

MEETING LIFE SITUATIONS

by C. B. Strang

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INTRODUCTION

Life situations! They are as inescapable and as inevitable as life itself.

Vital religion is made for and fits into all life situations, be they favorable or otherwise. When gladness and blessing and prosperity are the Christian's portion, he thanks God and seeks to share with those whose lot is less pleasant. On the other hand, when adversity and grief and suffering fill the day with heartache, the child of God learns submission and sympathy and looks with courage and hope to a better day.

Christianity is pretty much a way of life. Real religion is sincerity, sympathy, friendliness, tolerance. If your life and mine do not exemplify these characteristics, we do not have the right to call ourselves full-fledged Christians. The earnest Christian is alert to the opportunity that presents itself in any life situation. Most people are receptive to a word of witness, a proffer of assistance, a listening ear. If the spiritual mind is dull, if interest is turned toward self, if the heart is cold and unsympathetic, all these opportunities are missed. Souls that need help are deprived of it and we miss the unique thrill that comes only from lifting another's burden. Doctor C. B. Strang, the author of this volume, is eminently qualified to write a book of this kind. His earlier experience in sales work, and later his wide contacts in the ministry, have put him in touch with thousands of men and women in all walks of life. He has a sympathetic spirit, an open mind inclined to be tolerant with the weaknesses of the flesh, and most important of all, the heart of a shepherd. He loves humanity—especially the individual man or woman who has a problem. And he is not hard to find.

These annals of Doctor Strang's personal experiences will interest all types of readers—young, old, saints, sinners, ministers, laity. They constitute a fund of personal evangelism illustrations that will be valuable to any preacher, Christian worker or Sunday-school teacher.

—**P. H. LUNN**

AN
ALPHABETICAL ARRANGEMENT
OF LIFE SITUATION TOPICS

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LIFE SITUATION NO. 1

TOPIC: Motive

SUBTOPIC: God Judges Us By

TITLE: The Accidental Shooting

At the door stood one of the finest looking young men I had seen. “May I have a word with you?” he asked.

“Certainly, step in,” I replied.

He was a young police officer. I had never seen him before. What could he want with me? But here is his story:

Two nights before a robber was surprised at his work by this policeman. Commanding the robber to put up his hands and advance slowly toward him the officer edged toward the burglar. It was a stormy night. The streets were very slippery and just as he was about to put his hand on the burglar the officer slipped on the ice. His other hand held his Colt automatic and his gun finger was on the hair trigger. The gun was discharged and the bullet pierced the body of the boy burglar. He fell at the policeman’s feet. He was quickly gathered up and the ambulance called, but he died on the way to the hospital. Before me sat the grief-stricken young policeman who had shot him.

“What I want to know is, will God hold that against me?” he cried. “I haven’t slept for two nights, and, before God, I didn’t try to do it.”

What a situation I faced! What could I say to this young man?

Questioning him closely, I was soon convinced that the shooting was accidental.

I tried to meet his need. I told him that God always looks at the motive rather than the act, that God looks at what we try to do, rather than at what we do. I explained that if he had not intentionally shot the young man he stood in God’s sight innocent of his death. I pointed out to him that God was more merciful than his chief, who had already exonerated him.

“Do you believe that, Reverend?” he cried.

“With all my heart I do,” I replied.

I shall never forget his sigh of relief, nor the look that came into his eyes. But somehow I perceived that he was not quite satisfied.

“Officer,” I asked, “would you like to pray about this matter?”

“I certainly would,” he exclaimed.

I took him up to my study. I started to pray, and then I got both my arms around that handsome young man and told God all about it.

After awhile we got quietly to our feet. A tear trickled unnoticed down his face. His big hand, with the finger that had pulled that trigger, gripped mine firmly.

“I feel better now,” he confided.

I watched him swing down the street with shoulders back and head held high. He had the peace of God in his heart.

As he went on his way I silently thanked God that He had enabled me to point that young man to the God who “supplies all our need according to his riches in glory.” My Master had adequately met another life situation.

LIFE SITUATION NO. 2

TOPIC: Backslider

SUBTOPIC: Gloriously Reclaimed

TITLE: An Early Morning Caller

I had retired at twelve-forty in the morning after a hard day ending with a hospital call.

At 1:10 a. m. my phone rang. The man on the other end wanted to know if he could see me. I told him he could, and he said he would be at my home in half an hour.

At 1:40 a. m. the phone rang again. He could not find me. He was not familiar with my section of Pittsburgh, and he could not find anyone from whom to inquire at that hour. But he simply must see me, and would I give him more specific instructions? He arrived at 2:15.

Never have I seen a more burdened young man. I had never seen him before, but he knew of me through friends. Would I pray for him?

He was a backslider. One time he had been miraculously healed and saved, but now he was without God. It was the old story of getting in with the wrong crowd. For two nights he had been unable to sleep. He was in a strange city. His wife was not a Christian and could not help him pray. He must have relief!

I talked to him a bit and then we both knelt down by the davenport. I prayed earnestly for him. I asked him to pray. "It's been so long since I've tried I don't know how," he protested. And then, after a minute, "It's just no use tonight."

"Only Satan would tell you that," I replied. "Pray in your own simple way, and in your own words."

Finally he started. Seldom have I heard such desperate praying. Then the fountains of the deep were broken up. I prayed and cried with him. I exhorted and encouraged him as best I could. Several times it seemed that

he was not going to make it, but after a struggle of half an hour the victory came, and what a victory it was!

For a long time he shouted and cried and praised God.

At 3:30 some of the neighbors came to inquire. But that did not stop him, nor did I want it to. What a time we had!

“Wait till Mom hears about this,” he exulted.

“I suppose you’ll write at once,” I suggested, knowing she lived 120 miles away.

“Write her nothing,” he shouted. “I’m going home and tell her about it. Glory! And now I’m going home to try to get my wife saved.”

At 3:45 he went down my front steps praising God. I got back to bed at four, but could not go to sleep. I lost a night’s sleep, but felt compensated in that I had helped another soul to God.

But he did not come to church the next Sunday, although he had faithfully promised me. On Monday evening I phoned him. Did I say that he was a very prominent announcer from one of the local broadcasting stations? I called him at the studio. He was glad to hear my voice.

“I was expecting you’d call,” he said. “Wait till I tell you the news. I went home yesterday to tell the folks. On Sunday night we all went to church. What a time we had! My wife went to the altar and got saved. So did my brother and his wife. My mother and I went along with them. I’m so happy, and this is glorious.”

That was the best news I had heard from a broadcasting station in my life. How glad I was for Ken and his family.

I am sure God can meet the situation of anyone who will give Him a chance.

LIFE SITUATION NO. 3

TOPIC: Dealing With Souls

SUBTOPIC: Wisdom Used In

TITLE: A Ride With A Lumberman

I was returning from Bethany-Peniel College, where I had given the spring “Aycock Lectures.” My subject there had been, “Life Situations of Jesus and How He Met Them.” I had been telling the students that Jesus met trying situations while on earth, but He never failed to satisfy a human need, whether He met a ruler by night, a woman at the well, or a blind or leprous sinner. I was full of my subject while there, and left the school with the desire in my own heart to more fully emulate the example of my Master.

I changed trains at Newton, Kansas, and boarded the fast Santa Fe from there to Kansas City. The train was crowded, and I was forced to ask a gentleman if I might share a seat with him.

“Sure, Brother,” he replied, “I’m glad to have you.”

He was in the lumber business. So I talked lumber for fifty miles. His daughter was in college, and so was mine, and that took another fifty miles. But after awhile I told him who I was, and where I had been, and where I was going.

“I knew you were a preacher as soon as I saw you,” he exclaimed.

I was glad there was something about my bearing that revealed that. But now the talk started about religion.

I found him as needy as most travelers. I talked to him about Jesus. I do not know that I endeavored to explain much theology to him. He had some ideas and I listened kindly to them. He was not much of a church man he said. He did not like preachers very well. They always tried to shove their ideas on him and discount his. I assured him I had no desire to do so. I agreed with him that there were too many denominations and too much confusion about dogma and creed. I also offered no complaint when he said

there was too much pomp, form and ceremony in some churches. I let him talk on and on.

When he began to tire I commenced on my subject. I told him that Jesus came not to conform to the erroneous ideas of religion in His day, and would not in ours. I insisted that Jesus came in the flesh to reveal God to us, and also that He might represent us to God. I pictured Him as a companion, a friend, a burden bearer, a Saviour. I did it kindly, but firmly.

To his question about the suffering of humanity I replied that it is not always God's will to take away hardship, trial, temptations, suffering and death, but it is always His will to give us enough grace to endure these things.

I finally lapsed into silence and so did he. Then he tried to talk and could not. Sobs choked his voice. He was so filled up he was inarticulate.

Just then the trainman called "Kansas City." I grabbed my Gladstone bag and started out. My friend, still silent, followed close behind me.

Friends met me at the station. But before I hurried off my friend of the train took me by the hand and said, "God bless you, sir. You have done me a lot of good. You have given me a new outlook on life and a new insight into religion. And you are one of the few preachers I have met who seemed to understand my need."

I went away happy with the thought that I had successfully met his life situation, and incidentally I had successfully faced one of my own.

LIFE SITUATION NO. 4

TOPIC: Trusting God

SUBTOPIC: When Resources Fail

TITLE: Melting Ice

They sat before me each Sunday morning with shining faces, but I knew well the situation they were facing. They had an ice concession on a lake, or pond as they called it. They made their living by cutting ice from it in the winter time, storing it, and then selling it in the summer. A favorable winter gave them plenty of work and money, but the previous winter the pond had not frozen over, and now winter was almost over and still no ice.

It was aggravating, too. Several times it got cold enough to freeze the pond and they would tell me they intended to cut ice next week, for by that time the ice would be thick enough. But always the weather moderated and away went their ice and prospects.

Spring was on the way for the second time. There was little hope for ice now unless we had a hard freeze soon. But the hard freeze came and the pond froze to such a depth that they could cut in a day or two and they were very happy. But suddenly the temperature commenced to climb and each day the ice got thinner.

I prayed for it to stay cold and so did they, but as Sunday approached the ice was going fast. I knew I would have to face them on Sunday morning with something to say that would help them in their time of need, but how could I help them?

I prayed for a message, and I believe God gave me one especially for them. On Sunday morning my text was, “And ... the brook dried up” (I Kings 17: 7). I preached to two hundred, but my message was really for only two. I asked my audience this question: “Have you ever been compelled to stand helplessly by and see that on which you are depending slowly and surely taken from you?”

I told them that Elijah had that experience at Cherith. I emphasized the fact that the experiences of men of the present day are not different from those of men of past generations. I pointed out that whether it be a brook

receding, or stocks and bonds or a bank account the situations are analogous. I related how Elijah trusted God when the brook was receding, and even after it dried up. I reminded them that God took care of Elijah and that the ending of the Cherith experience was the beginning of better things for him at Zarephath. I insisted that God yet takes care of folks who will trust Him when outward appearances are against them.

Several people were helped that morning, but God had given me a message for at least two. Their happy faces shone that morning and they smiled through their tears. At the close of the service they voiced their faith in God, come what may. They did not cut a pound of ice that winter, but they did learn a lesson of dependence on God.

It is true that God does not promise ice for those who desire it, or warm weather for those who enjoy it. One man in a community may pray for ice to help him in his business, while another equally righteous prays for sunshine because he is without fuel and of course God could not answer both prayers at one and the same time. But God promises this transcendent blessing that, “thou wilt keep him in perfect peace, whose mind is stayed on thee” (Isaiah 26: 3).

I believe that promise and I believe that God can and will minister to us in every life situation.

LIFE SITUATION NO. 5

TOPIC: Soul Saved

SUBTOPIC: But Life Lost

TITLE: Eleven Fifty-Nine O'clock

One Sunday afternoon I was asked to visit an old gentleman in Lynn hospital. A nephew of the sick man accompanied me. When we arrived we found him unconscious and apparently dying.

“May we speak to him?” I inquired of the nurse.

“You can try,” she replied, “but he is so far gone that I doubt if we can arouse him.”

After calling him loudly several times and shaking him vigorously he slowly returned to consciousness.

“Uncle,” cried Archie, “I’ve brought the preacher to see you!”

There was no response.

Turning to me Archie pleaded, “Please do something for him. He has been an awful sinner. Don’t let him die without God.”

Here, indeed, was a situation! Here was a man fast nearing death. His life was fast ebbing away; he was barely conscious; he needed salvation. Could I snatch him as a brand from the burning? What could I do to help him?

Almost shouting, I told him the story of the cross. Desperately I urged him to look to Christ. Earnestly I pleaded with him to confess his sins.

To my questions, he nodded that he was a sinner, but believed Jesus could save him. Again his nod signified that he wanted prayer. Seldom have I prayed more earnestly than I did for that dying man. When I concluded I asked him if he believed Jesus had saved him. A slight smile and a nod was the answer. I shouted another word of encouragement in his ear, and then we were ready to go.

As we left the room I looked back. Already his eyes were closed; his mouth was open and he was again unconscious. An hour later it was reported to me he died.

“Brother Strang,” whispered Archie, as with tears streaming from his eyes we went down the corridor, “do you think he made it?”

“Archie,” I replied, “we deal with an all-merciful heavenly Father. In the last moments of a misspent life He extends pardon if we ask it. Yes, I believe we prayed him into the kingdom, but he has nothing to show for having lived. His life, so far as the kingdom is concerned, will be a blank unless we tell this story of his getting in at the fifty-ninth minute of the eleventh hour. Perhaps by our doing so it may help someone else to get in.”

I have related the incident here, and I trust it may help someone into heaven, but oh, friends, I am convinced that seeking God on a deathbed, if we are fortunate enough to have one, is the wrong time and place. God wants our lives as well as our souls.

However, I shall always be happy that God enabled us to be of service that day and it gives me great satisfaction to know that we assisted God to snatch one feeble brand from the burning.

No situation is too hard for God to meet!

LIFE SITUATION NO. 6

TOPIC: Smoking

SUBTOPIC: Delivered From

TITLE: A Smoke Screen

“You don’t believe there is any harm in smoking, do you?” asked the fine-looking gentleman, as he puffed calmly on his pipe.

I waited for a moment or two before replying. I was in his home, and I wanted to be courteous. Then, too, he was a very worthwhile gentleman, and I did not want to lose him.

Finally, I said, “Do you know I believe God always looks at one’s motives rather than at one’s acts. He looks at why one does a thing rather than at what one does.”

He agreed with me.

“Why do you smoke?” I inquired.

“Oh, just to be sociable,” he replied.

“Are you sure of that?” I questioned.

“Why do you think I do?” he countered.

“I think you smoke because you can’t quit it in your own strength. That pipe is your master, and God is always displeased when anything masters us. For my part I would not let a pipe master me. Yes, I do think it is wrong to smoke when smoking is my master. Why don’t you quit? You’re too big a man to be ruled by a pipe.”

