

# **Three Hours To Live**

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## Three Hours To Live

“At 27, Sam Tannyhill paid his debt to society in the death chamber at Ohio State Penitentiary.

“But that grim fact does not tell the whole story of Sam Tannyhill. In this volume the drama unfolds of a boy tossed between a dozen homes before he became a teenager, his early brushes with the law, and the tragic events which led to his imprisonment and the electric chair.

“The author of this book, an internationally famous TV speaker, shares with us his personal relationship with Sam Tannyhill and how Sam became a practicing Christian, able to face execution with remarkable courage.

“The lessons that Sam learned are open to the reader as the author outlines how anyone can find the peace and joy that God promises through Jesus Christ. Here’s Sam’s story.”

## The Path to Death Row

Twelve minutes had passed since we entered the grim death chamber at Ohio State Penitentiary in Columbus. It had seemed like an eternity. The silence was finally broken by the soft voice of the tense prison doctor as he removed his stethoscope from the bare chest of the man seated before him, took an official form from his pocket, and hesitantly said,

*"Warden Alvis, sufficient current has passed through the body of Tannyhill to cause his death at 8:12 p.m."*

At the age of twenty-seven Samuel Woodrow Tannyhill's debt to society was thus paid in full, and his vibrant voice and ready pen were forever stilled. But I dared to hope even then that the influence of his converted life would live on, for I considered it a most powerful example of the transforming grace of Christ.

To me, Sam Tannyhill, after his spiritual conversion, was a moving example of the change that takes place in a man's life after he truly becomes acquainted with his Saviour. Sam could never look back on a pleasant, happy, and carefree childhood such as most boys enjoy. Though both of his parents thought a great deal of him, when he was only five years old they broke up their home and separated. These circumstances cast the little fellow adrift among well-meaning relatives and friends who offered to care for him. Sam lived in a dozen different homes before he became a teenager. His needs were seemingly understood by no one. As a result, he grew up maladjusted and starved for normal affection. Looking back on what his experience did to him, various members of his family later wished they had realized his needs and given him a permanent home and loving guidance in their family groups. But by the time understanding arrived to any, it was too late. In some of the homes where Sam lived he was treated almost cruelly by those who thought they were teaching him obedience. Their harsh and unloving methods could do nothing but arouse his keen resentment.

When Sam was in his early teens, his father, ill with a heart condition which soon would prove to be fatal, invited Sam to make his home with him. By that time Sam was associating with a very rough crowd and frequently would be away from home until all hours of the night and early morning. His father would lie in bed, struggling to get his breath, and worry about where his boy might be. Even though unable to get around very well, he would laboriously get out of bed, go outside and walk up and down the nearby streets, trying to catch a glimpse of his son. When Sam was only fifteen, this good and wholesome influence was cut short by the father's untimely death. Once again he was set adrift.

Sam's childhood insecurity and frequent moves so adversely affected his schoolwork that, although he had a brilliant mind, he never satisfactorily completed a single grade in school. However, he was always passed on to the next grade even though he had not really finished the prescribed work. When he reached the sixth grade, his formal schooling came to an end. His limited education showed up in inaccurate spelling and occasional grammatical errors. However, during the last year of his life, when he made a close and daily study of the Scriptures, his letters showed a rather amazing change. His spelling greatly improved, and his letters assumed the culture and refinement of an educated person. The gospel truly makes revolutionary changes in men.

It might be said that Sam's criminal life really began when he reached the age of ten or eleven and had his first brush with the law. At that time, because this incident was considered unimportant, no one showed undue concern. It was generally agreed that he would surely "outgrow" any antisocial tendencies then displayed. As the result, no positive action was taken to guide him along better lines. At no time was Sam given any moral training; he never stepped foot, inside a church in all his life.

As time went on, instead of outgrowing his poor habits and attitudes, Sam became more deeply involved in theft and crime than ever. Minor infractions of the law ultimately became major ones. No punishments or jail sentences in any way checked his rapid decline. Finally he was convicted of forgery and was sentenced to Missouri State Penitentiary. After serving five and a half years of his sentence he was released, but within only two weeks he was again committing crimes. This time, as the result of his prison associations, he felt that now he was smart enough not to be caught. Needing money just a few weeks later in his home town of Fremont, Ohio, he decided to pull his last job before leaving with a girlfriend for another state.

In the town of Fremont is a restaurant named at that time "The Hut". This restaurant remained open all night, employing one lone woman, Mrs. Shirley Bradford, to cook, the food and serve the customers. Deserted by her husband some time before, twenty-nine-year-old Shirley supported herself and her little daughter working nights.

Intending to rob the restaurant, Sam entered "The Hut" at about two o'clock in the morning. Unfortunately for his purposes, he found a cab driver inside getting something to eat. Hoping that shortly the cab driver would leave, Sam sat down and dawdled over a cup of coffee. The cab driver, however, noting his suspicious actions, decided to stay around awhile. Finally Sam, unable to think of logical reasons to remain longer, left. But the cab

driver, his curiosity and suspicion aroused by Sam's nervous actions, jotted down the license number of the car Sam drove. He also noted the peculiar paint job on the Hudson car, a brown top with a black body. The next day the taxi driver was able to supply this information which ultimately led to Sam's capture.

Not long after the cab driver had left the restaurant Sam returned. Threatening Shirley Bradford with his gun, he took all the money in the cash register. Then, realizing that if he left her, she would quickly telephone the police who would shortly be on his trail, he forced the waitress to accompany him. His intention was to take her to a lonely place several miles out of town and leave her there, hoping that it would take her several hours to walk back. He would then make use of this time to pick up his girlfriend and put many miles behind him before the police were even aware of what had happened.

His plan, however, misfired almost from the start. While riding in the car, the waitress startled him considerably by calling him by name and informing him that she was well acquainted with his sister. Fresh from prison, Sam did not know his sister's friends. It so happened that Sam idolized this particular sister, and Shirley immediately saw that she had touched him in a soft place. Thinking quickly and attempting to play upon any fears she might have, Sam promised her that no harm would come to her if she would just assure him that she would never tell his sister of his crime. But Shirley was in no mood to make any such promises. She played up her advantage to the hilt, goading him as they drove on, describing to him in detail just how she would inform his sister as to what a "lousy brother" she had.

Things were not working out at all as Sam had foreseen them. He had no idea that this waitress would recognize him, and surely he had not thought that she would be able to identify him by name not only to the police but also to the only one in the world who meant anything to him.

Finally, when they reached a secluded place near a creek, he ordered the waitress out of the car. What happened after that is not entirely clear. Sam testified at the trial that Shirley reached for his gun, which had slipped out of his pocket, and fearing that she would take this opportunity to shoot him, he picked up the car's jack from the floor and bludgeoned her with it. Her badly mutilated body was found next to the creek the following day.

The people of the community were shocked and outraged at what appeared to be such a brutal and senseless murder. When the cab driver reported what he knew regarding the suspicious actions of the man in the restaurant, a great manhunt was on for Sam Tannyhill.

However, because Sam had covered his tracks fairly well, no one could be positive that he had actually committed the crime. He had been living for a few days in a hotel in Fremont, and when he had gone to his room the night before, he had been careful to say good night to the desk clerk so that the clerk would notice him and later supply the alibi that Sam had retired at an early hour. Then, slipping out of his room through a window, he had gone off to commit the robbery. After doing away with Shirley Bradford, he entered the room again by the window, meticulously

cleaned up, and left a rumpled bed to give the appearance that he had slept there throughout the night. Leaving again through the window, he had made his final getaway.

The next morning when the authorities came to the hotel to find their suspect, Sam was gone. However, the night clerk remembered clearly that he had seen him go to his room the night before, and was just as certain that he had not left all night long. This left everyone in a state of considerable uncertainty as to whether they were searching for the right man. No trace of a trail indicated Sam's whereabouts.

After murdering Shirley Bradford, Sam traveled with his girl friend to Kansas, where he immediately resorted to armed robbery to get money to live on. When he was caught several weeks later, the discovery was made that he was also wanted in Ohio for questioning regarding a murder. Back in Ohio, he was taken to the scene of the crime, and he readily confessed to his guilt in the whole affair. At his trial Sam pleaded self-defense. In later talks with me, however, after Christ had entered his heart, he told me earnestly that at the trial he had not been entirely truthful regarding all the events that had taken place. We never discussed which portions of his testimony were untrue. I did not feel it necessary to find out, and he did not volunteer to go into the whole dismal story in our talks together.

Though the trial jury decided that his crime had not been committed in self-defense, it seemed reluctant to see Sam given the electric chair. After deliberating many hours the jury asked the judge whether this man would ever again be released from prison if he were sentenced to life imprisonment. The jury members seemed anxious that he never again be a menace to society. The judge declined to answer their question, telling them that they must consider whether the defendant was guilty as charged and whether they could find reason to recommend leniency or mercy. Another long period of deliberation brought them back with the finding that he was guilty as charged and that they could find no reason to recommend mercy. Accordingly, Sam was sentenced to die in the electric chair of Ohio State Penitentiary.

### **Autobiography Before Christ**

When first imprisoned in the Fremont County Jail for the murder of Shirley Bradford, Sam wrote a brief story of his life, replete with all the pride and braggadocio of the accomplished criminal. The story as released to the newspapers by the sheriff only after Sam's death. As I read it I could scarcely believe that it had been written by the same man whom I had come to love and appreciate. When I knew him, his whole conversation revealed his deep sense of humility, his thankfulness to God for His willingness to forgive sins, and his certainty of the Christian's hope of eternal life. Actually, comparing the criminal recital with the experience of the man I knew showed the extent of the change Christ had made in his life.

