

## ***Amy Carmichael: The Radiant Life***

Adapted from *They Found The Secret*, by V. Raymond Edman

**Amy Carmichael first met the living Lord on the streets of Belfast.** She was just a girl then, in her teens. The meeting with the Savior was sudden and startling, wholly unexpected. She describes that meeting in her book, *Gold Cord*. This is autobiographical account of the background and the building of the Christian home for girls and boys she started at Dohnavur in South India. She later said **that encounter on the streets of Belfast was as important in her life as was the revelation of the Lord Jesus to Saul of Tarsus on the way to Damascus.**

"It was a dull Sunday morning," she recalled, "in Belfast. My brothers and sisters and I were returning with our mother from church. We met a poor pathetic old woman who was carrying a heavy bundle. We had never seen such a thing in Presbyterian Belfast on a Sunday! Moved by sudden pity, my brothers and I turned to go with her. We relieved her of the bundle. We took her by her arms, as though they had been handles, and helped her along. This meant *facing* all the respectable people who were, like ourselves, on their way home. It was a *horrid moment!* We were only two boys and a girl, ...and not at all exalted Christians! We *hated* doing it! Crimson all over (at least we *felt* crimson, soul and body), we plodded on, a wet wind blowing us about. The wind was blowing, too, the rags of that poor old woman, till she seemed like a bundle of feathers, and we were unhappily mixed up with them. But just as we passed a fountain, recently built near the kerbstone, *suddenly this mighty phrase was flashed*, as it were, through the grey drizzle:

"Gold, silver, precious stones, wood, hay, stubble; ...every person's work shall be made evident; for the day will show it, because it shall be revealed by fire; and the fire shall test every person's work concerning what sort it is. If anyone's work abides..."

**"If anyone's work abides** -- I turned to see the voice that spoke with me. The fountain, the muddy street, the people with their politely surprised faces, ...all *this* I saw, but *nothing else*. The blinding flash had come and gone. The ordinary was all about us, again. We went on. I said nothing to anyone, but ***I knew that something had happened that had changed life's values. Nothing could ever matter again but the things that were eternal.***"

That afternoon the eighteen-year-old Amy shut herself in her room. She talked to God, and settled once and for all the pattern of her future life.

**Amy had found the Lord Jesus as her personal Savior two years before**, when she had been a student at school in Harrogate, North Ireland. In the moments of quiet at the conclusion of an evangelistic message, the Good Shepherd, she said, "answered the prayers of my father and mother, ...and the prayers of many other loving ones..., and drew me, even me, into His fold."

**At the age of nineteen** she attended a convention in Glasgow. There **she heard the "Keswick testimony" of the life of victory by the Holy Spirit** for the first time. She recalled:

"I had been longing for months, perhaps years, to *know how one could live a holy life, and a life that would help others*. I came to that meeting half hoping, ...half *fearing*. Would there be anything for *me*? I don't remember feeling there was anything of significance (probably my *own* fault) in either of the two addresses I had heard. The fog in the hall seemed to soak into me. My *soul* was in a fog. Then the chairman rose for the last prayer. Perhaps the previous address had been about Peter walking on the water, and it may have closed with the words of Jude 24, for the one who prayed began like this, 'O Lord, we know You are able to keep us from falling.' Those words *found me!* It was as if they were a light, ...and they shone specifically *for me*."

In exaltation of mind and spirit she left the meeting and went with her hostess to a restaurant for lunch. "The mutton chop wasn't properly cooked and somebody said so," wrote Amy Carmichael. "I remembered wondering, 'Whatever does it *matter* about mutton chops? O Lord, we know You are able to keep us from falling!'"

