
6

THE NARRATIVE OF THE LORD'S DEALINGS

IT was only after the consideration of many months, and after much self-examination as to my motives, and after much earnest prayer, that I came to the conclusion to write this little work. I have not taken one single step in the Lord's service, concerning which I have prayed so much. My great dislike to increasing the number of religious books would, in itself, have been sufficient to have kept me for ever from it, had I not cherished the hope of being instrumental in this way to lead some of my brethren to value the Holy Scriptures more, and to judge by the standard of the word of God the principles on which they act. But that which weighed more with me than any thing was, that I have reason to believe from what I have seen among the children of God, that many of their trials arise, either from want of confidence in the Lord as it regards temporal things, or from carrying on their business in an unscriptural way. On account, therefore, of the remarkable way in which the Lord has dealt with me in temporal things, within the last ten years, I feel that I am a debtor to the Church of Christ, and that I ought, for the benefit of my poorer brethren especially, to make known, as much as I can, the way in which I have been led. In addition to this, I know it to be a fact, that to many souls the Lord has blessed what I have told them about the way in which he has led me and therefore it seemed to me a duty to use such means', whereby others also, with whom I could not possibly converse, might be benefited. That which at last, on May 6, 1836, induced me finally to determine to write this Narrative was, that if the Lord should permit the book to sell, I might, by the profits arising from the sale, be enabled in a greater degree to help the poor brethren and sisters among whom I labour, a matter which just at that time weighed much on my mind. I therefore at last began to write. But after three days I was obliged to lay the work again aside, on account of my other pressing engagements. On May 15th I was laid aside on account of an abscess; and now being unable, for many weeks, to walk about as usual, though able to work at home, I had time for writing. When the manuscript was nearly completed I gave it to a brother to look it over, that I might have his judgment; and the Lord so refreshed his spirit through it, that he offered to advance the means for having it printed, with the understanding that if the book should not sell, he would never consider me his debtor. By this offer not a small obstacle was removed, as I have no means of my own to defray the expense of printing. These two last circumstances, connected with many other points, confirmed me that I had not been mistaken, when I came

to the conclusion, that it was the will of God, that I should serve his church in this way.

The fact of my being a foreigner, and therefore but very imperfectly acquainted with the English language, I judged to be no sufficient reason for keeping me from writing. The christian reader being acquainted with this fact, will candidly excuse any inaccuracy of expression.

For the poor among the brethren this Narrative is especially intended, and to their prayers I commend it in particular.

—GEORGE MÜLLER. *Bristol, July 5, 1837.*

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

In this chapter, Pierson notes seven characteristics of George Müller's autobiography. Review these seven traits and then take some time to consider how a reader might characterize your own narrative.

The previous question may have been difficult because you have as yet not begun to write down an account of the Lord's dealings in your own life. Consider this statement from Pierson: "*He [Müller] might never have published a report or spread these minute matters before the public eye, and yet have been an equally faithful steward toward God; but he would not in such case have been an equally faithful trustee toward man.*" Take a few moments to prayerfully consider how setting down in writing your own account of the Lord's workings in your life might be a profitable. Your own account doesn't have to mirror Müller's, it's your story. The only similarity ought to be that, just as in Müller's account, it is less your story and more of a story of Lord's dealings with you.

If you have objections to such a work, take a few moments to list them below.

Perhaps you feel that an account of your life would not be as profitable to others as Müller's has been because you lack the faith and discipline that is so evident in Müller's life. Let's look at a few questions to see if this is a valid objection.

Questioning whether your own story would be beneficial to others is the wrong place to begin. Would taking the time to recount the Lord's dealings with you be of any benefit to you personally?

The Lord used Müller to begin several ministries: The Scriptural Knowledge Institute, Day-schools, Sunday-schools, Orphanages, etc. Perhaps the Lord has not called you to start or lead such institutions. Does this mean that God is not active in your life?

If God is active in your life, and if you are a believer He most certainly is, what acts of God are not worth recounting? Explain.

You may feel much like a Mr. Fearing than a Faithful or Great-heart like you consider Müller to have been.

This may, in fact, even be true. Are God and George Müller the only two characters in his biography? If not, who else makes up the cast?

Consider for a few moments the fact that God did not supply Müller's needs for those many years by the help of unusually miraculous means. They were miraculous in the sense that everything God does is miraculous, but He did not, as He did with others, provide for Müller with manna from heaven or use birds to bring him his daily bread. Müller and the ministries he led were supported by millions of acts of faithful believers who were led of God to participate in the work. No character in this drama is superfluous.

