



Missions in the Mountains

MRS. H. W. DARST

PREFACE

A number of years ago Mrs. H. W. Darst prepared a brief biography of her father (Brother John Britton) for publication in *Golden Words*, then a magazine directed primarily toward the youth of the churches of the Baptist Missionary Association of America.

Because the article met with such widespread acceptance, the editor desired to include it in *Echoes From Beautiful Feet*, a special edition containing brief biographies of some great Associational Baptists.

When the manuscript first appeared, the editor arbitrarily decided not to include it because Brother Britton was the only biographee who was still alive and active in the Master's service. (He still is!)

The editor then asked the biographer to expand the article for a separate publication to be used especially by Girls' Missionary Auxiliaries and Galileans.

After many delays on the editor's part Baptist Publishing House is pleased to make this small volume available. It is not only a tribute to a great Baptist but is also a useful commentary upon the work of Associational Baptists in an area with which few members of churches in other sections of the Baptist Missionary Association are well acquainted.

Both the young and the "not so young" will likely find the material informative, inspiring, and encouraging.

The publishers send forth this volume with a prayer that the Lord will be pleased to call other "Johns" and "Allies" to conquer the "mountains" of more recent times.

...Chas. O. Strong
December, 1977

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Chapter I

PUCKIE HUDDLE

"Greatness is not in position, power, fame...but character, holiness, and Christlikeness," E. E. Wadworth.

"...God saw that it was good," Genesis 1:10.

"Puckie Huddle," a quiet, little village lay nestled among the beautiful hills in the Ozark Highland Region. The name above the post office read, Davisville, Missouri, but that had no bearing on the old-timers who lived there.

There, August 1, 1896, John Leonard Britton came into the world. He was the eighth in a family of ten children born to Wilburn Jones Britton and Cora Godby Britton.

On the day that John was born, his eldest brother became nineteen. The other children were William, Eddie, Scott, Emma, Della, Eva, Roy, and Raymon.

The lovely Ozark Highlands comprise about two-thirds of the area of Missouri. The slopes and ridges of the hilliest parts are clothed with oak, pine, walnut, hickory, gum, redbud, dogwood, and a great variety of other trees and shrubs.

The hillsides provide a canvas for the artistry of the changing seasons as the trees exhibit the colors of blossoms or turning leaves. Many caves and springs add to the charm of the Ozark Highlands. The Meramec Caverns and the Onondaga are two of the more famous caves. More than ten thousand springs dot the Missouri Ozarks. Ninety-eight of the springs have a daily output of over a million gallons each.

Puckie Huddle had more than its share of springs, creeks, hills, and solid red bluffs. A cold stream on its way from a spring at the head of the valley to the Huzzah divided the village. Water-cress and water-lilies thrived in the creek.

Red Bluff, one of Missouri's most beautiful spots, could be seen from the top of the hill, just east of Puckie Huddle. The sparkling, swift-flowing Huzzah rushed along beneath the high-towering bluff. It was a paradise for fishermen and nature lovers. (It is now a patrolled park where thousands each summer enjoy what God has made. Many can truthfully say, "We saw, and it was good.")

John Leonard Britton grew up in that unspoiled beauty which God had provided.



John at 17

Chapter II

**A HAPPY CHILDHOOD
INTERRUPTED**

The Weaver

Behind our life the Weaver stands,

And works his wondrous will.

We leave it in His allwise hands,

And trust His perfect skill.

Should mystery enshroud His plan,

And our short sight be dim,

We will not try the whole to scan,

But leave each thread to Him.

The threads our hands in blindness spin,

No self-determined plan weaves in,

The shuttle of the unseen power

Works out a pattern not as ours.

Not 'til the loom is silent,
And the shuttles cease to fly,
Shall God unfold the pattern,
And explain the reason why.

The dark threads were as useful,
In the weaver's skilled hands,
As the threads of gold and silver,
For the pattern which He planned.

...Author unknown

John Leonard Britton had reddish-blond hair, blue eyes, a fair complexion, and high cheek bones. His appearance was likely a combination of his English and Indian ancestry.

From all accounts that have been related through the years, John was easy-going, fun-loving, and very mischievous. As a youngster, one of his favorite pastimes was teasing his older sisters, who—strange as it seems—generally believed everything that he said. He frequently turned common occurrences into practical jokes for the girls.

One day John had a nose-bleed. He used his handkerchief until it was very bloody. He then tied it around his leg and ran to the house yelling, "Help, quick, I cut my leg."

His sisters started screaming, "John has cut his leg; do something before he bleeds to death."

John started laughing as he pulled the handkerchief from his leg to reveal a perfectly healthy limb.

John enjoyed fishing and swimming in the Ozark streams. Barefoot and clad in his home-spun shirt and overalls, he spent many happy boyhood days on the Huzzah, Big Shoal, and Courtois creeks.

Wild fruit and berries grew profusely in the mountains. John loved to pick the papaw, a delicious yellow fruit which resembles a banana. The papaw grew along the creek bottoms. Gooseberries, huckleberries, blackberries, strawberries, and dew berries grew in abundance. Like others of the region, John's parents used the fruits in their fresh state. They also picked and canned some for use during the winter. All the berries made delicious jellies or preserves.

Mountain Music

Music came natural for young John. He played the "fiddle" and French Harp with great skill. Some of his favorite tunes were "Turkey in the Straw," "Red Wings," and "Soldier's Joy." He sang the old ballads and hymns that had been handed down from past generations. "Barbara Allen" and "The Letter Edged in Black" were two very popular ballads of his time.

Tragedy

His formal education was interrupted before John finished grammar school. Because of blindness his father could no longer earn enough to support his family. John's older brothers were married; they had families of their own to support.

Young John had to assume the responsibility of helping to support his mother, father, and two small brothers, Roy and Raymon.

A Man's Work

The position of chief supporter of the family altered John's formerly care-free life style. He helped with the farm chores. He always avoided the chore of milking, however. His mother always did the milking. John declared, "I can't get a drop of milk from those cows."

"A very smart way of getting out of milking the cows," his sisters said.

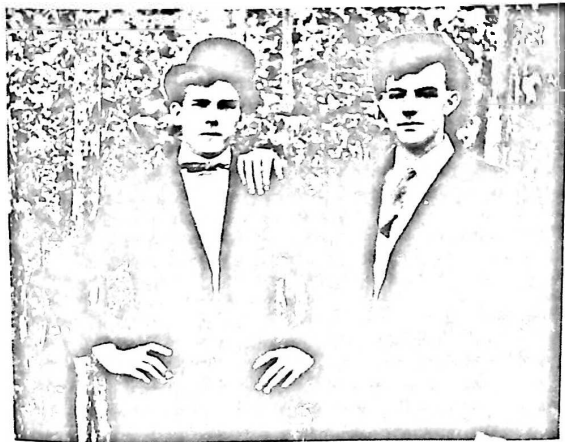
John hastily cleared the land for new fields in order to grow more crops. He broke the fields with a turning plow and planted seeds which he carefully saved from year to year. He cultivated the growing plants with a double shovel.

John said, "My blind father and I planted peach trees in the fence corners all around the farm." The farm fences were all made of rails, which John had helped to split. In a few years

the Brittons had a peach orchard that was the talk of the people of the country-side.

Jobs for which one could obtain cash were hard to find. When he could spare time away from the farm, John worked in the forest. He cut trees with a cross-cut saw; with a broad-axe he hewed the timbers into railroad ties. Using a team and wagon, he hauled the ties to market several miles from home.

The trails to market led up the hills, along the ridges, and through the valleys and creeks. In the rainy seasons, the ruts in the muddy roads were sometimes axle-deep to the wagon wheels. Many times the team of horses could not pull the heavy loads. John would have to unload the ties, pull the wagon from the mud, and then reload the ties.



John Leonard Britton, left, and his cousin, Ed Campbell, in 1913

Chapter III

THAT THY DAYS MAY BE LONG

"Honour thy father and thy mother: that thy days may be long upon the land..." Exodus 20:12.



Wilburn and Cora Britton
(John's blind father and his mother)

In 1877 the family of Wilburn Jones Britton was making plans to move west to seek their fortunes.

Wilburn wanted to go west with his family, but he had a problem. He had fallen in love with Cora Godby. Cora was small, high-spirited, and young—only fifteen years old. Wilburn wanted to marry her, but her parents would not consent to the marriage, if he intended to carry out his plans to go west. Wilburn promised, "If you will let Cora become my wife, I will stay behind." They consented. When they were married, Wilburn kept his part of the bargain.

Early in the spring of 1877, Wilburn's father, his mother, his sisters, and his brothers, with their families, loaded all their belongings into covered wagons to head west.

Wilburn never saw his father, mother, or sisters again. Many years later he saw two of his brothers who came back to Missouri.

The day that Wilburn's brother, John (young John was named for his uncle), returned from the west, Wilburn, although blind, was on his knees weeding the garden. John rode up to the garden gate and asked, "Could you keep a traveler overnight?"

Wilburn recognized the voice—after forty years—and said, "I have never turned a brother away from my door."

The brothers had a great reunion. Much talking was needed to fill the gap of a forty-year absence from each other.

In later years Wilburn sat for many hours as he whittled and carved cedar into bowls, kneading boards, rolling pins, chains, scissors, and many other beautiful and practical things.

Her family and neighbors considered Cora the best cook in those parts. She could fix hickory-smoked ham, red-eye gravy, and hot biscuits that no gourmet cook could match. The specialty of the house, however, was her cobbler pies—gooseberry, peach, blackberry, or whatever kind of fruit that was available.

A large carpet loom was one of Cora's most prized possessions. She wove Early American carpets for ten cents a yard, if the buyer tacked the strips together and rolled them into balls for her.

Cora was a good manager. She sold butter, cream, chickens, and eggs in order to supplement the family income.

Cora had a great sense of humor. She kept the family laughing at the many tales she told.

John inherited the soft-spoken, kind manner of his father, and the ability to tell amusing stories from the past from his mother.

Chapter IV

A PLAGUE OF LOCUSTS

"...There shall be famines, and pestilences, and earthquakes, in divers places," Matthew 24:7.

Old time residents of Missouri related to their children and grandchildren the story of the "Plague of the Locusts." In due time John heard the tale of woe.

It all began in 1874. A great invasion of grasshoppers, "Rocky Mountain Locusts," swarmed into Missouri. The locusts arrived in such numbers that they darkened the sky. The sound of the munching insects soon filled the air for miles around.

The *St. Louis Republican* described the invasion of 1874: "A glance upward toward the sun revealed them, filling the air as far as vision could extend, as thick as snowflakes in a storm. They drifted along with the breeze, and fluttered down at people's feet occasionally or lit upon their noses, with as much unconcern as if they had been a part of the elements."

Corn silk, young wheat kernels, and stems of cotton were the locusts' target. When they had consumed those, they ate almost anything—tree bark, canvas, hoe handles, even each other. One farmer humorously remarked that the "hoppers" had eaten everything he had except his mortgage.

In 1875, Governor Charles Henry Hardin set aside June 3 as a day "for humble and devout prayer, to seek divine intervention in halting the plague." Rains arrived to save the harvest that year.

Missouri's northern neighbor was not so fortunate. One of Hardin's critics charged that the governor "prayed the grasshoppers clear out of Missouri, and up into Iowa."

In the following three years, the locusts returned to Missouri, inflicting tremendous damage before the plague finally ended in 1877.

Chapter V

MINERAL WEALTH

In the early days French explorers carried back to France wild tales that the Indians had told them about vast gold and silver deposits in the land that is now Missouri. The French king sent several mining expeditions to find the wealth. The men found only lead.

In 1798, Moses Austin began large workings at Potosi where he opened mines and built furnaces. Ten years later he and Samuel Hammond founded Herculaneum, northeast of Potosi. In 1810, along the bluffs of Joachim Creek, they built the second shot tower in Missouri. Much of the ammunition which the American armies used in the War of 1812 was manufactured there. At the close of the Civil War lead mining became very profitable.

More than half of the barite used in the United States comes from Missouri. Washington County is the leading producer in the state. Producers use the mineral chiefly for making chemicals and paint, and as a filler for rubber, paper, and linoleum.

Miners also find in Missouri iron ore, limestone, marble, granite, zinc, coal, and clay (suitable for making fire bricks, tiles, sewer pipes, and cement).

The soil in the Ozark Highland Region is a rocky limestone (sedimentary rock, consisting of remains of marine animals and shells) clay, which is usually gray or light brown. The hillside farms required hard labor and ingenuity in order for families to eke out a living. Wilburn and Cora met the requirements. Despite their adversities they provided for a family of ten children.

Chapter VI

COURTSHIP AND MARRIAGE

"Therefore shall a man leave his father and his mother, and shall cleave unto his wife: and they shall be one flesh,"
Genesis 2:24.



Allie Minnie Wilkinson at 17

True Love

I think true love is never blind,
But rather brings an added light,
An inner vision, quick to find
The beauties hid from common sight.
No soul can ever clearly see
Another's highest, noblest part,
Save through the sweet philosophy
And loving wisdom of the heart.

...Phoebe Cary

In 1918, John rode a high-stepping bay horse to the Shoal Creek Baptist Church in an adjoining community. On the way home from church he noticed a girl riding side-saddle behind a friend. As he rode along the road, John said to another friend, "I am going to take that girl away from him. She is too pretty for him." He did just that.

The girl was Allie Minnie Wilkinson, daughter of Andrew Lafayette and Sarah Bays Wilkinson.

The time for the wedding soon drew near. Much preparation had to be made. The Wilkinsons ordered a wedding gown from a mail order catalog. Allie said, "It was a beautiful, long, white lace gown over white satin."

Her parents rushed invitations to relatives and friends to attend the wedding.

Mrs. Wilkinson baked cakes and prepared the sumptuous meal that was to be served. They cleaned and dusted the house until it glistened.

The day came at last— for Allie. It seemed "all too soon" for her parents!

A Perfect Day

BECAUSE

Because you come to me with naught but love,
And hold my hand and lift mine eyes above,
A wider world of hope and joy I see,
Because you come to me.

Because you speak to me in accents sweet,
I find the roses waking 'round my feet,
And I am led through tears and joy to thee,
Because you speak to me.

Because God made thee mine I'll cherish thee
Through light and darkness, through all time to be,
And pray His love may make our love divine,
Because God made thee mine.

...Edward Teschemacher

The day was perfect for a wedding. The dogwood and red-bud blossoms dotted the hills. The trees were freshly green.

The minister performed the wedding ceremony in the parlor of the bride's home, April 6, 1919, in the presence of many relatives and friends.

John reminisced, "In her lovely, white, lace gown and white slippers Allie was a beautiful bride. She wore her long, dark brown hair piled high upon her head. Her blue eyes sparkled, setting off her flawless complexion."

After the wedding feast Allie entertained the guests by playing the old pump organ, which always stood in the most prominent corner of the parlor. Her mother appeared at the door with a disapproving frown when Allie began to play "Little Brown Jug" with great gusto. Allie did not know that some of the deacons who were present frowned upon tunes of that nature.



(John and Allie — second and third from left in back row — along with some of Allie's family and friends on the first day that John came courting.)

Chapter VII

MAKING A HOME

Prayer for a Bride and Groom

"Our gracious heavenly Father, who givest the supreme gift of love to Thy children, we thank Thee for each other. We thank Thee for all who love us and who have given so much of themselves to make us happy. We thank Thee for the love that has bound our hearts and lives together and made us husband and wife.

"As we enter upon the privileges and joys of life's most holy relationship and begin together the great adventure of building a Christian home, we thank Thee for all the hopes that make the future bright. Teach us the fine art of living together unselfishly that, loving and being loved, blessing and being blessed, we may find our love ever filled with a deeper harmony as we learn more nearly perfectly to share it through the years.

