

**WESLEYAN HERITAGE Library**

*Autobiographical*

**SHORT SKETCHES FROM  
THE LIVES OF  
REV. AND MRS. C. W. RUTH**

By

*Rev. & Mrs. C. W. Ruth*

*“Follow peace with all men, and holiness, without  
which no man shall see the Lord” Heb 12:14*

**Spreading Scriptural Holiness to the World**

Wesleyan Heritage Publications  
© 1998

# **SHORT SKETCHES FROM THE LIFE OF REV. and MRS. C. W. RUTH**

PENTECOSTAL PUBLISHING Co.  
Louisville, Kentucky

## **FOREWORD**

No name is more fragrant in the memory of God's holy people in America than that of the late C. W. Ruth. It is most fitting to have a book published giving many of the outstanding facts of his most useful life and ministry. His companion in late life has undertaken this task in the pages which follow. She has done the work well. I am sure a real welcome awaits this memorial.

In addition to the above task Sister Ruth has added something of her own experience in a ministry of holiness testimony and active service for many years. Her keen interest in and efforts for promoting holiness interdenominationally speaks for itself. She is an untiring worker for her Master in this high calling.

**C. W. BUTLER**

# **LIFE SKETCH**

**(Autobiographical)**

**By C. W. Ruth**

The writer was born September 1, 1865, in Hilltown Township, Bucks County, Pennsylvania. Both my father and my mother were devoted and consistent Christians and members of the Evangelical Association before I was born; hence I grew up in a home atmosphere of real spirituality and godliness. For this I am devoutly thankful. Among my earliest recollections are the family altar, the Sabbath school, and attendance upon the prayer meetings, revival meetings and camp meetings with my parents. I was the first-born, and only son, having three younger sisters. I do not think there ever was a day, from my earliest childhood to the time of my conversion, the Spirit of God did not strive with me, and bring to my heart conviction for sin and my need of a Savior. Often times I was "almost persuaded" to become a Christian, and always cherished the purpose to do so at some time, and yet, withal, procrastinated, and so became more and more hardened and corrupted by sin. But the consciousness that my parents were daily and constantly praying for me, often restrained me from outward sin, and kept my conscience tender. For several years I lived on the farm with my grandparents, who also were devout Christians; and here too the influences of religion constantly surrounded and restrained me. Having but limited means, my parents were unable to provide me with any especial educational advantages. Living in a country village or on the farm, I never had the privilege of attending even a graded school, and for the most part attended a country school; and even here circumstances compelled an irregular attendance.

At the age of sixteen it was decided that I should learn some trade, and so arrangements were made for me to go to a neighboring town, (Quakertown, Pa.) to serve an apprenticeship in a printing office. Here again I found myself surrounded with religious influences, as the proprietor of the printing office was a Christian gentleman. In the same office with me was the son of a preacher. We became quite intimate friends. After a few months he was sent for by his father to attend a camp meeting. At once I surmised the object in view, and remarked to a fellow-workman that when the preacher's son would return from the camp meeting he would be religious. The more I thought of it, the more fully I believed it would be so, and the thought greatly distressed me. Somehow, I felt that if he was converted I would have to be. As he returned on Monday morning, just one look into his countenance, before he had uttered a word, convinced me that my fears had come true. Instantly I was in trouble, and under deep conviction. I felt there was a chasm between us. Without saying much to me upon the subject of religion, he declared his purpose to attend the midweek prayer meeting, and insisted on my going with him; this I finally consented to do. This was on Friday night. Conviction became so pungent and intense, I publicly confessed myself a seeker; after much earnest crying and agonizing prayer to God, by day and night confessing my sins, I was gloriously converted on the following Sunday night. The pastor of the church I attended, after an earnest sermon, invited seekers to come forward to the altar of prayer. I rejoiced in the opportunity, and rushed forward to the altar, fell upon my knees, and plead for mercy. At about 9:30 o'clock, God in mercy heard my prayer, the burden of my guilt was rolled away, the light of heaven broke into my soul, the Spirit witnessed with my spirit that I was pardoned and accepted of God, and was indeed a new creature in Christ. Although I had been averse to religious demonstrations, I now found myself shouting aloud the praises of God. I was born again and knew it. This occurred early in September, 1882. Praise God forevermore! Soon after this I was baptized and united with the church.

