
13

FOLLOWING THE PILLAR OF CLOUD AND FIRE

Before I received these letters I had been repeatedly asked during my fourteen years' residence in England, why I did not labour in my own country. The importance also of doing so had been pointed out to me; nor was I myself insensible to this; but my answer had p 499 always been: "I must labour where the Lord will have me to be, and as I have never seen it to be the Lord's will that I should labour in Germany, I ought not to do so." About fourteen months before I received these letters, it had been also more than ever laid on my heart by brother R. C. He had seen something of the religious state of the Continent, and he had heard still more about it, and he had found almost every where, that, when he set truth before brethren, they said, It is Scriptural, you are right; but if we were to practise this, what would be the consequences? what would become of us and our wives and children? or something of that kind. Brother C. therefore came on purpose to see me, on his return from Denmark, to lay it on my heart to visit Germany, on account of my being a native and having been led by the Lord as I had. He told me especially that he considered it of importance that I should publish my Narrative in German, in order that thus the faith of the brethren, with the Lord's blessing, might be strengthened, and that they might be led to act according to the light which they had. All this seemed to me very important; but my answer was as before: I cannot go till the Lord calls me. Scarcely had I read the letters from Mrs. G. and Dr. R——, but I felt: now is the time come when I am to go to Germany; and from that time I gave myself to prayer about it. When I afterwards communicated my feeling on the subject to brother R. C. he said: I am not surprised about it, for from the time that I spoke to you on the subject, I have been constantly asking the Lord to bring it about.—The reasons that pointed it out to me as the Lord's will, that I ought to go to Germany to labour there for a season, were these.

1, I knew not of one single body of believers, who were gathered on scriptural principles. In all the States of Germany, with scarcely any exception, believers are connected with the State Churches, and the very few believers of whom I had heard that they were separated, I knew to be close Baptists, who, generally, by their most exclusive separatist views, only confirmed believers in remaining in the Establishment. Especially of the Baptist Church at Stuttgart I had much reason to believe this. It seemed to me therefore important to go to Germany, and labour there for a season, if it might please the Lord to condescend to use me to put a light on a candlestick, howsoever dimly it might be burning at the first, so that by means thereof the light might be spread in other parts of Germany.

2, *As I am a German, and therefore familiar with the language, there seemed to me an especial call that I should take on myself this service, particularly as my experience in connexion with several bodies of believers, during the 13½ years previous to this time, would be of great help in this service.*

3, *It seemed further to me to be the Lord's will that I should go to Germany, in order that I might publish my Narrative of the Lord's dealings with me (which Mrs. G. had not been able to accomplish), and that not simply in the form of a translation, but so that it should be prepared for the press just as the necessities of the believers in Germany, (who, with scarcely any exceptions, are not only connected with the Establishment, but have no idea that there is any where else any thing besides Establishment) might require it. Thus, I judged, something would be given to Germany of the practical working of labouring out of the Establishment; of meeting only as believers in the name of the Lord Jesus, irrespective of any particular religious party or sect, and that in dependance upon the power and presence of the Holy Ghost in the Church of Christ; of dependance upon the Lord alone for every thing; of recognising no other book but the Holy Scriptures for our rule concerning every thing, &c.; and thus my Narrative, if the Lord allowed me to publish it, might be working still, after I had left Germany.*

4, *Up to that time I had never known an open door for me to labour on the Continent, at least not in Germany; for in the Establishment I neither could labour with a good conscience, according to the light which the Lord had been pleased to give me, nor should I have been permitted to have done so; and I was not acquainted with believers on the Continent out of the Establishment; and as to preaching in the open air, or going somewhere and taking a place for preaching, any thing of this sort was out of the question; for I was too well acquainted with the police of Germany, not to know that that would not be permitted. But now I heard of an open door. At Stuttgart, I judged, I might labour in expounding the truth in this close Baptist Church, and seek to bring these dear brethren out of their sectarian views.*

5, *But that which in connexion with these four reasons had likewise much influence upon me, was this: During the fourteen years that I had been in England, I had never had my mind drawn to labour on the Continent, and now the very opposite was the case. It was but two or three days before I received those letters from Stuttgart, that I had again expressed my mind as to labouring in Germany, i. e. that I felt no call from the Lord to do it, and had no drawing towards it. Now the case was altogether otherwise. I could not but pray about it; I could not but feel drawn to go to Germany in love to the Lord and in pity towards the poor Church of Christ in that country. Naturally there was nothing inviting; for I saw a hard struggle before me with reference to the brethren who were to be won for the truth, and to be brought out of their errors; in the Continental manners and the long and*

beautiful journey on the Rhine I saw, through grace, no charm, and certainly I saw nothing in them which would induce me to leave home, but the reverse; the fourth Orphan-House was on the point of being opened, and I, naturally, was very reluctant to be absent from it just then; the labour would be great in Germany, and work would heap up greatly for me in Bristol, during my absence. But with all this: — the leading of my mind to Germany still remained.