"Help us to keep the candles of faith and prayer always burning in our home. Be Thou our Guest at every meal, our Guide in every plan, our Guardian in every temptation.

"None can know what the future holds. We ask only that we may love, honor, and cherish each other always, and so live together in faithfulness and patience that our lives will be filled with joy and the home which we have established become a haven of blessing and a place of peace."

...Wesley H. Hager

Since John was still helping to support his parents, the young couple spent the first year of their marriage with them. John soon bought a barber chair and tools to set up a shop at Puckie Huddle. He received thirty-five cents for a haircut and shave combined.

While the couple was living with John's parents, Allie's first child was born. Marie Roena caused much excitement on the Wilkinson side of the family because she was the first grandchild. She was the youngest of many grandchildren on the Britton side of the family.

After a year of living with his parents, John and Allie moved to a little cottage about a mile away. Allie said, "We were so happy finally to have a place all our own. We bought a wood-burning cook stove for \$1.50. John made a table. We bought a second-hand bed and some chairs. We ordered a rocking chair and a beautiful dresser from a mail order catalog. My mother picked feathers from her geese to make a featherbed and two pillows for me."

That spring they planted a vegetable garden. Until a hail storm beat every plant into the ground, it appeared as if every seed had come up.

Discouraged after losing the prospect of raising food for their needs, John went to St. Louis, where he found employment. He worked at Hiney's Boiler Works for \$7.00 per week. When he was settled, he sent for Allie and the baby.

Holding the baby in her arms, Allie rode a horse to Davisville. Roy, John's younger brother, walked alongside. As they were going down a steep hill, the horse stumbled. Allie fell from the horse, but she held the baby high in her arms. Neither was hurt. She rode in a mail car from Davisville to Steelville. John met her there. They rode the train into St. Louis.

City life was not for the Brittons. John soon quit his job. He moved his wife and child back to the country where Allie's parents sold them forty acres of farmland.

The task of building a house faced John. He chose a site at the upper end of a tiny valley. Rolling hills were on the south. Rocky cliffs were to the north. A brook fed by two cold water springs ran at the base.

For \$18.00 John bought a house from a school teacher at Quaker, Missouri. Piece by piece he tore the house down and hauled it by wagon and team about thirty miles. He slowly built his house from sturdy, white pine lumber. He constructed the house in an ell with a fashionable breeze-way between the living room and kitchen. A back porch spanned the entire

length of the ell. The front porch had hand-carved banisters and latticework.

The house faced the west, giving its occupants a clear view of the length of the valley. In the summer evenings after the work was all done the front porch was a favorite gathering place for the family. As the years passed, together they admired many gorgeous sunsets from that vantage point.



John and Allie Britton
with first daughter, Marie
1920

Chapter VIII

BAPTIST HERITAGE

"Train up a child in the way he should go: and when he is old, he will not depart from it," Proverbs 22:6.



Allie Minnie Wilkinson
Age 6

An Old Church

The walls which now
Are crumbling lime
Could not withstand
The urge of time.

The wood has rotted
On the doors;
Rain has ravished
Roof and floors...

And yet because
Men worshipped here,
Something holy
And austere

Lingers on
And fills the air,
Like echoes
Of a quiet prayer.

...Hannah Kahn

Grandpap Gilliam, Allie's great-grandfather on her mother's side, was old and blind, as she remembered him. He and Grandma Gilliam lived in a large, log cabin. Clay filled the cracks between the logs. A huge stone fireplace dominated one end of the cabin.

Some of Allie's earliest memories include times when she visited Grandpap and Grandma Gilliam who lived down the road and across the creek from her home. She loved to watch them roast potatoes in the hot ashes in the fire-place and to cook dinner in a black iron pot that hung on a chain over the fire.

Grandpap was a great, old soldier of the cross for Jesus. He was a charter member of the old Shoal Creek Baptist Church which was organized after a baptizing service, November 28, 1885, on the banks of Little Shoal Creek. Brother R. G. Gibson, who had been the evangelist in a revival meeting, led in organizing the church.

The minutes of the organizational meeting name the following as charter members: William Caringer, William Beers, Elizabeth Coplin, Elizabeth Stotler, Martha Beers, Dot Bays, Marria Gilliam, Burl Gilliam (Grandpap), Melindia Gilliam (Grandma), F. Hensley, R. G. Gibson (the minister), R. Stotler, George Gilliam, and Sariah Bays.

They constructed the church building, in 1890, on a hill not far from where the Little Shoal and Big Shoal creeks meet. The original structure is still standing, but some remodeling has been done and some additions have been made.

The back part of the church yard was reserved for a cemetery. The bodies of many departed loved ones are there, awaiting their resurrection.

"...The hour is coming in the which all that are in the graves shall hear his voice, and shall come forth; they that have done good, unto the resurrection of life; and they that have done evil, unto the resurrection of damnation," John 5:28, 29.

Grandpap Gilliam opened his home for prayer-meeting and preaching services. Allie remembered hearing the singing ring out over the little valley one night when she was not able to go to the service because she was ill. She recalled hearing the shouts and praises to God because souls were saved.

Carl Gilliam (grandpap's great-grandson who is a minister, ordained by the Stony Point Baptist Church) related the following story that has been handed down through the generations:

"Grandpap was a short man, but what he lacked in height he made up for in spunk. He was the self-appointed 'bouncer' for the church in those days. The rowdy boys soon learned to respect him.

"One night some men and boys on horseback undertook to run over the church goers as they walked home from the services. Grandpap grabbed a club, knocked one man from his horse and yelled, 'Come on, boys, I got your leader.' The other men turned their horses the other way."

"On another occasion a man was disturbing the worship service. Grandpap walked quietly back to where the man was sitting, took him by the collar, marched him to the church door, and gave him a swift kick in the seat of the pants. The man landed on his face in the church yard—very humiliated. Grandpap dusted his hands and returned to his seat and sat down, as if nothing had happened."

People in the community knew Jim Gilliam, one of Grandpap's sons, as "Singing Jim." He was usually the song leader at whatever church he attended. His favorite song was "A Light At The River." He and his wife gave the land for the Hazel Creek Baptist Church which later became known to many as "Seed Tick."

Grandpap told hair-raising tales of Civil War days. He frequently related that the bushwhackers kicked down their front door in the middle of the night, took him away from home, stole his horse, and left him to walk several miles back. They also stole the food from the house and went through the corn patch to destroy much of the crop that was about ready to bear.

Allie's great-great grandfather, on her father's side, was a charter member of the first Baptist church west of the Mississippi River, in what is now Cape Girardeau, Missouri. His body lies in a cemetery there, awaiting the glorious resurrection of God's redeemed.

Allie's parents, Andrew Lafayette Wilkinsons and Sarah Bays, married in the home of her parents May 1, 1898. Rev. J. A. Nipper heard their vows.

Allie had an older sister (Oleva), two brothers (Fred and Delmar who died in infancy), and two younger sisters (Beulah and Virginia). Virginia was born when Beulah was eighteen years old. She was the joy and delight of Andrew and Sarah's latter years.



**Allie's Parents,
Andrew and Sarah Wilkinson**

Allie's parents—Grandpa and Grandma Wilkinson, as they were lovingly called—loved music. Grandma played the organ and the accordion. Grandpa played the French Harp and the Jew's Harp. They both loved to sing. By precept and example they taught their Puritan ways.

The oldest granddaughter recalls, "Some of the earliest memories I have of Grandma Wilkinson is the awe I felt while sitting in her lap to listen as she read from the big, brown, leather-bound Bible. Grandma explained that she was reading from God's Book. Those memories are precious. Coupled with much religious training in my parents' home, they have had a great impact upon my life."

Andrew and Sarah's grandchildren loved them dearly. The grandparents played games with the children and told them fascinating stories. Andrew would let the smaller ones spend a penny over and over in his little country store, until he thought they had had enough candy for one day.

Influence of the Church

The records of the Shoal Creek Baptist Church reveal that Sarah was saved and baptized, July 5, 1896. Andrew joined some years later. Sarah's brothers and sisters were saved and baptized as follows:

Annie Bays	—	June 7, 1903
Eva Bays	—	1906
Hattie Bays	—	1906
Orville Bays	—	May 12, 1912
Lottie Bays	—	May 9, 1915
Burley Bays	—	October 9, 1917
Thelma Bays	—	September 11, 1921

The Shoal Creek Baptist Church has been the scene of many a person's finding Jesus as a personal Saviour. The ministry of the church reached out into every direction for miles around. Through the years many preachers have come from the membership of the church.

In the early days of the church, it was the custom for the men to sit on the right of the aisle (facing the pulpit); the women sat on the left. Some folk looked down upon any woman who happened to make the mistake of sitting on the men's side of the building. A few in the community even suspected her of being of low character.

The cemetery behind the church building had a sobering effect upon most people as they entered the church doors. A good supply of white pine lumber from which to make coffins was stored under the pews in the "Amen Corner." The coiled ropes, used to lower the coffins into the graves, were always in a conspicuous place, causing one to speculate as to who might be the next for whom they would be used.

The furniture in the church building consisted of handmade pews (made with care and great adeptness), a pulpit (a sacred place for all who came near), a beautifully carved pump organ, and a table upon which sat the water bucket with its tin dipper. A cast-iron, wood-burning stove, which sat in the middle of the floor, heated the building.

Kerosene lamps with bright metallic reflectors behind them hung on the walls.

The Shoal Creek Baptist Church had a tremendous influence upon the life of John Leonard Britton.



Five Generations of Baptists

The five generations pictured represent more than one hundred years of Christian service.

Back row, from left to right: Marilyn Darst Orr (Mrs. Gerald Orr, Jacksonville, Texas), Marie Britton Darst (Marilyn's mother), Allie Wilkinson Britton (Marie's mother). Front row, from right to left: Sarah Bays Wilkinson (Allie's mother), and James Bays (Sarah's father).

Chapter IX

SAVED BY GRACE

"...By grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves, it is the gift of God," Ephesians 2:8.

In the fall of 1921, while John was away from home for a few weeks, Allie and the baby stayed with her parents.

Shoal Creek Baptist Church began a revival. Allie went night after night through the first week. The Holy Spirit convicted her deeply. When Sunday night came, she decided not to go to the services.

When her mother came home from the service, she said, "Allie, we had special prayer for you tonight. We also decided to extend the meeting one more night for your benefit." That touched her deeply.

When Monday night came, Allie went back to the meeting. She could hardly wait for the sermon to end. When the evangelist gave the invitation, she hurried to the altar. There she accepted Jesus as her personal Saviour! She said, "I had always had a horror of shouting for fear of making a spectacle of myself. When I was saved that night, however, I shouted praises to the Lord all over the house! I was so happy in my salvation that I wanted all the world to know about it." She later realized that many of her friends had followed her to the altar where they also trusted Christ for salvation. The revival had just begun.

Allie wrote John, "I have been saved. I am to be baptized next Sunday. Please, come home for the service, if possible."

Allie walked five miles to the store to buy white material

for a dress in which to be baptized.

John came home. He saw the white dress and listened to the plans for the baptismal service on Sunday. He said, "You surely would not have been baptized, if I had not been able to come home?"

"Yes," Allie answered, "I am so anxious to be baptized. I can hardly wait."

John said later, "To know that she had found something that made her so extremely happy and that I was not a part of it really upset me."

John went to church on Sunday morning. After that he went to the creek for the baptizing. He had a heavy heart. The Holy Spirit had convicted him!

John went back to church Sunday night. By the time that the evangelist, Riley Laramore, had finished preaching, he was ready to trust Christ for salvation! The Lord completely changed his life. Following his baptism, by Pastor Grant Midgett, the Shoal Creek Baptist Church received him into her fellowship. A short time later she ordained him as a deacon.

It is no wonder that John has loved the old hymn, "Amazing Grace," from that day forward.

Amazing grace! How sweet the sound

That saved a wretch like me!

I once was lost, but now am found,

Was blind, but now I see

'Twas grace that taught my heart to fear,

And grace my fears relieved;

How precious did that grace appear

The hour I first believed!

Thro' many dangers, toils and snares,

I have already come;

'Tis grace hath brought me safe thus far,
And grace will lead me home.

When we've been there ten thousand years,
Bright shining as the sun,
We've no less days to sing God's praise
Than when we first begun.

Chapter X

FIGHTING THE CALL

"...It is hard for thee to kick against the pricks," Acts 9:5.

The sun came up over the patches of corn and swept gently down into the tiny green valley below where John plowed. Furrow after furrow he plowed. He plowed, cried, and prayed. He had a great burden upon his heart.

Until the mid-twenties things had gone well for John and Allie. He then began to be troubled. He felt the Holy Spirit's calling him to preach the gospel.

John prayed as he plowed: "Dear Lord, I cannot preach. I am not educated." The excuse seemed ridiculous even to him when he remembered God's answer to Moses' excuse.

"...Moses said unto the Lord, O my Lord, I am not eloquent, neither heretofore, nor since thou hast spoken to thy servant: but am slow of speech, and of a slow tongue.

...The Lord said unto him, Who hath made man's mouth? or who maketh the dumb, or deaf, or the seeing, or the blind? have not I the Lord?

Now therefore go, and I will be with thy mouth, and teach thee what thou shalt say.

...He said, O my Lord, send, I pray thee, by the hand of him whom thou wilt send," Exodus 4:10-13.

The burning desire to tell the lost of Jesus' love and the way of salvation haunted John day and night. When he could bear the burden no longer, he told his church of his call to the ministry.

News traveled fast. Many soon heard the announcement

that Brother John Britton would preach his first sermon at the Emmaus Baptist Church, Courtois, Missouri. That was in 1926.

When John and Allie arrived for the announced service the whole hillside appeared covered with buggies, hacks, wagons, and horses tied to the hitching posts and trees. The church house was full of anxiously awaiting people.

The subject of his first sermon was "The New Birth," based on John 3:1-10.

After his first sermon Brother Britton preached only occasionally. His burden had temporarily eased. He had good intentions, but the cares of the world hindered.

He said, "I thought I had too much—a farm, cattle, a country store, a wife, and three daughters (Dolorece, Marguerite and Beulah May were born at about three year intervals after the first child)—to leave behind in order to go out to preach the gospel."

He promised many times, "Lord, I will fully surrender to your will—just give me a little more time." When the time came, he just would not turn loose of material things to go.

Several years passed. John Thurman, the first son, was born into the John Britton family. Before that time Brother Britton used to say laughingly, "All my boys are girls." About three years later, another daughter, Opal Viola, was born.



Brother Britton and first son, John Thurman

The Fire

One January night, the temperature was near zero. Brother Britton and daughter, Marie, walked two miles to prayer meeting. Upon returning home they hung their coats in the spare bedroom. After they retired, Allie asked, "John, did you leave the lamp burning in the guest room?"

He replied, "No."

When he saw a light shining under the door, he jumped out of bed to run to the bedroom door. When he opened the door, the whole room was ablaze. He yelled, "The house is on fire, get the children out." Allie frantically tried to get all five children awake and out of the house. Beulah, who was hard to awaken, kept crawling back into the bed. Allie finally succeeded in getting all the children out of the house just before the walls fell. John, Allie, and the children stood in a little huddle, shivering and screaming, too dazed to realize what was really happening.

John tried to save some of the furniture, but he failed. The next day someone found a kerosene lamp and a box of matches across the creek. In his excitement John had made a trip into the house to bring out an almost useless lamp and some matches when he could have rescued something of much greater value.

Accelerated by a fierce wind the fire spread over the entire house in only a few minutes. The wind was so strong that sparks from the burning house set the hay on fire in Uncle Fred Wilkinson's barn quite some distance away. That fire was discovered and extinguished just in time to save the barn.

The fire destroyed the nearby store building, which was well stocked with groceries and dry-goods. The store was built over a basement (usually called a cellar in those days). Allie had the cellar filled with home-canned fruits and vegetables—potatoes, apples, sour-kraut, and pickles. It all went up in smoke. Even the money in the hand-made money drawer burned.

