

Chapter 2

HEAVEN AND HELL

All of my short life, I had lived very firmly in what I could see, feel, hear, taste and smell.

My life was very physical. I mopped floors, made beds, got into fights, smoked cigarettes and did pretty much whatever I wanted to do.

But now I had changed. I didn't know much about this Jesus; but I knew that He was real and I could already feel the change that He had made in my life. The violent anger that had always boiled just beneath the surface was gone. The hard veneer and rebellious spirit were gone.

After I left the Daughters of Miriam Orphanage and miraculously found Mrs. Kerr, I needed a place to live.

Up until this time, I had never had to find a place to sleep. I would fend for myself in other ways, but I had never been without a place to go home to.

I discovered that I was not the only soul Mrs. Kerr had reached with the Gospel. She had taken the message of the Gospel to her very own brother, Mr. Maurer, and his family. Mrs. Kerr took me to their house and they generously offered to take me in. As soon as I arrived at their big and inviting house, their first order of business was to warm me up.

I had been walking through a tremendous winter storm. My clothes were soaked. My hair was dripping wet. I was incredibly hungry; I had left the orphanage without eating.

When Mrs. Maurer saw me, her face dropped. She rushed into the kitchen and began moving pots and pans around. I couldn't see her; I could only hear the commotion in the kitchen. While Mrs. Kerr explained to Mr. Maurer what had happened with me leaving the orphanage, I listened intently to the goings-on in the kitchen. I heard water running and what sounded like fire from a stove. But my attention was drawn to the home I saw around me. Pretty pictures hung unobtrusively on the walls. The living room

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furniture, that consisted of a couch, a coffee table, an easy chair and a rocking chair, all went together nicely, and formed what seemed to me to be a perfect family of furniture.

The dining room table at which I was sitting appeared to be the most used piece of furniture in the house, as if the family spent a lot of time here, talking, praying and visiting together.

Very quickly, Mrs. Maurer appeared with a bowl of liquid in her hands, steam rising from the bowl through the air.

"Now, eat this slowly, Morris," Mrs. Maurer admonished as she placed the steaming bowl of chicken soup in front of me.

At that moment, I didn't think I had ever seen a more beautiful thing than that bowl of soup. I was suddenly ravenously hungry – I wanted to pick the bowl up and drain it in a few gulps. But I listened to Mrs. Maurer and slowly ate the delicious soup, spoonful by spoonful, savoring the succulent flavor of the broth as it rolled around in my mouth.

The whole time I was eating, Mr. and Mrs. Maurer and Mrs. Kerr went about the business of discussing what to do with this fourteen-year-old boy who had been placed in their care by the hand of God.

I couldn't pay very close attention to them, though. I was exhausted. After I was finished with my soup, I tried to listen closely to their discussion; but it seemed my eyelids betrayed my interest as they kept trying to close. Periodically, I would notice that my eyes were closing and I would snap them open in a hurry, but I was fighting a losing battle.

I had been in an emotional war all day long. First, the beating at the orphanage, then the argument and threat to leave. Then actually leaving, fearing every second that the rabbi would grab me by the shoulder and jerk me into his office. And finally making my way through what amounted to a blizzard in a miraculous experience of which I was still in awe.

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My body was just too tired to continue any more. I wanted nothing more than a good night's sleep.

Sometime during their intense conversation, Mrs. Maurer glanced over and noticed that the object of their concern was trying his very best to keep from nodding off.

Smiling, she directed me to the room where I would stay. It, too, looked perfect. The bed was neatly made. Beside it there was a night stand and a lamp. On the night stand, prominently placed, was a Bible. The last thing I remember from that eventful day was climbing in between two of the softest sheets I had ever felt in my life. "She must iron these sheets," I thought. Then, I fell asleep.

The next few days, I read the Bible every chance I could find.

I no longer had to hide my New Testament under the sheets and wait until after all the boys had fallen asleep to read it. Instead of the little pen flashlight that Mrs. Kerr had given me, I now could simply turn on the lamp beside my bed, or read in the living room by the light of the winter sun.

I began to understand a little bit of how the Israelites must have felt when they were delivered from the bondage in Egypt.

Where before I had to be careful of my every move, making sure the rabbi didn't find out about my new interest in the Messiah; now I could read, pray and meditate on the goodness of Jesus Christ with impunity. I was free! It was as if an incredible weight had fallen off my shoulders. Even the air was easier to breathe, it seemed.

It was an experience that I would never forget. Years later, as I struggled with every bit of my being, to take the Gospel of Jesus Christ into countries where the people were forbidden to even speak His Name, I remembered vividly the struggle of my own exodus from the oppression of not being able to worship Him. My compassion for these

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precious souls was forged through the restrictions I myself had suffered; though in many cases, they could not compare to the oppression many of the world's Christians face daily in their attempts to worship the one true God.

Those who never know bondage can never truly appreciate freedom when they have it.

