

Mr. Penney has placed this testimony in print . He said, "But in the morning I was alive. To awake again was a strange kind of surprise. In some vague way I knew there must be a reason. What that reason could be I had no idea, nor there seem any value in straining to puzzle it out. "I felt restless and apprehensive. It was still too early for the day nurse to come on duty. In order to do something, anything, I got up, put on my clothes and wandered downstairs ....

"I felt as though an immense aloneness closed me in. I stood there, uncertain, in an emptiness that seemed to me to have no horizon. "Stealing softly along a corridor I heard the thread of an old, familiar hymn: *Be not dismayed whate'er betide. God will take care of you ...* "It seemed to be coming from a part of the building which contained the chapel. Seemingly without volition I moved slowly toward the sound. "The music grew clearer, the words distinct- *All you may need, He will provide God will take care of you ... Lonely and sad, from friends apart ... No matter what may be the test ... God will take care of you.* "I entered the chapel, sank down into a seat at the back . *Lean, weary one, upon His breast, God will take care of you.* "Quietly someone read a passage from the Scripture. 'Come unto me, all ye that ore heavy laden, and I will give you rest.

...Take my yoke upon you, and learn of me; for I am meek and lowly in heart, and ye shall find rest in your souls. For my yoke is easy and my burden is light ...' "Prayer followed within myself spontaneously.

I groaned, 'Lord, I can do nothing. Will you take care of me?' In the next few moments, something happened to me. I have never been able to explain it clearly in words and cannot now. I believe it was a miracle.

"I had a feeling of being lifted out of an immensity of dark space into spaciousness of warm and brilliant sunlight. The thought flashed through my wearied mind that if I had held myself responsible for such success as I had achieved, so too was I, and I alone responsible for all the trouble that had descended upon me. But the great thing was that now I knew; God with His boundless and matchlessly patient love was there to help me. God had answered me when I cried out, 'Lord I can do nothing. Will you take care of me?' This was His answer. "A weight lifted from my spirit. I came out of that room a different man, renewed. I had gone in bowed with a paralysis of spirit, utterly adrift. I came forth with a soaring sense of release, from a bondage of gathering death to a pulse of hopeful living. I had I glimpsed God.

The growth of his children forced him to consider Sunday school and church attendance. He accepted it as a "rather passive gesture of all-round living."

He says, "In a vague way I told myself that a man's duty was to support the church with money in addition to living in a conscientious and upright manner, but that it was not particularly necessary to go further."

When Mrs. Penney felt she should have her tonsils removed, she was so inured to saving every possible cent to help expand the business, that she would not take a conveyance from the hospital back home. She walked through a heavy rainstorm. She caught cold and pneumonia developed immediately.

"When she died my world crashed about me," Mr. Penney writes. "To build a business, to make a success in the eyes of men to accumulate money-what was the purpose of life? What had money meant for my wife? "I felt mocked by life, even by God Himself."

For months J. C. Penney's life seemed to drift. He was tempted by demoniac urges. But God was reaching toward him. He was in New York City and had gone for a long walk, hoping that physical weariness would induce sleep. He tells this story, "As I walked wearily along I began to hear fragments of sound from a rescue mission. Through a crack in a loosely hung door the strains of an old, familiar hymn, 'Jesus, lover of my soul,' sifted out into the dark chill of the night. "Out of bone-tiredness, and the nagging of the wind, and some curiosity, I stepped inside the mission, slipping into a seat at the back of the room.

"A man was telling a story of rescue from a drunkard's life, and his countenance made an immediate, profound impression on me. He was dressed sprucely in the height of fashion; it was hard to visualize what he was saying-that through drink he had sunk as low as it is possible for a man to go. "He had lost his job, lost his friends, been deserted by his family. At last disgraced, a bitter caricature of the man he once had been, penniless, sick, he had literally been picked out of the gutter by folks from this rescue mission and cared for until he could get on his feet again. Now he was in charge of the rug department of a big department store.

"'I found Jesus Christ in this place,' he said simply, his face alights. 'I never had known Him before. It is surprising no matter how low we sink; how we forget the precious things that were taught us by saintly mothers and God-fearing fathers; how badly we have repaid Him in the past for His loving-kindness and tender mercies-He will always welcome us back to our home in His family, His patience with us is endless, His mercy eternal.'

" 'If I can express to you men in my lame words the joy that is in my heart tonight. The debt I owe to Jesus Christ and, through Him, to the good people of this rescue mission ...'