**Assurance of salvation** at Harrogate ("the one watered moment in an arid three years"), **awareness of eternal values** by the Holy Spirit at Belfast ("something had happened that had changed life's values"), **and the actuality of the new life in Christ** at Glasgow ("You are able to keep us from falling") -- **these were the spiritual milestones of Amy Carmichael's awakening and preparation for her long and fruitful service for the Lord Jesus.**

**Early did this Irish girl also learn the sensitivity to the Holy Spirit that is indispensable in a close walk with God, and for fruitfulness in ministry.** Still in her teens, she was led to Christian service in a Belfast mission, called "The Welcome." For some nights there were souls saved night after night, ...then suddenly the meetings went dead. As she prayed and searched her own heart she remembered "a rollicking hour when we reached home after the meeting, ...and, as usual, it was *my* fault. There was nothing wrong in the fun, *but it was not the time for it*. I have never forgotten the shock of that discovery. ***Grieve not the Spirit***, that was the word then. In His mercy He forgave; and the work went on again."

**There was the implicit and wholehearted response to the call for foreign missionary service**, ...quite unthought of even *the day* before it came, on January 13, 1892. Obedient to that call of "Go Ye", she was appointed the first missionary under the Keswick convention, and within a few months went to Japan. Though her service there was brief, she learned many lessons that were invaluable later in the fifty-five consecutive years that she served in India.

Not long after she arrived in Japan, **she learned the importance of simplicity of dress and appearance** on the part of missionaries, **and the value of adaptability to the clothing and the standards of the people among whom one had come to witness** for the Savior.

It was a hard lesson, learned in a sad way. With her Christian fellow worker, Misaki San, she had gone to visit an old lady who was ill. In response to Miss Carmichael's word, translated by Misaki San, the needy heart seemed just about to turn to the Savior when the lady noticed *fur gloves* on the missionary's hands, and was distracted from the message. "I went home," said the young missionary, "took off my English clothes, put on my Japanese *kimono*, and never again, I trust, risked so very much for the sake of so very little .... "

**Another valuable lesson came out of that experience.** Miss Carmichael realized, "The touch of that old lady on my fur gloves *set free*, ...though I could not have imagined it at the moment..., *thousands of hours of time!* **The saving of time is great when a group of people are freed to live for many years without having to spend any time in giving thought to their clothes, jewelry or outward fashion.** And it set free thousands of dollars! **The saving of money is also great, when, at a stroke, all the extras of dress and decoration are cut off,** and *nothing need be spent on them.* And all this time and money *saved* has meant that this much more has been *made available to give to Him* Who gave us all. But more than that, ***I believe it led to the opening of doors never opened before.*** It would have been impossible for someone in foreign dress to go to the places to which I had to go if I were ever to discover the truth about things in India. (She discovered that little girls, and even little boys, were being sold to become temple prostitutes at Hindu temples. This truth was carefully hidden from "outsiders", and was only uncovered to Amy through Divine intervention. This was the impetus for the founding of her home for girls and boys at Dohnavur.) And more, *far more than that, it opened doors to hearts.* If any question that, I can fall back on this: it made it just a little less easy for the great enemy to distract a soul who was drawing near to its Savior." (Amy became one of a new breed of missionaries who chose to identify with those they served in dress and appearance. Most missionaries tended to stay in gated compounds, dressing in the clothing of their own national background, interacting mostly with the upper class politicians and business people. Hudson Taylor, Amy Carmichael and others chose to put aside their foreign clothing, dress like those they intended to serve, learn their language and customs, and live among them. This was much more dangerous, but also more effective. The apostle Paul had advocated the same principles in I Corinthians 9:19-22, and, of course, Jesus' incarnation is the *supreme* example of this approach.)

Early in her missionary life **she also learned the strength of the Strong One.** A Buddhist neighbor in the Japanese village of Matsue was possessed by the "Fox spirit," as they called it. The Japanese knew the reality of demon possession, but had heard nothing of deliverance from that dreadful bondage. Miss Carmichael and Misaki San went uninvited to pray for a demon-possessed man, only to be driven away, ...but not before they had assured the wife that they would pray at home until her husband was delivered from the power of the Fox spirit. Within an hour a messenger came to say that all the Foxes, ...*six* of them..., were gone! The next day the man, perfectly well, came with a branch of pomegranate flowers to express his appreciation for their prayers. Some months later he died of malaria, peacefully, with his New Testament clasped in his hands. Thus she learned in actual spiritual combat that "greater is He that is in you than he that is in the world" (1Jn. 4:4).