I had told him pretty straight, and it sort of got him; he did not seem to have anything to say in return.

After prayer I left him with a few encouraging words. Of course I invited him to church.

Sure enough, he was there the next Sunday and his wife was with him. It was easy to preach to him, as he seemed to drink in every word. He came every Sunday for several weeks, and then our revival services commenced.

He did not resist long. He and his wife were among the first to come. It did not take them long to pray through either. Later they were sanctified and joined the church.

One day he confided to me, "I haven't touched the pipe once from the day you called on me. I sort of saw the thing in a new way after your visit. You made me feel ashamed to think that a pipe or anything else could rule me. When you prayed for me I asked God to give me strength to leave it alone. He did and I did. I discovered it was the thing that was keeping me from having a real experience. Before that I always hid behind the fact that the Bible said nothing about tobacco. You made me see that tobacco or anything else that ruled me was displeasing to God."

It happened six years ago, and he is still leaving the old pipe alone. There must be thousands like him over the land who are trying to be Christians while burning the devil's incense.

I trust that God will help me to point out to men everywhere that anything that rules them comes between them and God. God wants to rule and reign in our lives, and through the strength and grace He gives us He intends that we shall be kings, and as kings we shall rule over the domain of our own body, mind and soul.

Yes, I am sure there is harm in smoking.

LIFE SITUATION NO. 7

TOPIC: Breaches

SUBTOPIC: Taking The Initiative To Heal

TITLE: Winning A Friend

It happened when I was a very young Christian, and while it might not seem to have large proportions to some, it was the first large trial which confronted me, and it seemed to be of the utmost importance.

Wesley had been my friend for a year or two, and then suddenly, for no apparent reason, he avoided me, and even refused to speak to me. To make matters worse, he was transferred to a night position, and I remained on a daytime job. I had no opportunity to see him, and yet I was aware that something should be done about it.

One evening the man with whom I worked asked me if I would return and work until midnight. This I did, and I discovered that Wesley's position required him to come to work that night in the same building. He was employed on the second floor and I on the first.

Some time during the night I was required to go to the third floor for some information. It was necessary to pass close to Wesley's desk. He did not even look at me when I went by. I wanted to speak to him, but I didn't have the courage.

No one was at work on the third floor. I remember kneeling by a chair in that quiet office building, and there I prayed earnestly that God would help me to go to Wesley. God came and helped.

Going down to the second floor, I walked up to Wesley's desk, and putting out my hand I said, "Wesley, I am a Christian, and I want to be your friend."

I shall never forget the look that came into his face. To say that he was surprised is putting it mildly. His face turned red. He stuttered and stammered, and then he extended his hand to grip my outstretched one.

“Cliff, I want to be your friend, too,” said he. “This is the first time that anyone has ever done anything like this to me. I have been jealous of you, but I’m not now.”

Can you see the picture? Just two young men with clasped hands in the midst of a gigantic steel plant. But it was more than that! It was a picture of what Christ can do for a life He has entered. It is a painting of one “going the other mile.” It is a picture of the renewing of a worthwhile friendship.

I left Wesley that night with a happy heart. That incident did something for him, but it did much for me. We became friends, but I became a more established Christian.

I have had to do similar things for the past twenty-nine years. But the same God who met me on my knees at a chair on the third floor of the Physical Testing Laboratory that night has met me many times since, and has always given me grace enough to meet comparable life situations.

It is the intention of Satan to create breaches that cannot be bridged between friends. Friendships are ruined and homes broken up in this manner. But if we remember that “our brother has aught against us,” and if we will go to him, God will help us win those who might be eternally lost to us.

Do you face a similar life situation? Take the initiative and do something about it today.

LIFE SITUATION NO. 8

TOPIC: Quietness and Confidence

SUBTOPIC: When Dying

TITLE: A Faithful Steward

I sat talking quietly with him and his wife in his hospital room. He was a very sick man and he knew it. He had protested vigorously against going to the hospital, but had at last consented. Before he went he had got all his affairs in order. No, he had not been excited about it, but with no more ado than if he were getting ready to go to the adjoining town, he had made his preparation. His wife, even yet, had no idea how seriously ill he was. And now we sat talking.

“Brother Strang,” said he, “I’ll have Margaret send your coal to you while I’m sick. I’m anxious that you get the same grade you have been getting, and I’ve given her instructions about it.”

“That’s very thoughtful of you,” I replied.

“No, it’s just my business; you preach and I’m in the coal business. We must both do our work in the right way.

He was interested in the parsonage remodeling then going on. How had the prayer meeting been last Wednesday? Why had I taken my valuable time to come to see him on a Saturday afternoon when I should be in my study preparing for Sunday? These and many other things were on his mind.

Then he told me how he had been saved from a life of sin through the influence of a “Billy Sunday” meeting. He told me how he had later been sanctified, and modestly he recounted his faithfulness for approximately twenty years. His voice neither rose nor broke. God was possessing his soul in quietness.

Shortly I had prayer and then I left them. I knew them to be one of the finest, most lovable couples I had ever known. I knew that he was dying, and so did he, but that one he loved so well did not.

I was sent for hurriedly the next afternoon. A great change had taken place in him. He was sinking rapidly, but he recognized me and called me by name. I took that kindly hand in mine and prayed for him. There was no sign of fear or alarm in his eyes. He was just one of God's good saints going home. In less than an hour he had crossed through that dark valley from which none return. But not alone! He had trusted the Christ who had said, "I will never leave thee nor forsake thee."

Talk about meeting a life situation! Christ met his! It was apparent in his illness and obvious in his dying.

From that time on death has not seemed so dreadful to me. It has never been inviting, but if the Christ who met my good friend and member and conducted him out of this life will only do so for me, I too shall not be afraid. And that is just what He has promised to do, so "I shall fear no evil."

A good man dies well. He dies well because he has lived well. To be a Christian consists in something more than an act or a series of acts. Being a Christian means the living of a life; a life hid with Christ in God.

Do you know Jesus as your Saviour? Are you trusting in Him? You would not want to die without Him, would you?

As for myself, I intend to love Him more and serve Him better, for I want no complications when death comes seeking me. Death requires a preparation. Like my friend, we need to give some attention to temporal and material things, but like him also we should be prepared for those things which are eternal.

LIFE SITUATION NO. 9

TOPIC: Sustained By God

SUBTOPIC: When A Companion Is Suddenly Taken

TITLE: “O Death, Where Is Thy Sting?”

A hasty call to the hospital revealed the fact that one of my finest members had met with a serious accident.

I had rushed to the emergency room, only to learn that they had removed him to a room on the third floor. The little nurse lost not a moment in rushing me to his bedside. Immediately I perceived that he had only a few minutes to live. I breathed a prayer for him as doctors and nurses rushed about.

A voice at my elbow aroused me. It had a familiar ring to it. I was amazed to discover that the young doctor who had spoken to me was an old college classmate of other days. He informed me that he was now chief-of-staff in that great hospital.

“Come out into the corridor,” said he. “There is an important task I need to perform.”

I believed I knew what it was, and breathed a prayer for him.

In the corridor we found the wife of the injured man. “Oh, Brother Strang,” she cried, “please, please pray.”

The doctor friend very gently told her the truth concerning her husband. What a shock it was to her!

I dropped on my knees by her chair, and there asked God to verify His promise: “My grace is sufficient for thee: for my strength is made perfect in weakness.”

I can testify that God heard and answered prayer, and well He had need to do so, for the injured man died while I was praying. I heard his groans cease, and I knew the end had come even before I concluded. His wife was

aware of it also, but He who had conquered death had now ministered to her in the time of her greatest need.

No, I am not saying that God takes away the hurt when our loved ones die. I am only saying that He can and does give grace sufficient to endure it. Yes, even to praise Him, not because of it, but in spite of it.

I have watched with interest the life of the bereaved woman. I have seen her faith hold fast in spite of tremendous difficulties. I have seen the value of the religion of Jesus Christ exemplified in her life. I am remembering that "God is no respecter of persons." I believe that God will give each of us a full measure of grace when these trying things come upon us.

There is only one prescription that we can offer persons in the hour of sudden accident and bereavement, and that is prayer; for back of prayer is the God who answers. I am glad that I had a little part in presenting that prescription to that saint who lost her husband so quickly. I am satisfied that through prayer, and because of the God who answers prayer, we can meet any life situation that may confront us.

Accidents will come. In a moment of abstraction a step in front of a street car or automobile may prove fatal. When the natural laws of nature or safety are not observed one suffers the consequences. This is no mark of God's displeasure. But on the other hand, God takes great pleasure in easing the hurt of the offender; in healing the wound of the bereaved who are left behind. The complexity of life is continually producing complex life situations. But thank God, He is able to meet them all with His grace.

LIFE SITUATION NO.10

TOPIC: Believing Unto Salvation

SUBTOPIC: Upon The Word — Apart From Feeling

TITLE: Saved By Faith

He came to my study in great agitation.

“I’m having difficulty with my experience,” said he. “I just don’t seem to be able to keep it.”

“Oh, you are either an habitual or an occasional sinner?” I asked.

“Not at all,” he insisted. “I’m not living in sin, but I don’t feel that I’ve got what I need.”

“Did you ever stop to think that you are trying to save yourself, and trying to do it by substituting feeling or emotion for faith?” I ventured.

“I can’t believe,” he replied.

“Can’t believe whom?” I asked.

“Just can’t believe,” he rejoined.

“Now, look here,” I said. “You don’t mean you can’t believe Christ?”

Reaching for my Bible I read, “Him that cometh to me I will in no wise cast out.”

Then turning to him I said, “Coming is the assent and consent of yourself in the personal Christ; it is the yielding of yourself to Him as your Saviour and Lord. Now, as far as you know, have you given yourself to Christ?”

“Yes, of course I have,” he replied.

“Then here is the answer of Christ to you: ‘I will in no wise cast out.’ Can you believe that word and rest on it?”

“I believe it, but—” he stammered.

I said to him, “Back of each promise is the Promiser. We are saved by taking Christ as our Saviour, and by believing His word, for, after all, the Bible is not only God’s Word, but it is God’s word to you. It will be true whether or not you have feeling. Your mood will change; your emotions may run high or low, but God’s Word is always constant.”

“I’m beginning to see,” he ventured.

“Now, unless you know some reason for disbelieving Christ, suppose you believe and trust Him at once,” I suggested.

“Why, I can’t help believing Him,” he cried, with his face shining.

“I have found Him worth believing for twenty-nine years,” I told him, “and the reason why I know I’m saved now is because I now believe His word to me.

“Thank God, He does not cast me out,” said the young man.

On our knees we went in a prayer of thankfulness. When we had both prayed we arose and he went away singing.

Some days he does not feel so good yet, but his faith has never wavered. Sometimes his faith acts on his feelings in such a way that his cup bubbles over.

Later he went on and was sanctified, and today he is rendering faithful service to his Master.

God’s Word is worth believing. It is as true as God is. Faith in its promises will save, sanctify and revolutionize your life. Trust God today!

Too many are trying to save themselves just as my young friend was doing. Some are trying to win God’s favor, and to attract His attention; to plead with Him to be merciful and gracious. He is that already. If we will confess our sins, and repent of them by turning from them, and if we will place our faith in Christ and His Word, we are saved. It is not that He will save, but He does!

LIFE SITUATION NO. 11

TOPIC: Drinker

SUBTOPIC: Helped With Loving Counsel

TITLE: John Barleycorn Defeated

My elderly neighbor beckoned to me as I went past her door. "I've been watching for you," said she. "I want to talk to you about my son, Will. Until recently he has been wonderful to me and to his family, but lately he has started to drink. When he gets over his drinking he is ashamed of it. But bad company is ruining him. Would you say a word to him some day?"

"I'd be glad to do so," I replied. "Just let me know when he will be home."

The days went by but she did not call me, and then one day she became ill. Missing her about, I called and found her abed. As I visited with her, who should come in but the erring son! He proved, in many ways, to be a fine man. Obviously, his trouble was not out and out badness but weakness.

I talked business and then politics, and finally steered the conversation to religion. He had no objection to that. In fact, he seemed anxious to hear it. As I was about ready to conclude my visit a call came for him, and he indicated that he must go to his business.

Before he left I praised him for being so interested in his ailing mother. He appreciated that, but frankly confessed that he had been negligent of her lately and that he had caused her some worry.

"Will," I said to him, "you can't afford to neglect your mother. You will be sorry some day if you do. God has been good to you to allow you to have her until she has reached an age beyond three score and ten. My own mother died at the early age of forty-eight years. She never met my wife nor saw my children. She died without knowing that I became a Christian or a minister. But you have been privileged to have your mother see your children grow up. Thank God for that and make up your mind to bring her happiness in her declining years."

He was visibly affected. A tear stole down his cheek. I had not said a word about drink, but he knew what I meant.

“Reverend,” said he, “you are right. I’m glad you came today.”

“Let me tell you this before I go,” I continued. “One Sunday morning my mother asked me to take her to church. Father had gone on before, because she thought she wasn’t able to go with him. She felt better now and wanted me to take her. I didn’t want to go, and told her so. I was only a boy of nineteen, and hadn’t much use for church. But she insisted, and finally, grumbling and complaining, I accompanied her. That was the last time my mother went to church. Just one week and one day later she died. I’ve thought of it many times since. I’ve been glad a thousand times that I took her, and conscience-stricken ten thousand times that I did it grudgingly. How near I came to refusing her last request! Treat every one as though it might be her last, and do your best to live to please her.”

By then Will was crying openly. He grasped my hand once more and told me how much good I had done him. He had to go then.

“Will,” said I, “I am going to pray for your mother before I go. If you will bow for a minute I will be glad to include you in the prayer.”

Will’s face was in his hands in a moment. I prayed for his mother, and I prayed for him. God came near and blessed us. When we arose Will’s face was radiant.

“I’m going to be a better man,” was his way of putting it. For the third time he shook hands with me and voiced his appreciation. As he accompanied me to the door he pumped my hand again.

I believe Will has decided to cut the old crowd. I believe God will enable him to do it. Will is too good to let Satan bind and claim him. I am going to help this struggling man all I can, and I believe God is going to help him all He can. I know God is able.

There are men like Will on every street. I protest that we must find out, voice our interest in them, and pray for them until Christ comes into their hearts and every bad habit they have is broken.

LIFE SITUATION NO. 12

TOPIC: Hostility and Resentment

SUBTOPIC: Divinely Melted Away

TITLE: Why Did It Happen?

One of my members had not attended prayer meeting for a couple of weeks, so I phoned her:

“Come out to prayer meeting tonight. We are having something special.”

She came. She made a tremendous effort to get there through the rain, but she surely enjoyed that meeting.

At midnight my phone rang. The hospital was calling. An injured lady wanted to see me.

