Looking for Lightning

am 21 now, and that feels weird to say because I'm growing up, and life is changing at a pace more rapid than I've ever seen it, which has required some adaptation and resilience, but mainly just a lot of faith. Thankfully, the God I serve, by "the integrity of His heart," and with "the skilfulness of his Hands," has taught me how to trust Him, taking my ashes of doubt and fear and trading them for the beauty of faith (Psalms 78:72). I've been sanctified for 4 years now, and in that time, God has been my only true constant. God forgave me of my sins on July 4th, 2018, and on that day, God gave me liberty that extends so fervently to me still, liberty that was prophesied about and manifested to us long before 1776. God sanctified me on July 6th, 2018, and on that day, God gave me the fire of the Holy Ghost, a burning torch that lights the way on a path that I can't see.

In those first couple of weeks after becoming sanctified, right before Campmeeting, I remember struggling with doubt, with what seemed at the time to be a lack of a witness of salvation. 'Did I really get sanctified?' the devil had me asking myself. I had given my all to God, but I just couldn't seem to know, I didn't know how to know, really. I didn't know why I felt the way I did, but I knew I needed to feel God fully in my life, and I couldn't do that if I was filled with doubts about my sanctification. I remember driving home one night in my dad's truck, so sick of doubting. I was begging God, pleading for something. Something I could hold onto. A witness that expelled all doubt, but that was just so elusive to me at the time. I likened the kind of witness I wanted and the one I was looking for to a lightning bolt, not a literal one, but one of feeling or emotion, of some grand experience that was undeniable and irrefutable, the same way a bolt of electricity would be if it struck the pavement right in front of me with a bright light and a booming crash, too obvious to doubt. So, crying in the car, sitting at a stoplight, I asked, "what more do you want from me?" My thinking at the time was if I had given my all to God, why did He seem to be so quiet? Why did He seem to be holding back an answer? I had laid it all on the altar, so with nothing else to give, I wondered why God hadn't made Himself so explicitly plain to me in the way that He sent His salvation. I asked Him this, and immediately, God spoke to me in a way that I can't explain, but in a way that I knew - "your faith," that's what more He wanted from me. My witness was not in seeing a big flash of light, or hearing a crashing boom of thunder, but in believing that God will reach down to a sinner, with nothing to offer, extending an amount of love and mercy that I still can't quite comprehend, and sanctify him fully, entirely eradicating sin and granting the miracle of living a Holy life. I never saw any blinding flash or heard any deafening thunder that night. That's not how God worked with me. However, in that time since, I have certainly come to see, and I have certainly come to hear, the fullness of Christ, expressly, explicitly, and so plainly manifested right in front of me. On the coffee table my knees rested against as I read through Hebrews one night, a golden glow pulsing through the pages, on the pavement and glittering off my windshield as I drove down the road listening to "Wonderful Story of Love," in my gilded tomorrows, as I read the stories of hope presented in the scriptures and watch them come alive as if they were my own.

That experience happened during the summer before my senior year of high school. Today, life is drastically different than it was then, and it's changed even more with every year that's passed. Since then, I've thought about that lightning bolt, for other things in my life, how easy it could be if the choices I have yet to make, of what to do and where to go and how to do it all, were as plain as a strike of electricity, visible and clear.

continued on p.2...

"We give thanks to God always for you all, making mention of you in our prayers;
Remembering without ceasing your work of faith, and labour of love, and patience of hope in our Lord Jesus Christ, in the sight of God and our Father; Knowing, brethren beloved, your election of God."

- 1 Thessalonians 1:2-4

For calendar updates visit www.cshc.org

God will take care of you, through ev'ry day, o'er all the way;

He will take care of you,
God will take care of you.
Through days of toil when heart
doth fail,

God will take care of you; When dangers fierce your path assail,

God will take care of you.

No matter what may be the test,
God will take care of you;
Lean, weary one, upon his breast,
God will take care of you.

- Civilla D. Martin (1904)

...continued from p.1...