Because there was no insurance on any of the property, the situation seemed hopeless.

"When God removes one's excuses for not doing His will, He does a complete job of it," Brother Britton has said many times since the night of the fire.

That night the family wept bitterly. Having everything taken away so suddenly came as a great emotional shock. They escaped with only the nightclothes which they were wearing. Grandma and Grandpa Wilkinson lived just down the road. They graciously opened their home to the Britton family.

That same winter most of the Britton's cows died! "Up the

holler" they found "Old Dan," their favorite horse, dead—apparently having been poisoned.

The Lord's chastening hand was heavy upon Brother Britton. Because John realized the situation, he was ready for the Lord to use him in any manner.

Kind friends and relatives brought clothes, food, furniture, blankets, quilts, pillows, linens, money, and many other supplies. The Brittons have never forgotten the love and concern that was shown in that time of need.

Steve Skaggs, owner of a sawmill, provided the lumber with which to rebuild the house within two months. A very happy family moved into their new house!

Chapter XI

SURRENDER

"...He trembling and astonished said, Lord, what wilt thou have me to do?" Acts 9:6.

Brother Britton had learned well a hard lesson. He had had enough of the chastening hand of God. He could finally truthfully sing:

I'll go where you want me to go, dear Lord,

'O're mountain, or plain, or sea.

I'll say what you want me to say dear Lord;

I'll be what you want me to be.

On July 10, 1932, the Shoal Creek Baptist church ordained him to the full work of the gospel ministry. He realized that God had called him to witness that the Lord Jesus Christ is the Saviour of the world. He prayed that later it might be said of him:

He held the lamp of truth that day

So low that none could miss the way,

And yet so high to bring in sight
That picture fair—the world's great Light.

He held the pitcher, stooping low,
To lips of little ones below,
Then raised it to the weary saint
And bade him drink when sick and faint.

He blew the trumpet soft and clear,
That trembling sinners all might hear;
And then, with louder note and bold,
He razed the walls of Satan's hold.

Then when the Captain says, "Well done,
Thou good and faithful servant—come!
Lay down the pitcher and the lamp,
Lay down the trumpet—leave the camp!"
His weary hands will then be seen
Clasped in those pierced ones—naught between.

...Anonymous

At various times during the early years of his ministry
Brother Britton pastored Shoal Creek, Emmaus, Pleasant
Grove, Stony Point, Temple, Walnut Grove, and Lone Star.



Brother Britton Baptizing Charles Lint
in
Big Shoal Creek

Brother Britton often repeated, "By the authority of the Shoal Creek Baptist Church and (candidate) and upon the profession of your faith in Jesus as your personal Saviour, I now baptize you in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. Amen!" Frequently the saints would shout on the banks of the creek as they did the day he baptized Charles Lint.

For many years, Brother Britton was missionary for the Washington County Missionary Baptist Association, which included churches in Crawford, St. Francis, Jefferson, and Saint Louis counties.

In addition to regular Baptist church buildings Brother Britton held services and revivals in brush arbors, old store buildings, union church buildings, court houses, homes, and an abandoned Methodist church building.

Brother Britton spent several of the "Depression Years" doing mission work. He traveled on foot, by wagon, by buggy, or astride "Ole Pete." (Preacher Britton declared that Pete was the smartest, most lovable, and stubbornest mule that ever lived. John could chase, coax, and call him for days as he

roamed the lush green meadow, but he would not come work or riding until he was ready. If he were in the mood to be caught, he would come to the preacher to eat out of his hand. When he was willing to be ridden, he was gentle as a kitten. If not, he would buck a rider as fast as he could climb onto him. He was always gentle, however, around children. All day he would willingly pull a sled filled with children or with rocks to be hauled from hill-side patches.)

On rare occasions during the Great Depression Brother Britton could afford gasoline for his "Model T." Some years there was not enough money to buy a license for the car!

Chapter XII

REVIVAL FIRES

"Wilt thou not revive us again; that thy people may rejoice in thee?" Psalm 85:6.

"O Lord, I have heard thy speech, and was afraid: O Lord, revive thy work in the midst of the years, in the midst of the years make known, in wrath remember mercy," Habakkuk 3:2.

Many of the high points of Brother Britton's ministry occurred as he preached in revivals throughout mountainous communities of Missouri.

The people "over on the Courtois" called, "Will you hold a revival meeting for us, if we build a brush arbor in which to meet?"

Brother Britton's reply was, as always, "Yes." There was no church in that community. Opportunities to witness abounded. The time had come for the young preacher to launch out upon the promises of God.

Brush Arbor Meeting

The folk built the brush arbor near the bend of the Courtois Creek. The fast-flowing, clear Courtois had wide sandy beaches, strewn with huge boulders, on both sides. Moss-covered rocks lined the edge of the creek. Beyond the beaches were stately oak, elm, and sugar maple trees which extended to the top of the surrounding hills. Mountain fern, mingled

with native flowers and many other varieties of smaller trees grew in profusion. The surroundings gave a natural cathedral atmosphere to the setting. Layers of cut brush formed the roof. Capable hands fashioned split logs into pews. They made a platform at the front for the preacher and song leader. Meade designed a crude pulpit from "cull lumber."

Brother Britton anxiously awaited for the meeting to begin. He prayed much as he prepared evangelistic messages.

The time finally arrived. Large crowds came—most on horse-back, in horse-drawn wagons, or on foot. A fortunate few came in automobiles.

God opened the windows of heaven to shower His blessings upon the revival. He saved many souls. Some who were saved joined the Shoal Creek Baptist Church in the adjoining community.

"Aunt Harriett," as she was affectionally called, walked every night to the brush arbor revival. Almost every night she carried her small grandson on her hip. Before the end of the week, she had rubbed such painful blisters on her feet that she could not wear her shoes. She did not want to miss any of the revival because she had a lost friend for whom she had been praying. Determined not to miss any of God's blessings "Aunt Harriett" decided to wear her husband's brogan shoes to the meeting, to get there early, and to keep her feet under the split log pews. Her plan worked well until Brother Britton gave the invitation. Aunt Harriett's friend went to the altar. On her knees, she wept and asked God to save her soul. When she stood again, redeemed by God's grace, many shouted praises to God. "Aunt Harriett" forgot about having on her husband's shoes. She and her newly saved friend threw their arms around each other and shouted praises to the Lord until "Aunt Harriett's" hat fell to the dirt floor where someone accidentally stomped it. (Many women wore hats to church even at night, in those days.)

On the way home from church that night "Aunt Harriett's" friend said, "Harriett, I will buy you a new hat to replace the one we stomped tonight. It is worth much more than the price of a hat to have the peace of God in my heart."

The next day she walked to the store to buy Harriett a beautiful new hat. The two women remained close Christian friends throughout their lives.

During that same revival an elderly man went to the altar night after night. He declared, "I have wanted to be saved so many times, but I have spurned the Holy Spirit over and over. I know that according to nature I do not have many

years to live. I want to be saved more than anything, but I cannot feel the wooing of the Spirit in my heart." That sad experience was a warning to the young people who heard his testimony.

"...Exhort one another daily, while it is called To day; lest any of you be hardened through the deceitfulness of sin," Hebrews 3:13.

"...Behold, now is the accepted time; behold, now is the day of salvation," II Corinthians 6:2.

The Huzzah-Bottom Revival

The second brush arbor revival which Brother Britton conducted was in the Huzzah Creek bottom, a few miles "up the creek" from the Huzzah, Missouri, post office. The meeting was in the fall when the leaves were in all their colorful glory. (One would have to see the Ozarks in the fall of the year in order to believe its beauty.)

Brother H. W. Darst, a young preacher from Steelville, Missouri, was teaching in the Shoal Creek community school. Brother Britton asked Brother Darst to assist in the revival at Huzzah. The young teacher who had recently surrendered to preach eagerly accepted the invitation. They alternated nightly with the preaching.

Despite fiercely cold weather, the people attended. The preachers wore overcoats as they preached. The people, wrapped in coats and blankets, sat on the log pews. Many trusted Christ during the meeting.

Many years later Mrs. Britton saw one of the ladies who had been saved in that revival. The lady, said, "Sister Britton, I was only a teenage girl when I accepted Jesus as my Saviour in that old brush arbor revival meeting in the Huzzah Bottom. That was many years ago, but I have never lost my salvation."

Mrs. Britton replied, "Daisy, you never will lose it. It is eternal."

"...God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life." John 3:16.

The Big Shoal Revival

A few miles above the merging of the Little Shoal and Big Shoal Creeks was the scene of another brush arbor meeting. It was held in late summer. Crops had been "laid by." Harvest had not begun.

Brother C. A. Darst assisted Brother Britton in the Shoal Revival. Brother C. A. surrendered to the ministry of a short time after his brother, H. W. Darst, had begun to preach.

During the revival Brother C. A. Darst stayed with the Brittons. The preachers drove to the meeting each night. Occasionally some very kind folk in the community invited them to eat in their homes.

The revival lasted three weeks. On the last night of the meeting, a man arose in the service to say, "I feel that we should take an offering to pay the expenses of the brethren during the revival." The offering came to forty-four cents (That was really in the days of the "Great Depression.") The preachers divided the forty-four cents equally.

The two preachers received great joy from preaching, witnessing to the lost, and seeing souls saved. Many will be in heaven as a result of those old brush arbor meetings. Only then will the Lord reveal the influence which sacrificial preachers have wielded upon others in His great vineyard.

Chapter XIII

ECHOES FROM THE PAST

Many of the first settlers who made their homes in the Ozark Highlands of Missouri came from eastern Kentucky and Tennessee. Some of their ancestors came from England, Germany, France, Scotland, and Ireland.

The descendants of those "hill people" still carry a trace of the speech and customs of those who arrived more than a hundred years ago. Groups frequently kept some of the "Old World" customs and traditions.

Their manner of speech and way of life dated back to earlier and more relaxed times. Once in a while one may still hear words that bring forth a bit of nostalgia.

A few typical expressions that just might be heard from the real mountain people are:

A-FIXIN'—Getting ready—"We're a-fixin' to go to the store."

PEAKED—Pale or sickly looking—"He's looking mighty peaked today."

DOIN'S—A function—"Are you going to the church doin's tonight?"

HOLLER—A small valley—"She comes from over in the holler."

FETCH—To bring—"Go fetch the doctor."

PUT OUT—Angry, annoyed—"He sure was put out about the meeting."

CUTTIN' UP—Acting foolishly—"Maude sure was cuttin' up last night."

FUR PIECE— A great distance— "He lives a piece from here."
GULLY-WASHER— A hard rain— "We su had a gully-washer last night."
LOLLYGAG— To loaf or loiter— "Why's l always lolly-gaging around?"
AIRISH— Breezy or drafty— "It's too airish here."
BIGGETY— Stuck up or acting big— "She been acting awful biggety these days."
SHED OF— Rid of— "You've got to get shed o that old mule."
SMACK-DAB— On the dot, exactly— "I sho him smack-dab through the heart."
GANDER— To look at— "Take a gander at her new outfit."
PARTS— Area or neighborhood— "What is he doing in these parts?"
POKE— Paper bag— "He put the chicken in a poke."

The beautiful, little town of Steelville, Missouri, is about twenty miles from Puckie Huddle. It is now the seat of Crawford County.

According to Goodspeed's *History of Missouri*, the first settler on the site of what is known as Steelville, Missouri, was William Britton. William came there in 1833. He built a fourteen by sixteen feet log house.

He then built a gristmill near the spring from which Yadkin Creek originates. Yadkin, often unobserved by visitors, is a small creek that gently flows through the town. In earlier days it was vital to the supply of meal and flour. A small log building housed the mill. A small piece of the dam still remains. People from miles around came with their grists.

Ten years later William moved westward about six miles to build a larger mill on the Meramec River. He ran the mill until some time during the Civil War. When William died, the mill property passed into the hands of a Mr. McAtie. Since that time the mill has been known by the latter name.

In the early 1900's residents of Puckie Huddle traveled by horse-back, buggy, or wagon to the bustling city of Steelville, Missouri. Steelville was their main source of contact with the outside world.

Chapter XIV

COUNTRY STORE

Uncle Jerry Priest owned the country store in Puckie Huddle. He was a kind-hearted country gentleman. He lent money to his friends when they were in need and sold groceries "on the credit."

Uncle Jerry sold sauerkraut and pickels from a barrel. He stored crackers, beans, coffee beans, sugar, salt, rice, and many other staples in huge bins. Those he scooped up, weighed, and sold by the pound.

In the early 1900's a person could buy an easy riding buggy for \$56.45. Advertisers described it as smooth-running, strong, durable, and the most comfortable built.

Other specials included:

BRASS BED—Constructed of magnificent brass tubing, fitted over steel for strength—
Reduced to \$32.95

ROLL TOP DESK—Golden oak—\$15.65

SOLID OAK TABLE—Extension table with hand carved claw feet, 48 inches long, fitted with dust proof flexible curtain—\$11.85

BARRELL TOP TRUNK—Iron bottom, leather hinges, sheet iron bound—\$1.85

RAZOR—Engraved, one-half inch blade with black rubber handle (your name engraved in gold)—\$1.80

TALKING MACHINE—Golden oak cabinet with swinging aluminum arm adaptable to any size disc—\$15.90

LADIES STYLISH SHOES—High-top, button shoes—A graceful new style—Patent leather with kid top—\$1.27

MEN'S WORSTED SUITS—Single-breasted fashionable grey, firmly woven worsted twill—\$8.97

LADIES' SHIRTS AND SKIRTS—Skirt (pleated taffeta silk)—\$6.75—Embroidered lawn shirts—89¢

LITTLE BOY'S SAILOR SUITS—White line with elastic bloomer pants—\$1.00

HAY FORK—Steel, with bent wood handle—39¢

WHEELBARROW—Varnished hardwood with removable sides—Weight fifty pounds—\$2.35

LAWN SWING—Four-passenger—Made of selected hardwood—Painted and varnished in contrasting colors—Swings with an easy motion—\$6.85

STEREOSCOPIC VIEWER—A stereoscopic view brings the original scene before one in a magical way that gives the vision of depth and distance. Made with specially ground optical glass—28¢

Chapter XV

LAUGHTER AND TEARS

"The rose and the thorn, and sorrow and gladness are linked together." ...Saadi

Life was hard in the depression years. "Money was almost scarce as hen's teeth," Brother Britton said.

During that period he served as missionary for the Missouri Baptist State Association for a dollar and fifty cents per day. He received pay only for the days which he actually spent in revival meetings.

The treasurer for the State Association worked in the "Tiff Mines" near Potosi, Missouri. Brother Britton would often go through Potosi on his way home from a revival. He would stop to see the treasurer, turn in his report, and collect his salary.

Collection was not always easy, however. Many times he had to go into the mine area to find the treasurer. He said, "I have gone from mine shaft to mine shaft and shouted the treasurer's name until he heard me. Sometimes to my disappointment and the treasurer's regrets there was no money in the treasury." The costs of a growing family did not stop just because there was no money in the treasury.

A Pig in the Back Seat

At the close of one revival Brother Britton received a hog as part payment. Mrs. Britton and their youngest son, Donald, built a crate, put the hog in it, and placed it between the seats of the car.

On their way home the frightened hog loudly squealed and grunted. The raging hog soon crashed the crate and broke the window of the car.

Reminiscing, Brother Britton said, "I had to think fast. When I looked down the road, the Lord had a farm house with kind people ready to help me."

He stopped the car and ran to the farm house, where he borrowed a hammer and nails to repair the crate.

Meanwhile, Mrs. Britton and Donald held the hog by the hind legs. After great difficulties in mending the crate and getting the hog back into it, they were on their way again. Because the hog became more resentful, they soon stopped to sell him to a man for seventy-five cents.