I went at once. It was the lady I had urged to come to prayer meeting. She had been struck by an automobile as she endeavored to enter an electric car. The accident had occurred just one block from the church.

Her husband and the other members of the family were in her room. An air of unfriendliness prevailed. They were not members of my church, but that could not account for it. I did not have to wait long, however, for the reason.

“Why did you ask my mother to come out on a night like this?” demanded the daughter. “And why did she have to get hurt on the way home from a prayer meeting?”

I could not answer either of the questions.

But the mother herself was uncomplaining. She was glad to see me. Her thoughts were for the others and not of herself. She wanted me to pray for them. I did, but I prayed especially for her. I lingered in that hostile atmosphere for awhile and then went thoughtfully home.

The next morning the injured woman died.

Out of courtesy I was asked to take charge of the funeral service.

What a situation!

What could I say to a heartbroken, embittered father and his children? Was there a message I could bring to those who were questioning the goodness of God? Could I make God real to some of them who were doubting His very existence?

How I prayed for guidance. But God surely helped me the day of the funeral. The text was “Be thou faithful unto death, and I will give thee a crown of life.”

I declared that the deceased was one who was faithful until the very moment of death. She illustrated the meaning of the text. I tried to show that the fact that she was taken thus was no sign of God’s displeasure. I pictured her as an uncrowned queen on earth, but now a crowned one in heaven.

God came on the scene and I preached through tears of sympathy. The hearts of the hearers commenced to melt. Tears streamed unnoticed down the faces of the family. Resentment cried itself out. Submission came to the resentful daughter as well as the others. The idea of sudden death, sudden glory, had not occurred to them.

At the close of the service they vindicated me of any blame for their mother’s death.

I left them, thanking God that He had enabled me to face a difficult situation, and thanking Him also that they had been given grace to meet theirs.

LIFE SITUATION NO. 13

TOPIC: Holy Ghost Received

SUBTOPIC: In Both Works Of Grace

TITLE: Theology Or Religion?

“What you believers need is the Holy Ghost,” shouted the earnest young preacher, as he brought his sermon to a climax. It had been a fine sermon and one delivered with unction and power. At the close of the service I invited the preacher to ride with me in my car to his home. On the way I spoke of the above declaration.

“Why, Brother Strang,” he exclaimed, “don’t you believe that believers need the Holy Ghost?”

Yes,” I replied, “and I’m going to tell you something else I believe. I believe that every believer has the Holy Ghost.”

“Don’t we get the Holy Ghost when we get sanctified?” he asked. “I’ve always been taught that.” “As a matter of fact and theology we don’t,” I explained. “We receive the Holy Ghost when we are saved.”

“Are you sure you are straight on that?” he demanded in an alarmed manner.

“Yes, and I want to get you straight on it,” I replied. “Does not the Bible say, ‘Ye must be born again.... of the Spirit’ (John 3: 7, 8)? And does it not say, ‘Now if any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of his’ (Rom. 8: 9).”

“It says that,” he answered, “but does that mean we must have the Holy Ghost before we can claim to be saved?”

“Certainly,” I replied. “The Spirit, the Holy Spirit, and the Holy Ghost are one and the same. If we must have the Spirit in order to be saved, then that means the Holy Spirit or the Holy Ghost.”

He looked perplexed for a minute and then questioned, “Well, what do we get when we are sanctified wholly if we already have the Holy Ghost when we are saved?”

“When we are saved,” I replied, “we receive the Holy Spirit or Holy Ghost, being born of the Spirit, but when we are sanctified wholly we are baptized with the Holy Spirit or Holy Ghost. In regeneration He comes to bring us spiritual life, and in entire sanctification he brings us the more abundant life. In the first instance, there is a reception or indwelling, and in the second instance there is an infilling or outpouring.”

The young preacher looked at me for a minute or two and then said, “Brother Strang, I got it in my heart all right; I have just been a little mixed in my terms.”

“That’s it,” I replied, “and you perhaps have mixed some others in their terms. But you might just as well have it right in your head as in your heart.”

“Thanks,” he said, “from now on I’ll experience it right in my heart, and I’ll present it correctly from the theological standpoint.” I felt encouraged about the young preacher. But in the last twenty-seven years I have heard many preachers and laymen who have used the same mistaken terms.

Do not try to make regeneration nothing more or less than a matter-of-fact business transaction in which God merely forgives sins. True He does forgive sins, but at the same time He puts His Spirit within, and thereby regenerates the heart. When He sanctifies wholly He burns out carnal tendencies and floods the soul in baptizing power with more of that same Spirit.

As I was leaving my young preacher friend he asked, “Did the disciples have the Spirit before Pentecost?”

“Yes, I believe they did,” I replied. “In John 20: 20-22 I read that Jesus appeared to His disciples before Pentecost, bringing them a message of peace, and at the same time giving them a commission, and then, ‘He breathed on them, and said unto them, Receive ye the Holy Ghost’.”

“But,” said my friend, “although He said that, perhaps they did not receive the Holy Ghost until the Day of Pentecost.”

“It could have been,” I rejoined, “but Jesus does not work that way. He had told them that if He went away He would send the Comforter to them (John 14: 16). He had been away and He kept His promise. At Pentecost they received a baptism with the same Spirit. In John 20: 20-22 they received the Spirit, and in Acts 2:4, they were filled or baptized with the Spirit in accordance with the promise of Acts 1: 8; thus Pentecost was actually a second blessing experience.” My young preacher friend was then convinced. Are you?

LIFE SITUATION NO. 14

TOPIC: Unpardonable Sin

SUBTOPIC: False Persuasion Of Committing It

TITLE: The Unpardonable Sin

“Come up to the altar and settle it now,” I pleaded with the young man, who stood white and trembling, as the evangelist gave the altar call. “It’s no use,” he replied. “It wouldn’t do any good.” “But why wouldn’t it?” I demanded.

“Because I have committed the unpardonable sin, and I can never get right with God,” he groaned. “But don’t you want to get right?” I questioned.

“Yes, more than anything else in all the world,” he replied. “But God has left me, just as an evangelist once told me He would, and now I can never be saved.”

“Don’t believe it,” I argued. “If you want to be saved it is proof positive that God has not left you, and that you can be saved.”

“No,” said he, “the evangelist warned us that night that someone was getting a last call. He said he felt it. He advised no one to leave that night without getting saved, but I left, and I have never felt the same since, so I know that God has left me.”

What could I say to him, and what can I say to thousands of others who are suffering under the same delusion? Silently I prayed for guidance. Then I spoke once more.

“My brother,” said I, “God would be the last one to leave anyone. I don’t believe He has left you. He is too kind and merciful to do that, and while you do not have as much feeling as you once had, that does not mean that God has left you.”

“Don’t you believe the Bible?” he countered.

“To be sure, I do,” I replied.

“Does it not say,” he asked, “‘Ephraim is joined to idols: let him alone’? That’s the very text the evangelist used the night I left the service. He said that God would turn away from a man who refused to be saved, and would never hear him again.”

“But,” I hastened to reply, “that evangelist did not interpret that text correctly, for in that passage God is telling others to leave Ephraim alone, lest they be contaminated with his idols. But He certainly was not saying that He would leave Ephraim alone. And while God did speak the words you have quoted, at the same time He was doing all He could to turn Ephraim from his idols.” He seemed unconvinced, and then wheeling on me he asked, “Does not God say, ‘My Spirit shall not always strive with man’?”

“Yes,” I replied, “He does. But yet I insist that God will strive until man will no longer strive with Him. It takes two to make a striving, and God will continue until man leaves Him. And after man does leave Him, His voice will call loudly after him, and the law of the divine dealing is that the deafer the man becomes the more piercing the voice of God, beseeching and warning. God’s mercy endures forever. You can wear out all loves but His.”

“Do you really believe, then, that I haven’t committed the unpardonable sin, and that there is hope for me?” whispered the man.

“I know you haven’t committed it, and I know there is hope for you. Let’s go to the altar now.”

It took only a few minutes of earnest praying for God to come into his heart. He rose to his feet and gave a wonderful testimony to the fact that Jesus saved him.

No doubt, there are many like him everywhere suffering because of the same perverted idea. Preachers, in their desire to get many to an altar, have brought the libel against God that He would leave men if they did not seek at once.

“But,” I hear someone asking, “do you not believe there is an unpardonable sin?”

Yes, and I believe it is this: that a man sins, and sins until his heart is so hard and calloused that he has no desire for God. He becomes so apostate that no appeal God makes to him is recognized. I do not believe that God leaves man, but I believe something infinitely worse, and that is that man leaves God. If God left a man He would come back to him, but the sad thing today is that multiplied thousands have so left God that they will never return to Him. But let us not blame man's sinfulness and wilfulness on God, for as long as a man desires to be saved and is capable of repentance he can be saved.

LIFE SITUATION NO. 15

TOPIC: Saving Faith

SUBTOPIC: Exercised Without Feeling

TITLE: Feeling Or Faith?

“I have tried so many times to get saved, but I just can’t make it. I’ve been to the altar and I’ve prayed at home, but I don’t feel any different,” said the young man at whose home I was calling.

I had prayed desperately with him at the altar the night before, but he had given up after about an hour and gone home. I had called with the intention of giving him further help.

“So you don’t feel any different?” I questioned. “What has that to do with it?”

“Are we not supposed to feel it?” he demanded.

“To be sure we sometimes feel blessed,” I replied, “but when we don’t feel we may know just as certainly that we are saved. We are saved by faith and we are kept saved through it.”

“Yes,” returned the young man, “I’ve heard about taking it by dry faith, but I’m not going to take it that way. I’ve got to know it, and to know it I’ve got to feel it.”

“My dear young man,” I replied, “there is no such thing as dry faith when directed toward Christ, for it then becomes living and potent. There is no other way to be saved except through faith.”

“That’s just the trouble,” complained the young man. “Too many have tried to take it by faith and have failed. No, I want to feel it, then I’ll know it.”

“Do you make feeling the basis of all knowledge?” I asked. “Do you have to feel that two and two are four in order to know it? How do you know that two and two are four?”

“Why that is axiomatic,” he replied. “Everybody knows that. My teachers have told me so, and experience tells me so.”

“Then feeling has nothing to do with it?” I inquired.

“Certainly not,” he replied.

“But,” I persisted, “suppose some day you got the feeling that two and two were five and you just couldn’t shake it off. Would you then lose faith in your teachers and experience and go to believing that two and two were five because you felt it?”

He thought for a minute before replying and then he said, “No, feeling has nothing to do with it. Two and two are four regardless of how I or anyone else feels.”

“Just so,” I replied, “and the promises of the Bible are true, regardless of your feeling. You are saved by faith in them and the One who gave them. If you confess your sins He is faithful and just to forgive your sins! God has made a contract with you. Your part is to confess; His to forgive. Do you believe that God would keep His part of the contract as quickly as you would yours?”

“Yes,” he almost shouted, “I do.”

“Well, if your part is to confess, and you’ve done it, what is God’s part?”

“To forgive,” he replied.

“And if you have done your part,” I persisted, “and He would be as quick to do His, what has He done?”

“According to His Word He forgives,” was the response.

“Well,” I asked, “would you want anything surer and truer than His Word? Isn’t it true regardless of how one may feel? If you are ever saved it will be because you believe God’s Word. Do you believe it?”

“I do,” he replied.

“And do you believe that promise?” I countered.

I shall never forget the look on his face as the truth gripped him. He slipped to his knees, and looking up toward heaven he earnestly thanked God for saving him.

Yes, he had some feeling after that. No man can realize he is saved without feeling better; in fact much better. But it is not the feeling better that saves him. Faith in Christ and His promises brings the victory and keeps one in victory. Do not gauge your religion by your feeling. Let me give you a better measuring stick. Here it is: "According to your faith."

LIFE SITUATION NO. 16

TOPIC: Waiting For More Conviction

SUBTOPIC: The Peril Of

TITLE: Feeling Or Conviction?

“No, I won’t come tonight,” replied the elderly gentleman in response to my invitation to come to the altar. “I just don’t feel like coming.”

“Have you ever felt more like going to the altar than you do tonight?” I asked.

“Scores of times,” he replied, “and when I feel like I used to I’m going.”

“But suppose you never do?” I asked. “Suppose you never have more conviction than you have tonight?”

“Oh, I’ll feel that way again,” he replied. “It’ll come back again.”

In spite of all I could do or say he refused. My heart was touched as I left him, as I thought not only of him, but of the thousands like him who are waiting for more conviction before moving toward God.

So stirred was I that I went back the second time to him. He was now sitting rather complacently while the evangelist continued the altar call.

“My dear man,” I said, “I’m worried about you. I want to tell you that the chances are you will never feel more like getting saved than you do tonight. While it is true that you have had more conviction in the past, it is also true that you may never have as much again. Continued refusal has hardened your heart. The gospel that one time softened it does not do so any more because you have said ‘no’ so often. If you ever get saved, you will have to move on the conviction you have.”

“But no one can get saved if he is not drawn toward the altar, can he?” he asked. “Isn’t there a time for everyone to get saved?”

“Yes, there is a time for everyone to be saved,” I replied, “and that time is now. ‘Now is the accepted time and today is the day of salvation.’”

“But, I don’t feel convicted enough,” he replied. “Look at that man over there. He is shaking under conviction. If I felt like him I would go. If God wanted me to go He would convict me like He does him. I feel fairly comfortable.”

“You are in far worse condition than he is,” I returned. “You were that way once, but you have rejected so long that it doesn’t bother you much to refuse again.”

And then looking him straight in the eye I said, “Unless you move on the conviction you have, you will never be saved.”

Taking him by the arm, I continued, “Conviction for sin is nothing more or less than being convinced that you are wrong, that you need to be right, and that Christ can make you right. The degree of conviction has little to do with the result you will obtain if you seek earnestly.”

Excitedly he asked, “Do you mean to say that I may never have a greater desire to be saved than I do now? Is knowing that I’m wrong and wishing to be right enough conviction to be saved on?”

“Exactly,” I replied, “and if you will take a younger man’s advice you will become a seeker at once.

I felt him yield. In a minute he was on his feet and in another he was at the altar.

It took him a little longer perhaps than if he had gone under trembling conviction. It took him some time to come to a state of repentance, but he did at last. His was a glorious conversion. I give you a word of his testimony, which is an exhortation to others, “Don’t sit around and refuse the appeals of the Spirit, it is too dangerous. I little realized my true condition. Satan had me believing that the thing to do was to wait until conviction seized me as in former days. I can see now that if I had continued to listen to him I never would have been saved. Move on the conviction you have now.”

Yes, conviction is necessary, but there are different degrees of it. A sad thing to me is to see the hundreds who come to every revival who are practically unmoved by messages that one time would have made them

tremble. While they congratulate themselves on their present feeling they little realize the danger they are in.

Sinner, do as my elderly friend did. Knowing that he was lost he sought to be saved. A seeking sinner and a seeking Saviour soon meet!

