

1984

B.R. Lakin: a Country Preacher

Elmer L. Towns
Liberty University

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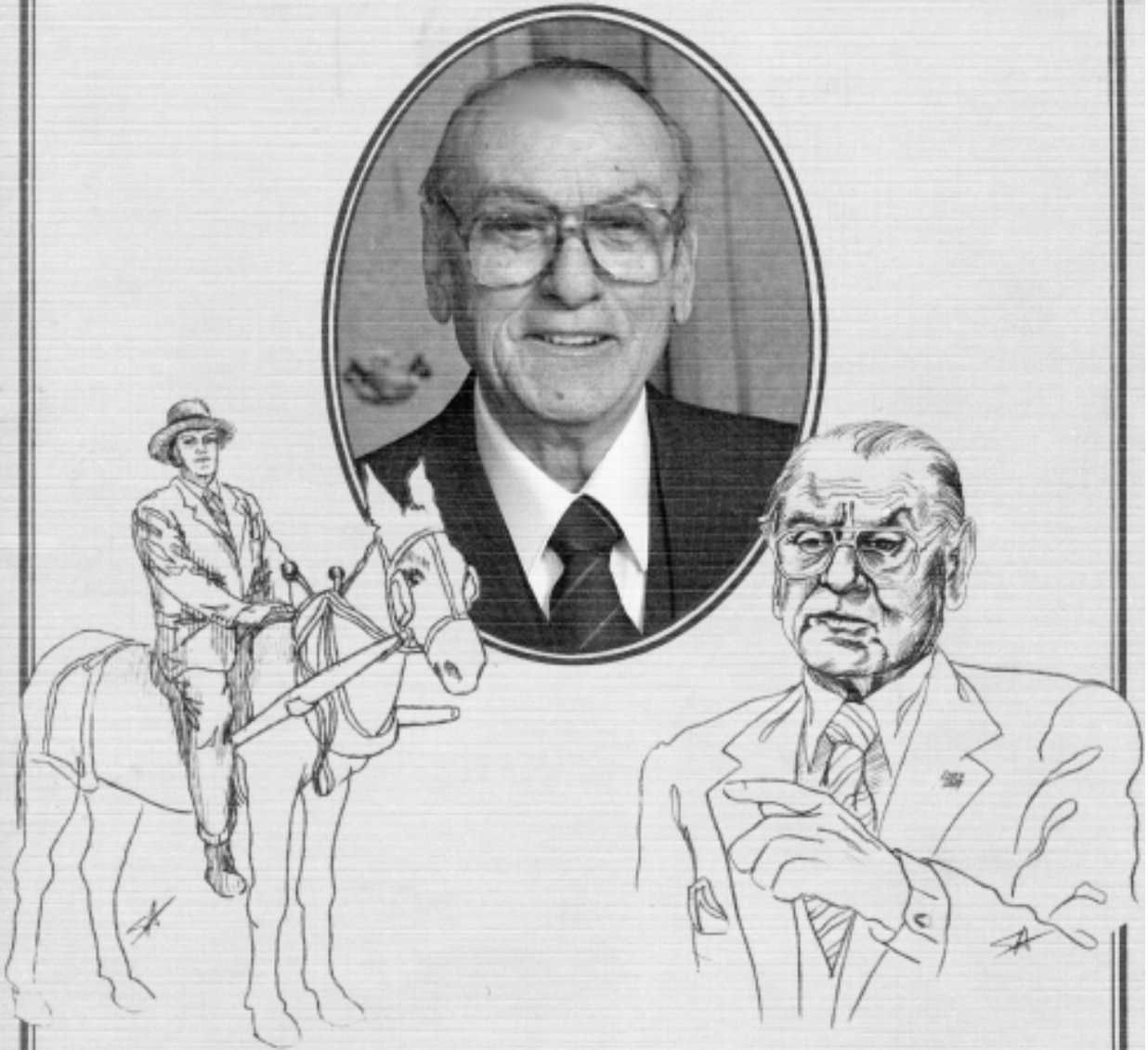
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B. R. LAKIN

“A COUNTRY PREACHER”



HIS LIFE IN PICTURES



“A COUNTRY PREACHER”

DEDICATION

This volume is dedicated to Mrs. Lakin who has faithfully stood by my side through the many years of Christian service. Not only has she been a loving wife and mother, but she has capably served in the capacity of secretary, advisor and co-laborer in the work of Christ. My prayer is that she may be spared many years and that, together, we might render an acceptable service to our Lord and Master.

-B. R. Lakin

(Dr. Lakin had begun the composition of this pictorial book in his later years-but never completed it. This is the dedication he had written.)



INTRODUCTION

Dr. B. R. Lakin, without a doubt, was the "Prince of Preachers" of this century. I first met Dr. Lakin when the Thomas Road Baptist Church was a very young and growing congregation.

Throughout the past 25 years, Dr. Lakin conducted dozens of special meetings and crusades here in our home church.

Dr. and Mrs. Lakin (called affectionately "Mommie Bob" by all who know and love her) had only one child. Their son Bill was killed in an automobile accident while still a young husband and father. Dr. and Mrs. Lakin, then, symbolically adopted me as "their son" many years ago.

Our relationship has been a very intimate one. He has been my spiritual father, mentor, and close friend. His advice through the years has been precious. This man was the first to conduct a daily, nationwide religious broadcast. He knew all the great "spiritual giants" of the early 20th century whom I had read about and respected so highly. He often preached to 10,000 persons on Sunday mornings in the great Cadle Tabernacle, which he pastored for many years.

