

Chapter 1:
STICKING TO HIS STANDARDS

Two or three times in my life, God in His mercy touched my heart, and twice before my conversion, I was under deep conviction.

During the Civil War, I was a surgeon in the United States army, and after the Battle of Gettysburg, there were many hundreds of wounded soldiers in the hospital; twenty-eight of whom had been wounded so severely that they required my services at once. There were some whose legs had to be amputated, some their arms; and others both their arms and legs. One of the latter was a boy who had been but three months in the service, and being too young for a soldier's duties, had enlisted as a drummer. When my assistant surgeon and one of my stewards wished to administer chloroform prior to the amputation, the boy turned his head aside and positively refused to receive it. When the steward told him that it was the doctor's orders, he said, "Send the doctor to me."

When I came up to his bedside I said, "Young man, why do you refuse chloroform? When I

found you on the battlefield, you were so far gone that I thought it hardly worthwhile to pick you up, but when you opened those large blue eyes, I thought that you probably had a mother somewhere who might at that moment be thinking of her boy. I did not want you to die on the field, so I ordered you to be brought here. You have now lost so much blood that you are too weak to endure an operation without chloroform, therefore you had better let me give you some.”



He laid his hand on mine, and looking me in the face said, "Doctor, one Sunday afternoon in Sunday school, when I was nine and a half years old, I accepted the Lord Jesus Christ as my Savior. I learned to trust Him then, I have been trusting in Him ever since, and I know I can trust Him now. He is my strength and my stay; He will support me while you amputate my arm and leg."

I then asked him if he would allow me to give him a little brandy. Again he looked at me with those blue eyes and said, "Doctor, when I was about five years old, my mother knelt by my side with her arm around my neck and said, "Charlie, I am now praying to the Lord Jesus that you may never know the taste of strong drink. Your dear father died a drunkard, and went down to a drunkard's grave, and I promised God, if it was His will that you should grow up, that you should warn young men against the bitter cup." I am now seventeen years old, but I have never tasted anything stronger than tea and coffee, and as I am, in all probability, about to go into the presence of my God, would you send me there smelling of brandy?"

The look that boy gave me I shall never forget.

At that time, I hated Jesus; but I respected that boy's loyalty to his Savior, and when I saw how he loved and trusted Him to the last, there was something that touched my heart, making me do for that boy something I had never done for any other soldier - I asked him if he wished to see the chaplain. "Oh, yes, Sir!" was the answer.

When the chaplain came, he at once knew the boy from having often met him at the tent prayer meetings; and taking his hand, said, "Well, Charlie, I am sorry to see you in this sad condition."

"Oh, I'm all right, Sir," he answered. "The doctor offered me chloroform, but I declined it; then he wished to give me brandy, which I also declined, and now, if my Savior calls me, I am ready, and can go to Him in my right mind."

"Perhaps you will not die, Charlie," said the chaplain, "but if the Lord should call you away, is there anything I can do for you after you are gone?"

"Chaplain, please put your hand under my pillow and take my little Bible, in which you will find my mother's address. Please send it to her, and write a letter, and tell her that since the day I left home I have never let a day pass without

reading a portion of God's Word, and daily praying that God would bless my dear mother, no matter whether I was on the march, on the battlefield, or in the hospital."

"Is there anything else I can do for you, my lad?" asked the chaplain.

"Yes, please write a letter to the superintendent of the Sands Street Sunday School, Brooklyn, New York, and tell him the kind words, many prayers, and good advice he gave me I have never forgotten; they have followed me through all the dangers of battle, and now, in my dying hour, I ask my Savior to bless my dear old superintendent; that is all."

Turning towards me, he said, "Now, doctor, I am ready, and I promise you that I will not even groan while you take off my arm and leg if you will not offer me chloroform again."