Taken for a Ride

Erma Lee, the youngest daughter, was beautiful, blue-eyed, and very blond. She loved to accompany her father on missionary trips. For eleven years before Donald was born she was the baby of the family. On various occasions when she had overheard plans for a trip, she would suddenly become sick. After it was too late for her to go to school she would say, "Daddy, I feel much better now. I think I feel like going with you and mother." That worked a few times before Brother and Mrs. Britton realized that they were the ones who were being taken for a ride.

Race for the Front Seat

One elderly man loved to go to revival meetings with the Brittons. Because he chewed tobacco Erma Lee always tried to beat him to the front seat of the car. She had often sat in the back seat while he sat in the front. When he spat his tobacco out the car window, the amber came in the back window to land on Erma Lee. As the incidents multiplied, she became very vocal about wanting to ride in the front seat.

Locked Out

In one community Brother Britton began a meeting in an old union church building. Because he was a Baptist, some opposition arose to Brother Britton's holding a revival.

Four unsaved men in the community decided to lock the church building. When the preacher and the crowd arrived that night, they could not get inside.

The next day Brother Britton went to the prosecuting attorney, at the county seat, for advice. The attorney looked up the deed to the property. He made Brother Britton a copy which stated that any denomination could hold services in the building. The attorney told him to saw the lock off the door, to go in, and to stay as long as he desired.

God blessed the meeting in a mighty way. The four men who had locked the building later apologized.

Left in the Dark

A number of years later a group many miles from where he lived called Brother Britton to hold a revival in another union church building.

Everything went well until Brother Britton preached on the eternal security of the believer. The next night when the congregation arrived, they discovered that someone had taken the kerosene lamps and the song books.

Some of the people who lived near returned to their homes to bring their lamps and lanterns. They sang songs that they knew by memory. The remainder of the meeting people brought lamps, lanterns, and song books from their homes.

The difficulties only seemed to heighten the interest in the revival. Many probably came to see what would happen next. Despite all those interruptions, God saved people.

A Chilling Experience

In the "dead of winter" Brother Britton conducted a revival in the Hazel Creek community. A good-hearted man had a big log-truck. All along the road he gathered people to take to the services. He usually transported as many as could crowd on the open truck bed.

On the way from church one night they had to ford a creek. As the truck started up a very steep incline on the other side, a lady fell off and rolled down the bank into the water. When she started screaming, the driver stopped the truck. They immediately drew her back onto the truck bed. Her clothes froze before she got home, but the next night she was back in the services, apparently no worse from her chilling experience. Brother Britton, along with the others, had ridden on the back of that truck. He knew how bitter the cold wind was.

"Say Unto This Mountain"

One Sunday morning the Brittons were going home from church about twenty miles from their home. They had Erma Lee and a preacher with them.

They started up one of the steepest and longest hills in the country. The first part of the road leveled off after about a mile, then started suddenly up and down again like a roller coaster for about another half mile.

Just as Brother Britton started up the first section of the hill, the motor stopped. The car rolled down to the beginning of the incline.

He said, "I didn't have a sign of a brake. The old mechanical brakes had just quit working. I was frightened. I told Allie and the preacher to get out of the car, to get a big rock, and to follow the car. I knew that, if the car started backward down the mountain, there would not be much chance of survival, if I could not maneuver the sharp curves. I told them that if the car stopped again to put the rock behind a wheel to serve as a scotch."

Mrs. Britton said, "We got out of the car to find a big rock. I had Erma Lee in my arms. She was heavy, but she was not big enough to walk. The preacher volunteered to carry Erma Lee, so I carried the rock.

"John got the car started again. He sailed right up the hill. I thought he would stop for us when he reached the level at the top of the first steep incline, but he went all the way to the top of the hill. I was left to walk the mile and a half, carrying a rock, and accompanied by a strange man carrying the baby. We met a car coming down the mountain. I was afraid the driver might recognize me, but luckily he was a stranger.

"When we got to the top of the hill, we were hot, dusty, and very exhausted from the long walk. Each step of the way my anger had built against John. When we reached the car, there John was sitting calm and cool. That did it! I would not speak to him most of the way home. Suddenly I thought what a funny picture that was—a man carrying a baby and a woman carrying a big rock, trudging up a mountain road while the preacher rode in ease. I started laughing, and all was forgiven."

Hole in the Gas Tank

Cars and Brother Britton seemed to have a constant run-

ning battle. In most of the skirmishes, however, Brother Britton was the victor.

A revival had been going on for several nights at Sugar Grove. A great number had made professions of faith.

Brother Britton drove to and from the services each night. He said, "The weather was bitter cold. As I started home after the service one night, the old car sputtered a time or two and died. Again the brakes would not work. The car ran backward until it was off the road. It ran up over a stump which knocked a hole in the gas tank. The gas started running out onto the ground. About that time, the people who were walking home from church came along. The women and men gave me their handkerchiefs which I stuffed into the hole. I got gas all over my clothes in the process."

Someone built a fire beside the road for those who were standing around. "I was so cold," said Brother Britton, "but I would not get near the fire for fear that my gas-saturated clothes would burst into flames. Some kind people took Allie and the children home. I spent the night in the community after the men helped get the car back into the road. The next day someone repaired the gas tank and the brakes. I went after Allie and the children. We arrived in time for services that night."

Tubs of Coals

The ingenuity of the mountain people matched the need of the occasion. They proved that to Brother Britton over and over.

Brother Britton said, "The temperature was below the zero mark. I was to begin a revival at Sligo, Missouri, where Brother Ossig was to help me. Through the sleet and snow we managed to get to Sligo. We stayed with a wonderful family who did everything within their power to make us comfortable and welcome in their home.

"There was no heating device in the bedroom where we were to sleep. Our host, however, remedied that situation. He took two large wash tubs, filled them with hot ashes and coals of fire from the huge fireplace. He placed the tubs of live coals on metal pieces in the bedroom. That helped tremendously."

People came to the revival in spite of the severe winter weather.

Full of the Spirit

During a revival at the Shoal Creek Baptist Church the Brittons became very interested in their unsaved neighbors and friends. They had invited to the revival all with whom they came in contact.

One man who responded to their invitation lived over the hill across the ridge. He walked to the Britton home to ride with them to the church house in a horse-drawn wagon.

After church that night before Brother Britton put the team in the barn they sat for a time on the front steps. The man was very quiet and dejected. The Brittons began to witness to him.

The man confessed that he was a sinner. He said that he wanted to be saved more than anything in all the world.

Brother Britton asked, "Would you kneel right here, repent of your sins, and ask Jesus to save you?"

He said, "Yes."

They all kneeled to pray.

Soon the man jumped up and said, "Praise the Lord, He saved me." Great rejoicing occurred under the stars that night.

The man was so happy in his salvation that he sat to talk with the Brittons until quite late. Finally, he said, "I must be getting home, my wife will be worried about me." (She often had good cause to worry about him. He was known to partake of the "bottle.")

He told the Brittons later, "When I started home, the farther I walked across that dark, lonesome ridge, the brighter seemed the way. I began to sing the old songs I used to hear my mother sing. When my wife heard my singing at the top of my voice, she cringed inside. She expected me to arrive at the door drunk again. How happy she was when I told her that I had been saved! She then realized that it was the Holy Spirit who caused my heart to thrill to sing His praises."

Long White Strings

The school building at Viburnum, Missouri, was the scene of a wonderful revival. It did not start out that way, however.

The first night of the meeting there were only nine present. The Brittons were very discouraged. They asked themselves, "Shall we go on with the meeting, or shall we give it up?" After much prayer, they decided to keep trying.

Because Brother Britton had had a bout with rheumatism, he could not stand to wear tight supporters to hold his socks up. He tied his socks up with long white strips which he had torn from an old bed sheet.

As the meeting progressed, the crowds grew larger each night until the house was filled. One night a great number of people accepted the Lord as their Saviour. All over the house people were shouting praises to the Lord.

Brother Britton said, "When things became quieter, near the close of the service, I noticed some of the young people with smiles on their faces, looking down at my feet. I glanced down to see what they were looking at. To my dismay, I saw. The long white strings I had used to hold my socks had come untied and were trailing along the floor as I walked. I had to smile at myself, but I went on with the service as if nothing had happened."

No Appetite for Gravy

Brother Britton and his cousin were visiting in a saw-mill settlement. The family was living there only temporarily. He said, "The family and guests were sitting in the living room while the lady of the house was preparing the meal. From where I was sitting I could see the kitchen table. There were no screens on the windows or doors. While dinner was being placed on the table, an old hound dog wandered through the kitchen door. He placed his big front paws on the table and started eating out of the gravy bowl before the poor woman could get him away.

"The lady called us to the table immediately after the incident. When the gravy was passed, I said, 'No, thank you, I don't care for gravy.' (That really was not the truth, for John always loved gravy. He just knew that he did not like *that* gravy.)"

John's cousin looked at him questioningly, took a big helping of gravy, and said, "John, I thought you always liked gravy."

He replied, "I usually do, but I just don't care for any today." His cousin had a huge second helping of the gravy.

On their way home as gently as possible John told his cousin the yet undisclosed truth about the gravy.

Chapter XVI

DESTITUTE FIELDS

To the regions beyond I must go, I must go,
Where the story has never been told;
To the millions that never have heard of His love
I must tell the sweet story of old.

To the hardest of places He calls me to go,
Not thinking of comfort or ease,
The world may pronounce me a dreamer, a fool,
Enough, if the Master I please.

...Margaret M. Simpson

A compelling force—like a tug on the heart-strings—drew Brother Britton to regions beyond. With a compassionate heart, he went into destitute fields, preaching the way of salvation. Those destitute fields were the hardest in which to get a work started.

Britton said, "In many places I had to do the singing, the praying, the preaching, starting the fires in the old wood

burning stoves, and sweeping the floors. Much of the time I had to carry the wood and kindling from home."

John Britton had a willing "helpmeet." His wife went with him on many mission endeavors. When she went along, he had a pianist or organist, if an instrument were available. She was a great personal worker.

Grandma and Grandpa Wilkinson were willing baby-sitters, although they probably never heard the term, "baby sitter," in their entire lives.

Some experiences in those destitute fields were hard to endure, but over and over the Brittons were aware that God provides for His children.

Noses in the Air

In one very destitute place, there was no church for many miles around. Brother Britton began a revival there in the wintertime. The Brittons knew little about the people in the community. After the first service a friendly man invited them to his home to spend the night. They accepted the invitation, not knowing the circumstances in the home. When they arrived the man introduced them to his mother, who was an invalid. She was lying in a bed in the living room. The man said his mother had tuberculosis. When time came for them to retire, the family moved the invalid mother to a bed in another room. The host told the Brittons that they could sleep in the mother's bed. No one offered to change the linens on the bed.

The Brittons went to bed but not to sleep. Mrs. Britton said later, "I lay all night with my nose high in the air, trying not to breath any more than was absolutely necessary. I just knew that I would very soon die of tuberculosis." God protected them!

Because of the Lord's blessings the Brittons were able to lead in the establishment of a church in that community. They praised the Lord for using them in His service.

Afraid to Laugh

Brother Britton and Brother H. W. Darst (who some years later became his son-in-law) made a missionary journey into another field destitute of the gospel.

The two preachers were very glad to be invited into the homes of the people in the community. It was much too far for them to go home after the services.

All went well until someone invited them into a home way back into the mountains. They went. When they arrived, they found the family living in a two-room, make-shift house. The house consisted of a lean-to kitchen and a living room-bedroom combination. There were only two beds in the room. Very small children were asleep in one of the beds. For some reason the parents transferred the children to the other bed in the room. They then told Brother Britton and Brother Darst that they could sleep in the children's bed.

When the preachers finally went to bed, to their dismay, they discovered that the bed was very wet. Soon bed bugs started biting them. They later asked, "How could anyone sleep in a wet bed with bugs nibbling on him?"

Before morning they became almost hysterically tickled. They were afraid to start laughing. They certainly did not want to be heard. The family had offered them hospitality, and they did not want to offend their hosts by their silly giggles.

Lightning to Light the Way

An old abandoned store building became the "meetin'-house" in one place. It was a ghostly looking place, reminiscent of days long gone by, but the people wanted preaching services, and Brother Britton obliged. The old building was about five miles from Shoal Creek where the Brittons lived.

The road to the "meetin'-house" ran over the mountain and along the ridge. One could take a short-cut by following for a distance a path on the mountainside. Below the steep mountain cliff, a deep stream of water swirled and dashed over the rocky creek bed.

One stormy night Brother Britton and Marie, who was only a child at the time, were on their way home from the revival. They took the short-cut. A storm was brewing. There were terrific flashes of lightning and crashing claps of thunder. It was hard for them to keep in the path. There was great danger of their losing their footing and plunging down the mountain side. The flashes of lightning helped to show them the way. Marie recalls, "I remember how I held dad's hand that night, feeling secure, trusting that he would take us safely home. In later years, I could see the likeness of the

heavenly Father's leading His children by the hand, through the storms of life, all the way, until they are safely in that beautiful heavenly home."

On some Sundays while Brother Britton preached in the old store building the family walked five miles to the morning service, five miles back home, five miles to the evening service, and five miles back home again—a total of twenty miles on a given Sunday. In those days not a member of the Britton family was fat.

Rotten Eggs

The devil seems always to have tried to counterfeit what God has done. He even has counterfeit preachers.

One old store building in which Brother Britton had preached had an unusual service in it. After Brother Britton had experienced a great revival there, a young man in the community decided that preaching would be a good way to make some easy money. He made a profession of faith. Shortly afterwards, he announced his call to the ministry. He asked if he might hold a revival in the old store building. The man who owned the store building did not claim to be a Christian. He knew nothing of church authority for doing mission work. He granted the young man permission to start a revival.

During the second night of the meeting the congregation took a collection for the preacher. It had been rumored that he needed money with which to buy a new suit. He received a good offering.

Everything went well until the preacher began to brag to some of his sinner friends about what easy money he was making. Word that he was a phoney soon spread. That did it! A neighborhood gang planned a quick end to his ministry. They gathered all the eggs (some of which were rotten) they could find. They went to the next service to wait for the preacher to start his sermon. Just as he stepped to the pulpit, they let him have the eggs from every direction. The incident put an end to his easy money and his phony ministry.

Chapter XVII

EARLY BAPTISTS IN WASHINGTON COUNTY

Potosi, an important lead mining settlement, was first called Mine á Breton. Foreign kings and Catholic priests, who sought to control the religious activities of their citizens, ruled the settlement for many years. Only the established form of worship was legal during that period.

As a result of the Louisiana Purchase, April 30, 1803, Potosi became a part of the United States. The official transfer was made at St. Louis, March 10, 1804. On that day Potosi officially gained religious freedom. The land west of the Mississippi River, for the first time, was opened to ministers of the gospel.

At that time the area that is now Missouri had several tribes of Indians. The most important tribes were the Missouri, who lived in the east central section of the present state; the Osage, a tribe of unusually tall and expert hunters who occupied the southern part; and the Fox, Sauk, and their allies, who lived in the north.

Many wild animals roamed the territory. Most early settlers made their living by hunting and trapping.

In 1804, fewer than ten thousand settlers lived in the territory. About one-sixth of the population was slaves.

Early Baptists in the Potosi area had a hard time in those pre-statehood days. As late as 1816, not one family in fifty had a Bible. For most an occasional sermon was their only opportunity to hear the Word. The few devout folk considered

themselves abundantly blessed, if they had to travel no more than ten or twenty miles to hear the gospel. Some seized every opportunity to invite even distant neighbors to attend preaching services in spite of the difficulty of travel.

In October, 1816, the Washington County Bible Society, auxiliary to the American Bible Society, was formed to provide Bibles. (Those in control ordered the first Bibles in the Ste. Genevieve area to be destroyed. Some boasted that the observance of the Lord's Day would not cross west of the Mississippi River. As late as 1817, Bibles were burned in mock ceremonies.)