Here are excerpts from Sam's account of his life just as he wrote it before his conversion: "I was born June 20, 1929, in Marion County. Was a pretty good boy the first ten years. Just minor trouble, such as breaking into the schoolhouse, lifting a little cigarette money from the cash box where my dad worked, lifting a couple of guns from a neighbor, and taking the money that Vick Hayes had put away.

"After I was ten years old, my little crimes began to grow up with me. During the next six years I stole six cars; getting caught twice, but successfully disposing of the other four cars.

"After a while I decided the car business was not so good, so I started leaving checks here and there. I left them in Marion, Dayton, Akron, Lima, and Louisville, Kentucky. Some were personal, some were payroll.

"Things were getting pretty much out of hand by this time. Every place I went the cops tried to coop me up. Also I was getting plenty of pressure for not being in school. Well, I went to work for Cole Brothers Circus. Then I worked with George Sweet's Wild West Show. From there I went with Clyde Beatty's Animal Act. I finally tired of that, once the law got wise that too many people were getting hit in the head and being relieved of their money.

"Later I went to Cleveland, where I enlisted in the Army. I didn't enlist because I liked it. The pay wasn't what I expected, but at least John Law was off my back for a little while. I was sent to Fort McClelland, Alabama, for training.

"Well, sir, I decided I wasn't cut out for that kind of life pretty fast. So I got me a heat stroke and went to the hospital. I was there about two months, and I got my first weekend pass. Two checkbooks later and a merry chase by John Law, and I returned to the hospital.

"The wheel over at the hospital got pretty sore because I was twenty-seven days late on my weekend pass. So he told me he was taking two thirds of my pay for six months. He decided I should be shipped to Fort Dix, New Jersey. He gave me a train ticket and my enlistment papers. I saw that they would have a hard time finding me if the papers were missing, so I went AWOL again.

"Many checkbooks later I was in jail, and the MP's came again. This time they took me to Fort Hayes in Columbus, Ohio. Finally one day I picked up a car and headed for good old Marion, Ohio. The law was on the ball, and caught me that afternoon. I gave them a hard-luck story, and they put me in a home for kids. When the MP's came, they found me almost out a hole I had dug under the sink, so back to Fort Hayes.

"The people at the Fort were pretty mad, so they put me in the blockhouse for fourteen days. Then they shipped me to Fort Knox, Kentucky. They put me in the guardhouse and gave me a job at the motor pool under shotgun guard. I worked there about two weeks and ran across some hacksaw blades. That night seven of us sawed out the bars in the window, but they got us about thirty-six hours later. They got real mad, and told me that since my records were missing and I had no pay to tap, they were giving me a discharge. That was music to my ears. So in September, 1947, I was out of the Army.

"Well, I returned to Marion for a while and used a couple more checkbooks so John Law will have something to do. The law is on Marion's side and tries to make a pinch. Two shots later and one broken window, I get to a friend's house. Within thirty days and a few checkbooks later, I am once more on the run. I pick up a car and dispose of it outside the city. After several months of this I met my first wife. We courted a couple of weeks and went to Fort Worth, Texas, and got

married, using her name instead of mine. We lived together for about two months, and I decided I'd had enough. I left and came back to Kansas City. As far as I know she is still there. I haven't seen her since.

"I then ran into my second wife. She was a good girl and couldn't understand why we had to move around so much. I stole a payroll, and we left for San Antonio, Texas; then in a few weeks for the Rio Grande Valley. When we left there I cleaned out the motel cabin, but we got stopped not five miles down the road. I gave my wife a call-down for packing the motel's property, and talked my way out of that mess. We even got the motel cabin for one more night. I was pretty well broke by then. We had been eating fruit for a week, and I needed some steak, so I decided to hold up a small restaurant. We left that night at 11:00 p.m. with about four hundred bucks.

"After two month's vacation in Old Mexico we finally ended up in Austin, Texas, with thirty-six cents and two dogs to feed (The dogs lived on pink grapefruit for thirty days). I got a job driving a dump truck, and we made out pretty well. Then I cleaned out a grocery store one night, and things got pretty hot. I dropped a few checks on the man I was working for, and we left for Kansas City (During the time in Austin my wife got in the family way). I then went with Frank S., but the heat was on him pretty bad, so I worked for Jake G., delivering bootleg around the city. I also worked at the Democrat Club collecting overdue debts.

"Well, I got tired of all these rackets and decided to get me an honest job. The baby would be around in four or five months, and I was thinking of getting settled down for that. We moved to where my wife's people lived, and I got a job on a farm at \$120.00 a month. After a couple of months I saw I was getting nowhere fast.

"So I got me a couple of checkbooks, and we left there for Iowa, \$1100.00 richer. I went to work for a farmer in Polk City, and that lasted till they caught me taking the tires off my employer's car and about to put them on mine. The law told me to leave or go to jail, so I went. I then went to work for a farmer in the next county. He was a cheapskate and only paid me ninety a month and wanted a man to work like a horse. So I decided when payday came I'd leave and take my own wages. So when I left I took a new refrigerator, a bed and springs, a table, four chairs, three rugs, and radio, two hundred chickens, and a cute baby pig.

"I then went to work for a farmer named Fritz K. He paid me \$135.00 per month but talked too much; so we decided to leave one day while he was away at the fair. I took his new pickup truck, three fishing rods and reels, a 410-guage shotgun, and two new books of traveler's checks and wrote a few personal checks on his account; and off we went.

We then went through Ohio, Indiana, Illinois, and back to Missouri. My wife wanted the baby to be born in her home state. I was stopped outside Kansas City for speeding, and I knew my car title would get me caught, but there was no way out. I was put in jail. My wife was given a room in a hotel.

"They had everything on the table. I took a ride for forgery, or my wife would get a charge for being an accessory before and after the fact. Not much choice, so I accepted. So I went to Jefferson City with a seven-year sentence on September 8, 1949.

I was due for parole in twenty-seven months. Some way the wife managed to keep the baby and get me a parole in seventeen months. I still don't know how she managed it. I was sent to Carrolton on parole, but under a Kansas City parole officer. Finally I had had enough of him, and leaving the wife and baby with her grandparents, I went to work with the check-book. Eleven checks later I was on my way to (you guessed it) Marion, Ohio.

"I was in Marion just twelve days when the law caught me in the Triangle Bar, drunk, and taking potshots at the liquor supply behind the bar. They put me in the cooler with seven charges against me. Things didn't look so good, So I got me some hacksaw blades. I was caught in the act, and jail breaking was added to my charges.

"I still had a few days until grand jury when Sheriff Ray Retter caught me warming some water to pitch on him when the door was opened. He said he would make sure I got some time. He did—thirty days for carrying the gun and ninety days for sawing up the jail. I was then returned to Missouri to finish my time. I was divorced a year later, after my second child was born, and was released from the Missouri Pen on February 12,1955.

"Mother was working in Enid, Oklahoma, at the time, so I went out there. I was there one week and decided to go to Indianapolis. I worked at the Holland Furnace days and cashed checks nights and pulled two robberies. Things were getting pretty hot, so I came to Fremont on March 5,1955. You know the story here.

"After I left Fremont I went to Kansas City. I saw my two children and pulled a robbery. That's where I locked the man in the cooler. I then went to Springfield and met a friend. We pulled a robbery there, and I went to Wellington, Kansas. I was looking for a friend I had done time with in Missouri, but he was in the pen in Kansas. I met his brother, and we planned a bank-job. I had spent every cent I had getting everything lined up for the job, and the day it was to come off he backed out on me.

"I was at the place where I needed money. The room rent was due, and I had a date for the night. So, I saw a liquor store open, and pulled the robbery. I changed clothes and took a cab to see the new flame, Phyllis. Her old man insisted I use his car. So we went about twenty miles to the next town and got us a steak. The flame, her daughter, age two, and I got back about 11:00 p.m. Everything looked OK, so we went into the house. I no sooner sat down than in walks three city police. I found out my friend in Missouri had an old man who put the finger on me.

"That's about all. I have always said: 'If I am for something, right or wrong, I am with it all the way.' I hide behind no one, and I am man enough to take whatever I get and hate no one for it. If I said I'd change my ways, I would have to break my vow to my friends. I'll never break my word."

### **Autobiography Rewritten**

But a bad vow is better broken than kept, and several months later, after Jesus Christ had entered his heart, Sam did, indeed, change his ways. After this experience he once again

wrote a brief autobiography of his life, but this time there was no pride in relating his crimes. His new attitude was as opposite from his old as day is from night, his emphasis this time being on what God had done for him in, changing his heart and life.

"I write this little story from a cell in death row at the Ohio State Penitentiary, where I await my turn to die for a crime of murder. Now, before I go any further, I want to say this: I am in no way asking for help, nor do I expect any sympathy from anyone. This is solely for the glory of God, who made it all possible.

"Some will say, 'This doesn't interest me, I am not going to end up in there.' That, my friend, is where you may be fooling yourself. I had the same opinion once.

"This didn't start with just a crime of murder. No, far from it! This started back in my hometown, when I was just a lad. My first brush with the law was at the tender age of ten or eleven. 'Nothing too bad,' they all said. 'He'll grow out of it in time.' That was mistake number one.

"As the years went by, so did all chance of decency in me. I didn't grow out of it; I grew more sly, and my wrongs grew in size also. Until 1949 none of my crimes had been of a vicious nature.

"My first real big brush with the law came when I was found guilty of first degree forgery and sent to the Missouri State Penitentiary at Jefferson City, Missouri, for seven years. That, you may say, was my finishing school in crime.