Such was the beginning of her deep acquaintance with the Lord and her preparation for service in India. **She was drawn into the privilege of sharing in the Lord's heart and counsel.** One day in India, while sitting under a wide-spreading tree with her Tamil grammar and dictionary before her, **she became conscious of the "unfolding sense of a Presence, ...a Listener."** **It seemed to her that He was looking for someone to listen with Him,** ...to listen to the voice of one's brother's blood crying to Him from the ground. Time ceased for the lady under the tree and she sat *all that day* in His presence. That day on the hillside influenced all the years that were to follow for Amy Carmichael, and gave depth to them all.

When she was called by the Lover of little children to the rescuing of girls from the Hindu temple, and later of boys in danger, few missionaries or Indian Christians were in sympathy with her. Of this she wrote: "Sometimes it was as if I saw the Lord Jesus Christ kneeling alone, ...as He knelt long ago under the olive trees. The trees were tamarind now, the tamarinds that I see as I look up from this writing. And **the only thing that one who cared could do, was to go softly and kneel down beside Him, so that He would not be alone in His sorrow over the little children.**"

**The sensitivity to spiritual and eternal values gave her not only insight to discern the presence of her Lord, but also outer sight to "see things as they are."** The publication of a volume by that name, *Things As They Are*, in 1903, caused a tremendous stir in India, and also in Britain; so much so that a committee on the field was appointed to ask her to withdraw from the mission field and return to England. She found, however, that the Lord of the Harvest overruled in her behalf when others misunderstood her obedience to marching orders and her understanding of the battle.

**She had by the Holy Spirit a wonderful gift of teaching others to trust the Faithful One.** When the First War brought great hardship and uncertainty to the work in Dohnavur there were opportunities to help the children learn the simplicity and sweetness of faith in God. In her 1915 diary we read:

"October 26. Had children in field weeding. Told them of need of money -- a new idea to them. Explained a little to older girls about our way of working (trusting the Lord to meet their needs in answer to prayer), and that it involved a careful sensitiveness towards God. Finally got them, and all, to the point of willingness to give today (Festival Day) to weeding. Girls splendid over it, children very sweet and good. Inwardly prayed for a quick assurance from our Father that He was pleased. It would be like Him to do this.

"October 27. Mail came in today, and 50 from a friend of Irene Streeter, ...the soldier brother's money left to her. Took letter up to field where children were weeding, and we all praised God standing in shadow of cactus hedge. There was other money too -- more in *one mail* than has come for *many months*. All much cheered, and much awed too.'

**The Spirit-filled life is a practical one.** Amy Carmichael found it so. In the problem of guidance she learned to pray, to trust, to obey, and not to look back.

"When decisions have to be made, don't look back and wonder what *I* (or, anyone else) would have done. *Look up to God*, and light will come to do what our Lord and Master would have you do.

"It may be that decisions which seem to change the character of the work will have to be made. But **if the root principles which have governed us from the beginning are held fast, there will be no real change.** The river may flow in a new channel, but it will be the same river.

"If you hold fast to the resolve that *in all things Christ as Lord shall have the pre-eminence*, ...if you keep *His* will, *His* glory, and *His* pleasure high above everything..., and if you continue in *His* love, loving one another as He has loved you, then all will be well, eternally well."

**Amy Carmichael had a singing heart.** Sensitive, artistic, and radiant, her gift of song found expression in her poetry. Few writers in her generation had the ministry of pen in poetry and also prose as Amy Carmichael of Dohnavur. These responses of her heart to trials of faith and triumphs of God's faithfulness have been printed and reprinted in every quarter of the globe.