During the following year I lived a most earnest and devoted Christian life, attending faithfully all the means of grace. I carried two Testaments -- one German and one English -- in my pockets, and used my spare time in studying the same. Thus I maintained a clear, justified experience. But I had gone only a very short time in my Christian experience until I discovered, much to my amazement, that there still remained something in my heart that hindered me, and at times even defeated me. The principal manifestations of that "something" were a man-fearing spirit, the uprising of an unholy temper, difficulty in forgiving and loving an enemy, etc. Just one year after I had been so gloriously converted, while yet in my first love. I definitely sought the experience of entire sanctification. After seeking earnestly for some days, one Sunday night while walking down the sidewalk toward the church, conscious that I had consecrated my all for time and eternity, I was enabled to look up into heaven, and say, "I believe that the blood of Jesus cleanseth my heart from all sin now; He sanctifies me now;" and suddenly and consciously the Holy Ghost fell upon me, and I knew just as positively and as assuredly that God had sanctified me through and through as I had known a year before that He had pardoned my sins. I rushed into the church, and before the pastor had time to announce the opening hymn, I told the congregation what had occurred on the sidewalk, and that God had sanctified me wholly. Billows of glory swept over me until my joy seemed to be utterly inexpressible and uncontainable. Oh the blessedness of that hour! Surely heaven could be no better. And from that day to the present -- now almost twenty years -- Satan has never had the audacity to tempt me to doubt even for one minute that God did not then and there sanctify me wholly.

In the spring of 1884 I accepted a position in a printing office in Indianapolis, Indiana. After coming to this city God distinctly and unmistakably called me to preach his gospel. It would require another chapter to give all the details of the struggle through which I now passed, as for three months I prayed against this conviction. In view of my limited education, poverty, etc., I felt that it was utterly impossible for me to enter the ministry. However, I came to feel, "Woe is me, if I preach not the Gospel;" and on a Monday afternoon about three o'clock, while on my knees, God seemed to speak to me direct in the words of Luke 21:15, "I will give you a mouth and wisdom, which all your adversaries shall not be able to gainsay nor resist." Those words had never before come to my notice. At the time, they seemed to have been spoken to me personally and audibly. This greatly assured and comforted my heart. The "open door" of opportunity in the providence of God was at once before me. I selected as my first text Matt. 11:28-30, and by the blessing of God preached as best I could. While I was thus endeavoring to preach, sinners wept and saints shouted. I gave an invitation for any desiring to seek the Lord to come to the altar of prayer. Although there had been no revival in progress, five penitents came to the altar, and three were happily converted that night.

Soon after this the call of God to the special work of holiness evangelism came to me just as clearly and certainly as had been my conversion, sanctification and call to preach. Again, in a most mysterious manner, the open door of opportunity was before me; and so in the fall of that same year (1884) I accepted an invitation to assist a church in a special series of revival meetings, and resigned my position in the printing office. Since that time I have never had a vacation of three weeks, and have preached and testified the gospel of holiness everywhere, and have never had a revival engagement where the services continue one week or more without seekers at the altar. I regard it as a conservative statement when I say that in my meetings I have witnessed more than thirty thousand souls kneel at the altar seeking pardon or heart purity.

Four times I was elected as presiding elder -- each time over my protest; but with it continued the work of holiness evangelism. I have traveled more than one hundred and fifty thousand miles filling my engagements, and have labored in thirty-three states and Canada, among twenty-five different denominations. Eighteen months of this time I have been associate pastor of the Church of the Nazarene in Los Angeles, California; but during all that time there never was a week without souls being saved and sanctified at our altars. To God be all the glory. Surely, "by the grace of God I am what I am."

C. W. RUTH.  
Indianapolis, Ind., November 1, 1903.

Rev. C. W. Ruth preached for thirty-eight years after this was written.

