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For 25 years or more, I've been traveling this land of ours and a few foreign countries trying to teach and preach by word of mouth and example, that a Christian businessman owes as much to God as a preacher does. The rest of the time I build machinery, almost any kind of machinery as long as it is big, and powerful, and can move around to do things no other machine could do before. Some people think I'm all mixed up—that you can't serve the Lord and business, too, but that's just the point. God needs businessmen as partners as well as preachers. When He created the world and everything in it, He didn't mean for us to stop there and say, "God, You've done it all. There's nothing left for us to build." He wanted us to take off from there and really build for His greater glory.

I speak in churches and auditoriums large and small across the land, usually about six times a week, and most often I start out by saying, "I am just a mechanic whom the Lord has

blessed." I'll let that serve as a starter here. As a mechanic, I like my machinery because I learned early that man is worth what man produces, and good machines help him produce more. Had I been born 100 years earlier, I would have been a good blacksmith, as men like me had been since the Bronze Age. But the Lord chose to put me here when electric motors and gasoline engines were just starting to turn, and with His blessings I have been able to take part in and contribute to the development of those great, heavy-construction machines that have helped produce our twentieth century.

Recently I built an eight-wheeled digger that out-produces the work of thousands of men at the time I was born. Instead of pushing a 100-pound wheelbarrow, the operator pushes a button and picks up the loads of 1,500 wheelbarrows, rolling off with them at 15 mph instead of two. Its rubber-tired wheels are eight feet high by over three feet wide, and inside the hub of each wheel is an electric motor that delivers more power than the giant steam engines of my youth. When it dips its twin buckets into the ground, it scoops up 150 tons of dirt in two minutes, and then lopes off to dump its load at the push of another button. Distance for distance it moves for eight cents a cubic yard what cost a dollar when I started out in business, and dollars were about three times their present size then.

I find a great deal of satisfaction in watching that brute in action, and more in the challenge of finding some better way of getting it to move 200 tons even more efficiently. In my talks, along with the statement that I am just a mechanic whom the Lord has blessed, I frequently add that He uses the weak to confound the mighty. There is no logical explanation in the world to account for my development of that digger. It combines two huge mobile Diesel engines with AC generators and DC generators, and it pours enough electricity to light a small town into a score of AC and DC motors. Yet I never got past the seventh grade in school. At the age of 30 my garage had failed and I was $5,000 in debt. At the age of 44

I lost so heavily on contracts that my employees, with more faith in me than I had in myself, took up a collection to get me back on my feet. That was me, working on my own.

If there is no logical explanation of my development of the digger, there is a theological one, available to all of us, including the weakest. By accepting God as your partner, no limit can be placed on what can be achieved. But God is no remote partner, satisfied if you go to church on Sunday and drop some religious money—the small change that goes to church—on the platter. He isn't overwhelmed if you read the Bible once in a while and obey the Golden Rule. That isn't active Christianity, but just a half-hearted way of getting along. When you go into partnership with God, you've got a Partner closer and more active than any human partner you can ever get. He participates fully in everything you let Him do, and when you start putting on airs, and thinking you're doing it with your own head of steam, He can set you down quicker and harder than a thunderbolt. There's nothing dull about being in partnership with God.

God has set me down with some terrific jolts from time to time, but when my attitude has improved, and He has seen genuine repentance, He is the only Partner Who can supply total forgiveness. Not that He is easily fooled. As one preacher put it, "God will forgive your sins, all right, but I wouldn't make a policy of going to Heaven raising Hell on the way."

But to get back to the weak confounding the mighty, in spite of my limited education, I became, with the help of the Lord, what is known in the heavy-duty equipment field as an industrialist. Among my competitors are such giants as Caterpillar, General Motors, International Harvester, Allis Chalmers and some eight others, all big corporations with high-powered executive staffs and engineering departments. In their midst I am the hick from the backwoods of Duluth, but during World War II it was our organization that built over fifty per cent of the earth-moving equipment used in combat. According to reports, what with the building of highways like

the Alcan and the Ledo Road in Burma, the building of airports and artillery emplacements all over the world, and the plowing away of rubble in demolished cities, more earth had to be moved during World War II than during all the combined wars of history.

We are proud of that record, naturally, but we wouldn't be human if we didn't find a satisfaction of another sort. The machines that did the job were what my competitors had declared to be some of "that crazy LeTourneau stuff" right up to the outbreak of hostilities. Now, nineteen years later, they are all turning out the same equipment with only minor changes. Maybe we don't confound them. They seem to be prospering. But we keep them confused. That new digger of mine can lose their biggest load in the rear end of its rear bucket.

When I have talked about this long before an audience, I've been known to apologize and say, "I didn't come here to preach a sermon. Give me time and I'll say something."

What I want to say is that what I've done, anyone can do with the help of God. Reporters have often asked me, "Did you start from scratch?" My answer to that is, "Every time." I've been financially broke so often and in debt so long that it was a big day for us when my wife and I could move out of a cook shack and into a brand new tent. Spiritually, too, I was a bankrupt even before I lost my first dollar. Yes, I started from scratch, all right, and was still starting from scratch at the age of forty-four. And the One who picked me up and started me over with my strength and ambition fully restored is the same Lord and Savior available to all for the asking.

I could have learned that early in life, as my seven brothers and sisters did. We come from a long line of ministers and missionaries on both sides of our family. My grandfather, Jean LeTourneau, was a Huguenot minister, sent with his bride, Marie Louise, from Lyons, France, to the Grande Ligne Mission in Quebec in the 1840s. From all accounts, he and his

wife had a rough time. The Protestant Huguenots were no longer subjected to the fanatical persecutions of the eighteenth century, but neither were they made especially welcome. Added to that was the primitive housing of the mission and the long, fierce Canadian winters. For a young couple from southern France, the winters must have been pretty grim, but they stuck it out until after my father was born on January 12, 1857, in St. Sebastian, Quebec. Then, both broken in health, they moved to Richford, Vermont, only five miles from the Canadian line.

