God speaking to me about this unclean, filthy habit. "Forgive my sin, O God!" I cried. "I will never again defile Thy temple. But, O God, this thing has me bound; it is such a strong habit with me, Thou knowest. I cannot break its power with any strength of my own. I cannot deliver myself; deliver Thou me, O God, in Jesus' Name. I plead the precious Blood of Christ for my deliverance and cleansing."

Glory to God! Like the Psalmist I can testify: "This poor man cried, and the Lord heard him, and saved him out of all his troubles" (Ps. 34:6). I arose from my knees a free man. The old pipe, the cigars and all the filthy tobacco I had I cast immediately into "hades" for destruction. My deliverance was instantaneous and complete. I have never had the slightest desire for tobacco from that hour until now. The very smell of tobacco smoke now sickens me; and to this very day I am nauseated whenever I have to be in the presence of men and women who are tobacco users. Bless the Lord!

"Jesus breaks every fetter,
And He sets me free."

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05 -- CALLED TO ST. PAUL'S, MANSFIELD, OHIO

Shortly after this wonderful change had been wrought in my life, God called me away from Defiance, Ohio, to other fields of service and labor in the Gospel. Under date of February 22, 1914, a unanimous call was extended me by the official Board of St. Paul's Lutheran Church, of Mansfield, Ohio, to the pastorate of said church. I accepted the call, and came to Mansfield the Sunday after Easter, 1914.

An interesting little incident comes to my mind in this connection. Two of the official Board members of the Church met me at the railway station. As we were walking up the street toward the parsonage, one of them said to me: "Pastor, we are all glad you have come to us; we have heard about your fearless preaching, and I have always admired any preacher who will speak right out and tell the truth straight from the shoulder." I said, "Brother, by the grace of God, I specialize in that kind of preaching; and if you will all stand by me, we are going to have a good time together, and God will surely bless us." Well, we certainly did have the good time, but I fear that this brother, as well as many others in that church, did not enjoy the preaching nor profit by it very much after all.

Often times now, as the years pass by, I look back to my call to Mansfield as one of the particular leadings of the Lord in my life.

Having had so glorious an experience of salvation, and desiring with my whole heart to go all the way with the Lord, it is but natural that God should lead me in the same paths in which He has always led his saints, -- into the "wilderness," into "Arabia," that there He might perfect the work of faith in me.

If you have been praying to know more of Christ, do not be surprised if He takes you aside into a desert place, or leads you into a furnace of pain. Thus in the providence of God, Mansfield, Ohio, was to be my "Arabia," my "wilderness." Here God was minded to put me through "a furnace of affliction" for His glory, in order that He might prepare me for the greater and more fruitful ministry of His own ordination. It is good for us, too, that we do not know the future of our ways before we are called to walk in them; it is good that the experiences yet to come are hidden from our immediate understanding. Undoubtedly I would have drawn back from going to Mansfield, had I known all the heartaches, and bitter disappointments, and the jeopardy of life and loved ones that awaited me there. But now as I look back, I can also look up and give thanks to almighty God, for I see in all those experiences the perfection of His own plan and purpose concerning me.

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06 -- JESUS CHRIST -- MADE UNTO ME SANCTIFICATION

Shortly after my coming to Mansfield, although I had had so wonderful an experience of salvation, I began to sense a deep spiritual need in the very center of my being, a crying out after God that I never dreamed was possible in this life. What it all meant, I did not fully understand. I had no Scriptural heart-knowledge of the sanctification taught in the Word of God. No one had ever spoken to me about the Baptism with the Holy Spirit, nor taught me the importance of it. Therefore again the faithful Holy Spirit Himself was leading me into all this truth.

I was already fully convinced of the fact, "that in me, that is in my flesh, dwelleth no good thing." Also I was often very conscious of the lack of power in my preaching; so few people were convicted of sin. And then, too, there was a sad lack of courage to witness for my Lord, just at times when I should witness for Him. I knew and understood clearly that God was holy, but in myself I found the evidence that I was unholy; I knew that "God is love," but within myself I found

stirrings of anger, of wrath, of bitterness, and of strife. Like the prophet. of old, I too cried in my distress: "Woe is me, for" I am undone; because I am a man of unclean lips, and I dwell in the midst of a people of unclean lips." What was I to do ?