"While there, I came into close contact with every nature of man and crime. In such a place you find everybody willing to help you make the so-called 'big time.'

"Sure, there were chaplains who were more than willing to help you. In my case there were three chaplains to serve three thousand five hundred men. Sure, I heard of them and their God, but I had never been in a church and was in no frame of mind to attend one then.

"After serving five years and a half, I was discharged as a well-adjusted, reformed, and sincere human male, ready to take my place in society. That was a joke. I had passed all the tests and was ready to advance, but not as a good member of society.

"My first crime came two weeks after my discharge. I went to Indianapolis, Indiana, but had to leave because of a number of crimes that sooner or later would have been placed on my doorstep. My next stop was in Ohio. I had a few dollars in my pocket and a head full of ideas—all bad. I found a job in a respectable business concern and was doing all right. I bought a car and found me a girl friend, and you might say had everything going my way. Within one month I found legitimate means of buying out, a small restaurant and service station. I gave up my job and moved in, ready to make a mint.

"Soon I found myself running around all day and all night. Oh, yes, a nice crowd, but no time left for the business. The next thing I knew, I had more checks out than I had money to

cover. That is where I made my big mistake. I bought a gun and decided to put some of my former schooling to a test. I pulled a robbery, and a waitress was killed. Things had not gone as planned at all. It didn't work as I was told it would. I was on the run.

"After a number of robberies I was caught up with in Kansas for a local robbery. I was sent to the State penitentiary for ten to twenty-one years for that. That is where I was a few weeks later, when Ohio found me and brought me back to stand trial for: first-degree murder.

"While waiting for trial, I broke jail, and after a wild ride, with two cars wrecked and seven people scared half to death, I was caught and returned to jail covered with cuts and bruises. Then came the trial, and facing all the innocent people who were made to suffer because of my wrongs. It lasted eight days, and I was sent here to die February 1, 1956.

"That is where I remembered all those sleepless nights in fear. All those times I had come so close to death, but somehow, had made it without catching that little death slug. During my time in jail I was visited by a number of preachers and Christians. One went so far as to bring me a Bible belonging to his nine-year-old son. It was given me after I made a promise I would read it. After I ran out of other books, I read it to help pass my time away.

"I found a place where a man named Jesus sent some of His gang to bring Him a mule. For this I thought Him a horse thief. Then I ran across a place where He made wine. For this, I called Him a bootlegger. Then I found a place where He raised the dead, healed all manner of sickness, and cast out evil. Now I wondered, '*What manner of man is this?*' So I started at Matthew, and I read all the part called the New Testament. By that time I found Him, not a horse thief or bootlegger, but the Son of God; I knew of people who prayed and served that God and who lived up to His law, but that wasn't me. I was an ex-con, a murderer, but yet I read where people in the Bible were also outside of the law. Then I was troubled; I wanted that peace of mind this God was giving away, but how could I get word to Him? Can He really hear you when you pray? And will He answer a man who has never heard of Him?

"To these questions and many more I wanted an answer. So I tried praying. My prayers never got out of my cell. I prayed for help, but hung on to the world with both hands. After I was brought here I got mail from a number of Christians. I read it all, and even read it to my buddies next door. There was one lady who, I could tell and feel by reading her letters, had just what I wanted. I decided to follow all her directions and give it one more try. Also our chaplain here told me the story, so I tried praying. For three days there was no more miserable soul on this earth than I. I prayed, cried, I prayed, and the longer it went on the more miserable I became.

"On November 4th I made one more try to reach that God who could give me that peace of mind. I got on my knees and truly confessed every wrong I could think of, and asked that God please help me. I told Him if I had forgotten any of my sins to have mercy on me and add them to the list, because I was guilty of them too.

"Let me tell you, I never had such a wonderful feeling in my life. I wanted to shout it to the world. Yes, I felt the Spirit of God as He truly brought His love into my heart. After I settled

down to bed about morning, I slept peacefully for the first time in my adult life. The next morning when I got up, I prayed my thanks to God before I even put on my clothes. That day I testified to my fellowmen here. Also I was overheard by a guard. He told me that by reading my outgoing mail he could tell I was searching for Christ. I didn't know what he would do about me telling my fellow inmates about my Lara, so I told him, 'You can lock me in a cell; but if you don't want to hear about God's love for a sinner, you'll have to pump the air out of me.' He told me he too loved my Saviour and would never try to stop me of such talk.

"My chaplain came to see me, and we had prayer together, my first prayer with anyone around me. I never tire of telling my love for my Jesus. Every letter I write I testify for Him. I am in a cell in death row, but I am more free here than I ever was in the streets. I have no fear of death whatsoever. To me death is one step closer to my Jesus.

"Man can have my body, they can burn it or chop it in little pieces, I don't care. Jesus has promised me a new body, and my soul is in my Lord's tender care. Yes, I was if man with a heart of stone. I was up to my chin in sin, with blood on my hands. God kept His word as He always will. He forgave my sins. The blood of His Son covered them, and now I am ready to meet God on His own terms. I am ready to take Jesus by the hand and stand before that mighty Judge. I truly say there is no sin too black that the blood of Jesus Christ can't wash as white as snow. "I ask every child of God who reads this to pray it may help some lost soul to find the peace of mind and blessed assurance one can only find through the love and mercy of God.

"May it be my testimony for Him and all glory be given to Him. My reward is not of marl, but from God.

"By the grace of God  
Sam W. Tannyhill"

### **First Step Toward Christ**

Sam's interest in spiritual things began with the dedicated concern of two Seventh-day Adventist laymen, members of the church in Fremont, Ohio. They decided to try to visit Sam just after they had read in the newspapers that he had been found guilty of murder and had been sentenced to die in the electric chair.

Making their way to the sheriff's office, they requested permission to visit Sam in his cell, explaining that they were not ministers, but that they felt a special burden to help this needy man. Their request at first was denied. Sam had not proved to be a very cooperative prisoner in the Sandusky County jail. He had even broken jail and had given everyone a hard time. As a result no one was very anxious to allow these strange men, not even credentialed ministers, to visit the prisoner. The officers attempted to dismiss the visitors with the explanation that Sam had had spiritual counsel. A clergyman had stopped in to see him once, and they felt this was sufficient.

The two men were so disheartened that they just sat there, hoping and even silently praying that God would change the ruling of those in charge. After quite some time the sheriff spoke again and said, "Oh well, I guess it can't do any harm to let you go in to see him," and he escorted them to Sam's cell.

Their approach would not be considered the perfect one to a lone man in a jail cell. Standing just outside his cell they delivered a sermon as if to a large congregation. In it they emphasized the love of God and His desire to save everyone. God used their simple and earnest message. After the "sermon" was ended they visited with Sam and asked if he would be willing to accept a Bible. One of the men explained that he had an extra one at home which he would be glad to bring over and give him. He asked only that Sam would promise to read it. The two also suggested that they would like to enroll Sam in the Faith for Today Bible Correspondence Course, which, they assured him, would help him understand the Bible.

There was something about these men that seemed different. Though they were not educated or trained for Christian witnessing, their sincerity was evident, and Sam's heart responded. He assured them that he would accept the Bible, and would promise to read it. Furthermore, he also agreed that he would welcome the Faith for Today Bible Course.

The next day one of the men returned. He had not been able to locate the extra Bible that he had promised and had been in quite a dilemma to fulfill his promise. His little boy had just been given a new Bible for his birthday, and the boy finally suggested that his father take this new Bible to Sam. The delighted father, Keith Collins, headed back for the county jail with the Bible in his hands.

This time he had exactly the same difficulty gaining admittance. The sheriff, who felt that he had broken the rules the night before in allowing the men in, now did not see how he could possibly relax the rules again. However, once more, after quite a bit of deliberation, he allowed the visitor to enter. Handing the Bible to Sam, Keith Collins related the fact that it was a gift from his nine-year-old son. This made a lasting impression, causing Sam to read and study this Bible to find what was there for him. And his life was never the same after that.

### **Our First Meeting**

My first meeting with Sam was in April, 1956, at Ohio State Penitentiary to which he had been moved. Originally scheduled to die in February, he had been granted a stay of execution till a later date.

On Sabbath morning the Faith for Today male quartet and I conducted the service in a beautiful church in Columbus, Ohio. As I looked out over the congregation worshipping God under such favorable circumstances, I could not resist telling them that while we were in that place dedicated to the service of the Lord, I knew of one other in that city who in heart was worshipping with us. I told them that I knew he would have rejoiced had he been allowed to be in our midst at that time. I told them that I had a letter in my pocket granting me permission to call on this man in the prison.

Immediately after the close of the church service I hurried off to the penitentiary. After presenting my letter at the front office, I was told to wait while a check was made to be certain that I was the one to whom the warden had written, and that the letter was not a counterfeit. Finally, a special guard was assigned to take me to Sam and to remain with me throughout the visit.

I counted the steel doors as one by one they clanged shut behind us—five in all. After passing through two of them, we came to a desk where an officer must make out a special pass for us to proceed farther. At this point both my guard and I were searched to make certain that we carried no concealed weapons. Then, with only my Bible in my hand, I accompanied my guard across a large courtyard and into a gloomy-looking gray stone building.

Prisoners were marching across the court and into the various buildings that adjoined it. We entered one of the buildings and walked down a long corridor on the side of which were cells, each containing four men. The cell block was six tiers high. But this was not our destination. Down the corridor we walked, approaching what looked like a small gray steel closet protruding from the wall. A uniformed guard sat in front of it. When we gave him our special pass, he rose to his feet, unlocked the door of the "closet," and my special guard and I entered. With a terrible finality the door clanged shut behind us.

