

## The Ticket Did Not Arrive On Time

by Walter L. Wilson, M.D.

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Having been confined to my bed for a number of months because of a severe illness, I was obliged to take a vacation out of doors, so that I might regain my health. It was therefore planned that this new period should be in California, hoping that the warm days, the new surroundings, and the healthful atmosphere would contribute materially toward a rapid recovery to normal health and strength.

About the time of this decision, a letter came from a friend in an eastern city, whom I had befriended some years prior to this occasion when he was in deep distress. In this letter my friend confided that he had never felt entirely satisfied nor happy in regard to his expressions of gratitude to me in lieu of the kindness shown him at the time of his deep need. He therefore requested the privilege of sending some appropriate gift and urged me to tell him frankly what that might be.

Inasmuch as this friend was quite able to give liberally and seemed deeply desirous of doing so, I explained to him that because my health made a trip to the Pacific coast quite necessary, I would be most happy and grateful to receive from him a ticket to California, if that seemed to be his pleasure. The date given him for the contemplated trip was June 28th.

On the morning of June 28th, having finished my correspondence, I closed my various business matters and left the office for home, there to await the ticket which should have reached me through the mail that day, since word had been received from my friend that the ticket would be sent on time; however, it did not arrive.

The afternoon mail delivery did not bring the expected letter. This disturbed my mind somewhat, so I slipped down stairs to a little room in the corner of the coal-bin which had been modestly equipped as a prayer room. Here I could get away from our four little children to talk with the Lord. The furniture in this small sanctuary consisted of a soap box and several minor pieces, together with an accumulation of old newspapers. Kneeling

there, I poured out my heart to the Lord of the harvest, telling Him of my disappointment. My desire was to board the particular train that He wanted me to take, and to occupy the very car in which He might have some friends with anxious and willing hearts to hear His Word.

The Lord gave me peace about the matter, for the case had been committed wholly to Him, and the Holy Spirit was trusted to take complete charge of the ticket, the train, the time of leaving, and every matter connected with the journey.

The next day's mail was equally disappointing — in fact, five days elapsed and still no ticket came. I went often to the little, crudely-improved sanctuary in the basement, asking the Lord to reveal to me the cause of the delay, and, furthermore, what unusual thing He had in store for me on this journey. I felt as though there was something peculiar transpiring, and watched daily in order to discover the good hand of the Lord and to discern His will concerning my path.

Having waited until the third of July without receiving the ticket, I went to my office purposely to purchase the ticket myself, being fully convinced that my friend had failed to make good his promise. While sitting in the office, meditating over with the experiences of the past few days, a special delivery letter came containing my ticket. Immediately my heart pulsated in deep gratitude to God for His kindness in sending the ticket, even though He had not yet revealed to me by His Spirit the reason for the delay.

On my way home, I purchased some fire-works for the children, in order that they might celebrate the fourth of July, and at the supper table I informed the family that I planned to leave that evening for California. The children immediately formed a committee of protest, demanding a picnic such as they had enjoyed in previous years, and suggested that it was hardly fair for father to take a long vacation and leave them with none. This seemed quite reasonable on their part, and I felt it was the Lord's good pleasure that I should remain another day and share with them the joys of this annual celebration.

On the evening of the Fourth of July, I boarded the train for California. The hour was late and the passengers in the sleeping cars had retired for the night, therefore there was no opportunity

to serve the Lord, nor to seek for needy souls. In the morning the train stopped in western Kansas, where breakfast was being served in the station of a small town. A number of passengers alighted to take advantage of this opportunity. However, to my disappointment, I noted that the conversation of the group gathered around the table did not savor of spiritual things, and I found no evidence of the working of the Lord in those parts.

As the train proceeded on its way, I requested the porter to bring me a writing table, upon which I placed my Bible, a concordance, and a book on prayer which I was enjoying. As I interested myself in Bible study, a lady approached the table, whom I had not previously observed in the car. She seemed to be about fifty years of age and was dressed in deep mourning. It was quite evident that some great sorrow had overtaken her for which she sought comfort.

Quickly looking to the gracious Spirit of God for wisdom and His leading, I greeted the friend by saying: "I observe that you have had a great grief in your life, and I would like very much indeed to share the burden with you. Would you not like to sit down with me and rehearse the story of your sorrow?"

"Yes, I would," she answered, and at once seated herself at the table opposite me.

"Are you a minister?" she asked.

"Partly so," I replied. "Some of my time is spent preaching and some in other labors. I love the Scriptures, however, and would like so much to help you with your problem, if there is a burden upon your heart. Will you permit me to do so?"