Prayerfully I turned to the Word of God. All my heart's desires were going out to God, and my very soul was panting after God "as the hart panteth after the water-brooks." Then all at once the same flood-tide of glorious Gospel light shone in upon my soul, as at the first, only that the radiance of it seemed even more glorious now than before.

I fell upon my face and wept before the Lord; how long I do not now remember. Time was altogether immaterial. But presently, through my tears, I beheld Calvary. And there upon the tree I saw the bleeding, dying form of Jesus my Savior, "The Lamb of God," crucified and slain for me. The contortions of His agony were excruciating. And I saw Him not so much as bearing my actual transgressions and sins, but rather as the Sin-Offering, God's Lamb "made sin for me, that I might be made the righteousness of God in Him" (II Cor. 5:21). I saw Him there suffering, bleeding and dying as the accursed one, under the awful curse of a just God, not only that I might be forgiven of my sins and justified through faith, but also that my heart might be cleansed from all sin and from every unrighteousness, and my body indeed prepared as an holy temple of the Lord (I Cor. 6:19-20).

And now a holy, heavenly voice spoke to me, saying: "Lo, this hath touched thy lips: and thine iniquity is taken away, and thy sin purged." Thus, in a moment of time, it was revealed to me, that "Christ is made unto us wisdom, and righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption" (I Cor. 1:30); and that by that "one offering He hath perfected forever them that are sanctified" (Heb. 10:14).

Oh, glorious rapture of the soul! I arose, shouted, and sang, and laughed in the Spirit until I cried for very joy as the flood-tide of God's grace rolled in over my soul again and again with purifying and cleansing power. I felt the holy fire of God burning in my soul. The Holy Spirit had come to abide forever. The Lord Jesus Christ was baptizing me with the Holy Spirit according to his word and promise.

"Peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ" I had known already before this, but now "the peace of God which passeth all understanding" settled down upon me, henceforth to "keep my heart and mind through Christ" forever. In my spirit I worshipped the Lord. Instantly Romans 12:1 flashed into my mind, -- "I beseech you by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service." To obey God meant His favor and blessing. So that very day and hour I made a complete surrender of myself to God, and in deepest, fullest consecration I not only spoke the words to Him, but also wrote them out before the Lord as follows:

"I call heaven and earth to witness this 17th day of June, 1915, that I now and forever give myself away, body, soul, and spirit, together with all I am or ever can hope to be, to God my Father, who has created me for His own glory, and to Jesus Christ my Lord, who saved me by His Blood, and to the everlasting control of the blessed Holy Spirit, my Sanctifier and Comforter, to

love and to serve Him in sunshine or rain, in loss or in gain, in joy or in sorrow, in life or in death. Amen and Amen."

"Drops of grief can ne'er repay,
The debt of love I owe:
Here Lord I give MYSELF away,
'Tis all that I can do."

Experience has taught me that it is a good thing to do things definitely and thoroughly, when "driving stakes" for God. Then when the devil comes around afterward to vex and torment you, to lie about and accuse you, you can take him to the place where you have driven the stake for God, and resist him in the faith until he flees from you.

God asks no more of any of His children than a definite surrender of themselves to Himself. And He gives the Holy Spirit "to them that obey Him" (Acts 5-32). Immediately, therefore, upon this my consecration God witnessed again to my heart with a most gracious filling with the Holy Spirit.

And may I add this further word: This most gracious experience of the deeper life in Christ is no fanciful dream of emotionalism on my part. It is scriptural, actual, and true. I have continual evidence of the presence and power of the Holy Spirit abiding in me. Daily and hourly He gives me power to overcome; by reckoning myself dead indeed unto sin, but alive unto Christ, I find that sin cannot have dominion over me. By His grace and power I am enabled to "walk in the light, as He is in the light," and so we have fellowship one with another, and His Blood cleanseth me from all sin. Day by day He cleanses me of all my faults, failures, shortcomings and sins, -- because, yielded to Him in spirit, soul, and body, these are errors of the head rather than of the heart. Before God's throne He Himself is "the propitiation, for my sins," keeping our fellowship unbroken and complete. Oh, praise His Name forever!

