

CHRISTIAN WORKER

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"WORK WHILE IT IS CALLED TO-DAY"

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VOL. I.

MEAFORD, ONTARIO, FEBRUARY, 1882.

NO. 4.

CHRISTIAN EXPERIENCE

SINCERELY SEEKING THE WAY TO HEAVEN

CHAPTER II

According to promise, our young friend, sincerely, read the Psalms of David through, and attended the prayer meeting on Thursday night following the time of the preceding conversation. In the place of the prayer-meeting, (as Mr. Honesty, the Presiding Elder, had expected,) he found the church in the midst of a protracted meeting. He said to himself, "I am rejoiced to find such a meeting as this in progress, for I shall have the way to heaven clearly pointed out to me." On entering the house he was rejoiced to find Mr. H. in the pulpit, reading the following words, "He who seeks shall find."

Mr. H. divided his discourse as follows:

1. To show that it is the duty of all to seek.

2. That the way is plain.

3. That the promise is unequivocal—that all who seek shall find.

Upon each of these heads he discoursed as follows:

1. It is the duty of all to seek the Lord. This is sustained by the clear language of Scripture, "He hath made of one blood all nations of men, to dwell on all the face of the earth, that they should seek the Lord, if haply they might feel after him and find him, though he be not far from every one of us." Again, "I will be sought unto by prayer."

2. The way is plain. This is proved by the word of the Lord. The prophet says, "The way is so plain that the wayfaring men, though fools, need not err therein." The gospel was to be a lamp to our path, which shows that the path was to be very plain. Thus you discover the way is plain, so that man is left without excuse.

3. The promise is unequivocal. "To him who asks, it shall be given; to him who knocks, it shall be opened; he who seeks, shall find." And again, "He who cometh to me I will in nowise cast out." "Now is the accepted time; behold, now is the day of salvation." "Whosoever will, let him partake of the water of life freely."

Having now proved from God's written word—

1. That it is the duty of all to seek.

2. That the way is plain.

3. That the promise is unequivocal—that they who seek shall find.—the duty of all is manifest.

What, then, must the verdict be of those who refuse to seek God? Let me exhort you, then, to haste, as for life, to the altar of prayer, and seek God while it is called to-day. Come, now, all things are ready; come, and give us your hand, and we will do you good.

At the conclusion an invitation was given, and a number of persons rushed to the altar and fell upon their knees. But our young friend, Sincerely, kept his seat in the middle of the house, and whined, from

his countenance, that deep trouble was upon his heart. He sat still, apparently in deep meditation, during some two hours, while the usual exercises of a mourner's bench scene transpired, and, at the close, with a draw in great sadness. As he walked away, he said to himself, "I am afraid this matter of becoming a Christian is a dark subject. The more I think about it, the thicker the gloom. What does it avail to hear a man argue that the way is plain, who does not show me this very plain way? I will go to the residence of Mr. Honesty, and have another conversation." In a few moments he raps at the door. "Walk in," responded from within. "Good evening, Mr. S., I am happy to see you, and was greatly rejoiced to see you at our meeting to-night. Have you read the Psalms of David?" said Mr. H.

Sincerely. Yes, and find them extremely interesting, but could not find, as I expected, the way pointed out for me to become a Christian.

Honesty. I labored to point out that to you in my discourse to-night, I hope I have satisfied you in regard to that matter.

S. I am sorry to be compelled to say, Mr. H., that you shed no light on the main difficulty with me. I was satisfied before that it was my duty to seek God, and I had supposed, as you contended, that the way was plain. But, from all you have said, I could not see that you pointed out any way to come.

H. Did you not see how those others came?

S. Yes, sir; I saw how they came to the mourner's bench, but I did not see or hear any Scripture, as I hoped to do, requiring them to come in that way. If you had shown the Scripture requiring such procedure, I was ready, at any moment, to have done as they did. But seeing these come as they did, and observing the whole procedure, has involved my mind in such perplexities that I know not what to do.