TIDINGS

Instead, I've experienced a different element, one that's been demonstrated so powerfully to me, in my brightest moments, and in my darkest nights: fire, the blazing flame of the Holy Ghost. John the Baptist said, "I indeed baptize you with water unto repentance: but he that cometh after me... shall baptize you with the Holy Ghost, and with fire" (Matthew 3:11). There's a lot of importance surrounding the symbolism of water in the scriptures, but Jesus didn't come to baptize with water, and he didn't come to electrify, either. He came to baptize with the all-consuming flame, a Holy fire that ignites me to go further, that drives me to chase the passion of the scriptures, that urges me to carry that torch into a world of darkness, a task I certainly don't feel qualified for. There's a lot of things still to figure out in life that I don't feel qualified for, and not a lot of knowledge of myself to figure it all out, but God required my faith four years ago, not in seeing a bolt of lightning, but through believing in His great light, and He requires it today, too. I see that great light, that fulness of Christ, in the beauty of the gospel and how it permeates into every crevice of my life, in the love of sanctified folks, in the magic of the scriptures and how they unfold themselves to me, in the love that God allows me to have for other people, in the way I'm able to feel the hope, traded from ashes, that strikes through the fog of fear or doubt or anxiety or sadness or despair or whatever it may possibly be, to reveal that great light, prophesied about in Isaiah, manifested to me four years ago, and even more brightly ever since. So, I never got that bright lightning bolt, but the way that God spoke to me was so much sweeter, and I did indeed, and still do, see a great light.

Isaiah 9:2 "The people that walked in darkness have seen a great light: they that dwell in the land of the shadow of death, upon them hath the light shined."

-Brother Ryan Collier

A TESTIMONY BY "THE BOY FROM THOMASVILLE"



was born on December 16, 1940...not in a hospital, but at home in the rural community of Meigs, Georgia (near Thomasville). During my 80-plus years, I have learned to appreciate electric lighting and indoor plumbing...luxuries that rural Meigs, Georgia didn't enjoy when I was born.

I was the 4th child born to my parents, T.J., and Rosa Lee Smith. My older siblings were my brother Jack and my sisters Frances (Nichols) and Margaret (Collins). We were poor; my father was a sharecropper in Meigs. When I was about 3 years old, my parents moved to Thomasville where my younger brother Cecil was born. We then became a family of 7: our parents and 5 children. I began 1st grade, and life began to change for me. However, at such a young age, I had no thought of how expansive and life-altering the change would be for our family.

While living in Thomasville, our family encountered several tragedies. My older brother Jack was killed unexpectedly in a freak accident at the age of 15 years. It wounded our hearts; we grieved. For me as a 7-year-old lad, I lost the Big Brother who I had looked up to. It was a sad time indeed for the Smith family.

The day following the death of my brother, my paternal grandmother suffered a stroke and died about 1 month later. Less than 2 weeks after her death, my paternal grandfather died. Our family was grief-stricken and overwhelmed with sorrow at the deaths of these three family members who died within a period of less than 2 months. As I look retrospectively at this sad time for the Smith family, God was beginning to work.

Our mother didn't drive, so she and we 4 children attended Sunday School and church locally with individuals who came by to take us to church, as our father didn't attend church at that time. Approximately 1 year later (as best I can remember), our father decided to move the family from Thomasville to Boston, Georgia where he purchased a country store. We lived in the back part of the store. There were no interior doors, so rooms were separated by hanging cloth curtains over each doorway for privacy. I was about 12 years old when I walked by my mother's bedroom and saw her on her knees, tearfully and sincerely praying aloud. I heard her tell God "If our family is not living right, please send someone along to show us what is right!" God began working with my heart!

At this time, unbeknownst to us, the Charlie Cogar family had purchased the land directly across the road from our store, with the intention of building their home there. When they began to occupy the house, the 4 Cogar girls (Sarah, Minnie, Ina, and Nettie) began to come over to the store to purchase candy and bubble gum. At this time, Sarah had recently become sanctified and began to frequently witness to our mother. Sarah invited our family to attend the Christ's Sanctified Holy Church tabernacle at the Five Forks location. My sister Frances and myself began riding to church with the Cogars. Our mother soon wanted to go attend and "see for herself". She got under conviction and was sanctified there! Others from the community came and were sanctified there also! Thomasville was on fire with new converts, and many CSHC families relocated there!

