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Through the Valley of the Shadow

A war prisoner's struggle for survival

Daniel C. Snaddon

Faithful Men

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“The things that thou hast heard of me among many witnesses, the same commit thou to faithful men, who shall be able to teach others also.” (2 Timothy 2:2)

Dedication

I dedicate this book to the glory of my precious Savior, and to my dear wife Lily, and daughter Anne who have encouraged and inspired me to record these experiences.

My sincere thanks also to Mrs. E. Fleming and Mrs. L. DeCamp for the typing and review of the manuscript.

Foreword

I have known the author of this story for more than fifteen years and have sat under his ministry at Bethany Bible Chapel in Satellite Beach, Florida. Satellite Beach lies in the shadow of the great gantries that have placed men in outer space and on the moon.

Each time I visit Mr. Snaddon it is hard for me to realize a human being could endure such mental and physical torture during those war years, yet remain unscathed. The only reason for this is that Dan Snaddon as a young lad in Scotland, put his soul and life in the hand of the Savior of the world.

His faith in the Lord Jesus Christ brought him the courage to persevere under heartbreaking conditions and also was a fortress in the days of adversity. It sustained him during the darkest hours and gave him the assurance of a glorious future.

This story is the testimony of a Scottish lad who under adverse circumstances sought to honor God, and God has honored him. The book obviously is not written for self-aggrandizement, but rather for God's glory and to show His ability to sustain His children.

Dan Snaddon heard the call to full-time service for God in 1959. Then he was led to serve Him in a new work at Satellite Beach, near Cape Canaveral. Many souls have been saved under his preaching, and many afflicted believers have found refuge in the perfect Hiding Place through his ministry.

As you read this thrilling story may you be inspired to move closer to the God Who is equal to every circumstance.

G. Tom Willey

Chairman of the Board

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Chapter 1: Triumphant Faith

It was midday at Tonshon South Prisoner of War Camp in the inhospitable jungles of Thailand. Suddenly, the stillness of the hot, humid jungle was shattered by the agonizing scream of someone being clubbed to death.

Early that morning the so-called fit men and the sick men had dragged their aching bodies down the narrow jungle track to the infamous “Railway of Death.” Left behind in that cheerless clearing in the hostile jungle known as the hospital compound, were the physical wrecks of humanity. Not only were they broken in body, but they were crushed in spirit; to be consigned to the hospital was almost like having the death sentence pronounced. Hundreds of young men who felt they had been cheated of normal manhood tossed in agony upon the vermin-infested rice sacks, grasping at straws in the fruitless effort of trying to hang on to the last threads of life.

Filthy and emaciated bodies moved uneasily within the tattered tents of that lonely hospital compound. Joyless eyes peered out through the doors into the brilliant sunshine and stark naked courtyard. Confused and terrifying thoughts forced their way through the stagnant brain cells of the victims of inhuman war and disease. Each man was wondering in a painfully slow mental process: who is the victim this time?

The subject of this clubbing was a middle-aged Chinese man. He lay motionless in a pool of his own blood. The Japanese guards stood nearby still holding the bamboo pole which one of them had crashed through the unfortunate creature’s skull.

The guards seemed almost at the point of insanity. For many years the Chinese had been the mortal enemies of the Japanese. How was it then that a Chinese dog had been sheltered under their very noses and had eaten Japanese rice? It was the unpardonable sin to give Japanese rice to a Chinese. Now that the Chinese had paid with his life for his fictitious crimes, the British collaborators must be found and likewise punished.

The first victim stood nearby. He was one of the heroic Medical Officers of the Royal Army Medical Corps. This British Captain was well liked — he had given himself unsparingly in the course of his duties as a doctor to the futile effort of combating disease and death. Pursuing his humanitarian course, he had been exercising the Chinese when he was spotted by the Japanese guards. He had watched man's inhumanity to man exhibited in this senseless killing. "Now what?" he thought as he faced his barbaric assailants. He had not long to wait; they lunged at him and commenced to beat him in merciless fashion until he crumpled at their feet. The Captain never fully recovered from this. Some two months later his tragic death was attributed to the brutal beating he had received.

It had all begun a few weeks previously. I was assigned the questionable honor of being the medical orderly for the gaunt skeletons who formed one of the many "work parties" which laboriously pushed their way through the mosquito-infested jungle, building what was later to be known as the "Railway of Death."

The scene this morning was the building of a bridge over a swollen river. Some men clothed only in meager loincloths

stood up to the waist in this swirling icy water. These men were pulling hopelessly on a rope in a vain attempt to hoist the large trunk of a tree to the Japanese engineers high up on the bridge. Suddenly, with out warning, the noose slipped and for a moment the tree hung precariously in mid-air, then it crashed into the murky waters. Unfortunately one of the prisoners was unable to get out of the path of the falling tree and it fell on his lower leg, completely crushing it.

A situation like this called for quick action. The man was grabbed from the torrent, and carried to the riverbank. It was a pathetic sight: here was a young man suffering excruciating pain from a mutilated lower leg which hung limply from the knee; I felt so inadequate in myself, but commended the situation to the Lord. No splints, no bandages, no morphine to alleviate the pain. Hurriedly, bamboo poles were cut and used as improvised splints; we immobilized the leg binding leg and splints together with the stalks of creeping vines. A stretcher was made by inserting bamboo poles lengthwise through two old rice sacks. Gently, we lifted the man and placed him on the crude stretcher; by this time he was more dead than alive. Under the protests of our unsympathetic guards, four of us lifted the stretcher and slowly made our way along the narrow jungle track to our primitive hospital.

The Medical Officer, realizing the seriousness of the injury, at once gave instructions to take the unfortunate young man to a better-equipped hospital where his leg could be amputated. We lifted the semiconscious frame and commenced our slow journey down the narrow, winding, jungle trail.

Long columns of dejected men had dragged themselves along this trail of death. Naked, sick and half crazed by thirst and

hunger they had toiled and sweated under the blazing sun, driven relentlessly on by the well-fed and well-equipped guards. Broken in spirit and utterly exhausted, many brave men gave up the unequal struggle, preferring the long sleep of death to the tortures of a hopeless existence.

On either side of this bloodstained trail of horror lay the bleached bones of many a brave man, bones that had been picked clean by the flesh-eating vultures. As we carefully chose our steps through the labyrinth of mud holes and roots we became conscious of someone groaning in the bush. Laying our patient down, we proceeded cautiously into the jungle and found a Chinese national suffering from multifarious injuries and lying in a state of indescribable filth. Though language was a barrier, by signs we determined that this destitute man wanted just a little rice and a drink of water. Rice and water — the bare necessities of life. We had neither and when the Chinese realized this the look of expectancy quickly faded into one of utter dejection. How helpless we felt; we made him as comfortable as we could, and with sad hearts we left the man alone on his jungle couch with the snake and scorpions and carnivorous vultures as his constant companions.

After delivering our patient to the medical authorities, our minds turned back to the injured Chinese. In the hope of contacting him again, we were able to secure from a kind-hearted cook a small portion of burnt rice and a bottle of water. As we approached the place where he lay we heard his shouts and, finding him, gave him the rice and water. No language was needed to convey the overwhelming gratitude that welled up in the man's heart. His eyes and face spoke eloquently for him. This touching scene reminded me of the

Scriptural promise: "Whosoever shall give you a cup of water to drink in My name...shall not lose his reward" (Mark 9:41).

Having done everything for the man that we possibly could, we made our way to our camp with sorrowful hearts. Though we left the poor man in the jungle, the vision of this dying derelict became an obsession. When this obsession could no longer be contained I approached the Japanese guards through the interpreter to have the man brought into the vicinity of our camp. To this request the guards simply shrugged their shoulders, which to men of the Western World meant, "Suit yourself, we don't care." So we immediately planned to make the move.

The next morning with a few interested friends we carried this human reject into the outskirts of the cholera camp. We felt that should the Japanese change their minds, he was relatively safe there, as no guard ever entered the confines of this horror compound. After recuperating for some time, the Chinese made some progress and seemed headed for recovery. But then a very serious problem arose. The cholera camp, which had been phased out, was closed down completely. The question uppermost in our minds was, "What will we do with our good friend?" It was unthinkable to abandon him in this crisis.

Under cover of darkness we carefully carried our newfound friend to a little bower we had prepared for him close to the main camp. This straw hut was completely hidden in the thick underbrush, which gave adequate cover for our frequent visits to care for his many needs. Though food was terribly scarce some of us were able to share our meager rations with this Chinese castoff. This is the sequence of events, which

triggered off one to the many atrocities committed during these forty-seven months of terror.

The Japanese were convinced that others, apart from the British Captain who had already been punished, were involved, and in their usual efficient manner went about to find out who they were. During this commotion I was enjoying a well-earned sleep. The past night had been a trying one. Fourteen long, weary hours on duty, on a hot humid night surrounded by the sick and dying can drain the body of mental and physical energy. Exhausted and frustrated, I had left my fever-ridden comrades struggling for dear life on cold mother earth.

The sound of angry voices increasing in tempo drew steadily nearer. My heart was chilled, cold sweat broke out all over me as the guards shouted and raged, demanding the identity of the villain — the Good Samaritan.

In a moment I grasped the situation. The incredible incidents of the past few weeks flashed before me. The joy of having been able to help this poor victim now seemed lost in the surge of horror and fear that gripped my heart. The moment of truth had come. I cast myself on the mercy of the Lord Who had never failed. Then calling on all the reserve of spiritual and physical strength that I could muster, I strode from the bamboo hut and confronted the astonished Japanese.

Quickly the infuriated guards jumped lion-like on their helpless victim, a mere ninety-seven pound shadow of the proud Scottish soldier who was called to the colors a few years previously. I stood there in their midst — I never felt so alone and helpless in my life as at that moment. I stood naked but for my ragged loin cloth. Bearded, with hair falling to my shoulders, the flesh had almost disappeared from my tall six-

foot frame. Hollow eyes and cheeks, collapsed abdomen, pitifully thin legs and arms, I stood feeling utterly helpless. Only the previous Sunday I had addressed seven to eight hundred men on the subject of the Good Samaritan, exhorting them to help their less fortunate comrades who had fallen by the way. Suddenly the character of the Good Samaritan linked itself with my present position. Instantly I received strength, and the mysterious consciousness of the Divine Presence of my blessed Savior permeated my whole being. Humanly speaking, I was at the point of no return. None of my comrades dared to help me in the face of this ruthless and bloodthirsty enemy. But instantaneously and gloriously my fears completely left me.

The faith that I had found as a lad of twelve suddenly became a living reality. That which had been theory suddenly became experience — it was new and invigorating. Then I understood experimentally why the saints and martyrs could sing praises to God while being thrown to the lions, and as the flames of fire roasted their flesh while they burned at the stake. I recalled the hymnwriter's description of this kind of faith as he contemplated the Cross of Jesus Christ:

*It makes the coward spirit brave;
It nerves the feeble arm for fight;
It takes its terror from the grave
And guilds the bed of death with light.*

To the four Japanese guards I must have seemed easy prey as I stood there utterly helpless. They huddled together for a conference. Breaking away, they jumped around me briefly,

screaming with rage. Then they struck; swift and sure came the cruel blows each one a killer. With feet and fist they pummeled my weak frame until I crumpled at their feet beaten into insensibility. Throwing a bucket of cold water over me brought me back to consciousness, where I was hauled to my feet by determined Nipponese assailants. Through misty eyes I could see them stealthily advancing upon me again. Suddenly the blows began to fall on my weakened frame. I tried to resist them but they came from all directions; unmercifully and relentlessly they fell, then semiconsciousness faded into total darkness and relief.

Being brought back to consciousness for the second time, I felt that I was living my last few moments on earth. Strange as it may seem I was not loathe to let go the strings of life. The works of Paul were my constant inspiration, "To die is gain." Lifting my heart to the Lord I prayed, "Dear Father I am ready to go or stay at Your command." The presence of my precious Savior was so real, His love in which He had enclosed me was impregnable and impervious to the threats of my barbaric assailants. They at one time seemed so large and formidable, but as I looked at them through the eyes of the Omnipotent God they seemed to have become so diminutive. Thus fortified, the inner peace and radiance burst through the filth, the scars and the coagulated blood, and formed a smile — the onlookers said that it was a heavenly smile. The furious Japanese soldiers stared in disbelief; there was some Power here, which they had never encountered before and could not understand. How could one endure such punishment and be so close to death, and smile? They were incensed to the point of insanity. No puny, filthy prisoner would mock their

disciplinary action. He must be dealt with in the same way as the Chinese.

From thirty feet away they advanced on their helpless prey. Terrified and helpless fellow prisoners stood around. They had witnessed and heard the sickening thud of each death-dealing blow. Many of them thought of the message of the Good Samaritan delivered only a few days before. On came the rushing soldiers, murder in their hearts, shrieking and yelling as they ran — twelve feet, ten feet, eight feet, seven, six, five, four. Suddenly those baffled men skidded to a stop. They looked incredulously at each other and stared with amazement at this battered and bloody archenemy. They retreated slowly to their former position to review their strategy. They worked themselves up into a frenzy; they yelled and screamed and waved their arms around as they began their advance on their seemingly forlorn victim. Could the truth have been known I was never stronger than at that moment of human weakness. The Lord Jesus was never so precious as He was then. The power with which He surrounded Elisha at Dothan was now mine experimentally. The companionship of the Son of God that sustained the three Hebrew children in the fiery furnace was now mine in reality. I felt more than a conqueror through Him that loved me.

While breathless buddies watched, I waited — physically weak but never more strong. Onward rushed the guards, bent on ending this sordid affair. Twelve feet, eight, six, four. Again around the three-foot mark they skidded to a stop, as though facing an invincible barrier, which they could not penetrate. Now utterly baffled and confused they stared at each other in disbelief. They were obviously bewildered. (They could

understand the almost naked figure, the gaunt skeleton that stood a little unsteadily before them. He would not be the first that they had murdered, nor would he be the last.) What drove them to distraction was the look of serenity, or was it a look of triumph? Then there was this unseen Presence, the irresistible Power, and the invisible Hedge: they were baffled and perplexed. I could sense that a change in their attitude was taking place. They could find no solution to any of their immediate problems and in utter dismay and disgust they retreated into the bamboo jungle. I could hardly believe that my accusers had left, yet was not surprised, for in the days prior to my enlistment the Lord had given me the precious promise, "I will never leave thee nor forsake thee." This experience of abject humiliation and deliverance revealed that the God Who lived in Moses and David's time was still alive.

Kind and loving hands came to embrace me; they carried me into one of the hospital tents and washed my sores and attended to my bruises. The road to recovery was painfully slow and during convalescence the Lord showed me still further the greatness of His power and the sweetness of His love. The men in the camp were deeply impressed by this incident. Some said, "Here is a man who practices what he preaches." Others said, "This is a faith worth having." Many others said, "This is a God worth trusting." Eternity alone will reveal the work of God that was done in the hearts of many of these men.

Chapter 2: Early Days in Scotland

Tillicoultry, Scotland, is a beautiful little town. It lies couched in the bosom of the Ochil Hills and nestles quietly in the shadow of Ben Cleuch, the highest mountain in the range. Oddly enough Tillicoultry is situated in the smallest county in Scotland, which boasts of the longest name:

Clackmannanshire. The setting is just perfect, the beautiful Ochils to the north enclose a sheltered valley bordered on the south by the lower reaches of the River Forth. This river cuts its tortuous way through green fields and past sleepy little villages and farms nestling on its rich brown banks.