**LIFE SKETCH**  
**(Autobiographical)**  
**By Mrs. C. W. (Laura) Ruth**

I was born in Story County, Iowa. While I was very young, my parents drove to a Fourth of July celebration; but finding no dance floor on the grounds they drove back twelve miles to the county seat, where they found a tent with a holiness camp meeting in progress. Eternity alone can reveal how much that meeting has meant to my life and eternal future; for after attending and seeking the Lord in three services, my father and mother were saved.

County and State holiness leaders kept camp meetings and conventions before the people, and my parents were sanctified.

When the next Fourth of July came, a neighbor wanted to take my sister and me to the celebration, as our parents had no desire to attend. I have always been thankful that our mother was not moved by our pleading and tears; but her "No" was final and we never attended again, though I was greatly disappointed that first time, as I wanted to hear the band music.

On the night before I was eleven years of age I was converted in a revival meeting in an Evangelical Church. The pastor's wife invited me to the altar. My mother had often spoken to me concerning my soul's need, but never until the night before I was saved did I realize I was a sinner; I knew I should go to the altar when the invitation was given, but I was with a young lady; the little church was crowded and we were in the "Amen Corner." The enemy said, "What would she think of you if you walked out and kneeled at that altar?" I was the only one at the altar the next evening. The people may have thought it a small meeting with only an eleven-year-old, bashful girl converted, but it was a wonderful service for me. The evangelist, Rev. Charles Pickford, soon came to be our pastor. If his daughter or I failed to testify when we had opportunity, he always reminded us after the service that we must witness for the Lord. That kindly admonition was just what I needed; otherwise my timidity might have checked my testimony and caused me to backslide.

Our pastor's wife encouraged me to commit scripture to memory and our pastor was continually preaching holiness, showing the condition of the unsanctified and telling of the possibility and great need of having all sin cleansed from the heart.

My parents took us to holiness conventions and camp meetings, so I was well "exposed" to holiness teaching. I am more thankful to them for what they did for me in this way than for anything else they might have done.

Before I was fifteen years of age my mother was taken to Heaven. My sister was twelve and brothers ten, eight and three years of age. Since I was oldest, I quit school and cared for my baby brother, sent the rest to school, and took my mother's place in carrying on the work in the home, on a farm. I baked the bread, churned the butter, canned several hundred quarts of fruit, raised many hundreds of chickens, and much garden, cooked for corn-pickers, harvesters and carpenters.

How good it was that I was saved, for I had no mother to direct. Sometimes when my brother didn't do as he should, I had a feeling in my heart that troubled me, though no one knew about it. It was often so difficult for me to testify, even though I wanted to, yet I was afraid I wouldn't speak just as I should. I had heard, "Without holiness no man shall see the Lord," and, "This is the will of God, even your sanctification."

Soon after I was saved we had a new pastor who didn't preach holiness; but one Sunday afternoon some Salvation Army people held a meeting in our church and I went to the altar, knowing I had a heart need. The pastor's wife came to me, telling me I was all right, and didn't need to be at the altar. She didn't know the inner feelings of my heart when things didn't go as I thought they should.

I don't remember how many times I was a seeker in camp meetings and conventions, trying to get rid of carnality. I would think I "took it by faith," and go on for a time sincere in my belief and testimony that I was sanctified; then I would get in a good holiness meeting and a doubt would arise and again I would go to the altar.

At the National Holiness Association Camp Meeting at Des Moines, Iowa, I heard C. J. Fowler, Will Huff, H. C. Morrison, J. M. and M. J. Harris, C. W. Ruth, G. A. McLaughlin, and others sing and preach holiness till I knew it was the will of God for me. But when Dr. Carradine preached from Romans 7:24, "O wretched man that I am! who shall deliver me from the body of this death?" picturing the awfulness of carrying around the body of sin and clearly showing that carnality means death to the soul, if we are not delivered, I was more determined to be sanctified; for I loved the Lord, and the knowledge of the awfulness of carnality was so stamped on my mind that nothing but complete deliverance could satisfy.