H. I don't see anything to perplex you, unless it is your own unbelief.

S. It may be unbelief, for anything I know, but so it is. I am a miserable being, and hoped that you might relieve me. I cannot rest in this condition.

H. I cannot relieve you unless I know your difficulty. I trust, however, it is the work of conviction you feel; and, if so, I hope it may progress to complete regeneration.

S. My difficulty is this: you argued that it was the sinner's duty to seek; that the way was plain; and that those who seek shall find. A large number came forward seeking, and inquired what they should do to be saved. I anxiously listened to hear you tell them what to do. I heard the directions you gave them, and saw them do what you told them to do, in every particular as it appeared to me, with the deepest anxiety. Am I not right? Did they not seek according to your directions?

H. They did, and I think did right in so doing. You should have done the same.

S. Well, sir, here is my difficulty. After they had sought according to your directions; had done all you directed, you recollect that you passed along among them, and inquired of them personally, after

which you arose and reported that not one of them had got religion? Now, I could not understand this. It was their duty to seek. You said the way was plain, and insisted upon the unequivocal promise, "They who seek shall find." These persons did seek, but, you said, did not find! How is this?

H. Perhaps they may find peace to their souls on to-morrow night.

S. My dear sir, am I in all this anxiety, and are all those persons, in their deep and intense solicitude, as I saw them to-night, to depend on a "perhaps" for the salvation of the soul? If this is where I am to be left, I am in a worse condition than if I had never heard the gospel.

H. My young friend, you are entirely too impatient. I was a seeker six months before the Lord spoke peace to my soul. I have known many to seek for years, and not find peace with God. In some instances I have known persons to join on trial, and seek as high as ten, fifteen, and in some few instances, as high as twenty years, without finding.

S. And yet you tell them the way is plain, and they who seek shall find. Alas! for you; plain way and your Bible promises, if a man may seek fifteen or twenty years and not find.

H. Young man, I see that you have no adequate conception of Christianity.

S. No, sir, I perceive I have not, and what is more mortifying than all, is that I am not likely to have any adequate understanding of the subject; for nothing but clouds of gloom and darkness rise before me. Am I to have no Scriptural directions to guide me? Is there no way laid down in the Bible, by which I can come to the Lord?

H. I do not say that you must seek as great a length of time as some I have mentioned—it may get through much sooner. You may get through in a week, two weeks, or six months. You might get religion the first time you came to the mourner's bench. You should not despair nor become impatient.

S. But, my dear sir, if the way is so plain, as you have represented, and we have the promise that they who seek shall find, how is it that you suspend the whole matter in doubt, saying, "I may get religion," on the first application, "the second, &c."? Is there no definite place where I can come to the unequivocal promise of God?

H. I have already shown you the promise, and if you have any faith you cannot doubt the Lord's promise; but you must wait for the Lord's own good time.

S. Does not the Scripture say, "now is the accepted time, and now is the day of salvation," some place? Does it not say, "To-day, if you will hear his voice," &c.? Did not many thousands anciently come to the Lord in a single day?

H. There are such passages as you refer to, and many did come, and obtained peace with God in a single day in olden times, but it is not so now.

S. Why is it not so now? Who has changed the order?

H. Times have changed. The Scripture says—1-1—if you desire to go with us, we will do all for you we can; but, with your notions, I can do but little for you

I have no notions, know nothing about what is right, but wish you would show me how so many turned to the Lord in a day. Good night.

MR. GEORGE MULLER ON HIS BAPTISM.

The large Orphanage near Bristol, founded and sustained by Mr. Muller, simply by the exercise of faith and prayer, had its origin the earnest wish which God had given him to serve Him faithfully, and to trust Him while he did so, to fulfil with certainty his promises. One subject which this led him to examine was that of baptism. The following is his own account of this examination, and of the results:

About the beginning of April, 1830, (when 25 years old,) I went to preach at Sidmouth. While I was staying there, three sisters in the Lord had, in my presence, a conversation about Baptism, one of whom had been baptized after she had believed. When they had conversed a little on the subject, I was asked to give my opinion concerning it.