You may agree that every character in the story is necessary, but you may feel that only those whose are extraordinary believers should have their stories retold for the benefit of others. However, Müller would be the first to point out that he was in no way an extraordinary saint. Rather, he was a saint of God with like passions as we. Throughout his biography accounts can be read of confession and acknowledgment of sin. Observe the following:

May 13. To-day I have had again much reason to mourn over my corrupt nature, particularly on account of want of gratitude for the many temporal mercies by which I am surrounded. I was so sinful as to be dissatisfied on account of the dinner, because I thought it would not agree with me, instead of thanking God for the rich provision, and asking heartily the Lord's blessing upon it, and remembering the many dear children of God who would have been glad of such a meal. I rejoice in the prospect of that day when, in seeing Jesus as he is, I shall be like him.

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

Scripture is also very clear in presenting to us the fact that the servants of the Lord such as the apostles and prophets were men with fallen natures just as we have. In some ways we find comfort in the failures of great men and women because it enables us to relate to them more easily. Sometimes we can find great encouragement knowing that some of the Lord's servants are quite average, like us.

Do you think anyone might be encouraged from your story, despite the fact that you are a simple believer who daily struggles with the flesh? Why or why not?

Lastly, you may feel that though Müller was a man of like passions, he had also been a great gift of faith that you have not received. Listen to Müller's reply to such an objection:

Think not, dear reader, that I have the gift of faith, that is, that gift of which we read in 1 Cor. 12:9, and which is mentioned along with "the gifts of healing," "the working of miracles," "prophecy," and that on that account I am able to trust in the Lord. It is true that the faith, which I am enabled to exercise, is altogether God's own gift; it is true that he alone supports it, and that he alone can increase it; it is true that, moment by moment, I depend upon him for it, and that if I were only one moment left to myself, my faith would utterly fail; but it is not true that my faith is that gift of faith which is spoken of in 1 Cor. 12:9... And lastly, once more, let not Satan deceive you in making you think that you could not have the same faith, but that it is only for persons who are situated as I am. When I lose such a thing as a key, I ask the Lord to direct me to it, and I look for an answer to my prayer; when a person with whom I have made an appointment does not come, according to the fixed time, and I begin to be inconvenienced by it, I ask the Lord to be pleased to hasten him to me, and I look for an answer; when I do not understand a passage of the word of God, I lift up my heart to the Lord, that he would be pleased, by his holy Spirit, to instruct me, and I expect to be taught, though I do not fix the time when, and the manner how it should be; when I am going to minister in the word, I seek help from the Lord, and while I in the consciousness of natural inability as well as utter unworthiness, begin this his service, I am not cast down, but of good cheer, because I look for his assistance, and believe that he, for his dear Son's sake, will help me. And thus in other of my temporal and spiritual concerns I pray to the Lord, and expect an answer to my requests; and may not you do the same, dear believing reader? Oh! I beseech you, do not think me an extraordinary believer, having privileges above other of God's dear children, which they cannot have; nor look on my way of acting as something that would not do for other believers. Make but trial! Do but stand still in the hour of trial, and you will see the help of God, if you trust in him. But there is so often a forsaking the ways of the Lord in the hour of trial, and thus the food of faith, the means whereby our faith may be increased, is lost.

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If you have not lived to this point in such complete dependence and faith in the Lord will you make a trial of it henceforth?

Certainly all believers desire to follow the example of Müller in this regard, but how do we go about developing such faith. Again, observe the advice of Müller himself:

The following means, however, ought to be used:

1, *The careful reading of the word of God, combined with meditation on it. Through reading of the word of God, and especially through meditation on the word of God, the believer becomes more and more acquainted with the nature and character of God, and thus sees more and more, besides his holiness and justice, what a kind, loving, gracious, merciful, mighty, wise, and faithful Being he is, and, therefore, in poverty, affliction of body, bereavement in his family, difficulty in his service, want of a situation or employment, he will repose upon the ability of God to help him, because he has not only learned from his word that he is of almighty power and infinite wisdom, but he has also seen instance upon instance in the Holy Scriptures in which his almighty power and infinite wisdom have been actually exercised in helping and delivering his people; and*

he will repose upon the willingness of God to help him, because he has not only learned from the Scriptures what a kind, good, merciful, gracious, and faithful being God is, but because he has also seen in the word of God, how in a great variety of instances he has proved himself to be so. And the consideration of this, if God has become known to us through prayer and meditation on his own word, will lead us, in general at least, with a measure of confidence to rely upon him: and thus the reading of the word of God, together with meditation on it, will be one especial means to strengthen our faith.