I promised, but I had not the courage to take the knife in my hand to perform the operation without first going into the next room and taking a little stimulant to nerve myself to perform my duty. While cutting through the flesh, Charlie Coulson never groaned, but when I took the saw to separate the bone, the lad took the corner of his pillow in his mouth, and all that I could hear him

utter was, "Oh, Jesus, blessed Jesus, stand by me now!" He kept his promise, and never even groaned.

That night, I could not sleep, for whichever way I turned, I saw those soft blue eyes, and when I closed my own, the words, "Blessed Jesus, stand by me now," kept ringing in my ears.

Between twelve and one o'clock I left my bed and visited the hospital, a thing I had never done before unless specially called; but such was my desire to see that boy. Upon my arrival there, I was informed by the night steward that sixteen of the hopeless cases had died, and had been carried down to the dead-house.

"How is Charlie Coulson? Is he among the dead?" I asked.

"No, Sir," answered the steward; he is sleeping as sweetly as a babe.

When I came up to the bed where he lay, one of the nurses informed me that at about nine o'clock, two members of the Young Men's Christian Association had come to the hospital to read and sing a hymn. They were accompanied by the chaplain, who knelt by Charlie Coulson's bed, and offered up a fervent and soul-stirring prayer, after which they sang, "Jesus Lover of My

Soul.” Charlie had reportedly joined in the singing. I could not understand how that boy, who had undergone such excruciating pain, could sing.

Five days after I had amputated that dear boy’s arm and leg, he sent for me, and it was from him that I heard the first Gospel sermon. “Doctor,” he said, “my time has come. I do not expect to see another sun rise, but, thank God, I am ready to go, and before I die, I desire to thank you with all my heart for your kindness to me. Doctor, you are a Jew - you do not believe in Jesus; will you please stand here and see me die, trusting my Savior to the last moment of my life?”

I tried to stay, but I could not, for I had not the courage to stand by and see a Christian boy die rejoicing in the love of that Jesus whom I had been taught to hate; so I hurriedly left the room. About twenty minutes later, a steward who found me sitting in my private office covering my face with my hand said, “Doctor, Charlie Coulson wishes to see you.”

“I have just seen him,” I answered, “and I cannot see him again.”

“But, doctor, he says he must see you once more before he dies.”



I made up my mind to see him, say an endearing word, and let him die; but I was determined that no word of his should influence me in the least so far as his Jesus was concerned. When I entered the hospital, I saw he was sinking fast, so I sat down by his bed. Asking me to take his hand, he said, "Doctor, I love you because you are a Jew; the best FRIEND I have found in this world was a Jew."

I asked, "Who was that?"

He answered, "Jesus Christ, to whom I want to

introduce you before I die; and will you promise me, doctor, that what I am about to say to you, you will never forget?"

I promised, and he said, "Five days ago, while you amputated my arm and leg, I prayed to the Lord Jesus Christ to save your soul."

These words cut deep into my heart. I could not understand how, while I was causing him the most intense pain, he could forget all about himself, and think of nothing but this Savior and my unconverted state. All I could say to him was, "Well, my dear boy, you will soon be all right." With these words I left him, and twelve minutes later he fell asleep, "Safe in the arms of Jesus."

Hundreds of soldiers died in my hospital during the war, but I only followed one to the grave - that one was Charlie Coulson, the drummer boy. I rode three miles to see him buried. I had him dressed in a new uniform, and placed in an officer's coffin with a new United States flag over it.

That dear boy's dying words made a deep impression upon me. I was rich at that time, so far as money is concerned, but I would have given every penny I possessed if I could have felt towards Christ as Charlie did; but that feeling

cannot be bought with money. For several months after Charlie Coulson's death, I could not get rid of the words of that dear boy. They kept ringing in my ears; but being in the company of worldly officers, I gradually forgot the sermon Charlie preached in his dying hour. But I never could forget his wonderful patience under acute suffering, and his simple trust in that Jesus whose Name to me at that time was a by-word and a reproach.