He, fittingly, preached his last sermon from the pulpit of the Thomas Road Baptist Church on February 26, 1984. He was already quite ill. On March 15, 1984, lying in his bed at the Virginia Baptist Hospital in Lynchburg, Virginia, Dr. Lakin quietly went to be with his Lord. Moments earlier, he had concluded a telephone call to his dear wife who was 5 miles away in the Holiday Inn.

As he requested, he is buried in the beautiful Memorial Garden adjacent to the Prayer Chapel on Liberty Mountain, which is the campus of Liberty Baptist College. He was the last of his kind. He was God's gift to me. I shall cherish his memory.

Jerry Falwell

CHAPTER ONE

FROM THE FORKS OF THE BIG SANDY

Dr. B. R. Lakin traveled the face of the earth for more than half a century, preaching constantly the Word of God and its message of life to unnumbered multitudes. No man can give of himself so long and so intensely without learning much in the laboratory of human experience. Not only did B. R. Lakin have his soul forged upon the anvil of God's sovereign purpose, but he felt the heartthrob and heard the souls cry of as many people as any preacher of this century. He walked among the masses and ministered to the needs of people. He was truly a tool which, though tried in many fires of the Lord's battles, always shone the brighter for Christ after conflict.

B.R. Lakin had no peer as a preacher. He was gifted by God with a brilliant mind and masterful eloquence. He was divinely endowed with an immeasurable amount of ability. All of this talent was completely dedicated to the service of the Lord Jesus Christ. I have often watched him take the Word of God and go to work on an audience as a skilled surgeon goes about his task. I have listened to him preach when it seemed that a heavenly halo had settled about him. I have witnessed God putting His stamp of approval upon this man as multitudes came to be saved, and many lives were blessed and changed.

The many-faceted ministry of this man of God cannot be exaggerated. He had been the preacher's friend, the church's helper, the common man's leader, and most of all, he had been for sixty-five thrilling, fruitful years, God's mighty messenger. His sons in the ministry are all over America, and converts all over the world. What a God-send was his message, the voice of one of the truly great preachers of all time. As a preacher he had no equal; as a trusted friend, he was pure gold.

From the obscurity of the forks of the "Big Sandy" came this divinely-sent human meteor to pass among men and move them to Christ and His cross. As our generation speaks of Spurgeon, Moody, and Sunday with loving admiration, if there be a generation before the Lord's return, it will lovingly speak of B. R. Lakin.



BASCOM RAY LAKIN
(1901 - 1984)

102



102 Bascom Ray Lakin as a seven-year-old.

103 Dr. Lakin's parents, Richard and Mary Elizabeth Lakin, two brothers, and one sister.

103



104



104 Lakin was born in this small home in Fort Gay, West Virginia, on June 5, 1901.

105 Lakin studies his family portrait in the room where he was born.

106 When he was eighteen, B. R. Lakin was saved in this little country church in Big Hurricane, West Virginia. He preached his first sermon one week later.

105



106



107



107 Big Hurricane Baptist Church as it looks today.

108 The forks of the Big Sandy River, where Lakin grew up.

108



109



109 A later picture of B.R. Lakin with his mother.

110 Dr. Lakin had rich memories of his childhood in West Virginia. In this picture taken during his later years he stands at the site where he was baptized as a teenager.

110



CHAPTER TWO "BOBBIE"

201 Violet Crabtree, who later became Mrs. Bascom Ray Lakin.

202 Mrs. Elizabeth Crabtree, Violet Lakin's mother.

202



201



203



204



203 Mrs. Lakin's birthplace near Fort Gay, West Virginia.

204 B.R. Lakin preached his first revival meeting at the Tabor's Creek Baptist Church. Under his preaching, Violet Crabtree was saved. The young school teacher was later baptized by the evangelist, and not long afterwards, they were married. Dr. Lakin called her "Bobbie," and credited her as being the mainstay and support of his ministry.

205 The Lakins' log home in West Virginia.

205



206



206 Dr. and Mrs. Lakin loved Liberty
207 Mountain. Whether a building was
being dedicated in Dr. Lakin's name
or whether he was preaching at
Thomas Road Baptist Church,
"Mommie Bob" served as wife, ad-
visor, coworker, and friend.

207



208



209



210



208 The Lakins spent many years
209 together in Christian service. They
210 co-labored for the cause of Christ
without weighing the cost.

CHAPTER THREE THE MINISTRY BEGINS

301



301 B. R. Lakin baptized his father, Richard Lakin, in the Big Hurricane Creek. His first pastorate was the Evangel Baptist Church, located in the tiny settlement of Greenbriar Creek. He commuted to that church on a mule and earned a monthly salary of \$7.00. In his saddlebags he carried his Bible, a copy of *Pilgrim's Progress*, and his "other shirt." As he preached, he prayed, "God, lay the weight of the world upon me. Give me love for every soul for whom Jesus died. Help me preach as a dying man to dying men with a broken heart and tears."

302 Bill Lakin and son Ronnie.

302



303



302a



302a Bill Lakin's first school picture.

303 Bill Lakin wanted to be baptized in the same creek as his father and grandfather. B. R. was happy to oblige.

304 B. R. Lakin and Homer Rodeheaver were preparing to go riding.

304



305



306



307



307 Dr. Lakin preparing to preach. His evangelistic work continued while he pastored churches, and he preached in hundreds of churches, large and small, each year.