How thankful I am for such faithful messengers! Oh, that all young people may hear as I heard! I kept on seeking, and each time I thought I had believed. One Sunday afternoon at the National Holiness Camp Meeting, when I was seventeen, I determined that I would never leave the altar until I was absolutely certain the work was done. Previously I had promised the Lord I would be or go as He might choose. I became willing to join the Salvation Army or go to Africa; but I didn't want to say a thing that wasn't true, so I thought I must have the witness before I believed. Believing God's Word is so simple, yet the enemy makes it a mountain. But I was at the altar and didn't intend to leave till I was rid of all sin if I stayed there till I died. Jennie Reeves, now Mrs. C. A. Thompson, took out her watch and said, "Now can't you believe God this twelfth day of June at fifteen minutes till six o'clock?" I said to the Lord, "I'll believe Thy word at any cost." I felt as I think the priests must have felt when they stepped off the Jordan bank. I felt I was stepping into dark, turbulent waters that would swallow me up unless the Lord came to my rescue. I never touched the waters, but the Holy Ghost came like an electric shock through my entire being. No one needed to tell me the work was done. I hardly knew how I got up from that altar and down the long aisle, but I do remember when I reached the outside of the tabernacle.

Never again did I feel I should go to the altar because of a question mark in my experience. And the inward carnal stirrings were gone. I might be discouraged with those who go often to the altar, if it were not for my own experience. Some one has said that we must want to be sanctified more than mildly if we are to obtain. When our desire becomes great enough, we will receive.

A few years after this, a lady evangelist was holding a meeting in our country. One day she told our father he must send one of us to Central Holiness University that fall. We thought it couldn't be, much as we desired to attend. But we decided later that my sister should go first, as I could get along alone with the work easier than she. She secured a teacher's certificate the next summer, and my oldest brother and I went to C. H. U. that fall. I had been out of school seven years, but the Lord helped me and I obtained a certificate for teaching. After this my sister and I took turns teaching and keeping house, saving our money for further schooling. How grateful I have been for all who prayed this holiness school into being, making it possible for me and others who had been deprived of high school to take subcollegiate work. Other young people my age had gone to high school and college from our community and, although I had a great longing for schooling, I thought I never would have the opportunity. Meanwhile I had been developing an inferiority complex because the other young people had received education that I had been denied. This would have been more pronounced but for my Christian Endeavor and Sunday School interests.

I tithed every dollar that came into my possession, and have felt the Lord made the ninety per cent reach farther than the one hundred per cent would have, otherwise.

Later I did three years' high school and four years college work in five years by attending summers as well as regular school year at Iowa State Teachers' College. I came out with a little reserve, while some who had taught twice as long as I, had \$2,000 debt in the same institution. The Lord never becomes indebted to His children.

Since I was sanctified in the National Holiness Association Camp Meeting in Des Moines, Iowa, when I was seventeen years of age, I have always been interested in interdenominational holiness association work; and when the leaders of our county holiness association left us one after another, I became concerned as to what the outcome would be. I was deeply burdened when our leaders in Iowa in the interdenominational work went to Heaven, as in the case of Isaiah Reid, the State President, and Dr. D. J. Bunce, leading holiness evangelist, another of our workers, a county association officer, became afflicted with an incurable disease, which depleted our ranks. I was greatly distressed in regard to the opportunity for our young people to hear the preaching of holiness as I had. How could they receive the teaching and hear the holiness messages, if no one kept the monthly meetings, conventions and camp meetings before them?

About 1929, the president of Iowa Holiness Association, held a holiness convention in Ames, Iowa. At this time we were urged to set a time for monthly holiness association meetings as in years past. We decided on the first Sunday afternoon of each month. So Story County Holiness Association was re-organized and, with only a few at the business meeting, I was elected president. I had the burden of the work at heart, but felt some one more capable should have been chosen leader.

We began our County Association work with eleven members. At first we met in homes and later in churches. Always the blessing of the Lord was on these services of prayer, song, testimony and sermon. One Sunday when we met in an Ames church, four men from adjoining Boone County attended. After the service they inquired as to just what the Association stood for. After an explanation, one brother said, "Why, that is what we want;" so they joined. Later more people from



this county united with us, and the Story County Association became the Boone-Story County Holiness Association.