But I had been oppressed. I had been restrained from worshipping Jesus. I understood the precious value of the freedom that Jesus had brought me to through my exodus from the orphanage. Though, as a fourteen-year-old boy I couldn't yet articulate the value of my deliverance, I somehow had a powerful understanding of just what Jesus had done for me.

Every sight held new meaning for me. Every experience had a new perspective. My small little world had just expanded beyond my wildest imaginations.

The thankfulness I had in my heart has never left.

When Sunday came around, I had no way of knowing, but my life was about to undergo yet another radical change, another transformation deeper into the reality of the New Covenant of which I had been made a partaker.

It started simply enough.

Brother Maurer came up to me and explained to me that it was his family's practice to attend church every Sunday morning and Sunday night.

"Do you want to go with us, Morris?"

He didn't know it, but he didn't even need to ask. I was hungry for knowledge. I was anxious to do anything that would help me to learn more about Jesus and my newfound relationship with Him. My answer was an immediate yes.

I had left the orphanage with only the clothes on my back and they were nothing to brag about. I had to depend on the Maurers, who generously provided me with clothes to wear;

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a suit nicer than I had ever worn, with a nice pair of freshly polished shoes.

I was so excited to experience anything I could that had to do with Jesus. I could hardly wait to get in the church – though I had never attended one before. My previous experience was centered on the synagogue which was nothing like a church, I was soon to find out.

As we approached the Bethany Assembly of God on Broadway in Patterson, New Jersey, I could hardly believe my eyes.

The building was enormous.

Bethany Assembly had been built to seat a thousand people. In those days, that was a huge church. I was awestruck.

The church had recently been bought by the Assemblies of God from a Presbyterian congregation at a cost of one million dollars. This was in about 1946, when a car sold for only a few hundred dollars. One stained glass window in this enormous church was worth more than \$30,000. Everything about the church spoke of fine workmanship and great care taken in craftsmanship.

I was very impressed.

But that impression was not to last long.

Mr. Maurer led the way into the church through the oak doors in the front. As we passed through the foyer, it seemed like a busy day at Grand Central Station. People were everywhere. Mr. Maurer began to head down toward the front of the church in the main auditorium.

I couldn't believe my eyes. Even the rows of pews impressed me. It seemed they stretched on forever, row after row after row of pews. Where would they find enough people to sit in so many seats?

I began to get nervous as Mr. Maurer continued toward the front of the church. He kept going and going.

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“Is he going to get up on the platform?” I wondered to myself.

My heart was pounding. I was ready to go to church, but I had not been prepared to be on a platform in front of so many people.

Each time we passed a row of pews, I would secretly wish, “Let this be the one we sit in.” But it seemed every time, we would keep on walking, closer and closer to the front.

Just as I was about to tug on Mr. Maurer’s sleeve and ask him to stop, he stopped and moved into one of the rows of pews.

I don’t know if I made an audible noise, but I know I was tremendously relieved. Apparently, Mr. Maurer had a favorite place that he was accustomed to sitting near the front of the church, and we had finally arrived at it. It was so close to the front of the church that I felt I could probably reach out and touch the platform from my seat.

I sat in the pew with the Maurer family and began craning my neck around, watching what seemed to me to be an immense crowd of people as they filed into the building, all dressed in their Sunday best.

Men were wearing suit coats and colorful ties, covered with dark trench coats and topped with hats, which they all promptly removed as they entered the sanctuary. Again, this was different from the synagogue, where it was customary to don a yarmulke upon entrance.

All the women were smartly dressed in long dresses, and most wore gloves. Many of the children were dressed just like their parents, the little boys wearing miniature versions of their dads’ suits and the little girls wearing tiny copies of their mothers’ dresses.

Another thing I noticed immediately was that everyone seemed to have a Bible tucked under their arm. Even the

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children had tiny little New Testaments clutched in their chubby little hands.

This, too, was a change from the synagogue in which I had been raised. In the synagogue, the Torah was stored in a special cabinet designed specifically for it. It was usually written on real lambskin, and rolled up as a scroll on two ornate spools.

It was a very solemn occasion when someone would take the Torah out of its cabinet and prepare it to be read.

The person who was to carry the Torah had to pray special prayers and sing special songs; he had to be specially prepared, and he had to be Bar Mitzvah.

But here, every person carried their own Bible. Every person was able to open it at any time and read every word – in English.

It wasn't until several years later that I was able to articulate the significance of the difference I observed that very first time that I went to a church: Jesus had come to give the Word to EVERYONE, who could access it at any time and ponder the truth therein!

My thoughts were interrupted by the vibrato hum of the church's organ as everyone seemed to take their seats at the same time and begin to sing from the church's hymnal.

The pastor was an Englishman, the Rev. David Leigh. He was not prone to displays of emotionalism. By all accounts, he was a very dignified man who preached in measured tones, rarely descending into emotionalism, but this Sunday, he would be different. Only a few minutes after the service had started, a tremendous move of the Spirit of God began to sweep through the sanctuary.

Somewhere toward the back of the congregation, a man lifted his hands and shouted "Hallelujah!"

I just about jumped completely out of my seat.