For just a moment I wondered what we were doing in that tiny place. Still puzzled, I finally noticed a peep-hole in the back of this enclosure and realized that it was another door. I could observe an eye at this opening, and realized that a guard watched us from there. In reality the "closet" was a small steel corridor with locked doors attended on opposite ends by two guards. As soon as the inside guard was certain that the outer door was safely locked behind us, he opened his door and we passed through.

I found myself in a large room containing a number of cells along one of the walls. This was the place of maximum security, in the innermost part of the prison. I was now on "death row." As I examined the situation and looked down the row of cells, the guard in charge pointed to a chair placed outside of one of them. He said, "That is for you. Go and sit down there." As I sat in the chair my special guard pulled up a chair about eight feet away and sat down also. He was courteous enough to make believe he was falling asleep, but I knew that he was there to listen closely to every word that passed between us.

I observed that the cell ahead of me was occupied by a young man, slightly built, pleasant appearing, whose face bore a look of real expectancy. I was separated from him by two rows of bars. The row nearest me had screening placed just inside to make certain that nothing could be passed through by a visitor. The second row of bars was separated from the first by about three feet, and the cell was beyond that. Five feet wide by nine feet deep, the cell was lighted by just a little electric bulb suspended by a wire from the ceiling.

My eye quickly took in the cell's contents: a cot, lavatory facilities, and one or two pictures taped to the otherwise bare, concrete wall. The only outside light reached the cell from a window behind me and high over my head. A little later during our visit the prisoner was allowed to come through the row of bars farthest from me and sit in a chair directly in front of mine, still separated from me, however, by the remaining bars and screening.

As I looked at him I queried, "Are you Sam?" to which he replied, "I am Sam." He then proceeded to call me by name even though we had never met. I think, however, that we instantly felt quite well acquainted, for we had corresponded so much. As Sam had proceeded with our Bible lessons, we had thought we could observe a tremendous change

taking place in his life. I was eager now to meet him personally to try to ascertain whether or not the change was as genuine and as complete as his letters had indicated. On this and subsequent visits I became thoroughly convinced that in his Christian experience there was no sham or counterfeit. This conversion was genuine! Prison officials who associated with him every day recognized this fact even as did I.

As I looked into his cell that day, I wondered just how to begin our visit. What could I say under those circumstances? Probably I began rather badly, for I simply stated, "Sam, it is hard to find you here and to meet you in this place, realizing why you are here and what lies in store for you."

He instantly replied, "Pastor, don't feel sorry for me; I am the happiest man in the world."

"What makes you say that, Sam?" I asked.

His answer was, "When I was out there in the street (and he pointed vaguely to the outside world), I had no hope. But since I've come here, I have found Jesus Christ as my Saviour. Now I feel that what happens to me in the next few days doesn't matter; it is what happens to me over there that counts. And I've got all the hope in the world for over there."

We settled down and became completely absorbed in discussing the subject closest to his heart, his new-found joy in his friendship with Jesus and his acceptance of the Saviour. He wanted to share with me the story of his first attempt at prayer. Having discovered from the Scriptures that there is One who offers to forgive sins, promising peace and assurance to those who accept Him, Sam decided to ask God for the help he needed. He wanted to start all over again, he felt, and so it had become most important to him that he get out of prison and live the kind of life he now wanted to live.

His very first prayer, he told me with a smile, went no higher than the roof of the prison, for it was based only on his former experience and knowledge. He asked God to give him a pistol so that he might shoot his way out of the prison and then "go straight" on the outside! After relating it Sam laughed, observing that all of us are inclined to conclude that if we can just have one more chance, we will do what is right! But in answer to his first prayer, no pistol dropped from the heavens.

Within an hour God caused him to realize that escape was not his primary need nor was it the solution to his real problems. During the next several days he continued under great conviction to consider the claims of Jesus Christ on his life. Finally he concluded that he must dismiss any thoughts of attempting to extricate himself from the situation that engulfed him, giving first attention to making things right with God.

His second prayer, he told me, was offered after several restless days of pacing back and forth in his cell. It was offered just about at sundown on Saturday night. He told me that he had dropped by the side of his cot and prayed, enumerating his sins as he could remember them. In simple language he told me how he had prayed, "God, forgive me for this sin, and for that one, and that one." Finally he ended his prayer by asking, "And God forgive me for every sin there is because

I'm guilty of all of them.” He radiantly told me that when he arose from his knees it seemed to him that a great weight had been lifted from his life. When later that night he was finally able to go to bed, he fell into the sweet sleep of those whose consciences are clear. From then on, for the first time he could remember, he was able to sleep "like a baby" every night. He experienced the peace which only Jesus Christ can give to a man, the peace that comes with canceled sin and the removal of all guilt feelings as a result.

### **We Discuss Christian Doctrine**

I was amazed in that first visit to discover the depth of Sam's understanding of the Scriptures. He had been eagerly devouring the Word of God, and God had opened his alert mind to a rapid comprehension of its great truths.

"Sam," I stated, "I told our folks in church this morning that while we were keeping the Sabbath there you were keeping it here in your cell on death row."

"Yes," he smiled back at me. And pointing behind him to something hanging on the wall of his cell he said, "There's my sunset calendar." Then looking meaningfully at me he added, "The Sabbath began at 6:21 last night. They were just cleaning the cell block prior to that time. I called out to them and said, 'Make sure that you get mine done before 6:21, because that's when the Sabbath begins, and I want to make sure that I am keeping it properly.' They did, and I was able to observe the Sabbath right from the very beginning of the holy hours."

Sam shared with me how he had often longed to attend just one church service. He said how much he would have enjoyed meeting with God's people in the fellowship of worship. He mentioned that often he had tried to visualize what it would be like to meet on the Sabbath day with others of like faith. Often he tuned in his radio on church services and tried to imagine himself a part of the worshiping congregation. He volunteered that he looked forward to meeting with God's people in the earth made new, when, according to the Scriptures, we will all worship God each Sabbath day.

His earnest words made me think of how lightly some prize their opportunities to fellowship with God's people from week to week. Hearing him speak of the privilege of church attendance with such reverence, awe, and longing to participate made me wish that every church member might see this young man and hear him tell what worshiping with God's people would have meant to him. He had often thought of requesting the privilege of attending just one Protestant service held in the prison, but knowing that this would have been a favor difficult to grant an occupant of death row, he decided not to request any special consideration.

He also talked to me that day about a matter we had discussed before in our correspondence the fact that he had never been baptized by immersion. He had requested baptism, but no facilities were available on death row to make this possible. The Protestant chaplain had one day offered to baptize him on the spot. In answer to Sam's incredulous inquiry as to how this could be accomplished; the chaplain answered that he would simply sprinkle a few drops of water on Sam's head. Sam told me that he had assured the well-meaning chaplain that in his belief this would not be sufficient and could not be considered as

baptism. However, so desirous was he of fully accepting the Lord Jesus and participating in all that might be available to him, that finally he agreed to allow the chaplain to carry out the ritual. But the experience brought no satisfaction to his heart, and he discussed with me his conclusion that he had not been truly baptized. He inquired if God did not have some plan whereby individuals like him who had been denied this opportunity could still be saved in God's kingdom.

It was a privilege for me to assure him that God did have such a plan. I explained how Jesus Christ was baptized, not for remission of sin, for Christ was sinless. Christ's baptism accomplished two important things: First, He set an example for all of us; and, second, this portion of His life, His baptism, covers the sins of anyone coming after who was denied this privilege. The thief hung next to the Saviour on the Cross when he first expressed his faith in the Lord Jesus. No baptism could or did follow, and yet Jesus assured him of a place with Him in His kingdom. I informed Sam that this was the only place in the Gospels where an individual is definitely promised salvation without having been baptized. I expressed my own conviction that only one of these experiences has been recorded in the Bible so that no one might presume too much upon the mercies of our, Lord, and yet no one might feel that his case was hopeless.

This thought seemed to bring great comfort to Sam. In our very last visit together he referred to the fact that not only was he dependent upon Christ's death on the cross to cover his sins, but that he also was dependent upon Christ's baptism to suffice for his own. However, he firmly believed that if by any act of God his life were to be spared, and he were released from prison, he should present himself for baptism. Four days before his execution he wrote me expressing this thought and adding that he still hoped someday it might be his privilege to present himself at one of our churches and have me baptize him.

In our very first visit Sam told me that he really was resigned to whatever the future held. He stated, of course, that any person clings to life and that he surely would like to live. He expressed a great longing to be a minister, using his life and strength now for good instead of evil. For one personal reason he hoped his life might be spared a little longer. As he expressed it, "I would so much like to have my mother find Jesus Christ and His truth, which has meant so much to me. She never really had a chance to discover these things which have so changed my life. I would love to be able to live to help her become a Christian too."

I suggested, "Sam, let's both pray about it. You write to her, expressing your hope for her conversion, and I will write her also. Perhaps we can enroll her in the same Bible course which has so changed your life. Who knows what might come of it." Upon my return I wrote his mother and received a good reply from her. I realized that Sam was also writing to her on many occasions. At a later visit Sam shared with me the good news that his mother and stepfather were studying the Bible three times each week with a consecrated laymen. This was most encouraging to him.

Before our first visit was concluded Sam and I prayed together. God seemed very near as we renewed the dedication of our hearts and lives to the service of Jesus Christ.