On June 9, 1816, twelve people met twelve miles south of Potosi to organize the Bellevue Baptist Church. It was the first in what is now Washington County. Baptists from Potosi and other communities later attended the church.

The Bellevue Baptist Church soon had eighteen members. She sent messenger John Lewis to a meeting at the Bethel Baptist Church, near Jackson, Missouri. During that meeting the brethren organized the first Baptist association of churches west of the Mississippi. Seven churches, with a combined membership of two hundred thirty, organized the Bethel Baptist Association, September 28, 1816.

The following year the American Board of Foreign Missions sent Elder John Mason Peck and Elder James E. Welch to the Missouri Territory.

Elder Peck, his wife, and three children, left Litchfield, Connecticut, July 25, 1817, in a one-horse wagon. The weather was rainy. Streams were often at flood stage. Many of the roads were almost impassable. Their difficult journey of more than twelve hundred miles ended in St. Louis, December 1, 1817.

At that time St. Louis had a population of about three thousand. The missionaries found no more than twenty-five Christians in the city. They founded the first Baptist Church of St. Louis on February 3, 1818. The church began with eleven charter members. The church existed about fifteen years.

Missionaries Peck and Welch were at the first Baptist Association meeting held in Washington County at the Bellevue Baptist Church, September 25-27, 1819. The Bellevue Church membership had increased to forty-two.

Elder John M. Peck preached that Sunday, using Romans 10:1 as a text: "*Brethren, my heart's desire and prayer to God for Israel is, that they might be saved.*"

The missionaries and a few pastors taught and encouraged the support of missions in the churches. By 1822, Bethel Association began sending "traveling preachers" into Arkansas and many areas of Missouri. In some areas the missionaries were nearly as apt to ride into an Indian camp as into a settler's clearing.

The "traveling missionaries" usually carried their Bibles, hymn books, and clothes in their saddle-bags. They rode horseback from settlement to settlement, looking for Baptists. They sought those with receptive hearts. They preached wherever groups gathered. Sometimes after several days of praying, preaching, and teaching, they would organize a small church and accept the responsibility of being the pastor.

Elder James Williams organized the church at Fourch-au-Renault (about five miles north of Potosi), January 10, 1829. Four women and two men comprised the charter roll. Williams pastored the church for three years.

In September, 1830, the little church on Fourch-au-Renault, entertained the Bethel Association. Elder Williams, the moderator, preached the introductory sermon. For a text he used Psalm 133:1: "*Behold, how good and how pleasant it is for brethren to dwell together in unity!*" A large congregation attended the meeting. Sinners were converted, and many covenanted to pray for a revival. The group voted to set aside the first Monday of each month to pray "for the prosperity of Zion and the advancement of the Redeemer's Kingdom."

Elder Peck described the "hunger for righteousness." Dinner was not so much as thought of on meeting days. Three or four preachers delivered long sermons on the Lord's Day.

The *Western Baptist*, published monthly in Illinois by Elder Peck, was one of the first Baptist papers to come into the county. The association recommended the *Western Baptist* and literature from the Baptist Tract Society to the churches.

The late Elder J. T. Hill wrote, "The most accurate documentary evidence of the organization of the First Baptist Church of Potosi is from the minutes of the Fourche-au-Renault Baptist Church. According to those minutes, the church appointed Brethren Harvey Young, Archabald Roland, William Bubb, and Josiah Johnson to aid in constituting a church in Potosi, on Saturday before the first Lord's Day in August, 1832. The committee reported at the September meeting of the Fourche-au-Renault Church, 'She was constituted.'"

The following month, the Potosi church, having only seven members, was the smallest church represented at the first annual meeting of the Franklin Baptist Association.

Although many Baptists in that day did not approve education for ministers, the churches of the Franklin Association did. In 1833, two of her ministers, Samuel Baker and J. M. Frost, were attending the Theological Seminary which Doctor Peck had established in Illinois.

The association formed the Franklin Missionary Society for the purpose of spreading the gospel and paying missionaries. Lewis Williams was probably the first missionary to receive financial support from the First Baptist Church, Potosi. Williams had attended a school for Indians where he excelled in feats of welfare and hunting, but he had barely learned to read. He did not hear the gospel for many years.

When he was about twenty-five years old, the hardy backwoodsman accepted Christ during a revival at Fee Fee Baptist Church, St. Louis, Missouri. The church ordained him to the gospel ministry, June 22, 1811. His wife often helped him to read and to find his texts. His ordination certificate was written on heavy brown paper. He became the first moderator of the Missouri Baptist Association.

Missionary Lewis Williams endured many hardships. Providing for his nine children was quite a feat. Sometime during his early missionary career a horse kicked him, necessitating the amputation of a leg. He continued to preach the gospel for many years. He organized many of the early churches in Missouri. His associational report for 1883 stated, "There were eighty-four baptisms. The numerical strength of the association almost doubled."

Hiram M. Smith, association treasurer, reported that he paid Williams and his twenty-two year old son \$169.50 for their year's mission work.

At the close of 1835, there were in Missouri sixteen District Baptist Associations, two hundred six Baptist churches, ninety-nine ordained ministers, and 7,831 members. At that time Missouri had a population of about two hundred fifty thousand.

Soon after the 1835 associational meeting Missionary Lewis Williams and his son held a revival in which about four hundred were saved.

The great depression of 1837 began to affect the churches. Mission offerings were among the first to decline.

According to Duncan's *The History of Missouri Baptists*, the association told Missionary Lewis Williams that the treasury was empty and that the churches could no longer sustain him.

"Never mind," he said, "we can get corn bread and bacon enough. If those fail, I have the old rifle yet."

The following year the old missionary was caught in a blizzard. In spite of faltering steps, he found his way to the home of a friend. In less than a week he died. The results of his labors continue. The Lord called his four sons and four grandsons into the ministry.

The White Oak Grove Baptist Church, a few miles west of Potosi, was organized, April 9, 1842.

Among the important works of the Franklin Association was the formation of a committee of eighteen to select a site for a Baptist College in southeast Missouri. In a few years they established the Farmington Baptist College which had seventy students by 1888.

Following a brush arbor meeting the Breton Creek Baptist Church was organized in 1890.

In 1906 there were 2,120 Baptist churches with combined memberships of almost two million in the state.

On May 28, 1910, messengers from sixteen churches met with the First Baptist Church, Potosi, Missouri, for the purpose of organizing a new association. Mt. Zion, Pleasant Grove, and Hickory Grove Baptist Churches of the Franklin Baptist Association had called for the meeting.

Messengers passed a motion by Elder J. C. Rasnic that the association being formed be known as "The Washington County Missionary Baptist Association." The group selected a committee of five to write the constitution.

The completion of the organization and the first session of the Washington County Missionary Baptist Association was held at the Fourche-au-Renault Church, Thursday, October 13, 1910. Fourteen churches with memberships totaling almost seven hundred composed the new association.

George Dotson (a member of the Bunker Hill Baptist church which was organized August 8, 1910) said, "The organizational meeting was wonderful. A large, interested crowd of men, women, and children attended. Horses, buggies, and wagons filled the woods surrounding the meeting house. It was a great day in the Lord's work!"

Chapter XVIII

FAMILY AFFAIRS

HEART'S EASE—Every house where love abides and friendship is a guest is surely a home, and home, sweet home, for there the heart can rest.

...Henry Van Dyke

"That our sons may be as plants grown up in their youth; that our daughters may be as corner stones, polished after the similitude of a palace," Psalm 144:12.

There was a lot of love in the Britton home. The children never knew that they were "as poor as Job's turkey"—the way Brother Britton described their condition during the great depression.

Wally Kat Jones

On winter evenings Brother Britton often drew a chair near the fire and got the small children on his lap. He would tell stories, recite rhymes, and make riddles which delighted them.

He teasingly told them that his name was "John Thomas, the Diddymous, Christopher Holmes, Christopher Kat Wally, and Wally Kat Jones." That always caused gales of laughter.

In the summer he played games with them or took them fishing and swimming. In the autumn one of their favorite outings was when Brother Britton took them nut hunting. If

it was a good year, they found hazel nuts, hickory nuts, and black walnuts. The memories of those outings in the long ago on beautiful Indian Summer days among the multicolored trees of the forest still linger.

Only One Mother

Kate Douglas Wiggin wrote, "Most of all other beautiful things in life come by twos and threes, by dozens and hundreds. There are plenty of roses, stars, sunsets, rainbows, brothers, sisters, aunts, and cousins, but only one mother in the whole world."

Mrs. Britton spent much time reading or telling stories to the children. She gave the girls music lessons on the old pump organ or piano, whichever they had at the time. She taught them to cook, sew, wash, iron, and to make quilts. She taught them to embroider and crochet. She also taught many very practical spiritual and moral lessons.

Lullaby

Sweet memories of home linger with children throughout their lives.

Mrs. Britton frequently sat for hours rocking the "current" baby until he fell asleep. She did not believe in putting a baby in a room to sleep by himself. She believed that babies need a lot of rocking and cuddling. She gave such to all eight of her children. As she rocked, she sang, "What a Friend We Have in Jesus," "Amazing Grace," "In the Sweet By and By," or some other great gospel hymn.

Marie recalls, "Some of my earliest and fondest memories are of the times that dad read the Bible aloud, the family sang around the organ as mother played, and both offered earnest prayers for the salvation, protection, and guidance of their children. Those memories have greatly affected my life. Memory is not just the imprint of the past; it is meaningful and precious."

A Happy Home

Among the most important privileges of parents is the making of a happy home where children want to be and to which they want to return.

A home is not a place of perfection. It is not a place of spotlessness. It should be a place of pleasantness.

A home is a place of helpfulness and hospitality. It is a place of love and loyalty.

A happy home is not a place where mealtime is for scolding or fault-finding; it is a place for a family get-together.

Home is a place to share joys and responsibilities.

Blessed is the home where Jesus is the welcomed guest at all times.

Johann Goethe, German poet, novelist, and dramatist, wrote, "He is happiest, be he king or peasant, who finds peace in his home."

Douglas William Jerrold, English writer of dramas, essays, and humor, said, "Happiness grows at our own firesides, and is not picked in strangers' gardens."

Luther Burbank, the famous American horticulturist, said, "If we paid no more attention to our plants than we have to our children, we would now be living in a jungle of weeds." A happy home is one where the children are well cultivated.

The Brittons were firm believers in the command, "*Train up a child in the way he should go: and when he is old, he will not depart from it,*" Proverbs 22:6.

They practiced the remedy, "*A merry heart doeth good like a medicine...*" Proverbs 17:22. They were able to laugh at themselves on so many occasions.

The Cougar Scare

For the lack of something to do, some of the older boys in the community thought how funny it would be to start a tale that a cougar (sometimes called a mountain lion or panther) had been seen in the area. They invented a whistle that sounded like the squall of the large powerful tawny brown cat.

As word soon got around, fear gripped the residents in the community. Some feared that the powerful beast might attack a person. The old-timers had often told tales of seeing cougars in their earlier days.

One balmy spring evening, Brother Britton and his brother-in-law (Fred Wilkinson) walked around the fields to see that the forest fire, which had been raging all day, was under control. (They had earlier burned—back-fired—the leaves around the split-rail fences to protect them from the forest fire. If the rail fences had burned, no crops could have been grown that year, for it took many weeks for farmers to build a fence from the trees in the forest.)

While Brother Britton and Fred were inspecting the forest fire, Mrs. Britton and the children heard the eerie sound that

had sent shivers up the spine of many of their neighbors. They knew that the cougar was near. They ran into the house, shut the windows, and locked the doors. They waited in suspense for Brother Britton to return.

Brother Britton got back to the house after dark. The family told of the screams of the cougar nearby. Preacher Britton bravely remarked, "I'll call Fred. We'll take our guns to kill the thing." He opened the front door to holler for Fred.

In their haste to get into the house the children had left the yard gate open. A white-faced yearling had wandered from the meadow into the front yard. When Brother Britton opened the door, the light inside shined into the yearling's face. He threw his head up and let out a loud bawl. The bawl scared Brother Britton so much that as he fell back he almost knocked down the whole family that was crowded closely around him. When they discovered that the yearling—and not the cougar—had made a lunge toward the door, Mrs. Britton and the children laughed hysterically. Brother Britton, however, did not think it was quite so funny.

Years later a few of the community boys confessed to scaring the people with their whistle that sounded like the squall of a cougar. They thought it was great fun, but the people of the community were not amused.

Through the Eyes of a Child

When the crops were "laid by," Brother Britton worked as a carpenter. At times that necessitated his staying away from home.

One very cold afternoon Marie was walking from school. The school building was about two miles from her home. As a six-year old she felt very important to be going to school. As she passed her Uncle George Gilliam's house, her Aunt Mary asked her to come in to warm herself.

Marie said, "No, I have to get home to cook supper."

"Cook supper?" Aunt Mary asked. "What does your mother do while you cook supper?"

"Oh, she has to do all the milking and feeding the cows. She has to feed the horses, the chickens, and the pigs," Marie replied.

"Well, what does your father do while your mother does all the work?" asked Aunt Mary with wide eyes.

"He just pittles around," called Marie as she ran up the road toward her home. She never explained to Aunt Mary that her father was away at work.

Mrs. Britton did do all the chores. She put the supper on the back of the wood-burning cook stove and told Marie to watch it and to care for the baby.

Topsy-Turvy

Marie held Beulah, letting her stand in a chair at the window. They watched their mother as she went in and out of the barn, doing the evening chores. Suddenly Beulah jumped. Marie tried to catch her, but she was too late. Beulah turned a back flip to land with her head in the bucket that was full of bage for the hogs.

Marie quickly pulled her out and tried to wipe the waste corn meal bran, and potato peelings from her face. Beulah's awful scream brought Mrs. Britton running from the barn to the kitchen. The garbage had softened the impact of the fall. Beulah was not really hurt, but she was very frightened and she seemed to want everyone around to know it!

Choked on Soap

When Opal was about a year old, fire destroyed the Britton's home. The family stayed with Mrs. Britton's parents until Brother Britton could build a new house.

One day Mrs. Britton came from the grocery store. She saw Opal in the middle of the bed while she put the groceries away. Opal got a bar of soap, removed the wrapper, and started eating. The more she chewed the more lather built up in her mouth and throat. She began to choke and turn blue. Mrs. Britton grabbed the child and ran her finger down her throat—to no avail. She then held her by the heels and pounded her in the back. When Opal coughed, up came the chunk of soap that had shut off her breath.

Sweet, Sweet Sorrow

The snow was deep, and the wind was blowing new flakes in from the north. The scene from the dining room window was like a fairyland. When three-year-old Dolorece came into the dining room, she wanted to look out the window, but she was too short. She climbed onto a ten-gallon lard can that was full of sorghum molasses. The lid on the can crumpled, and she fell into the thick sorghum. In spite of shoes and stockings she sank to her knees. She still does not like sorghum molasses.

The Search

One lazy summer afternoon, Mrs. Britton told the older girls to watch two-year-old Alfred, the baby of the family at the time. She was going down to her mother's house for a while. The girls were soon preoccupied. Later one of them asked, "Where is Alfred?" No one knew. They searched the house and yard. The girls were so frightened and excited that they cried and hollered so loudly for Alfred that Mrs. Britton and her mother heard them. The women ran up the road to see what was wrong. When they learned that Alfred was missing, they frantically joined the search.

To no avail they searched the barnyard, the meadow, the garden, the spring, the springhouse, and the creek. They could not find Alfred. By that time all were almost in tears.