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I whirled around in my seat to see who was causing all the commotion. I thought this might be some kind of isolated outburst. The man hadn't stopped his ruckus, though. In fact, other people began doing the same thing.

"What have I gotten myself into?" I thought. I had never in my wildest dreams thought that something like this was going to happen. Not only had these people begun making noise, but it had begun to spread throughout the sanctuary.

People all over the place were shouting and raising their hands to God.

I nervously glanced over at Mr. Maurer. Beads of sweat were running down his forehead.

The poor man was sweating for more reasons than one.

I found out later that he was praying to God that the church wouldn't be wild that day so that it wouldn't spook me.

But God had other plans.

If I thought the service would calm down after the congregation was done singing, I had another thing coming.

Brother Leigh, normally serene and collected, made his way to the pulpit and the service became wilder.

As he preached, his voice rose and fell like the mountains and valleys of the Himalayas. He paced back and forth on the church's huge platform like a caged tiger eyeing his next meal.

Periodically, he would stop at the pulpit for a few seconds and give it a good whack with the palm of his hand before springing off in another direction, preaching ever louder through the service.

I had never seen a rabbi behave this way. They were always calm and dispassionate, delivering their messages and prayers in a practiced, measured tone.

But this preacher was on fire!

His words weren't just loud, they were laced with the conviction of a man who knows that what he's saying is the

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absolute truth. The power of his delivery did nothing to diminish the bullseye aim of his message – a message clearly flowing directly from heaven.

I was amazed at his athleticism. A professional athlete couldn't have performed with this much energy for so long, but the preacher continued to pace and speak, as the sweat was pouring down his face and saturating his shirt. The congregation seemed to hang on every word. As if choreographed, they would shout "amen" and "preach it" when the preacher delivered a particularly powerful point.

Though I squirmed a bit at the beginning of this man of God's message, within a few minutes I, too, was hanging on every word. I didn't shout "amen" with the rest of the congregation, but somewhere deep inside, I wanted to. I could understand their enthusiasm.

Finally, the service neared an end.

It was the custom, in that church, that at the end of the service, the congregation would be dismissed with prayer and the pastor would make his way toward the back of the sanctuary, where he would shake hands with everyone as they left.

But this morning, the pastor changed the routine. He called everyone down to the altar at the front of the church for prayer.

It seemed like the ocean at high tide as people from all over the congregation began edging their way out of their pews and heading toward the front of the sanctuary as the organ hummed in the background.

I had no way of knowing it at the time, but my presence in the church was responsible for some of the excitement. Apparently, the church had been praying corporately for God to save my soul and bring me out of the orphanage. When the congregation saw me walk into the church with

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Mrs. Kerr and Mr. Maurer, they began rejoicing at the answer to their prayers.

I looked at Mr. Maurer, sweat still beading on his face a little more heavily now.

“Do you want to go to the altar, Morris?” Mr. Maurer asked me.

“Go to the altar?” I thought. I looked at the altar, and then I looked back at Mr. Maurer. We couldn’t have been more than 15 feet from it anyway. “I’ve come this far, a few more rows surely cannot hurt me.”

I timidly stepped forward, made my way through the people who already were at the front of the church and knelt down at the altar to pray.

To tell the truth, I did more looking around than praying.

I had placed my hands over my eyes, but I had separated my fingers just enough to sneak a glimpse through them.

I would periodically close my eyes and pray; but more often than not, I peeked through my fingers and watched the people around me pray. Just as everything else this Sunday morning, the congregation’s prayers were completely new to me.

Many people prayed out loud – VERY loud. I was accustomed to a very quiet volume in prayer. Some rocked back and forth. Some raised their hands.

And many of the people had tears streaming down their cheeks as they made their petitions to God, hands stretched toward heaven, lips rapidly moving in words I could not distinguish because of the noise of so many gathered people all praying at once.

I had never witnessed anything like the service that morning. Mr. Maurer must have been walking on pins and needles, wondering how I was going to take what many people of the day doubtlessly called fanaticism.

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But I didn't regard what was happening as fanaticism or as emotionalism. It was unusual to me, but instead of being put off by the commotion, I was made hungrier.

The people in this congregation seemed to be reaching out to a God they knew would answer their petitions. They were praising a God they knew would hear and appreciate their worship. They were speaking prayers of adoration to a God they knew had delivered them from the bondage of sin. I wanted what they had.

After the service, I thought of all the men of God I had learned about in Hebrew school who had spontaneously burst into worship of God: Abraham, Isaac, Moses, Joshua, Gideon, and Samuel. David had even worshiped God so hard that some of his clothes had fallen off by the sheer force of his dancing.

Though it was strange to see in person, I innately understood that the display I had witnessed that morning was simply a manifestation of people who were deeply and fundamentally changed by God, and they were expressing their thanks to Him in the only way they knew how.

I wanted what they had. I wanted to worship God with the freedom they displayed.