To the west at a distance of some ten miles is the site of such historic battles as Stirling Bridge and Bannockburn, where the Scots of long ago fought against great odds for their homeland. In proud but faded splendor, Stirling Castle stands like a sentinel guarding the approaches to the Scottish Highlands. Once impregnable, it is now obsolete with the ruthless fingers of time and decay relentlessly tearing at its formerly strong bulwarks. In the courtyard of the Castle is a bronze statue of King Robert Bruce, the valiant victor of the battle of nearby Bannockburn. Sitting on his prancing steed he proudly looks over the scene of victory and the city of Stirling, toward the slim pencil-like shape of Wallace Monument. This monument stands on top of a lofty knoll and was built by the patriots of Scotland in memory of William Wallace another of the great heroes of early Scotland.

Tillicoultry itself is situated on the River Devon. The paper mill, textile factories, and coal mines were the chief industries of the four thousand inhabitants. The town is beautifully kept

and at the time of this writing has escaped much of the pollution and ravages of modern industry. It was in this lovely setting that I was born, named after my paternal grandfather, Daniel Cameron Snaddon.

My parents were godly people. I was carried to the meetings in the local church long before I knew it. When my sister, Jessie, came along five years later this process was repeated. The Assembly who met in Bank Street Gospel Hall was about one hundred strong. Its members were mostly from working-class families, many of them earned their daily bread in the bowels of the earth, far from the green verdure of the mountains and the pure air, which swept through the valley. The elders were spiritual men; they were not blessed with education from a worldly standpoint, but had a deep insight into the Word. There was a good percentage of young people in the Assembly; they were active, sometimes overactive. Nearly everyone had a deep desire to learn and live Christ. These were happy days; the Assembly was the heart and fulcrum of all our activities. Many of us worked twelve hours a day but meeting was never missed. The Lord blessed in those days as we labored for Him in this happy group.

At one point there was a great outpouring of blessing. There were no special meetings, but the Spirit's power was manifested and people were being saved. We often wondered why the Lord blessed us so. Years passed, then the war came, many of the local group were scattered to the four corners of the earth. Upon returning home after five years in the Army I went to see Miss Nellie Gourlay who many years before had been taken to a home for incurables in Edinburgh with arthritis. She was lying on a bed completely immobilized; she

was unable to move any part of her body. The only thing she could do was move her eyes from left to right. When I arrived she asked me to sit down where she could see me. then slowly and laboriously told me this story, the gist of which is as follows. "I am totally incapacitated, physically I am helpless. But when I move my eyes as far over to the right as I can, I can see the clock on the wall. I know when the Assembly gathers for the meetings, and I pray all the time they are gathered that the Lord will bless and save souls." By the time Miss Gourlay had finished she was completely exhausted. As she lay there she looked radiant, touched by the Master's hand. With breaking heart I laid my hand gently on that tortured and twisted form and thanked God for a noble intercessor. The main reason for blessing in the Assembly fifty miles away was the prayers of this dear saint. A few months later God called her from suffering to an eternal weight of glory.

My conversion was unspectacular. There were no emotional experiences, no blinding lights, but looking back over my life one can see God's hand leading in definite steps toward conversion. I believe that my Sunday School teachers played a big part in leading me to the Lord. My daddy was first used to start me thinking of Heaven, hell and salvation, he taught one of the younger classes. One day the Sunday School superintendent, Mr. Hugh McKee, spoke to the entire group. In his own way he brought to our attention the truth of hell to be shunned and a Heaven to be gained. In our opening exercise we had sung a hymn, one line of which said, "And what must it be to be there." He quoted this, explained some of the glories of Heaven then added, "Have you ever thought, what must it be not to be there?" Another arrow of conviction penetrated

my heart. Gospel texts were greatly used in gently leading me to Christ; they were as nails in a sure place.

One Sunday morning after the Breaking of Bread, Bill Paterson, late of the British West Indies, and I were leaving the church when Mr. McKee, a real shepherd, put his arm around Bill and said, “I haven been praying a lot for you and feel constrained to ask if you have given any thought to accepting Christ as your personal Savior?” Bill was interested and had been under conviction for some time. A conversation in a nearby anteroom led to a personal encounter with Jesus Christ. Bill emerged from the room a new creature in Christ Jesus.

Bill’s conversion made a great impression on me. The following week an intense longing to be saved grew in my heart. I knew how to be saved but had never reached the moment of decision. The next Saturday night Bill and I sat together at the Gospel Tea Meeting. The dear servant who had led Bill to Christ came and asked him if he still trusted the Lord. “Yes,” said Bill. “It’s wonderful.” Then with deep earnestness he said, “What about Dan?”

I was expecting this; somehow I knew it would happen. The good shepherd asked kindly, “What will you do with Jesus, Dan?” He quoted John 3:16, “For God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten son, that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish but have everlasting life.” I knew those words by heart, but somehow they were different that night, the meaning was clear — and from the depth of my young heart I said, “I will take Christ as my Savior now.” Immediately a great peace filled my heart, my joy knew no bounds, I had to tell my dad and mom, my grandparents, everybody. As I look back on that day I consider it the greatest in my life. Dar

reader, as you eagerly press on into the contents of this book, may I urge you to pause for a moment's reflection? Do you know Jesus Christ as your personal Savior? Before another minute passes, why not trust Him and be saved.

I have just been recounting the happiest day in my life, let me now tell you of one of the saddest. My dad worked in the coalmines as a deputy. He had the important task of looking after the safety of the miners in his particular section of the mine. He worked from 3 p.m. till 11 p.m. On a bright August day before leaving for work, he walked around our little living room with his hands clasped behind his back, his head held high and sang lustily in his sweet tenor voice, "And He walks with me, and He talks with me, and He tells me I am His own, and the joy we share as we tarry there, none other has ever known." Dad left for work that day — a fond kiss for mom and little sister, a firm pat on the back for me, then away on his bicycle. I felt so proud of him; he looked so handsome and strong and carried his thirty-nine years lightly. With a cheery wave of the hand, he turned the corner at the end of the street. As I stood there a strange feeling of loneliness crept into my young and tender heart, nevertheless I resolved that when I grew up I would be like my daddy. Dad descended into the bowels of the earth just before 3 p.m.; at 6 p.m. he was pinned beneath a huge stone, which had mysteriously slipped from the roof of the mine. Ten men used every device they could think of to free him. He was rushed to the hospital but by 10 p.m. he had passed into the presence of the Lord.

The untimely death of my father was a dark mystery to me. It made life more complex than ever. The brevity of time, the uncertainty of life, gave me cause for serious reflection. Bereft

of paternal protection, care, and counsel, I felt so lonely and the world seemed so big in my inexperienced eyes. I was not spiritually mature enough then to realize that my Heavenly Father would put His strong arms around me and protect me. Looking back I can see God's hand in all of this; He was preparing me for the grueling experiences that He knew lay ahead and of which I was completely ignorant.

Chapter 3: The Complexities of Youth

My father's tragic and premature death caused quite a stir in our community. Several well-meaning sportsmen became interested in my talents as a cricketer. During my days at school I had won every prize awarded for outstanding performance. Since I was bereft of my father's counsel in these matters, these kind-hearted gentlemen sought to fashion a career in professional sports for me, hoping thereby to blunt the edge of my tragic loss.

It was customary in those days for most of the villages and towns in Scotland to field their cricket teams in the summer and soccer teams in the winter. On those long wonderful summer evenings it was a great thrill for me to don the appropriate clothes and play my heart out for my team. On the field I discovered that the concentration and excitement of the game filled every crevice of my heart. There was room for nothing else, nor did anything else really matter. The applause of the crowd and riding the wave of success was an exhilarating experience. Becoming the idol of the sports fans and receiving the admiration of the townspeople seemed, at that time, to be the apex of my ambition.

Sometimes when we were playing at home an arrow of conviction would pierce the inner recesses of my heart. My love for Jesus Christ at this time was at low ebb, and sometimes from my place on the field I could see numbers of the local Christians making their way to the prayer meeting. Usually that same night when the excitement was over, I would lie in the darkness of my little room wrestling with the conflicting thoughts that tormented my immature mind.

Slowly and painfully, after weeks and months of conflict I came to the conclusion that the answer to the longings of my inner man could not be found in success on the sports field, nor through the applause of the crowd.

Life up to this point had really been meaningless. I felt like a ship without a rudder or a small twig tossed about on the limitless ocean of life. I realized then that I was facing a crisis in life; there was no sidestepping the issues involved.

Some years previous to this I had accepted Christ as my personal Savior. This decision was very real to me, but somehow the exhilarating joy of the succeeding days was almost nonexistent. My backslidden condition could not in any way be attributed to the Lord's lack of concern for me. It was entirely my own doing. Worldly things appealed to me and I failed to cultivate the presence and companionship of my blessed Savior. I decided that all this must be changed and that Christ must be Lord of all, or not Lord at all.

Soon my confused brain began to properly assess true values in the light of God's Word. As wisdom and strength came from the Throne, I relinquished my hold on the transient and embraced the eternal, counting that the recompense of the reward was greater riches than the fame of the world. The question had been, "Christ or cricket? The Savior or sports?" I answered from my heart, "I will give up all for Jesus, and this vain world is naught to me."

Great peace swept over my troubled heart. Life seemed to take on a new dimension. Now there was a goal, a prize, an objective, the attainment of which I knew would bring satisfaction and joy unspeakable and full of glory. I determined then that the energy and time, which I had expended

unstintingly on the sports field, would be channeled into the service of the Lord. The impelling love of Christ burned in my heart with irresistible force and I turned all my youthful zeal and enthusiasm toward seeking men and women, boys and girls, for Christ.

Around this time a surge of interest in missionary work swept over me. I read everything, which I could lay my hands on. The feats of devotion and endurance accomplished by those dear servants of God thrilled my being. In those days of newfound joy I believe the seed was sown in my heart to serve the Lord full time. Opportunities to witness came in an ever-increasing circle; men of God helped me and encouraged me immeasurably.

Several years passed in happy service, then came the bewildering days just before the declaration of war. One day there was a ray of hope that war would be averted, only to be dashed suddenly by the threats of a ruthless dictator. During this period, in my quieter moments, I often contemplated the ravages of total war. Even in the night I would wake, and my imagination would run riot, I could hear the sickening noise of battle, the deadly impact of mechanical and aerial warfare. I would lie almost petrified as I thought of the carnage and waste of life. Sometimes the groans of the wounded and dying haunted me day and night.

To take an aggressive part in such an inferno was unthinkable to me. Not only have I a sensitive nature, but also certain principles were ingrained in me which were inviolable. However, having no desire to shirk my duty I took immediate steps to prepare for the inevitable. For several months I attended lectures in Red Cross first aid and nursing, gaining

diplomas in both. The course of my military service became clear to me, as we waited and wondered. I felt more capable of attending to the physical needs of wounded comrades and, while doing so, was determined never to let any opportunity pass of poring into their ears the tender and sweet story of Jesus and His love.

Chapter 4: Royal Army Medical Corps

Strong convictions prohibited me from taking up the weapons of war to kill. But for an able-bodied young man to be assigned noncombatant duties was unheard of. There seemed to be only one way around this, register as a conscientious objector. Although this was expedient, in many aspects it was very unpalatable. Nevertheless the inherent principles and ideals woven into the pattern of one's life could not be ejected at this time of crisis.

The day came for me to appear before the Tribunal in Edinburgh. Five men sat on the bench, and it was not without a certain amount of trepidation that one faced them. A judge, a professor, two ministers from the main religious denominations, and a prominent businessman comprised the hearing board. They read the letters from my employer, from the Assembly where I fellowshiped, and from some of the prominent spiritual leaders in the Country who confirmed my deep conviction. When they finished reading they asked me to speak.

Very simply, and as sincerely as I could, I gave testimony to my deep convictions and to the inviolable Scriptural truths involved then sat down.

"Would you be willing to go into the Medical Corps?" the Tribunal Chairman asked.

"Certainly, sir," I said, "I count it an honor to serve my King and Country." For the sake of my employer, I was given a six-month exemption after which came the greatest change of my whole life.

On November 9, 1940, I became a member of the Royal Army Medical Corps. My first assignment was at Dalkeith near Edinburgh. This was quite a shock. From the sheltered atmosphere of a Christian home to the loud ribaldry of the barrack room was a transition too shattering for words.

The ensuing weeks were veritable nightmares. To meet the challenge of Army life head-on as a Christian was baffling and frustrating. It was a constant battle, there was no respite, and the evening presented my greatest problem. It had been my custom for years to read and pray on my knees before retiring, but this was different. Rather halfheartedly, I would read a portion of Scripture with my Bible well concealed, then slip quietly under the blankets and continue my prayers there. I felt terrible about this at first but as the nights passed it seemed to get easier. Then my conscience erupted in protest and I knew that somehow I must find a way out of this lukewarmness.

Wednesday night found me in the local Assembly prayer meeting in Dalkeith. At the conclusion, Mr. John Fraser asked me to accompany him home for a little fellowship and refreshment. I considered this a God given opportunity to share my problem. I unburdened my heart and laid before him the innermost longings of my soul. Mr. Fraser was visibly moved, and then he broke what seemed to be an eternal silence by suggesting that we kneel and pray. First there pored into the ear of our Heavenly Father the voice of experience, interceding earnestly for a young son in the faith. Then the stammering yet sincere cry of one who had defected somewhat from a rather strict course, found ready acceptance with the God of all grace.

As I trudged the mile and a half through the slush and snow back to the barracks, I made up my mind that it was tonight or never.

I opened the door into the barrack room and was immediately jolted back to reality. The air was thick with cigarette smoke; a heated argument was reaching a climax. Loud laughter and barroom singing all burst with unnerving force upon my timorous soul. The old fears and qualms rushed back unbidden. Slowly I took off my coat and wet boots, taking plenty of time in the process. A fight was raging in my breast. “Don’t do it, leave it till tomorrow night, what will they think of you? Why be a fool — Christ’s fool?” That did it. I dropped to my knees, and quickly a deathly stillness crept over the room. My heart was pounding and my brain was in turmoil. Being unable to pray I peeked through my outspread fingers, curious to see what was going on. First one, then another, of the boys reached for something to throw. Scared, I awaited the barrage and the repercussions, which would follow.

Then to my surprise, one of the veterans across the room jumped out of bed and challenged the younger soldiers, “The first man who throws anything at this boy has me to deal with. I have been in the Army for fifteen years and have never seen anything like this before. He’s the only real Christian I’ve met.”

Slowly, the surprised and subdued soldiers put the missiles down, quietly bade goodnight to their buddies, and slipped into bed. This was unbelievable. As I continued on my knees in prayer, I thanked the Lord for His protection and prayed earnestly for the boys in my room. What joy filled my heart as I slipped between the rough Army blankets; trials indeed, but they were the very gates of Heaven.

I grew to love these men and I found that they respected reality. Within weeks we would all gather around the potbellied stove just before lights-out for Bible reading and prayer. Many of them asked for prayer for their loved ones in the bombed areas of our Country. Many a precious time was spent in counseling, and although none of them came out openly and confessed Christ as Savior, I feel confident that I will meet some of them in Heaven.

The bewildering days at Dalkeith came to an abrupt end. Orders were received to report to the 196 Field Ambulance, stationed at that time in the little village called Yetholm on the borders of Scotland and England. Six of us arrived in the darkness of a cold, miserable night. Quite unexpectedly I was thrust into another ordeal greater than the former.