"There was a message for me in that man's words. Sitting there quietly (at the time I thought by such a thin margin of chance, but later I wondered if it had been chance at all)

somehow I knew it. "In my distraught state I did not altogether grasp it clearly. But I felt that my steps had been led in some way that night, halfway across the city, along the murky Bowery, through Chinatown and into Doyers Street, to Tim Noonan's Rescue Mission."

There was a struggle. It happens in every life. Mr. Penney has put it this way, "Of course the real trouble was that foolishly, I was presuming to make the terms on which God could have me. Instead of letting Him make the terms on which He could take my life and make it His."

It was hard for Mr. Penney "to envision a larger life" than making money, accumulating wealth and influence.

Still he was faced with the persistent question, "What is the reason for this deep discontent within me?" It led him to the discovery of a great truth: it is useless to run away from life, which must rather be faced fairly and squarely.

Mr. Penney tried another avenue. He crammed his life with philanthropy and good works.

He adorned his life with senses of fairness and liberality. Again he became concerned about the ethical rather than the spiritual. Absorptions of expanding success and making money gripped him. There was the excitement of business adventure to sustain him. God had to take it ALL away. "By way of a hard awakening we did, however, learn some valuable lessons. Of them all undoubtedly the most valuable was that, of itself, money will not insure the success of any project or any life. It is possible to possess material wealth and yet to be a failure."

After he was stripped, Mr. Penney said, "When I worked for \$6.00 a week at Joslin's Dry Goods Store back in Denver, it was my ambition, in the sense of wealth in money to be worth \$100,000 someday. When I reached that goal I felt a certain temporary satisfaction, but it soon wore off and my sights were set on becoming worth a million dollars."

Later he reached this conviction: "If it is possible to live the Christian life at any point whatever, it should be possible to live it in all relationships of one's life. When the individual faces a question of business choice he should ask himself, 'Is this worthy of my best?' If the answer is 'Yes,' he should go into it to the extent not only of upholding his own self-respect, but also of holding fast to the highest Christian standards."

J. C. Penney learned that God would not accept his money until he had given himself .

Mr. Penney knew that he had passed from condemnation to justification when he could testify: "I had to pass through fiery ordeals before reaching glimmerings of conviction that it is not enough for men to be upright and moral men.

When I was brought to humility and the knowledge of dependence on God, sincerely and

earnestly seeking God's aid, it was forthcoming, and a light illumined my being. I cannot otherwise describe it than to say that it changed me as a man. "I must admit it was only after I assumed the responsibility of church membership thus rendering unto God the things that are God's—that I realized just how merely being a church member, and attending church regularly, is not enough. For all men there must be yet one more thing: giving oneself over to God's purpose."

At long last Mr. and Mrs. Penney journeyed to Philadelphia to ask for Mr. Penney's baptism at the Baptist Temple. He stood upon the verse found in St. John 15: 10: "If ye keep my commandments, ye shall abide in my love; even as I have kept my Father's commandments, and abide in His love."

This is Mr. Penney's testimony: "Pondering it, I felt that it was not that baptism, in itself, had brought about the profound personal change of which I was now clearly aware, but that baptism had been the climactic symbol of the change; grievous experiences and ordeals had worked the change, and the hour of baptism was the crowning moment ."

He rests his soul on these words, "This is life eternal, that they might know Thee, the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom thou hast sent." Mr. Penney is never without his Bible.

J. C. Penney has recorded his faith in divine healing. It took an act of God to spare his life and restore his health.

The Great Depression, beginning in the latter half of 1929 and continuing through the early thirties sucked J. C. Penney economically dry. In Mr. Penney's autobiography, "Fifty Years with the Golden Rule." "In the end my debts exceeded \$7,000,000, all incurred to save what to me were public-spirited enterprises." He was flat broke. At 58 he faced the necessity of starting all over again. Servants, gardeners, aides were all gone. Mr. and Mrs. Penney lived in two rooms. Mrs. Penney did the housework.

Physical collapse followed financial collapse. Mr. Penney became a very sick man. When he finally asked Dr. Elmer Eggleston, a life-long friend and a staff doctor at the Kellogg Sanitarium at Battle Creek, Michigan, to go over him, Dr. Eggleston ordered him to bed in the sanitarium, assigning day and night nurses to the case.

This is how Mr. Penney remembers it. "I didn't have the money to pay for such care. Yet I knew it would be useless to tell that to the doctor, who had known me for a long time as a man of wealth and would not be inclined to believe me even if I could subdue my pride sufficiently to tell him about my state of affairs."

In the harrowing night of extreme physical torture Mr. Penney put his thoughts into letters for Mrs. Penney and the children, fully expecting that when morning came he would no longer be alive.