Just a few nights earlier, I had been reflecting on the freedom I felt in being delivered from the orphanage, in being able to worship Jesus without worrying about repercussions; but this Sunday morning service demonstrated to me that I could be even more free than I currently was in worshipping Him. There was something deeper that these people had and I wanted it.

I could hardly wait to return to the church Sunday night.

My soul longed to reach closer to Jesus, to dive into whatever He had for me. I wanted to get what the people in the congregation had. I wanted everything my new Lord had for me.

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That night, I was no longer worried as Mr. Maurer and I approached the front of the sanctuary.

During the song service, I didn't turn around when people started shouting and praising. During the preaching, I concentrated on the message, not on how the preacher was delivering it. I was focused. I knew within myself that tonight was a turning point in my life; a point where I would leave much different from the way I had come. I didn't understand how, but I knew something was coming.

When the altar call came, no one had to ask me if I wanted to go.

I was the first person to jump out of my seat and make my way to the altar. I immediately knelt down and lifted my hands, tears streaming down my cheeks, praising God for delivering me, for revealing to me that Jesus is the Messiah!

I began to praise and worship God for removing the scales from my eyes, for allowing me to see clearly what so many other Jewish people still could not: that Jesus is the Son of God.

As I worshiped, the entire world seemed to disappear from my attention. My ears no longer heard the music and my eyes were squeezed tightly shut. All my attention and focus were on my Messiah.

I praised God like that for about ten minutes, then my life was changed forever.

In the midst of praising God, I felt something like a hand on my forehead. With that touch, my entire body just gave out from underneath me.

I fell to the floor. No human had touched me; I was touched by the very hand of God.

I knew I was on the floor, but I couldn't do anything about it. I was embarrassed. I had no idea that this sort of thing happened all the time in some churches. All I knew was that I was on the floor, and I had never seen anything like that happen to anyone else.

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I tried to get up, but I couldn't. All I could do was praise God. More and more praise flowed from my lips. Bit by bit, I became enveloped again in worshiping God and forgot completely that I was on the floor as the world disappeared once again and my focus returned to the Prince of Peace.

Gradually, I began to see a vision of the sky.

I had never seen the sky look so beautiful, though. The blue was brilliant and resplendent, deeper and more clear than I had ever seen it. The clouds were the purest white I had ever seen – it seemed as if they were tiny puffs of cotton gently floating on the most brilliant blue lake.

Within a short time, beads of water began to form in the sky, and as they gathered more mass of completely transparent water, they would drop. Each drop had a word written across it in a language I had never seen before and that I couldn't understand.

As each drop came closer to me, it engulfed my entire body, my whole being, like being completely immersed in a warm, relaxing pool.

About ten minutes later, I was speaking in unknown heavenly tongues, praising God. God was baptizing me with the Holy Spirit, though I didn't know that terminology at the time.

I didn't understand what was happening to me at the time; all I knew was that God was answering my heart's cry. All I wanted was to know more of God, to wrap myself up in Him. All I wanted was to live my entire life in Him. I knew that whatever this was that was happening to me was God answering my heart's cry. As each drop of water enveloped my being, it seemed I was overtaken with a wave of holiness – with a massive overwhelming tide of the very Presence of God that ebbed and flowed in increasingly intense pulses of power.

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Later, I remembered Acts, chapter 2, where the apostles had spoken with unknown tongues after they had been baptized with the Holy Spirit.

I stayed on the floor at the altar a very long time. All I could do – was to praise God. I didn't want to leave. By the time we made our way back to the Maurers' house, it was one o'clock in the morning, and I was still speaking in tongues, magnifying God, still basking in the waves of God's glory that had been enveloping my body for hours at the altar.

When we got to the Maurers' home, we all intuitively knew that God was not done.

The Maurers had not yet been fully committed to the Pentecostal experience. They had not yet decided if it was for them. They had been "dabbling" in Pentecostalism, according to their words, but they had not yet made the commitment to involve themselves in it and receive the Baptism of the Holy Ghost – they were Baptists.

But when we got to their home, they and Mrs. Kerr all realized what a tremendous work God had just done in me, and they all fell to their knees to receive the Baptism in the Holy Spirit as God moved in another tremendous demonstration of power, baptizing each one of them tremendously in the Holy Spirit.

That night, a few hours after we got home, the Spirit of God moved on me again and I began speaking in tongues.

As I spoke in the heavenly language, I began to understand the words that otherwise would have sounded like gibberish. I didn't quite understand what was happening. I knew that I wasn't speaking in English; but just the same, I knew what it was I was saying. After some prompting by the Holy Spirit, I began to offer interpretations in English of the tongues I was speaking.

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I was astounded. Nothing like this had ever happened to me before. I had read in I Corinthians where Paul encouraged the Christians to pray for interpretations of tongues, but I had never seen or heard anyone actually do it. I was simply obeying what God led me to do. Judging from the expressions on their faces, Mr. and Mrs. Maurer and Mrs. Kerr were astounded too – their faces literally shone with amazement. But God was not done yet. A few minutes later, following the same prompting by the Holy Spirit, I began to prophesy. God spoke through me that He had called me to do a special work.

