

The Coal Miner PREACHER

A testimony of

healings,

miracles,

angels,

and prophecies

By James O. Russell as told to Georgia Smelser

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Childhood Experiences

Many people in the small community of Ilsley, Kentucky, where our family lived, were receiving the Holy Ghost and speaking in other tongues. In the General Baptist Church where my father, James Eddie Russell, was a deacon and my mother, Martha Ann, a godly, praying woman, was a member in good standing, there was a stir and a hunger for a deeper experience with God among several members of our church.

Uncle Van was one of them. He'd worship God with all his heart and get so happy. I was just a small boy, but I vividly remember the night when Uncle Van was "slain in the Spirit."

One Sunday night at church when Uncle Van was praising the Lord in the Spirit, he fell backward on the floor under the power of God—right in front of the pulpit. It was like he was in a trance—just passed out.

A lady in the church thought he had fainted, ran to the "community" water bucket behind the door, got a dipper of water, poured it on her handkerchief, and bathed Uncle Van's face to revive him. About that time Uncle Van

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started speaking in other tongues, and another lady said, "Let him alone, he's coming to."

Soon my mother and father received the Holy Ghost. A short time after this, my father left the Baptist church and built a church that he called the Ilsley Holiness Church, which he pastored for many years.

There were seven children in our family: George, Mary Frances, me, Clyde, Lewis, Ernest, and John—six boys and one girl. We had a small "congregation" with just our family.

Another vivid memory as a young child was going to our yearly graveyard workings. People went early in the morning and cleaned the grounds and their family's graves. Then everybody spread their tablecloths and had dinner on the ground.

After dinner we all went into the church and had a church service. Sometimes this service would last a long time. I saw women lying on the floor "slain in the Spirit." When it was time to go home, I saw them being picked up and put in the wagon. After the bumpy ride home, they were still under God's power.

When I was six years old, we lived in an old log house. There was a wide hall between the room where my brothers and I slept and our parents' bedroom. My sister, Frances, slept in a room adjoining theirs.

One night as I lay in my bed in that log room, I heard someone call my name. I sat up, put my feet on the floor, and listened awhile.

I don't know who called me, I thought, so I just lay back down.

A little while later that same voice spoke to me again. I got up as before and listened again. Nothing happened.

I lay down again.

The third time I heard the voice, I thought that perhaps it was my daddy, so I got up. I crossed the hall and went through my sister's room to my parents' room. They were asleep.

As I stood at the foot of the bed, I was confused. If that was my daddy who called, how did he get back into a deep sleep so fast? About that time Jesus spoke to me and said, "I have called you."

I didn't get scared. The voice was clear and definite. When the realization came over me of what had just transpired, I got so blessed! Although I had not yet received the Holy Ghost, the Spirit came upon me with such force that I shouted all over the house—in the dark. I woke up the whole household and perhaps some neighbors!

Can you imagine my parents awakening from a deep sleep to all this commotion!

I soon settled down and went back to bed. The way the Lord dealt with me reminded me of the way God called Samuel when he was a child. Samuel thought Eli the priest had called him.

After this experience I became a six-year-old janitor of the church. I'd open the church doors before services along with cleaning the church. I felt a compulsion to work for the Lord.

I was about six years old when my mother came down with tuberculosis in both lungs. TB, as it was commonly called, took the lives of many people during those times. After World War II, "miracle" drugs were developed, and the death rate of tuberculosis dropped nearly eighty percent.

My mother got it in 1925. She was just barely alive