308



308 Dr. Lakin's travels carried him over 50,000 miles a year and during an average week he would speak to 4,000 people.

309 Dr. Lakin was one of the first preachers to travel in his own private plane. Here he is being greeted by the pastor of the First Baptist Church in Kenova, West Virginia.

309



310



310 The Lakins in Hawaii, where he was holding revival meetings.

311 One of the crowds which eagerly came to hear B. R. Lakin. Dr. Lakin and Mrs. Lakin are in the center front.

311



312



312 Dr. Lakin drew crowds of
313 thousands time after time, but he
shared his heart with the small con-
gregations, never turning down a
meeting because a church was too
small.

313



WHY I KNOW THERE IS A GOD

by B. R. Lakin

Wherefore remember, that ye being In time past Gentiles In the flesh, who are called Uncircumcision by that which Is called the Circumcision in the flesh made by hands; that at that time ye were without Christ, being aliens from the commonwealth of Israel, and strangers from the covenants of promise, having no hope, and without God in the world,. But now in Christ Jesus ye who sometimes were far off are made nigh by the blood of Christ.

-(Eph. 2.11-13)

In these words to the Ephesian Christians are two of the most dreaded words-"no hope." A doctor stands beside the bed of a sick man. Anxiously the family awaits the verdict but he says, "There is no hope." Those are sad words when speaking of human circumstances. But they are darker still as they are used in this scriptural text. Far better for man to be without anything else in this world than to be without hope for a future life. Without hope, prosperity amounts to very little. Struggle has no meaning or purpose.

We ordinarily use the word "hope" in a very careless way. God always uses it with the greatest of care. No matter how strong, desire is not hope. Mere expectation is not hope. Hope in the Bible is a well-founded expectation for the future. There are three types of people mentioned in the Bible who are without hope. First those who doubt or deny the existence of God stand without hope. Then those who deny the Bible as the Word of God stand without hope. And finally, those who reject Christ as the Son of God stand without any hope.

The first one, the man who doubts or denies the existence of God, stands without any hope. Hope for a future life rests upon the existence of a beneficent, omnipotent God ruling in nature and in the affairs of men. Take that God out of the universe and man stands absolutely helpless and hopeless. There are not many who do not believe in the existence of God. Fifty years ago I met Charles Evan Smith, the president of the League of Atheism from New York City. When I asked him if he believed in theistic evolution, he said he didn't believe in God at all. I asked him how he accounted for everything that is, and he said everything that is just happened to be. He believed the sun, moon, stars, and all the rest of God's wonderful creation just fell in place. That would be as likely to happen as taking the intricate mechanisms of a watch, throwing them up in the air, and getting them to fall together in perfect working order. Without a watchmaker, the watch falling together in perfect order is as impossible as the universe falling together without a creator.

Then I asked him if he believed that an evolutionist could also be a Christian. He said it was absolutely impossible. That any man who is an evolutionist and stops short of Atheism is simply a dishonest thinker. I asked why he could not be a Christian. He answered that the Christian says man fell and needs a Saviour. The evolutionist says that he climbed down out of

the trees and started to walk. He said if man did not fall, man does not need a Saviour. Did the monkey sin? Of course not. He reasoned, eliminate the Garden of Eden and there is no need for the cross of Christ.

So how do I know there is a God? Notice, I did not say *I think*. You see I'm not an educated man. Therefore I can say why I know. An educated man is not supposed to know anything. He's supposed to say "perhaps" or "it could have been." Somebody asked me if I could read Greek. I said, "Man, I can hardly read English let alone Greek." A fellow was trying to teach me some Greek about baptism. He said it's *baptidzo and rantidzo*. I said, "Yeah and its *gravo, graveis and gravel*, but it was just sop when I was a kid." Maybe we're not supposed to be dogmatic, but I'm going to say dogmatically that I know there is a God. I'm positive there is a God.

First of all I know it from the argument of creation. Look at all that you see now. From whence did it come? Life has never been generated from dead matter. From nothing, nothing can come. Suppose I take a bottle and pour out all the air and the water and the germs. I'd cork it up so nothing could get in it. From nothing, nothing could come. How would anything ever be in it? Since life has never been generated from dead matter we must explain from whence it all came.

*All of man's rational
thinking and philosophy
will never give him
a foundation on which
he can stand and
provide a reason for
having any hope.*

I believe in the beginning God created the heavens and the earth. The Bible does not say, "In the beginning God." The Bible says, "In the beginning God created." Why? Because God didn't have any beginning. He was the beginning of beginnings. There was a time when God was alone. There were no trees, no grass, no water, no foliage, no nothing, just God. Just God. I believe only He knows what went on back there. He was there and had it put down in this Book. Now a lot of these Atheists and so forth who weren't there are like the little boy who caught a bumblebee on his way to school. He put it in a bottle and stuffed it in his hip pocket. When he got to school he was wriggling around in his seat and the cork came out of the bottle. Then he really began to squirm about in his seat, and his teacher said, "Johnny, what are you doing?" He said, "There's something going on back there that you don't know about!" What I'm saying is, something went on back there that only God knows and only God could tell us.

Now secondly, I know there is a God because of imparted wisdom. The unbeliever doesn't call it imparted wisdom. He calls it inherited instinct. There is no such thing as instinct. In the fall of the year before the wind roars down over the Rockies and up around the Lakes, the

geese and the ducks get together and form in companies. They fly south across Michigan, Ohio, Kentucky, Tennessee, North Carolina, South Carolina, Georgia, and Florida, and drop into the warm waters of the Gulf to bathe their breasts in warm water until spring. Then they turn and come back again. Who told those geese to go south in the winter and come north in the summer? Who told them to do that? You say that's instinct. Where'd you get that instinct, old goosey? Those geese had never made that trip before. Yet they take leave from up yonder in Canada and fly all the way to Florida, never missing a feeding ground. Now where did they get their navigating ability?

