



JESSIE PENN-LEWIS (1861-1927)

"Set apart . . . for Himself" (Psa. 4:3).

"Set apart" – a chosen vessel
To the King of Kings,
"Set apart," for ever severed
From all earthly things.

"Set apart," to bear the fragrance
Of His blessed name,
And with Him to share the sufferings
Of a Cross of shame.

"Set apart," with him to suffer
O'er a world undone,
And to stand in fiercest conflict
Till the fight be won.

"Set apart," – an earthen vessel,
Empty, weak and small,
Yet the treasure that it beareth
Christ the Lord of all.

By Freda Hanbury Allen written as a birthday message to Mrs. Penn-Lewis (pxii)

"My life is not my own. I can do nothing else but be obedient to the heavenly vision - since God has chosen the foolish things to confound the wise. Here am I, raised from the grave to be His instrument! Here am I to be spent, every breath, for the God who gives me breath. Our home is not our own, it is God's. We have nothing, we glory in being slaves of Jesus Christ, my dear one and I."

HERITAGE

Born on February 28th, in South Wales, Jessie was brought up in the lap of the religious surroundings of Calvinistic Methodism. Her grandfather was a preacher well known for emphasizing the building up of the believer in spiritual walk and life. It was also said, he was "the most metaphysical preacher of his day."

Having lost her first child, her mother could not bear the thought of losing another. So it was not until she had grown some that her mother divulged the covenant she made giving her to the Lord. But once Jessie was old enough to understand, she was often reminded, that she was under the Lord's care and keep. Gifted as a child, she began walking at nine months. And even at this early stage of life her keen mental abilities were readily apparent. However! Though restrictions were advised and even implemented to prevent her from

progressing too rapidly (which at that time were felt for her benefit), she taught herself, and was "reading her Bible freely" by the age of four. Her father being an avid reader of classical and standard works, the home was filled with a library of books which, she become thoroughly acquainted with as she grew.

CONVERSION

As is often the case with children brought up in the midst of religious surroundings . . . true inward change of heart did not come until Jessie had married and moved away from "the old home." "After I had been married some eighteen months, I began to feel very ill at ease about the Lord's return. I knew I was not prepared to meet Him . . ." Thus, she began to seek Him. And as the Lord is ever true to His word, not long after . . . she found the peace that every restless soul needs, in the Savior.

SURRENDER

In 1883 her husband was appointed Borough Accountant of Richmond (Surrey). The new position necessitated a move from Brighton to Richmond. This facilitated their placement under the tutelage and deep spiritual teaching of Rev. Evan H. Hopkins. Shortly thereafter, Jessie tasted the joy one gains through making an open confession of Christ; and this, to Mrs. Hopkins. Shortly thereafter, in the year following, complete surrender and consecration were offered (Feb. 28th, 1884). And, as God would have it no other way, He took her utterly, and entirely, at her word. However! The lessons that remained, and the trials she endured teach us, though we might offer, yet the vessel must be emptied before it can be filled for service. These were lessons she wholeheartedly learned to embrace as she walked with the Lord, year after year, in devoted service.

Indeed! Her life is a testimony of the value of being emptied, that it is dying not doing that produces spiritual fruit.

Oh to be but emptier, lowlier,
Mean, unnoticed and unknown,
And to God a vessel holier,
Filled with Christ and Christ alone!

THE EARTHEN VESSEL

So very delicate and frail was her condition, even at nineteen, her uncle thought it his duty to speak to her fiancé, and explain; marriage meant a life-long commitment to one who was "practically an invalid." But this would not deter him. He was willing, no matter what the sacrifice. These were the formative years of her spiritual life and walk. During which the Lord performed a deep work in her. Though initially, medical opinion gave her "six months" to live, the Almighty had other plans. Yes. Tuberculosis ravaged her lungs. But she was miraculously healed. So it was, as a frail servant of Jehovah Ropheka that she was enabled to endure and accomplish labors beyond all natural power and resources. Indeed! Numerous were the times throughout her life when the fulfillment of the calling upon her defied the physical condition of her body. So vivid was this reality, that later in life, on one occasion, when in a terribly weakened state, her physician responded to the questions and concerns of those near in this way. I cannot say how it will go, as Mrs. Penn-Lewis was "a law unto herself."