LIFE SITUATION NO. 17

TOPIC: Restitution

SUBTOPIC: Meant Going To Prison

TITLE: The Price Of Confession

I met him only once, but I shall never forget him. It was during the altar service one evening in the city of Alliance, Ohio. Never have I seen a man carrying a heavier burden. The evangelist had concluded the altar call and many seekers were praying.

“I must talk to you alone,” he said, calling me to one side. “I have something to tell you in the strictest confidence.” I took him aside to grant his request.

“Now,” I cautioned, “don’t tell me anything you will regret later.”

“But I must tell someone,” he said, “I’ve been weighted under this load for several years. Here it is: Several years ago when I lived in a southern state I was in great need of money. I was operating a business on a very narrow margin but I could not make it go. In my desperation I decided to burn my store and collect the insurance. This I did. I never was suspected, as the insurance company paid the entire claim. I have carried a sense of guilt for years, but tonight as I knelt at the altar I was overwhelmed with a feeling of remorse. I was unable to pray through. What shall I do? If I confess to the authorities, I will surely go to prison, but I must do something to get peace.

Poor young man! What would you have advised him to do?

I prayed silently for a moment before offering this advice.

Then I said, “Young man, this is what I’d do. I’d take the first train south and go to see the insurance company representatives. I’d give them my whole story and take the consequences. I’d rather go to heaven by way of prison than to miss it by way of an unconfessed crime.”

I believe I gave him the advice he expected for he replied, “That is just what I’ll do.”

We prayed together for a minute and he left me.

Months later I heard from him. Sure enough, he was in prison, but for the first time in years he was happy. Like Paul of old he could write, "I have all things and abound." The young man found peace through finding Christ.

I've never been sorry I advised him as I did. Heaven is worth all we may be called upon to pay for it. Hell will be full of remorseful souls who refused to pay the price. Some reader may have restitution to make. Please do not hesitate to do it. There is scarcely a Christian of my acquaintance who has not had some straightening out to do.

A man of my acquaintance worked in a railroad shop at the time of his conversion. After he became converted he was convinced that he must return many tools to the shop which he had taken while no one was looking. Securing a wheelbarrow he filled it full and started to the shop with it. Fellow workmen hooted and laughed. "Don't laugh," said he, "I've got another barrow full at home, which I shall get at once." He made full restitution and became happy through doing so.

I often think of the young man in the southern prison paying the price of his wrongdoing. I do not hear from him any more. He may be released by now. I hope to meet him in heaven.

Yes, heaven will be worth while at whatever price we pay for it!

LIFE SITUATION NO. 18

TOPIC: Weights In Life

SUBTOPIC: Necessary For Progress

TITLE: His Father's Bible

The Wabash train was speeding between Kansas City and St. Louis. I saw the sad-looking young man in the seat in front of me quietly leafing a Bible.

“Are you a preacher?” I asked.

“Oh, no,” he replied. “This is my father's Bible. I have just attended his funeral. He left me his Bible as a token of his love.”

“That's coincidental,” said I. “I have my father's Bible with me. He, too, left it to me.”

The young man did not know much about the Bible. Life itself, at the moment, was proving to be almost too much for him. He was in trouble. The depression had recently taken his business, and now death had taken his father.

“Why do these things happen?” he asked.

What could I say to him? How could I meet his need?

“Get your Bible out again,” said I. “Now read with me II Corinthians 12: 9, 10, 11. There is Paul's philosophy of life. He had reached that place in life where he would suffer all manner of reverses gladly.”

I went on to show the young man that resistance in the natural realm develops power. That the train on which we were moving could not go ahead sometimes because the way was too smooth. It needed the resistance which sand on the rail furnished. I explained that on the driving wheel of our train was a large cast weight. This was designed neither to accelerate nor retard our speed, but only to steady the wheel. I insisted that the weight was necessary for our progress.

I told him that resistance and weights in our lives are good for us. I informed him that I believed that anything that drives us to our knees is for our benefit and not for our injury. I pointed out that Paul had prayed for the thorn to be removed, but it was not. God's reply to him was, "My strength is made perfect in weakness, my grace is sufficient for thee." "Thorns in the flesh are sure to come, I explained, "but God's grace is our portion too. Adverse circumstances develop power in us. Through these the power of Christ rests upon us as it did on Paul." I urged the young man to adopt Paul's philosophy of life.

I saw the young man take his pen and put a bracket around the verses to which I had referred him.

"I didn't know those verses were in the Bible," said he. "And I didn't know that anyone could look on life as that man Paul did, and from now on I shall try to do so too."

The young man then handed me his Bible and pen, with the request that I put my name on the fly leaf.

"But," I protested, "you don't want me to write my name in your father's Bible."

"That's just where I do want it," said he. "That's the appropriate place for it, and I shall always remember this conversation."

I left him in Pittsburgh, as he continued his journey to New York. A smile was on his face and gratitude in his voice, as with a firm grip on my hand he poured out his thanks for my help.

There are thousands like him. I wonder if we even try to meet the needs of those around us.

LIFE SITUATION NO. 19

TOPIC: Sufficiency Of God's Grace

SUBTOPIC: At The Death Of A Loved One

TITLE: All-Sufficient Grace

For a week Joe's life was in the balance. On Monday evening he was rushed to the hospital suffering with pneumonia. On Saturday a group of preachers knelt by his bedside, and anointed him and prayed for him. As one of the brethren prayed I felt the glory of God in that sickroom. I opened my eyes and looked about me as the prayer continued. I looked on the face of Joe's father, and there I saw the glory of God shining as I seldom ever have before. We arose feeling that God was near, and that he had undertaken for Joe.

On Sunday morning I preached in the Bethany church. I had known for over a week what my text would be. Of course it was to be a sermon with which I was entirely familiar, because I was to have in my audience a college president and his faculty, over four hundred students and five hundred townspeople, so I must endeavor to preach a "big" sermon and preach it in a big way.

But God dealt with me for a week. He kept telling me to change my text. On Saturday evening I decided to change my proposed "big" sermon for a message that God was putting on my heart. I gave that message on Sunday morning.

Sure enough, there were one thousand people present, but I gave my message, not for the many, but for a few. The few were represented by Dr. McGraw, the father of the sick boy, and three members of his family. There they sat expectantly, a son and brother belonging to them was sick unto death, and what was I to say to them? Oh, the challenge of it!

Then I began to understand why God would have me change my message. The text was, "And he said unto me, My grace is sufficient for thee: for my strength is made perfect in weakness. Most gladly therefore will I rather glory in my infirmities, in reproaches, in necessities, in persecutions, in distresses for Christ's sake: for when I am weak, then am I strong" (2 Corinthians 12:9, 10).

I preached from a heart of love that day. Tears streamed down my face, and here and there in the audience people were affected, but I was preaching to Brother McGraw and his family. I told them God's grace is sufficient in time of trouble; that sorrow and trouble can never separate us from God; that individual suffering is no sign of God's displeasure; that sorrow and trouble endured will result in bringing us a fuller measure of God's grace.

I told the audience that anything that will drive us to our knees is good for us. And then the hospital scene of the previous day flashed into my mind and I said, "Death may yet step in and take from us Joe McGraw, but it can never rob us of what we felt and experienced of God's grace in Joe's room yesterday."

The sermon ended and Doctor McGraw's arms were around me with these words, "Brother Strang, God gave you that message for me. I believe His grace is sufficient."

The next morning Joe McGraw died. The funeral service was held the same afternoon at Bethany Church. It was the saddest, yet the most glorious service I was ever in.

There sat the good doctor and his family in about the same place they had sat the morning before. They were heavy with sorrow, but God with His grace had preceded death, and they were living witnesses of the fact that God can meet the most difficult of all life's situations.

LIFE SITUATION NO. 20

TOPIC: Wasting Life

SUBTOPIC: Saved From

TITLE: Waste And Restoration

He had made his boast that he would never attend church again, but one night I saw him come hobbling to the back seat. I talked to him after service and discovered he was a young university graduate. In a railroad accident he had lost both limbs above the knees. This loss, together with the fact that the railroad refused him any compensation, had soured him with life and people. For religion he had no use at all. He claimed to be an atheist. He was now filling a subordinate position in a local plant, burying his talents, and cursing man and God as he did so.

I invited him back, but he would not promise, yet, strangely enough, he returned the next Sunday evening, and also the next.

What could I say to this man who thought God and men were against him? Could I correct his false thinking and give him the proper outlook on life? I determined to try!

I prayed much for him. I tried to say something in each sermon to encourage him. Finally I decided to preach an entire message to him. I prayed about it, I studied hard for it, and I put my best into it. I went to church on the Sunday night I was to preach it greatly burdened for that young man.

As the service continued I commenced to be concerned. He had not come in. The song service was concluded; the announcements made; the special song ended, and still he had not made his appearance.

I stood up to preach; announced my subject and then my text. I thought God wanted me to preach that sermon and for the benefit of that one individual. But was I mistaken?

No, there the door opened, and he hobbled to a seat.

I repeated my text for his benefit: “To what purpose is this waste?” (Matt. 26:8).

That night, although the church was filled, I preached to one man. I told him that all waste is wickedness; that all lives were designed to have a divine ideal in them; that all wasting of life is traceable to absence of faith, to absence of love, or to indifference. And then I told him that all lives are reparable by redemption.

God got hold of the young man that night and he shook with conviction. But he would not come forward for prayer, although I extended the altar call. He made his way out before I concluded.

I went home feeling that I had failed. I wondered if anything would move him to an altar of prayer and to God. I was tormented with a doubt that he would ever get saved.

About an hour after I got home my phone rang. One of my good members who lived next to the church was calling.

“Say, Brother Strang,” he exclaimed excitedly, “there is a young man here and he wants to see you. Hurry down for he is ready to pray.”

Can you imagine my joy in finding it was the young man for whom I preached the message?

It did not take long to pray him through to glorious victory.

Here is his testimony, as I remember it:

“I left the church tonight fighting against God. I was determined I wouldn’t yield, but God spoke so forcibly that when I got home I couldn’t rest, so I came back to the church for prayer. Finding it closed I came next door seeking help. I believe there is a God, and I am through rebelling against Him. He can have my heart and life. I’ve wasted too much of it already.”

I went back home rejoicing, and firmly convinced that God can meet the life situation of anyone. There are thousands like this young man who need someone to get interested in them. Will you help God meet their need?

LIFE SITUATION NO. 21

TOPIC: Hard Cases

SUBTOPIC: Can Be Won

TITLE: The Hardest Man To Win

“Why, I couldn’t get him to church,” exclaimed one of my members, he’s the hardest man in town. He drinks; he’s profane; he’s a cigarette fiend, and he has no use for church or preachers.”

“Nevertheless, he’s the man I want you to go after,” I insisted.

We were conducting a personal worker’s campaign, and I had asked for the name of a man the group believed would be the most difficult to get to church. One of the group suggested the man referred to, but when I suggested that he go after him he was taken aback. I did not know the man, but because he seemed like a hard case, I insisted that my worker should go after him.

The next Sunday evening when I stood up to preach I noticed a stranger sitting by the worker referred to above. I wondered if it could be the man he thought would be so hard to get to church. I concluded he was.

I was not much interested that evening in making an oratorical display or in following any homiletical style. I neither sought to be profound nor deep. But I preached out of a heart of love to one man. When the altar call was made the stranger raised his hand for prayer. No, he would not come to the altar, but he was visibly under conviction.

I was introduced to him at the door. Sure enough, he was the “hard” individual, but not quite so hard as when he came, for God got hold of him that night.

I thanked him for coming, and congratulated my worker on bringing him. He promised to come back the next Sunday morning, and he made good the promise. He seemed to like it. He returned on Sunday evening. In the meantime much prayer had been made for him.

On Sunday evening he sat in the second row of seats from the front. He trembled with conviction. I told him that night with the help of the Spirit that God could break the tobacco habit, deliver him from profanity, cure him of gambling, and put the love of God in his heart.

The “hard” individual was the first one at the altar. The man who some thought could not be brought to church was now praying and beseeching God for mercy. And it did not take him long to find God, for a seeking Saviour and a seeking sinner soon meet. There never was a more earnest seeker or a more happy finder. What a miraculous change came into his life!

Through his coming his wife came, and also his son, and in fact several others. Later on they were sanctified and joined the church. He was through with the old crowd and the old ways. He now bent every effort in service to God.

It has made me wonder if there are really any hard cases. Perhaps all “hard” individuals need is someone to insist that an interest be taken in them; that a kind invitation be given them by one who is already experiencing salvation; that several band together to pray for them; and that a preacher bring them a message out of a heart of love and compassion.

If these things are done the life situations of poor individuals can be met from our pulpits each Sunday.

LIFE SITUATION NO. 22

TOPIC: Offering First A Positive Salvation

SUBTOPIC: Instead Of Legalistic Negatives

TITLE: God Or A Cigarette?

“You must give up smoking,” demanded the earnest and well meaning evangelist of the young man kneeling at the altar.

“I don’t see how I can do it,” he confessed, as sorrowfully he arose and made his way back to where he had been sitting.

I felt sorry for him, so securing his name and address, I determined to call on him.

I did not get around to see him until several nights later. The special services were then over. I could scarcely recognize him as I went into his living room. It was blue with cigarette smoke. I talked about other subjects for a while, but finally veered around to salvation.

“Yes, I want to be saved, but I know I can’t quit smoking,” he groaned, “so I might as well forget it.”

“Why not get saved first, and let God take care of the smoking?” I suggested. “God is greater than a cigarette. You are now on the outside looking in; it will look different when you are on the inside looking out.”

Yes, he would like to quit, but like millions of others he could not in his own strength.

“But,” said I, “the salvation of Jesus Christ consists in doing the thing for us we can’t do for ourselves. At any rate I’d get saved and then see about the cigarettes.”

He had become so discouraged that he had stopped attending the revival services, but he promised to come to church the following Sunday. He came, too, and when the altar call was made on Sunday evening he came forward with a determined step. God gloriously saved him, and to my certain knowledge he has not even wanted a cigarette since.

He became the head of our personal workers' band, and one of the hardest workers in the church. Today, he is superintendent of a Sunday school and still standing true.

I have never been sorry that I went to his home that evening, and I have always been glad that God gave me enough sense to know how to deal with him.

Of course he gave up his cigarettes, and to be sure the evangelist was correct in telling him he must. But when we make salvation a negation, or a series of negations, we are wrong. Too often we have wanted to take something away from a man without telling him we have something vastly better to give him in its place. Salvation does consist of giving up cigarettes and many other questionable things, but it also consists of receiving the grace of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. The young man I write of never could have given up his cigarettes until Christ came in, but when He came it was easy.

Today the devil has millions of men and women and boys and girls bound down with the cigarette habit. We can meet their life situations only by telling them that Jesus Christ has something better. You will not have far to go to commence to tell the story; there are needy ones all about you!