2, As with reference to the growth of every grace of the Spirit, it is of the utmost importance that we seek to maintain an upright heart and a good conscience, and, therefore, do not knowingly and habitually indulge in those things which are contrary to the mind of God, so it is also particularly the case with reference to the growth in faith. How can I possibly continue to act faith upon God, concerning any thing, if I am habitually grieving him, and seek to detract from the glory and honour of him in whom I profess to trust, upon whom I profess to depend? All my confidence towards God, all my leaning upon him in the hour of trial will be gone, if I have a guilty conscience, and do not seek to put away this guilty conscience, but still continue to do things which are contrary to the mind of God. And if, in any particular instance, I cannot trust in God, because of the guilty conscience, then my faith is weakened by that instance of distrust; for faith with every fresh trial of it either increases by trusting God, and thus getting help, or it decreases by not trusting him; and then there is less and less power of looking simply and directly to him, and a habit of self dependance is begotten or encouraged. One or other of these will always be the case in each particular instance. Either we trust in God, and in that case we neither trust in ourselves, nor in our fellowmen, nor in circumstances, nor in any thing besides; or we DO trust in one or more of these, and in that case do NOT trust in God.

3, If we, indeed, desire our faith to be strengthened, we should not shrink from opportunities where our faith may be tried, and, therefore, through the trial, be strengthened. In our natural state we dislike dealing with God alone. Through our natural alienation from God we shrink from him, and from eternal realities. This cleaves to us more or less, even after our regeneration. Hence it is, that, more or less, even as believers, we have the same shrinking from standing with God alone,—from depending upon him alone,—from looking to him alone:—and yet this is the very position in which we ought to be, if we wish our faith to be strengthened. The more I am in a position to be tried in faith with reference to my body, my family, my service for the Lord, my business, etc., the more shall I have opportunity of seeing God's help and deliverance; and every fresh instance, in which he helps and delivers me, will tend towards the increase of my faith. On this account, therefore, the believer should not shrink from situations, positions, circumstances, in which his faith may be tried; but should cheerfully embrace them as opportunities where he may see the hand of God stretched out on his behalf, to help and deliver him, and whereby he may thus have his faith strengthened.

4, The last important point for the strengthening of our faith is, That we let God work for us, when the hour of the trial of our faith comes, and do not work a deliverance of our own. Wherever God has given faith, it is given, among other reasons, for the very purpose of being tried. Yea, however weak our faith may be, God will try it; only with this restriction, that as, in every way, he leads us on gently, gradually, patiently, so also with reference to the trial of our faith. At first our faith will be tried very little, in comparison with what it may be afterwards; for God never lays more upon us than he is willing to enable us to bear. Now, when the trial of faith comes, we are naturally inclined to distrust God, and to trust rather in ourselves, or in our friends, or in circumstances. We will rather work a deliverance of our own somehow or other, than simply look to God and wait for his help. But if we do not patiently wait for God's help, if we work a deliverance of our own, then at the next trial of our faith it will be thus again, we shall be again inclined to deliver ourselves; and thus, with every fresh instance of that kind, our faith will decrease; whilst, on the contrary, were we to stand still in order to see the salvation of God, to see his hand stretched out on our behalf, trusting in him alone, then our faith would be increased, and with every fresh case in which the hand of God is stretched out on our behalf in the hour of the trial of our faith, our faith would be increased yet more. Would the believer, therefore, have his faith strengthened, he must, especially, give time to God, who tries his faith in order to prove to his child, in the end, how willing he is to help and deliver him, the moment it is good for him.

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

Note that Müller's advice begins with Bible Intake. Why do you think that is first in list of means?

To what does Müller refer in his second point, without using the word itself, as the cause for our lack of growth in grace and faith? How do we combat this?

What does Müller's third point tell us about the battle required from point two?

In his last point Müller says that we are to "let God work for us." Does he mean that we should "let go and let God" in the sense that that phrase is often used today? If not, what does he mean? How does that relate to our study on mortification?

Will you take Müller's four pieces of advice in order to grow in grace and in the knowledge of the Lord Jesus Christ?

It is never too early or too late to embark on such a path of faith and you never know how recounting such decisions will challenge and encourage others who may be able to relate more easily to you than to such “heroes” of the faith as George Müller of Bristol.

NEXT LESSON: LED OF GOD INTO A NEW SPHERE

April 10. I asked the Lord for a text, but got none. At last, after having again much felt that Teignmouth is not my place, I was directed to Isaiah 51:9–11.

April 11. Felt again much that Teignmouth will not much longer be my residence.

April 12. Still feel the impression that Teignmouth is no longer my place.

April 13. Found a letter from Brother Craik, from Bristol, on my return from Torquay, where I had been to preach. He invites me to come and help him. It appears to me, from what he writes, that such places as Bristol more suit my gifts. O Lord, teach me! I have felt this day more than ever, that I shall soon leave Teignmouth. I fear, however, there is much connected with it which savours of the flesh, and that makes me fearful. It seems to me as if I should shortly go to Bristol, if the Lord permit.

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