Articles by Claude Simms

Claude Simms

First published in Food for the Flock (Food for the Flock, Inc., Ontario, Canada).

KEE Ministry Library · Faithful Men
kee-ministry-library.netlify.app

Years Ago on the Farm (Mar 1968)

From Food for the Flock, Vol. 14 No. 3, Mar 1968.

Those of us who were born before the end of the 19th century and have survived in this “space age” have witnessed tremendous changes. One needs but to think of such things as the automobile, the aeroplane, radio, television and atomic energy to realize that the world we live in now is very different from that of some decades ago. Every area of life has been affected.

But at the moment my thoughts revert to an old farming community. I was born on a farm in 1884, and lived my early life as part of a farm family. Our way of life would be considered primitive, and some of the methods of that day would be thought extremely crude. Some things, however, that happened in my own life at that time have meant a great deal to me ever since. Let me tell you of some of them.

My Father and Mother were both Christians. By that I do not mean merely that they were more or less religious or that they were church members. I mean that they truly owned the Lord Jesus Christ as their Lord and Saviour, and so knew that they were right with God.

My Father died when I was only two years of age, so I do not remember him. Just before he died he said to my Mother: “Be sure that Ida and Claude (My sister and I) meet me in Heaven.” Mother often told us about our dear Father, and never failed to remind us of those parting words of his. And she made it clear to us that if we were to meet our Father in Heaven, we must, each of

us individually, become possessors of God's salvation. This I am happy to say, we both eventually did.

In our early home we were not by any means over-burdened with luxuries, but Mother had an enduring faith in the living God. I well remember how, each night at bed time, she would kneel to pray, with Ida kneeling on one side of her and I on the other. She very simply told the Lord about our needs, and never failed to plead that her children might come to see their need of the Saviour and that they might receive Him and be saved. And I was often forcefully reminded of my Father's dying words, especially when listening to the preaching of the Gospel, or whenever there was mention made of God or of Christ in my hearing.

When I was nine years old my Mother remarried and my sister and I were introduced into a family which included two boys older than I and a girl slightly younger. And now, too, I had a Father, whose interest and care were to mean much to me. At about that time a little Gospel Hall was moved to the corner of my step-father's farm, and it became the practice for evangelists who came to hold meetings to be entertained in our home. The farm house was of the old rambling type, and had plenty of room in it for entertaining guests, and when there was need for transportation there were always the horse and buggy or the team and bob-sleigh.

I continued during my youth to be much concerned about my eternal interests. Preachers who stopped at our home spoke freely of such things. And well do I remember one of them putting up in the dining room a large poster which read: "Friend, you are travelling to eternity — to an everlasting Heaven or to an eternel hell

— WHICH?” Soon quite a few in our community received Christ and were rejoicing in the knowledge that they were saved. Among these were my two stepbrothers, my sister and later my stepsister. I was left alone in the family — the only one not saved! Frequently on Sundays, just before a Gospel meeting, everyone in the family seemed to disappear. They had all retired to their bedrooms to pray, while I wandered about the house almost in desperation. Finally I might go to the barn, only to hear my oldest stepbrother praying aloud in the hayloft! And every morning the family remained together for Bible reading and prayer. In the midst of all this I was made more and more to realize that I was still unsaved—still not right with God —still exposed to judgment and eternal ruin. At a conference in Cleveland which I attended, a preacher, as I left a gospel meeting, laid his hand on my shoulder and said “Claude, I’m afraid you will never be saved!” Needless to say, that remark increased my trouble of soul — and I could not forget it!

Eventually a girl who lived near us was saved. She had been extremely popular. She was a singer, a music teacher, had her own riding horse, and was envied by all the young people of the community. Hearing of this girl’s experience, our family were all interested, and went to her home. The conversation was much enjoyed by all present, except one — and I was that one. Finally the girl arose, went to the piano, and sang in a lovely clear voice:

Come unto Me - it is the Saviour’s voice,

The Lord of Life, who bids thy heart rejoice;

O weary heart, with heavy cares oppressed,

Come unto Me, and I will give you rest!

Such was the impression made upon me that I could hardly keep from weeping, but I did not come to any decision.

Time passed. Soon I was one of a number of older students in our school who passed the “teachers examination.” Then from January to June 1903 I taught in a school about fifteen miles from our home. Returning home each Friday evening I had to walk some distance from the car-stop. Eagerly I watched for the light in the window of our home. When I caught sight of it I was comforted, for it meant that my family were still there — the Lord had not come to take them home to Heaven, leaving me behind!

One night after coming home from a meeting my stepbrother and I were getting ready to retire. Turning to me he said very earnestly “Claude, wouldn’t you like to be saved?” At other times when asked that same question I had maintained a definite silence. But now, feelingly and decidedly, I said “Yes!” My stepbrother reminded me that the preacher was in one of the bedrooms downstairs and suggested that we go to him. I replied “He can’t save me!” (I knew that “slavation is of the Lord!”) However, at my stepbrother’s insistence, I went down with him. The preacher was on his knees, and was praying for me. Rising, he spoke to me, very earnestly. I remember little of what he said, but a verse of Scripture kept going through my mind. It was Romans 5:6: “ … when we were yet without strength, in due time Christ died for the ungodly.” Three expressions in that verse were impressed upon me by the Spirit of God:

1. “When we were yet without strength.” I said to myself “that surely is my case—I have no strength at all to save myself.”

2. “In due time…” These words reminded me of another passage, which read “Now is the accepted time, behold now is the day of salvation” (2 Cor. 6:2). I realized that it must be NOW!

3. “Christ died for the ungodly.” I said “Lord, that’s me!” At once there came to my mind a couplet that I had often heard quoted:

“When I took the place of sinner and at mercy’s footstool lay,

Jesus took His place as Saviour and at once put sin away.”

In a moment I looked in faith to Christ, and simply trusted Him. My burden was gone, and I became a child of God (John 1:12).

As we came out of the bedroom we found the whole family together, waiting to hear what had happened. All knelt together in prayer and praise, and then we sang:

Lord Jesus, my Saviour, how vast thy love to me!

I’ll bathe in its full ocean to all eternity!

And wending on to glory this all my song shall be:

I was a guilty sinner, but Jesus died for me!

Adore Him! Adore Him! the glorious work is done!

The Father will not punish me, ‘twas laid upon His Son!

‘Tis finished’ cried His suffering soul and I my title see,

I was a guilty sinner, but Jesus died for me!

It is more than sixty years since all this happened. Life since then has brought many changes, some of them quite radical, but there has been no change in my wonderful Lord and Saviour, and no change in His saving grace and keeping power. I still rejoice in Him, who is “The same yesterday, and today, and forever.”