In California there is a spider about the size of a shoe button. He builds his nest inside an empty clam shell or oyster shell. Before he does that he lifts that shell from 6 to 12 inches above the ground. For that little spider to lift that oyster shell which is many, many times his own weight requires an engineering feat equal to the building of the pyramids of Egypt. How does he do it? He goes up and puts on a thread, comes down and hooks it on the shell, goes up and hooks another, comes down and hooks it on the other side. That thread is moist and when it dries it contracts. And he keeps putting them on until he can finally lift it. Where did he learn how to do that? Some say that's instinct. He learned it from his mommy and poppy spider. Where did they learn it? Listen old smarty. The first spider that ever did that didn't have to sit down and figure it out for himself. It's imparted wisdom. That's the reason I know that there is a God. My niece came home from college one day and said to me, "My professor said that Jesus couldn't have been born of a human mother without a human father. That was a biological impossibility." I said, "Let me tell you what to do. You tell your little possum-headed professor that your uncle said the first man that ever got in this world got here without either father or mother. If God wanted to send His Son born of a human mother without a human father He could and did do it." The next day she came back to explain how the first germ came from another planet. I asked, "Where did the germ come from?" Life has never been generated from dead matter. Her professor claimed that the first germ came on a meteor. I said, "Honey, don't you know a meteor is a blazing ball of fire? How would a germ live in that?" But she said, "The theory of evolution is the only sane explanation." That's the most insane thing I've ever heard! To be an evolutionist you'd have to switch your brain out of reason and throw it into neutral. Listen to what they say.

Way back yonder sometime, somewhere, somehow, nobody knows when, how, where, or why, nothing got in nothing and nothing formed a something. A germ got in the water somehow. Then the water developed it into a tadpole and one day the tadpole swam to another bank and got stuck in the mud and dried there. Wriggling around in the mud, he formed warts on his belly that later became legs. After he developed legs he was climbing through the trees one day when his foot slipped. As he fell he wrapped his tail around a limb. The jar of it broke off his tail. He hit the ground, stood up on his hind feet, walked across the street, bought him a suit of clothes, went to teaching in the university and said, "Thank God I'm a man at last!" They can cram that down the neck of some kids, but let them try the old man once. Everything that is, had to have a beginning, accept God, and He is the beginning of beginnings.

The third reason I know there is a God is because of fulfilled prophecy. Every religion has its bible, but this Bible is the only one that has a word of prophecy in it. Why? Because the authors of all those other books knew that if they inserted a word of prophecy and it failed, their book would be discredited. But God's Word, with daring boldness, tells us what will happen upon this earth to men, nations, and individuals, sometimes thousands of years in the future. Who could write a Book like that? Only God.

I can take the prophecies concerning Jesus Christ alone and prove to any thinking man that there must be a God. First of all He said He shall be born in Bethlehem of Judea. Not just in Bethlehem, not just in Judea, but Bethlehem of Judea, and thank God He was.

He said He shall be born of a virgin. Thank God He was. He said they would gamble upon His garments. They did. He said they would pluck out His beard. They did. He said they would crucify Him and they did. He said He would make His death with the wicked and His burial with the rich. He died between two thieves and He was buried in Joseph's new tomb. He said you'll put Me to death but I'll rise again. That's right. You can't kill Me but I'll give up My life anyway and I'll rise again on the third day. Don't let anybody fool you. This is the Book that will stand the test.

There's another reason I know there is a God. That is, He answers prayer. Have you ever gone into an automata That's a restaurant that looks like a post office. You don't see waitresses or cooks or anything. One day I went in one in New York. You drop in a quarter-out comes a cup of coffee, or mashed potatoes and gravy. I didn't see a soul around, but I had sense enough to know that there was somebody back there passing that stuff out. For 60 years I've walked up to the open windows of heaven and I've asked for things and I've had them passed out to me as real as mashed potatoes and gravy. I know there is a God because He answers prayer. "The fool has said in his heart, There is no God" (Ps. 14:1). I'm asking God to let me live a few more years because I believe I have a message for the people who do not believe there is a God.

*Hope for a future
life rests upon the
existence of a beneficent,
omnipotent God.*

There is one final reason I know there is a God. All of man's rational thinking and philosophy will never give him a foundation on which he can stand and provide a reason for having any hope. The only foundation is the revelation God gives of Himself in this Book. It alone stands against the winds of criticism. The man that does not confess the Christ that this Bible presents stands without any hope.

A fellow said, "I don't know whether to believe Christ was God, because He went to sleep on a boat, like a man would sleep." Was He merely human because He wept, because He got hungry, because He died? Listen, if He was just human that night out yonder on that little boat when He went to sleep, He was God when He stilled the waves. If He was human when He got hungry, He was God when He took a little boy's lunch and fed 5,000 people with it. If He was human when He wept, He was God when he burst the grave of Lazarus open like a chestnut burr and caused him to come out alive. If He was human when He died upon a cross, He was declared to be the Son of God with power, by His Resurrection from the dead. You can trust Him, my friend.