After I finished praying with him and prepared to leave, he asked, "Aren't you going to talk with Earle while you are here?" He pointed to a cell, the third one down from his, in which was another young man condemned to die. Through Sam's influence Earle had enrolled in the Bible course but had not mentioned to us the fact that he, too, was on death row. I asked the guard if I might speak with Earle also, and he granted his permission. A few moments of conversation revealed that he, too, seemed to be enjoying a happy Christian experience. He told me that he and Sam spent many hours together talking through their bars about the things of God and happily discussing the things being learned from our Bible course.

### **"Under the Blood of Christ"**

In one of Sam's letters he wrote, "There are just four of us on death row at present, but I am glad to tell you that three of us are under the blood of Christ. Please pray that we will be able to get the fourth one before it is too late." Later, I discovered that "too late" has a special connotation on death row. It was in April that I first visited with Earle, but when I returned several months later, he was no longer there, having gone to his death in July. But, I found he had spent his last hours with a Christian layman, who has shown a real interest in prison work and helped many to a closer walk with the Saviour. Sam assured me that Earle died strong in faith and in the certainty of resurrection. He described their parting to me as being a very hopeful experience. Only new Christians, both expressed their confidence in the soon return of the Lord and the reunion which they anticipated then.

### **Presence of Jesus**

I must admit that when I left Sam, I felt that as a minister I had been somewhat of a failure. My purpose in visiting him had been to bring him cheer and spiritual encouragement. However, in retrospect, I felt that he had brought me more cheer and spiritual encouragement than I had brought him. On death row I felt the presence of Jesus in the changed, converted life of a condemned criminal.

Soon after I returned home I wrote Sam, expressing my joy at having been able to meet him personally and visit with him. This is his reply:

April 22, 1956  
Columbus, Ohio

"Dear Pastor Fagal:

"Received your letter and was so very glad to hear from you. I pray this note will find you and yours well in body, and ever happy in Jesus' tender love and care.

"One more wonderful Sabbath has just closed, and my, the blessings brought forth! It seems as if our heavenly Father left the throne and spent the day right here in my house. Of course we know His loving Spirit is ever present but never as near as when a body rests as God rested. You said you were happy to find I had found so much peace in the blessed Lord. Pastor Fagal, this will sound strange but nevertheless true. I am more happy here than I ever was in the street, and I am ever thankful to God for striving with me. There just wasn't any other way to wake me up, so here I am.

"Moses was driven to a wilderness before he became of service. The beloved Paul was so far off he was struck down in the road and blinded. Well, Sam was a hardhead too. My case may look much different, but it's not. We all have the same God, we all need forgiveness, and in the end we respect our God, pray to Him, and look forward to spending an eternity in the same place.

"Yes, Jesus is coming soon, out of the east with all His glory. Sam wants to be ready for that day. I may be here, I may be in a grave, but either way, I want to be ready. This world just doesn't have any pretties anymore to catch my eye. I want to go home, and I am looking forward to finding many of our faith there.

"As I close I again thank you for coming to visit me. I surely did enjoy that visit from 'my pastor,' and if I am real, real good, the Lord may give me the pleasure."

"By God's grace, Sam"

The word "grace" means "unmerited favor." Sam evidently understood this and loved to think about it, for his letters always ended with, "By God's grace, Sam."

### **Sam's Execution Stayed**

Sam is in a grave today awaiting the call of the Christ he served. Six dates were set for his execution. Five of them passed by. Those of us who knew him hoped that the sixth would pass by also. We even dared dream that perhaps he might have the privilege of living for Jesus Christ under sentence of life imprisonment. At times we allowed our hopes for him to include the idea that he might even be released so that he could give his life in wholehearted, full-time service to the cause of Jesus Christ. While Sam also hoped this, he recognized that his life was in the hands of Another, who would have to work out His own plans. Sam was ready to fit into those plans, no matter what they might be.

The first date set for Sam's execution was February 15, 1956. Had he died then I would not have had the privilege of meeting him, for my personal contacts came later. The next date was May 15. My first visit to him was in April when he did me the honor of asking if he might call me his pastor. Explaining that he had never had one, he hesitantly asked if I would object were he to consider me as his pastor. Something about the way he asked made me feel that he feared I would object because of who and where he was. I assured him that I had never been more honored by anyone. Then he asked if, as his pastor, I would be with him on May, 15 when he was scheduled to die. Wondering if I would be equal to such an experience, I nevertheless answered Yes.

Two or three weeks later he seemed to have the assurance that God had some reason for sparing his life a little longer, and so he wrote to me saying, "I surely want to thank you for being willing to be with me on May 15, but it will not be in May. I have a little more labor for my Master before my time comes. For feeling this way some might call me crazy, some silly, but time will bear me out. So let's wait and see, God willing."

I must confess that his optimistic attitude concerned me, for we had no reason to suspect at that time that his execution would be postponed. I was disturbed lest, in being wrong, he might

become discouraged at the very end. However, my fears were quite unfounded. Two days before May 15 I received a telegram telling me it would not be necessary for me to come, as Sam's execution was being postponed. His faith apparently had not been misplaced, for Sam had been right and I wrong. I watched this same thing happen again, month after month, through the summer and into the fall. Various dates were set, and then at the last moment postponed. God surely seemed to be sparing Sam's life for some good cause known best to Himself.

The following October, when I visited Sam again, he was aglow with some wonderful news. During that very week his mother had visited him. "A real miracle has taken place," he asserted. "Mother sat right there where you are sitting. My stepfather was along, and also a lady who had been studying the Bible with them. For two hours I listened while my mother and stepfather talked about Jesus, His soon coming, and the necessity of obeying Him. It seems that they were just waiting for light, and they have been eagerly devouring the truths that have come to them. I was amazed to see the change that all this has made in them."

"Sam," I assured him, "you are going to have stars in your crown in heaven as a result of souls who have found Jesus because of your conversion."

Sam dropped his head and responded, "Pastor, don't say anything like that about me. I am not worthy. You see, I came in here with blood on my hands. There is nothing good about me." Then he added as he smilingly raised his head, "But I have a wonderful Saviour."

### **Sam's Last Hours**

Each date that was set found me ready to go to be with Sam, but always there would be the telegram telling me that the date had been postponed. But each time before the telegram came a letter from Sam, stating his conviction that this was not it. He seemed to have a strong conviction each time that God still had a little more time left for him to work. Finally, the date of November 26 approached. Sam's execution was set for that night at eight o'clock.

On Sunday, since I still had not received the usual telegram stating that the execution had been postponed, I decided to telephone the warden of the prison. When I reached him, he told me that the governor had just announced that he was considering the whole case and would make his final decision the next morning. I told the warden that in order for me to be sure to be there it would be necessary for me to take a plane from New York City at 9:30 a.m., and I asked him to telephone me if he had any word prior to that hour. He assured me that he would, but indicated that probably he would have no word by that time. When I asked what he would counsel me to do in view of the circumstances, he expressed his feeling that this time it would be best for me to come.

Since no call came from the warden, I boarded the plane the next morning. Upon my arrival in Columbus it was snowing, and it continued to snow throughout the rest of the day. The bleak day quite matched my mood. A telephone call to the warden brought me the disappointing news that the governor had just announced that, after considering the life of Sam Tannyhill, it was felt that no useful purpose could be served by giving him life imprisonment. As the result the execution would take place that night as scheduled. The warden

asked me to arrive at the prison about five o'clock, and told me that I would be allowed to be with Sam for the last three hours of his life.

That afternoon in my hotel room I spent my time reading the Bible and gathering together texts of Scripture which I felt might be encouraging to a doomed man. Not wanting to refer to notes, I committed to memory the Bible references I wanted to bring to Sam. After all, I realized that I was to have no second chance to make up for any of our visits' deficiencies.

About 4:30 I started to walk through the snow toward the prison, not far from the downtown section of Columbus. I was startled to see newspaper headlines screaming out the news, "Tannyhill to Die in Chair Tonight." I purchased one of the papers, taking it back to my hotel room to read it later. Knowing, however, of the strong faith and spiritual confidence of Sam Tannyhill and of the tremendous change which had taken place in his life, I could not help comparing the world's attitude toward him with what I knew regarding him. To them, a justice was about to be done. A killer was about to die, paying the penalty for gross murder and misdeeds. In my heart I knew that the man who would die in the chair that night was not the same man who had taken the life of a waitress a year and a half earlier. Jesus Christ had made such a tremendous change in him that this man was completely different. The killer was no more, he had truly been "born again."

When I arrived at the prison, I found that the warden had left a pass for me permitting me to go immediately to the death house. A guard was assigned to guide me to this place, the building to which Sam had already been brought. I was to be on my own inside the prison, needing only to present my pass at the prison gates when leaving. This time when we came to the point where persons are frisked, my guide received this attention but no attempt was made to search me. In response to my guide's astonishment that I was being overlooked, the one in charge simply stated, "He's a minister; I know he is all right."

So I passed on through the heavy steel doors once more and into the now familiar courtyard. This time instead of heading for the gray building containing death row, we went in the opposite direction and approached a low brick building. The guard explained as we walked that Sam had already been moved from his cell to this place, and was now being served his last meal. He counseled me to join Sam in eating his meal, explaining that it would be helpful if I acted as nonchalant as possible to make the occasion seem like a happy social event. This, he stated, would relieve the tension which probably would exist. I answered that I would do my best to cooperate in every way possible.

When we stepped through the door of the death house, we found ourselves in a large room divided in the middle—by a row of thick bars. Several guards milled about in the outer portion of this room, and beyond the bars Sam and a prisoner friend sat at a table covered with a white linen tablecloth. A prison chef was serving the food. A hasty glance to my right as I entered revealed a heavy wooden door, which I correctly presumed led into the death chamber.