I had no idea what God meant by a “special work,” but I knew something revolutionary had taken place.

In the course of a few short hours, God had moved in such a tremendous way that I had received the Baptism of the Holy Spirit, spoken with unknown tongues in a heavenly prayer language, interpreted unknown tongues and prophesied in the Spirit of God.

I knew that I had participated in an experience the saints of the Old Testament had dreamed about, had prayed for, and had died awaiting.

I knew that God had bestowed on me a tremendous gift, that could not be ignored or shut up.

I didn't know exactly what God intended, but I had a sense within myself that what I had experienced that night was not ordinary. I knew God had pulled out all the stops for a reason – I didn't yet understand.

Much as my statement to Rabbi Gold that “It's real, and you can't take it away from me,” I knew that what I had just experienced would be with me forever, that God had separated me for a special reason. I knew that God had powerfully answered my heart's cry to know Him deeper.

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But, as He would tell me thirteen years later on a platform in the Philippines in front of 30,000 people, I hadn't seen anything yet.

The Vision

Almost immediately, God began to thrust me into the ministry, though I didn't know it at the time. I have often wondered, "Why me, God?"

I was just a Jewish orphan boy who had run away from his orphanage. I had no special training to minister. I had never been interested in ministering. I was the last person anyone would pick if they were choosing someone to share the message of the Gospel of Jesus Christ. But as I questioned why God would use me to deliver the message of the Gospel, a passage of Scripture would always come to mind:

"But God hath chosen the foolish things of the world to confound the wise; and God hath chosen the weak things of the world to confound the things which are mighty; And base things of the world, and things which are despised, hath God chosen, yea, and things which are not, to bring to nought things that are, That no flesh should glory in his presence" (I Corinthians 1:27-29).

I had not been to any Bible school. I had not learned the fundamentals of homiletics or of composing a three-point sermon. I never learned that the preacher should use humorous anecdotes to bring the sermon home to his congregation.

And though those things are all fine, God had chosen another way for me. He had begun with a shapeless lump of clay and started shaping and molding it into a minister – though I didn't know it, and probably would have resisted if I had known that was what was happening.

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Nevertheless, by the time I was fifteen, God was using me to preach or witness or testify an average of three to four times a week. I had preached in churches of all denominations and had seen many people saved by the power of God.

I never knew what to say when God would call upon me to minister. I would stand in front of a crowd of people who all seemed older than I and who all had certainly been in church longer than I had; and I knew within myself that if God didn't speak through me, there would be no speaking at all – I had no reserve of predigested sermons, and no years of ministerial experience to fall back on. I was literally an empty vessel waiting for the Lord to flow through me – and if He hadn't, the services simply would have been without preaching.

But God always came through, and His power began leading many people to the Lord through this little Jewish orphan boy who had surrendered his life to the Messiah.

I had stood in front of congregations of hundreds at a time. Me! Only fifteen years of age! A nobody, by my estimation. You can probably imagine my trepidation the first time I got up on a platform and saw several hundred eyes peering out from the congregation at me. In those days, I was what the old-timers would probably call a whippersnapper. What could people who had been in church for fifty years possibly hope to learn from a fifteen-year-old boy? But God knew what He was doing.

My goal was never to be a minister.

I wanted to be a lawyer. I wanted to serve Christ by being an advocate for Christian people, by giving Christians an honest attorney who would honestly represent them as an advocate before the judge.

I had read many stories and had witnessed lawyers firsthand. I was in enough trouble as a youngster to

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understand that a lawyer could be your best friend or your worst enemy.

When a lawyer is prosecuting you, his attacks know no bounds. Nothing is sacred. He can attack your character, your past, your family, your friends, your actions, even your attitude. There is nothing quite as intimidating as facing a very talented lawyer whose single goal is to see you put behind bars or to see you lose a judgment.

Conversely, though, I also knew that a talented defense lawyer could bring immense relief and provide protection from the barbs of a vicious prosecutor. When the prosecutor's accusations stray out of bounds, a good defense lawyer will stand up and shout, "I object!"

When his grounds are justified (and a good lawyer's grounds almost always are), the judge will agree with him and rein in the prosecutor.

When someone is in court facing the accusations of a zealous prosecutor, he can have no better friend or advocate than a good defense lawyer.

I wanted to be that kind of friend, that kind of advocate. Not only as a defense lawyer, but as a lawyer to represent Christian people in all legal matters. I wanted to be a shield against those who would seek to take advantage of Christians, knowing that Christians by nature wouldn't put up too much of a fight even if they knew they were getting the shaft.

I had always been scrappy, so I figured a career in law would fit my personality just right – I would fight now, however, for the rights of those I represented. Instead of using my fists, I would use the brain that God had given me.

But God continued to stir up a fervor in me, a desire to reach out to those who had not known the Jesus who had set me free – a hunger to lead more souls into the exodus I had experienced.

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My goal was to practice law, then to become the governor of my state, New Jersey; but God seemed to be developing other plans in my life.

