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A WORD OF WARNING ON DIVORCE-MARRIAGE
By Jerry Miles Humphrey

Gospel Words and Music
P. O. Box 4703
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Publisher's Note About J. M. Humphrey

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ABOUT THIS DIGITAL EDITION

I have taken the liberty to give titles to the chapters of this booklet, though no such titles appeared in the printed edition. I leave it up to the reader to decide whether or not I have given appropriate titles to the chapters. I have also installed a Table Of Contents that was not in the hard copy edition. The "Publisher's Note About J. M. Humphrey" is from a later reprint of this publication published by Don Hughes, and printed by "The Religious Press, Independence, Kansas." No publication date accompanied the reprint and there was no copyright. -- DVM

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PREFACE

To the Christian world at large: I, your unworthy brother and fellow traveler to the bar of God, feel myself indebted to give these words of warning before I go the way of all the earth that other souls may read and take heed, and not be snared by the devil, as I was, in this, his most subtle snare, -- viz.: "Divorce Marriages."

My object in this little pamphlet is not to argue or contend with anyone on the subject, but simply relate my own experience. First as one who believed that there were no grounds for divorce marriages whatever. Second: as one who was persuaded to believe there was one ground -- viz.: Matt. 19:9, and was led to renounce my former convictions and take a second wife, while the first one lived.

My next object is to give a little running comment on the passages of Scripture treating on this subject, and then leave every honest reader, who wishes to take the clearest track to eternity to decide for themselves.

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01 -- MY PERSONAL EXPERIENCE INVOLVING REMARRIAGE AFTER DIVORCE

I was born June 30th, 1872, a few miles south of Memphis, Tenn., and spent the earlier part of my life in and about that section. At the age of nineteen I was married to a young lady of seventeen. She was then an excellent girl. About four years later we moved to Chicago, Ill., where we were both converted and sanctified, and lived a happy Christian life for some time. But as time passed my wife grew cold and indifferent, and finally renounced all religious scruples, and went into open sin and uncleanness to such an extent that I was forced to "put her away," according to Matt. 5:32. However I remained unmarried, having been instructed by the Bible and my religious teachers that there were Bible grounds to put away the unclean party, but none whatever to remarry while she lived. So I believed and taught this for years, from the pulpit and through the press. But later on I read more largely on the subject and met many holy, devout men, as I went forth in the evangelistic work, who were more experienced both in Word and ministry, than I, and who believed there were Bible grounds for the innocent party to remarry under my circumstances, taking Matt. 19:9 for their authority. Also I saw in the discipline of all orthodox churches that they recognized the one ground, viz., Matt. 19:9.

So as I did not hold myself as any criterion, after weighing the matter in these different scales, I finally concluded that I was wrong, and my views on the subject were non-scriptural. So I publicly confessed my mistake, and accepted the general view of the Christian world -- viz., one ground for the innocent party to remarry. Matt. 19:9. So as I was the innocent party, after living a single life for seven years, I felt as clear as heaven to take a second wife -- basing my foundation on Matt. 19:9. However, some of my friends advised me differently; but their advice came too late. But the very next day after the ceremony was performed, I felt strangely. I did not feel that sky-blue clearness. I felt a little smitten in spirit. However, I would not allow myself to feel under condemnation, for I had (as I thought) the Bible on my side. Hence, I concluded that it was only the

enemy trying to torment me. However, the Lord was very tender and patient with me, and would bless and pour out His Spirit upon me, knowing I was ignorant of my mistake.

But as time passed by, this annoyance became a constant thing; so I would set myself apart for a few days of prayer and fasting; at which time my sky would clear up as bright as noon, and all was well; but when I would resume the former routine of life, things would darken up again. So this continued for about five months, in this alternate way. However, I was as honest as an angel in the matter, believing I had God's highest approval in the step I had taken. But after the first five months of our married life, the thing became a real doubt; so I resolved to set myself apart by prayer and as much fasting as I deemed prudent, for I wanted to know from God.

First: if I had really made a mistake, -- and if there were really no grounds for divorce-marriages.

Second: I wanted to know (if it was wrong) what step to take to get out of it, as it would no doubt be a great stumbling block to the unsaved.