Dolorece went through the house one more time. She later said, "My grief was so intense that I just wanted to crawl into a dark place to die." She happened to open a little closet door, under the stairway. For some reason she fell into the closet. As she went down, her face brushed against something warm and breathing. It was Alfred—fast asleep! The women and girls rejoiced. The lost had been found. Such experiences caused the family to be close, to appreciate one another, to realize how quickly one could be taken.

Scarlet Fever

The summer was hot and dry. The crops were dying for the lack of rain. Brother Britton was away from home in a revival meeting.

Six-year-old John T. became ill. He had a sore throat and a high fever. In a few days he broke out with a rash. Mrs. Britton usually had a home remedy for every common ailment, but she did not know what to do for John T. His condition steadily worsened. His throat swelled out even with his chin, and his temperature went dangerously high. The nearest doctor was twenty-five miles away.

Mrs. Britton finally summoned the doctor who said that John T. had scarlet fever. Because of good care and the proper medicine, he recovered. All the family was quarantined for three weeks.

God had once more protected His missionary's family.

Chapter XIX

MIXED EMOTIONS

"...The Lord had said unto Abram, Get thee out of thy country, and from thy kindred, and from thy father's house, unto a land that I will shew thee," Genesis 12:1.

The Temple Baptist Church, Belgrade, Missouri, in Washington County, called Brother Britton as pastor. After much prayer he accepted the call.

The family greeted the situation with mixed emotions. They desired to be used of the Lord, but close family ties were hard to break. They had lived in sight of Mrs. Britton's parents for many years.

At the time, Marie was married. Dolorece had finished high school. Beulah was a high school sophomore. John T., Opal, and Alfred were in grade school. Erma Lee had not started to school. Donald was born four years later.

For five dollars per month Brother Britton found a house to rent in Belgrade. The house was conveniently located next door to the church building. (Sometimes it was too convenient.)

The church gave him a starting salary of eight dollars a week, with the privilege of working part-time. He had to pay his own rent and utilities.

Moving day finally came. A friend who had a big truck offered to move the furniture.

It was a sad day and a glad day. It was so sad to move away from Mrs. Britton's parents. Grandparents, parents, and grandchildren cried as the big truck moved away with the furniture. They said, "It will never be the same again. We will

be so lonesome, not being able to see you every day." It was never the same again! Time never moves backward.

A short time later the Brittons sold their large farm.

It was a glad day when the Brittons arrived at their new place of abode. They had the glorious prospect of giving full time to the work of the church.

Some men of the church were waiting when the truck came to a halt in front of the new house for the Brittons. They helped to unload and place the furniture in the specified rooms. The good ladies of the church had a bountiful meal prepared. The family went to bed that night with both sad and happy feelings entwined.

Brother Britton was pastor of the Temple Baptist Church for several years.

When they sold the old farm place, they invested the money in property in Belgrade. They built two houses for rent. The rent houses brought in a much needed supplement to their income.

While the family lived at Belgrade, Beulah, John T., Opal, and Alfred were graduated from high school.

After attending college Beulah, John T., and Opal all later taught school in the surrounding areas.

Chapter XX

A LOVE TEST

"Though I speak with the tongues of men and of angels, and have not charity (love), I am become as sounding brass, or a tinkling cymbal.

And though I have the gift of prophecy, and understand all mysteries, and all knowledge; and though I have all faith, so that I could remove mountains, and have not charity (love), I am nothing.

And though I bestow all my goods to feed the poor, and though I give my body to be burned, and have not charity (love), it profiteth me nothing.

Charity (love) suffereth long, and is kind; charity envieth not; charity vaunteth not itself, is not puffed up,

Doth not behave itself unseemly, seeketh not her own, is not easily provoked, thinketh no evil;

Rejoiceth not in iniquity, but rejoiceth in truth;

Beareth all things, believeth all things, hopeth all things, endureth all things.

Charity (love) never faileth..." I Corinthians 13:1-8.

God is no respecter of persons. It is easy to love the lovely. God's love was extended to the whole human race. Only through His grace can a person look beyond the faults and sins of the unlovely to love their souls.

For the Brittons that theology was put to a test. After preaching a "hell-fire and brimstone" message to a congregation which included some so-called tough guys, Brother Britton and his wife started home. A preacher friend

—eirs, Brother Lark Chandler, was with them. Home was
—ty miles away. The road was treacherous. It crept up
—p mountain sides, down and around sharp dangerous
—es.

— storm was brewing. It was thundering, and lightning in a
— that is peculiar to the Ozark Highland region.

—ust as they started down a steep incline, a wheel came off
— car and rolled down the mountain side. Brother Britton
— the car stopped just short of their going down the moun-
—n. He and Brother Chandler left Mrs. Britton in the crip-
—d car to go down the mountain to look for the wheel. After
—ch searching, with the help of flashes of lightning, they
—nd and replaced the wheel. The next morning they found a
—e on the back of the car. It said, "Goodbye boys." They
—rned later in the week that the "tough guys" had loosened
—e nuts on the wheel. God had again protected His
—eachers.

During the meeting Brother Chandler went back to talk to
—e of the "tough guys" during the invitation. When the
—eacher reached out to shake hands with him, the man ex-
—ended his hand, revealing about a six-inch knife blade up his
—eeve. Brother Chandler asked him if he wanted to be saved.
—He answered, "No, I want to go to hell."

Brother Chandler replied, "You wouldn't be in hell five
—minutes until that knife would be melted."

The man began weeping. Soon he was at the altar where
—he Lord saved him.

They had passed the love test!



Pastor E. R. Gibson baptizing at the close of a meeting
at Antioch church, Oxly, Missouri

Chapter XXI

REVIVALS

"O Lord, I have heard thy speech, and was afraid: O Lord revive thy work in the midst of the years, in the midst of the years make known; in wrath remember mercy," Habakkuk 3:2.



Sixteen who were saved and baptized following the Stony Point revival

Stony Point Baptist Church was about half way between Potosi and Flat River, Missouri. Brother Clarence Wilson was the good pastor. The church invited Brother Britton to

preach in a revival. He stayed with the Wilsons, who lived about six miles from the church.

The great depression was on. Brother Wilson and Brother Britton walked the twelve miles, round trip, most of the nights of the revival.

The first few nights of the services there were no moves. The services seemed so cold. That was very discouraging to the two walking preachers.

On the way to church one night, one of them said, "Maybe we need to get right with the Lord. Maybe that is what is wrong with revival." They agreed to examine themselves to see if they were the cause of the coldness. By an old tree stump on the side of the road they had a real prayer meeting. That night the "meeting" became a revival!

A sixteen year old boy was among those who found Christ. Two weeks later he died in an accident. How they praised the Lord that the boy was saved before he went to his death.

Twenty-two made professions of faith in that revival. The preachers and the church felt the power of God in a mighty way.

PLEASANT GROVE



Baptizing at Pleasant Grove
(Brother J. H. Gibson is at the extreme left and
Brother Britton, second from the right.)

The building for the Pleasant Grove Baptist Church in Caledonia, Missouri, sat well back in a grove of beautiful cedar trees. On the church yard was a deep drilled well which had an old-time pitcher pump with a long handle. The water was cold and satisfying. Children often succumbed to the temptation to drench one another with water before and after the services.

Brother J. H. Gibson, the pastor of the Pleasant Grove Baptist Church, was a great singer and music teacher as well as a preacher. He taught many "singing schools" far and near. His music and preaching ministry lives in the churches today. He has gone to be with the Lord, but his son, Brother E. E. Gibson, and his grandson, Brother Kenneth Gibson, are both preachers. They are carrying on for the Lord.

The Pleasant Grove Baptist Church voted to have Brother Britton to preach in their revival. Some of the critics in the community said, "There isn't any use to hold a revival at Pleasant Grove. The unsaved will not attend." Because Brother Gibson and the church had great faith, they launched into revival services with Brother Britton doing the preaching.

One night a Catholic man brought his wife to church, but would not go inside the building. He sat on his car fender where he could see Brother Britton as he preached. When the preacher was about half way through his sermon, the man became very angry. He thought Brother Britton could see him from the pulpit. Brother Britton did not know that he was there. He preached that "Ye must be borned again." He declared that unless a man repents of his sins and accepts Christ as a personal Saviour his destiny will be eternity in a burning hell.

The man changed fenders. When he did, Brother Britton stepped to the other side of the pulpit. The man later said that the preacher looked straight at him as he pointed his finger and said, "I mean you. You must repent, or you are going to hell." The man became deeply convicted. In a later revival he trusted Christ for salvation. Today he is a great defender of the faith.

BATES CREEK



(Baptizing in Bates Creek)

In 1949, Brother Britton held a revival at Bates Creek in a school house. The small church did not have a pastor at the time.

Mrs. Britton wanted to go help in the revival, but because of the missionary's small salary and the many expenses of her large family, her wardrobe had dwindled to only one old black dress that was suitable to wear in public. Her desire to win souls finally outweighed her pride. She decided to attend the revival, wearing her old black dress every night.

The revival broke out to sweep the community. A great number—old people, middle-aged people, and young people—made professions of faith.

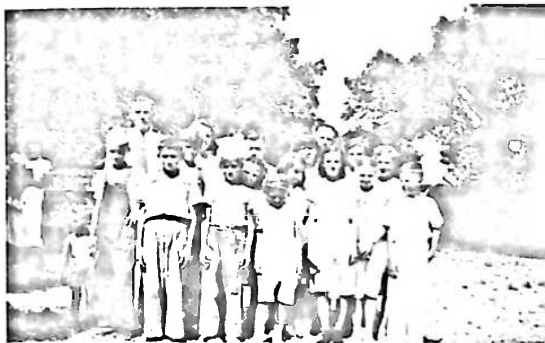
Toward the end of the revival, several of the young people came to Mrs. Britton and handed her \$20.00. One of them said, "This is a love offering for you in appreciation for all you have done in helping us to find the Lord as our Saviour."

One of those young men is now a preacher.

Mrs. Britton, overwhelmed by the love shown by the young people, promptly went to town to buy herself three new dresses. She said, "I was ready for other revivals."

During the meeting there were twenty-one additions to the Bates Creek Church. Fifteen came upon professions of faith and for baptism.

WHITE OAK GROVE



(A group baptized at White Oak Grove, August 22, 1948. Pastor and Mrs. Ralph Gibson are at the left of the group. Missionary and Mrs. John. L. Britton and their youngest son, Donald, are at the extreme left of the picture.)

The White Oak Grove Baptist Church was more than one hundred years old. During the century the Lord saved many there. Many bodies of departed saints lay in the cemetery adjacent to the church yard. Many great men had preached the message of salvation from the pulpit of the White Oak Grove Baptist Church.

In 1948, Brother Ralph Gibson was the pastor of the church when she asked Brother Britton, state missionary, to preach in her summer revival.

A teenage boy, who could not hear or speak, attended the meeting. One night when the preacher gave the invitation, he made his way to the altar. Some did not think that he understood the message. When Brother Gibson motioned toward heaven, the boy lifted his hands and eyes. With a beautiful smile on his face and with tears streaming down his cheeks, he accepted Jesus as his Saviour. The congregation felt the power of the Holy Spirit so forcefully that none doubted his salvation.

He was one of the first to respond to the invitation to be baptized. Twenty-six others made professions and requested baptism.



(Brother Britton in 1949 when he was missionary for Missouri Baptist State Association — now the Baptist Missionary Association of Missouri)

MISSION RIDGE



(Brother Britton and his niece, Mrs. Eileen Gastineau, standing in the water just before he baptized her for the Mission Ridge Baptist Church)

The church building at Mission Ridge sat high on a hill. hill is often referred to as "High Point." Through the front door the graveyard is in full view from the pulpit. Just before "Decoration Day" many help to clean the graveyard and place flowers on the graves. On the Sunday nearest Memorial Day relatives and friends come from many miles to pay tribute to their departed loved ones.

The revival at Mission Ridge started slowly. As news of the meeting spread, larger crowds began to attend each night.

During the service one night Brother Britton began to sing

In the morning when I rise,

In the morning when I rise,

In the morning when I rise,

Give me Jesus.

At the noon-time when I pray,

At the noon-time when I pray,

At the noon-time when I pray,

Give me Jesus.

At night when I lie down,

At night when I lie down,

At night when I lie down,

Give me Jesus.

And when I come to die,

And when I come to die,

And when I come to die,

Give me Jesus.



Brother Britton shaking hands after baptizing under the bridge over Big River.

Chapter XXII

FOUR DIVINE CALLS

(The following sermon, printed in the *Missouri Missionary Baptist*, in 1976 was taped as Brother Britton preached at the Breton Creek Baptist Church during a regular service.)

God makes four calls to man. First, He calls man to repentance, next to service, then to death, and last to judgment.

The Call to Repentance

When God sent John the Baptist into the world, He commissioned him to preach repentance and to baptize those who repented. Matthew 3:1, 2 says, "*In those days came John the Baptist, preaching in the wilderness of Judaea,*

And saying, Repent ye: for the kingdom of heaven is at hand."

Mark 1:1 tells what days were under consideration: "*The beginning of the gospel of Jesus Christ, the Son of God.*

"*As it is written in the prophets, Behold, I send my messenger before thy face, which shall prepare thy way before thee.*"

"*The Lord is not slack concerning his promise, as some men count slackness; but is longsuffering to us-ward, not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance.*" II Peter 3:9.

Matthew 4:12, 17 tells when and where Jesus began preaching during His personal ministry. He preached repentance. "*Now when Jesus had heard that John was cast into*

prison, he departed into Galilee...From that time Jesus began to preach, and to say, Repent: for the kingdom of heaven is at hand."

Without repentance and the new birth no one will see the kingdom of God. Jesus said so! "*Jesus answered and said unto him, Verily, verily, I say unto thee, Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God,*" John 3:3.

A person cannot have the new birth without repenting of his sins. God is no respecter of persons. He will save the vilest sinner, if he will come to Him in repentance. He made the way from earth to heaven when He gave Himself. His call is for men to come unto Him in repentance, for all things are now ready.

The Call to Service

After one has repented of his sins and followed the Lord in Scriptural baptism, the Lord then calls him to service. Everyone who knows the Lord should be busy telling the story of salvation.

A great example of Jesus' calling men to service is found in Matthew 4:18-20, "*And Jesus, walking by the sea of Galilee, saw two brethren, Simon called Peter, and Andrew his brother, casting a net into the sea: for they were fishers.*

And he saith unto them, Follow me, and I will make you fishers of men.

And they straightway left their nets and followed him." Jesus calls only men to preach His gospel, but every saved person should serve as a soul-winner for Him.

God does not force anyone to answer the call to repentance. He does not force a saved person into a life of service for Him. The day is coming, however, when every unsaved person will wish he had heeded the call to repentance. The day is also coming when every saved person who has not done so will wish he had heeded the call of service to the Master.

The Call to Death

All man receive from God the call of death. Man cannot evade the call. That fact is made plain in Luke 12:16-20, "*And he spake a parable unto them, saying, The ground of a certain rich man brought forth plentifully:*

And he thought within himself, saying, What shall I do, because I have no room where to bestow my fruits?

And he said, This will I do: I will pull down my barns, and build greater; and there will I bestow all my fruits and my goods.

And I will say to my soul, Soul, thou hast much goods laid up for many years; take thine ease, eat, drink, and be merry.

But God said unto him, Thou fool, this night thy soul shall be required of thee: then whose shall those things be, which thou hast provided?"

Another Biblical example of a man's having to answer the call of death is recorded in Daniel 5. Belshazzar, the great Babylonian king, made a feast to a thousand of his lords. From the gold and silver vessels taken out of the Temple at Jerusalem they drank wine. He thought he was having the best time of his life. Suddenly there was the finger of a man's hand that began to write upon the wall. Belshazzar began to shake and tremble until his knees smote one against the other. His wise men could not read the writing. They had to get an old prophet of God, Daniel, to read it. Daniel interpreted the writing to say that Belshazzar had been weighed in the balances and found wanting. That night Belshazzar, king of the Chaldeans, met death at the hands of the Persians.