Each time I preached, the results were tremendous; with God reaching into the souls of the listeners, reaching beyond the day-to-day religion they had become accustomed to and pulling the strings of their very hearts. Salvation and other miracles seemed to flow like a mighty river.

One of my most vivid memories of those early days was when I preached in a Baptist church in Nutley, New Jersey.

I had no way of knowing the spiritual condition of the people at that church. By all appearances, the congregation was just like any other congregation – completely committed to God. In my six short months out of the orphanage, I had met many Baptists who were wholly wrapped up in God and completely committed to serving Him; and I had no reason to think that this congregation was any different.

But as I stood up on the platform (again, I wouldn't have had anything to say if God had not moved) God began moving through me to preach a salvation message.

"Someone must have brought some unsaved loved ones," I thought to myself as I continued to preach the message that God had given to me. As I preached, every eye in the congregation was trained on me. They watched my every movement and seemed to listen intently to every word.

As I began to drive the message home, it seemed most of the people in the church began leaning forward in their seats.

"Many will say to me in that day, Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in thy name? and in thy name have cast out devils? and in thy name done many wonderful works? And then will I profess unto them, I never knew you: depart from me, ye that work iniquity." (Matthew 7:22-23)

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I could see tears welling up in many of the congregation members' eyes. I could see husbands looking at their wives, children looking at their parents as if seeking confirmation for what they were feeling in their hearts.

As I closed the sermon, people began weeping openly. As I called the congregation to come to the front to pray and receive Jesus as their Lord, I expected a few people to come to the front of their own volition. I expected that maybe one or more people would coax a relative nearby to come to the altar to receive Christ.

But what I saw completely amazed me.

By the time God was done in that church, the pastor, his wife and thirty-five of his congregation members had come to the altar to be born again by the power of God.

I was shocked. I knew right then an important truth that would stick by me until this very day: *"...no man can come unto me, except it were given unto him of my Father"* (John 6:65).

If God could use an uneducated, brand-new believer to lead people of this caliber to Himself, it was certain and undebatable that no man could accomplish anything for God on his own.

God revealed to me then (although not in these exact words): *"This is not the work of a man, but the work of the Holy Spirit."*

Appearances almost never tell the whole story. In almost any church, large numbers of people may not even know Jesus; but oftentimes, preachers assume everyone is saved so they don't reach out to those souls. I was so young and inexperienced that God was able to reach those people through the simplicity of my child-like delivery and willingness to do whatever He said.

It seemed as if every time I preached, when I gave the altar call for people to meet my Messiah, tears would stream

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down my cheeks as I wept for a tremendous harvest of souls. I couldn't help thinking of Jesus' indictment of the workers:

"The harvest truly is plenteous, but the labourers are few." (Matthew 9:37)

I wept for those souls who weren't being reached. It seemed my singular goal in life was to reach out to lost and dying souls. I would have rather ministered the Gospel than to eat or sleep. It consumed my every thought. Every day, I was thinking of new ways I could spread the good news that had brought me freedom and had introduced me to the Messiah.

But still I resisted the call of God that gently tugged on my heart, calling me to surrender to His will for my life: preaching.

I had only been out of the orphanage for six months; but already, God was dealing with me in a tremendous way.

I was in prayer one day at Bethany Assembly of God, when I felt God's hand on my forehead again. I have only felt that hand twice in my life; once when I was baptized in the Holy Spirit and, again, this time in prayer.

I had never seen a vision up to that point. I had heard about them, and understood that they happened frequently in the Bible, but I didn't even have any idea what a vision would be like.

In today's world of televisions in every room of the house and instant access to the Internet, it's not hard for many people to imagine what a vision from God might be like. They've had years of movies produced with multi-millions of dollars by imaginative and creative Hollywood directors to shape and mold their idea of what visions and dreams should look like.

I had no such background to shape my perception. Sure, I had seen a movie or two, but I had no indication at all of

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what a vision from God was supposed to look like. I really didn't give it much thought, either, until this day.

As I felt the hand on my forehead, I again was slain in the Spirit, lying prostrate on the floor.

At first, nothing else happened. I was simply lying on the floor before God for what seemed to be quite a long time.

After a while, a vision began to unfold and assemble itself before my very eyes, as pieces of a puzzle that are miraculously putting themselves together to form a whole.

As the vision assembled, from one end of my field of vision to the other, I saw a beautiful blue sky.

This was not a normal-looking sky, however. Normally, as you look to the sky and the horizon, the sky fades from a darker blue at the top to a lighter blue the closer you get to the horizon. It's a natural result of your vision and the angles at which light is hitting the earth's atmosphere.

But the sky I saw was all one shade of blue. It was completely blue and the deepest, most beautiful blue I had ever seen – it immediately had the feel of something supernatural. No natural sky could ever look so incredible.

I became very nervous and confused. I didn't know what to think of what was going on.

Was I in heaven?

Had I died, and was this what happened before I was taken to heaven?

Was this the Second Coming I had been reading about? Would I soon see Christ come through the sky, and rise up to meet with Him in the air?