As soon as I arrived I was allowed to go right into the same inner room with Sam and his friend. This was the first time that I had been face to face with him without bars separating

us. We shook hands, the first time we had been permitted to do that, and sat down side by side, also for the first time.

The dining table looked cheerful and festive, as if everyone had gone out of his way to make the occasion a happy one. While I came in with full intention of joining in the meal, I must confess that the realization of why we were there robbed me completely of my appetite. Since I was able to find an excuse just to sit at the table and chat, I weakly chose the easy way out. The best I could manage was a dish of ice cream for dessert. I was quite a failure at relieving tension I am sure. However, Sam ate well, and he did everything in his power to make us all feel at ease.

There apparently was no fear in his heart, nor was any expressed in his conversation. He ate a leisurely meal and visited cheerfully as it progressed. He and the friend seemed to know each other well, and their conversation was cheerful and light, with no mention being made of the reason for this gathering and the terrible conclusion to which it would come. When the meal was completed, Sam's friend left, apparently realizing that he might be in the way were he to stay longer. I was quite touched by his statement as for the last time he shook Sam's hand, "I wonder if I'll ever meet anybody else in all the world like you." He then thanked him for what their friendship had meant to him spiritually. With that, they parted, with no more emotion than if they were to meet again in but a few more moments.

Sam and I sat down together then and visited at length about spiritual things. He explained his attitude regarding what was about to happen that night: "I'm just going to go to sleep tonight as I have done every other night. No one should feel sorry for me, and I don't want this to be a solemn time for long face. The way I look at it, my work is done. Everything is made right between me and God. The records are clear in heaven. My sleep will seem but a moment, and the next voice I hear will be the voice of Jesus Christ waking me to spend an eternity with Him in the earth made new. Rather than your feeling sorry for me, it should be the other way around. I should feel sorry for you, for you must remain on here to fight the good fight of faith. The future struggles will be yours rather than mine."

It was inspiring to me to observe how love for Jesus Christ and confidence in His Word could make a man reason this way. His thoughts in these final hours were not on himself but were constantly reaching out to others. He seemed to want to tell me about his family, his wife from whom he was divorced, and his two little children. He expressed joy that his wife had remarried and had apparently found a good husband who would make an excellent father, for his boy and girl. He told me of his other relatives and of his appreciation and affection for them.

One text of Scripture I had planned to read to him was 2 Timothy 4:7, 8. In these verses the apostle Paul makes his last confident statement of faith before going to his death. But Sam was ahead of me, and before ever I got to read this to him he referred to this verse.

"You know," he mused, "what verse of Scripture has meant most to me today? I have thought often of the words of the apostle Paul, 'I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith: henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteous-

ness, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, shall give me at that day: and not to me only, but unto all them also that love His appearing." Then, thinking back over his twenty-seven years of life, he added, "The first twenty-six years were not so good. I wouldn't want to live them over again, but this last year, since I found Jesus, has been a wonderful year. I would love to live this one over again and again." Though this was the year that he had spent behind bars on death row, it had been lived with Christ in his heart. This had made it memorable.

Later, the Protestant chaplain related to me how he had stopped in to visit Sam in his death-row cell that afternoon and found him, Bible in hand, lying on his bed, and looking up at the concrete ceiling. Finally, he exclaimed, "Chaplain, this is a glorious place!" When the chaplain inquired what had produced such feelings in his heart, he instantly responded, "Because this is the place where I found Jesus Christ as my Saviour." Sam is not the first man to have found that the presence of Jesus Christ can change even a dungeon or a death-row cell into a glorious place.

Men are not allowed to dress formally for their executions. Sam was attired in just a simple white shirt, without necktie, a pair of blue prison dungarees with a red stripe on each side, and shoes and socks. In the pocket of his shirt he had brought a little paperbound New Testament which had just arrived in his mail that day. He gave me that Testament just before he died, and I shall always treasure it. Together we read many verses of Scripture which he remembered and which had come to mean a great deal to him. From God's Word we read again the promise of the new earth, the second coming of Jesus, and many related promises which mean so much to every Christian anticipating Christ's soon return.

One Scripture verse which Sam particularly appreciated was 1 John 5:14, which contains the words "according to His will." As we read this passage together Sam said "That's all I want. Whatever is according to His will, that will be all right for me." He told me then that in the year since he had found Jesus as his Saviour he had spent five hours each day studying the Scriptures. As nearly as he could compute, this meant that he had spent about two thousand hours in studying the Word of God. It is no wonder that one could hardly begin quoting a text of Scripture but that Sam could complete it. Only a year before, this man had held in his hands his first Bible. But as the result of properly valuing it, he had now become exceedingly well versed in its teachings, and its principles had changed his life.

Finally, at 7:25 p.m. Sam stated, "I know that you are going to want to pray with me tonight. Why don't we do it now. Once again he was ahead of me—seemed to me that it was always this way. I had planned to pray with him a little closer to eight o'clock. However, at his request, of course we prayed then. The Protestant chaplain had joined us by this time, and the three of us sat side by side. Turning to the chaplain I requested, "Chaplain you lead us in prayer; then, Sam, pray next; and I will offer the last prayer." The chaplain immediately bowed his head and offered a lovely prayer in which he thanked God for the "bright "Christian experience" of this young man who had been so transformed by the gospel.

We were still seated when Sam's turn came to pray. The chaplain and I were puzzled to see just what he was going to do when he rose from his chair. But he only turned around, then dropped to

his knees in front of his chair. No sitting down and talking to God for him. You may be sure that I dropped to my knees beside him.

I wish that I might have had a tape recorder to take down the exact words of his prayer so as to share with others the deep faith and assurance which was evident even in his tone of voice! His prayer went something like this:

"Dear Father, You know that more than a year ago I placed my life in Your hands. Nothing that has happened in this past year has changed that in any way. Nothing that will happen tonight will change that; my life is still in Your hands. Do with it as You will. And, God, I know that You never make any mistakes. Amen."

I must confess that prayer was rather difficult for me after hearing that moving plea, but I did my best. At the conclusion of my prayer Sam offered another prayer, for there was something he had forgotten. This second prayer reminded me somewhat of that of Stephen, the first Christian martyr. Sam prayed, "Lord, don't hold against these guards what they are about to do tonight. What I have done has forced them to do what they are about to do. If it is a sin, Lord, then charge it up to my account, and forgive it just as You have forgiven all the rest of my sins. Amen."

That was the kind of love, forgiveness, and understanding Jesus Christ had placed in his heart. I thought to myself that I was witnessing under most unusual circumstances the fruits of the miracle of conversion. When we arose from prayer, Sam walked to the bars to talk to a guard who was outside. Busy for a moment talking with the chaplain, I did not listen until I heard the guard having difficulty Sam quoting to him Paul's words in 1 Corinthians 15, "*If in this life only we have hope in Christ, we are of all men most miserable.*" Sam had been expressing his firm conviction that this was not the end and that we have hope beyond this life. The guard himself was a Christian, and responded with this wonderful promise of resurrection. It was good to feel the spirit of faith present in our hearts in that hour.

One of Sam's last concerns was for another Earl whom he had brought to Christ and who was to die just a week later than he. Several times as we sat together in the anteroom awaiting the signal of death at 8:00 p.m., he discussed Earl and the fact that just a week from that time Earl would be in that room. He observed, "This will probably be the hardest week of Earl's life, because I will not be there to encourage him." He had thoughtfully made arrangements with a number of persons to contact and encourage Earl during the ensuing week so that his faith would not fail at the end.

A half hour before eight o'clock a heavy knock came on the door from the death chamber. The door was opened and two guards were admitted to the cell. With them they brought a little box containing barber equipment. Apparently Sam had not realized that it was necessary for them to cut his hair so as to leave the crown of his head bare for the electrode. They explained this to him, and though it seemed to disturb him somewhat to think of his hair being cut in a strange way, he meekly sat down in the chair. They used the scissors to cut off large portions of his hair, and then with a pair of electric clippers they made the crown of his head ready so that an electrode could make contact with his skin. At the same time that this was being done by one guard, the other was slitting the right leg of Sam's trousers so that an electrode could be

placed on his leg just below his knee. The whole procedure took about five minutes, and then these two guards left.

Another guard explained that when eight o'clock came Sam was to leave his glasses on the table where he had eaten his last meal and we were then all to enter the death chamber together. Sam told the guard that since he did not see well without his glasses, he would appreciate it if he might keep them until the last minute. The guard thought a moment and then answered that while it would be all right with him personally "his instructions had been to request Sam to leave his glasses on the table." He added, "You wouldn't want to get me into any trouble about this, would you? It would be a help to me if you would leave them according to the instructions given me." Sam immediately agreed.

Many times during that last half hour Sam asked me what time it was, and I kept checking on my watch to give him this vital information. At just one minute before eight he made another of his frequent and thoughtful attempts to relieve our tension by saying, "Not many men in the world know that they have only one more minute of life. I guess I'm in quite a unique position." We were amazed at his ability to make statements like this at a time when many would have completely disintegrated in fear. To the very end his attitude was one of Christian thoughtfulness of us who were with him at that desperate time.

Promptly at the stroke of eight a heavy knock came, and in a moment three guards appeared. The Protestant chaplain led the way toward the door of the cell. The events then took place so rapidly that it was hard for me to believe it was really happening. After having placed his glasses on the table, Sam followed the chaplain and then I brought up the rear. Two guards took positions on either side of Sam, and we passed through the heavy wooden doorway into the death chamber.