And what a difference this experience made in my life and ministry! I now had power to witness for my Lord that I never knew anything of before. Now, too, His Word was like a sharp, two-edged sword, and carried pungent conviction to the hearts of the hearers. Men began to cry out, -- "What must I do to be saved?" Whilst others hardened their hearts in sin, and gnashed their teeth at me in wrath and anger.

I shall never forget those wonderful days of Gospel ministry in Mansfield, Ohio, following this wonderful baptism with the Holy Spirit. A few months of faithful preaching of the Word precipitated an old-fashioned Pentecostal revival in that old staid Lutheran Church. And in His mercy and grace God saved a multitude of souls in a short time. In many ways it was a very informal revival; it had to be of necessity from the human side. St. Paul's was a strict, orthodox church, holding to all the ritualism of Lutheranism. No altar services nor public invitations to accept Christ were allowed in the public services. The official Board even attempted to forbid prayer-meetings, and would have stopped them had we given heed to their demands. Nevertheless God was in it. And the Holy Spirit leaped over all the limitations and hindrances of man, and scores of souls were saved in the regular services without a formal altar, and the revival fire ran from house to house where the people gathered themselves together for prayer, and to hear the

Word of God. Once a week I also preached the word in a small Rescue Mission down town, and many accepted the Lord Jesus there. Days of heaven upon earth they were. Eternity alone can reveal all the blessed fruit of that spiritual revival.

But the devil, too, got busy. He always does whenever and wherever God begins to work.

Almost simultaneously with the revival, dark and ominous clouds began to gather round about me and to break over my head. The first outburst of opposition and wrath came shortly after the funeral service of a young man of the church; he was quite prominent in the church, and had had considerable influence with many. My only crime in the affair was, after being told that he had but a short time to live, I tried in every possible way to lead him to Christ. For this kindness I gained the disfavor and enmity of his family and household.

Two months after this the official Board of the Church demanded my resignation as pastor of St. Paul's; but of course the resignation was not tendered, for I was not a hireling of the Board. After this, many false and terrible accusations were circulated about me; charges of heresy and of false teaching of every kind were made; it seemed that all the lies of hell were vomited out and charged against me. My name and character were slandered before the whole world. Such terrible lies! I had not believed it possible men could tell. May God for Jesus' sake forgive them. My life was in jeopardy every day. Twice I was threatened with mob violence if I would not forthwith resign. Once my life was threatened unless I would leave the city within twenty-four hours. Constantly my wife and children lived in fearful apprehension of what the opponents would do next to intimidate me, and drive me away. But none of these things moved me. Though often troubled in spirit, I was never in despair; I knew that I was in the center of the will of God, as well as in the place where God had put me. Wherefore I was determined to stand unmovable in spite of the devil. And by the grace of God I did stand.

Since then I have learned that every man who is bold enough to preach and live the truth of Christ's Gospel will have the devil on his heels, and he must be prepared for the worst. The message God puts in the mouth of his servants may kindle a flame that will even consume the message-bearer, yet the price is not too great to pay to be on the Lord's side. Nor is it an unusual thing for the man of God to be misunderstood. If he is full of enthusiasm in the service of the Lord, he is declared to be mad; if he is zealous and openly attacks evil, his motives are impugned; if he claims any particular Christian experience for himself, he is ridiculed and called an egotist and a fanatic. Christ was accused of having a demon, though He was binding and casting out demons everywhere; and Paul was called a fool, and beside himself, because the love of Christ constrained him to give himself whole-heartedly to the work of the Lord. And Christ said: "They shall put you out of the synagogues: yea, the time cometh, that whosoever killeth you will think he doeth God service" (John 16:2). Think it not strange, then, if your life also be misread.

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07 -- ACCUSED OF HERESY -- TRIED AND PROMOTED

The 31ST of May, 1916, I shall remember as long as I live. On that day the president of Synod (District Synod of Ohio), together with three other ministers appointed by him, came to

Mansfield to examine me concerning my doctrinal standing and the many charges that had been made against me. Every member of that committee was prejudiced in their mind, and strongly held with the opposition. After a prolonged session, continuing until almost sunrise the next day, and after a great many witnesses had been heard, not one of which agreed with the other in their testimony, this committee cited me to appear before the annual Synodical Ministerium convening in Lima, Ohio, June 23rd to 26th, and stand trial on charges of heresy, and conduct unbecoming a minister of the Gospel.