The Call to Judgment

The last divine call to men will be their summons to judgment. No person will be able to ignore the call. The saved will stand at the Judgment Seat of Christ where their works will be tried.

"Every man's work shall be made manifest: for the day shall declare it, because it shall be revealed by fire; and fire shall try every man's work of what sort it is.

If any man's work abide which he hath built thereupon, he shall receive a reward.

If any man's work shall be burned he shall suffer loss: but he himself shall be saved; yet so as by fire," I Corinthians 3:13-15.

The unsaved shall appear at the Great White Throne Judgment a thousand years after the saved have been resurrected. *"But the rest of the dead lived not again until the thousand years were finished. Blessed and holy is he that hath part in the first resurrection: on such the second death hath no power..."* Revelation 20:5, 6.

The call to judgment for the unsaved is described in Revelation 20: 12-15. *"And I saw the dead, small and great,*

stand before God; and the books were opened: and another book was opened, which is the book of life: and the dead were judged out of those things which were written in the books, according to their works.

And the sea gave up the dead which were in it; and death and hell delivered up the dead which were in them: and they were judged every man according to their works.

And death and hell were cast into the lake of fire. This is the second death.

And whosoever was not found written in the book of life was cast into the lake of fire."

If a person answers the calls to repentance and service, he will be ready for the call to death and judgment!



Brother and Mrs. Britton at Christmas, 1962



Brother and Mrs. Britton and their eight children in 1966 (left to right): Donald D., Erma Lee Holley, Alfred J. (Al), Mrs. Britton, Brother Britton, Marie Darst, John T., Dolorece Gibson, Opal Wilkerson, and Beulah Akers.

GRANDPA BAYS



Allie's Grandfather Bays and his grand- and great-grandchildren at the time. Allie is on the back row, third from the right, holding Beulah, her baby. In the front row Dolorece is the first on the left, and Marie is the last on the right.

Chapter XXIII

THE STORM

God washed the world last night
With sweet refreshing rain;
And thirsty earth reached up to drink
Of that life-giving gain.

God washed my heart last night
With tears, both bitter, sweet;
He probed in hidden corners, dark
And washed it clear, complete.

"My child," His voice spake sweet and low,
"This storm came as a grace;
Lean hard upon my breast, dear one,
And look into my face."

Completely spent, I looked and prayed,

"Dear Father, be it Thine,

To mold and make me as Thine wilt,

Thy will forever mine."

...Alethea S. Miller

After Brother Britton resigned the mission work, he accepted the pastorate of the Breton Creek Baptist Church, Potosi, Missouri. At the time he and his family lived at Belgrade, Missouri, where he owned a home.

The Brittons decided that it would be best for them to move to Potosi, eighteen miles away, in order to be near the church. They bought a lot in Potosi and built a house. They rented the house in Belgrade.

The Breton Creek Church grew steadily. After a few years the Brittons decided that they should move back to Belgrade in order to take life a little easier. They reasoned that it was not too far to drive to and from Potosi. They sold their home in Potosi and bought several acres in Belgrade near the property which they already owned. They spent several weeks and much money renovating the house on the property.

They moved in, happy to be back among old friends. Life went smoothly for a while, but not for long.

One Wednesday afternoon Brother Britton preached a funeral at Potosi. One of the members of the church invited the Brittons to stay over for the evening meal and to go to the mid-week service from there. The Brittons sat on the front porch visiting with the man of the house while his wife prepared the meal.

Someone passing by said to the Brittons, "That was a pretty bad tornado they had in your town this afternoon, wasn't it?" That was the first they had heard of a storm.

A few minutes later, another man came by to say, "That storm really tore things up around Belgrade."

The Brittons decided that they had better go home to investigate. Their daughter, Beulah Akers, and family lived near their home. Donald was to have gone to their house after school.

The Brittons excused themselves before eating the meal

and anxiously started toward Belgrade. As they drew near the town, they began to see results of the tornado. Trees were down; barn roofing and furniture were hanging in some of the trees. The Brittons vowed to each other not to be too disturbed, if the members of the family were not hurt, even though their property might be destroyed.

When they got in sight of their home, it was in shambles. All the weeks of labor in re-doing the house were lost. They frantically searched for Beulah and the rest of the family. They were safe. Beulah had run to the basement for shelter. Her children and Donald had not arrived from school.

The Brittons accepted the situation as God's telling them something. Each secretly know that God wanted them to live in Potosi, where their work was. Back to Potosi they went! They lived in a rented house until they could build another. They sold all of their Belgrade property to live in Potosi as long as God directed them. For twenty-five years John Britton remained as pastor of the Breton Creek Church. He is now the beloved pastor-emeritus.

After the Storm

The tornado completely destroyed the Temple Baptist Church building. The congregation was at a great loss, but they met to ask Brother Britton to hold revival services in a lodge hall. Large crowds attended the revival. One man said that he went to the meeting just to give a donation to the church in order to help get a new building. Earlier he had had no intention of going back to the revival, but the Lord convicted and saved him. He and twenty-one others made professions of faith during the revival.

Chapter XXIV

PHILOSOPHY OF LIFE

"...Be ye kind one to another, tender-hearted, forgiving one another, even as God for Christ's sake hath forgiven you,"
Ephesians 4:32.

Brother Britton's philosophy of life is: "Treat other people the way you wish to be treated." He taught his children to think twice before speaking; to forget others' faults; not to repeat slanderous reports about others; to be content with what they had; to let life be motivated by love and kindness.

The Bible is his chief literature, his rule of faith and practice.

He firmly believes, *"Train up a child in the way he should go; and when he is old, he will not depart from it,"* Proverbs 22:6.

His philosophy might be summed up in two poems:

Forget It

Forget the slander you have heard,

Forget the hasty, unkind word;

Forget the quarrel and the cause,

Forget the whole affair, because

Forgetting is the only way.

Forget the storm of yesterday,
Forget the chap whose sour face
Forgets to smile in any place.
Forget you're not a millionaire,
Forget the gray streaks in your hair.
Forget the coffee when it's cold,
Forget to kick, forget to scold,
Forget the plumber's awful charge,
Forget the iceman's bill is large;
Forget the winter's blustery days.

Remember

REMEMBER— The value of time;
The success of perseverance;
The pleasure of working;
The dignity of simplicity;
The worth of character;
The power of kindness;
The influence of example;
The obligation of duty;
The wisdom of economy;
The virtue of patience;
The improvement of talent;
The joy of originating.

In all nature God supplies in keeping with needs. Brother Britton believed that God would surely supply the needs of His children. He noted:

The fish was given fins for the water; the flying birds wings for the air. The eagle understands the purpose of its talons and beak; the ant-eater, its pronged snout; and the porcupine, its quills. Each bird, creature of the land or the sea was wisely equipped with gifts to meet the peculiar need of its owner. That principle is also true of plant life. A person whose task in life demands great strength receives it.

Chapter XXV

FUNERALS

"...It is appointed unto men once to die, but after this the judgment," Hebrews 9:27.

Longfellow wrote, "There is no flock, howsoever tended, but one dead lamb is there. There is no fireside, howsoever defended, but has its vacant chair."

Funerals were always difficult, for Brother Britton's heart was easily touched. He said, "It is much easier to preach a funeral for a dear saint of the Lord than it is to try to comfort the family of someone who has left no Christian testimony."

In his more than fifty years of ministry, Brother Britton has preached hundreds of funerals, in areas far and wide, and under divers circumstances.

Very early in his ministry, he was working on the county road. (That was the way he paid his poll tax. In lieu of payment a man might work four days—two days, if he furnished a team.) A man came to ask the men who were working to go to the cemetery to finish digging a grave. There was to be a funeral at the church that afternoon, and the grave was not completed.

Brother Britton and some of the others went with the man. They worked fast and hard to have the grave finished in time for the funeral. They were scarcely finished when the funeral procession arrived. The home-made casket was on an old spring-board wagon bed. Other wagons and people on horseback followed.

When time came for the funeral to begin, the minister who

was to officiate was not present. A member of the family went to the cemetery where the men were putting the finishing touches on the grave. He asked Brother Britton to preach the funeral. He said, "I can't. I have my old bib-overalls on. I am sweaty and dirty, as you can see."

They waited, but the preacher who was to have the service did not arrive. Brother Britton finally decided to go into the church building where he got the worn pulpit Bible. After a song and prayer, he tried to comfort the hearts of the bereaved family. He warned the unsaved to accept Christ as their Saviour.

On separate occasions he preached the funerals of two alleged infidels. He emphasized that the Bible says, "*The fool hath said in his heart, There is no God...*" Psalm 14:1. He dwelt upon the parable of a certain rich man, whose sad story is related in Luke 12. God called the man a fool because he was not rich spiritually.

Three of his most difficult funerals were for boys who were murdered in taverns. He asked himself, "How can I comfort the hearts of those heart-broken mothers? What can I say to the rest of the family and kind friends?"

Upon further reflection he decided to preach to the living. The destiny of the departed cannot be changed. Someone who listens may be saved.

Through the years many have been convicted of sin and have accepted Jesus as Saviour as a result of hearing funeral messages.

Brother Britton has trudged through the heat and the cold, sleet, snow, rain, and mud to preach funerals. At times he has gone when he had to borrow money to pay for the gas for his car. Many times he received no reimbursement.

Chapter XXVI

THE WAY OF SALVATION

"A young man, who had a Christian mother and sister, left home to seek employment. He found a job in a lumber camp. One day he was critically wounded in an accident. He knew he was going to die, and he knew that he was lost. He asked for someone to read God's Word to him. No one could find a Bible in the camp. He asked for a song, but no one could sing a hymn."

With those words of introduction, Brother Britton began to sing the old song about the dying young man.

Dying From Home, and Lost

Companion, draw nigh, they say I must die,

Early the summons has come from on high.

The way is so dark, and yet I must go,

O that such sorrow you never may know.

Chorus

Only a prayer, only a tear,

O if sister and mother were here;

Only a song 'twill comfort and cheer,
Only a word from that book so dear.

Ah, can you not bow and pray with me now?
Sad the regret we have never learned how,
To come before Him, who only can save,
Leading in triumph thru death and the grave.

And can you not sing a song of His love,
How he came down from the mansions above
To bleed and to die on Calvary's tree,
Bringing salvation to sinners like me?

Alas; it is so; but thus it must be;
No word of comfort or promise for me;
To die without God; or hope in His Son,
Covered in darkness, bereaved and undone.

O people of God who have His blest Word,
Will you not heed the command of your Lord,
And publish to all of Adam's lost race,
Pardon, forgiveness, salvation thru grace?

S. M. Brown wrote and copyrighted that old song in 1892, four years before Brother Britton was born.

Many trusted the Lord in the service that night. Since that night Brother Britton has sung that old song to touch the

hearts of many. He has always tried to make the way of salvation so plain that even children could understand how to be saved. He declares, "The Bible presents the way of salvation in clear and certain terms."

The way to eternal life is presented here with a fervent prayer that all who read this book will stop to ask God to save them, if they do not already know Jesus as personal Saviour.

All have sinned:

"As it is written, There is none righteous, no not one,"
Romans 3:10.

"...All have sinned, and come short of the glory of God,"
Romans 3:23.

Why all need to be saved:

"Wherefore, as by one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin; and so death passed upon all men, for that all have sinned," Romans 5:12.

The wages of sin:

"...The wages of sin is death..." Romans 6:23.

God commendeth His love:

"...God commendeth His love toward us, in that, while we were sinners, Christ died for us," Romans 4:8.

Call upon the Name of the Lord:

"...If thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus, and shalt believe in thine heart that God hath raised him from the dead, thou shalt be saved.

For with the heart man believeth unto righteousness; and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation.

For the scripture saith, Whosoever believeth on him shall not be ashamed.

For there is no difference between the Jew and the Greek: for the same Lord over all is rich unto all that call upon him.

For whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved," Romans 10:9-13.

Chapter XXVII

THE FAMILY

Across the Sea

John T., the eldest son of the Brittons, was the only one in the family to serve in the armed forces of the United States. He served four years in the Air Force. He spent several months in South Korea. He saw the thirty-eighth parallel change sides a number of times. He experienced the horrible reality of war.

Mrs. Britton said, "The real joy of living went out of my life while John T. was in the thick of battle in Korea before I realized that I should trust God with my children wherever they may be. God was so good to us. He brought our son home without a scratch."

John T. had taught school before going into the Air Force. When he got out of service, he took a job with a company which had a contract with the government to set up and maintain radar stations in various countries of the world. In the years that followed, he and his wife, Ava Gay, and two daughters, Patti and Jane, saw a lot of the world.

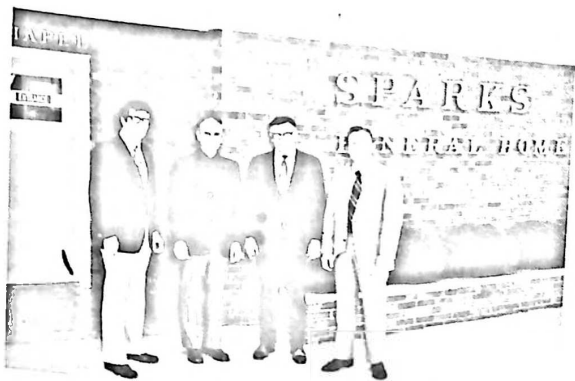


John Thurman Britton

Pfc. John Thurman Britton, son of Mr. and Mrs. John L. Britton, Potosi, Missouri, has been awarded the American Spirit Honor Medal as the outstanding graduate of his basic training class at Lackland Air Force Base, San Antonio, Texas.

The medal is awarded on the basis of qualities judged best to exemplify the American spirit, including honor, initiative, loyalty, and high example to comrades in arms.

**The presentation was made February 29, 1953, at a parade of the 3720th Basic Military Training Group.
(from *The Washington County Journal*)**



From left to right: Donald Britton, John T. Britton,
Alfred Britton, and Donald Sparks

The Britton Brothers

The Britton Brothers Enterprises include the Sparks Funeral Home, Potosi, Missouri; The Britton-Turnbough Funeral Home, Steelville, Missouri; The Britton Funeral Home, Cuba, Missouri; The Britton Brothers Furniture Store, Cuba, Missouri; and the Franklin Variety Store, Cuba, Missouri.

Donald, a former student of Central Baptist College, Conway, Arkansas, and a graduate of the Mortuary Science School in Indianapolis, Indiana, is the manager of the Britton Funeral Home, Cuba, Missouri. He and his wife Madeline have a son, Kevin, and a daughter, Lori. He is a deacon in the First Baptist Church, Cuba, Missouri.

Al manages the Sparks Funeral Home, Potosi, Missouri. Before assuming that position, for twenty-one years, he was an executive in the Ford Motor Company, Cleveland, Ohio. He served as Supervisor of Cost and Financial Analysis, prior to joining his brothers in the business in Missouri.

While in Ohio he was active in the planning and construction phases of two buildings for Baptist churches in different towns.

Al said, "I am proud to have been a part of Ford Motor

Company management, but it means more to me to have had a part in constructing two Baptist churches where people will work for the salvation of souls."

The Faith Baptist Church, Streetsboro, Ohio, ordained Al as a deacon.

Al and his wife, Barbara, have one son, Ronald.

John T., a former International Telephone and Telegram Engineer, is the manager of the Franklin Variety Store, Cuba, Missouri. After spending nineteen years with the telephone company, he took early vested rights retirement. At the time of his retirement, he was a Senior Systems Engineer.

John and his wife, Ava Gay, have two daughters, Patti and Jane. He is a deacon in the First Baptist Church, Cuba, Missouri, where he is also a lay speaker.