Assigned sleeping quarters in the village hall with the five other men, I had to place my mattress out in the center of the floor. All the available bed space around the walls had been taken. Strengthened by my previous experience at Dalkeith I committed the situation to my Heavenly Father and fell on my knees in the middle of the room. The seventy fellows around gradually became quiet as they saw this strange action, most of them for the first time. I prayed for strength and spiritual deportment. A few of the fellows made disparaging remarks, which they lived to regret. Because of this testimony I discovered a few secret disciples in the company.

Most of this group stayed together throughout the war and I have reason to believe that a few of them eventually put their trust in the Lord Jesus. These were days of spiritual awakening and growth for me. The real meaning and value of my faith thrilled my heart. In the past, to a large extent, it had been

pleasant theory. Now it was a precious reality, a way of life. My concept of the Person and power of my Savior grew as I saw Him work in my own life and in the lives of others.

Conversely, it was a very unnerving experience to see just how far a person could go when released from the influence of home and family. Even some professing Christians were drawn into the quagmire of sin. I wept for these men; I felt the Lord had placed me among them for a purpose. I prayed for them and thanked God for those who responded to kindness. Many crooked paths were made straight and some wayward sheep brought back into the fold.

In 1941, while temporarily stationed at Presteigne, Wales, we heard the news, which we had awaited for some time: we were heading abroad. Though not unexpected, this news gave us all a jolt. We were beginning to realize what our training and indoctrination really meant. The comfort of the Scriptures at this time was immeasurable: one that came with significant assurance was, “As your days, so shall your strength be” (Deuteronomy 33:25).

A short visit home brought to an end one year of training. Before leaving my mother to catch the train, she took me into my room and said, “Son, remember this, at eight o’clock every morning I will come to your bedside and pray for you.” With a fond embrace and a tender kiss I left her sobbing quietly. Thank God for mother’s prayer and for this trysting place. Wherever we went in the world I tried to calculate the time change and, when possible, I joined her in spirit at the Throne of Grace.

Chapter 5: The Horrors of War

December of 1941, found us aboard the “SS Oronsay,” a huge ship of some 35,000 tons. The crew was not very encouraging, telling us that this was the ship’s first voyage since Nazi shells blew her superstructure away. We sailed from Bristol, then to Canada, the British West Indies, South Africa, and India. Our final destination was Singapore, where we disembarked amid a hail of shells and bullets.

Singapore Harbor is reckoned to be one of the largest natural harbors in the world. The city was the hallmark of Imperial colonization — rich, extravagant, pompous. Alas, the ravages of war could clearly be seen on its proud profile.

It was January 29, 1942, when our unit, the 196 Field Ambulance, landed on the beleaguered Island. There was no time to get acquainted with the people and the customs. The Japanese were closing in for the kill, every effort had to be made to bring our positions to a state of readiness. Our Field Ambulance was attached to the 18th Division, highly trained for war in Europe or the Middle East but inexperienced in jungle warfare. Furthermore, we were unseasoned troops never having had our baptism of real warfare.

The picture of the war in Southeast Asia at this time was dismal. The few antiquated planes, which we possessed, had been blasted from the skies. The long trails of black smoke and flames ending in ear-splitting explosions told the story of death and destruction. Two of the greatest ships of the Royal Navy lay at the bottom of the ocean, the victims of Japanese suicide bombing. Day and night, the indomitable Nipponese forces advanced down Malaya scattering all resistance and

annihilating all opposition. It was just a matter of time before we would be involved in a hopeless struggle.

The Japanese, intoxicated by the wine of victory, reached the Straits of Johore opposite Singapore Island. Victory in sight, they quickly aligned their artillery and mortars at vantage points. Soon the heavens were split with the thunder of the guns, and the earth shook with convulsions as the shells exploded in clouds of acrid smoke and debris.

Although this was what we had trained for, the shock and impact of such barbaric and inhuman conduct cut into and across all my Christian principles. But here was no time for contemplation; there was work to do.

A staff car hurriedly drew up to headquarters. The officers had been recalled from the front to receive some vital information; they hurried into the building. Moments later as the driver was making a hasty egress from the car, there was a shattering explosion nearby and the unfortunate man fell to the ground in a crumpled heap. A small piece of shrapnel no larger than a pea had entered into the left side of his chest, penetrating his heart. He died instantly.

We brought him in unmarked, apart from the small wound in his chest. This was our first casualty; it hardly seemed possible that the man was dead. It came as a tremendous shock to me that such a little thing could “loose the silver cord, and break the golden bowl” (Ecclesiastes 12:6).

When the fighting raged at its fiercest, I worked most of the day and night. I sweated in the sultry heat and prayed silently for the men around me. My heart bled for the long columns of bloody and weary men that came to the field hospital for

treatment. I found myself looking at them through the eyes of my blessed Savior. Calvary love swept over my bewildered being, driving me to the very limits of endurance in an effort to relieve their bodily suffering and to supply their spiritual needs. One of the tragedies that has been indelibly imprinted on my mind was the sight of one of the chaplains going up and down the line glancing at identification tags then ministering only to those who belonged to his particular faith, completely and coldly ignoring the others. This seemed so unchristian and so diabolically opposed to everything that I had been taught, that I was sad and sick at heart. Surely this man, who would allow denominational barriers to preclude his love for his fellow man in times of calamity, knew nothing of the compassion of Christ.

The next day when things were really tough — bombs were dropping with sickening regularity and accuracy, and shells thundering overhead carrying death and destruction — I was placed in charge of an ambulance to take some seriously wounded men to the hospital in Singapore. Four men had to be rushed to the Singapore General Hospital for emergency care. The way to the city was comparatively quiet until we reached the sprawling suburbs. Then we encountered extremely heavy shelling and bombing. It looked like suicide to attempt breaking through this holocaust but these were precious lives, which I held in my hand. So with complete abandon we took up the gauntlet. Moving along, sometimes at a crawl, sometimes at sixty miles an hour, through abandoned streets, past flaming buildings, we ultimately reached our destination, shaken but gratified to deliver our precious cargo.

The return journey was a nightmare. The Japanese gunners were concentrating on blockading the main road, landing shells on the highway with pinpoint accuracy. Very few vehicles dared to attempt the hazardous journey, but duty called. Slowly the driver nosed the ambulance through the maze of shell holes. We were rocked frequently as bombs burst with a sickening crunch all around. I never prayed so earnestly in all my life. Slowly we crept on — although instinctively we wanted to flee for dear life. Suddenly the ambulance nearly turned over, a mortar shell tore a huge hole in the roof and side but miraculously did not explode. When I recovered from the shock, I bowed my head in deep gratitude and thanked the Lord for His preserving care. Eventually we arrived back at our unit, badly shaken but unscathed. This experience increased my confidence in the Lord's preserving grace, and it seemed to me that He had further work for me to do.

Reaching Base, I ate a hasty meal because I was assigned guard duty until midnight. This always presented a problem because my deep convictions prohibited me from carrying a lethal weapon of any kind. I preferred to utilize the usual Medical corps “weapon” — a cudgel or stick. My partner carried a rifle.

Before going on duty I went back to the tent to get my steel helmet. I reached in under the mosquito net and took it from the bed but decided to leave the crowded tent before putting it on my head. There was a full moon in the sky, which flooded the area with its silvery light. As I lifted the helmet to my head I noticed what I thought was a snake curled up inside. Quickly I turned the helmet over and slammed it to the ground. Some of the regular soldiers, who had been in Malaya for some time, asked me what I was doing. They laughed outright at the

assertion that a snake was trapped under the helmet. “There are no snakes in Singapore, you know that,” they said.

Eventually, after much deliberation they turned over the helmet with a long stick. A three-foot black mamba — one of the deadliest snakes in Malaya — slithered toward them. The deadly reptile was soon disposed of. Even to this day I shudder at the thought of that creature slithering down my neck or across my face, injecting its deadly poison in the process. This was not my first escape from death. Once again there arose in my mind the thought that I was being spared for more important things in the service of the Master.

The enemy activity in the air and on land intensified hourly. We were constantly under bombardment from land, sea, and air. Our forces retaliated feebly with small arms fire. Soon there was a shortage of ammunition and, worse still, water supplies were cut off. The main reservoirs for Singapore were on the mainland of Malaya. This made conditions, in the blazing heat of the tropical sun, almost impossible. The end seemed in sight.

On February 10, 1942, General A.P. Wavell, the hero of the Middle East Campaign, flew into Singapore to review the situation; in a couple of days he issued a Special Order of the Day.

“It is certain that our troops in Singapore Island heavily outnumber any Japanese who have crossed the Straits. We must destroy them.

“Our whole fighting reputation is at stake and the honor of the British Empire. The Americans have held out on the ‘Bataan’ Peninsula against far heavier odds; the Russians are turning

back the picked strength of the Germans; the Chinese with almost complete lack of modern equipment have held the Japanese for 4 1/2 years. It will be disgraceful if we yield our boasted fortress of Singapore to inferior enemy forces.

“There must be no thought of sparing the troops or civil population and no mercy must be shown to weaken us in any shape or form. Commanders and senior officers must lead their troops and, if necessary, die with them. There must be no question or thought of surrender. Every unit must fight it out to the end and in close contact with the enemy. Please see that they bring the above to the notice of all senior officers and to the troops.

“I look to you and your men to fight to the end to prove that the fighting spirit that won our empire still exists to enable us to defend it.”

When we read this directive we knew that the writing was on the wall. It was so contradictory to the prevailing circumstances. We were short of everything — even medical supplies were dwindling rapidly, and the Japanese were massing forces on the mainland for the final assault on the Island itself. During all this the civilian population was taking an awful slaughtering. Trucks filled with dead lying like cordwood streamed endlessly from the city and dumped their loads into huge communal graves. How long could this inhuman savagery go on?

Our worst fears were confirmed when General Wavell and his staff flew out of Singapore only a few hours after issuing his fighting challenge. The next four days were soul-destroying. My faith in man was shaken to its very core. I had never understood the doctrine of the total depravity of man but the

useless slaughter of precious lives and the mutilation of physical frames was proving the doctrine to the hilt. Little did I know that all this was but preparatory to more fearful and dreadful events.

There was an endless stream of casualties; we treated them as best we could under primitive conditions. The Japanese kept up a continual bombardment with devastating results. The medical personnel were showing signs of fatigue. It was a twenty-four hour grind that had continued for several days. Hunger was gnawing at our stomachs, our throats were parched for lack of liquid, our nerves were taut — it was as if we were slowly dying.

But there was no time for reflection; war drew on every human resource and reserve. I cried to the Lord for spiritual strength. “Help me, oh Lord, that I may be able to help others,” I earnestly prayed. Nothing seemed to matter at this point. With complete abandon I threw myself into the unequal task with the thought in mind that death would overtake us, the only alternative being that we would fall into the hands of a ruthless and barbaric enemy.

February 15, 1942, is a day ever to be remembered by the unfortunate troops trapped in Singapore Island. At 4 p.m. there descended upon the weary soldiers the shroud of death. The bombing, shelling, and the rattle of small arms fire suddenly stopped, the silence was almost unbearable, it was louder than the crunch of exploding shells. The impregnable fortress of Singapore had unconditionally surrendered to the Japanese.

Thoroughly exhausted both physically and mentally, I completely collapsed. My mind went blank, I have little

recollection of the few days, which followed, but praise God, recovery came quickly and I was soon in harness again. One memory that remains with me of those critical days was the importance, which I attached to my Bible. It was my constant companion and even though I could not read it, no one could take it from me. My love for the Word was to increase as the long months merged into interminable years.

Chapter 6: Prisoner of War

The realization of being a prisoner of war with an inhuman enemy is very frightening. During the Malayan campaign the Japanese had shown no mercy and had executed all prisoners in cold blood. Many reports had filtered through the grapevine of the utter disregard for human life displayed by the arrogant foe. Mercifully, we were so busy attending to the wounded and sick and adjusting to our new conditions that the real impact of what could possibly happen was lessened.

Faced with a record harvest of 70,000 prisoners, the Japanese could hardly follow their iniquitous and nefarious policy of exterminating every prisoner. They must come up with something new and they certainly did, as the following chapters will clearly define.

Our brief stay on Singapore Island in comparison with later experience was less exacting. Despite the primitive and crowded conditions, our lot could have been much worse although that was hard to imagine at the time. Slowly, from all the confusion — and everything was chaotic — there steadily emerged a horrible spectre — hunger.

Shortly after the surrender of Singapore the Japanese uncovered their “secret weapon.” All European food was confiscated and in its place they provided rice. It was a cupful of boiled rice for breakfast, lunch, and dinner. One could almost feel the strength drain from his body and the flesh dissolve from off the bones. Long hours of work and improper sanitation compounded the vicious evils that attacked our gaunt frames.

To add insult to injury our captors commandeered all medical supplies, leaving only the bare necessities for hospital work. Kapok, the lining of life jackets, was substituted for cotton wool. This nonabsorbent material, designed to expel water, was to be used to clean the festering wounds. The improvisation was unbelievable, how the medical staff ever adapted to this new environment, and remarkably enough not without a good measure of success, is a mystery.

The experience of living in this prison ghetto is unforgettable. We slept head to feet, allotted eighteen inches of bed space. The stench of unwashed and sweaty bodies was almost unbearable. Water was strictly rationed. During the night no one slept peacefully, each one tossed and turned attempting subconsciously or semiconsciously to protect him from the vicious bites of myriads of lice, fleas, and bed bugs. Mosquitoes by the thousands, the noise of their wings zinging in our ears, dive-bombed our hapless forms extracting our very lifeblood, at the same time injecting deadly malarial toxin into our undernourished bodies. Malaria became one of the most feared killers during our forty-five months of incarceration.

The depravity of man's heart became more apparent. To live in such close proximity with men from every strata of society was demoralizing to say the least. I was seeing and experiencing firsthand, things that I did not even know existed. I never would have believed what did happen when the influence of home, religion, and friends, was removed. When I saw the human heart with the lid off, I was appalled and found the Bible to be correct when it says that, "the heart of man is deceitful above all things and desperately wicked."

Men, minus the veneer and polish of modern society, acted in some cases like beasts. I soon discovered that the dreadful circumstances either brought out the very best or the worst in a man.

I was absolutely convinced that no amount of reformation could ever heal or cure the sin in men's hearts; only the grace of God and the precious blood of the Lord Jesus could do that. How awful it was for me to hear the incessant use of the name of my precious Savior in blasphemy. Also, the general vocabulary of most of the men became rather restricted and every other word was interspersed with obscenities. This coupled with other situations almost drove me to the point of distraction. I believe adjusting to these unfamiliar conditions was my greatest challenge thus far. In all fairness one must say that despite the total breakdown of morals in some cases, there were others who rose to the heights of human sacrifice to alleviate the suffering of the more unfortunate.

During this time several Christians were meeting for prayer and Bible study. This was one of the greatest blessings in all my life. Just to meet with those of like precious faith, even for a few minutes, was a stimulus. At this time a young Jew became acquainted with this group. He was in the hospital having had his leg amputated. When opportunity afforded, we all witnessed to Dave. He developed a healthy appetite for the Word and in a short time he professed to accept Christ as his Savior. With his knowledge of the Old Testament, and the customs of the East, he was able to interpret the Scriptures in a refreshing way. His face shone and his eyes sparkled with the light of Heaven when he spoke of the Lord. He progressed

rapidly in spiritual matters. I have never seen anyone so zealous and hungry for the Word as he.