LIFE SITUATION NO. 23

TOPIC: Divorce

SUBTOPIC: The Cure For

TITLE: The Cure For Divorce

“I guess we’ll have to separate and then get a divorce,” confided the young man to me. “We don’t get along. We don’t seem to be suited to each other.”

“But what about your children?” I inquired. “What would you do with them? Don’t you love them?”

“Yes, I love them, and I don’t know what we would do with them, but we can’t go along as we are. What would you advise us to do? Our home is very unhappy.”

How many times I have been called upon to listen to a story like this! And how many times I have been asked to help solve a similar problem, or to meet a similar situation!

In this day when the divorce courts are grinding out divorces almost as fast as the marriage license bureaus are issuing licenses, how shall we advise those who are having marital difficulties?

“This is what I advise you to do, my boy,” I replied, “Go home and take her on your knee; put your arms around her, and tell her that you love her. And when you tell her that, mean it with all your heart. Go on now and see if it works.”

He saw me in a day or two.

“It worked,” he beamed. “She loves me, too. We hadn’t been speaking for several days, but everything is fixed up now.”

“Now that you know the prescription employ it often,” I advised. “There is nothing fundamentally wrong between you and your wife. The devil is trying to do to your home what he has done to thousands of others. Don’t

let him. The strongest weapon in all the world is love. Use that weapon to protect your wife and children, and to give you happiness.”

“I’ll do it,” he exclaimed. “Every time a misunderstanding comes up I’ll take her in my arms and tell her I love her.”

It is true that many people are failing in life today because they do not know how to relate themselves to each other. They do not live on a moral plane. It is not that they are immoral, but they are unmoral or nonmoral.

Most of the difficulties in the great business world, in the church and in the home are the result of misunderstanding. A little more effort to get along with each other would produce remarkable results.

The first year of married life is often the hardest. It is then that the most adjustments must be made. At that time some girls are not yet psychologically weaned from their mothers, and some boys have not yet forgotten the way Mother used to make things. Little things then start arguments which sometimes result disastrously. Then when the children come, the grandparents sometimes cannot refrain from indulging them too much, as in the case outlined above. And this makes for trouble.

But in it all, and through it all, true love will conquer. Many who have truly loved each other have been separated, and even divorced, because of a small misunderstanding which was not settled intelligently. If separation and divorce were forgotten, and if they were not so easy to obtain, more of our young folks would make greater efforts to get along with each other.

Without being sentimental, I say that the prescription, “Take her on your knee, and tell her that you love her,” will solve many marital problems and meet many home situations.

LIFE SITUATION NO. 24

TOPIC: Saved From The Fire

SUBTOPIC: Through Earnest Prayer

TITLE: The Winning Of Levi

“Will you and your wife do something for me today, Brother Strang?” the voice at the other end of the line inquired.

“We would be glad to help you in any way we can,” I replied.

The lady who asked the question was one of the most respected of my flock, but she had a wayward boy. She had reason to believe he was keeping company that day with a group of drunken bums who had a hangout in a deserted pottery near the edge of town. Would we go with her to see if we could locate him? We went.

As we stepped into the building we were met by one of the most loathsome individuals I have ever seen. To our inquiry about the boy we were seeking he merely pointed toward an old kiln from which smoke was ascending. At first we could not see into its depths, but after a while we discerned five men lying in a state of intoxication on the floor. All around were empty canned heat containers. I noticed a bucket half full of alcohol at the edge of the kiln. A fire smoldered dangerously near the men, but so far were they gone in drunkenness they did not notice it.

“Is my boy down there?” called my friend. No answer.

The question was repeated again and again without response. After her eyes became accustomed to the smoke my friend discovered her boy was not there. Then looking at me she said, “I want you to speak to these men.”

“That would be useless,” I protested. “They are so drunk they would never know it.”

“You are a minister,” replied she, “and I want you to pray for them.”

What a situation!

I commenced to pray and God helped in a marvelous manner. While I was praying I heard a stirring in the kiln. As I concluded a man started up the ladder from its depths, and then another, and another, until all five stood before me. God had in a minute of time sobered each of them!

“Men,” said I, “I want you to take me by the hand and promise me you will go home and quit drinking. You were not made to live like this.”

Each took me by the hand and each promised. But as the last one grasped my hand he fell on his knees by my side.

“Oh, Reverend,” cried he, “no one ever prayed for me before. Won’t you pray one more prayer for me?”

I knelt with him on the rough planks and poured out my heart to God for him. Never shall I forget his look of despair, or the sorrow in his voice as he cried out, “Oh, Reverend, God doesn’t love me.

I insisted that He did, and encouraged him to pray, but He only said, “God doesn’t love me!”

Later, it was time to go, but as we started he cried again, “Won’t you pray one more time for me?”

Again on the hard planks we knelt, and I prayed earnestly for Levi, for that was his name. But it was no use. He still insisted that God did not love him.

Finally I left him, but I invited him to my church, and, strange to say, he promised to come. The next afternoon I had just started out to call, but before going half a block I noticed a bedraggled figure coming toward me. It was Levi. He told me he wanted me to pray again for him. He had not been able to wait until Sunday. He insisted he was not worthy to come into my house, but I took him in against his protests.

“Look, Reverend, at my hand. I got it in the fire a couple of nights ago.” It was burned to the bone. I put some ointment on it. I allowed him to wash up. I gave him a clean shirt. Suddenly he stopped.

“Reverend,” said he, “let’s pray now.”

On my kitchen floor we knelt, and I prayed for the poor old tramp who believed that God did not love him.

All at once he interrupted the prayer.

“What was that?” he exclaimed, “what was that?”

“What did it feel like, Levi?” I asked.

“Something right there,” said he, putting his hand on his heart.

“Levi,” I replied, “that’s Jesus come into your heart. He does love you!”

The poor old face lighted up. It was beautiful to behold. The peace of God came into his heart.

“I got it,” he cried. “I got it.”

Then in a quavering voice he commenced to sing. It was a song he had learned at his mother’s knee. He had not sung it for over fifty years.

Levi and I arose from our knees. We were one through the blood of Jesus. He was happy that day as he left me.

A few weeks later I picked up the evening paper. On the front page there was an account of the burning of the old pottery building where I had prayed for the unfortunate men. The police said the building had been burned by tramps. Then followed a list of the names of the culprits. To my chagrin, I saw the name of every man for whom I had prayed that day. They had all broken their promises and gone back to their evil ways—all but one. Levi had gone to his home, and the last I heard of him he was living an exemplary life.

How glad I am that God enabled me to help Levi in this life situation.

LIFE SITUATION NO. 25

TOPIC: Plucked From The Burning

SUBTOPIC: Through Faithful Visitation

TITLE: A BRAND FROM THE BURNING

“Will you visit my nephew in the hospital?” inquired the voice over the phone. “They say he can’t get well, and I am worried about him for he isn’t saved.”

“I’ll be glad to do so,” I responded, and I went.

I found the poor fellow in a serious condition. After offering a few words of consolation, I proceeded to a more important matter.

“Are you a Christian?” I asked. “I belong to the church,” he replied. “But were you ever converted?” I persisted. “No, I guess I never was,” he admitted. As best I could, I explained the way by quoting a few passages of scripture. I then prayed earnestly for him a few minutes. When I concluded he reached out his feeble hand.

“I feel better now,” he said.

“But do you accept Christ as your Saviour, and do you believe He accepts you?” I asked.

“Yes, I do,” he said.

I left him, but I was not quite satisfied.

The next day I returned to the hospital. He greeted me with a smile.

“Say,” he exclaimed. “I’m all right now. Since your prayer I have been different. I believe I’m a regular Christian now.”

“That’s fine,” I said. “I believe the Lord does save you.”

Then he introduced me to a young lady who stood by his bed.

“This is my wife. We have been married only two weeks,” and there was a catch in his voice as he said it.

I acknowledged the introduction. Then she asked me to go outside his room with her.

“I don’t know whether you understand his case or not,” she said. “He has a condition that the doctors say is impossible to cure. He may die any moment. We were married only one week when it developed. It was necessary to rush him here. He doesn’t know it, but he isn’t going to get well.”

My heart went out in sympathy toward her. Here was misfortune indeed! Married two weeks, and about to lose her husband! I exhorted her to be brave. I pointed her to Christ, and asked that she look to Him. I left her with a sorrowful heart.

The next day I stopped to see the sick man. A great change had come over him. The mark that death puts upon its victims was upon him. He scarcely recognized me, but when he did, he smiled. I pointed up, and he smiled again. I took his cold hand and breathed a prayer for him. Then releasing his hand very gently I slipped out.

As I left, my feelings were a mixture of joy and sorrow. Joyful indeed because God had enabled me to be instrumental in snatching one more brand from the burning; sorrowful because a young man, married less than three weeks, who thought he had love, life and happiness before him was going out into eternity. He died a few hours later.

Before he went he told his folks that I was to be given his small bedside radio because I had helped him to find Jesus. He went out victorious. I hope to see him again in that land where disease and death never come; where there are no more partings; where Jesus is the light and darkness never comes.

Reader, if you were given a hurried summons would you be ready? Many are not fortunate enough to have a deathbed, nor do they have the ability or willingness to repent on one. It pays to be ready!

LIFE SITUATION NO. 26

TOPIC: Great Physician

SUBTOPIC: Still In Business

TITLE: A Miracle Of Healing

The phone call informed me that a dear old lady in my congregation was suffering and needed prayer. Would I come? Well, I surely would!

When I arrived at her home I was informed that she had recently had a cancer removed from her head, but that the roots were there and it was only a question of time until it would grow as large as ever. That is, it would unless God would undertake for her. But would God undertake?

That morning in her home I found five people who thought He would. Sister Ross, the sufferer, was one of them; her husband was another. Sister Logue believed He would; Sister Howard was sure of it and Sister Mitchell had faith to believe He would heal at once.

What a prayermeeting we had! I can still hear Sister Mitchell earnestly imploring God, “Make the devil take his hands off her.” I tell you Sister Mitchell is a remarkable woman of faith.

It is remarkable how a fellow’s faith rises when he gets around a few people who have a little to spare. Soon I found myself praying the prayer of faith with the others.

I tell you God came into that humble home that day. It seemed I could almost reach out and touch Him. His presence burned in our hearts.

Mother Mitchell exhorted Sister Ross to believe now. Shortly she did. It was glorious. We rose to our feet thanking God for answering prayer.

A few days later Sister Ross went to see her doctor. He could not believe what he saw, but Sister Ross lost no time in telling him about it.

“Woman,” he said, “the place where the cancer was is all healed up. You are cured.”

“Yes,” she replied. “I have had the Great Physician.”

I tell you the Great Physician is still in business. While I believe in earthly physicians and their scalpels and medicine, I believe more and more in the healing power of the gentle Jesus.

I sometimes feel that we are in danger of bending over backward with regard to divine healing. In our fear that we put it first and thus make it of more importance than healing of the soul we have just about put it out all together in some places. But the Book still says, “And these signs shall follow them that believe; in my name.... they shall lay hands on the sick, and they shall recover” (Mark 16:17, 18).

No, I did not meet the situation in the home that day. It met me. But while I did not meet it Jesus did.

Reader, I believe He can meet any situation you face. Is your heart burdened with sin? He can forgive it and take the burden away. Is your soul bent and warped by the sinful nature? He can straighten it out and make you every whit whole. Is your body sick? I believe He can cure you. How do I know? Well, He cured Sister Ross months ago. He is no respecter of persons. What He did for her He will do for you if you will trust Him.

Give the Great Physician a chance at your heart and life today.

LIFE SITUATION NO. 27

TOPIC: Saved

SUBTOPIC: Away From The Church Altar

TITLE: Wise As Serpents And Harmless As Doves

For years the lady about whom I am writing attended our church. In fact, she had been one of the biggest boosters for it, and in some respects, had been one of the best workers in it. She believed in the doctrines of the church. Her mother is an excellent Christian lady, and she had trained all of her family well. When it came to Sunday school work this young lady had few equals. She would visit others. She would head drives and rallies; help sponsor any project for the school, but she was not a Christian!

I saw her under conviction on more than one occasion. She went to the altar two or three times, but she never got victory. Finally, she came to tell me that she was through with the church. She said it only aggravated her condition to come, so she had made up her mind to quit. She said she was not even coming to Sunday school. Nothing I could say seemed to make much difference, so she stopped coming, but she was not satisfied. Her husband was a good Christian, and faithful to the church. Finally she got to the place where she could not stand to see him come without her, so she started attending again.

Then the revival meeting came on. The tide was running high, and many were being saved and sanctified. Her friends urged her to go to the altar and after some persuasion she went. Everyone was so pleased, but she remained at the altar only a few minutes, and then she arose and went weeping to her seat. How disappointed we all were! I talked to her that night. She said she could not concentrate at the altar, so she gave it up.

Then I got an idea. I asked a few of her particular friends if they could go to her house to pray the next afternoon. The meeting was arranged and she agreed. God seemed to be in it from the start.

We met the next afternoon. First we discussed some of God's promises, then we spoke of her particular problem. Next, we knelt in prayer. Two or three prayed earnestly, and then I called on her to pray. After a moment or two of hesitation she commenced to pour out her heart to God, and

suddenly something happened. Never have I felt more of God's presence any place. The room seemed to be filled with His Spirit. The humble petitioner's face was aglow. After many years of need the young lady had prayed through. It was a time of great rejoicing.

That was several months ago. Her happy testimony still blesses the church. Her life has been transformed. She is now the supervisor of a department in our Sunday school. She is testifying outside of our services, and we believe she will win others for Christ.

To be sure she could have found Christ at the altar. But when it became apparent that Satan was defeating her there we determined that we should help her win the victory over him. I believe the prayer meeting was God-inspired. God helped us to meet her situation but, oh, in what a great way He met it.

Thank God He is able to meet the life situation of every honest heart. Let Him meet yours today!

LIFE SITUATION NO. 28

TOPIC: Nomads On Life's Highway

SUBTOPIC: From Broken, Loveless Homes

TITLE: Poor Little Hitchhiker!

The town marshal, Mr. J. W. Sullivan, stood at my door. "Brother Strang," said he, "I want you to come over to my house. I picked up a young girl today who needs help. Perhaps you can advise her."

I went with him. There I found one of the most pitiful bits of humanity I have ever seen. She seemed to be little more than a child, although she said she was twenty-two. She was so nervous she could hardly sit still. She had fainted along the roadside near Bethany, and Brother Sullivan had been called to get her.

In answer to my questions she told me she had run away from home because her father had abused her. She had been gone three months and was on her way to California. Her strength had given out, but her determination to go on had not.

After hearing her story I advised her to go back to Kansas City to her home.

"I'll never do it," she almost shouted. "Go back there and be beaten some more? I tell you I'm going to California."

"But, listen, young lady," I said, "your health will not permit that. Trouble awaits you if you start west. You will get into more difficulty going that way than you will in Kansas City," but she would not listen to me.