However, I was fully determined to obey God in spite of men or devil, even at the loss of all things, even life itself. So we lived a separate life, for eighteen months, waiting for the clear, unmistakable mind of God. However, but little of my time was spent at home, as I was engaged in evangelistic work, with the blessing of God wonderfully upon my soul.

We read in Job 33:14-18 these words, "God speaketh once, yea twice, yet man perceiveth it not. In a dream, in a vision of the night, when deep sleep falleth upon men, in slumberings upon the bed; then He openeth the ears of men, and sealeth their instruction... He keepeth back his soul from the pit, and his life from perishing by the sword." Truly, the Lord has verified this in my case, as He has used this special method (together with the Word) of warning, instructing and reproofing me ever since I was saved.

I confess, all visions and dreams are not to be depended upon, yet God has a way of making one know when He is speaking. So I here give the reader, in substance, what God said to me, or in other words, some methods He used by dreams and visions to make me know I was wrong in my divorce-marriage. I do not force it upon anyone, I only relate it, and let you take it for what it is worth. It is to be remembered, I did not receive all of these in one night, or in one month, but from time to time, during a period of eighteen months, and upward.

1. On the night of April 13th, 1907, the Spirit came to me in a dream or vision, in the form of an eminent preacher, who lives an exceptionally holy life, (however, I do not know his views on this subject), and quoted clearly and distinctly two passages of Scripture. The first one is found in Isa. 52:11, "Depart ye, depart ye, go ye out from thence, touch no unclean thing; go ye out of the midst of her; be ye clean that bear the vessels of the Lord." The next passage is found in II Cor. 7:1, "Having therefore these promises, dearly beloved, let us cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of God." These came, not as other flighty dreams, but were stamped on my heart and mind by the invincible power of the Spirit. Hence, I can never forget them.

2. On September 28th, 1907, in my dream I stood on the sidewalk of a solitary street. I saw no one for miles around. But suddenly a being from another world descended and sat on the top of a building just across the street from where I stood, and began talking in loud, clear, thrilling and awful words, such as filled me with terror, for they seemed not only words, but stuck fast in my soul like arrows. He spake as follows:

"There is someone in this community rejecting God-given light, and if they do not stop, God is going to send them to hell forever. He has sent me to warn them. Now you may do as you please about this matter. I have warned you, so good-bye!"

After he was through speaking, he was transformed into the likeness of a large bird, and ascended into the sky. Immediately I awoke, filled with confusion, terror and conviction, beyond the power of language to describe. I related it to my wife, and told her that God was not pleased with our marriage. But she did not seem to see it in that light, hence the sad news almost broke her heart. So I did not leave her then, as I wanted to be sure it was God talking, and not the enemy. So I decided to pray for God to make it clearer still. However, we continued to live clean and separate.

3. Another night I saw in my dream a large white boat at sea, (which I believe represented the safe Bible way) but I had left this boat, and taken a little narrow skiff (which I believe represented that one isolated passage of Scripture, Matt. 19:9, which is the only passage in the Bible that seems to give grounds for divorce-marriage) and was rapidly drifting away from the large lifeboat. And as I drifted, my little boat became uncontrollable and rapidly leaped on, over the angry, turbulent waves, until it gradually began to sink, and I went down to a watery grave. I awoke with a sense of God's displeasure on divorce-marriages beyond the power of description. But as I wanted to be sure, and not make another mistake, I decided to still keep the matter before God, so as to obtain His clear, unmistakable leading.

I want to say right here, strange as it may seem, God kept His blessing on my soul, for He knew I wanted to know His will, and would do it. Hence the patience He had with me, in convincing me of the wrongness of this matter, was something marvelous. The great trouble was this, it was such a legalized sin, among almost all classes, even the strictest and most devout people of earth (with a few exceptions), that it was difficult to renounce and go against their smooth words and plausible arguments on the subject. I plainly saw if I took the way God was holding up I would have to take a dead stand against the majority of preachers and holiness teachers of our day. Another thing that made it so difficult to take the way the Spirit was holding up was I did not want to be a "turncoat," i. e., I had known this light on the divorce subject before, and was led by shallow teachers to renounce it; but God showed me, notwithstanding that fact, I had to take His clear, uncompromising way, no matter what men or devils would say. It is better to turn a thousand times and be right, than never turn and be wrong.