My reply was, "I do not think I need be baptized again."

I was then asked by the sister who had been baptized, "but have you been baptized?"

I answered, "yes, when I was a child."

She then replied, "Have you ever read the Scriptures, and prayed with reference to this subject?"

I answered, "No."

"Then," she said, "I entreat you never to speak any more about it till you have done so."

It pleased the Lord to show me the importance of this remark; for whilst at the very time I was exhorting every one to receive nothing which could not be proved by the Word of God, I repeatedly spoke against believers' baptism, without having ever earnestly examined the Scriptures, or prayed concerning it; and now I determined, if God would help me, to examine that subject also, and if infant baptism were found to be scriptural, I would earnestly defend it; and if believers' baptism were right, I would as strenuously defend that and be baptized.

As soon as I had time, I set about examining the subject. The mode I adopted was as follows: Repeatedly I asked God to teach me concerning it, and I read the New Testament from the beginning, with particular reference to this point. But when I earnestly set about the matter, a number of objections presented themselves to my mind.

1. "Since many holy and enlightened men have been divided in opinion concerning this point, does not this prove that it is not to be expected we should come to a satisfactory conclusion about this question in the present imperfect state of the church?" This objection was thus removed: If this ordinance is revealed in the Bible, why may I not know it? as the Holy Spirit is the teacher in the Church of Christ now as well as formerly.

2. "There have been but few of my friends baptized, and the greater portion of them are opposed to believers' baptism, and they will turn their backs on me." Answer: "Though all men should forsake me, if the Lord Jesus take me up I shall be happy."

3. "You will be sure to lose half of your income if you are baptized." Answer: "As long as I desire to be faithful to the Lord, He will not suffer me to want."

4. "People will call you a Baptist, and you will be reckoned among that body, and you cannot approve of all that is going on among them." Answer: "It does not follow that I must in all points go along with all those who hold believers' baptism, although I should be baptized."

5. "You have been preaching for some years and you will have thus publicly to confess that you have been in error, should you be led to see that believers' baptism is right." Answer: "It is much better to confess that I have been in error concerning that point than to continue in it."

6. "Even if believers' baptism be right, yet it is now too late to attend to it, as you ought to have been baptized immediately on believing." Answer: "It is better to fulfill a commandment of the Lord Jesus, be it ever so late, than to continue living in neglect of it."

As soon as I was brought into this state of heart, I saw from the Scriptures that believers ONLY are the proper subjects for baptism, and that immersion is the only true Scriptural mode in which it ought to be attended to. The passage which particularly convinced me of the former, is Acts xv. 30-35, and of the latter, Rom. vi. 3-5. Some time after, I was baptized. I had much peace in doing so, and never have I for a single moment regretted it.

Before I leave this point, I would just say a few words concerning the results of this matter, so far as it regards some of the objections which occurred to my mind when I was about to examine the Scriptures concerning baptism.

1. Concerning the first objection, my conviction now is, that of all revealed in the Scriptures, not even in the doctrine of justification by faith, and that the subject has only become obscured by men not having been willing to take the Scriptures alone to decide the point.

2. Not one of my true friends in the Lord has turned his back on me, as I supposed, and almost all of them have been themselves baptized since.

3. Though in one way I lost money in consequence of being baptized, yet the Lord did not suffer me to be really a loser, even as it regards temporal things; for He made up the losses most bountifully.

In conclusion, my example has been the means of leading many to examine the question of Baptism, and to submit from conviction to this ordinance. Seeing this truth, I have been led to speak on it as well as other truths, and during the twenty-three years that I have now resided in Bristol, more than a thousand believers have been baptized among us.—Evangelist (Eng.)

Tough not, taste not, handle not intoxicating drinks.

Xtend to every one a kindly salutation.

Yield not to discouragements. Zealously labor for the right, & success is certain.