I asked her if I might pray for her but she said "No."

Poor little hitchhiker! She had come from a broken home; a home in which there was no love. Think of her being on the road for three months, and traveling from place to place as a nomad of the highway! There are many of them, and what to do about it is a problem.

I talked kindly to her. I convinced her that Brother and Sister Sullivan and I were her friends. After some time she relented, and we prayed for her. God softened that stony heart of hers after the prayer. She thought she might go back home if it could be arranged.

Brother Sullivan and I decided she was in no condition to undertake so long a journey. We arranged to take her to a hospital in Oklahoma City, with instructions to the hospital authorities to let us know when she was recovered enough to travel.

Did she go back home? I do not know. I have never heard of her again. My guess is that she slipped out of the hospital without saying good-by. She is probably out on the road again. What a pity!

But somewhere a father will have to answer for his conduct. He will give an account to God at the judgment for his abuse and neglect of his child. A mother will give an account of why her child was allowed to roam. Somebody besides civil authorities will inquire into the reason for the divorce and remarriage. The girl herself will be held accountable for her part.

I wish I could have helped her more. But how? I do not know. There was scarcely enough character left in her on which to make an impression. Her body was broken and her mind twisted, and her poor little soul was shriveled. May God have mercy on her!

There is only One who can help such unfortunates. He came to seek and save such lost ones. They are everywhere. Let us do our best to bring them to Him.

LIFE SITUATION NO. 29

TOPIC: Going Home

SUBTOPIC: Better Than Running From Trouble

TITLE: A Prodigal Son

The young boy accosted me on the street and said, “Say Mister, could you spare me a dime? I’m hungry and want something to eat.”

I looked him over before replying. His face and hands were dirty, his clothes were torn, and his shoes were only bits of leather hanging to his feet.

“Where do you live?” I questioned.

“Oh, I’m from Louisville,” he replied. “I just came up on a freight and I want to get to Detroit.”

“What makes you want to go to Detroit?” I countered.

“Well, you see it’s like this. I lost my job in Louisville, and I was afraid to tell my father, so I decided to skip town and go to Detroit.”

“Do you know anyone in Detroit?” I asked.

“No, but I know there are lots of jobs there,” He said.

Poor, foolish boy. Dirty and unkempt as he was, what chance had he? No money and no friends, and yet foolish enough to believe he could get work in a strange city where he knew no one. I wondered how I could help him.

“Say,” I ventured after a bit of reflection, “it’s just as near Louisville from Columbus as it is Detroit. You don’t have a chance in Detroit. If you can’t make good in Louisville where you are known, how can you make it in Detroit? You go back to Louisville and try it all over again. Your father won’t hurt you if you try to be a man about this. Take my advice and start back to Louisville. Besides, the police will pick you up if you loiter here. Go back home.”

I saw him hesitate. His lip quivered and a tear was about to start down his cheek. He needed a friend as much as he needed food.

How many like him there are! Trying to run away from their problems. Trying to find the easiest solution. Afraid of life and afraid of consequences.

Taking his dirty hand in mine I said to him, “I believe you are big enough to do the hard thing. It’s north to Detroit and more trouble for you, or south to Louisville and success. Which is it to be?”

“Mister,” he said, and that tear was coming now, “I’m going back home.”

He started to walk away from me.

“Say,” I called, “remember what you asked of me? I’d like to make a small investment in you.

I slipped a coin into his hand, and he started in the direction of the freight yard. I saw him go with many misgivings for his safety, but he assured me that he could make it south, and would.

Did he? I do not know. Perhaps he never even started south, but I think he did. My heart ached for him. I could not do much, but I did what I could.

The pity of it is that there are multiplied thousands like him—wanderers on the face of the earth, with no one to befriend them. Many of them come from broken homes. Many from homes where there is little or no love. Sin takes its toll every day.

Yes, I tried to meet his situation. A word of encouragement, a word relative to salvation, a coin in his hand and a prayer following him. It was all I could do, but it was the least I could do.

LIFE SITUATION NO. 30

TOPIC: Birth Of A Church

SUBTOPIC: In Spite Of Backslidden Opposition

TITLE: Now Or Never

“No, you can’t have the building for Bible school purposes, either now or any other time. The Bible is too sacred to read, so I never open it.”

Thus spoke the lone surviving trustee of a certain organization in response to our request for use of a vacated church building. So we were forced to organize our Sunday school in a private home at the edge of a thriving little town.

Some time before, the pastor of another denomination had wanted me to go into that very town and take over their vacated building. But because we were carrying a heavy financial load in our own church, and because it would have meant another plunge in the nearby town we refrained, so we started in a small way in a home because the old trustee would not allow us the use of the small building we desired, but several months after his first visit the friendly pastor from the nearby town came to see me again.

“Now or never,” said he, “if you don’t want our church we have an opportunity to sell it to someone else.”

Of course we wanted it! But could we arrange to get it? A long distance telephone call brought my District Superintendent. A conference was arranged between him and the friendly pastor. An option was secured on the building. Rental terms were agreed upon. Before twenty-four hours had elapsed plans were completed for an extended revival campaign. I am not saying it was all easy, but it was wonderful the way God blessed us.

One of the first things we did was move our baby Sunday school organization into our new building. It doubled in a week, and more than quadrupled in a month.

Soon our evangelistic services were crowded to capacity. One night when the streets were like polished glass and the thermometer down almost to zero, standing room was at a premium. Scores were saved and sanctified.

At the close of a six-week campaign we organized with fifty charter members. Shortly after the meeting closed the new church called a full-time pastor at a good salary. Six months after the meeting closed we bought the church building.

Last year this church reported one hundred seventy church members and two hundred seventy-five enrolled in Sunday school. During the past six years hundreds have been saved at its altars. All of this in spite of the fact that an old, backslidden trustee believed the Bible was too sacred to study; and on the other hand, because a few folks thought he was wrong, for it was the reading of the Bible that prompted our going to that community; it was the studying of it that strengthened our Sunday school organization; and it was the preaching of it that brought conviction to the people who lived there; and it was the believing of it that brought salvation to them.

The church in the little town of which I write has been a real asset to it. It is hard for me to see how the people there got along without it as long as they did. I believe the church is the adequate answer to the life situation of any community.

LIFE SITUATION NO. 31

TOPIC: God's Guidance

SUBTOPIC: In Starting A Work

TITLE: Throwing The Net On The Other Side

"We ought to have a Sunday school in the community east of us," declared my Sunday school superintendent one Sunday evening after church service. "I've been noticing the growth of that allotment for some time, and I'm sure we ought to start something there."

"I'm agreeable," I replied. "Let's go and look the place over tomorrow evening."

We drove up to the allotment at dusk next evening. Up one street and down the next we went. For no particular reason I felt strangely led to stop at a certain house. It looked much like the other houses in the row, but after driving past it I felt led to back, the car up to the door.

At our knock a young man came from the rear of the house.

"Good evening, Brother Strang," he shouted. "I'm certainly glad to see you."

"I'm glad to see you, too," I replied, "but who are you?"

"Wait a minute, and perhaps this will help you recognize me," he said.

Stepping to the door he disposed of the biggest chew of tobacco I ever saw.

Returning he said, "I was over to your church last evening, but I slipped out before the service was over."

I now recognized him as the strange young man who had occupied a rear seat the preceding evening.

We asked him if there was any place in that allotment where we could have Sunday school services.

“There is no church or hall of any kind, but why not have it here in my home?” he demanded.

And so we did. We commenced the very next Sunday. Our new-made friend helped advertise it, and the next Sunday his home was full of pupils both large and small. What a blessed service we had.

“Will you come over to church tonight?” I asked our friend and his family.

They came, and when the altar call was made his wife, his two girls and he came and prayed through. The man and his wife had been backsliders.

“Get up and testify,” I suggested, when victory came.

“Not us,” he replied, “we want to be sanctified wholly, too.”

Nor did they stop praying until they were! How happy they were, and how their faces shone with the glory of God.

Of course he had no more use for chewing tobacco. A few weeks later he took off two lodge pins and the four of them joined my church. Shortly afterward he became the Sunday school superintendent, and proved to be one of the finest in the movement.

It all happened thirteen years ago, but it was only the beginning of better things. Through our Sunday school organized in this brother’s home a church was organized. Last year they reported 176 church members and 476 enrolled in Sunday school.

It happened because a conscientious layman got a burden for an outlying section of a large city, and because God marvelously directed us to the home of a backslidden young man who opened his door for a Sunday school.

There must be many more communities with similar situations awaiting the workers of the church.

LIFE SITUATION NO. 32

TOPIC: Soul Winner

SUBTOPIC: Evaded, Wrongly Persuaded

TITLE: Failing To Win Charlie

The woman on the other end of the line was very much excited. “Can you come at once, Brother Strang?” she shouted, “Charlie is very ill and I’m afraid he’s dying.” I went immediately. But, strange to relate, Charlie was not at home when I arrived.

“He knew you were coming and hastily went out,” said his wife. “He wasn’t able to go, but he didn’t want to see the preacher.”

Perplexed, I went back home. The next day the same woman called again. I was able to go at once, and did so, only to find that Charlie had fled again. His wife insisted that he was very sick, and that she had tried to persuade him to remain at home, but he had insisted on going out.

On the third day she called me again. Charlie was desperately ill. Could I come at once? By that time it was an old story to me. The cry of “Wolf, wolf, when there was no wolf,” could not fool me three times in a row.

I put off going until the next day. When I arrived at Charlie’s home I was met at the door by his wife. I could tell by her face that something was decidedly wrong.

“I wish you had come yesterday,” she said sadly. “Charlie is in bed today. He is badly paralyzed. He can’t talk and I don’t believe he understands a thing I say. He wasn’t nearly so bad yesterday.”

I think I shall never forget Charlie. He just lay and looked at me. I talked to him. I read the Word to him, and I fervently prayed for him; He only rolled his eyes, oh, so sadly. He could not speak and probably did not know a word I said to him.

Yes, you guessed it. Charlie had been drinking. Bad whisky had got him and was quickly wringing his very life from him. His wife had not wanted to tell me his trouble, but finally she revealed it to me.

On the two previous occasions when she had called me he had been in bad shape, but had insisted on going out in a weakened condition for more. Yesterday he could not go, and full of remorse over his misconduct he had wanted the preacher. But the preacher was busy here and there and did not go. Today it was too late! If I had only gone yesterday Charlie might have been saved. Today he could only sorrowfully roll his eyes at me. I left him reluctantly.

That night Charlie died. He was a victim of drink. He had been a nice, quiet man, a former member of my church, and only a few months before he had told me he wanted to get right and come back to church. And now he was gone; gone without God, and I had let him slip out without getting him saved. If I had only gone the day before all might have been different. He was conscious then; he wanted me then, but I waited a day and now it was too late.

I shall never forgive myself for being remiss in my duty relative to Charlie. I have told myself a hundred times that I did just what most people would have done under the circumstances, but it is no use. I cannot rationalize enough at that point to justify my conduct. I failed to meet a life situation because of neglect.

Well, it has taught me a lesson, and I hope it may teach any who reads this a similar one. A soul in need is the first consideration of every child of God. Let us not get so busy with the needs of an organization that we will fail to meet the need of an individual.

LIFE SITUATION NO. 33

TOPIC: Opportunity To Win A Soul

SUBTOPIC: Forever Lost By Untimely Conversation

TITLE: The Rabbi I Might Have Won

I met him for the first time in the sun parlor of the West Penn Hospital. I shall never forget how he pushed his wheelchair over by me, saying, “I must talk to you.”

He was a retired Jewish rabbi, a cultured gentleman, an intellectual scholar; but he was lonesome and homesick and suffering from a badly infected foot. He was delighted to learn that I was a minister. He assured me that he knew my denomination well. He was anxious to talk to me, but no more than I was to talk to him.

Daily, for three weeks, I visited my daughter, who was a patient in the hospital, and daily I visited the rabbi. Lois accused me of preferring his company to hers, but while that was not true, I was determined to contact my Hebrew friend as much as possible.

We talked about current events, economic conditions, but especially we discussed religion. I learned much from him about the Talmud, the law of Moses and Jewish customs. He was orthodox, but broad-minded enough to see the value of my religion. I was drawn to him, and frankly, I liked him a lot. He looked forward to my visits. If I was late getting to the hospital he would inquire from Lois if I was coming. I seemed to mean much to him in his lonesomeness.

For three weeks I talked to him each day. For three weeks I sold myself to him. For three weeks I talked religion to him, but for that length of time I failed to meet his need. Let me explain.

I brought Lois home on a Tuesday evening. On Thursday morning I received the shock of my life. A well-known likeness looked out at me from the daily press. Over it were these words: “RETIREE RABBI HANGS SELF IN HOSPITAL ROOM HERE.”

I could scarcely believe it, but it was true. Late Wednesday night, the day after I left him, he had taken his life with the aid of a bathrobe cord. I was filled with remorse. I felt that I had lost a real friend.

But now I saw his real situation. He was discouraged. His family was not as attentive as they might have been. Finances were probably low. The pain in his foot was hard to endure, so he decided to take his life.

I thought of all the hours I had talked to him. I had talked religion; I had received information from him; I had given him a little in return; but on reflection I knew that I had said little or nothing about vital salvation. I had talked about the Messiah to him. I had told him I believed Jesus was the Messiah, but I had failed to represent Christ as the great Burden-bearer. I knew I told him that I believed Jesus had lived nineteen hundred years ago, but I had not told him that His Spirit was living in my heart now.

Yes, I failed! There is no doubt about it. I had looked upon him as a Jewish rabbi, and had overlooked the fact that he was an individual just like myself, an individual with a need that only Jesus Christ could meet.

I wish I could have five more minutes' conversation with him, but I cannot. I had at least twenty hours' conversation with him and in that time I had failed to meet his life situation. How sad!

I am sure there are people all about us who are just as needy as the rabbi. Let us be very definite in presenting One to them who can meet their every need.

LIFE SITUATION NO. 34

TOPIC: Seeking Failures and Failing Seekers

SUBTOPIC: On The Brink Of Eternity

TITLE: Almost Persuaded

The old couple knelt at an altar one Sunday evening along with a dozen others. I knelt in front of them for a minute and exhorted them to pray, but although they confessed their need to me I could not induce them to offer a petition.

It was a hot summer evening, and the outside atmosphere was inviting. I had preached hard and the temptation was to shorten the service. Others demanded my attention, and before I was aware of it the old couple arose and went back to their seats. The meeting was dismissed and I scarcely thought of them again. They were strangers but they had promised to come back the next Sunday evening.

On Tuesday evening of that week I picked up the Alliance Review. I read the front headline "Well-known Alliance woman meets death in automobile accident." On reading farther I was dumfounded to learn it was the woman who was at the altar on Sunday evening but could not pray. A head-on collision resulted in her being thrown through the windshield of their car. Her jugular vein was severed and she died in a few minutes on her way to the hospital.