During my absence from home while engaged in school work, I would secure a church and a preacher by correspondence, would send notices and the vice-president would take charge of the service.

At one of our meetings, a brother who had visited in a neighboring state told us of a holiness association there that had kept up an annual camp meeting, even through the time of the financial depression, with only half the membership we then had. We told the audience we might just as well begin at once while the Lord had the burden upon us, and asked this brother to call for pledges for a camp. The pledges were made faster than I could write down names. We prayed for a place where the meeting might be held, and as one expressed it, "We prayed for a cow pasture and the Lord gave us a beautiful park." We desired a lovely hillside with grass, shade, and a well, near Ames; but we secured a large steel chautauqua pavilion, in beautiful surroundings in Boone, at very little cost. Our first workers in 1935 were Rev. Joseph H. Smith and Rev. Gideon Williamson with the Bate Sisters as song leaders. At one service during the invitation for seekers the pianist asked another to take his place at the piano, and he came down from the high platform and knelt at the altar as a seeker, and other young people followed. This young man later enrolled in what is now Kletzing College, from which he was graduated and has since entered the work of the Lord. A number of young people who sought the Lord at the altar in the camp, as their Savior or Sanctifier, became students in holiness schools. When we saw the altars filled with seekers then, and each succeeding year, all felt well repaid for all the effort and prayers it took to plan and carry out such camps.

It takes fasting, prayer and the burden of the work upon the heart, as well as constant vigilance every day of the year, to keep a live holiness association functioning effectively; but we can testify that it pays. As Dr. G. A. McLaughlin would say, "Keep holiness preaching before the people, and there will be scholars and dollars for our holiness schools, and workers for both home and foreign lands."

After Boone-Story County Holiness Association had been working for some time, we went to Waterloo, Iowa. There we found the Tri-County Holiness Association had ceased to operate, although it had held monthly all-day meetings and an annual tent meeting a few years before, during the time I was a student in a near-by city.

After a vain attempt to locate the membership list, we secured First Methodist Church for a Sunday afternoon holiness association meeting, with a male quartet from the now Kletzing College to have charge, to sing and testify. A few hours before time for service a telegram advised us they would be unable to make the long drive, because of icy highways caused by a heavy sleet storm. But the Lord came to the rescue, and the pastor of the local Wesleyan Methodist Church gave a fine holiness message, with only a very short advance notice. We certainly appreciated God's minute man. That was in 1937, and was the first service of the re-organized Tri-County Holiness Association. Monthly meetings and an annual tent meeting have been held since.

Prior to the first service we had visited every church we thought might be interested in attending such a meeting and contacted as many as possible getting name and address. Not long ago a friend inquired if I had a hobby. I told them it must be getting mailing lists for a holiness association. Some will attend if they see a notice in a local newspaper or hear an announcement from the pulpit; but we find many more who do so if they receive a personal notice.

We were praying about officers, especially a president. We had a committee meeting to discuss plans. In the course of conversation a good layman remarked that if a certain brother could be president we would have a good start. We had not met this person suggested, but we made it our business to locate him. He was a member of a different denomination from the one who suggested him. He was elected their first president, and at this time has been serving in this office since 1937, and we believe the Lord made the selection.

The spring of 1938 we believed the Lord would have us plan a tent meeting for Waterloo. We had very little in the treasury, and we couldn't see our way through; but we knew if the Lord put the burden on our hearts, he would not fail us. The Iowa Holiness Association president informed us that we could use one of the Iowa Holiness Association tents and he had found an evangelist and wife who had a trailer cabin; so we had our first tent meeting in the fine tourist park. One brother helped locate chairs, and his wife loaned her piano. The state president brought the tent and did most of the work in getting it in readiness. We paid the workers and other expenses and had more left in the treasury than at the beginning of the meeting. The evangelist for that meeting is now the state president of the Iowa Holiness Association.

For the next annual tent meeting we secured Evangelist A. L. Whitcomb, and for 1940 Rev. C. W. Ruth, as we desired that the fine group of people who were attending the meetings should have the definite holiness teaching we knew they would receive, and the people were not disappointed.