The report of the committee to Synod was as follows:

Report Of Committee To Investigate Certain Complaints
Against Rev. L. H. Ziemer Of Mansfield, Ohio.

"After careful consideration of all the facts in the case as the committee was able to ascertain and judge of the same, we find that Rev. L. H. Ziemer has departed from the Lutheran Faith and is guilty of heresy on the following counts:

1. "He believes and teaches un-Biblical and un-Lutheran doctrine concerning holy baptism, denying that baptism is the means of regeneration.
2. "He has departed from the Lutheran faith and is guilty of heresy in teaching the un-Biblical and un-Lutheran doctrine of the Second Coming of Christ (Millennium).
3. "He is guilty also of heresy for teaching un-Biblical and un-Lutheran doctrine about sanctification, preaching, teaching and proclaiming that he is a perfectly sanctified man.
4. "He is guilty of heresy because he sets aside some of the ordinances, usages and customs of our Church, which are near and dear to our people, and in their stead he has introduced others which are a grievous offense, and against the faith and spirit of our Church.
5. "He is guilty of heresy because he fellowships with false believers, and unites in religious worship with non-Lutherans."

In the original draft of charges the committee: had preferred three others against me, but these were later withdrawn.

The morning of June 23rd had come; and that day I was to appear before the Ministerium of Synod in Lima, Ohio, to stand trial for heresy. Strange feelings were going through my soul that morning. Satan, too, was berating and deriding me.

"You will suffer defeat this time," he said. "For your foolishness, your family will have to suffer want. You are going to lose your position; you will be driven out of your house and home. It's a fine mess you have gotten yourself into, and no one is to blame for it but yourself." What an infamous liar the devil is!

Before bidding my loved ones good-bye, we knelt together in prayer to God, imploring His mercy, grace and strength for all that was before me, and that He would keep me in all my ways. Praise God! He heard our cry and answered from heaven in that very hour out of His own Word. He gave me Deut. 31:6. "Be strong and of good courage, fear not, nor be afraid of them : for the Lord thy God, He it is that doth go with thee; He will not fail thee; nor forsake thee." What a Word! Who then would fear man, or even 10,000 devils, when God thus comforts the soul to strengthen his servants.

Having arrived at Lima, Ohio, I made arrangements to appear immediately before "the august Ministerial Assembly," before which my case was to be tried. It was a long drawn out trial. The Ministerium reviewed all the charges of heresy; they listened to complaint after complaint made by the committee; witness after witness of the opposition rose up and testified against me. The details of the trial will not materially add to this story, therefore they are omitted. It will be of interest, however, to the reader to know the outcome of it all. Well, thank God, the truth prevailed, at least at Synod, and the Lord triumphed gloriously. I was acquitted of every doctrinal charge of heresy preferred against me, and was openly exonerated from the floor of Synod. This was Monday evening, June 26th, after the evening service.

Cleared of all guilt, I returned to Mansfield to my charge as pastor of St. Paul's Church, thinking in my heart that we would now have peace, and that we might do the work of the Lord for the salvation of souls. But in this I was mistaken. The plottings and underhand workings of those who had set themselves against me continued in just about the same manner as before. The sting of defeat before Synod only roused the opposition to more wily plottings and insidious attacks. And thus matters went on until September 24th, 1916, when the storm broke again upon me with added fury and bitterness. The opposition had somehow managed to get a majority of the church membership on their side; they immediately forced a congregational meeting, and unceremoniously ousted me from my charge, and denied me the privilege to minister any longer as pastor of St. Paul's Church.

The outlook was indeed dark and discouraging. I was baffled in my spirit. I felt as though I was pressed out of measure and above strength. All my hopes seemed to be dashed to the ground and broken. "BUT GOD!"

Once again GOD proved Himself to be the solution of all my troubles. The following little incident occurred at that very time, and I relate it particularly to show that God never forgets nor forsakes those who put their trust in Him. He may suffer them to be severely tried, but He does not leave them comfortless.