My dad and mother pillowed their heads upon that hope and passed peacefully into another world. The man who denies it stands without any hope in this world and in the world to come. He has no hope of meeting with his loved ones who have gone or who may go. Buried

out yonder lies my boy on a little hillside in West Virginia, in a grave, waiting for the resurrection. One day I believe he will come forth from the grave and I'll see him again. Don't take that hope away from me, Mr. Modernist or Mr. Evolutionist. God hangs a rainbow of hope around the shimmering shoulders of the storm of my bereavement. He is that hope and without Him there is no hope of pardon in the eternal world.

Why do I believe there is a God, my friend? Because only He makes any sense out of this old world. Only He brings meaning to living, the hope of pardon, and a place in heaven.

CHAPTER FOUR THE FAMILY GROWS

401



401 B. R. Lakin attended Moody Bible
402 Institute. He also received several
403 honorary doctoral degrees: the
Doctor of Divinity from Bob Jones
University, the Doctor of Letters
from Kletzing College, and the
Doctor of Divinity from Mount
Vernon University.



402



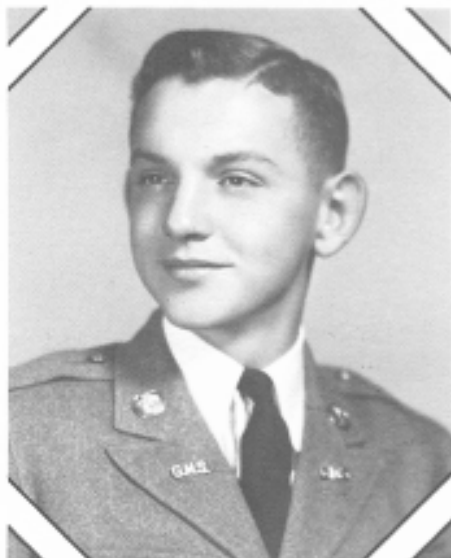
404



404 Dr. and Mrs. B. R. Lakin.

405 The Lakins' son, Bill, while a student
406 at Greenbrier Military Academy
(left) and while serving on the *U. S.
Stevens* during World War II (right).

405



406



407



407 The Lakin Family was invited back to Fort Gay, West Virginia, for homecoming.

408 A big crowd from a tiny town turned out to hear the preacher.

408



409



410



410 The Lakin Family at the homecoming: Dr. and Mrs. Lakin; Bill and his wife, Cathy; and Ronnie, Dr. Lakin's grandson.

411 Dr. Lakin was loved by everyone. A plaque which hangs in his office reads "To Dr. B. R. Lakin: Happy Father's Day to the spiritual father of thousands with gratitude for 56 years of 'plowing, planting, and watering.' "

412 The joyful preacher and his son.

412



411



CHAPTER FIVE

THE MAN WITH A BROKEN HEART

by Ruth Tomczak McClellan



On June 5, 1901, a baby was born to Richard and Mary Elizabeth Lakin in a farmhouse on Big Hurricane Creek in the hill country of Wayne County, West Virginia. When Mrs. Lakin first felt life within her she sought the Lord asking Him to give her "a preacher boy." She dedicated little Bascom Ray to the Lord before he was born. Her prayers were sweet to the ears of God, and He blessed her with one of the outstanding preachers of this century.

B.R. Lakin knew God intimately. He preached with a special anointing from God. For 65 years he "crisscrossed America back and forth like a country boy working a corn row," preaching to countless multitudes, seeing thousands of lives transformed by the power of Jesus Christ.

When asked how many were converted to Christ under his ministry, his quick reply was, "Oh, I don't know." Some say 100,000 is a conservative figure. Only eternity will reveal the number of men who were called into the ministry under Lakin's preaching and influence.

Reviewing his life of preaching Lakin said, "I have never knowingly done anything to bring a reproach or stain on the name of the Christ I love and who saved me. I'd rather die than live outside the will of God."

He did not know the meaning of retirement. At 76 years old he was holding meetings every night. He had a deep conviction that God called him to preach for as long as he had strength. In his later years B. R. suffered from diabetes and heart problems, but he maintained a full schedule until 1982.

Lakin was known for his great compassion and love for people. His constant prayer was, "God lay the weight of the world upon me. Give me a love for every soul for whom Jesus

*The consuming desire
of Lakin's life was
to see revival break out
across this nation.*

died. Help me preach as a dying man to dying men with a broken heart and tears."

God abundantly blessed his ministry because he walked humbly before God and men. From the pulpits of some of the greatest churches in America he declared, "I never expected to be any more than a country preacher. That's what I am tonight."

During his life many things changed. His means of transportation changed from mules and buggies to automobiles and jet airplanes, and his meeting places changed from tents to tabernacles. One thing never changed-in this land or around the world his one simple message was: "Man is a sinner; Christ a Saviour. There is a heaven to gain and a hell to shun. Life is short and eternity is long. Prepare to meet your God."

Lakin was born and feared in the country in a community called Big Hurricane Creek. His first years of formal education were in a onerom country school on Queen's Creek, far back in the hills of West Virginia. In the fourth grade he went to a two-room school.