Dave was released from the hospital and went back to his friends. One night he was missing from the little group, much prayer went up for him. Several days elapsed before we saw him, then we learned that the Jewish lad did not intend to return and fellowship with the group. We learned later that the acting Rabbi and friends had pressured him into a complete denial of his Christian faith and of the Lord Jesus Whom we thought he loved. This came as a tremendous shock to the group of believers. It caused a deep searching of our hearts and for most of us it strengthened our faith as we put our roots deeper into the vital truths of our Christian heritage.

There were many plots hatched to escape from the shackles of imprisonment during these pressure-packed days. Many of these schemes were never carried out — the chance of success was almost nil — and if one was caught, the consequences were worse than death.

The Anglo-Indians had the best chance to escape, or so they thought. Having carried out preparations for several months, and being helped with money and supplies from inside sources, they escaped through the barbed wire. Their absence was concealed at roll call that night but the following night it was discovered.

Eventually, the escapees were caught and beaten so terribly that they were returned to the hospital under guard for treatment. When the men showed a slight improvement the guards took them away. Soon after, the Colonel in charge of the hospital and a few of his senior officers were escorted by the Japanese to a distant point. To their horror they saw the

men standing at the heads of graves, which they had been forced to dig. They were shot down in cold blood by a Japanese firing squad, their battered and emaciated bodies fell in crumpled heaps into the freshly dug graves.

The following day, the shocked Colonel called us together and told the gruesome story, warning us that in the future anyone caught attempting to escape was certain to meet with the same fate.

Shortly after this incident the Japanese produced a paper, which forbade anyone to try and escape under any circumstances. They insisted that every prisoner sign this. The officers and men refused.

The Nipponese were never at a loss for reprisal, and proved that they were equal to this occasion. They had countermeasures ready and quickly began to expedite them.

The 14,860 men, excluding hospital patients and staff, were marched hurriedly into a barbed wire enclosure measuring 261 feet by 165 feet. The same area had accommodated 600 men in peacetime conditions. Machine guns had been mounted at the corners of the enclosure. Searchlights blazed continuously through the hours of darkness. The conditions were terrible at best and could have deteriorated quickly into a catastrophe. The men had to eat and sleep in shifts. No one could lie down or even sit down, until it was his turn. On the fourth day dysentery broke out and spread rapidly among the troops, very soon everyone would be affected. Colonel E. B. Holmes, commanding British and Australian troops, reluctantly and under duress signed the paper not to escape. Otherwise the heartless Japanese had threatened to bring the hospital patients and staff and dump them into this inferno.

It was a motley throng that left the portals of death; a number had already died. They walked as best they could carrying their meager belongings. Though legs were swollen and eyes red for lack of sleep, they dragged their weary frames over the dusty miles. Some even sang the old battle songs — these men were defeated but not broken.

Chapter 7: Conditions in the Prison Camp

Men are strange creatures: so weak, yet when occasion demands, so strong. Large groups would meet when prevailing conditions allowed and sing their hearts out. Usually these songfests began with the old favorites but nearly always ended with several sacred numbers. Singing these hymns did a lot for the men, bringing together the best of the old life and the aspirations of the uncertain future. During these times lone figures would rise slowly, make their way through the crowd, disappear into the darkness, gaze wistfully into the starlit heavens, and watch the Southern Cross sink slowly over the horizon. Soon it was over for another day, every man would then crawl beneath his tattered and dirty blanket, or rice sack, to dream of friends and home.

I cannot pass from this section without mentioning some of the victims of vitaminosis. This particular group of martyrs was continually on the move, they had what was commonly known as “happy feet.” They padded ceaselessly round and round the compound trying to alleviate the burning pain in their feet. When darkness fell the pain seemed to increase, there was no respite. Men were driven out of their minds. Some would reach the bedspace, fall down and never rise again. Others would fall with a sickening crunch on the concrete floors, the victims of heart seizures. The determination to live characterized many, the will to die motivated some.

Our first Christmas was a memorable one. A little of our rations had been saved for weeks to ensure a feast for the

great occasion. We had plenty to eat that day, by prison standards. We also gave gifts to each other, queer gifts — a small banana, a piece of coconut — but never did gifts carry such true and sincere sentiments. The singing of the old carols brought comfort to many an aching heart.

Food was an endless subject of conversation. Always when men conversed there was a reference to the food of the good old days. This is understandable because our rations were at starvation level. Three-fourths cup of rice and a drink of hot water for breakfast. Three-fourths cup of rice and a drink of coffee — water in which roasted rice had been boiled — for lunch. Three-fourths cup rice, some green leaf stew, and a small ball of rice fired in palm oil, sometimes a small piece meat, if a yak had died, and coffee?? comprised our supper. Hunger made men do all sorts of things. They supplemented their protein-lacking diet by eating lizards, snakes and snails. Some, driven to desperation, ate rats and mice. Cats and dogs became a delicacy because the demand far exceeded the supply. Many a Nipponese soldier lost his pet animal and could only conjecture where it had gone. Small wonder then that the one-time physically strong bodies of British and Australians youths seemed emaciated by comparison.

During those bitter days of trial, I thanked the Lord for the preciousness of His presence and for the comfort of the Scriptures. I noted in my diary at this time several truths that impressed me; in no way do I claim originality for these.

“If great clouds move silently over our heads, we know that they — like our troubles — are passing.”

“The fruit of a life in Christ is a life like Christ;”

“Our walk is the outward expression of our inner life.”

“It is beautiful to see a ship on the sea, but a fearful thing to see the sea in the ship. Likewise, it is beautiful to see the church in the world, but a fearful thing to see the world in the church.”

“It only took God one night to deliver Israel out of Egypt, but it took Him forty years to get Egypt out of Israel.”

“Fellowship is the privilege of saints, but soul history and experiences are individual.”

“There is nothing to equal the power of example.”

“Facts exist; faith believes; feelings follow.”

“A man is what he is; not what he says he is.”

Included in the diary are notes from messages that I delivered to groups of prisoners. God blessed these meetings and I'm sure that I will meet some in Heaven who trusted Christ at this time.

Throughout the latter months of our stay in Singapore, I was severely tested physically. Dengue fever wracked my body; the disease is characterized by severe pains in the joints and back accompanied by fever. This fever occurred over and over again, leaving me worn out and depressed. The situation worsened, a severe attack of malaria prostrated my already weak body. The fever raged within and all attempts to control it failed. Soaring to 104.8 degrees I lapsed into unconsciousness and remained in this state for almost six hours.

During this time I had a most glorious and beautiful dream. I dreamed I was in Heaven. It was so wonderful to be there, I

couldn't even attempt a description. There are no words to describe it. The music was the most wonderful I had ever heard. Everyone was dressed in white, and the peace that pervaded that sequestered scene surpassed all description and understanding. I was completely at rest there.

Then slowly I began to regain consciousness and finally, the heartbreaking realization that I was still in the body, in the Changi Prison Camp at Singapore. What a disappointment. Dear friends, Heaven is real, and I am glad that it will be my eternal home because of my faith in the Lord Jesus Christ.

Vitaminosis revealed itself in many ugly forms. Men were stricken with raw weeping scrotums, rough, red, painful tongues, and the most common of all, weeping sores that would not heal. To really appreciate these repulsive conditions one has to live through the discomfort of a weeping scrotum, the agonies of a raw tongue, and the loathsomeness of a pair of leprous looking legs.

The lack of drugs accentuated the situation, and despite heroic efforts of the medical staff, conditions worsened. Sick parades became larger, the men stood listlessly in long lines in the blazing sun day after day, hoping and praying for some relief, yet knowing full well the situation was hopeless.

By the beginning of 1943, many work parties had left Singapore; News had filtrated back to us of the tragedies that had overtaken some of them. The reports told of the annihilation of the prisoners sent to Borneo, the drowning of shiploads sent to Japan, and decimation of the railroad workers in Thailand and Burma. This had a demoralizing effect on the prisoners waiting to be shipped to what appeared to be their death.

Let me reminisce for a few moments here. My physical condition was becoming rather serious. Having gone through the various stages of raw scrotum — raw tongue — severe loss of weight — threatened rheumatic fever — impairing of sight, etc., there was reason for contemplative thought. Dengue fever was still draining my body of vital energy; it was an effort to keep going. In this depleted physical condition I was surprised to find myself a member of the ill-fated “H Force,” the next company to leave for Thailand. I was too weak to protest against the injustice, and with total abandonment I resigned myself to the will of the Lord. What a wonderful peace and assurance swept into my heart in the joy of full surrender. Subsequent years proved the power and interest of the Lord in my particular, insignificant life. The school that He had chosen for me was a bitter one; the bitterness was hard to take, and many a cry of anguish escaped my lips.

God wrought a miracle on my behalf and seemed to increase my strength daily. From the day that our forlorn group headed out from Singapore, my chronic sicknesses left me and I probably enjoyed as good health as anyone in our group. This is all the more remarkable because I courted death many times yet my life was miraculously preserved.

Chapter 8: Captain Sheridan

Before passing from this phase of the story I would like to relate the incident involving Captain Sheridan of the 125th Anti-Tank Regiment. As the ship which carried this regiment approached Singapore it was bombarded mercilessly from the air. The ship was an old one, very slow, and became a “sitting duck” for the exuberant Japanese gunners. When the bombing became excessively heavy, the stokers left their posts under the terrific pressure; consequently, the ship’s engines stopped completely and, drifting along helplessly, the vessel became an easy target for the enemy. The decks had been cleared. Some of the Army officers had gone down to the lounge under the main deck and began to play the piano and sing while the bombardment was going on.

Shortly, however, the Japanese dropped an oil bomb that broke through the deck and into the officers’ lounge. The next thing that Captain Sheridan knew he was in the water, apparently having escaped through a porthole. His calls for help were finally answered and he was picked up and brought into Singapore, severely burned and blinded in both eyes. After the capitulation of the garrison the officer was brought to a small temporary hospital where I was assigned to look after him and another blind officer. Both had their heads swathed in bandages.

One day while sitting in the little mess-room for lunch the second officer interrupted the conversation and in great emotion cried, “Take the bandages off, I can see.”

I was surprised at this turn in events, because the young officer was very quiet. When he persisted in his request, I

contacted the Medical Officer.

“Why not take the bandages off?” he said. I assisted him as he unwound the bandages carefully. When the last bandage slipped from his eyes, the young officer cried out joyfully, “I can see, I can really see.” An apparent miracle had taken place. Meanwhile, Captain Sheridan suffered agonies untold as he contemplated his own plight. As I led him to his room his massive frame shook; he manfully suppressed his heartbroken sobs. The weeks dragged slowly on and there was little if any improvement.

During the period I was assigned to help him, we had countless opportunities to speak of the things that really count. Seldom do two people become so attached in so short a time. Ours was an unusual friendship; our backgrounds and future aspirations were so different. Long conversations about God, His Son Jesus Christ, and the plan of salvation occupied our attention for hours. He gave me his life story one time, and the following day he asked me to give mine. What a thrill and joy it was to tell of my godly heritage, of my conversion to Christ and, of my service for Him. An occasional tear would fall quietly as we considered eternal verities. One day he put his arms around my shoulders and said, “There is only one Person who comes to mind as I try to picture you, and that is the Savior Whom you serve. I hope when I regain my sight, you’re still around and I can see you. “Dan,” he said, “you have something I don’t have.” I could understand this, because strong feelings were being confirmed; a life without Christ was empty and pointless. This fine officer did not make an open confession of Christ but impressions were made which eternity alone will reveal.

Slowly, Captain Sheridan regained partial sight in one eye. With the other one, he could discern light from dark. Gradually he began to regain his composure and his soldierly bearing. Finally, he was discharged from the hospital and given the responsibility of taking men from one part of the prison camp to another.

Captain Sheridan was happy to be gainfully occupied again. Proudly he marched the men from one area to another. One day a Japanese guard approached him on his blind side as he walked at the head of the column. (Guards were to be recognized by prisoners at all times.) As the column marched past with no recognition, the guard took it as an insult and stopped them. Then he accosted Captain Sheridan and severely reprimanded him volubly, then struck him with his fist. One blow struck the Captain's good eye and totally blinded him again. Thoroughly disheartened, he returned to the hospital for further treatment.

Again I undertook the responsibility to look after the Captain and nurse him back to a measure of recovery. I prayed for this man and for the others who came under my care and I am glad to say that this dear man again found his vision partially restored. I prayed with all my heart that spiritual sight would be given the Captain for this would far outlast the physical.

Chapter 9: Journey into the Unknown

The Japanese were masters of subterfuge. “H Force” was to go north to the hills; they were due a rest after their long siege in Singapore. “Take your sports gear and musical instruments along so that you may obtain the fullest enjoyment from the long days of relaxation,” they said.

“H Force” was not a happy one. Most of the physically fit had already gone north. Many sick men had been included in this work party, and it was a rather straggly and pitiful column that left the barracks and embarked on the trucks. These trucks then took off packed with living skeletons clutching desperately at the small bundles containing their worldly possessions.

Our drive through the streets of Singapore was pleasant enough. The natives appeared friendly, in a reserved way. They did not spit on us nor stone us as they had done in the early days. They obviously had had their fill of empty promises and co-prosperity. Ultimately we arrived at the railroad station and awaited our train. With the promises of the Nipponese ringing in our ears, and the flashing of gold teeth revealed by the smiles of the guards, we expected good transportation to our camp in the cool hills.

When a freight train noisily screeched to a stop at the platform where we stood, we thought little of it. But soon we realized that this was to be our means of transportation. Boxcars about one-third the size of American cars made up the train. Built of steel, each boxcar had to accommodate thirty-five men with their belongings. We were herded like cattle into those cars, assisted by a blow from the butt-end of

a rifle if the progress seemed slow. After we had all been pushed in, the steel doors on both sides were closed and sealed, except for a two-inch opening to allow for air.

We stood for a minute or two in shocked silence in the semidarkness. This inhuman reception left us speechless. After the wide-open places at Changi, it seemed as if we would be crushed in the vice-like grip of this human hell. Soon we were jolted into reality. With the blowing of whistles, and the harsh shouts of the guards, our capsule of death lurked forward. The noise was deafening, the wheels seemed to be square, and as we slowly emerged into the brilliant sunshine the car began to heat up until it became a veritable furnace. Blinded by sweat and nauseated by the foul odors from the thirty-five unwashed bodies, we were totally exhausted physically, and crushed mentally. We sweated and grumbled, fought and argued. Nerves were a breaking point. Lack of food and water made it almost impossible to live. The almost complete absence of sanitation made disease and death a definite reality. During the day we were almost roasted alive and at night we almost froze to death. The journey seemed interminable. For seven endless days and nights, this clanging, jolting, capsule of death pushed relentlessly through the almost unbroken jungle into the dark unknown. Sour rice covered with bluebottle flies was our only food, greasy water, mostly from the engine's rusty old boiler, was our drink. Many of the lads who left Changi full of hope never lived to see the end of this ghastly episode.

During those days of crisis I appreciated the faith implanted in my heart in earlier days. My faith seemed to have come alive. It was sustaining and vibrant. It was a living faith that could not be quenched in spite of prison, fire, or sword. In the black

valley of the shadow of death I always found my precious Savior, His open arms were always ready to receive His trembling child. As those strong arms embraced me, I often whispered into my Savior's open ear:

Hold Thou my hand, I am so weak and helpless

I dare not take one step without Thy aid;

Hold Thou my hand for then O loving Savior

No dread of ill shall make my soul afraid.