With an expression of eagerness and leaning forward, she said earnestly: "I was reared without knowledge of the Bible, although surrounded by religion. Not only did I attend church daily, but gave liberally of my means and supported every enterprise of the church, thus contributing my time and effort. My husband, a judge of some prominence in a western city, together with the children, were in hearty accord with me in my religious zeal.

"One day a neighbor presented me with a copy of the New Testament, something I had never seen before, nor had I ever

read it. How interesting I found it to be! One thing that seemed particularly inspiring to me was the freedom which all the folk had who wanted to come to Jesus. They came directly to Him, with no one in between. They brought every distress to Him, as well as all of their questions. To me it was wonderful to observe how tenderly the Lord dealt with them, and how quickly He forgave the sins of those who came with broken hearts.

"This unusual freedom with Christ affected me so deeply that in a few days I called my minister, and asked whether Christ, when on earth, had a private secretary. 'No,' he replied, 'He did not.' Does He now have a private secretary? 'No,' he answered, 'He does not. Why do you ask me?' Because I want to get to Jesus myself, I said; I want to get right into His presence and hear Him forgive my sins. I want to know that He has done it Himself like He did for the people in the Bible."

My friend then explained how she had left her pastor at the close of this conversation with him, to again read the Scriptures and to seek someone who would show her the way to the Saviour. "When I saw your Bible," she continued, "I thought surely you were a minister, and could tell me how to find Jesus, for I feel I must get to Him soon and receive His forgiveness."

Because of her religious experiences, I turned at once to the Book of Hebrews, and read of the priestly work of Jesus Christ in blotting out and putting away the sins of every one who came to Him in faith. We read in chapter two, verse 17, that "Christ made reconciliation for the sins of the people." It was her sins He came to blot out. We next read in Chapter seven, verse 25, that "He is able also to save them to the uttermost that come unto God by him." We read, too, in chapter one, verse 3, that "When he had by himself purged our sins, sat down." The two words, "By Himself," particularly impressed her.

"I never realized that before," she said. "I knew that Jesus had done some things for my salvation, but I thought that the church must do much more and that I should do a great deal." Turning my Bible around in order that she might see the passage, I asked her to read the verse for herself.

As she meditated on the blessed truth that Christ "by himself had purged her sins, we turned to chapter nine, verse 26, and found this message: "But now once in the end of the world hath he

appeared to put away sin by the sacrifice of himself." The light was beginning to dawn in this darkened heart. Never before had she realized what Christ had done for her. It was a new revelation to her heart that the Saviour at Calvary had actually put away her sin. Again, we turned to chapter ten, verse 17, of the book of Hebrews, and read, "And their sins and iniquities will I remember no more."

Her troubled heart found peace at once, and extending her hand across the table, she said with tears of joy, "I see so clearly now that my Saviour has taken my sins away and they are gone." She closed her eyes in worship and thanked the Redeemer for His love to her.

"You did not tell me about your sorrow," I said.

"No, I did not," she replied, "and you will be surprised when I say that I am glad this sorrow came when it did. While in Blackstone visiting my sister, I purchased my return ticket with Pullman reservations, intending to begin my journey on the night of June 26th. This would have brought me through Kansas City on the night of June 28th. On the 26th, my sister became quite ill with appendicitis and died on the 28th. The funeral was held on July 2nd, and I left that evening which brought me through Kansas City last night. I feel deeply thankful to God that He has permitted me to be on the train that you are on with your Bible, otherwise I would have gone home unsaved and be still in my sins."

She was unaware of the gratitude and worship that surged through my soul at that same moment, because of the wonderful way in which the Holy Spirit had handled this entire matter. Noticing my agitation, she asked the reason. I then told her the story of my exercise of soul concerning the trip. My plans were to leave Kansas City on the night of June 28th. However, the Spirit of God, knowing she could not come through that night, caused my friend in New York to delay sending the ticket, thus hindering my departure, and delaying my trip until the night of the Fourth. This remarkable example of the leading of the Spirit so stirred our hearts that we bowed together in reverence, while I offered our united praise to God for the leading of His Spirit and the saving power of Jesus Christ.

At the conclusion of our conversation, my friend arose, walked

to the rear of the car, and as she passed from seat to seat related to each passenger in the car the story of her wonderful conversion.

Let me remind each Christian worker that the Holy Spirit is still the Lord of the harvest. He arranges times and seasons. He brings about peculiar circumstances which work out for the salvation of men. Let us learn more and more to depend upon Him to lead us to troubled hearts, and to bring together in His own peculiar way the seeking Saviour and the needy sinner.

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