I do not know exactly what I expected to see. Though I had thought I was emotionally prepared for anything, I fear the three wonderful hours we had spent together, with the Spirit of God so near, had made me somewhat forget the reason for our presence there. In the death chamber seventeen men solemnly watched as we entered. The electric chair was to our left on a slightly raised platform. We had to step up on this platform and cross by the ugly electric chair in order to get down into the area where we were to stand.

The Protestant chaplain stepped down in front of the electric chair and turned about to face it. Sam was seated in it, and guards immediately began to strap him in. I brushed by them in order to step down and stand next to the chaplain.

The chaplain always conducts a short service on such occasions, reading the twenty-third psalm and then reciting the Lord's Prayer. The electrodes were fastened to Sam's head and leg, straps were placed around his neck, arms, and legs, and over his face was placed a mask resembling a black welder's mask. Then the guards stepped back. Though the chaplain had not yet completed the Lord's Prayer, he stopped, for it was evident there would not be time to finish it.

The warden nodded a signal. His associate, standing at Sam's left, pressed a button on the wall which rang a bell in an adjoining room. The next instant a light went on over the chair, and the current surged through the body. There was no outcry from the man in the chair. It was evident that the first shock of electricity mercifully brings unconsciousness. The only sound in the room was that of straining as every muscle in Sam's body was made taut by the current. Even though a man is unconscious, the human body apparently reacts in this way to electric current.

We stood, tense and silent, for what seemed an age before a doctor finally stepped up and placed a stethoscope on the bare chest of the man before us. After listening for a few moments he stepped back without comment. Then another jolt of electricity was sent through the strapped body before us, and once again it strained in reaction. Two or three more minutes passed by, minutes that seemed again like an eternity. Then the doctor stepped forward once more and placed the stethoscope on Sam's chest. After listening intently he straightened up and looked at the warden, saying tensely, "*Warden Alvis, sufficient current has passed through the body of Tannyhill to cause his death at 8:12 p.m.*"

The warden said, "Thank you." The doors of the room opened, and all who had been present left quickly.

After returning to the cell to get my coat and Bible, I acted on impulse and reentered the death chamber. All had gone at this time except Sam. He was still seated in the chair. With the straps released and the mask taken from his face, he looked just as if he were asleep.

The sight brought to mind some of Sam's last words to me, spoken just before eight o'clock. Grasping my hand and looking earnestly into my eyes, he had said, "Pastor, I'm going to be looking for you over there." I had responded, "Sam, I know that you're going to be there, and by God's grace so am I. Then he concluded, "Good-bye, then. I'll see you in the morning."

Thus we had made an appointment to meet, as real as any appointment I have ever made in my life. We agreed to meet on a better shore, "in the morning," when all-sin, sickness, death, grief, and pain are forever ended.

Then Sam had simply requested, "Go back and tell the folks at Faith for Today never to grow weary in what they are doing, never to become discouraged in their work for souls. There are so many in the world like me who need the gospel and who will accept it if only it is brought to them. By all means tell them never to give up their good work for God."

As I stood there looking down into his still and ashen face, I bowed my head and offered a silent prayer that God would richly bless the now silent testimony of this converted life. Remembering his admonition, "Never grow weary .... Never become discouraged ....There are so many in the world like me," I vowed to do my best to continue to spread the message of Jesus Christ. And I prayed that I might find the many more like Sam, who, in the prison house of sin, so much need the gospel even as did he.

Before I left the prison, the Protestant chaplain joined me and requested the privilege of introducing me to the warden. Later, in visiting with the warden, I told him that I had not found it easy to watch the proceedings of that night, but that I had been glad to realize that Sam's life was completely dedicated to God. I added, "I suppose you have seen many of these and probably are not affected as I have been."

I will always remember the warden's reply: "While I have seen many, none of them are easy. I think this was the hardest one of all."

Leaving the prison, I walked the streets of Columbus in the falling snow for two hours that night. Going at last to the hotel, but unable to think of sleep, I prayed and read most of the night. Again and again I recalled the way Sam ended his letters, and I rejoiced that his whole hope of eternal life could be contained in his few words—"By God's grace, Sam."

Some might conclude that Sam's brief life-span, so full of violence and unrest, at last met a just end. But I know that he died triumphant, looking forward to eternal life through the merits of the shed blood of Jesus Christ. His voice is stilled, but the marvelous change in his life will long be a witness which will draw men and women to the Saviour of us all.

### **What Makes the Change?**

What brings a completely changed attitude to a man who admittedly has spent almost his entire adult life in pursuit of evil? What force or motivation could turn him about and change his entire attitude and outlook on life?

Such an accomplishment demands more than a resolve to do right. Many individuals have done this much, making good resolutions each New Year's Eve, only to break and forget them before the first week is past. When man tries to reform himself, sad experience has shown the result to be temporary at best.

Sam's reformation of character resulted from a miraculous experience which Christians have witnessed in themselves and in others for centuries. We Christians call it by a term both biblical and highly descriptive, "the new birth." Jesus used this figure as He talked one night with a Jewish ruler named Nicodemus.

Though Nicodemus was a good man outwardly, and a spiritual leader of his people, he was yet quite unprepared for Christ's directness in dealing with him. Jesus struck at the root of the problem when He flatly stated, "*Ye must be born again,*" or "*Ye must be born from above.*" Unwilling just then to admit his spiritual need and submit his life to the sweeping and even evolutionary changes of conversion, he sadly left the Master; but he could not forget Christ's appeal to him nor his own inner desire to respond. Gradually in the next three and a half years his life did change until he was indeed born again. And at Christ's death he changed from a secret disciple to an openly committed one who used his wealth without stint to aid the infant church.

Sam's changed life bore silent testimony to the reality of his spiritual experience. His new outlook and changed goals indicate that conversion is just as real today as it ever was. In fact, the Bible states that this new birth from above must come to every man if he is ultimately to be

saved in God's kingdom. As the result of this dynamic spiritual experience, Sam became completely different from what he had been before; and everyone who knew Sam could plainly see the change. He was motivated by different desires, affections, ambitions, goals, and objectives. This was observable by everyone who associated with him. He was, in reality, a new man with new objectives, new ambitions, and a new will. Like every converted man, he was a new creation, a literal fulfillment of the Scripture's bold assertion, "*If any man be in Christ, he is a new creature: old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new.*" 2 Cor. 5: 17.

Someone has descriptively observed that conversion is a U-turn on the highway of life. History has seen countless examples of lives completely changed, even reversed, through the power of the Lord Jesus Christ. The Bible enumerates the details regarding several of them.

For instance, a jailer at Philippi, in the grip of fear at seeing God's power open his jail, cried out to Paul, "What must I do to be saved?" Paul's simple reply is an immortal classic: "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved." (Acts 16:31), The Scriptures indicate that the jailer believed, and Paul baptized him on the spot. Immediately after this man's conversion, he showed concern for the wounds of his prisoners and set about ministering to their physical needs—a sure indication in his outward life of his inward change of heart. And Paul recognized these conversion symptoms, for he himself had passed through this same spiritual experience on the road to Damascus long years before. He could never forget, nor did he even want to, what it had meant to him to have Jesus take control of his life. He could state authoritatively that a man with Christ in his heart becomes a new creature, because he knew that this is what the gospel had done for him.

The Philippian jailer's question, "What shall I *do* to be saved?" is asked again and again today. People imagine now, even as did this man in New Testament times, that salvation in heaven depends upon something which we can and must do.

Many conclude that a person who leads a good life will be saved. But in the Scriptures we never find any authoritative command to lead a good life and thus *earn* salvation. Paul's answer to the jailer was brief and unequivocal: "*Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and thou shalt be saved.*" It is as simple as that, according to the Scriptures. If a man really believes in his heart on the Lord Jesus, he has taken the great all-inclusive step which will ultimately lead to a place in God's Kingdom. No man can buy his way to heaven, and no one can ever earn it by his good works. Salvation is a free gift of Jesus Christ to every soul who accepts Jesus as his Saviour.

It is important also to realize that one is not expected to straighten out his life before he can accept Jesus as his own Saviour and Lord. The truth of the matter is that people cannot change their lives with their own strength. Though Sam had tried on numerous occasions, he was never able to change his life. He made many excellent resolutions, but he always slipped back into the same old wrong ways of doing things. Sin seems to get too great a hold upon a man for him to break it in his own strength.

Surprising though it may seem, we are never told in the Scriptures to straighten out our lives, give up our sins, and then commit our ways to Christ. The fact of the matter is that such a course

of action would be absolutely impossible. The order is reversed. We are commanded first to come to Christ, with the assurance that the rest will logically follow after.

As a boy, I remember hearing the church congregation sing that wonderful hymn, "Just As I am, without a plea, that Thy Blood was shed for me, and that Thou bidst me come to thee, Oh Lamb of God, I come, I come." The only way anyone can come to Christ is *just as he is*. We cannot change our own sinful natures. All of us are utterly dependent upon Christ to work out the character transformation which we so desire.

In the spring of the year have you ever noticed how the trees new life causes any clinging leaves to drop to the ground? When we come to Christ in our sinful state, He gives us the miraculous new life which makes our old sins and habits fall off like lifeless leaves. This new life from Him coursing through our bodies makes our whole world new and lovely. Then we know from experience the truth of Paul's exclamation that with Christ in his heart, a man is a new creature. To his delight, Sam found that to be true.

Sam discovered, as every man must discover, that the important thing is to come to Christ just as we are. We must not try to change ourselves first, but rather must allow Him to do this otherwise impossible task for us. How important it is for us to remember that only God can change us.