4. Another night, in my dream, I saw myself joined arms with my second wife, walking down a wide brimstone road in hell, and as we passed a large vestibule I saw throngs of voluptuous men all dressed in black, and wearing silk hats. They were all keeping time to a band of music, and waving college banners, and singing this chorus:

"In hell at last! In hell at last!
And earth and all her pleasures past.
In hell at last! In hell at last:
For aye and aye the die is cast."

And in front of these men were about a dozen large black swine (emblems of filth and uncleanness). And they were flopping their ears and cringing to the music. In this, God showed me that I had followed the sensual, unclean, flesh-indulging multitudes of earth, into this divorce-marriage business. At this I awoke with that awful picture burning in my brain, and that hellish music ringing in my ears.

But as it meant so much to make another public confession, and say I had made a mistake by re-marrying, while my former wife lived, I thought perhaps these were only dreams, and I had better pray some more before I made, what seemed such a fatal step. So I decided to spend some more days in fasting, and some more all-nights in prayer before God, to know the unmistakable truth about this matter.

5. One day, as I stood all alone in the parlor of a friend's house, in an eastern city, (while contemplating taking up this awful cross) it seemed as though a glorified spirit descended, and sang the following chorus to me. (I never heard the words or the tune until then):

"Heaven is cheap at any cost,
Do gain its ports or all is lost;
For earthly gain is only dross
And naught's of value but the cross."

And with this song there seemed to come volleys of exhortations from Wesley, Fletcher, Pollock and millions of glorified saints saying to me, "Gain heaven's port at any cost:"

For several days afterward, an inexpressible heavenly melting was upon me, and that angelic song was ringing in my ears. Since then I have had the song put to music, and put into our song book, "Revival Fire In Song." It can be had at our office for fifteen cents.

After this invincible message I was not only convinced that the divorce-marriage was wrong, but also thoroughly convinced that we had to separate fully. So we began to plan and work to that end. However, we kept praying for still clearer evidence so that in after years there would be nothing to regret over taking this step of separation. Of course, after many of our friends and brethren heard that we had decided to separate, they came to us, by letter or in presence, and tried to reason us out of our conviction, etc., by defining what divorces meant, and by saying what Jesus must have meant, etc. They meant well, but their arguments were too shallow to build on for eternity. We saw one woman die in this divorce trap. She was a good Christian woman, and professed holiness too, but we have never seen such a distressed, forlorn, God-forsaken looking being before or since.

O, friends! we cannot afford to take any doubtful position in regard to our eternal welfare. Preachers and people can reason us on to a false track, and into hell, but they cannot reason us out.

So my advice to everyone is, take the clearest track to heaven. Of course it may be the most unpopular, and may bring lots of persecution, but after all, it is the safest way to the pearly gates.

6. One night, in my dream, two preachers came to me (one I thought was St. Paul). And as they stood near me, the other preacher read to me from a paper which he held in his hand the following in substance: "You would be all right if it were not for that divorce-marriage." At this they disappeared, and I awoke with these awful words ringing in my ear: "You would be all right if it were not for that divorce-marriage." And while lying there thinking upon these awful words, a strange feeling seized me, as if it was death. I was conscious, but could not speak or move; and as I struggled and made efforts to free myself, I found something holding me fast: and God seemed to put this question at me: "How would you like for this to be death, and you tied up in that divorce-marriage?" As I lay there and struggled all that I could see, filling the whole horizon of my mind, was, "That divorce-marriage." From this, God caused me to see that a soul could not afford to go to their death-bed with the least conviction on their heart, or a shadow of a doubt in their experience.

7. The following night in my dream I was standing in a large yard all alone; and while thus standing, it seemed that God was so angry with me because of my divorce-marriage, that a great stream of lightning swept down from heaven and ran on the ground to meet me, in thousands of fiery spangles. It picked me up literally, and carried me about thirty feet to a large heap of fire burning on the ground, and held me fast in those flames. When I awoke, I still seemed to be on fire. Even the bed seemed hot with those wrathful flames. And as I was awakening, I heard these words out of that avalanche of lightning, "Prepare to meet thy God." This occurred while I was away in another town. I went home and told my wife, and we mutually agreed to separate.