It was the Monday morning following the Sunday we had been so unceremoniously ousted from our position and charge, (we were still occupying the parsonage, however.) While at the breakfast table together, the morning mail came. The postman left two letters for us, -- one a sealed letter, the other just an open letter, and bearing a R. R. Station postmark. To this day I have not learned who sent it. I love to cherish the thought that my heavenly Father sent the message to me by the hand of some kindly angel. I opened the sealed letter first. It was from the Church Council, and contained the following communication:

Mansfield, Ohio, Sept. 25th, 1916.

Rev. L. H. Ziemer, Mansfield, Ohio.

Dear Sir:

"Whereas the congregation of St. Paul's Lutheran Church has formally decided by a vote of 165 to 121 to accept your resignation as pastor of this church, it is now the request of the Church Council that you immediately turn over the keys to the church property and all other property belonging to the church, including the parsonage.

"Please give this matter your prompt consideration."

(Signed) The Church Council.

It was my certificate of "promotion" to the streets of Mansfield, Ohio. With my wife and three little children I was now jobless and homeless. Strange situation!

In that hour we all felt ourselves very much forsaken. Wife was weeping, and then the children, too, began to cry. With great difficulty I constrained myself. The Word of our heavenly Father came to me in that moment to comfort me. "God is able to make all grace abound toward you." And while we were musing, I looked at the other letter, and from the envelope I took the heavenly message of encouragement that God had sent us for that very hour. He had sent it just at the right time, when all of us needed it most. I read it aloud:

The present circumstance which presses so hard against you, (if surrendered to Christ) is the best shaped tool in the Father's hand to chisel you for eternity. Trust Him, then. Do not push away the instrument lest you lose its work.

That was enough, overwhelmingly enough. We were all completely overcome with emotion. A river of joy and praise welled up out of my deepest soul to God. For who could doubt God under such circumstances? We took courage, knelt down together and gave thanks to almighty God. After prayer we all sang:

"God is still on the throne,
He never forsaketh His own;
Though trials may press us,
And burdens distress us,
He never will leave us alone.
God is still on the throne."

Very shortly after this we moved out of the parsonage, into a rented house that God had provided for us.

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08 -- BEGINNING AND GROWTH OF THE MANSFIELD TABERNACLE

My next pulpit was God's big out-of-doors. On the streets of Mansfield, Ohio, and in Central Park of that city God had built me a pulpit that I was to fill for His glory. However, before I could preach in the open air, I had to have a permit from the city administration. And the application for such a permit had to be issued by the mayor of the city. Now the mayor of Mansfield at this time was a member of St. Paul's Church; and he had been very active in his opposition of me from the beginning, and his ballot helped to put me out of my pastorate. Nevertheless, I went to his office; saw him personally; told him what I had come for, and he promised to take my petition under consideration immediately. He said I might return the next day for his decision in the matter. When I returned the next day, he granted me even more than I had asked for, -- in place of a permit to preach at some certain corner in the city, he gave me a "blanket permit," and I was at liberty to preach anywhere I pleased under police protection. Hallelujah! Jesus giveth us the victory.

So I began to preach the glorious Gospel of Jesus Christ to an ever increasing congregation, with no man interfering or forbidding me. Standing with and by me was a noble company of men and women, whom God had saved from sin, and out of that old withered church, together with many Christian sympathizers from other churches, (their names are in the book of life), and they also nobly supported and often times comforted me.

Almost from the beginning it became necessary to find some place where we could meet together for public worship on the Lord's Day. In answer to prayer the Lord opened up the doors of the Y. M. C. A. to us. And for a whole year we met there every Sunday morning and evening for our Sunday School and preaching services. At the end of the first year we were compelled through opposing influences to seek other quarters. After prayer we found that once more the Lord had provided a place for us. We secured the Trades Council Hall, on the third floor of a large industrial building, and here we held forth for three full years. It was during the time of the great world war, when, because of government restrictions, we were hindered in undertaking any kind of building operations.

As soon as the government building restrictions were lifted, we began our own building program. A lot was purchased in the business section of the city, and the commodious Tabernacle, with a seating capacity of 500, was erected upon it. In the fall of 1920 it was dedicated to the service of God, and we were once more "at home" in our own houses of worship. And thus did the Grace Gospel Tabernacle, at Mansfield, Ohio, come into existence.

