

THE INNER SECRET

[Harry Foster]

ERNEST was puzzled. He was also sad. He had been to a Memorial Service for his grandfather and there he had heard read a chapter from the New Testament which spoke about believers being "caught up" to be with the Lord at the Second Coming.

It had not been a sad service, for everyone seemed so certain that they could look forward to seeing Grandfather again when they were all caught up. Ernest was sad, however, because he was not at all sure that he would be among them, and he was puzzled for he could not understand how God would know for certain whom to call up to join that happy reunion and whom to leave behind.

He continued to wonder about this for some days, and then a big change happened which occupied all his thoughts. He and his parents went to live with his grandmother, who was now left all alone in her big house and wanted them to share the home with her. First of all there was the [33/34] excitement of the move and then, of course, there were many new and interesting things in Grandmother's house -- 'gadgets' his father called them. In this respect perhaps it was the bathroom which was the most interesting.

Take the soap, for instance! Instead of lying rather wet on the washhand basin, it just hung on a sort of arm or bracket which was fixed on the wall tiles just above. Perhaps it was not true to say that it hung, for, as a matter of fact, you just put the soap up against and underneath the arm and there it stuck. Ernest did not normally like washing very much, but now he was always ready to wash his hands just for the joy of seeing if the soap stayed put. And it always did!

At least, it always had done until that morning when his grandmother was ill. She was not very ill, but still she had to stay in bed, so that meant that Mother took water, soap and towels into her bedroom for her. So when Ernest came to the bathroom there was no soap. That is to say that there was none in the right place, but there was another tablet on the ledge by the bath, so he used that.

The trouble came when he placed it on the special bracket. It fell with a clatter into the handbasin. That is funny, thought Ernest. It has never done that before. He tried again, pressing the soap against the metal arm, but still it did not stick, but fell once more down into the basin. This was one more problem for Ernest! It was the same kind of soap and the same colour, and yet it would not stay up but fell whenever he let it go.

As a matter of fact, this was a very similar problem to the one he had thought so much about, as he found when he told his father about it. By this time Grandmother was settled and the soap back in the bathroom, so his father told him to fetch both tablets. This he did, and still they looked the same.

"Turn them over," Father said, and when Ernest did this he found that the first tablet had a small metal disc on it, while the other had none. "That is what makes the difference, Ernest," his father explained, "and that is what makes it possible for the soap not to fall. Not that the disc has any power! Oh, no, that is just an ordinary bit of steel. The power is in the magnet which is at the end of that bracket. The magnet has the power, but it needs the metal disc to use it."

Ernest was beginning to understand. He knew enough about magnets to realize that they have the power to attract and to hold iron, and although he had never thought about it before, he saw that soap without iron was no use for this purpose. He asked his father if the soap had to be specially made with this steel cap, but his father showed him how it could be removed and fitted into the other cake of soap. Having pressed the disc into the other piece of soap he gave it to Ernest, saying: "Now go up to the bathroom and try that." The boy hurried upstairs, and to his delight he found that the second tablet of soap was now firmly held by the bracket. It did not fall as before.

Father had known about Ernest's problems concerning being "caught up", so he took the opportunity to explain by means of the two pieces of soap how one could be taken and the other left. "Outwardly," he told Ernest, "one cannot always be sure who is a true Christian and who is not, but inwardly there is no difficulty. The true

Christians have Christ in their heart, whereas the others, however nice they may be as persons, are just like that second piece of soap. They have nothing in them which can respond to the upward tug of the magnet of God's love. They will be left behind, for they have never asked the Lord Jesus to come into their lives."

This left Ernest very thoughtful, but then he had an idea. "Father," he said, "it was not too late to change that second piece of soap, was it?" "No," answered his father, "it was not too late, and nor is it too late for you to change. It will make all the difference if you open your heart for the Saviour to come in and live in you."

Now Ernest has no problems about being ready for the Coming of the Lord. With the Lord Jesus in his heart he knows that the great magnet of God's love will not let him fall. Of course, there was a big difference between what happened to the soap and what happened to him. With the soap it was only an outward extra, but with a human life it is an inward change which decides our future. The right explanation is in Colossians 1:27: "Christ IN you, the hope of glory." - H. F.

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