Since we did so, I feel as clear as an angel. And I am fully convinced that divorce-marriages are wrong; no matter if every preacher in the universe says they are not. I have been in hell (so to speak) for almost two years on account of listening to false teachers. O friend! don't be deceived by any preacher or teacher! It is wrong beyond all shadow of doubt! If I had the voice of an archangel I would sound it from pole to pole. I came near losing my soul by giving ear to these false teachers, rather than to God! Of course, many of them are good, well-meaning Christian men, but they are only giving their opinions, and also what that isolated passage in Matt. 19:9 seems to mean. But I have been caught in the snare of the thing, and God has been hurling light and conviction on my soul for nearly two years, both night and day, making me know and feel that the thing is wrong. I am not writing what I think, but what I positively know; and am willing to seal this testimony with my blood. I know whereof I speak. And no matter how conferences or church disciplines may rock the conscience of the people to sleep telling them they can marry while their husbands or wives live; they are wrong, and the souls whom they are deceiving will find it out when eternity is unveiled, if not before. I thank God that He kept conviction and light streaming from heaven on my soul until I walked in it, in spite of all the false comforters, who were crying, Peace: Peace: when there was no peace; but dread, fear and awful uncertainty.

Now, precious eternity-bound friend, will you take the advice of one who has acted the fool, and never, never enter into a divorce-marriage under any circumstances? And if you are now in one, and love your soul, and want to gain heaven, do get out of it: even at the cost of all things, or else you will regret it throughout all eternity.

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02 -- WHAT SAITH THE SCRIPTURE ABOUT REMARRIAGE AFTER DIVORCE?

In this chapter we wish to give a little running comment on the passage of Scripture treating on the divorce subject. We do not mean to contend or split hairs, but only drop a few thoughts to earnest souls, who are aiming to gain heaven by all means.

Every honest and level-headed Bible reader will agree that Matt. 19:9 is the only passage in the whole Bible that seems to give grounds for divorce parties to remarry. Of course Matt. 5:32 gives grounds to put away the unclean party, but does not say either party can marry again. We also agree that it does not say they cannot. But the Bible says so in four or five other places which we will mention later. We often meet people who say that Mark, Luke, Romans and I Corinthians are to be read in connection with Matt. 19:9; i. e., the exception is to be recognized in reading those passages. But the safer way, to my mind, would be to accept the testimony of the three writers in preference to accepting the testimony of one against the three. Jesus says, "In the mouth of two or three witnesses every word is established."

We will quote the divorce-pleaders' passage, which seems to give ground to remarry, but does not say so emphatically. "Whosoever shall put away his wife, except it be for fornication, and shall marry another committeth adultery against her." Matt. 19:9. Now if this was the only passage in the Bible that treated on the subject, we would all readily agree that there were grounds for divorce parties to remarry. But let us quote some of the passages that say emphatically there is no ground for divorce-marriages.

In Mark 10:11, 12 we read as follows: "Whosoever shall put away his wife, and marry another, committeth adultery against her. And if a woman shall put away her husband, and be married to another, she committeth adultery." This is clear and emphatic. So that if a doubt should be left in our minds on reading Matt. 19:9, in this verse it is all removed.

Again we read, in Luke 16:18, "Whosoever putteth away his wife, and marrieth another committeth adultery: and whosoever marrieth her that is put away committeth adultery." One might say right here, the Bible does not forbid the innocent party to remarry. Well, it says "Whosoever." I am quite sure "whosoever" means everybody.

Again we read, in Rom. 7:2, 3, "For the woman which hath an husband is bound by the law to her husband so long as he liveth; but if the husband be dead, she is loosed from the law of her husband. So then, if, while her husband liveth, she be married to another man, she shall be called an adulteress: but if her husband be dead, she is free from that law; so that she is no adulteress, though she be married to another man." Some people try to make it appear that if one breaks the marriage vow, they are reckoned as dead, but this is too thin to build for heaven on. We all agree that a dead man or woman does not walk, talk, eat, drink and work, as we do. Hence that is not the death God means. God means physically dead, so that they have ceased from all their labor under the sun, and gone to eternity. For one to try to make this mean anything else means to try to lead souls into sin, death and hell. O, God! deliver us from these soul cut-throats'

Again we read, in I Cor. 7:39-40, "The wife is bound by the law as long as her husband liveth; but if her husband be dead, she is at liberty to be married to whom she will; only in the Lord." These passages say positively you cannot marry while your husband or wife lives. Matt. 19:9 does not give clear grounds but seems to leave grounds to marry. But Mark, Luke, Romans and I Corinthians do away entirely with all doubt, and put it in clear, unmistakable words, we cannot.

