CHAPTER 1

Our Finest Hour

For, behold, the darkness shall cover the earth, and gross darkness the people: but the Lord shall arise upon thee, and his glory shall be seen upon thee. Isaiah 60:2.

In the darkest hour in the history of the modern world the monstrous tyranny of Nazi domination held the forces of decency and justice at bay. Foreboding filled the hearts of all free men. Great Britain, the nation which had cradled democracy in its infancy, was being deliberately, tortuously ground to destruction under the heel of pitiless oppressor.

It was as if the legions of evil had conspired in wicked revenge to punish this land for daring to give freedom its wings, for daring to have served as the launching pad of Christianity to the New World.

At this hour one man stepped to the center stage of history. A man under the direction of God. His words were heard clearly across the length and breadth of the besieged nation. They have come to be immortalized.

“I have nothing to offer but blood, toil, tears and sweat. We have before us an ordeal of the most grievous kind. We have before us many very long months of struggling and suffering… Come then, let us go forward together with our united strength.”

Nevertheless, calamity followed on calamity. The United Kingdom’s allies were being picked off one by one. Belgium fell, leaving the British soldiers on the Continent to face the huge armies of the enemy alone. At Dunkirk, in retreat, with nowhere else to go, a British army of more than a third of a million men was being pushed into the sea on the French side of the English Channel. All of their equipment lost, thirty thousand men were killed or captured.
The cowardly Mussolini chose this opportune time to declare war on Britain. Shortly thereafter France surrendered. Would Britain too be overwhelmed as well?

The world trembled as it began to realize what the outcome of this momentous struggle might mean. The tiny island country had become the last stronghold in all Europe for truth and freedom. Winston Churchill expressed it exquisitely: “If we fail, then the whole world … will sink into the abyss of a new Dark Age, made more sinister and perhaps more protracted by the lights of perverted science.”

The British people began to prepare for the worst. It seemed a certainty that the enemy would soon touch their beaches, land in their fields, march in their streets. In unforgettable words, Churchill hurled the challenge: “We shall defend our island whatever the cost may be. We shall fight on the beaches, we shall fight on the landing grounds, we shall fight in the fields and in the streets. We shall fight in the hills; we shall never surrender… .

“The battle of France is over. I expect that the battle of Britain is about to begin. Upon that battle depends the survival of Christian civilization.”

Next he uttered the magnificent words that symbolize the meaning of this book. “Let us therefore, brace ourselves to our duties and so bear ourselves that, if the British Empire and its Commonwealth last for a thousand years, men will say, ‘This was their finest hour.’ “

A similar conflict today rages in the world, one which far exceeds in its magnitude and consequence that faced by the British people. The battle of this hour is waged not for occupation of land or control of sea. It is waged singularly for the very souls of human beings. The destiny, not of one nation, not even of one civilization, but of all mankind hangs in the balance. Strange struggle - a person in the midst of it may be totally unaware of it. It is indeed the ultimate contest of the ages in which only the alert, the discerning, will be victorious.

Squarely at the forefront, love is pitted against selfishness, two forces which are absolute antithesis. When each is in its
purest form, when each is personified, as it is in the case of Christ and Satan, they cannot abide in the company of one another. Integration of the two is impossible. Selfishness and love can never be synthesized successfully in any life, in any nation, on any planet.

Since that unprecedented event, the entrance of selfishness - or, as some call it, sin - into the universe, the world has reeled under the impact of these two factors confronting each other. Now, on this planet there is disharmony, conflict, and eruptive confusion. Lawlessness grapples with lawfulness. Unholiness struggles with holiness. Death attempts to choke out life, as evil wills to destroy all that is good.

Two mighty powers here meet. One alone will conquer!

At His cross Jesus Christ exposed Satan to the universe as the true enemy of all good. With his wicked motives and the extent of his degeneracy now flushed into the open, Satan no longer hides his desperation. His original desire to conquer and destroy all that is good and godlike he has fanned to a fiendish passion. Consumed with a furious fervor to annihilate the kingdom of love, he comes brazenly to the hour of his final stand. Using every weapon in his unsavory arsenal, he is making a frenzied play to attempt to keep control of hijacked Spaceship Earth and its human passengers. Although because of the cross he cannot now use his victims to force his will against the government of the universe, his insane selfishness still compels him to drag as many of his hostages as he can over the brink to eternal ruin with him. These efforts have succeeded in bringing the world to this crisis hour.

Another startling victory is his success in blinding of so many to what is happening. This plot-master dulls human awareness to the point where most can no longer discern the issues, no longer discriminate between evil and good, selfishness and love, right and wrong. He clouds the issues, destroys the absolutes, and removes the pillars. Human beings, children of God, left confused in a gray haze, have become accustomed to selfishness and evil that they accept them as normal.
One indication of Satan’s success is the world’s murderously insane arms race. Only a fiend could have generated the sort of atmosphere in the world today that seduces each of the major governments of the world to attempt to top the other in the number of times it can destroy the other. Satan has so locked the world into this spinning self-destructive cycle that the keenest of minds can find no way to break free.

Another indication of his success is widespread depravity. Seldom have morality and decency reached such low points. Chastity? It is a laughingstock. Virtue? A novelty. Violence and illicit sex have become the chief form of entertainment and for some are the chief form of recreation! Satan has found a master strategy: Destroy the best citadel in the world of true love - the faithful marriage relationship - and everything else will fall with it.