My heart was pounding.

But as these and a thousand other thoughts raced through my mind, I knew they could not be what was happening. I knew within myself that I was lying on the floor of Bethany Assembly of God, not up in the air or dead.

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I was startled out of my wondering by a flash that brought an image of a multitude of people, all seated in concentric rows, radiating outward from my position as far as the eye could see, people upon people. They flashed before my eyes, one at a time in rapid succession.

Even more amazing, right in the front row, I saw myself sitting with the rest of the multitude of people.

When I saw myself, my brain completely lost contact with my body. I no longer was aware that I was lying on the floor at Bethany Assembly. I no longer felt the church's carpet against the back of my neck. I no longer felt the sweat that was beading down my forehead. I no longer felt the gentle pinching of my sock against my calf. I no longer heard my breathing or felt the breath.

My spirit had been lifted from the earth and taken into the heavens.

The sensation was as if I had looked into a mirror, and had been sucked into the mirror to become part of the scene I had just seen.

My entire spirit was vibrating with pulses of excitement and awe.

I could hardly believe my eyes, as before me and the incredible crowd of people, the Godhead was manifested.

I saw a flaming ball of brightness and glory, about as tall as a man and about two feet wide. I don't know how I knew that this flaming ball represented the glory of God – I just knew. There were no human-like features to it at all. It had no mouth, no hands, no legs, no nose and no eyes.

I began to shake and tremble, just as the people around me did, in the Presence of the holiness of God.

To this point, the entire vision had been silent – the tremendous, holy Presence of God commanded reverent silence.

The Presence of God was brighter than anything I had ever seen. It was ten thousand times brighter than the sun in

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its radiance. But this incredible, resplendent, brilliant light – as bright as it was – did not hurt my eyes at all. I could look directly at it, and understanding that it was so bright it could leave me blind, but I had no worry at all; I knew the light of God would not damage my eyes.

The color was a color I had never seen. It was both a warm and cool color at the same time. It was simply the crystallization of the glory of God. Through the years, I have tried to describe this Presence of God, and I have never been able to – my human words have no way of expressing what I saw. The best I can say is that it was the radiant glory of God, and it illuminated the entire sky and shone everywhere.

While I was sitting in awe of this magnificent glory I was seeing, I lost track of time. I don't know how long I had been there when a tremendous beam of light began to emanate from the right side of the glory of God, much as a person would stretch forth their arm in front of their body.

The light headed toward me as I sat there. I could see that this ray of light was filled with glory. The beam struck my body; and immediately, I was paralyzed by its glory. Every muscle in my entire body seemed to yield. Before I knew what was going on, I was standing.

My mind hadn't told my body to stand up. As far as I know, my leg muscles hadn't moved to lift my body. None of my muscles seemed to be working. I simply found myself standing, without having gone through the action of standing up from my sitting position.

My legs began moving, and I began walking toward the light.

I cannot adequately describe the emotions I felt at that time.

I felt completely humble as one cannot feel until he finds himself in the Presence of Almighty God. Suddenly

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everything about me was wholly overshadowed by the presence of the One I was approaching. Everything about Him seemed so much higher, so much cleaner, so much holier, that I could do nothing but reflect in myself that God is indeed holy – I had a brand-new understanding of that word, “holy.” I understood that even the presence of shoes on top of ground that holiness is standing on is an affront to the holiness.

I suddenly knew how Moses must have felt when God, in the bush that was burning but was not consumed, commanded him to take his shoes off because he was on holy ground.

How could something made by man, like shoes, even dare to appear in the presence of a God whose creative power was so much higher? His holiness demanded that the feet He had created walk the ground in His presence.

My body was still walking me toward the presence of God – the presence of the triune Godhead; the Father, the Son and the Holy Ghost.

I walked until I stood about an arm’s length from the Presence of God – this brilliant light that outshone the sun in its radiance. Everything was still silent.

Every fiber of my being was in complete ecstasy. Every cell, every molecule, every atom seemed to be rejoicing to be standing in the Presence of the holy Creator of all things. I felt completely and utterly full of the glory of God. I could not imagine ever receiving any more and living to tell about it. My entire being was on fire with the glory of the living God. I was completely overwhelmed.

Just then, the Presence of God that had been no more than an arm’s length away from me moved about a foot away from Its previous location, a foot further away from me.

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I had just been reflecting on the tremendous blessing that God had drawn me so close to His Presence. I was just rejoicing in the nearness I felt to God, but now He had moved away. I could not understand why He would draw me so close to only move away from me.

But I didn't have very much time to dwell on my disappointment that He had moved away.

My eyes were drawn to where the Presence of God had been standing.

Where He had moved away, there were two footprints. It looked just as if someone had cut two footprint-shaped holes in a giant cheesecake upon which I was standing.

I looked through those footprints, and what I saw changed the course of my life forever.

As I looked through those footprints, I saw the very flames of hell licking upward toward where I was. It is surely one of the most unusual things anyone could ever experience to be standing in the holy Presence of the living God and to be looking at the same time into the pit of hell.