Upon arrival at Bangkok our exhausted and depleted force detrained. We were immediately herded into a transient camp, which consisted of a few grass huts seething with flies, and a degree of filth, which can only be attained by untrained Asiatics. We were fed the usual sloppy rice and were told to rest. Rest! It was impossible. The relentless heat of the sun, the stench of human excretion from previous occupants, and the presence of myriads of bugs of all descriptions made rest unthinkable.

With canteens full we marched into the Thailand night and what proved to be a fatal journey for many. For seventeen nights we dragged ourselves through the inhospitable jungle. The Japanese guards never slackened pace, they had to be on schedule. We carried our meager belongings. Tools and multifarious utensils ere secured on poles slung between two men. As the sick collapsed those who were nearest them supported them. Those who faltered and fell received liberal blows form the guards' rifle butts. Some fell out completely and we never saw them again.

We stopped marching when the sun was high. We slept from sheer exhaustion and while we slept the native Thais stole our meager belongings. Disease carrying flies protested our invasion, or came and feasted on our filth. For seventeen consecutive nights we stumbled, fell, and struggled for dear life. We ducked the low hanging branches; we wallowed in the mud up to our knees; the vines tripped us; the poisonous bamboo spikes gashed our blistered feet. On top of all this, the screaming voices of the merciless guards kept shouting, "Speedo, all men speedo."

During this entire ordeal, comradeship was never so real. The Nip guards shouted and bullied, the Thais laughed and stole, we hoped and prayed for better days and continued to march wearily in struggling columns to our unknown destination.

We stopped at an unmarked place on the map. Just dense jungle loaded with potential enemies and filled with deadly mosquitoes. Though we had marched all through the night, in a few minutes everyone was at work cutting down trees and bamboo. As the clearing became larger a few leaky tents were erected; in this way the notorious camp of Tonshon South was established. Now we knew our role in the future plans of the Japanese; we would help to build what would become the infamous "Railway of Death."

Chapter 10: Railway of Death

One of the costliest ventures in world history was the building of the notorious “Railway of Death,” from Bangkok to the borders of Burma. Several times foreign interests had tried to push back nature’s frontiers but the cost in money and life was prohibitive. The Japanese never counted the cost. They used the natural resources of the country and the precious lives that the fortunes of war had so completely thrust into their control. Life to them was cheap, worthless and there was plenty of it. In the final analysis it was reckoned that it cost a man’s life for every tie that was laid. This does not take into account the sweat, blood, toil, and tears, or the untold misery of the many who survived.

The morning after our arrival we awoke to the harsh “Curahs” of our guards. After a hasty breakfast of rice and water we were told to, “Speedo, all men go.” This meant everyone must go to the “Railway” and work. We could not understand this. We had marched for seventeen nights; the majority of the men were sick, very sick. Feet and legs were so swollen that the toes were hardly visible. Many of the men were lying on dirty rice sacks. Some had vomited all around them, some too helpless to move were lying in their own filth; others had tossed in the agonies of malarial fever the whole night.

“All men?” we protested vigorously. “All men,” the soulless guards replied, and then they commenced to use the persuader. Under the threats, and blows of rifle butts, men crawled and staggered weakly to join their helpless comrades on parade.

My blood boiled — my whole being revolted — never in the history of modern warfare had such inhuman cruelty been displayed. I wondered, as I prayed for strength for myself and the other wrecks of humanity, if such barbaric conduct could be forgiven, “Why doesn’t God act?” I thought. “Why does He allow this to go on?” These questions, to a large extent, are still unanswered.

This was the first time that I had ever questioned the ways of God, and in quieter moments I have often rebuked myself.

Painfully we made our way through the foul-smelling jungle. The air was filled with the high-pitched hum of parasite-laden mosquitoes, which had kept the interior of Thailand uninhabited for thousands of years. We carried our friends on improvised stretchers, and on our backs. All day long we stood in the merciless sun swinging hammers and twisting drills, boring holes into the solid rock. When the holes were deep enough, dynamite was inserted and the whole area was blasted. The shattered rocks were then put into baskets, which were passed down a long line of men and emptied at some chosen spot. From twelve to sixteen hours a day we worked, sweated, nursed our sores, and prayed for better days.

Slowly we blasted our way through mountains, felled huge trees, then laboriously inched them into position on rollers and sledges. Somehow the Japanese engineers threw bridges across raging torrents, murky brown rivers, and over deep ravines. We cut and hacked our way into the depth of the hostile jungle.

During these torturous months I found only one answer to the grim conditions that threatened to engulf us — my faith in the Lord. I tried to share this faith with others and found many

open ears to pour the words of Scripture into. Many a heartfelt prayer went up to the Throne of God from these jungle wastelands.

Surrounded on every hand by bamboo jungle, with no possible way of escape, we faced a living death. Hygiene became a thing of the past. To wash in the river sometimes brought death by the most dread enemy in the camp, cholera, so we preferred the filth and stench of stinking bodies. We oftentimes longed for rain; only then could we safely wash, or at least wet our bodies, for at this time there was no such thing as soap. Only the very sick failed to luxuriate in the tropical showers. During days of drought we often joked of washing in a cup and bathing in a mess tin.

Food was very scarce. Our daily diet was hardly enough for a bird, much less a full-grown man. Our stomachs must have shrunk for it seemed that very little filled them. We were just walking skeletons. The food ration had hardly changed from Singapore days although our work was much harder and longer. We worked from sunup until the assignment was completed for that day. Often it was six or seven in the evening, and occasionally as late as 10 p.m., before we completed our work. Japanese guards held huge torches while we worked in the darkness.

Under such a limited diet, the temptation was great to obtain food by any and all means available. Not even the severest of punishment could dissuade the starving men from seeking relief from their hunger. The black market flourished. There are always the tough guys in every situation. These were unprincipled and unscrupulous, but very brave. They would slink through the barbed wire in the dark and raid old army

food dumps in the rubber plantations, then return to sell their booty at black market prices. Every community has its villains and the prison camps in no way lagged behind.

Hunger pains drove men relentlessly into unprecedented situations. Can you picture a man from a good family, holding a responsible job in civilian life, sitting almost nude grasping a piece of knotted string in his hand. This man is aged far beyond his years, his almost fleshless bones protrude through his blotchy skin, and his eyes are sunk deep in his head. He holds that string intently; he seems to be in a world of his own. The end of the string is attached to a piece of wood which, when pulled, causes some bricks to collapse. Beneath these bricks are scattered a few precious grains of rice. They were placed there in the hope of attracting or enticing an unwary sparrow. A quick pull on the string makes the bricks collapse, and a starving man's hunger is curbed.

The dread enslavement of habit trapped some men. One former American professor, who had suffered heavily in the Wall Street crash of 1929-30, had lost his mental balance slightly and left his high post. Enlisting as an ordinary seaman, the man had been captured by the enemy on the high seas and brought into the prison camp. When one of the two Red Cross parcels admitted by the Japanese came through, he sold his portion for a few cigarettes. Then, unable to sleep he sat up and smoked them all.

Many other men were enslaved by the tobacco habit. They deprived themselves of food to satisfy their craving. Some smoked dried tealeaves, paper, and grass in an attempt to stifle the torture within. A most distasteful experience was when Japanese soldiers came into the camp smoking their

evil-smelling and cheap cigarettes — some prisoners would fall over each other grabbing for their discarded filthy butts. The sneer on their faces at such degradation was repulsive.

Hunger was a terrible master; some men paid dearly for falling victim to its dictates. A desperately hungry Australian youth tried to buy a few bananas from one of the natives outside the barbed wire. This was forbidden by both the Japanese and by our own command; the risk involved was tremendous.

Unfortunately the youth was caught. The guard commander, continuing the Japanese reputation as past masters in the art of torture, stuffed the man's mouth with chili, many times hotter than pepper. Then they made him stand in the blazing sun, with his hands raised above his head. When his hands began to droop, they prodded him with a bayonet until he fell unconscious. Doused with a bucket of cold water, he quickly revived, only to go through the same ordeal again. He returned to the lines in a state of physical and mental exhaustion and received what little help the Medical Corps could give him.

There were dozens of such incidents every day. Our guards never gave up in their relentless search for would be offenders. If no real criminals were found, someone would be incriminated. Prisoners must be subjugated; the superiority of the guards must be flaunted.

One day I was assigned as medical orderly to a working party, which was building a bridge across a ravine. About 120 feet deep and 65 feet across, the mountain gorge presented a real problem with many obstacles. Some of the working force was laboring on top, drilling holes for dynamiting the rock to be removed. Others were employed in the cold depth of the chasm. Suddenly, without warning to us who were working

below, the Japanese engineers began blasting. Huge pieces of rocks and debris crashed into the ravine, fatally wounding one Japanese soldier and wounding many of the prisoners. As the noise of the explosion died down, I raised my head and looked around at my stricken buddies and immediately the words of the Psalmist came to mind, "A thousand shall fall at your side, and ten thousand at your right hand; but it shall not come nigh you" (Psalm 91:7).

The Japanese were really unpredictable; they could show their gold teeth in a beautiful smile and in the next instant lay you out cold with a blow from some instrument.

Restriction had been imposed on all gatherings, no meetings of any kind were to be held. This was a severe blow to the little group of believers, so we decided to run the gauntlet. Many evenings we stealthily made our way in the darkness to an empty hut and conversed and encouraged each other in Christ; these seasons of fellowship were invaluable. One night as we sat in a close circle praying together, we became conscious that someone else was present; we had the feeling that we were being watched.

Suddenly a match was struck, and in the flickering light we saw the form of a Japanese guard. Fear gripped our hearts. As best we could, by Pidgin English and gestures, we told him that we were praying to God. He replied in broken English, "You know Jesus, I know Jesus in Japan. Okay, okay. All men go-go," he admonished. We did not need a second bidding. We vanished into the night. The rest of the waking hours that night was spent praising the Lord for our deliverance. Had that been any other guard, some of us might have paid for it with

our lives. With grateful hearts we closed our eyes that night convinced that Daniel's God was still alive.

I often wonder at the background of this incident, and in my mind can picture some missionaries laboring hard in Japan and being discouraged at the lack of fruit. They will be surprised when in the Glory they learn that their faithful witness was the means used by God to save the lives of six young prisoners of war.

There were many tragedies in the camp. Tragedy did not always mean death — the living tragedies were pitiful to watch. Men lost their sight and their hearing. Many lost the coordination of their limbs and worst of all, some became mentally deranged.

One of the prisoners, a former first violinist with the London Philharmonic Orchestra, found his hands and arms attacked by dreadful tropical ulcers. This was unusual, for ulcers usually attacked the lower leg. The doctors failed to find a way to halt the spread of this canker. After much consultation and postponing of the decision they finally decided to amputate in the interest of the patient's life. The musician protested vigorously and refused to allow the operation. Continuing expert care by doctors and orderlies finally arrested the growth of the ulcers, and after a while they slowly began to heal. When he was able, the proud artist — very grateful for the use of his hands and fingers — made himself a miniature piano keyboard and sat and practiced by the hour to keep his hands in shape. The sequel to the story is this: we had the good fortune to hear this man play the violin, and it thrilled our hearts.

Chapter 11: Christ the Answer

It was 1943, no particular month, just 1943. Time had lost its meaning. The days were dark. The burdens were becoming increasingly heavy. The morale of the prisoners was very low. Local conditions prompted this but, worst of all, the news from outside was all bad. It looked as if we might be slaves for the rest of our lives. I came to the conclusion that if one was to survive, it was essential to lose oneself in the needs of others and to draw strength and courage from my Heavenly Father.

The commandment to love your neighbor is difficult at any time, but infinitely more difficult in days of acute strain. “How can I love my neighbor?” I asked myself. Loving one’s neighbor was more complicated than I had ever recognized. After deep spiritual exercise I found that I could love my fellow prisoners in spite of having seen them in the raw. By stretching my love almost to the limit I could love the natives outside the wire, despite their betrayal of some of the fine lads who tried to escape. One last tremendous obstacle remained, the Japanese. Could I love them?

The issue could not be evaded; there was no way around it. God’s Word distinctly said, “Love your enemies, bless them that persecute you.” I spent sleepless nights wrestling with this question and with God — surely there were exceptions to this commandment. The outcome of this deep spiritual exercise was that I accepted the great though painful truth that all men, no matter the color of their skin and the baseness of their nature, were my neighbors and I must love them for Christ’s sake. In those abortive conditions, the desire to take the Gospel of Jesus Christ to the Japanese people was born.

Having reached this decision a great burden was lifted and the peace of God flowed into my heart. My newfound conviction was to be tested sooner than I expected. The events of Chapter 1 chronologically fit in here.

In August of 1943, I faced a haggard and disheveled group of men. More forlorn creatures could not have been found anywhere. Of course the preacher was no different from his audience. I faced them with a powerful four-word text.

“My text tonight is very simple,” I began, “only four words: ‘Fear not, only believe.’ I want you to picture a scene of a heartbroken father making his way to a source from whence he would receive comfort, practical help, and sympathy. All his hopes and ambitions were shattered; his dreams had come to naught. The flower of his home had been plucked in its freshness and beauty. Death had left its inevitable scar on a home of tranquility. His daughter of twelve years was dead.

“His need was great, but he believed it could be met. So he came to Jesus. His servants sought to discourage him. “Trouble not the Master,” they said. He sank to the utmost depth of despondency. No one seemed to care; no one seemed able to help. Alone and unaided he stood, a picture of grief. Then the words of the Master came through the dull mists of uncertainty, ‘Fear not, only believe.’

“The look of sorrow left his face — his burden also left. Confidently he followed the Master. Gladly he received his daughter back to life again. His faith was rewarded, his hopes restored. ‘Fear not, only believe,’

The haggard men about me brightened perceptibly. An occasional tear gave way to faint smiles of joy as the Spirit of

God drove home the Word.

“How many of us,” I continued, “like this man, have lost courage? Our hopes have been undermined; ambitions have fallen shattered, at our feet. Our youth has been snatched from us. Many are withered. Our hopes are fading one by one. We find ourselves sinking. We are weary and downcast. Disease had gripped us. Malaria, dysentery, fevers, all have tended to draw us down and make us despondent. But through the dim mists of uncertainty, breaking as a ray of sunshine upon our darkened lives, come the cheering words of comfort, calculated to give us confidence and raise our hopes, ‘Fear not, and only believe.’

“Never were men subjected to such privations; never have humans been asked for so much and given so little. Our faith has failed and our spirits are running low. But do not be discouraged, be of good cheer. Listen! Listen! Words of comfort to the sick, words of cheer to the weary, can you hear them? ‘Fear not, only believe.’” It was times like these that kept many a man full of hope and courage in his darkest hour. The Word of God was precious in those days.

Chapter 12: Cholera

Cholera — the dread disease of all armies in the tropics — finally hit our beleaguered group. Our bodies had been weakened by constant attacks of malaria and recurrent bouts of dysentery. Morale was at an all-time low, and when the horrible specter of cholera stalked through the compound, our spirits were crushed.