Unique too, in all the history of the world, is the abuse of technology. A handful of ruthless men can threaten the peace and security of the strongest, most civilized nations on earth with heretofore unheard of terrorist acts of kidnapping, sabotage, and assassination. Evil is brasher, bolder, more totally destructive and uncaring than ever before.

Even the economic security of the world is held together by nothing more than a very fragile thread. With nowhere to turn for true financial security, men’s hearts are “failing them for fear.” In times past, when problems arose, when difficulties needed to be surmounted, there was always promise of an answer being provided by new ideas, new technology, new leadership. Only in the last few years have governments had to face the stark reality that truly unsolvable problems now confront them. The “ultimate panacea for all humanity’s ills” - modern science - has proven totally inadequate. The human intellect in all disciplines, even when stretched to its limit, now appears incapable of solving the difficulties of the human heart and soul. As never before, events of today cry out in one great voice that the climax of the ages is at hand!
Too often Christians have focused on sin’s latest triumphs as proof that something exceptional is soon to occur. Ask yourself this question: As evil grows continually more aggressive, can we expect a corresponding surge of good? As liars abound, can we foresee an increase in the number who value truth above all else? As fornicators multiply, can we anticipate a proliferation of the pure? As evil’s champions gain ever greater and ever more eager folio wings, can we look forward to seeing new heroes of God arise? As Goliaths boast fully strut the plain, do we have in prospect any Davids?

The challenge of this hour appears to be this: The increasing intensity of evil and selfishness in some must be matched by a parallel increase of love and righteousness in others. When iniquity abounds, grace and goodness must much more abound.

But this cannot happen unless with a special perspective people see evil for what it really is and good for what it is. People must be willing to invest “blood, toil, tears, and sweat” and to stand against the forces of selfishness and ungodliness. People must recognize the special chance that is theirs to align with God’s cause of righteousness and love and must be willing to defend their faith in God to the death if necessary.

In the hour of greatest darkness, more brightly burns the candle. The Bible says, “The spirit of man is the candle of the Lord.” Those of us who live today, as the darkest hours of earth’s history approach, have the unique opportunity to contribute more to the victorious climax of God’s campaign to eliminate sin and selfishness from the universe than any other generation since the world began.

There is no more exciting hour to be alive. There have never been, nor will there ever be, greater challenges or more magnificent opportunities to accomplish, to contribute, and to serve. The stakes have never been higher, but neither have the rewards and satisfactions ever been greater.

As evil’s attacks become keener, the resources and countermeasures available to those who would stand for truth become more abundant. After all, we live on the “victory side”
of the cross! We benefit immensely from the effect that two thousand years of this antidote for sin has had. The witness of Jesus Christ’s life, death, resurrection, and intercession; the ministry of angels; the mighty indwelling presence, power, and gifts of the Holy Spirit; the work of God the Father above and through all; the unceasing concern of heavenly beings; and the eager willingness of divinity to couple with humanity, all combine to place at the Christian’s disposal an unconquerable arsenal against evil!

Yet, where are the people - God’s heroes - who will step into the battle and use these marvelous spiritual tools for God? Our heavenly Father has chosen to make Himself dependent on people to finish His conquest of sin. It will be the cooperation of human beings with divine beings that will defeat evil permanently. In a strange and ironic turnabout Satan is to be “bested” by the members of the very race he led astray! Nothing could demonstrate more effectively the superiority of love over selfishness, the power of compassion over coercion!

His honor, His very name and reputation in the universe rest in your hands and mine. For this reason Christians are the most important people in the world right now!

“Be not overcome of evil, but overcome evil with good.” At this crucial hour will you be seduced by the subtle allure of evil? Or will you choose to be among those who contribute in the divine conquering?

The final dramatic conflict between the forces of good and evil will be resolved not on some far-off galactic battlefield. Satan will be permanently defeated in the life of each individual human being who chooses to live completely for love, for God who is love.

Your life, your personality, your character stands center stage. Yours is the last act in the great drama of the ages.

God needs people. People who insist on showing themselves stubbornly true to principle. People who, when the religion of Christ is held in coldest contempt, will show their zeal to be the warmest. People who, when His law is most despised, will reveal their courage and firmness to be the most
unflinching. People who, when the world majority has forsaken such qualities as unessential, will stand as flesh-and-blood examples of unselfish love and uncompromising truth.

At the close of the conflict a group of individuals will see the honor of God vindicated before the universe in their own lives. They will have demonstrated the depths of His unconditional love. They will actually have established such oneness with Him that His thoughts will have become their thoughts; His ways, their ways; His character, theirs. They will have resisted evil at the peak of its fury. They will have allowed God to defeat it once and for all on the very turf of their own lives. Certainly not by their own wisdom or personal piety or persistence. Victory will be theirs because of the closeness they sought and the dependence they have chosen on the Christ who indwells them so completely by the Holy Spirit.

Soon the controversy will end. The entire universe will once again exist in peace and harmony. One pulse of love will beat in unison throughout all God’s vast creation.

As for those who were given the privilege of helping to make this splendid situation a reality - perhaps they can look back from the vantage point of eternity to that time when they stood loyally for God to defeat evil and say, “That was our finest hour!”