H. W. Darst, the first son-in-law of the John L. Brittons



**Marilyn Ruth Darst (at ten months), the first granddaughter
of the John L. Brittons**



**(Back row, left to right: Darrell and Dwayne — twins —
first great-grandchildren of the Brittons.
Front Row: Katrina and Danny Orr. All are children of
Gerald and Marilyn Darst Orr.)**

More Deacons and Preachers

The Lord blessed the Britton family with preachers and deacons.

Marie's husband, H. W. Darst, is a Baptist preacher, a former school teacher, and a former writer of Sunday School literature. The Darsts have one daughter, Marilyn who is the wife of Gerald Orr.

Dolorece's husband, E. F. Gibson, is a Baptist minister, former school teacher, and writer of various quarterlies for the Baptist Missionary Association of America. Their children are Phyllis, Kenneth (a Baptist minister), Wayne and Judy, who married C. R. Curtman, a Baptist minister.

Beulah's husband, Charlie Akers, is a deacon in the Temple Baptist Church, Belgrade, Missouri. Beulah and Charlie's children are Elmer and Delmer (twins), Charles Dean, LaDonna, and Glenn.

Opal's husband, Joe Wilkerson, is a deacon in the Breton Creek Baptist Church, Potosi, Missouri. Joe, his father, mother, sister, and two brothers were all saved in the same revival. Brother Britton baptized them in the same service.

Opal and Joe's children are Nancy and Connie. Opal has always lived near her parents. She has been the one upon whom they have leaned because all the other children lived away. She is always willing to help them.

Erma Lee married Dr. Darrell Lee Holley, a Baptist musician. The Holley's have three children: Terri, Amy, and Randall.

Chapter XXVIII

ILLNESSES

"Blessed be God, even the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of mercies, and the God of all comfort;

Who comforteth us in all our tribulation, that we may be able to comfort them which are in trouble, by the comfort wherein we ourselves are comforted of God.

For as the sufferings of Christ abound in us, so our consolation also aboundeth by Christ," II Corinthians 1:3-5.

Heart Attack

As he tried to supplement his family's income, hard physical labor was a way of life for Brother Britton. Providing for a family of eight children was not easy. As needs arose he resorted to the carpenter trade.

One summer he used a portable mixer to prepare concrete to use in the construction of a house. The temperature was high. His heart could stand no more that day. He had his first heart attack! Workers rushed him to a hospital where the doctor said he arrived just in time. The physician ordered him to slow down and to refrain from hard physical labor. His stay in the hospital was remarkably short. He was soon back in the pulpit.

In 1959, the family had a reunion at the Britton home. (They are a very close-knit family and use every excuse possible to have a family "get-together." After a sumptuous meal, Brother Britton excused himself so that he could go to the church to help the Young Adult Sunday School Class paint

their classroom. He was gone about an hour. When he returned, he mentioned that he had painted quite a lot of the room. About mid-night, he had another severe heart attack.

Mrs. Britton and Marie rode in the ambulance with Brother Britton. Mrs. Britton became ill. Marie got the driver to let Mrs. Britton in the front seat.

Marie said, "It was a terrifying trip. It was pouring down rain. The road was under construction. The ambulance driver took a wrong turn on the detour. I prayed as I held dad's hand. The rest of the family was praying. God heard and answered. He spared dad's life. How we thanked Him!"

A Leg Saved

"When things have gone wrong, mother has always been the one to console us," say all her children.

It was ever such a comfort to hear her say, "Things are going to be all right." They always were!

When Mrs. Britton became dangerously ill in the summer of 1974, all her children gathered at her bed-side in the Missouri Baptist Hospital, St. Louis. Because she is now a diabetic, gangrene had developed in her foot where a small tumor had been removed. Circulation of the blood had stopped from her hip to the bottom of her left foot. The pain was excruciating. The doctor promised that with the help of the Lord he would do all he could to save her leg, but he gave no assurance that he could do it.

The day for the dreaded surgery arrived. The family gathered in the hospital waiting room for the long vigil. They prayed throughout the day. The operation lasted eight hours. The operation was successful, but she was in intensive care for several days. She remained in the hospital for six weeks, after which she went to Marie's for a time of recuperation.

Chapter XXIX

TESTIMONIALS

Brother Britton has been pastor of the Breton Creek Baptist Church since July 7, 1951. He has worked hard all those years. Many years ago, the church voted to give him two weeks vacation with pay every year. He preferred to be in his pulpit every Lord's Day.

A stroke several years ago kept him inactive for a little while, but his recovery was amazing. Some wondered if he would ever be able to preach again. His reply was, "If it is the Lord's will, I will." He has preached many more years. Another illness in 1975 kept him away from church, but not for long.

When Brother Britton became pastor of Breton Creek, the building consisted of a sanctuary only. Over the years, the church has made a number of improvements. She has added Sunday School rooms, new floors in the sanctuary, a new furnace, air-conditioning, carpeting, brick on part of the exterior, and new pews.

In the years he has served as Breton Creek's pastor, Brother Britton has preached to and baptized many who were small children when he first came. Many of the young families in the church are made up of folk who were born after he came. He has led them to the Lord and baptized them by the authority of the church. He has performed their marriages, rejoiced with them at the births of their children and at other happy occasions, wept with them in times of sorrow, and buried their dead.

Brother Britton has baptized some who are the children of those whom he baptized years ago. The last one to date was Robin James, the nine year old daughter of Mr. and Mrs. Billy James. Robin's mother was one of eleven children whom Brother Britton baptized.

Through all those years, Sister Britton has walked beside him, sharing burdens, encouraging, helping, "holding up his hands."

It would be impossible to recount all the spiritual services, the great revivals, the truths believers have been privileged to learn, the blessings they have enjoyed together.

Brother and Sister Britton have always shown a deep, personal interest in each member and family of the church. They have stood steadfast for the truth and for the cause of Christ. They have lived for the Lord and have worked for the advancement of the Breton Creek Baptist Church.

Together they have walked through the years. Often the path led along the ways of sorrow, pain, and disappointment, but often, too, along ways of rejoicing on the "mountain top." It has been an era that "shineth brighter and brighter unto that perfect day."

...Ruth McCulloch

(Ruth McCulloch has been a Sunday School teacher in the Breton Creek Baptist Church for many years. She has also been president of the Women's Missionary Auxiliary for several years.)

Church Pianist

A year before I was born Brother Britton became pastor of the Breton Creek Missionary Baptist Church. My parents and my aunt took me to church there, starting me on the right road in life.

I was seven years old when the Lord saved me while Brother Britton was preaching. He baptized me, and the church received me into her fellowship. As the years went by, I came to love him and his family more and more.

The church has grown dearer to me each day. Many have heard the Word from the lips of Brother Britton. He is so sincere. One can tell that he loves souls, and he can feel the Holy Spirit as he preaches God's Word. During the last few years, as a pastor he has grown ever dearer to me.

I will never know how he remembers—except by the grace of God—all those Scriptures he quotes and gives their reference.

I will never forget the man's great sense of humor. He loves all mankind, but he can joke without harm to anyone. One of my favorite jokes was his saying as if it were Scripture, "In those days came John Wesley, preaching in the wilderness of Judea, saying, repent ye, for the Campbellites are coming." When everyone looked startled, he said, "I just wanted to see if you were listening."

Another favorite was about the old colored preacher who at the time for election of a pastor said, "All in favor of me as your pastor, say 'aye'" No one spoke. The preacher said "Silence gives consent. I's your pastor for another year."

Brother Britton must get discouraged at times, but he never gives up. He never seems to tire of his ministry. He loves God from whom he draws strength to continue. Brother and Sister Britton's doors are always open to everyone. They are willing to help anyone at anytime.

Brother Britton has always stressed missions. Because of his leadership Breton Creek Church has been very missions minded. He has great concern for souls all over the world.

Brother Britton has always preached the importance of the church. He stressed that the church should keep herself holy because she is to be the bride of Christ.

I pray that God will continue to bless Brother Britton and that He will send more dedicated men like him.

...Alice McCulloch Simpelo

(Alice has been a member of the Breton Creek Baptist Church since she was seven years old. She has served as church pianist, Girls' Missionary Auxiliary Counselor, and Sunday School teacher. She also sings in a girls' trio.)

What a Country Preacher Meant to Me

I have been a member of the Breton Creek Missionary Baptist Church for twenty-three of the twenty-five years that Brother Britton has been the pastor. It has taken much prayer and dedication on his part to keep us in line and to win the many souls that have been saved through the years.

I have heard Brother Britton quote John 3:16 and Romans 10:9-10 as many found their way to the altar, repented of their

sins, and arose with shining faces, testifying of God's saving grace.

Many from the membership of the church have surrendered to the ministry in the past twenty-five years. I have seen fathers, sons, and grandsons in the same family accept the Lord and then follow Him in baptism.

During his twenty-five-year pastorate Brother Britton has missed very few services. A few years ago he had a stroke. The church was in one accord as she sent her prayers up in his behalf. He missed only four Sundays.

To have been a member of the Breton Creek Baptist Church has strengthened and inspired me to become a better Christian.

Brother Britton often pleaded for the church members to live dedicated lives. He set the example, The church respects him as a God-called preacher and as a leader. He taught that church members should adhere to Romans 12:2.

The never-tiring, prayerful, dedication of Brother Britton's helpmeet has helped him to overcome the heartaches that church members have caused him over the years. She has been by his side, helping all hours of the day and night. Once the phone rang in the middle of the night. A lady called to say that she was miserable. She was lost, but she did not know how to be saved. She wanted to know if she might come to their house. The Brittons said, "Yes!" They soon dressed to greet the weeping lady. They read God's Word to her and prayed with her. While she was on her knees in their living room floor, the Lord saved her.

One evening following a service Brother Britton accidentally locked a member in the church building. He laughingly said that he was sorry, but I think he was trying to tell that member something.

Brother Britton preaches what is in God's Word. He has said many times, "I'll run before I will take it back." He likely would not run or take it back either.

Once someone borrowed the church's new air-conditioners without returning them. Brother Britton reminded the church to pray for the thieves. He quoted Romans 12:21. That was not easy! The church later put in a central air-conditioner for the church plant.

I do not know how anyone could sit under Britton's preaching for long without accepting Jesus as his personal Savior and then becoming a member of the Baptist Church.

That country preacher has preached over two thousand six hundred sermons during the time that he has been at Breton

Creek Baptist Church.

I think I can speak for all at Breton Creek Baptist Church: "We love and respect him." When the Lord calls him, he will hear, "Well done, thou good, and faithful servant, enter into the joys of thy reward."

...Mabel C. Benson

(Mabel has been the church clerk at Breton Creek for a number of years. She has also been a Sunday School teacher, a member of the choir, and a diligent worker with the young people of the church.)

Chapter XXX

GOLDEN YEARS

Grow old along with me:

The best is yet to be,

The last of life, for which

The first was made.

Our times are in His hands

Who saith, "A whole I planned,

Youth shows but half; trust God;

See all nor be afraid,"

...Browning

The Brittons celebrated their Golden Wedding Anniversary April 6, 1969. Their eight children, with their companions, most of their grandchildren, and great-grandchildren were present, along with many other relatives and friends.

The family rented a large hall for the occasion. They mailed engraved invitations. The children made great preparations

for the celebration. They ordered a huge four-tier wedding cake and decorated the hall with wedding bells and all the trimmings.

When the appointed day for the celebration arrived, an air of festive excitement prevailed. (John T. and his family had just returned to the states, after having lived in Germany for a year. Marie and her husband had moved back to Missouri, after having been away from the home state for twenty-three years.) Relatives and friends began to arrive with baskets filled with delicious food.

Much eating, talking, picture taking, and remembering took place.

Relatives and friends brought many beautiful gifts to the Brittons. During the day a money tree grew several hundred dollars.

James M. Barrie, the famous Scott writer, declared, "God has given us memories that we may have roses in December."

The Brittons have a great supply of roses in the December of their lives.

They have taken many of the bumps out of the road of life in order to make traveling easier for their children. They have helped to build bridges in church work and missionary endeavors in order to make the way easier for many who will follow.

The Bridge Builder

An old man, going a lone highway,
Came at the evening, cold and gray,
To a chasm, vast and deep and wide,
Through which was flowing a sullen tide.
The old man crossed in the twilight dim.
That sullen stream held no fears for him;
But he turned, when he reached the other side,
And built a bridge to span the tide.

"Old man," said a fellow pilgrim near,

"You are wasting your strength in building here.
Your journey will end with the ending day;
You never again will pass this way.
You have crossed the chasm, deep and wide,
Why build you this bridge at eventide?"

The builder lifted his gray old head,
"Good friend in the path I have come," he said,
"There followeth after me today,
A youth whose feet must pass this way.
This chasm that has been as naught to me
To a fair-haired youth may a pitfall be.
He, too, must cross in the twilight dim.
Good friend, I'm building this bridge for him."

...William Dromogoole

The Psalmist prayed, "...*Teach us to number our days, that we may apply our hearts unto wisdom,*" Psalm 90:12.

"The days of our years are threescore years and ten; and if by reason of strength they be fourscore years, yet it is their strength labor and sorrow; for it is soon cut off, and we fly away," Psalm 90:10.

Chapter XXXI

BEYOND THE SUNSET

Beyond the sunset, O blissful morning,
When with our Saviour, heaven is begun.
Earth's toiling ended, O glorious dawning;
Beyond the sunset, when day is done.
Beyond the sunset, O glad reunion,
With our dear loved ones who've gone before,
In that fair homeland we'll know no parting
Beyond the sunset, forever more.

...Blanche Kerr Br

At the old home place the most beautiful time of the day was at sunset. When the day's work had ended, the family gathered for the evening meal. Indescribable peace and contentment prevailed.

In the summertime the huge, banistered front porch was favorite gathering place. A look across the tiny green valley toward the brilliant sunset brought a feeling of awe and expectancy for what lay in store for the tomorrows.

Beyond the sunset of life for Christians, "*...Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man, the things which God hath prepared for them that love him,*" I Corinthians 2:9.

It will be wonderful when all of God's family will gather beyond the sunset of life in that great everlasting tomorrow.

Tears have washed the cheeks of many during the years, especially Brother Britton's children, as he preached about life after death. He would often stop in the middle of his sermon to sing:

O're death's sea, in yon blest city
There's a home for every one.
Purchased with a price most costly,
T'was the blood of God's dear Son.

Chorus

In that city, bright city
Soon with loved ones I shall be,
And with Jesus live forever
In that city beyond the sea.

Here we've no abiding city,
Mansions here will soon decay.
But, that city God built firmly,
It can never pass away.

I have loved ones in that city,
Those who left me years ago.

They with joy are waiting for me,
Where no tears can ever flow.

T'ward that pure and holy city
O'ft my longing eyes have cast.
Jesus whispers sweetly to me,
Heaven is yours when earth is past.

* * * * *

I am waiting for the dawning
Of the bright and blessed day,
When the darksome night of sorrow
Shall have vanished far away;
When forever with the Saviour,
Far beyond the vale of tears,
I shall swell the song of worship
Through the everlasting years.

I am looking at the brightness
See, it shineth from afar
Of the clear and joyous beaming,
Of the "Bright and Morning Star."
Through the dark, gray mist of morning
Do I see its glorious light;
Then away with every shadow

Of this sad and weary night.

I am waiting for the coming

Of the Lord who died for me;

Oh, His words have thrilled my spirit,

"I will come again for thee."

I can almost hear His footfall

On the threshold of the door,

And my heart, my heart is longing

To be His forevermore.

...Selected

Even So, Come Lord Jesus

The Apostle John described that heavenly home that awaits all those who accept Jesus as a personal Saviour (Revelation 20, 21).

God's children have a longing to be with Jesus beyond the sunset of the earthly abode. It shall be a place where the sunrise of that eternal day will last forever.

The Lord promised, "... *Surely, I come quickly.*"

Even so, come, Lord Jesus. Amen!