As I read it my conscience smote me. Why had I not been more interested in her? I felt I should have been more insistent on Sunday evening about her praying. Perhaps if I had given her more attention I could have got her saved. She was one who was almost persuaded.

I reviewed the picture. She was at an altar on Sunday evening, slowly shaking her head and saying she could not pray. On Tuesday she was in her casket. On Sunday in time, refusing God, and on Tuesday in eternity without Him!

I preached her funeral sermon on Wednesday, but she did not hear it. The funeral sermon she had heard was preached on Sunday evening, but she did not know it. Then she had made a move toward God, but she had not

moved far enough. Perhaps there was something she was unwilling to give up on Sunday evening. How small that thing must have looked on Tuesday as she viewed it from eternity!

I have thought of this sad incident many times since that Sunday evening ten years ago, but I never think of it without attaching blame to myself. The truth is I did not try hard enough to win her. I failed to meet her life situation. God did not fail, but she did, and I did.

I have learned a lesson from it. I have tried to atone by showing an added interest in seekers at an altar. I do not let them get away so easily now. I am sure that Satan does not care how near an individual gets to God if he fails to reach Him.

Perhaps, reader, you have been just as negligent as I many times. Perhaps a seeker is just a seeker and nothing else to you, but to me each one is a soul in need; an individual who needs individual instruction and prayer. The seeker you hold so lightly today may be in eternity tomorrow. We must not fail them. We must diligently point each one to a God who can meet any situation.

LIFE SITUATION NO. 35

TOPIC: Procrastination

SUBTOPIC: Fatal, Through Mistaken Optimism

TITLE: Frustrated By Optimism

“I’ll be out of here in a day or two,” said the young man, lying so flushed on the hospital bed. “I’m feeling better today.” His sister had told me I would find him quite ill. He had once been a Christian, but was now in a backslidden state.

The nurse who showed me to his room knew that his time was short. She told me he was a very sick boy. She closed the door softly, and left me alone with him.

He did not seem to be so ill as many others I had seen. He seemed sure that he was getting better. But it was fever that was brightening him up. Dope was keeping him from intense pain, but fever and dope were keeping him from thinking clearly.

I prayed for him and pleaded with him gently to look to Jesus, but he wanted to wait until he got out. It seemed a bit cowardly to him to seek the Lord now. Gentle persuasion did little good. I seemed to be frustrated by his very optimism, “I’ll be out in a few days.”

I left him at last. I met the same nurse in the corridor. “His condition is not good,” she said. There was a worried look in her eyes. I believe she understood that the boy was not a Christian.

I got on the outside of the hospital, and then I almost turned back again. Had I done my best for him? If he had been my own son would I have tried a little harder? Finally assured that I had done all I could I drove off.

Well, he came out in a few days. But not the way he had expected. No, they carried him out feet first, and two days later six men carried him to his last resting place. He had not expected that.

I failed to get him saved because he failed to realize that time was short. He had forgotten that the Bible says, “Now is the accepted time, today is the day of salvation.”

He failed to get saved because he did not seek the Lord while he had health and strength. He failed to get saved because he made the same mistake that thousands before him have made, and thousands who are living, and other thousands who yet will live make; and that mistake is believing that one has lots of time. As a matter of fact, no one has lots of time for anything. The only time you and I have is now.

I shall always regret that I was unable to break through his optimism, that optimism that seemed to assure him that he would get well. We ought to realize that we are all dying men, and we should minister to others as dying men to dying men.

He was only a boy of nineteen. He thought he had life before him, but he did not. Some young man who has the same thought will read this article. Let me exhort you not to put off your salvation. If you intend ever to be saved, “Seek the Lord while he may be found; call upon him while he is near.” Do not wait until disease and death approach. Help me to meet your life situation now.

In the name of one boy who put it off too long, let me exhort you to seek God at once.

LIFE SITUATION NO. 36

TOPIC: Pressing The Claims Of The Gospel

SUBTOPIC: Failure To Do So

TITLE: Losing A Nice Fellow

The post card from a distant city read, “Dear Brother Strang, there is a young man in the University Hospital in your city. He is from our town. He is in a serious condition. Go see him. He needs God. Do your best.”

The card was signed by a friend of mine.

I took the time to grant the request. I found the man to be congenial and quite approachable.

“No, I’m not a Christian,” he replied to my question. “But I’m not such a bad fellow.”

After a short conversation he told me I might pray for him. I did so, and told him when I had finished that I would be back to see him again. I fully intended to go, but being a busy pastor, I did not think of him until three days later. Then I received another card from my pastor friend in the distant city. It read:

“Thanks for your effort regarding the young man of whom I wrote you. He passed away soon after you called. I conducted his funeral today. Looks like we failed to meet a life situation.”

Yes, I made an effort, for I had called on him and prayed with him. But it was a prayer like I often make, and like other pastors make. It was sincere, but I had not been definite enough. I thought I had more time to get the man saved. I did not realize that he was so ill. The nurses had not told me, and the young man himself did not know it, so he slipped through my fingers, and with this testimony, “No, I’m not a Christian.”

A nice fellow, but not a Christian. How sad!

Being a nice fellow saves no one. There are thousands like him in the world today. They are kind and courteous to the minister. They respect religion,

but they do not have it. They are not antagonistic enough to object to prayer. But not Christians!

Always we are dealing with dying men. All of them are not in hospitals. I preach to them every Sunday, and I brush shoulders with them every day.

No one quite expects death when it comes. We can imagine its coming to everyone but us. But death will not remain a stranger to anyone. It finds men on the street, in the home and in the hospital.

But it does seem to me that I should be more concerned about those in hospitals. That is a very poor place, usually, to press the matter of salvation on one; especially in the busy wards. Other patients are there; nurses interrupt by their duties. Pain prevents clear thinking. Confusion makes it hard to speak or pray, so the friendly word and the short prayer are often given, and a hasty exit made. And while I have seen many saved in hospitals, I have been frustrated many times in my efforts to get persons to God.

I still think of the nice young man who slipped out into eternity without the Lord. How much of it was my fault I am not prepared to say. I trust I did my best for him, but I am bothered by the thought that I did not press the claims of salvation more at that first meeting. Yes, I looked at it as only an introductory call. Sort of breaking the ice, you know. But it happened that I was the last and only one who spoke to him about his soul. He was dead in a few hours after my visit. I shall try to do better by the next poor fellow, but I certainly failed to meet that poor man's life situation.

Reader, how about you? Look around you. There are many dying without God.

LIFE SITUATION NO. 37

TOPIC: Sinning Away One's Day Of Grace

SUBTOPIC: Into Hopeless Insanity, Endless Eternity

TITLE: The Man Who Couldn't Say "Yes"

"Would it be possible for you to accompany me and my son to a hospital a few miles outside the city?" This was the question of the woman at my door one Sunday evening. Her husband was ill with pneumonia, and was badly in need of prayer. I informed her that immediately following my service I would gladly go with them.

Our destination proved to be a hospital for those who were mentally ill. As we approached the institution it was clothed in darkness, but my companions knew the way, and after waiting for some time there was a response at the door to our knock.

We were ushered into the hospital ward of that great institution. Men wasted in body and mind stared through semi-darkness at us. It gave one a queer sensation.

We approached the bed of the one whom we came to see. Seldom have I seen a sadder sight. He was almost a living skeleton. His suffering was obvious. If he were glad to see us he did not show it, as his staring eyes gave no sign of recognition to either his wife or son.

They looked to me expectantly, but what could I do for an insane man dying with pneumonia?

I knelt by his bed with his hand in mine. Ignoring the stares of the inmates and the cries of his companions in distress I poured out a prayer for him, but it seemed to be useless. As I held to that dying man's hand and looked at those poor, wild eyes I said to him, "If you can understand one word I am saying squeeze my hand." There was no response. I then said to him, "I am going to pray again, and if you know what I am doing squeeze my hand." But again there was no response. Only his rolling saddened eyes would fasten on me a moment and then they would traverse the room. I felt so helpless.

Finally I arose to go. I said to his wife, "I have done all I can. We can only leave him in the hands of a kind heavenly Father."

On the way home I learned that once he had been very strong and stalwart. He had held a responsible position, but overwork and worry had extracted their toll from him and brought on his present condition. He had never been a Christian. He had thought there was lots of time. But tonight he lay dying, a hopeless case, without God.

An indescribable sadness took hold of me. I had failed to help him; to meet his life situation, but it was not my fault. He had sinned away his day of grace. The mind that was so deranged now had often said "no" to God. That emaciated body, in the day of its strength, had walked away from God's house, and tonight neither his mind nor body was normal. Tonight he could not say "yes," because of impairment of mind and body.

He died that night. On Wednesday I officiated at his funeral service. I spoke to the living in no uncertain tones on the brevity of life and the certainty of eternity. His was the most difficult case I have ever been called upon to help. The only satisfaction I had about it was that I had done my best;

But some strong man in mind and body will read these lines. You, too, need God. Next month you may be in the position of the unfortunate man whom I tried to help. Just remember that a day comes to the unrepentant when it is too late to help. Let Him help you now.

LIFE SITUATION NO. 38

TOPIC: Branch Sunday Schools

SUBTOPIC: An Asset To A Church

TITLE: The Sunday School God Wanted

“Why don’t you come over our way and start a Sunday School?” demanded the painter as he plied his brush vigorously. Following an impulse, which I now believe to have been God speaking to me, I had stopped my car to speak to this stranger while he painted a house near my home.

“Used to have a good Sunday school,” he replied to my question, “but something happened, and now we don’t have any. Too bad religious people can’t agree among themselves.”

No, he was not in any condition to help in Sunday school work, but he gave me the name of a woman who was a good Christian, and wanted a Sunday school in the community.

I went about my calling, and for the present forgot both the painter and the Sunday school.

Several days later I decided to look into the situation. I drove over to the painter’s community, intending to visit the lady to whom he had referred me. I reached into my pocket for the paper on which I had written her name and address. I could not locate it, and a diligent search failed to reveal it. It was gone and I chided myself for my carelessness. what was to be done?

I drove aimlessly along several streets, and then for no apparent reason, I stopped at a modest looking house. I introduced myself, and then divulged the reason for stopping.

“I am desirous of organizing a Sunday school in this vicinity, and I am trying to get in touch with any interested persons,” I explained.

“I am very much interested,” replied the lady. “In fact I was secretary of the school we formerly had here.”

She told me her name. Then I remembered! The Lord had wonderfully led me to the home of the lady to whom the painter had referred me! How I rejoiced!

To make a long story short we organized a Sunday school in the nearby schoolhouse the following Sunday afternoon with over one hundred present. The former secretary had done her part to get them there. She had canvassed the community, she had an announcement made relative to it each morning by the schoolteachers, and then she prayed for results.

The Sunday school flourished like a green bay tree. From it several joined our church, including the family to whom I had been so remarkably led. The community needed the school and showed its appreciation for it. I had a lot of people in my church who needed something worth while to do on Sunday afternoons and they found this the best possible employment. I needed the stimulation of faith that came both through God's wonderful leading in getting the school started, and God's wonderful blessing after it was organized.

This Sunday school met the community's need, and acted as a feeder for our nearby local church. Branch Sunday schools are advantageous in more ways than one. Why not organize one somewhere?

LIFE SITUATION NO. 39

TOPIC: Pain

SUBTOPIC: God's Saving Ministry Through

TITLE: The Ministry Of Pain

God works in marvelous ways His wonders to perform. We cannot always understand the manner in which God chooses to work out His eternal purposes.

For instance, we often question the workings of God when He allows sickness or pain to come to us.

To illustrate: We had often prayed that my wife might be healed, but in spite of our prayers she was rushed to the hospital one Sunday morning for an emergency appendectomy. She got there just in time. The operation proved to be both painful and expensive. She had to suffer the first and both of us the second. But let us see what God had planned. My mother-in-law, a beautiful Christian, and certainly saintly looking, was observed by another patient in an adjoining room, as she went daily to her daughter's room. The patient called to her one day, and asked that she visit her. It developed that she was very much in need of spiritual help.

My mother-in-law informed the lady that her daughter was a pastor's wife and she would have me call on her.

I shall never forget my first visit. "I believe God directed my attention to that little woman who has been visiting across the hall," she said. "I was attracted by her bearing. I believed she could help me."

I had the privilege of praying for her, and of giving her some much needed direction. I visited her each day until my wife went home from the hospital, and later I went to call on her in her home.

She was a cultured, refined lady, but she needed God. One day she was beautifully converted.

We kept in touch with her for almost four years. And then one day came the message that she had slipped off to heaven.

I officiated at her funeral. It was easy to say the last words over her. She had been won for Christ. I do not believe that winning was accidental. It is not the way I would have planned to win her. But I believe God planned it thus.

Let us see how He did it. He made pain and suffering work for Him. He allowed three of His servants to minister for Him in a hospital. He directed the attention of a fellow sufferer toward a quiet Christian lady. She did not feel that she could sufficiently help her so she called on me. It all makes up a pattern of service with God in the center of it.

In the White Cross Hospital in Columbus, Ohio, there hangs a motto: "All healing is divine." Sometimes God elects to heal through the surgeon's knife. It is no sign of His displeasure with us if He does not answer our prayers for healing at once. God can use some folks in hospitals.

The woman I am writing about proved to be the sister of a very influential funeral director in our city. Because we took an interest in her he became interested in our church and he became a very good friend of it.

God's work must go on. He lives and gives direction to it. We become impatient at times and want things done in our way and at once. But it must be as a dear old brother in our church often says, "God has all eternity to work out His eternal purposes."

We should be careful not to try to dictate to God, neither to tell Him how, nor when, nor where. I know that God saved the lady through another's suffering and by her submitting to an operation. The life situation of one was met by a series of circumstances to which God gave direction. Reader, trust Him more fully and submit yourself to Him as an instrument and channel through which He may work.

LIFE SITUATION NO. 40

TOPIC: Hollywood Actors

SUBTOPIC: The Fatal Imitation Of

TITLE: “He Saw It In The Movies”

“Oh, Mother, he saw them do that in the movies,” was the anguished cry of our neighbor girl as she came rushing into the room where the tragedy occurred.

We had been called to come quickly to the home next door. Something dreadful had apparently happened. The mother had thought her boy electrocuted by contact with a live wire. But when my wife took hold of him as he stood near the hall tree she discovered a tie around his neck. He had either jumped or slipped off the hall seat toward the floor, but he didn't quite make it. His feet were just a few inches from the floor. They worked frantically with him while I tried unsuccessfully to get a doctor. Finally in desperation I put him in my car and rushed him to the hospital. There they pronounced him dead.

A more broken-hearted family I have never seen. Their little boy of seven was suddenly and tragically taken from them.