Again we read, in I Tim. 3:12, "Let the deacon be the husband of one wife." Also we read, in Titus 1:6, "If any be blameless, the husband of one wife." Now in the face of these five witnesses, crying out unanimously, we cannot remarry while the former wife or husband lives. It would be very unwise to risk our souls and an eternity of bliss on a doubtful passage that only seems to endorse what five others clearly condemn. I was fool enough to risk it, but by the mercy of God I got out before hell closed her horrid jaws upon my poor soul forever. I believe God let me out to give this word of warning to other deceived souls.

Let us turn again to Matt. 19:9 -- the hope of the divorce-pleader -- and I will give you the benefit of what I have read concerning this passage, then you may investigate it for yourself.

"Let it be remembered that the Vatican Manuscript, which is chiefly the basis of our Greek text, does not contain that clause -- 'And shall marry another' (which we read in Matt. 19:9). And the emphatic Diaglott leaves it out. Were not the uniform voice of the Scriptures elsewhere against such a proviso we would perhaps take other manuscripts against the Vatican. But the latter being strictly in harmony with the Word throughout, is most likely correct."

Now I will here give the exact quotation of Matt. 19:9, from the "Codex Vaticanus." "But I say unto you, Whosoever shall put away his wife saving for cause of fornication, maketh her an adulteress, and he that marrieth her when she is put away committeth adultery." There is no "And shall marry another" in the text. Hence this makes Matt. 19:9 read practically the same as Mark 10:11-12, and Luke 16:18. I am not adding to nor taking from the Word, only calling your attention to this recorded fact, which we have investigated and found to be true. We must all agree that divorce-marriages are a doubtful position for anyone to take; hence that is sufficient proof that they are wrong and should be avoided; for the Word says, "Whatsoever is not of faith is sin." Rom. 14:23.

The question may be asked right here, To what profit is a divorce, if we cannot re-marry? It is a means to dissolve the marriage tie to the extent that we are free from all future annoyances from the unclean party. Hence they can have no legal claim on anything that belongs to us; but we cannot get married while they live. I Cor. 7:11, "But and if she depart, let her remain unmarried, or be reconciled to her husband." This cannot be done if she gets married to a second husband.

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We now come to the next great question that is asked by so many people, "What shall we do? We were married when we were sinners, and we did not know it was wrong. Now, since the Lord has converted us and forgiven our sins, was not this included in the forgiveness?" We answer, Yes! But God saved you on the terms that you would ever walk in the light, which meant, when you would find out more of His will, you would do it. When I first started in the way of the Lord I used tobacco, but He soon let me know it was wrong, and I had to quit. When we were first saved, God did not remind us of all our restitutions, but reminded us of them one by one, as He gave us grace to attend to them. He did not show us everything at once, or we might have become discouraged and given up the way. Hence he let the light shine by degrees. However, we were His children, and were forgiven for every sin, because we had agreed to continue to do or undo anything He would show us, all the way until our dying day. So when you were first saved, God did not call your attention to the divorce matter right away; for you were not able to bear it, but now when you have gained strength enough to take up this cross, He sends the light on your soul. And if you refuse to obey, you can no more retain His favor than can a man that refuses to return a stolen article, or pay an honest debt. Of course God will give you time and grace too, to walk in this light, but if you refuse, you will lose His favor just as would any disobedient child.

Again you may say, "It will bring such a reproach." Jesus says, "Whosoever therefore shall be ashamed of Me, and My words, in this adulterous and sinful generation, of him also shall the Son of Man be ashamed, when He cometh in the glory of His Father, with the holy angels." Mark 8:38.