When he was 17 years old Bascom Lakin stayed in a little log shanty in the head of the hollow and worked a timber job. In February 1918 he became ill and had to go home. His mother told him of the revival they were having in her little church at the forks of the creek. The preacher was J. C. Simpkins, the nephew of the legendary "Devil Anse" Hatfield, leader of the infamous HatfieldMcCoy feud. The last night of the revival, February 12, 1918, Bascom went to the meeting. That night Simpkins preached on, "When I See the Blood." When he finished, Bascom knelt at a little pine mourner's bench and trusted Christ. Lakin frequently described that moment saying, "As I knelt, Jesus walked down the aisle with a crown on His head and a cross on His back and said, "What can I do for you?" And I answered, 'Do for me that which I cannot do for myself. If you'll save me you'll never hear the last of it.' My mother's face shone like an angel's that night, and as I walked out of the church building the stars looked like they had been washed with all the purity of God's holiness. I walked out of there and I've been telling the story ever since, going around bragging on Jesus."

Dr. Lakin remained true to his word. The trail started at the head of Greenbriar Creek in that little church where he was saved, and it led him all over the world. God loved Bascom Ray when he was a barefooted boy using a mule to plow around a rocky hillside in the mountains of West Virginia. Many days as he plowed he would look up to God and say, "Someday, I'll

amount to something." God looked beyond the mule and the doubleshovel plow, beyond the coal-oil lights, and the pot-bellied stove, and saw him preaching to thousands of people around the world, God knew He was preparing Him for what he would become after being transformed by His grace.

A week after he was saved Bascom preached his first sermon. His first pastorate was Evangel Baptist Church located in the heart of the little settlement known as Greenbriar Creek. He traveled to that church over the mountain by mule and was paid \$7 a month.

In those early days Dr. Lakin pastored and helped build churches in many states. In Bristol, Virginia, in just 19 months Sunday school attendance grew from 101 to 700, and a Sunday night audience from 17 to overflow crowds that required loudspeakers in the basement.

Dr. Lakin traveled in a van until his legs got so numb he was unable to tolerate riding all day long. However, this was no excuse for him to quit. He cried out to the Lord all night, "God, if I'm going to go on, I've got to do something." God answered Dr. Lakin's prayers. Jerry Falwell felt led to ask God's people to help the Lakins purchase a motor home. People all over the United States responded. This allowed Dr. and Mrs. Lakin to travel together.

The consuming desire of Lakin's life was to see revival break out across this nation. He asked God to let him see a revival like he saw 50 years ago. He knew revival does not come without paying a price, He paid the price for 64 years. "What will it take for America to return to God?" he asked brokenly. "I remember the recession after World War 1. Eleven million people stood in breadlines. And yet America did not turn to God. Then there was a period of prosperity. Everything we touched turned to gold-and still we did not acknowledge God. Now I believe the vials of God's wrath are fast filling up, and He will pour them out upon this nation and others in a rapidity that will startle. I believe the only thing that will stay the hand of judgment is a return to God and an old-fashioned, genuine, Holy Ghost, limb-straightening, heaven-opening, Devil-driving revival."

*AI never expected
to be any more than a
country preacher."*

With a burdened heart full of compassion for a lost world, Dr. Lakin continued in his goal to be a good and faithful servant. The happiest moments of his life were those when he saw men and women walking down aisles, with tears streaming down their faces, asking, "What must I do to be saved?"

One night Dr. Lakin and his grandson were driving all night to get to another city and another meeting. Young Ronnie asked, "Poppop, why do you keep going like this day after day, night after night?" Dr. Lakin replied, "It would be hard for you to understand, but when I die and you stand beside my grave, I will not care about a granite stone or monument of marble; I would like you and others to be able to say, 'Dr. Lakin never left a fortune, but he left behind a life that was big and rich and ripe, and blessed humanity. A quarter of a million souls have taken his hand and been pointed toward Jesus.' "

Dr. Lakin said, "If you want to know what God looks like, what His power is: Look at the flowers-you see His wisdom. Look at the stars-you see His glory. Look at the ocean you see His power. But look at Calvary and you see His heart. If you want to know Him, come to Calvary. When you see Jesus dying on that cross you see the heart of God."

Dr. Lakin preached his first revival at the Tabor's Creek Baptist Church. There a young lady named Violet Crabtree was saved. Dr. Lakin baptized her in the creek and later married her. She is the only sweetheart, the only girl he ever had. He credited Mrs. Lakin as being the mainstay and never-failing support of his life. Her job was not easy. Keeping up with the energetic evangelist included constant travel and correspondence. Their grandson, Ronnie, finally took over her real estate business to allow "Mommy Bob," as B.R. affectionately called her, more time for tending to her husband's needs.

Dr. Lakin pastored the Cadle Tabernacle in Indianapolis, Indiana, for 14 years, two years as associate pastor. There he preached to crowds of over 10,000 and was on the first coast-to-coast daily religious broadcast in America, entitled "The Nation's Family Prayer Period."

Certainly a "trademark" of Dr. B. R. Lakin was his humor and wit. Proverbs 17:22 says, "A merry heart doeth good like a medicine." Lakin's jovial spirit and optimistic attitude made him a very pleasant person to be around. He made everyone comfortable in his presence.

This testimony is especially meaningful because Lakin knew much sorrow, disappointment, and loneliness in his life. His health had been tried. At one time he was in the hospital for 18 days following a heart attack. Once he was rushed to a hospital in Ashland, Kentucky, where he was declared dead by several doctors. The next day the paper carried his obituary. But God was not through with him!

Dr. and Mrs. Lakin had only one son, Bill. He had a brilliant mind. He graduated from Greenbriar Military School and then served in the Navy. On March 27, 1955, when Dr. Lakin was preaching a great revival in Akron, Ohio, his pastor called him at one o'clock in the morning. He related the tragic news that Bill had been killed in an automobile accident; he was 31.