In 1955, my father sold the country store and we moved from Boston back to Thomasville. I learned there was a CSHC congregation in Albany, Georgia and I was invited to visit, since there was a nice group of young people there. God had been working with my heart for about 4 years. I went to the altar in 1957 while visiting in Albany and received forgiveness of my sins. The following night, I was sanctified at 16 years old in the newly built permanent church in Thomasville!

My life, attitude, and behavior changed! My teachers began to ask me what was different about me...I became respectful of them, lost my desire to fight, and straightened up! I began riding to Feast Meetings with CSHC church members, and I became known as "The Boy From Thomasville" since most people didn't know my name. Everyone was kind to me! I had found Jesus, true friends, and a church home at CSHC!

-Brother Charlie Smith

Let me tell you bout my Jesus

Are you past the point of weary?
Is your burden weighin' heavy?
Is it all too much to carry?
Let me tell you 'bout my Jesus
Do you feel that empty feeling?
'Cause shame's done all its stealin'
And you're desperate for some healin'
Let me tell you 'bout my Jesus

Rises up from an empty grave
Ain't no sinner that He can't save
Let me tell you 'bout my Jesus
His love is strong and His grace is free
And the good news is I know that He
Can do for you what He's done for me
Let me tell you 'bout my Jesus
And let my Jesus change your life

-ANNE CLAIRE WILSON / JEFFREY THOMAS PARDO / MATTHEW JOSEPH WEST

"I REMEMBER ALL ABOUT IT"

My heart is privileged to have a personal testimony to report! I can testify and declare to you that I have a personal relationship with God by receiving His forgiveness for my sins and then, receiving the gift of His Holy Spirit within my heart!

My testimony is different; it is unlike my husband's. I was blessed to be born to parents, Ernest and Lillie Porter Cory, who were both sanctified at the time of my birth in 1943. They resided in Jacksonville, Florida where I was born. They relocated to Birmingham, Alabama when I was 3 years old.

I'm as thankful as I know how to be for God placing me in a home where holiness was accepted and lived. But honestly, I don't know if I know how to fully appreciate this. Unlike my husband, Charlie, I have been exposed to holiness and the Holy Scripture all of my 79 years.

From my earliest memory of spirituality and living for God, I knew I wanted to be sanctified. As a young girl about 11 years old, I very distinctly remember kneeling nightly at my bedside, praying and telling God that when I got old enough, I wanted to be sanctified and serve Him.

In October of 1956, my parents were invited by Everett and Effie Beecham to come stay at their home in Decatur, Georgia to attend the Atlanta Feast Meeting. I was 13 years old and by this time, I had 2 brothers: Ernest Bert (Bud) and Timothy Cory. My parents accepted the invitation to come for the Feast Meeting, and our family stayed with daddy's relatives, the Everett Beecham family.

Of course, we all attended the service on Saturday night. Then, we all attended the service on Sunday morning. I was sitting about halfway back on what we sometimes referred to as "the men's side" of the church; there was a very large crowd. When the invitation for prayer was given, my great aunt, Clara Beecham, passed by my bench and said, "Don't you want to go?" and kept on walking. I immediately burst into sobbing. I think I probably stepped on the feet of my benchmates as I quickly stumbled to exit the bench. I headed straight for the altar with no hesitation at all! I hardly remember how I got there, except I remember feeling as if I were "floating" down the aisle to pray. Even though I had tried to be an obedient daughter and live good, I vividly remember the feeling of relief when my sins had been forgiven! It still makes my eyes tear up as I write this when I remember the relief!

My parents had planned to return home to Birmingham after dinner Sunday, but they chose to remain for church Sunday night to give me an opportunity to return to the altar and ask God to place His Holy Spirit within my heart. I have thanked God many times for their wisdom in making that decision. I was sanctified that night, and our family returned home after church. The crowd in Birmingham was small, but there was a large group of young people in Atlanta. God led my parents to relocate to the Decatur area so I would have an opportunity to flourish spiritually. So, within a few short months, and without the promise of a job for daddy, our family moved to Decatur. Our family was happy with the move, and I thrived spiritually as a young person. I have continued to live in the Atlanta area ever since my parents relocated there in early 1957. My life has been happy, and I personally embrace the line of the song that says, "And the way the Lord has led me is a wonder in my eyes".

-Sister Joy Smith

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