In Ezra 10 we read how the people put away their strange wives. We must remember that it meant as much for them in those days to put them away as it does for us now. But God has laid down His laws in righteousness, and we are to come up to them, by His assisting grace, or be lost forever. No matter how the scorning world may laugh and jeer. They will weep and wail some day.

You may say, "I think my companion is dead, as I have not heard from him (or her) in a long while." This is not sufficient excuse to get remarried on. You must know they are dead. Thinking they are dead is not sufficient; for they are as likely to be alive as you are. Hence, you will never have perfect soul-rest while a doubt remains in your mind as to whether they are dead or alive. O, friend! we cannot afford to deal loosely or haphazardly with this all-important matter, for it means heaven or hell.

Now I have cleared my soul. I have related in a simple way my experience in a divorce-married life; and the clear, God-given convictions which I experienced from time to time, until we separated. And since that time my sky is clear as the noonday sun. O, hallelujah. And I am now steering for the clearest track to the skies.

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PUBLISHER'S NOTE ABOUT J. M. HUMPHREY

Brother J. M. Humphrey, now deceased, was personally known to Sister Jennie A. Jolley, one of the editors of "The Repairer," published at Atlanta, Ga., Route 7, and when she learned that

Brother Humphrey's testimony on Divorce and Remarriage was to be republished, she expressed her high appreciation of him in the following letter:

Dear Sister Orem:

Your letter received today. I will be so glad for someone to print Brother Humphrey's "A Word of Warning on Divorce-Marriage." I think I have a copy of it. You will be perfectly welcome to print it. He was a very dear and close friend of ours. Black, yes, but he could come nearer preaching the saints under conviction than anyone I ever heard. S. K. J. Chesbro, one of the fathers of Free Methodism, (guess you knew him, or of him) said that Brother Humphrey was the best sermonizer he ever knew.

He was the BEST PREACHER I EVER HEARD. Close like the judgment. I worked for him in his printing office as a girl in Chicago. He was young in the way then and soon learned to prize me as no ordinary girl; not that I was more brilliant, but that I loved the old way and stuck close to it. I helped him much in learning to speak and print correctly. He preached for the Old Time Methodists in Chicago, both colored and white. My sister, Julia, (before she married E. E. Shelhamer), and I went to a Free Methodist camp meeting near Chicago, and took Brother Humphrey along.

My sister, Lucia Rose, and her husband, a Free Methodist preacher, let us come to their tent. People saw the Negro and paid no attention to him; just a Negro. Lucia told the District Elder he was a preacher and to give him a chance, so he put him up at the most unimportant service, or at least the one not very well attended, at 11 a.m. Subject, "Three Rounds of Backsliding." They opened their eyes and mouths in astonishment, and a hardened backslidden preacher's daughter could not wait to go to the aisle, but ran over the seats and fell at the altar. Threw her ring away in the straw.

This was the most wonderful preaching to the Christians they ever heard, so he must preach next day, but Brother Humphrey mustered courage to tell them his forte was night, so they gave him the night service. Oh! oh! what a sermon on Hell! It may have been then when the girl went forward. They didn't miss using him after that and he had calls and openings among the Free Methodists and at Stoneboro, Pa., camp (Wesleyan Methodist).

Colored people couldn't claim him after that; he was too much in demand by the Free Methodist whites. When in Chicago, still in his office, he used to preach against divorce marriages. His wife quit him, threw flat irons at him, etc. He could not live with her, but he would not marry again.

We came to Atlanta and later heard he had been induced to marry a colored woman. Some people were delighted over it, but my mother and I were so grieved and wrote him how we felt. I wrote to him, "How are the mighty fallen! Tell it not in Gath," etc. Believe mamma cried. A white preacher had written to us "Brother Humphrey has a fine wife." Two or more years later he wrote and published the little book.

I think Brother Humphrey died quite suddenly in California. It was said the church was full and it didn't seem like a funeral; the house was filled with the glory of God. Oh, his life was so fragrant, it makes me cry to think of him. He lived NEAR God. He was like a heavenly perfume bottle. He would be delighted from his heavenly home to know of his experience being reprinted.

May his mantle fall on many others.

Yours,
Sister Jolley

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THE END