"That's a French Canadian for you," my father once said. "When he crosses the border, he thinks he's as far south as he can get."

Grandfather LeTourneau set up a boarding school in Richford, with Grandmother doing the cooking for about twenty students while taking care of her own sons, Joshua, Caleb, and Joseph, and daughter Rachelle. In his spare time and on Sundays, Grandfather continued to serve as minister among the Protestant French Canadians who made up the bulk of the population.

I never really knew my grandparents; my one recollection of my grandmother when she visited us in Duluth is that she was small and spoke only in French. But I have a great admiration for them. In Richford, to serve both God and humanity, they drove themselves night and day until once more they collapsed from the strain. Ordered by their doctor to give up teaching and the ministry, and live an outdoor life, they bought a farm north of town, and then because there was a stream tumbling through the farm that Grandfather didn't want to waste, they built a saw mill. There may be harder jobs than trying to farm in the rock of Vermont and run a saw mill, but I've never found them in heavy construction work or iron foundries.

By tradition, the eldest son, Joshua, known to us as Uncle J., was to run the farm and the mill, and my father was to be trained for the ministry. Neither my uncle nor my father

ever spoke about the accident that changed the plans, but as a mechanic I can see what happened. The crude water-powered mill of the 1870s, wet stone floors made greasy with sawdust, no safety precautions, and a young boy straining at logs too big for him. Uncle J. lost his arm in that accident, and it was my father, much too young, who had to take over the farm and the mill.

I think Uncle J. regarded his lost arm as more of a chance for escape than a handicap. Although no one had ever heard of a one-armed type-setter, he became one, and then a newspaper reporter, publisher, and successful printer in Duluth. My father settled down to his responsibilities as he had been trained to do, but the evidence is that he didn't like it.

In 1880 a town like Richford did not go in heavily for Youth Entertainment Centers or recreation of any kind. You had your Sundays off for church where you were taught more the fear of God than the love of God. It might even have been heresy to think of God intimately enough to call Him Partner. I know from long talks with my father, after we got over feuding, that his only recreation was going to the Richford Blacksmith Shop to watch his young friend, Robert Gilmour, learn how to shoe horses and shape red-hot iron. And young Gilmour got his recreation by coming out to the farm to watch my father saw lumber.

What made Richford endurable for Caleb Thucydides was the arrival in 1880 of a new school teacher named Elizabeth Johnston Lorimer. According to the Martin Genealogy book, of which my brother Bill has a copy, she was an eighth-generation Martin on her mother's side, the original Samuel Martin having arrived in New Haven, Connecticut, around 1645. The Lorimers were Scotch, and had arrived in the village of Beebe Plains, Quebec, in 1830. Like the Martins, the Lorimers ran strongly to ministers, three of Elizabeth's four brothers being reverends.

I have it on the good authority of my Uncle Albert Lorimer that his family had strong objections to one Caleb Thucydides

LeTourneau when he began squiring Elizabeth Lorimer around to the church suppers. They had high respect for his Huguenot parents, but they didn't think he was the last word in rock-bound, New England stability.

"My sister Belle warned her that he wouldn't stay put, that he'd carry her off, and we'd never see her again," Uncle Albert told me.

My own idea, based on some frank opinions of my mother, is that being carried off was the least of her worries. As she moved from Richford to Beebe Plains to Duluth to Portland, Stockton, Long Beach, and Uplands, with minor stops in between, her favorite quotation was, "Whatsoever state I am in, therewith I'll be content." And she certainly was. One December in Uplands she came in with a bouquet of flowers from the garden, and looked at the clock with immense satisfaction. It was 5:00 p.m. and the sunshine was pouring down. "It's eight o'clock in Richford," she said. "And cold, son! It's so cold I can hear it crack from here."

Father and Mother were married on Christmas Day, 1881, and moved into the big, comfortable, two-story-plus-attic farmhouse. They were a long time in getting away. Harold was born there on June 1, 1883. William was next, born on June 24, 1885. Then my sister Mattie, born on January 22, 1887. I was born on November 30, 1888, and named after my father's best friend, Robert Gilmour.

Apparently I was the straw that broke the camel's back. Within weeks of my arrival father shipped us up to our Lorimer grandparents in Beebe Plains, and then he and Robert Gilmour headed south.

"That was the year after the big winter of 1888," my father told me, "so Bob and I decided we had spent our last winter shoveling snow. We took a train to California, and then went all the way down into Baja California, a couple of hundred miles south of San Diego. Nobody had ever heard of frost down there so we put our money down on a couple of farms, and started back for you folks."

They never did see those farms in Mexico again. Returning to Vermont, they made a detour by way of Duluth to see my Uncle J., then running a big printing plant there. Uncle J. was getting ready to build a fine house up on the hill, overlooking Lake Superior, and knowing Dad and "Uncle Bob" were excellent craftsmen, he offered them the job, "cash on the barrel-head." They figured they'd have time to build the house and get back to their farms in Mexico just in time to catch the next rainy season. But when that house was finished, other buyers admired the workmanship, and ordered more. By the time we were all reunited in Duluth in 1890, Dad was well on his way to becoming a successful building contractor. Robert Gilmour had a growing blacksmith shop and he took in Uncle Emanuel Richards (Aunt Rachelle's husband) as partner. Forgotten were all thoughts of farming in Mexico.