We tried to console them. We did our best to minister to them in lovingkindness. But months lengthened into years before time and the grace of God healed their wounds. Today, they are some of the best friends we have, but it took tragedy and suffering to open their eyes.

Yes, the little fellow had seen the movie performer jump from somewhere with a rope about his neck. The actor lived to do it again. Why shouldn't he try it?

Well he did attempt it but it was the death of him.

I am sure the movies have done much harm to young life. The movie presentation of life is unreal and perverted. Glamour girls and sheiks have portrayed life in a way which is not safe to follow. Drinking, dancing and illicit love affairs are made to appear to be the thing. Visually minded

young persons see it in the movies, and it seems all right for them to emulate the practices of the screen.

But there are wretched lives everywhere because “he saw it in the movies.”

It had been the practice for months for the little fellow of whom I write to attend the picture show each week. Playing bandit was his chief fun. His parents never thought it was important to check into the kind of shows he was attending. But now the sister wails, “He saw it in the movies.”

The county and state made an investigation into his untimely death. Columns were written in the newspaper about it. But no one thought of investigating the chief cause of it.

I was not their minister, but their pastor proved to be a sympathetic Christian gentleman. Between us we succeeded in getting them to look up from the darkness occasioned by the tragedy and to trust God. They had been good, in a sense, but very worldly-minded. Shows, and dances, and parties constituted their life program. But it all changed when the little boy hanged himself. The authorities never could decide whether it was accidental or intentional, but it had the effect of sobering the parents.

It left lines in their faces that will never be erased in this world, but it drew them nearer to God and to some of His children, than they would have ever been otherwise.

I do not even intimate that this tragedy was a punishment sent from God. I only say that God permitted it. And I add that in it and through it God enabled my wife and me to bring a careless family in contact with Him.

God proved to be the only one who could help much during it all. He alone can meet every life situation.

If today tragedy is acting as a barrier between you and God, pull it down and allow the God of all grace to comfort you.

[Transcriber Note: In mentioning the harmful, and spiritually fatal, influence of world actors, we should today include T.V. actors along with Movie actors.]

LIFE SITUATION NO. 41

TOPIC: Healed

SUBTOPIC: Of Cancer

TITLE: God Works In Mysterious Ways

“Will you please go to the hospital and administer communion to a man there?” asked the voice on the phone.

I had never done anything like that before, but I promised.

At the hospital I found a man who was very ill. He was to have an operation for cancer on the morrow.

I told him why I had come, and he was pleased. A nurse put a screen around his bed in that long ward and I was ready to administer the communion.

“I wish you would pray for me before I take it,” he said. “I’m not quite satisfied.”

Shortly he prayed through and I gave him the bread and the cup. It was a very sacred service that we had there. when I concluded he looked up and smiled, and said, “Preacher, God sanctified me while I was partaking.”

I left the hospital satisfied that God had used me to help a needy man.

The next morning the doctor attempted to operate, but found such a cancerous condition that he merely sewed up my new-found friend.

In a day or two I called on him in the home of one of my members where he boarded. He said he felt so much better since his operation. Poor man he did not know his condition. When he left the room for a few minutes the lady in whose home he lived whispered, “Look at the back of his shirt when he comes in. Cancerous matter is simply oozing out of his incision. The doctor says he has but a very short time to live.”

When he returned I noticed a place as large as my hand where seepage was taking place.

I knelt for prayer before I left. At the conclusion of it, Bill, for that was his name, said, “Brother Strang I want you to pray for me. Pray that God will heal me.” Now, I have never tried to limit God’s power, but to be asked to pray for a man in this condition was quite an assignment.

I had no oil with me. The only thing the lady could find was a quart bottle of mineral oil. I said it would do, and Bill knelt before me with his hands clasped in prayer like a little child.

I called God’s attention to His promises and anointed Bill.

“I feel better already,” he said as we arose. “I’ll be out to church in a week or two.”

I returned to see Bill a week later. The landlady met me at the door.

“Where’s Bill?” I asked.

“Oh, Brother Strang!” exclaimed the lady of the house, “Bill is all better and has gone to work. His back has all healed up and the doctor says there is no sign of a cancer, and we all think you are wonderful.”

I was never more astonished in all my life. A week ago I was sure Bill was dying. I could hardly believe what I heard. But the lady gleefully assured me that it was all true.

“Give God the glory,” I said. “I had little or nothing to do with it. It was Bill’s faith and God’s power. I have no virtue within myself to perform such a miracle.”

It all happened six or seven years ago. The last I heard of Bill he was still working. He is a miracle of God’s healing power.

I do not know why God does not answer all our prayers for healing, but I do know that he heard prayer for Bill. He must have work for Bill to do that only he can perform.

I know this case has strengthened my faith in healing. I do not put it before regeneration and entire sanctification, but I do know God is able.

God met Bill's situation. Doctors and human agency were of no avail. At that point God came and worked a wonderful deliverance.

Thank God for His saving, sanctifying and healing power.

LIFE SITUATION NO. 42

TOPIC: Saying “Amen” To God’s Will

SUBTOPIC: A Greater Miracle

TITLE: The Greater Miracle

“A miracle is happening in Bethany,” said the young man who met me on the street.

“There is a little girl here for whom we have been praying. The doctors have said she could not recover, but she is improving, and God has answered our prayers. I want you to go to see her.”

I went that same day. I found a little tot about five years old, suffering intensely. Her parents were glad to see me. They appreciated the prayers of our people. And they were commencing to believe for the recovery of their darling.

I talked with them and prayed with them and gave all the encouragement I could. I said to them, “I hope your little girl will recover. I have a little girl of my own just her age. I know how you feel when your child is ill. I’m glad for the improvement in her. If she recovers it will indeed be a miracle. But do you know a greater miracle than that may be performed here? It would be this: If she should die that you would still maintain your faith in God.”

I left them with that and prayer that God might give them needed grace.

The next day the sweet little girl died.

I was called to the home again, and I found that the greater miracle had happened. The grief stricken parents were held up and comforted by their faith and God’s grace.

Some readers may not be inclined to agree with my observation regarding the greater miracle. You need not. I am sure, however, that it is a wonderful miracle when one can see his own child taken and submit without becoming bitter.

After twenty years of pastoral experience I can look back at many times when God in answer to prayer has healed persons. Some whom I thought would be healed were not. At other times God healed on almost the minimum of faith. Divine healing is something I do not understand entirely. If in answer to prayer God healed all for whom we prayed I could understand it. But the truth is He does not do that. He has plan and purpose in all He does. We cannot demand healing of Him. We must pray in His will. If for His glory He heals we need rejoice, but if He does not heal we must say amen to His will. The miracle of “amen to His will,” is occurring every day. I have known thousands who have said it under adverse circumstances. I believe in divine healing with all my heart. Perhaps it is because of our weakness and lack of faith that we do not see more healing. I exhort each reader to believe more for it. We have some wonderful promises regarding healing, and I am going to lay hold of them more and more. But I yet believe that when a person says like Job of old, “Though he slay me, yet will I trust him,” he has given evidence to something greater than an act of faith that will heal His body. To trust God in affliction and pain requires a miraculous faith.

A miracle is happening in Bethany, for I know several who are invalids whose faith is holding fast.

LIFE SITUATION NO. 43

TOPIC: Salvation

SUBTOPIC: Will Stand The Tests

TITLE: He Giveth More Grace

The voice on the wire said, “I consulted with my doctor and he said it was strictly a family affair. He told me to ask my preacher or priest and to take his advice.”

“Well, I think she ought to be told,” I replied.

“Then I want you to come right down to the hospital and tell her if you will.”

What a situation to be placed in!

A young boy of our community had been electrocuted. He had died instantly. The tragedy had occurred in a city about two hundred miles away. The boy’s mother was in the hospital, where she had just undergone a serious operation. Her husband was asking me to go down there to tell her about the accident.

In half an hour I was at the hospital. There I met the grief-stricken father. The hospital authorities knew why I had come, and they were prepared. An intern and a nurse were near the door.

I prayed silently and then said, “I want you to be brave. I have something of a very serious nature to tell you. It is not about yourself, but it concerns someone who is dear to you. Do you believe you can muster up courage to hear it?”

She believed she could.

I shall never forget the initial shock my news gave her. I really believed she was going to die right there. The nurse and doctor came rushing into the room to administer a sedative.

I stood condemning myself and questioning my judgment, but it seemed to me to be unforgivable to bury that boy without her even knowing he was dead. But had I done right?

Shortly, she got hold of herself.

I was given an illustration of how much a brave woman can endure. I saw portrayed in her the reality of salvation. A calm and quietness possessed her. She thanked me for telling her, and said she believed I'd done right to tell her. The grace of Jesus and her faith met and she was triumphant.

It must take a lot of grace and much courage to stand the shock of hearing that a precious son has been hurled out into eternity. Here is the value of our salvation.

The more I live the more I become aware of the fact that salvation will stand any test to which it is subjected.

The grace of God can be given to us in such measure that the sickness and death of our loved ones can be endured. Even personal sickness and with our own death staring us in the face, we need not fear.

Surely it is a great salvation that Jesus came to provide. Fear makes cowards of men. But when the love and grace of Jesus become operative in our lives we can say, "I will not fear what men may do to me, and we may also cry out, "O death, where is thy sting?"

I am glad that I saw that loving mother's bravery. No soldier fights on foreign soil today who is braver than she. She has encouraged me to believe that Christ can meet any life situation.

LIFE SITUATION NO. 44

TOPIC: Personal Work

SUBTOPIC: Easy Among Frightened Wreck Victims

TITLE: The Wrecked Flyer

The train from Fort Worth to Oklahoma City was speeding along at about sixty miles an hour. It was a beautiful day, and I was relaxing after my breakfast, and had just resumed reading Buttrick's book, "Prayer."

I had bought my ticket in Abilene, thinking at the time that I was being routed over the Rock Island from Fort Worth to Oklahoma City, only to discover that I had been sold over the Santa Fe from there. At the time I debated about changing the ticket, but finally decided to keep it.

The night before I had been asked to return by automobile from Abilene to Oklahoma City. In fact, some friends had insisted on it, but I had elected to come by train, and here I was on this particular train speeding homeward.

Suddenly there was a terrible lurching and jarring, and I was aware that our train had left the rails, and we were running along the ties. In a few seconds, which seemed an eternity, there was a tremendous impact. Our locomotive had struck a pier on a bridge across a river. Instantly there was the utmost confusion. People screamed and ran toward the doors as the train trembled to a stop.

I happened to be at the extreme rear of our car. I stood up and exhorted the people to be calm. I succeeded in getting some degree of order. I then opened the door of our car, and discovered that the locomotive, two baggage cars and two coaches were off the tracks, and the two baggage cars and the locomotive had turned over. Steam was escaping from the great engine as it lay panting on its side.

I ran down the track to the locomotive. We found the engineer pinned in his cab and up to his neck in the soft mud of the river. The engine had stopped right at the edge of the water. With the help of two or three others we finally extricated the engineer. He was badly injured.

After a long delay we were all put in the cars that had not been overturned, another locomotive was attached to our train, and we backtracked several miles and were rerouted toward Oklahoma City, but a more frightened group of people I never have seen. Fortunately, not a passenger was seriously injured, but they all knew they had come within a few feet of death.

Four Pullman porters had been deadheading to Chicago. They had been riding in one of the overturned baggage cars. I contacted them in the washroom as I attempted to clean up. I was covered with mud from head to foot. The colored fellows sure were scared.

“Boys, it pays to be ready,” I said to them. “It sure does, Boss,” they replied in unison. How they escaped injury or death in a car full of trunks and baggage is a mystery. I really preached them a sermon, and they were ready for it.

It took me twelve hours to reach home from the scene of the wreck. I improved almost every minute of that time by doing personal work, and don’t think people were not receptive!

One lady stopped puffing her cigarette as I went by. “Sit down,” she invited. She was almost a nervous wreck.

“I want you to do something tonight before you retire,” I suggested. “What’s that?” she replied.

“I want you to kneel down and thank God for sparing your life and giving you a chance to get ready to live and serve Him,” I answered.

“And will I do it!” she exclaimed. “This has certainly taught me a lesson.”

And so it went. One after another wanted to talk to me, and in each case they were willing and anxious to discuss salvation. There were a lady from Colorado, a soldier boy from New York, an officer’s wife from Louisiana, the claim agent from Texas, and many, many others.

I began to see why I was permitted to ride that train. God wanted my presence on it to meet an emergency situation. I really believe I did more good on that train than I had done in the four-day convention from which I was returning.

Thank God for the privilege of witnessing for Him, and for an opportunity to help meet life situations.

LIFE SITUATION NO. 45

TOPIC: Rationalism and Modernism

SUBTOPIC: Saved and Sanctified Out Of

TITLE: Faith Versus Modernism

“See if you can help this young lady,” the worker at the altar said to me. I knelt beside the needy one for a few minutes and discovered that she was an earnest seeker, but her faith had been dealt a damaging blow. Someone had put seeds of doubt in her mind about the inspiration of the Bible; about the goodness of God and the reality of salvation. I perceived that while she was in earnest that she needed some help in her thinking.

I suggested that she seek no farther that night, but that she come to see me the next morning. She came right on time.

Mrs. Strang and I sat and reasoned with her, trying to remove doubt at every point, trying to undo the result of erroneous teaching that she had received before coming to Bethany. It was a testing time for each of us, but God helped and she finally was ready for prayer. We prayed with her and sent her to her room to think and pray some more.

The next Sunday night she was at the altar again and was beautifully saved. The next week she consecrated her life to Christ and was gloriously sanctified.

I heard her testimony the next Wednesday evening in prayer meeting. Her face shone as she gave it. It was a testimony of faith and victory.

She was snatched as a brand from the burning. She was rescued before she had gone too far astray on the dark road of rationalism and modernism. How very much pleased we are about it.

I should say that the worst thing anyone can do is to rob a boy or girl of his or her faith in God and God’s Word. I am going to do my best to help all I can to keep their faith in God. But there are scores and thousands of young men and women subjected to skeptical teaching and teachers each day.

Thank God for church schools, where boys and girls are taught the Word, and are taught in all subjects by Christian teachers. Because of the good work they are doing these schools deserve our support. We should support them with our prayers, our influence and our finance. They are not turning out skeptics, but their product is happy men and women who go out into the great fields and marts of life to demonstrate and manifest the love of God to a sin-sick world.

Look around you and see if the skeptic is happy. I have met many of them, and sat in their classes, but have yet to find one whose religion brought him peace and joy. On the other hand, those whose faith is in the Bible are joyous and happy.

Yes, I noted the young lady's countenance the first night she sought. How sorrowful it was! But when doubts were cast away and faith became operative her face shone with God's glory. The last testimony I heard her give was:

"I am saved and sanctified. My trust is in Him. I have peace in my heart and I expect to serve Him all the days of my life."

No skeptic or modernist talks like that.

Reader, let me exhort you as never before to "have faith in God."