It all started in the Asiatic camp. A steady stream of stretcher bearers slowly made their way to a clearing in the jungle and dumped the victims of this horrible disease. We waited and wondered when our turn would come. It struck one night with devastating effects. Some of the men who reported sick that morning were dead when we returned from the “Railway.” The scourge had begun.

Volunteers were asked for, to nurse the sick men in the cholera camp. No one would be detailed to go. To volunteer for such duty was a hard decision to make and I weighed it carefully. It was with mixed emotions that I prayed for wisdom, or was it for faith and courage? Like everyone else I wanted to see my loved ones again, back in Bonnie Scotland.

With my best friend, Bob Pender, I went out into the hostile jungle in the darkness. We prayed; never had we prayed with such sincerity and expectation. I told the Lord of my human fears, weaknesses, and desires. I prostrated myself before Him under the starry dome of Heaven, surrounded by enemies, and a seething, broken mass of humanity.

Suddenly in the midst of my Gethsemane, I was conscious of an invisible Presence. It was almost like a voice that spoke. No

one had joined me from this world, but the Savior had, bearing the message to volunteer for this dangerous mission. Stunned with the reality of this encounter with the Lord, I returned to the camp to volunteer. Along with Bob, I made my decision known to the Camp Commander, who very gravely pointed out the danger of such an action, adding that there was the imminent possibility of a horrible death. But the die had been cast; I must follow my Master's instructions.

All night long we worked feverishly to finish preparations for establishing a cholera camp. In the morning we hastily said goodbye to our friends and well wishers, then we pulled out from the land of the living into the valley of the shadow of death. It was a pitiful group that marched off. Clutching their small bundles of earthly possessions, and carrying a few medical supplies was the picture of mere skeletons of men. Some walked with leaden steps — I walked with my hand in the Savior's hand.

A clearing in the jungle at Tonshon South, Thailand, housed a few old leaky Army tents. These tents were denuded of all furnishings. Just four tattered sides, a rotten roof and cold mother earth. In these inhospitable and bleak surroundings many a brave boy would fight his last battle and draw his last breath.

Our first contact with the dread disease came abruptly and painfully. Our unit's champion cross-country runner, a very fine young man with flaxen hair, fair skin, and pink cheeks, was stricken with cholera. As he made his way slowly to the medical tent, he seemed like a man of ninety — though he was scarcely twenty-four. In a matter of a few hours he died a painful death, the first victim of cholera in our camp.

The disease spread like the plague among the Asiatic and white prisoners alike. Isolation was the first step toward self-preservation. Anyone in the main camp suspected of having the disease was immediately dispatched to the cholera camp. It was like being sent to the death chamber. Bravely, these prematurely old men accepted their lot. Some even smiled weakly as they were carried by their buddies on the first stage of their last journey.

Very soon the cholera camp was filled to capacity, but room was never a problem; just as many were carried out dead, as were brought in alive. My experiences at this time were the most heartbreaking and frustrating of my young life. With our limited equipment we faced the impossible task of trying to retrieve from the very jaws of death, emaciated human bodies wracked with pain. On occasion I hastily retreated to the edge of the jungle, emptied my stomach, and poured out my heart to my dear Heavenly Father, asking Him to relieve my taut nerves and to have mercy on the victims dying in such revolting conditions.

As one watched these men die, one became acutely aware of the progressive stages of the disease. The body first of all became dehydrated because of diarrhea and vomiting; this dehydration showed itself first of all in the extremities such as the ears and the fingers, which became withered looking and blanched. As the disease spread, severe cramps would seize the muscles of the arms. Simultaneously, the process was repeated in the legs. First the toes, then the feet and calves, up to the thighs, all this accompanied by excruciating pain. Finally, the disease concentrated in the abdomen, bringing the victim within its ruthless grasp, ultimately crushing him in its

vice-like grip and squeezing the last breath from the convulsing form.

We worked against tremendous odds. Medication in any form was almost unknown. We tried by all means to get liquid into the bodies of our patients. Our methods were primitive. We boiled river water, then dissolved rock salt in it to make saline. This was placed in a bottle from which ran a rubber tube. To regulate the flow we raised or lowered the bottle and pinched the tubing with our fingers as necessary. Finding the vein in the ankle region was a chore for us and an ordeal for the patient. We dug into the almost white flesh with an old scalpel or penknife. Upon finding the vein, which was like a piece of old cord, we inserted the blunt hypodermic needle and gave the transfusion. When this primitive operation was over, an old piece of boiled cloth was soaked in a weak solution of acroflavian (antiseptic), placed over the wound, then this was covered with a large leaf from one of the jungle trees, and tied together with some of the creepers that grew profusely all around.

Living in conditions like these was enough to turn a person's mind. There were many who lost their sanity. Contact with the main camp was forbidden. We were treated like lepers; any provisions, etc., were left for us at a prearranged spot.

When time permitted I would take my precious Bible in the evening just before it got dark, make my way from tent to tent and read and pray with those broken warriors. The Word of God, and a voice lifted in humble supplication, were the last things that many of these men heard. I know that I will meet some of them in Heaven.

At some distance from our cholera compound there was another one. This was the dumping ground for all the Asiatic victims. They came under the command of the Japanese. The scenes in this enclosure were indescribable. The victims had no covering at all — they lay out in the open. The screams and the groans from this compound tore at the very depths of my heart. I have heard animals howl in severe pain and been moved with compassion, but human beings to be abandoned and discarded, never! “O God,” I cried, “have mercy on these poor creatures, and avenge the brutal treatment of their merciless enemies.”

Every morning, at the first light of day, a group of natives would go to this compound and pick up the remains of those who had died during the night. These were carried to a huge communal grave, which had been dug the night before; the burial of the poor victims was heartless. No compassion or concern was evidenced for the lives that had been snuffed out. In their final death throes they had died in all sorts of positions, many with arms and legs sticking up in the air. Carelessly thrown into the graves, many times the arms and legs protruded above the surface of the ground. Japanese guards, walking around like kings, would break off the protruding limbs with their shovels.

On one occasion, in the middle of the dark night, I sat on a fallen tree at the edge of the cluster of little tents. A good going fire was burning to give light and to ward off animals. Suddenly I heard something crashing through the underbrush. Thinking that it was a wild animal, I grabbed a stick and waited. A Malayan native appeared. He had broken out of his compound in his agony. His soul-stirring cry was, ‘Water!’

Water! Water!" This precious liquid was at a premium, there was hardly enough for the stricken men in our own camp. What to do in such circumstances posed quite a problem. Eventually I decided to give the man a little water, he wanted more but there was none to give him despite his pleading. Adjacent to the fallen tree was a bucket of creosote which we kept for washing our hands. The native saw this, mistook it for water, and before he could be stopped he had his head in the bucket gulping the oily liquid. This only increased his agony. He crawled back into the jungle filling the air with his tormented cries. Slowly the cries subsided, an investigation in the morning found the grotesque form.

Chapter 13: Life of Faith

In these days one walked hand in hand with danger. I learned in these circumstances to live, “moment by moment.” Life was uncertain, everything was uncertain. We knew not what a day would bring forth. When cholera was raging, I did some quick mental arithmetic. Assuming the number of men that were in the main camp and knowing the number of men who were dying daily, I calculated that not one of us could live more than six weeks. This was a sobering thought and prompted much heart searching. About this time a fellow was brought into the compound, and with him came his reputation for dishonesty and deceit. He evidently had been the cause of a sick young soldier’s death, by stealing his blanket. His companions never forgot this action and waited for the day of revenge. He was stricken with cholera. I had witnessed many agonizing deaths during my incarceration, but I never saw a death like this man’s. He seemed to be tortured mentally as well as physically, and cried out time and time again, “Don’t let me die, don’t let me die.” We did everything in our power to save him, but he grew worse. We spoke to him of the Lord but he was too busy hanging on to life to listen. My heart bled for this man who, humanly speaking, was being punished for his past deeds.

One day I heard his agonizing call for help and rushed into the tent. In my hurry I forgot to adjust my facial mask. While I was bending low over him on my knees he vomited right into my face. Apart from the loathsomeness of the situation, this was serious. It probably meant death. I rushed outside and washed my face with scalding hot water, scarcely daring to breathe. Then in the shelter of the jungle I committed myself to my

Heavenly Father. The next few days were anxious ones, and as I waited God worked a miracle; there were no after effects. That same day this unfortunate man crawled out of his tent into the jungle and spent his last minutes alone within its inhospitable confines.

I had often heard preachers talk of the “school of experience” without knowing the full implication of the term. At this period I was being taught some hard lessons, which gave me a different outlook on my circumstances. I approached this particular phase of my work with fear and trembling. The brevity of life, the shortness of time, troubled me. Some of these men were hearing the Gospel for the first time and probably the last time. “Oh God, how can I reach them,” I prayed. I decided to bring the message in a collective way. We held meetings on Sunday, at least when we thought it was Sunday, for a short period.

Come with me now in spirit to a clearing in the dense bamboo jungles of Thailand. Picture in your mind, a group of unwashed, unshaven, and unkempt men sitting in the brilliant sunshine. These men were once the flower of British youth and they made good soldiers. Now, more dead than alive, with staring non-seeing eyes, sunken cheeks, and bent frames, they sat in numbed silence. Their hair hung down their necks, their beards were full of lice and other tormenting bugs. Some of their bodies were disfigured for war wounds and accidents. Most of these skeletons plucked recently and miraculously from the gaping jaws of death, contained embittered hearts.

As I stood before them on this particular day, (we found out later that it wasn’t Sunday), I read to them the words of the Lord Jesus, as recorded in John 11:28, “The Master is come, and

callesth for thee.” I reminded these men of the fact that our enemies had successfully cut us off from our homeland, our friends, and our loved ones. So far as the outside world was concerned we were lost or dead. But there was one door, which they could not close: the door to the Throne of God. Though surrounded by enemies on every hand, with no possible way of escape, there was always access into God’s presence. If at times He seemed to be so far away, He was not really far away but was right in our midst. I paraphrased the text a little, quoting, “The Master is here, standing by your side, and calls for you.”

The men seemed perceptibly moved as this tremendous truth broke into their bewildered and darkened souls. Beaten, bruised, lonely, and unwanted, they now rejoiced in the glorious fact that God was near, very near. The Lord seemed to be speaking, and men were making great decisions, some passing from death into eternal life and entering the Kingdom of God’s dear son.

“The Lord Jesus is close by your side,” I reminded them, “He is ready to take you with all your sin, He can save you, He can cleanse you, change your life and eternal destiny, but you must respond to His invitation.”

Near the end of the message I was constrained to repeat the text, “The Master is here, and calls for you.” Over on my left, a young golden-haired boy who must have been the idol of his mother’s heart listened intently. He had been a sailor on board the great battleship, “Prince of Wales,” which along with other ships had been sunk by some ghastly mistake. He had been delivered from a water grave, taken to Singapore, given an old rifle and sent into battle. He had escaped death a dozen times,

but now the grim reaper drew near as he lay in the final throes of the dread cholera.

As the text was repeated, the lad struggled to a sitting position. His face shone with a new light. "If He is calling for me," he said distinctly, "I'm gong." He rocked unsteadily, fell back and was gone. Gone, we believe, into the presence of the Master Who called him.

Winding up the message, I again recited the text. In an old tent nearby, a huge six-foot-six bronzed Australian, once a handsome specimen of a man but now only a shadow of his former self, lay in the last stages of the disease. Many times he had shown me the pictures of his lovely wife and children. There was nothing he wanted more than to return to them. His end was near and he listened in the afternoon quietness to the clear message of the text, "The Master is by your side, and is calling for you." As the challenging words fell softly into his heart, he mustered all his remaining strength, sat up, and said, "I know the Master is here and is calling for me, I am going to Him, I am going now."

That positive declaration was the last word he ever spoke, he passed away from the stress and strain of his burdened life into the presence and love of his Lord.

The death toll continued to multiply. With a hasty calculation on our part of the number of men who had died and the number still left in camp, we estimated that we had only another seventeen days left before the complete extermination of all personnel. Mercifully, God came in and stayed the plague. It had raged for over three months and it left just as quickly as it had come.

Chapter 14: Broken Humanity

The work on the “Railway” was drawing to a close. The long, crude, serpentine steel lay like an ugly scar across the face of the verdant jungle. Maintenance crews worked feverishly day and night repairing the track and fighting off the encroaching jungle. In the furthestmost North, depleted gangs of human skeletons forced themselves wearily through the mud in a last effort to complete this bizarre undertaking. To the incessant scream of “Speedo, speedo,” we pushed on reluctantly. By this time clothes were a thing of the past. We worked clad only in “G-strings.” Day after day men dragged their canvas-bandaged, ulcerated legs to the cuttings, embankments, and bridges. The backbreaking struggle seemed to increase daily as we raced to keep the impossible schedule. Amid scenes like these the “Railway” was finished. It ran from Bangkok to Rangoon, through unmapped territory for 400 miles, at the cost of one human life for every tie that was laid.

Soon the sick began to be shipped back south to Kamburi. Kamburi was a veritable steam bath; it was a cesspool for malaria. Dysentery ran amok, hundreds lay helplessly around in appalling conditions. Painful and gangrenous looking sores afflicted most of the lads. Our skin was the color of dirty parchment, shrunk and shriveled. Tropical ulcers, large and gaping, covered our legs. Our arms hung down like sticks joined to huge bony hands. Eyes were deeply sunk and had a deathly glaze. Beriberi patients, bloated and ugly, hobbled about or lay in their misery until they died. The death toll was very high at this point.

Into these horrible conditions trainloads of prisoners from the North were dumped. Our medical resilience was tested to the utmost. At this point no one was really well, everyone was sick to some degree. The medical people fought valiantly to alleviate the abounding suffering and misery.

Armed with my “wooden spoon,” a few old bandages which had been recycled many times, and a weak solution of antiseptic, I would enter my ward. A chorus of cries would go up for attention. Sitting down beside a man I would remove the sopping wet, stinking bandage, then with my “spoon” I would dig firmly into the mass of suppurating green pus, never stopping until I reached the tender flesh. This painful procedure was repeated every day, there was no respite, and very often after months of excruciating pain the process ended with amputation. Some of these wounds were horrible, stretching from the knee to the ankle. Sometimes the flesh was so eaten away, that my “spoon” would pass easily between the shinbone and the wasted flesh behind.

It was at this point that I had a very severe attack of malaria. Oh, how I needed comfort and help — I longed for the touch of my mother’s hand on my fevered brow. Instead of these physical comforts, I found spiritual strength as I realized the Lord’s everlasting arms enfolding me. I prayed:

When my way grows drear,

Precious Lord linger near.

When my life is almost gone

Hear my cry, hear my call,

Hold my hand lest I fall

Take my hand precious Lord,

Lead me home.

My precious Savior heard that prayer and gave me strength to recover and resume my endless task of ministering to the physical and spiritual needs of the men around.

Our methods of cleaning wounds had changed with the conditions. In the jungle camps we used maggots, they ate and thrived on the foul mess. When the colony in a man's wound became too big we took some of the maggots and introduced them into another man's wound. This seems crude, but it was effective and the patient had only a little discomfort.

As the weeks rolled slowly into months a marked mental improvement became apparent among the prisoners. Although the men's bodies were rotten with stinking ulcers, tormented by beriberi, and burned up by fever and dysentery, they were slowly recovering from the haunted memories of the past years.