When Mrs. Lakin heard about her son's death she said, "I'll have two to bury." Dr. Lakin would accept no offers to be driven to Fort Gay, West Virginia, where Mrs. Lakin met him with Biff's body. He drove the long distance alone, getting things settled in his mind. When he met Mrs. Lakin she said, "How can we go on? I'll never be reconciled." To this Dr. Lakin replied, "Oh, yes, we must and can. For 35 years I've told people, 'God's grace is sufficient.' If it isn't sufficient for you and me now, I've not been honest in preaching to others." He never asked God the reason why Bill died because he knew that Asomeday He'll make it plain, and until then I'll just watch and wait."

Dr. Lakin believed that new power comes from crushing experiences, that a rose must be bruised before you get perfume from it. Dr. Lakin said, "From the night I received the message that Bill was in an automobile accident and it was fatal-from that hour until this-I've had a broken and crushed heart. I thank God for all of it." Sorrow made the Lakins draw closer to Jesus. With great anticipation B. R. looked toward the day he would be with Bill forever.

Dr. Lakin often joked about his education even though he had studied at Moody and had received two honorary doctoral degrees. This saint of God lived in the holy of holies immersing himself in the study of God's Word. His wisdom far exceeded any found in doctoral degrees or prestigious universities.

A mentor of Jerry Falwell, B. R. Lakin talked with the younger pastor on a regular basis, giving advice and guidance.

Falwell reciprocated the strong feelings. "I always considered him my pastor. He was the greatest preacher. As a pulpiteer he had no peer." The department of religion on Falwell's Liberty Baptist College campus is named in honor of B. R. Lakin and special arrangements were made to bury the preaching "warhorse" on Liberty Mountain.

His last time to be in a pulpit was at Thomas Road Baptist Church on February 26, 1984, when he closed his message with, "After my recent visit to the Holy Land someone asked me if I would be returning there soon. I said, 'Not until I come in the cavalry.'

After his first attack the peppery old saint would say, "If I can make it through March, I'll make it through another year." On March 15, 1984, he died.

Often Dr. Lakin said that he would sometimes get so close to heaven he could "kinda tiptoe and look over." He was not afraid of death and said, "No matter what may be the means or method that hour comes to me, if you read or hear the news that I have died, don't you believe it. That day will be Graduation Day, and I will have just begun to live."

CHAPTER SIX CADLE TABERNACLE

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601 In 1939, Dr. and Mrs. Lakin accepted the call of the Cadle Tabernacle. Dr. Lakin served as associate pastor for two years and immediately assumed full pastorate responsibilities when Dr. Cadle died in 1942.

602 The Lakin home in Indiana.

603 The exterior of Cadle Tabernacle, Indianapolis, Indiana.

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604 The usual crowd at Cadle
605 Tabernacle. While in Indiana,
Dr. Lakin began a radio broadcast.
Known as the "Nation's Family
Prayer Period," it was broadcast
weekly and reached thousands of
homes.

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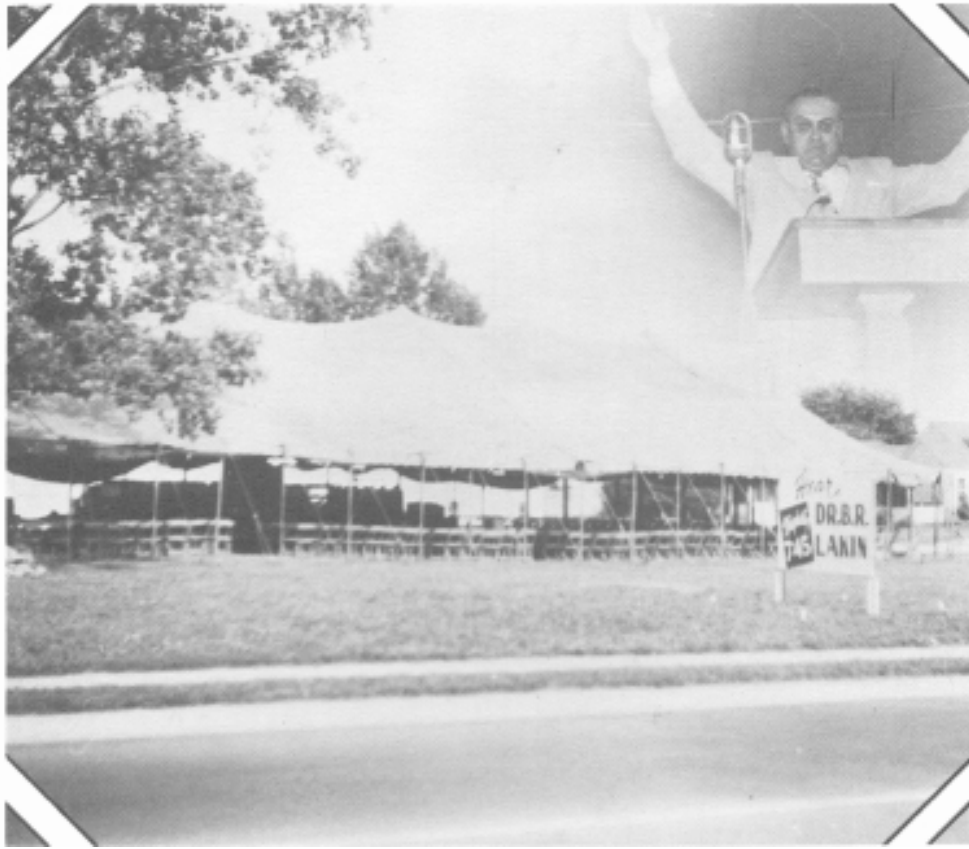
606 Dr. and Mrs. Lakin in Indiana.