POWER FOR SERVICE

Physically frail, with a body weakened from disease, hers was a life requiring resources and a dependence from something outside herself. Perhaps that is why and how she learned the value of embracing each and every circumstance the Lord places in our path. As she learned to embrace them, she came to realize as few do: These are lessons of faith; the tutorials of the Holy Spirit! The instruction required to develop and mature in the Lord. Each circumstance, each trial, each frustration, is but a small part of our higher education in spiritual matters that draws into a deeper dependence on Him and propels one into a ministry full of power. These burdens and daily trials are the very portals the Lord uses to strengthen one's faith and lead into a more intimate communion with Him. Sometimes, they are lessons in humility, other times they are lessons of

unpopularity and rejection. Yet other times, lessons in failure. But at all times, they are needed, and they are with purpose.

"Leaning upon her Beloved!" SOS

"To bring the soul to entire reliance and dependence upon Him
is the 'end of the Lord,'
and the purpose of His varied dealings
both in the 'valley,' and in the 'mountain top.'

'Leaning upon her Beloved!' This is the outcome of
the life of union - what life more simple and blessed!
In this privileged position the hidden one comes forth
To renewed service and activity. 'Leaning upon her Beloved'
to be taught of Him."

THE MESSAGE

Admittedly she owed a great deal to the books of Madame Guyon, "as having showed her the path to life 'in God.'" Indeed! Her first response after receiving and understanding the vision and way of the Cross, and dying to self, was not an uncommon one: "No I will not go that path." But after a brief struggle, she realized, it was the only way into the deeper spiritual life and unbroken communion with the Lord.

In her day, the "message of the Cross" was rarely preached; except in its first application to the forgiveness of sins through the Blood of the Lamb. The half-forgotten truth God ordained her to proclaim was "the Cross that breaks the power of cancelled sin." This only occurs as the believer learns to identify with Christ, in His death to sin and the world. In learning to be "crucified with Christ," the believer is led into a fellowship with Christ that alone enables to obey the Lord's injunction, "take up the cross and follow Me." It is a conformity in likeness to the Lamb.

An "old white-haired saint" came to her early in her ministry and solemnly declared; God had given her a great responsibility. She was entrusted with a mystery of the Kingdom. He begged faithfulness to the calling upon her, to not shrink back from proclaiming the message of the Cross. She recalls . . . "it was like the voice of God . . . calling me to the battlefield" . . . And the record bears out, she was faithful to the calling upon her. Year after year, the message remained the same - the Cross; though many remarked, as the years passed, the depth was ever richer. "The Cross alone is the center of light, as well as unity. To the degree that each believer actually experiences the in-working power of the Cross, whereby the old Adam fallen life manifested in the fallen intellect as well as in the sins of the flesh, is really put to death - to that degree the Spirit of Truth is able to reveal the inner meaning of the fathomless truth of God." p284. Our death-union in Christ was, and still is the only way to our life-union with Him.

It was this same message - the message of the Cross - that swept through the Keswick Convention of 1903 like a mighty wind from heaven. S. A. McCracken commented on this in *The Life of Faith*. "Two great truths were set forth among us - first, that Christ died for us; second, that we were identified with Him in death. To thousands of Christians the second point was an aspect of the work of Christ that had hitherto escaped their notice." . . . "The 'Word of the Cross' is indeed the dunamis, the energy of God, God's 'power in action' for the salvation of a lost world".

THE GENDER ISSUE

"I saw that God had given me a specific commission . . . but the one objection was the fact that I was a woman. There was no quarrel with the message . . . no denial of the divine seal . . . no getting away from the evidence of the results. But none of these . . . did away with the fact that I was a woman, therefore I could not but see that, whilst God opened doors . . . in some quarters, others were fast closed to the message I bore, purely, and only, because I was a woman."

The great cry of this heart was, "Why did God not commit this vital message to one who could . . . deliver it without restriction?" Often, in the early years, as she labored to deliver the message, she also gazed out upon the audience, "watching with eager eyes to see whether there was not some hidden and chosen instrument to whom God could transmit this burden, who would rise up . . . and let me step aside. . ." The following expresses her deep concerns. . . "for years I cried to God that He would raise up a man . . ." to fill "the commission He had given to me . . . many tears did I shed over this, . . . until at last, . . . I saw and could say with the Lord, 'I beheld and there was no man,' God had committed this message to me, and at whatever cost, I must go forward."

