

# THE COMFORTING ARMS OF MY LOVING FATHER

BY BILLY JONES



In 1952 my Dad graduated from Holmes Bible College in Greenville, S.C., and took his first church as pastor of the Bethel Pentecostal Holiness Church in Gladys, Virginia. Even though I was only four and a half years old I still remember moving there. So many sights and sounds from those years are etched forever in my memory. Sounds such as that bucket hitting the water at the bottom of the well when my Mom would draw water, or the blood curdling scream coming from the outhouse when my Mom looked down and saw a black snake curled up around her feet. The sight of that door flying open and her trying to run with her panties around her ankles still makes me laugh even now. I remember Dad's first two converts as pastor of the Bethel church, Junior and Lorene Mitchell. They had a little red headed freckle faced girl named Brenda who became my very first girlfriend at the ripe old age of six. My wife and I are still very close friends with Brenda and her husband Lynn. I could go on and on, but there is one memory from Bethel that is especially precious and dear to me.

I don't remember if the church already had that old bus or if they bought it after we moved there, but Dad would jump in that old thing, go out and pick up people and bring them to church. Later on after Junior Mitchell got saved, he and Dad would take turns driving. I loved riding that old bus because all of us kids would sit in the back and play.

I remember one particular Sunday night when Daddy was to drive the bus. After the service was over everybody went their separate ways, some in their cars and some on the church bus. Mom had taken my two little brothers, Byron and Harold, and gone home as usual. Dad thought I had gone home with Mom and Mom thought I was with Dad, but I had fallen asleep on a church pew. I'll never forget waking up in the dark and when I say dark, I mean DARK! You couldn't see your hand in front of your face. We were way out in the country and there were no street lights. I was so scared. I remember screaming and crying, "Daddy, Daddy" but there was no answer. I tried to remember which pew I was laying on so maybe I could find my way to the door. I remember bumping into everything. I mean it was complete, T-total darkness and I was one scared five year-old little boy. I finally found the front door, but it was locked. I don't remember how long I stood there, but it seemed like a lifetime. All of a sudden I heard something! Way off in the distance I heard the sound of an old church bus. Nobody will ever know how beautiful that sound was to that five-year-old little boy. I listened as it pulled into the yard. When the motor shut off I started screaming "Daddy, Daddy" but he couldn't hear

me. When Daddy went in the house Mama asked him where I was. He said, "I thought he was with you." Mama said, "I thought he was with you."

All of a sudden I heard the sound of footsteps running to the church, then I saw the flashlight shining under the door and then I heard the sound of keys. When the door finally opened my Daddy grabbed me up in his arms and said "Son, I'm so sorry." I don't remember how long he knelt there and held me but I do know this, I didn't have to walk home, he carried me. It was then I knew everything was going to be alright because my Daddy kept telling me it was. What I felt at that moment in the arms of my loving father made it all worthwhile.

Well, there have been other times in my life when I was lost in the dark and I couldn't find my way. It was at that very moment when I cried out to my heavenly father I felt His loving arms slip around me and I knew, just as before, everything was going to be alright! I thank God everyday for, "THE COMFORTING ARMS OF MY LOVING FATHER." Both of my fathers!