Müller, George. A Narrative of Some of the Lord's Dealings with George Müller. Vol. 1. London: J. Nisbet & Co., 1860. Print.

In May of 1843, George Müller came to the conclusion that the Lord was calling him to minister in Germany for a season. This was occasioned through a providential meeting with a woman from Germany who sought out Müller's assistance in Bristol. Briefly summarize each of the reasons that he gives above which pointed out the Lord's will to him.

He also lists out reasons that would seem indicate otherwise. What does this demonstrate about Müller?

Pierson notes the meekness required in seeking the Lord's will and he gives one sure sign of such meekness and willingness to follow wherever God may lead. What is that sign?

For the meek, who are humbly seeking the Lord's will, what effect do hindrances to various paths have? Why?

How might a believer gauge the level of their surrender to God's will?

Once Müller had become convinced that going to Germany was the Lord's will, and the Lord had removed all obstacles, Müller and his wife set out for the Continent. What great trial did Müller experience at the outset of this journey?

How had previous events, even those of the recent past, enabled Müller to meet this trial head-on?

Once in Germany, Müller began to minister to some small groups of believers that had separated from the state church. What were some of the errors that needed corrected? What is the "awful error"?

To what does Müller attribute these errors?

Consider the following comment from Müller during this period:

Nay, whatever parts of truth are made too much of, though they were even the most precious truths connected with our being risen in Christ, or our heavenly calling, or prophecy, sooner or later those who lay an undue stress upon these parts of truth, and thus make them too prominent, will be losers in their own souls, and, if they be teachers, they will injure those whom they teach.

Is this statement correct? Can you think of any instances in church history or your own history where this has occurred?

As Müller worked for reform amongst these small groups of baptists, a rumor was circulated that Müller was working to bring these groups back into the state church. How did God use this rumor to achieve His purpose in this situation?

It would be easy to conclude, as many did, that because Müller was abroad, the funds must be in surplus in Bristol to carry on the work in his absence. What might lead some to think this?

In fact, the opposite was quite true, yet the Lord provided:

During all the time of my absence from Bristol, the Lord bountifully supplied our need. For though the

money, which I was able to leave behind on my departure, would not have supplied the Orphan-Houses with more than about one-half of what was needed, yet the Lord helped so seasonably, and sent in so many donations, that there was not once, during all this time, the least difficulty with reference to means.

However, even after his return to Bristol, the ministry was often living day to day from the hand of God. On September 4, 1844 Müller had but one farthing and 140 persons to feed. Below is Müller's account of how the Lord provided:

A little after nine o'clock I received a sovereign from a sister in the Lord, who does not wish the name of the place, where she resides, mentioned. Between ten and eleven o'clock the bag was sent from the Orphan-Houses, in which in a note it was stated that £1. 2s. was required for to-day. SCARCELY HAD I READ THIS, when a fly stopped before my house, and a gentleman, Mr. —, from the neighbourhood of Manchester, was announced. I found that he was a believer, who had come on business to Bristol. He had heard about the Orphan-Houses, and expressed his surprise, that without any regular system of collection, and without personal application to any one, simply by faith and prayer, I obtained £2000. and more yearly for the work of the Lord in my hands. This brother, whom I had never seen before, and whose name I did not even know before he came, gave me £2., as an exemplification of what I had stated to him.— There came in still further this morning 10s., being profits from the sale of ladies' bags. From the same donor who had sent the sovereign this morning, I received, two hours later, a box containing the following articles:—Three mourning rings, three other gold rings set with cameos, two gold watch keys, four gold locketts, a gold brooch, a silver snuffbox, six medals, three gold ear-drops, a pair of mourning earrings, a purse, two pairs of babies' shoes, a pair of card-racks, two necklaces, five ornamental hair pins, a wafer-stamp, a paper-knife, two book marks, and a great variety of polished pebbles.—Oh! how good is the Lord, and how seasonably comes His help, in our great, great need, when so much is required for clothes, &c. There came in likewise through a sister in Bath £1., and 5s. 6d. more. Thus, besides all the articles, which have been mentioned, altogether £4. 15s. 6d. has come in this day, at the commencement of which I had only ONE FARTHING left.

NEXT LESSON

GOD'S BUILDING: THE NEW ORPHAN HOUSES

HOW complex are the movements of God's providence! Some events are themselves eventful. Like the wheels in Ezekiel's vision—a wheel in the middle of a wheel,—they involve other issues within their mysterious mechanism, and constitute epochs of history. Such an epochal event was the building of the first of the New Orphan Houses on Ashley Down.

*Pierson, Arthur T. George Müller of Bristol. London: James Nisbet & Co., Limited, 1899.
Print.*