We gradually found our singing voices again. In the evenings as the men gathered together, the conversation would center on home and loved ones. In a pensive moment a clear young voice would start singing, "There's a long long trail a winding, Into the land of my dreams." Soon the whole camp would join in. A moment of silence, then invariably we would sing:

Abide with me: fast falls the eventide;

The darkness deepens; Lord with me abide;

When other helpers fail, and comforts flee,

Help of the helpless, O abide with me.

In the eloquent silence that followed these outbursts, some prayed — some thoughts winged their way over sea and continent to loved ones and home. Content with our present lot we closed our eyes to dream of that long winding trail. The worst in Thailand was over.

Chapter 15: Visits from the “Flying Fortresses”

Sir Winston Churchill, in one of his immortal speeches, described Singapore as the Impregnable Fortress of the Far East. At one time this was undoubtedly true. But Singapore had been denuded of its defenses in favor of strengthening our position in the Middle East. It now stood as an empty shell, as vulnerable as a sitting duck. The Japanese knew this; their secret intelligence had exploded the fallacy of its impregnability.

When the Japanese had completed the task of blasting the “Railway” from Bangkok to the Burma border they immediately began to withdraw the prisoners from the

Far North and bring them back to the Island of Singapore. They must reinforce the already formidable fortifications erected by the British prior to the war. Their strategy of defense was much different from ours. In Burma they had used a system of tunnels with devastating results to our men. They would hide in these tunnels until our troops had advanced beyond their hideout, then they would emerge and kill from behind and quickly vanish into the thick underbrush and the safety of their tunnels. I believe this type of warfare precipitated the advent of the flamethrower. What worked in Burma must work in Singapore, they reasoned.

By the forced labor of prisoners, tunnels and trenches were dug day and night, until the Island became a veritable rabbit warren. Underground passages penetrated far into the hillsides. At the end of each passage was a huge room capable of housing a number of men with provisions for many weeks.

These were connected to similar rooms by more underground passages.

On the outside, communication trenches were dug from one entrance to another. These were deep enough to conceal any enemy movement. No one needed to come above the surface of the ground to commute between various stations. This tunnel system was ingenious in many ways. It provided cover for stores: ammunition, food, water, etc. As I saw the intricate underground passageways with their limitless provisions and supplies, I envisioned a never-ending reign of the Japanese over the Island. At this time reports trickled in from other islands that the same meticulous care was being taken in defense of the whole area.

As I pondered over this sad thought I figured it would be absolutely impossible for anyone to affect our release before 1947. With the help of the Lord Who was a constant companion I sought, as opportunities allowed, to prepare myself spiritually, mentally, and emotionally for the long siege. Never did liberation seem further away. Force after force of human slaves was being shipped away from Singapore. With good reason I was further convinced that the preparations being made on our island were being repeated on countless islands of the Pacific.

Along with the tunneling, there was also the project of making new airstrips to handle the increasing numbers of fighter planes and light bombers which began to appear. Many a man's heart was broken by the laborious task. Working as slaves in the blazing sun day after day was one thing, but knowing that our efforts could be adding weeks or months to our ultimate

release was frustrating. Despite all forms of sabotage the construction went on.

Singapore Harbor and the great naval base at Selarang showed increasing signs of activity. Ships came in more frequently for repairs and some of them showed signs of having been damaged in battle. Another observation we made about this time was that the models and designs of many of the planes were completely new to us. These obvious signs, coupled with the meager news that trickled through to us by devious routes, convinced us that a major crisis was approaching.

There were great moments in these crisis days, particularly when American Flying Fortresses (B-29's) flew in perfect formation high above the range of the anti-aircraft guns and beyond the ceiling of the fighter planes. Like great winged birds they flew majestically over the coveted Island, the key to strategic success in the Far East. I believe taking pictures was their main mission, but in the process they "laid a few eggs." We could hear the dull thuds and see the columns of smoke that rose from each of the harbors. Unfortunately some cannon shells also exploded in the camp wounding some of the men. Thank God for His preserving grace during those periods of danger and uncertainty.

A very unfortunate incident happened at this time. An unexploded "ack-ack" shell fell about three feet outside the wall of the grass hut in which I worked as a medical orderly. It buried itself in the ground and burned itself out without exploding, just a few feet from the head of a very sick man. We quickly evacuated him to a safer area but the shock was too much for his weakened heart. He never recovered and passed

away some time later. I had the opportunity to witness to him and before he died he made a profession of faith in Christ.

The news of the war, which filtered through the grapevine, was all good, but we were afraid to believe it. Our hopes had been dashed so many times. Yet there seemed to be an authentic ring about it. It told of the great sea battles in which the grand fleets of the conflicting nations were involved, the heroic battles in the air, in which, according to the news releases, we were victorious. Then were elated to hear of the victory in Europe. It almost seemed as if we were dreaming. This was a real shot in the arm to us weary prisoners; we regained much of the morale lost in the last four desperate years. The Japanese guards noticed the change, but could not understand it. We, the captives, evidently knew more than the captors. We could hardly wait for each news release, and as the endless days dragged slowly on we even began to think in terms of freedom, at least something momentous was in the air.

The fickle complexity of the Japanese soldier had often puzzled me. At the pit of my stomach I had a great dread and fear as to how they would react in the present situation. In their slave-like devotion to the brutal ideals of their code of honor they placed little value upon life. Sometimes without compunction they would kill a defenseless prisoner with little or no reason in an act of patriotic fervor. The question was how would they react in the present situation?

Never were days so uncertain. It was like being in the crater of a volcano expected to erupt momentarily. A stealthy footstep in the night would strike terror into our hearts. We prayed and longed for the daybreak. These nights seemed interminable.

The daylight hours, though long, were all too short; reluctantly we watched the crimson fingers of the receding sun flicker and fade into the far horizon. Then darkness cast itself around us like a shroud.

During this period many of the men had hideouts where they hoped to escape the expected slaughter. Many and long were the seasons that I spent in prayer at this time, not only being concerned for my own safety, but also the safety of others. My Bible was my constant companion. During the last four years it had miraculously been preserved. It had escaped Japanese inspections over and over again. I had buried it and hidden it in all kinds of places. Several times it was on the point of being discovered but went unnoticed. In my present dilemma, as at other times, I took recourse thereto and encouraged my heart, claiming the promise of Psalm 91:2, "He is my refuge and my fortress; my God; in Him will I trust." Many a time I sat at the close of the day and sang softly but fervently, "Hiding in Thee, Hiding in Thee, Thou blest Rock of Ages I'm hiding in Thee."

Chapter 16: The Busy Grapevine

After forty-two months of virtual isolation from the great outside world, the news of international current events received over our underground radio made very interesting topics of discussion. In the past there had been news releases, but we had the suspicion that these releases were made to bolster morale as well as convey the truth. Also, when genuine news was released, it was sandwiched between items so far removed from the truth that its meaning was veiled. There was good reason for this. Our officers did not want the Japanese to know of the secret radio although they highly suspected it. As their intelligence roamed throughout the camp listening to every word, they must at times have been amused at all the incredible nonsense they heard. Of course if we knew that a spy was close by, our imagination would run riot and we would talk loudly about fictitious battles the outcome of which was blurred beyond recognition. Our captors must have laughed heartily at our seeming ignorance, and no doubt felt proud of the effectiveness of their “blackout” of world events. All these things considered, the Japanese soldier was more ignorant of world events than we were. They were fed a steady diet of atrocious propaganda.

Things for us were a little different now. It was evident from the reports of the underground radio that the tide of war was changing. The news was more encouraging. Around this time it was reported to us by devious channels that the American Navy had broken the back of the Japanese Grand Fleet. This tremendous news, coupled with the fact that the war in Europe was over, brought encouragement of a new kind to

each one of us. Amid the secret rejoicing — for we dare not show our exuberance — there was one sad thought. The Japanese fighting force was very strong; the training of the young soldiers was being noticeably intensified. The morale of the Nipponese troops had never been greater. All this, along with our knowledge of the vast defense system, made them a formidable enemy, numerically and strategically powerful. The surging arrogance of the Japanese indicated that they were the victims of intense propaganda. The brainwashing experts had done their work well; with insolent presumption they felt and acted as if they were the Number One Nation in the world.

At about this period there was a cut in our rations, indicating to us that the enemy was experiencing difficulty in bringing supplies by sea. Although this did nothing to alleviate the frequent hunger pains in our empty stomachs, it boosted our morale immensely. Such reasoning, though subject to some doubt, helped to make the days more bearable, ease the strain of our seeming interminable incarceration, and further buoy our hopes that our eventual liberation was near. The work on the tunnels and airstrip never stopped. It was work as usual and “all men go.” In fact the Japanese were driving us harder than at any time since our return to Singapore and their attitude became more belligerent each day.

One of the officers told me one day that things were reaching a climax and that the eventual seizure of Singapore by the Allied Forces was only a matter of time. Meanwhile intensive preparations were being made by the Japanese. Huge gunsw ere being assembled and put in place; air activity was increasing daily. It was obvious that the Japanese command

was expecting to be called upon to defend this strategic island fortress.

Planes from the Southeast Asia Command based in India paid frequent visits to the Island now. At first the ack-ack fire was very heavy, though rather inaccurate. As the days passed the ack-ack fire seemed to be lessening somewhat and there were not as many planes in the air as at the beginning of these attacks. The hours of darkness began to produce the thunder of revving plane engines, the roar of which would ultimately fade away in the distance. We comforted and encouraged each other in the thought that these planes were being redirected to other arenas of war where our enemies were being hard pressed. Singapore was being denuded of air power for the second time in four years. First by the British to strengthen the beleaguered forces of the Middle East, now by the Japanese to bolster their crumbling defense line in the Pacific.

The Japanese were a mysterious force to us, we could not understand them. We never knew what they were thinking and their general attitude changed so quickly that we often made grave mistakes. We found out by bitter experience that it was impossible to comprehend completely the Oriental mind. This is understandable when we realize that the Japanese nation has only been open to Western civilization for less than a century. They had hardly been exposed to the Gospel of Jesus Christ which softens men's hearts and sets new ethical standards, so while hopes of freedom ran high, there lured in my mind the thought that the Nipponese troops might run amok and begin to shoot us prisoners. It was possible, I reasoned, that despite the many escapes from death in the

past few years I might be living in the last days of my young life.

One day while walking a sick man near the barbed wire perimeter of our section of the camp someone from the main camp appeared suddenly from behind one of the huts and gave an exuberant “thumbs-up” sign. The enthusiasm of the gesture and the radiance of his face was meant to convey a message. They did — I felt that victory was near. The unknown herald with the silent yet eloquent message disappeared into the maze of bamboo huts as quickly as he had appeared. For a few moments I stood there transfixed then experienced a flood of deep emotions, which I had thought to be long dead. The possibility of freedom in the very near future after three years and nine months of incarceration was almost unbearable. Freedom from the stench of rotting wounds and unwashed bodies. Freedom from the continual oppression and from the unscrupulous guards. Freedom from pressures and frustration, from the rough badgering of uncouth and ungodly men. Most stunning of all was the thought of “going home.” Home had been but an obscure memory, growing dimmer as the weary months dragged slowly past. Now as home came within my eager grasp, the floodgates of my pent-up emotions opened and I was instantly overwhelmed with my dear Heavenly Father’s goodness and human gratitude.

Returning to my friends I passed the word along to several of them. Speculation ran high among the prisoners, even the sick ones seemed to improve suddenly, and the air was electrified. Not long after this our Camp Commander was summoned to the Japanese headquarters. The meeting lasted for hours. It

seemed interminable. We waited expectantly and, thank God, we did not wait in vain.

Chapter 17: The Atomic Bomb

The world entered abruptly into the Atomic Age on August 6, 1945. The Allies had dropped the first-ever atom bomb on Hiroshima with devastating effects. Buildings and people had completely vanished. Multitudes more were maimed and burned in the awful inferno. The shock waves that resounded throughout the world were nothing compared to the shock of the Japanese soldiers. They had never expected this, defeat was unthinkable. They had been the victims of propagandism. Slowly and reluctantly the Nipponese had stopped fighting. It was all quiet on the far-flung battlefronts of Southeast Asia. The scream of the dive-bombers, the whine of the shells, the crunch of exploding bombs, and the piercing crackle of small-arms fire were silenced. It was an eerie silence.

The Nipponese forces in the Malay Peninsula at first refused to obey their orders from Tokyo. This put the prisoners under their command in a very precarious position. There was a period lasting several hours in which our fate hung in the balance. Only by rushing a special envoy from Tokyo to Singapore was the garrison persuaded to lay down their arms. The ultimate surrender brought great relief and joy into the lives of the remaining badly crippled allied prisoners.

When the summoned Allied commanders were ushered into the presence of the Japanese general, he announced very gravely that for them the war was over, but for him it had only begun. This officer had allowed and consented to the brutal atrocities, which had been perpetrated in his command. More than once he had strutted proudly through the filthy compounds, sneering at the condition of the victims of cruelty.

Now he stood humbled before those whom he had treated as animals. Pointing to a picture of his wife and son standing beside a huge German shepherd dog he asked, "What will happen to them?" If the question was asked of the Allied officers to evoke sympathy, it was unsuccessful. Taking command immediately they produced, from the most unlikely places, documents demanding, among other things, the release of all prisoners who were being held in solitary confinement, an increased food ration, and badly needed medical supplies.

Human language could not describe the pitiable condition of prisoners freed from solitary confinement. How they managed to survive is a story that probably will never be told. Slowly the men from the outlying areas began to come into a central camp. They came with light hearts but broken bodies, carrying their meager belongings and their sick buddies. Those who had been seriously injured while tunneling in the mountains were slowly being brought back to Base. The advent of these various groups in their atrophied physical conditions reminded me of the dark days in the jungles of Thailand where one particular young Englishman came under my care. This lad had had his back broken several months previously and, due to the lack of medical facilities, had developed a bedsore on his buttocks in which I could lose my fist. Mercifully he was paralyzed from the waist down and did not feel the pain. This was only one of the many human tragedies that lay around in abject misery.

We were being visited almost daily now by British planes. One of the first to fly over after the surrender dropped leaflets entitled, "To all Allied Prisoners of War: The Japanese forces

have surrendered unconditionally and the war is over. We will get supplies to you as soon as is humanly possible and will make arrangements to get you out, but owing to the distances involved, it may be some time before we can achieve this. You will help yourselves and us if you act as follows: (1) Stay in your camp until you get further orders from us. (2) Start preparing nominal rolls of personnel, giving fullest particulars. (3) List your most urgent necessities. (4) If you have been starved or underfed for long periods, DO NOT eat large quantities of solid food, fruit or vegetables at first. It is dangerous for you to do so. Gifts of food from the local population should be cooked. We want to get you back home quickly, safe and sound, and we do not want to risk your chances from diarrhea, dysentery, and cholera at this last stage. (5) Local authorities and/or Allied officers will take charge of your affairs in a very short time. Be guided by their advice.” As the friendly planes flew low over the compound, daring young airmen stood at their open doors, waving and throwing out newspapers and bars of chocolate.

On the first such occasion I stood and watched the pathetic sight of bedridden men crying like children as they crawled out of the long bamboo huts to greet the friendly planes. Some who were too weak to stand, fell down, their strength inadequate for the occasion. Huge, gaunt frames shook with emotion like leaves in the wind. Men with eyes sunk back in their heads, eyes that had long since lost the sparkle of youth, now with the newfound hope vainly tried to push back the years of suffering and to transform their haggard features.