One poem will suffice to illustrate all the rest:

From prayer that asks that I may be  
Sheltered from winds that beat on Thee,  
From fearing when I should aspire,  
From faltering when I should climb higher,  
From silken self, O Captain, free  
Thy soldier who would follow Thee.  
From subtle love of softening things,  
From easy choices, weakenings,  
Not thus are spirits fortified.  
Not this way went the Crucified,  
From all that dims Thy Calvary,  
O Lamb of God, deliver me.  
Give me the love that leads the way,  
The faith that nothing can dismay,  
The hope no disappointments tire,  
The passion that will burn like fire.  
Let me not sink to be a clod:  
Make me Thy fuel, Flame of God.

And what shall we say of her books: *Things As They Are*, *Meal in a Barrel*, *Gold Cord*, *If*, and *Though the Mountains Shake*, to mention just a few?

In *Gold Cord*, Amy tells of a trip one hot September day by some happy Indian children to trace their mountain river to its remote source. To them it seemed no difficulty to follow the ravine upward and onward until the unfailing font was found. The climb was long and exciting, through the forest glades where tiny hoof prints were noted by the water's edge, and even a trace of a tiger.

"The children found new delights," she writes, "fairy falls and fairy pools and caves and dear growing things, great ferns and cushions of moss; but the source they did not find. A tree had crashed through the forest just where the banks were too steep to climb and the undergrowth was too entangled to penetrate. The trunk was covered with orchids, and was a beautiful thing, but it barred the way. Below it was a deep, clear pool. The children knew that, far beyond, above the fringes of the forest, the real source must lie out under the sky in a lonely loveliness, with only the wind and the whispering rushes and the marsh flowers to tell it of the ways of the world below. But they could not go up there."

Such was a parable of Amy Carmichael. The ultimate source of *her* overflowing life was far beyond, out of sight and reach, because it was *in God*. The "pool" from which her life poured forth was the meeting with the Lord Jesus on Belfast's rainy streets with its challenging words that changed all of life's values: *if any man's work abide!*

## Lessons from Amy's Life:

Note the "steps" of perception in Amy's life, the growing awareness of God and His plan for her:

Age 16 - Conversion to Jesus

18 - Consecration -- "If any man's work abide..." -- a deeper commitment to follow and serve Him, and a pursuit of the spiritual realities over the material.

19 - Hearing of the Keswick teaching of the victorious life in the Holy Spirit -- insight into Jude 24, "God is able to keep *me* from falling!"

- Developing a sensitivity to the Holy Spirit -- Awareness that *effective ministry is Spirit-filled ministry*, and that certain inappropriate or untimely attitudes and behavior can shut down or grieve the Holy Spirit.

Early 20's - Wisdom of adapting yourself to those who you intend to serve -- Avoid distractions.

- Lessons in spiritual warfare.

Mid 20's - Listening *with* God to hear the burden of His heart for humanity.

- Consistency and dependence on the Faithful One in trial and misunderstanding.

## God Hunt 2: God Opposes the Proud, but Gives Grace to the Humble

"Seek the Lord while He may be found; call on Him while He is near. Let the wicked forsake his way and the evil person his thoughts. Let him turn to the Lord, and He will have mercy on him, and to our God, for He will abundantly pardon."  
Isa. 55:6,7

### More verses that speak of "seeking God":

### What is the value of this kind of *repetition*?

Note what people *did* to seek God, or show their commitment to Him!

2 Chronicles 7:14

11:16

12:14

14:2-4

15:2

15:12

19:3

20:3,4

34:3.

### Problems of ignorance (sometimes "clueless", sometimes "ignore-ance"), pride and arrogance:

Read through Isaiah 1,2,5

Were these "religious" people?

What behaviors and attitudes does God specifically mention that He *hates*?

What behaviors and attitudes does God specifically mention that He *wants* to see?

What is the recurring refrain in chapter 2?

What was God *looking for* in chapter 5? Was there more *He* could have done?

What are the six "woes" directed against?

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.
- 4.
- 5.
- 6.

James 4:1-10

I Pet. 5:5-11