

if you will study it prayerfully, and exercise your own good sense. You have to give an *account of yourself unto God*, and it matters little to you what other people believe."

"Why are you unwilling," says she, "to have me read your Confession of Faith?"

"I am *not* unwilling, Madam,—not at all, if you wish to read it, I will bring it to you, with pleasure, at any time you desire it. But I am only expressing my opinion, that it will do you no good at present. I think the Bible is far better for you to read just now. At another time, the Confession of Faith may be of service to you, but not now."

"I was not brought up in the Presbyterian church, sir. My father is a Universalist, and my mind is not settled about the doctrines of religion."

"Are you a Universalist too?"

"No sir, I don't think I am; but I don't know *what* to believe," said she most mournfully.

"Do you believe the Bible is God's word?"

"Oh, yes, I believe that."

"Well, the Confession of Faith is *not* God's word (though in my opinion it substantially agrees with it); and I advise you to take the Bible and lay its truth upon your own heart, with all candor and with sincere prayer. If you get into the Confession of Faith, I am afraid you will not understand it so well as you can understand the Bible; and I am afraid your understanding alone will be employed, and not your heart; or at least, that you will have more of the spirit of speculation than of heart religion, and will leave your sins, your Saviour, and salvation, too much out of sight."

"Oh, sir, I don't mean to do that."

"I think, Madam, that you know perfectly well, that the Bible demands of you a repentance, and a faith, and a love of God, which you do not exercise; and your first business should be, not to examine the Confession of Faith about a great many other doctrines, but to get your *heart* right,—and what that means, the Bible teaches you, and you painfully feel its truth."

"But, sir, I ought to know what a church believes, before I unite with it."

"Most certainly you ought. But you are not prepared at present to unite with any church. You do not think yourself to be a true Christian at heart—a true penitent—a true believer—a sinner born again, and at peace with God through Jesus Christ. Come to these things *first*. Get a *heart* religion; and after that you will be better prepared to examine the Confession of Faith. But don't allow your mind to be led away into a wilderness of doctrines, to the neglect of your present, plain duty. You are an unhappy woman, a sinner without pardon. You have no peace of mind. And first of all, yes *now* on the spot, you ought to give up your heart to Christ, penitent for sin and trusting to the divine mercy. Here lies our present duty. Don't you think so yourself?"

"Yes, sir, indeed I do," said she, sadly; "*I wish I was a Christian.*"

"I will send you the Confession of Faith if you desire it, but in my —"

"No, don't send it," said she, interrupting me, "I will not read it yet."

"You said your father was a Universalist, but you did not think you yourself were one. I have no desire to say anything to you about that doctrine. It is unnecessary. If you will read the Bible with candor and common sense, and with humble prayer for the direction of your heavenly Father, you certainly *can know* as well as any one, what the Bible teaches about that. I leave that to your own judgment. If you find any difficulty on that or any other subject, I shall be happy to tell you hereafter just what I think. But I am sure you cannot mistake the meaning of God's word about the everlasting punishment of sinners."

"Do come to see me again," said she, with a sad earnestness. "I am not satisfied to rest where I am. I will try to follow your advice."

After a short prayer, I left her. In subsequent conversation with her, I discovered nothing to make her peculiarity or hindrance to repentance any more intelligible. I did not suppose that the religious opinions of her father were exerting any influence upon her mind, for it seemed to me, and to herself, too, that she had entirely abandoned them.

Just at this time, her father paid her a visit, and remained with her for more than a week. He probably noticed that she was unhappy, and probably knew the cause;