Many said that the work would never continue. They called it "just a mushroom;" they called us "Ziernerites," and said that if I ever left the city, the work would die. But the false prophets were all mistaken. God has richly blessed His Word in Mansfield, and is blessing it today. I have been away from the Mansfield Tabernacle now for more than eight years, but still the work continues to grow and exert a godly influence upon many hundreds of lives. In fact that work has grown to be one of the largest affiliated churches of the Christian and Missionary Alliance, having a Sunday School enrollment of around 500 members, and large congregations attending the preaching services from Sunday to Sunday. That little Church, just sixteen years old, has given thousands of dollars for the spread of the Gospel in all the world; it has sent five missionaries to

the foreign field, whom it also supports, with several others on the waiting list, and it has just as many other workers in the homeland. It was my happy privilege to remain with this people for nine years after the church was born out of such a storm of affliction and tribulation. Blessed years they were, among the most cherished of all my years of service with my Lord. Surely God did "make the wrath of man to praise Him."

Since May, 1925, I have been in charge of the work of the Toledo Gospel Tabernacle. Here God, in His abundant mercy and His unfailing grace, sees fit to use me in His service of salvation and preaching of the Gospel with blessed and eternal results. The glory shall be His, and His alone for all eternity.

I desire to clothe the last words of this story in rhyme and verse:

"Jesus, my Lord, my God,
My life to Thee I owe;
For Thou hast borne my guilty load
Of sin, and death, and woe.

Thy Blood alone sufficed
My captive soul to free;
At such a ransom priced
How dear my soul must be!

Such wondrous love as this
A Seraph's thought exceeds;
Nor could he sing my song of bliss,
Or pipe it on his reeds.

On Thee I cast my care
Whose tender grace divine;
Of scanty crumbs made bread to spare,
Of water choicest wine."

* * * * *

ADDENDA

This story of my conversion would be incomplete without a word of tribute to my beloved wife and bosom companion in tribulation. Next to God, I am most deeply indebted to her. In the Word of God it is written: "He that findeth a wife, findeth a good thing, and obtaineth favor from the Lord." And surely I have been highly favored from the Lord.

Through every calumny, through all kinds of slander and lying accusations against my character and otherwise, in hardships and trials, in suffering, in losses, in shadows and darkness, when God's ways were hidden for the moment, she has stood faithfully by my side. Her prayers and sanctified wisdom have been a wonderful help and blessing to me in so many hard places.

God has given to my wife the gift of a marvelous intuition. She is able to sense almost any kind of spiritual danger or trouble before ever it makes its appearance, -- thus again and again she has enabled me to be prepared by prayer and watchfulness to avoid the fiery darts of the wicked one, and often times escape the tempter's snare. She is a woman of deep piety and true spirituality. Night and day she prays for God's anointing to rest upon me as I go forth to preach the Gospel. And in all her petitions and prayers she is absolutely forgetful of any selfish purpose and self-interest, always seeking God, His Kingdom and the salvation of precious souls first.

* * *

To Make Others Happy Is Ever The Chief Delight Of Her Life

As a mother, she is unsurpassable. Ask our children, our sons and daughter, whom she has trained in the nurture and admonition of the Lord, -- and may I say, given back again to the Lord, as Hanna did Samuel, -- ask them, in what estimation they hold their mother.

My wife is not a "preacher" nor a public speaker; nevertheless, in the home, in the closet, and in the Sunday School class room she is a power for God, and "a fisher of men" in the truest sense, and meaning of that word. As a Christian worker at the altar, she has helped hundreds of souls to find the Lord Jesus as their Savior and Friend. And beside all this, her quiet, unassuming life and ministry of personal work is a greater and far more effective testimony for Christ and the Gospel than much of the loud platform work of others.

To me she has been and is today a true "helpmeet." She has been the companion of my heart during all the wonderful years of our married life. Our union is even too sacred to describe. And ought that God has wrought through me, much of it is due to the loyalty, the faithfulness and the constant encouragement given me by my beloved wife. And verily she shall share in any reward my Lord may see fit to give in that day.

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THE END