When the first burst of excitement had died down, many of those who had crawled from their bedspaces were unable to

return; they just lay around, exhausted but happy. I spent the next hour helping my weaker comrades back to their beds. Those who could talk talked incessantly of the happy days ahead.

This exciting day drew slowly to its close. The sun had sunk in a blaze of crimson glory over the distant horizon. Darkness crept over the camp and our spirits rose in ecstasy as the truth of our liberation gripped our weary hearts. Very soon now the strains of the nightly “lights-out” would float over the camp from the tower in the jail courtyard. For almost four years the flag of the Imperial Japanese Forces had proudly and defiantly flown from the flagstaff high on the ramparts of the tower. This may have elated the Japanese and their collaborators but it depressed those of us who felt the iron heel of the oppressor. Today it had been unceremoniously hauled down — the flagstaff was empty. On these same ramparts where the proud little Japanese bugler had sounded “lights-out” night after night, stood one of our own buglers. Soon the air was filled with sweet silvery tones — silence descended magically upon the survivors of four years of incarceration. To all of us this was the sweetest music that we had ever heard. As the last strains died silently in the night a lump rose in my throat and I must confess that a few tears of thanksgiving trickled down my haggard cheeks. When the excitement and the thrill of the moment died down I peacefully drifted off into the most restful sleep in almost four years.

With the dawning of the new day, activity around the compound increased. Highlighting the day’s proceedings was the important event of hoisting the flag. I was honored by the

hospital authorities to represent our area at the flag raising ceremony. Miraculously an old shirt was produced; shorts of a kind and an old forage cap supplemented this. These were hastily washed and in the early afternoon I walked proudly out of our camp clad in the old shirt, shorts, cap, but no boots or shoes. No one ever walked more proudly than I.

About twenty of us stood on the ramparts of the tower at the base of the flagstaffs. These were the selected representatives of various areas. The chaplain was there and to make up the group, the buglers. The ceremony began with the singing of the old hymn of the church, "O God, our help in ages past, our hope in years to come, our shelter from the stormy blast, and our eternal home." After a brief prayer, the buglers filled the whole area with silvery blasts, no doubt inspired by the greatness and the joy of the occasion. Soon the notes of triumph were echoing and reechoing throughout the maze of jaded bamboo huts.

Slowly the flags of the three nations – British – American – and Dutch – were raised to the tops of their respective poles. Thousands of men on the ground watched breathlessly. The cord was pulled and the flags unfurled and fluttered proudly in the afternoon breeze. Thousands of voices rose in a lusty cheer, which reverberated around that tower and rose in an ever-swelling crescendo until it seemed that the very heavens would vibrate.

Great, hot tears streamed unabashedly down my cheeks as I looked at the emblems of peace and safety. This was one of my most unforgettable experiences. Now we were safe from all our enemies. How I thanked the Lord that I lived in the Western World where there was at least some semblance of

honoring Him, where peace and a measure of security prevailed.

In the excitement of being freed I never forgot to thank my great God. For despite all the human incidents that precipitated the end of the war, I was convinced that He had overruled. My praise and my thanksgiving were sincere, never had I been so thankful in all my life.

“Things are rapidly changing here,” I wrote in my diary on September 5, 1945. “The men are beginning to realize that they are free. The tempo of things is increasing daily. The Navy came into Singapore yesterday, this caused a great stir in the camp.”

The Naval Officers and men looked clean and handsome in their spotless white uniforms. They were very kind; some of them had baskets over their arms filled with all sorts of luxuries. Home-baked bread — which we ate sparingly — tasted like cake to us. It was so good to our unaccustomed taste buds that we shunned the butter and jam that was freely offered. Powdered milk was another treat — no mixing in water for us, just a spoonful in the mouth — we would chew until our jaws were sore. These were great days, we appreciated the smallest favor. How my heart responded to the kindness of our liberators!

My diary records the following incident, “An Australian, in spite of the fact of having been off good food for three years, ate in one night the contents of his Red Cross parcel—eleven pounds, plus his ordinary rations from the kitchen. He was admitted to the hospital suffering from severe pain. He hovered between life and death for some time before slowly recovering.”

“Men are like children these days,” I wrote, “New clothes are the order of the day, men are parading in shirts of all colors, sizes shapes; socks, shorts, and boots. They laugh, sing, joke, and talk; everyone is on the tiptoe of expectancy. What a difference from a few weeks ago.”

With the reversed roles of the Allied and Nipponese troops, I faced many new situations. The Japanese, under the supervision of the Indian troops, now performed some of the tasks previously assigned to the Allied prisoners. I felt grieved and shamed at the action of some men who brutally assaulted the Japanese prisoners in retaliation for past behavior. I felt strongly that we who had come from lands steeped in Christianity should have set an example to our enemy. Despite long discussions on the subject I failed to convince my countrymen that we should display some of the love of God rather than the hatred of man.

The realization of freedom was working miracles among some of the beleaguered sick. The shackles of disease fell from some of the victims and miraculously some whom we had thought incurable showed definite signs of recovery. Though few remained of the original company, those of us left rejoiced at the unbelievable prospect of seeing our loved ones again.

Chapter 18: Wonderful Freedom

The evacuation had begun. Huge planes from the various nations began descending on Singapore. The wounded and the sick men were prepared hurriedly — all the marks of imprisonment still apparent — and processed for their departure. Many tears were shed as we embraced our buddies fondly, knowing that in all probability we would never see each other again.

Soon came the time for my own departure and, to my surprise and consternation, I was informed that I would be flown out. I didn't want to fly; I much preferred to travel the slower way home, allowing time for me to consider the many adjustments to be made upon my return to civilization. There were so many physical and mental scars to be healed. I also hoped to add a few pounds to my emaciated frame.

My departure was delayed for a number of weeks because of this decision, but I was thankful for this time so badly needed for recuperation. Finally on November 1, 1945 — a beautiful day in Singapore — I embarked on the good ship “Sobieski,” a Polish ship manned by a combined British and Polish crew. The four-week voyage gave ample time for refection. Our bodies, too, responded to the good food, rest, and recreation. The calm sea and the excellent weather added to our enjoyment. We basked in the sunshine, breathed the pure air, and thanked God for having spared us. There was one incident that marred the tranquility of the voyage. Looking into the beautiful blue ocean one day, I saw the bodies of a few seamen floating nearby. A wave of sorrow swept over me as I contemplated that some mother's son, or a father, husband, or boyfriend had

met with a water grave and would never return home. My contemplation led me to think of the resurrection. I remembered the Scripture, which says, “And the sea gave up her dead” (Revelation 20:13). Even those who had been swallowed up in the ocean’s mighty depths would one day answer God’s call in resurrection.

During those days of relaxation our commanding Officer, Lt. Col. John Huston, issued a farewell message. “On going our various ways after the ups and downs of the past five years, I want to thank all ranks of what was the 196 Field Ambulance for the faithful work, steady discipline, adaptability, and common sense they have always shown. You were a good team!”

As we journeyed slowly home we had time not only to reflect on the past, but also to contemplate the future. I kept my mind alert with various notes that I had made, in the hope that they would stand me in good stead as I publicly witnessed for the Lord in future days. I knew by this time that there was only one course that I could take in the uncharted future. I must surrender myself wholly to the Lord, no matter the cost.

I also reflected more than ever on the parting word of my dear mother before leaving the house for the last time. “Every morning,” she said, “I will go into your room at 8 a.m. and kneel at your bed and pray for you.” I appreciated this more than ever as I recalled the mighty hand of God on my life during these strenuous months and years as a prisoner of war.

I also appreciated the prayers of the Assembly at Tillicoultry. With tears running down their cheeks these dear people, coal miners for the most part, cried to the Lord for my safety and preservation, though no one knew whether I was dead or alive.

God answered the prayers of a devoted mother and the supplications of my brethren and sisters in Christ. I believe that God answers prayer.

I began to philosophize on prayer and made another entry in my diary. "Worldly men laugh when Christians mention the power of prayer. We are not altogether surprised at this, but let us take ourselves to task. Do we really believe in prayer? I am inclined to believe that deep down in our hearts we really doubt the power of prayer, although we acknowledge the power with our lips. This was my own experience, but prayer is real. It is something tangible. I have found out from my own personal experience that prayer moves the hand of Him Who moves the universe. God answers prayer. It is one of the most powerful and potent means that God has put into the hands of the believer. In fact, one has written that 'Satan trembles when he sees the weakest saint upon his knees.' "

En route home, the "Sobieski" stopped at Colombo, Ceylon, for a couple of days. When word came to this beautiful port city that prisoners of war were stopping for a day or so, the authorities immediately confined all girls in the Forces to their barracks. Policemen were stationed at every street corner, some carried firearms. Soon the authorities realized that they had misjudged the troops. We had been so long in subjection, obeying orders of every description, that the simplest command was met with immediate obedience. Soon the policemen were withdrawn, the girls were released from the barracks, and the city returned to normal. Bands played lively music and the ex-prisoners danced in the streets with the fairer sex.

The voyage home was uneventful. We sailed via the great fortress of Gibraltar, eventually arriving at the busy seaport of Liverpool. Arriving in the late afternoon we were forced to drop anchor approximately five miles out. We were pleasantly surprised by the announcement of mail call. This brought to some uninhibited joy – to others intense sorrow. The letters brought the news to some of broken engagements, others found that their homes had been broken up, still others found out that their loved ones had been killed in the air raids. Then there were the fortunate ones like myself, who were thrilled at news from loved ones who really cared.

On the following morning the ship drew alongside the dock. People seemed to be everywhere – on the tops of buildings and at every vantage point – wherever a foothold could be gained they clung desperately to keep from falling. Many carried banners bearing the names of loved ones who would never come home. They cheered and sang, and the bands played. High up on a dockside building I recognized my old friend, Arthur Greenwood, Evangelist. We exchanged greetings from the distance – I did not have the pleasure of meeting with him at this time. Struggling down the gangway with my luggage, I heard a voice asking, “Are you Dan Snaddon?” To my surprise there stood another old friend, Duncan Stevens, from Glasgow. Duncan had been a prisoner of the Germans.

We were hustled off to one of the camps outside the city where we were fitted out with proper clothes, identification papers, money, and a free rail ticket home. It was the “wee” hours of the morning before we eventually turned in to bed – but not to sleep. Very early we were called for breakfast then put on board a bus and taken to the train station. What

excitement! With the help of Duncan Steven, I eventually entrained. With a shrill whistle and clouds of steam we slowly left the crowded station, gaining momentum by the minute.

For me this was the second last lap of my long journey. All along the way tremendous crowds lined the railway station platforms looking expectantly for loved ones. A deep sense of being home enveloped me as we crossed the border in Bonnie Scotland, my native land. As the train approached the great city of Glasgow my heart began pounding. I knew that some of my friends would meet me there, But who?

Detraining at the Central Station in Glasgow, I soon was being smothered in the arms of my sister Jessie, and her husband Johnny. Hardly a word was spoken, but the silence was eloquent. The other friends who were there helped me with my baggage into a waiting bus. As we drove through the familiar streets to Queen Street Station my emotion erupted — it was good to be among loved ones again.

Chapter 19: Safely Home

The last thirty miles of my journey brought back many pleasant memories. Memories of yesteryears that seemed like distant dreams. Our conversation in the railway coach was exciting and interesting as we each tried to catch up with the events of the past five years. One by one the old familiar landmarks came into view, then receded quickly into the evening twilight. Soon the winter darkness enveloped the drab landscape, but in our little compartment it was bright and cheerful.

The long-awaited moment had come — the train drew slowly into the station at Tillicoultry. Scores of Christian friends and townspeople had gathered for this tremendous occasion. As we stepped from the train the sound of singing filled the air. The old hymns of the church never sounded sweeter in my ear, nor to my heart. “To God be the glory, great things He hath done,” they sang lustily. The chorus resounded throughout the station, “Praise the Lord, praise the Lord, Let the earth hear His voice.” Then as they covered me with kisses, hugs, and handshakes, they sang triumphantly, “Jesus never fails, Jesus never fails,” and “God is still on the throne.” This was a joyous reunion after so many bitter years.

The following days and weeks were happy ones. There were the usual “welcome home” gatherings, special meetings at the Assembly, and visiting friends in their homes. These times of fellowship gave me many opportunities for testifying to the goodness and faithfulness of my Heavenly Father Who had brought me through the valley of the shadow.

After a few months of recuperation I returned to my secular employment, and also gave myself wholeheartedly to the work of the Lord in the area. The next few years were very difficult for me, and the period of adjustment was long and arduous — it was hard to get settled down and find one's self again. The walls of the factory in which I worked seemed at times to be closing in on me, almost driving me to the breaking point. For long periods, sleep almost left me and the infrequent naps were filled with terrible nightmares, however, there was much prayer made on my behalf during these trying days and though the odds seemed insurmountable, I praise God that His wonderful grace was sufficient. Slowly, my health and attitude began to improve and, consequently, I regained my composure.

I could not pass from this phase of my life without recording that in 1950, I was introduced to Lily Hislop of Hamilton, Scotland, and at first sight I was convinced that she was God's helpmeet for me. In January of 1951, we announced our engagement and in June of the same year we were united in the Lord. In September of 1953, God blessed us with a baby daughter, Anne.

Eighteen months after our marriage I accepted a position on the staff of a paper company near Glasgow, where we spent four happy years. When my career seemed to be approaching its zenith, I felt that the Lord was calling my family and me to Orillia, Ontario, Canada, where my brother-in-law had established himself in the building business. On May 13, 1957, we left Scotland in an almost empty plane for the New World.

During our two and one-half years in Orillia, despite the pressure of the restaurant business, we gave ourselves to the

work of the Lord. Gradually during this period the Divine pattern and plan for my life began to unfold. The pieces were coming together. The call of God became clearer and the leading of the Holy Spirit more apparent. This was really not a new situation for me, because God had spoken on many previous occasions. The crisis came during a weekend Conference in the West Street Chapel in Orillia. Mr. T.E. McCully, the father of Ed McCully, one of the five missionaries martyred for the Lord at the hands of the Auca Indians in Ecuador in 1956, was one of the speakers. The challenge of his message gripped Lily's heart and mine. The Lord also used the pictures of the martyred missionaries to complete His work in us. After deep exercise of heart, we surrendered to the call and claims of Christ. We disposed of our restaurants and waited for the Lord's leading, as to our place of future service for Him.

Sometime later we received a telephone call from Mr. G. T. Willey of Indialantic, Florida, asking us to come and visit. A few brethren had built a Chapel in Satellite Beach, but required someone to help them establish the work. Our visit to the area revealed the great potential. After much prayer by all concerned, we were convinced that Satellite Beach was to be our sphere of labor. On October 26, 1959, Lily, Anne and I left Canada for Florida to work among the space engineers and others in the Cape Canaveral area.

We have spent many happy years in fellowship with the Assembly in Satellite Beach. The Lord has signally blessed His work and many souls have come to know Him, while many more have been encouraged to progress into the deeper things of God.

I attribute my passing through the valley of the shadow, to the power of God and the fervent prayers of my loved ones, and many other friends in Christ. I believe that the God Who delivered Daniel from the lions, and Who also walked with the three Hebrew children in the fiery furnace, is alive and can work for His children today.

I challenge you, my friend, to prove such a God in your own life and circumstances, and to “present your bodies to Him as a living sacrifice, that Christ may be magnified, whether it be by life or by death” (Romans 12:1; Philippians 1:20).

The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you all. Amen.



To God be the glory.