\*\*\*\*\*

After a ten-day meeting at Pacific Bible College, and a few happy days at home, we left Pasadena, California, February 12, 1941, for Chicago, where my husband had an executive board meeting of the National Holiness Missionary Society.

On the way to Morgantown, West Virginia, for a meeting, we stopped overnight in Indianapolis, Indiana, and visited the church prayer meeting where the Ruth family had belonged before locating in California. The next day we arrived in Cincinnati, Ohio, and visited son Elbert, Dr. E. B. Ruth and family.

In Lansdale, Perkasio, Coopersburg, Weissport, New Ringgold and Reading, Pennsylvania, I had the privilege of meeting Brother Ruth's two sisters and husbands and many of his nieces and nephews, besides many of his friends. Between the closing of a meeting at Lansdale, on Sunday night and beginning at West Chester on Tuesday evening, we went to the home of daughter Grace and husband, Rev. E. E. Young, in New York City, who took us over the beautiful Speedway through New Haven and on to daughter Naomi and husband, Dr. Wm. Shellabear, in Hartford, Connecticut.

I had of course, met the two sons in California, George C. Ruth and Lila Todd, who is now his wife, and Rev. Roy L. Ruth and family.

Next day Ed and Grace took us back to New York Station, and the pastor met us in Philadelphia and hastened us to the church in West Chester, Pennsylvania.

After a week's meeting we were taken to Wilmington, Delaware, where we took a streamliner to Washington, D. C., and the home of a niece, with a fine service in the church where her husband is pastor. The altar was filled after husband's one message, and we left for Greensboro, North Carolina, on the midnight train for a ten-day meeting, and on to Wilmore, Kentucky for the National Holiness Convention, where Brother Ruth preached his last sermon at Asbury College.

How precious is every memory of our association! It seems almost miraculous that we were privileged to visit most of his relatives together. It has meant so much to me during the days since he went to Heaven, to hear from the dear ones who loved him. And how faithful has been the Comforter! So many times I have pitied those who pass through great disappointment and sorrow without Jesus.

This Pasadena home is precious to me; every part of it seems almost sacred. I could easily have spent all my time caring for it. Then there was a splendid opportunity to earn doing nursing. I nursed in the beautiful home of a banker one week, and was paid considerably more than I asked. But there was this great metropolitan area with such a comparative few from various denominations meeting together once a month for holiness association meetings; and the Lord had called me into interdenominational holiness work, after about thirty years doing what I could in the Church, of which I was a member. I love the church and I enjoy having those of various denominations meet together for fellowship and worship, as we expect all who are free from sin to dwell forever with the Lord. So He helped me to be true to His call; and the time I may have on earth shall be spent in the center of His will as He reveals it to me.

In June, 1943, we began Pasadena Holiness Association, monthly, second Sunday afternoon meetings. The Lord has blessed in every service now for three years. We have met in fourteen different churches of the city, representing nine different denominations; with fifty pastors, evangelists and singers of the holiness movement preaching, singing, and otherwise assisting.

In early January, 1946, our first annual Winter Camp Meeting of Pasadena Holiness Association was held with Rev. D. William Caffray, Rev. F. R. Dawson and Professor John E. Moore as workers, with Rev. D. H. Scott and Dr. Cornelius P. Haggard, National Holiness Association Regional Vice President in charge. Many holiness evangelists and missionaries in Southern California during the holidays, were in attendance.

Getting rid of carnality that causes much of our difficulties, and in its place receiving perfect love, means so much in this life, as well as the hope of dwelling forever with the Lord and all the blood-washed saints, that we feel we can well afford to relinquish things that endure only for time in order to help spread scriptural holiness, that will endure through eternal ages. Then "When the

Saints Come Marching In," and "When the Great Celestial Choir Begins to Sing," "We'll join the everlasting song, and crown Him Lord of all."

This was written at the suggestion of Mrs. E. E. Shelhamer, who heard me relating some of my experiences to a group of students.

**Mrs. C. W. (Laura) Ruth.**