When a man's life is miraculously changed as was Sam's, we say he has been converted. What do we mean by this rather technical theological word? Let us try to analyze it and apply it to our own personal experience.

Were we to try to analyze conversion, we would rightly conclude that it contains two main elements—*repentance and faith*: Both of these primary elements are of the utmost importance to a changed life.

Repentance is vital to and must precede conversion. Jesus taught that a man cannot possibly be saved without it. He exclaimed, "*Except ye repent, ye shall ... perish.*" (Luke 13:3).

What did Jesus mean by this command to repent? In simple terms, repentance is the experience of recognizing what we really are and feeling a genuine sorrow for our failures. Actually, what this amounts to is that we come to see ourselves as God sees us, and, as the result, are almost overcome by our own inadequacy and need of His help. Job summed it up when he wrote, "*Now mine eye seeth Thee. Wherefore I abhor myself, and repent in dust and ashes.*" (Job 42:5,6). When a man gets a "God's-eye" look at himself, he cannot help but see his pitiful spiritual state and his need of help from heaven. As Paul expressed it, "*Now I rejoice, not that ye were made sorry, but that ye sorrowed to repentance .... for godly sorrow worketh repentance to salvation.*" (2 Cor. 7:9, 10). There can be no repentance without a godly sorrow for sin.

But if a person stopped with godly sorrow and did not take the next step of "faith" in the conversion experience, he would be most miserable indeed. A person cannot live long with sorrow, even godly sorrow, without it adversely affecting his whole life. God intends that our sorrow for sins should simply be a step on His ladder to heaven. The next step is labeled "faith".

Faith is a good strong word, and yet if it stands alone": it approaches being meaningless. For faith to have meaning, it must be connected to something else—in its highest form, a person. I can have faith in you, in my friends, in my wife, my family, my children, etcetera. So Christians are not simply instructed to have faith, but they are told to have faith in Jesus Christ, who died for them and in their place on Calvary. Christian faith is, therefore, commitment to a Person, the Lord Jesus Christ, who first loved us and paid the price for our sins on Calvary's Cross.

Here is Christian faith in action: "He that cometh to God must believe that He is, and that He is a rewarder of them that diligently seek Him". (Hebrews 11:6). A Christian, then, is one who not only has felt guilt for his own wrongdoing, but has realized his need of a saving Power greater than himself. In simple faith he has been willing to accept the fact that Jesus died on Calvary's cross to pay the price for his sins. He has applied this to his own life by believing that Jesus has accomplished this for him. And he has trusted Christ to forgive his sins and give him power to live as he should in the future. This is what is often referred to as a "saving faith" which obviously leads to salvation. It is a full trust in and, acceptance of Jesus as one's Saviour and Redeemer from sin.

Conversion, then, very simply, begins with a person's recognition of his own sinful nature and utter inability to effect a permanent change in' himself. Conversion becomes a reality as the person reaches out in faith to Jesus, asking Him to' effect the change in him that cannot be wrought in any other way. Christ then makes the miraculous change. And Christ has been doing this for men and women through the centuries. It is as true today as it ever was that "*If any man be in Christ, he is a new creature: old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new.*" (2 Corinthians 5:17). Thus, conversion involves a personal encounter with Jesus Christ who only can permanently change men's hearts.

### **How to Begin the Christian Life**

How does a person become a new creature in Christ? How did this experience come to Sam? First, Sam saw his own need and wanted his life to be different from what it had been. He felt a genuine sorrow and remorse for his sinful life and wanted to be done with that forever. There is no doubt but that this is the way every Christian life begins. A person feels a great sense of his own inadequacy and is completely discontented with his past failures. Realizing that there must be a higher Power who can help him lead the right kind of life, he reaches out in simple faith for divine help. When a man does this, God is always there to perform the miracle of conversion in his experience. He discovers then that he is a changed person.

It is not easy to spell out the steps which follow in leading a Christian life, for God's Spirit does not lead everyone in exactly the same way. However, the ultimate result in a converted and changed life is the same. Similarities appear in all conversions, of course. Let us list a few of the things present in a genuine experience of "new birth."

1. You will recognize that Jesus died on Calvary's cross for you and for your sins. Since conversion is not possible without the Lord Jesus Christ, a converted man will want to become thoroughly acquainted with *the Saviour who* died for him."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." (John 3:16). You will accept what Christ did for you on Calvary and receive Him in your heart as your very own Saviour and Lord. This is a personal application of the events of Calvary to your own life. You will then feel that "*Jesus died for me.*" "*But as many as received him, to them gave he power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on his name: which were born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God.*" (John 1:12,13).

2. You will feel genuinely sorry for all your past sins and will repent of them, turning your back on them in your desire from now on to lead a truly Christian life. To a group of New Testament believers who asked, "*What shall we do?*" Peter replied, "*Repent, and be baptized everyone of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins.*" (Acts 2:37, 38).

3. You must tell others that you have given your life to Christ and in His strength are attempting to live a Christian life. Jesus said, "*Whosoever therefore shall confess me before men, him will I confess also before my father who is in heaven..*" (Matthew 10:32). Paul wrote, "*If thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus, and shalt believe in thine heart that God hath raised him from the dead, thou shalt be saved. For with the heart man believeth unto righteousness; and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation.*" (Rom. 10:9, 10). Telling others of your new faith in Jesus will actually give you strength to live the Christian life. This personal witnessing is the natural and necessary outgrowth of a true conversion experience. No one who has really found Christ can keep silent about his discovery. Sam witnessed to everyone he could talk with on death row.

Have you taken these steps? Do you see yourself as a sinner needing the salvation of Christ? And do you recognize what Jesus did for you at Calvary? Will you receive Him as your own Saviour as you repent of your sins? And will you confess to others the fact that you are trying to live a Christian life for Him?

### **How to Go About It**

Sam Tannyhill was not converted in a great religious meeting with hundreds of others joining him in going down the aisle to the front. In fact, he had never attended a religious meeting of any kind and had really little concept of what a church service or an evangelistic meeting would be like. Sam found Jesus Christ as his Saviour in a lonely prison cell as he read the Scriptures and helpful Christian literature.

The truth of the matter is that anyone can accept Christ as his Saviour at any place he may choose. You need not wait until you can attend some great religious service where a public invitation is given for individuals to accept Jesus. You can make Him your Saviour in the privacy of your own home or office just as Sam did in the privacy of his cell. You could do it right now as you read these words. The outer circumstances of your environment are of no consequence in getting right with God. You do not need to be in a church or at a great public meeting where others are praying for you. Giving your heart to Jesus is a personal matter which you can care for no matter where you may be. You can do it right now, if you will.

Do you wonder how to go about it? Your words and method are really not important. The only thing which really matters is the sincerity of your heart.

Permit me to offer a specific suggestion for those who may appreciate this. Bow your head right now and pray this simple prayer: "*Father in heaven, forgive all my sins, for I sincerely regret everyone of them. I accept Jesus Christ as my Saviour, and I hereby make Him the Lord of my life. From now on I want to live for Him. Help me do so, for I pray this in Jesus' name. Amen.*" God will always hear and answer such a prayer. If you have prayed it in simple faith, be confident that He has heard you and that all heaven is now rejoicing that another sinner has come "borne." You are now a child of God in every sense of the word.

Now that you have given your life to Christ, be assured that God has forgiven you all of your sins. This includes the very worst of them, the ones you hardly dare remember, for their memory brings you such bitter pain and remorse. They are completely forgiven. Right now you are cleansed, and the page representing your life is clean and white in the book of heaven. Never question whether or not this is so, but rather remember that the Bible promises, "If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness." If you have confessed, He has forgiven; and He will not remember these mistakes against you" anymore. Your sins are gone forever. You may believe it because He has promised it, and He always keeps His promises.

You are now a Christian. In a special sense you have become a son of God. You have been adopted into the heavenly family, "that we might receive the adoption of sons." (Galatians 4:5). As an adopted son you are now a joint heir with Jesus Christ of all the glories of heaven. You now have something to which you may look forward, even as did Sam. You can look forward to a home in God's kingdom where you will enjoy eternal joyous life with Jesus and the redeemed ones.

Of course, there will come times when Satan will tempt you and attempt to make you fall. At times, he might even be successful, but this must not discourage you. Remember the promise, "*There hath no temptation taken you but such as is common to man: but God is faithful, who will not suffer you to be tempted above that ye are able; but will with the temptation also make a way to escape, -that ye may be able to bear it.*" (1 Corinthians 10:13). When Satan brings his temptations, always look for the Way to escape. You will find that God always keeps His promises and that the escape route will always be there.

The Bible does not teach that a Christian ceases to have any struggle with sin. That struggle will go on until we are all ultimately redeemed in God's kingdom. But the Bible does teach that we Christians are to have divine strength by which it will be possible for us to escape sin's domination.

If perchance you fall into sin, ask God for immediate forgiveness, and then pick yourself up and continue your journey to His kingdom. He will give you grace to conquer the evil one and power to overcome sins that you thought could never be conquered in your life. Thus, your Christian life will be a constant one of praise to God for victories won.

I have always felt that God brought me into contact with Sam Tannyhill for a purpose. I would like to think that part of the purpose was to witness the joy and peace which acceptance of Christ brought to Sam in his last months of life. But I have also felt that a wider purpose was that I might share his story with others, bringing to them the assurance that what God did for Sam, He could also do for them. The truth of the matter is that if God could so gloriously redeem the life of a murderer, He can redeem anyone.

Surely He can save *you* from *your* sins, great and small. Have you let Him do it?