I had never imagined that such torment could exist.

The flesh of the people seemed to be on fire, but they were not burned up. They were continually scorched by the red-hot flames, but they were never consumed.

There seemed to be no relief. No matter where the people were, the flames seemed to burn them equally. Every inch of every person's body was engulfed in the flames continually.

The horror in their eyes was uniform in every person I saw. They were the eyes of people who knew there was no escape from the utter damnation they were experiencing; people who knew they would never have relief, never again have a moment's peace from a pain more intense than any they had felt when they were alive.

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The pit seemed to go on forever, lined with people who were tormented by the flames.

As they were burned, the multitude – I could see thousands upon thousands of people – were screaming out for mercy. Children were crying out to their parents saying that they would obey now if they could only have a second chance.

Others were crying out, hoping futilely that the prayers of their loved ones would rescue them.

Backsliders were crying out for another chance to serve God.

Adulterers were crying out that they would now be faithful.

Fathers were screaming that they would raise their children right, in the knowledge of the Lord.

Ministers were crying out that they would preach the Gospel now if they could only have a chance.

Some were screaming at others, asking why they had not told them of the Gospel and salvation.

Others were just screaming. Screaming in pain and horror. Screaming in sadness and grief. I had seen people grieving at funerals before, but the people above the ground were not grieving even the tiniest percentage as much as these people who were below it, their flesh constantly torched with undying flame.

Many people were screaming through clenched teeth as they gnashed them together against the pain, to no avail. In this pit, there was no death to end the pain, no morning sunrise to end the nightmare, no water to quench the fire.

Through all the cries, the same voice was heard: anguish. All were reaching their hands upward, seeking someone to come and pull them out of the flames.

But no one answered their cries.

My heart was moved with compassion beyond anything I have ever felt. How would people be saved from such a

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tremendously hideous fate if no one would tell them of the saving love of Jesus?

It was then that the scripture came to life to me: *“How then shall they call on him in whom they have not believed? and how shall they believe in him of whom they have not heard? and how shall they hear without a preacher?”* (Romans 10:14)

I was presented with a choice.

I could serve as a friend and advocate for people as a Christian lawyer, representing them in temporal matters before earthly judges and eventually as the governor of New Jersey.

Or I could serve as the messenger for the true Advocate, Jesus Christ, Who came to represent them in eternal matters before the Judge of all things.

My reaction was instantaneous. When God had presented me with this tremendous vision of the ultimate end of sinners, I did not hesitate. I knew what I had to do.

I stepped over and put my feet in the footprints that the Presence of God had left when He stepped away.

To my complete astonishment, my feet fit the footprints perfectly.

I realized that God had called me to this vision for a specific purpose, to *“... make up the hedge, and stand in the gap...”* (Ezekiel 22:30).

God had called me to surrender completely to His will, to dedicate my life to fulfilling the purpose for which He had called me. As a result, my life – dedicated to and directed by Him – would make a difference for thousands and thousands of souls who otherwise may never walk through the gates of glory.

But how could I, a fifteen-year-old Jewish orphan boy, hope to reach so many people?

How would I possibly make a difference in their lives? I had no formal training, I didn't understand why God would

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want me. I began to get nervous and fear that I would be inadequate for the task God had called me to do.

No sooner had I made the decision to surrender than I felt a warmth all over my body. I turned around, and the Presence of God was right next to me, right by my side; I had moved closer when I had stepped in His footprints.

The ray that had emanated from the Presence of God and drawn me to Him was now engulfing me, glowing all around my shoulders.

Immediately, all my fear and nervousness fell away. I felt strength flow into my body. I felt power from God strengthen me completely.

Until this point, the brilliant light that was the Presence of God had spoken nothing.

But now, the voice of a man, kind, gentle, young and full of gentle authority, spoke from the light. It was a voice that sent waves of glory all over my body. It was the richest, most comforting voice I had ever heard. The words were not in English – they were in a language I had never heard, but I understood them in English:

“My son, arise, shine, for thy light is come and the glory of the Lord is risen upon thee. Thou shalt not be afraid, for thou shalt not stand in thine own strength; neither shall thou stand in thine own place, but you shall stand in the place I have made for thee and My strength shall uphold and guard thee.”

Then with a tremendously powerful force, the glorious Presence of God began to shoot forth rays of bright light and glory over the heads of the sea of humanity that were gathered.

Once again, He spoke to me: “When you see My Glory in the midst of My people, know then that I am there in the midst to bless you as you minister to My people.”

And then, as suddenly as it had started, the vision was over.

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I again was lying on the floor of Bethany Assembly of God. I began to praise God for the call He had just demonstrated so powerfully in my life.

From that point forward, my life changed. Though I had been preaching before this vision, I had never preached like I soon would.

From that point forward, my life was dedicated to keeping more souls from entering that fiery, eternal grave.

The vision remained vivid in my memory; and every day, it drove me to reach out more fervently to the souls who were crying for help all over the world.

But I hadn't seen anything yet.