607 While pastoring, Dr. Lakin continued his evangelistic work. This is Akron Baptist Temple, one of Dr. Lakin's favorite places.

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608 Dr. Lakin also preached in tents.
609 After leaving Cadle Tabernacle, the
610 Lakins moved to Titusville, Florida,
611 and went into evangelistic work full
612 time.

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613 The Lakins' first home in Florida.

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CHAPTER SEVEN ACTIVE RETIREMENT

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701 As he reached the age when many preachers retire, Dr. Lakin kept going. He began to speak annually at the Thomas Road Baptist Church, pastored by Dr. Jerry Falwell. The two became fast friends. Dr. Falwell considers Dr. Lakin to be "my pastor and my mentor."

701a Dr. Lakin preaching at Thomas Road Baptist Church.

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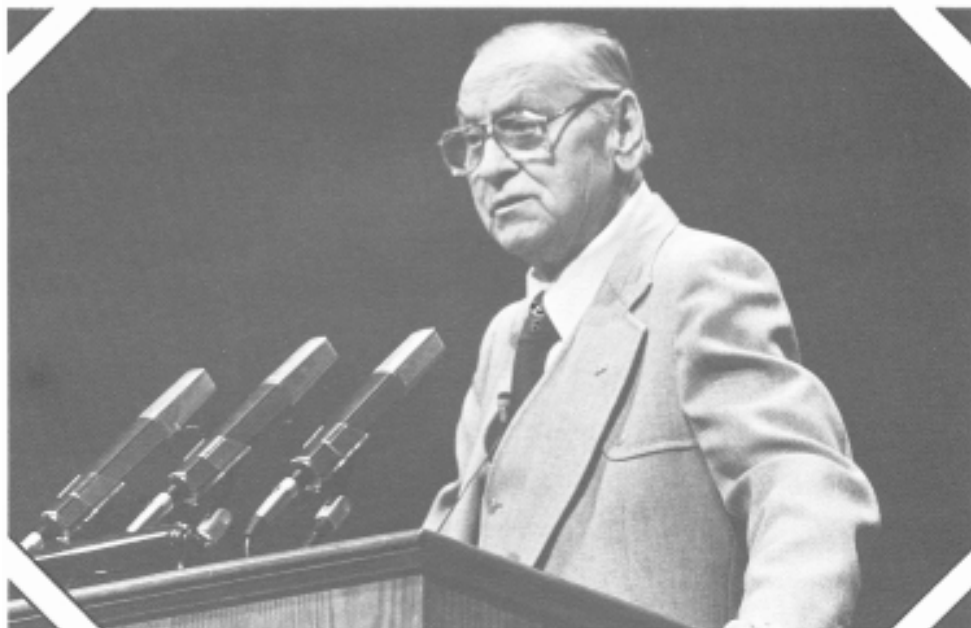


702 The "Prince of Preachers" continued
703 to spread the gospel despite failing
health. He often said, "No matter
what may be the means or method
that hour comes to me, if you read
or hear on the news that I have
died, don't you believe it. That day
will be Graduation Day, and I will
have just begun to live. I will
merely have changed my base of
operation. I won't be dead; I'll just
have moved out for repairs."

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703



704



704 As usual when he traveled, Violet
705 was by his side.

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706 In 1979, the pastors and churches of the Baptist Bible Fellowship presented Dr. Lakin with a comfortable Winnebago for his travels. This photo shows Dr. and Mrs. Lakin later with a van, provided by a friend in California.

707 For many years, Dr. Lakin's grandson, Ronnie, accompanied him on his travels.

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708 Ronnie Lakin "on the road" with his grandfather. One night Dr. Lakin and Ronnie were driving during the early morning hours. Ronnie turned to Dr. Lakin and asked, "Poppop, why do you keep going like this day after day, night after night?" Dr. Lakin replied, "It would be hard for you to understand. But when I die and you stand beside my grave, I will not care about a granite stone or a monument of marble; I would like you and others to be able to say, 'Dr. Lakin never left a fortune, but he left behind a life that was big and rich and ripe, and blessed humanity. A quarter of a million souls have taken his hand and been pointed toward Jesus.'"

709 Ronnie Lakin's family.





710 Dr. Lakin at the empty tomb in Jerusalem. He once said, "On my last visit to the Holy Land I was at the Mount of Olives and someone asked, "Dr. Lakin, do you ever expect to come back here again?" He replied, "Oh yeah, I'll be back, but the next time I come I'll be in the cavalry."

711



711 On February 26, 1984, Dr. Lakin preached his last sermon, "If There Be No Resurrection," at Thomas Road Baptist Church. He soon became ill and was hospitalized at Virginia Baptist Hospital in Lynchburg.

On March 15 at 6:30 a.m. he placed a call to his wife's hotel room. "Bobbie," he said, "I'm ready to go home."

"Honey, we can't go home now," Violet answered. "You're too sick to travel. You need to stay and get better."

"But we've used up all the money we have," Dr. Lakin protested.

"No," his wife replied. "We still have each other."

"Whatever you say," the old preacher replied. And only minutes thereafter, the prince of preachers went home.

Dr. Lakin lies buried in the Prayer Chapel Garden on Liberty Mountain. But he is with the Lord, a faithful soldier preparing to come in the cavalry.