On one occasion, "a gentlemen with strong prejudice against the ministry of woman" was in attendance at an Overcomer conference. . . . In conversation afterwards, he confessed: 'I would not have believed it possible, had I not seen it, that God would use a woman like that!'"

Her response? "God never does use a woman like that . . . or a man either! God only uses the NEW CREATION."

THE VOICE OF PEERS

A letter to her from Oswald Chambers (Nov. 2nd, 1903) states, "Your 'Cross of Calvary' is pre-eminently of God. The splendid treasure of pain, your pain, has merged into the greatness of God's power. Your book teaches clearly and grandly what the Spirit witnesses to in the Bible and in our hearts, viz: that 'the way of God' flatly contradicts common sense, and by utmost despair the Holy Ghost leads to resurrection triumph. The breakdown of the natural virtues seems to be the point wherein most regenerated lives are cast into despair. Your book will help these to understand that this despair must end in death to the natural goodness and self, and be raised by the power of God into inconceivably glorious power and peace and liberty of life" . . .

On more than one occasion, she enjoyed the fellowship of Andrew Murray, and corresponded on a regular basis. He wrote the Forward to the Dutch edition of Word of the Cross. It reads! Truly prophetic were the words of Mrs. Penn-Lewis in her preface, . . . as she spoke of "the conviction growing in many hearts that the Holy Spirit is bidding the messengers of God go back to Calvary" . . .

A weekly contributor to The Life of Faith, for three years (Nov. 1904 to the end of 1908), and to The Christian, for two years during that same time. She presided over all the principle meetings of the Swanwick conference of 1927, and was a frequent speaker at the Keswick and Llandrindod conventions. Additionally, she collaborated with Evan Roberts on what has become the premier and classic work on spiritual warfare, War on the Saints, and developed a lasting fellowship with F. B. Meyer. Referring to him as her "old friend," he was chosen to preside over the service when her husband was called home on March 24th, 1925.

While touring to the United States, she was privileged to speak at the Moody Bible Institute Workers Conference (Sept. 1900). Reserved, as she was, there was no question of her being embarrassed when the President, R. A. Torry, introduced her as "one of the most gifted speakers the world had ever known." On that same tour she visited and spoke at the Gospel Tabernacle, sharing tea with Mr. and Mrs. Simpson. This was followed by addresses in the church of D. M. Stearns, Germantown Philadelphia. Concerning the booklet on the "Message of the Cross" that was circulated in the millions in India, D. M. Stearns remarked, "It is God's telegraphic dispatch to a dying world."

THE COURSE FINISHED - DEATH SWALLOWED UP IN VICTORY

"There is a 'COURSE' prepared for each believer from the moment of his new birth, providing for the fullest maturity of the new life within him, . . . To discover that 'course' and fulfill it is the duty of every soul." It is the current of the Spirit that leads one to fulfill the plan God has for each of us. Our business is to make sure we find His will, and remain in it. Thus, there is "only one condition . . . necessary on the messenger's part - to keep free to follow the will of God, and that only."

Three times during the years 1926-7 Mrs. Penn-Lewis was brought near to the gates of death. And three times, owing to the prayers of others and her own indomitable faith and courage "for the work's sake" she was brought back as a miracle. The attacks left her weak in body, though buoyant in spirit. Those present for her last moments shed no tears as she entered into glory, and remarked, the Presence of the Lord in the room was something beyond the realm of "faith," - it was almost "sight" in its reality.

As her earthly tent was laid to rest, around the open grave they sang the song "There is a fountain filled with blood," - adding to the chorus some of the last words spoken by Mrs. Penn-Lewis:

I do believe I now receive
The life He offers me,
And standing on Christ's finished work,
I claim the victory.

Excerpts taken from Jessie Penn-Lewis: A Memoir, by Mary N. Garrard.

A GIFT FROM: LIGHTHOUSE LIBRARY, INTERNATIONAL; P. O. BOX 571225,
DALLAS, TX 75357-1225; ROGER and SUNNY COFFMAN; [972] 270-4232;
E-MAIL: inquiries@lighthouselibrary.com; WEB PAGE: www.LighthouseLibrary.com
NEWEST WEB PAGE: www.LighthouseLibrary.org