From Perils to Pearls

“Our Missionary Story”

R. E. & Sue Beasley
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In the Beginning ...

“Before I formed thee in the belly I knew thee; and before thou camest forth out of the womb I sanctified thee” (Jeremiah 1:5).

Four days after the Germans marched into Poland on September 1, 1939, Clyde and Betty Beasley had a son. My first memory is of a tenement apartment on Haight Street in San Francisco. (Can any good thing come out of the Haight-Ashbury district?) My father was not a stable individual, and I did not have many contacts with him during my life. Soon after I was born, my mother and I moved into my grandmother’s house in Alameda, California, just across the Bay. My grandfather, Amos Bowler, was a kindly man who died of Parkinson’s disease when I was young. My godly grandmother laid the foundation for that same godliness to take root in my own life. At some point
my grandparents lived in Stockton, California, and attended the Peniel Mission church where they became acquainted with the Haney family. Sophie Haney was the mother of Clyde J. Haney who later became a powerful influence in my life.

These were the war years. I recall the blackouts along the West Coast after the Japanese attacked Pearl Harbor. My mother worked in the war plants in order for us to survive. Food was rationed. I guess these hardships were the reason that, as far back as I can remember, I have always felt deep compassion for the plight of women and children who have been abandoned to their fate. Still, I am thankful I cannot remember a single time when my needs were not met.

Everyone rejoiced when the war came to an end and my two uncles returned from overseas. My parents were together again for a brief time, during which they purchased a home in San Leandro, just south of the Bay area. This reunion did not last very long; my father was soon gone again and so was everything else, so we went back to Grandmother's house on Bay Street.

My mother filed for a divorce and just a few days after it was finalized, my father was committed to a state institution. The timing was fortunate for my mother because at that time in California, one could not divorce a spouse who was in a state hospital.

One evening my grandma took me to church at the Ninth Street Mission in Oakland, pastored by Harry Morris. This was my first contact with Pentecost. The building was full of people and noise. I was too young to understand what was going on, but I remember a woman preaching on the platform. Sometime later, a missionary
visited our home. He asked me to pray for him and gave me his picture. This is the first recollection I have of praying. I took his request seriously and laid his picture on my bed while I tried to pray for him.

My next door neighbor, Kenneth Sykes, and I started going to Sunday school together. Most of us who have any kind of spiritual influence in our lives can look back and trace the unmistakable handprint of God.

In 1946 some friends of my mother introduced her to Myron Langley. Mr. Langley worked for Bethlehem Steel, building ships for the government. A few months later, they were married in my Aunt Olivet’s home. I attended Mastic School a few blocks from Grandma’s house. Someone dared me to climb through the window of our classroom, and for that infraction the principal whipped me in front of the whole school. This was the beginning of my “reign of terror” before God changed my life.

We soon moved from Grandma’s house to the upper floor of Aunt Olivet’s house on Peach Street, on the other side of Alameda. It was a beautiful home. I attended Edison School and began to get a serious education. Myron Langley, my stepfather, was a harsh person who believed in “old school” discipline. He terrified me and I hated him for most of my childhood. Later I learned how valuable his discipline was to my future. He instilled in me a work ethic and stability by his example. Nevertheless, I was emotionally starved for the love and moral support of a father. He and my mother bought me a used bicycle, and every weekend I rode to Grandma’s house to spend the night and go to Sunday school with my friend Kenneth.

In 1949 we moved to Concord, California, and lived in a nice house on Almor Court. These were some of the