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LED OF GOD INTO A NEW SPHERE

April 14. Wrote a letter to Brother Craik, in which I said I should come, if I clearly saw it to be the Lord's will. Have felt again very much to-day, yea, far more than ever, that I shall soon leave Teignmouth. At last I was pressed in spirit to determine that to-morrow I would tell the brethren so, in order that by the result of this I might see more of the Lord's mind; and that, at all events, I might have their prayers, to be directed in this matter by the Lord.

April 15. Lord's day. This evening I preached again once more, as fully as time would permit, on the Lord's second coming. After having done so, I told the brethren what effect this doctrine had had upon me, on first receiving it, even to determine me to leave London, and to preach throughout the kingdom; but that the Lord had kept me chiefly at Teignmouth for these two years and three months, and that it seemed to me now that the time was near when I should leave them. I reminded them of what I told them when they requested me to take the oversight of them, that I could make no certain engagement, but stay only so long with them as I should see it to be the Lord's will to do so. There was much weeping afterwards. But I am now again in peace. [This would not have been the case, had the matter not been of God. I knew of no place to go to. My mind was much directed to Torquay, to preach there for a month or so, and then to go further. For though I had written that I would come to Bristol, I meant only to stay there for a few days, and to preach a few times.]

April 16. This morning I am still in peace. I am glad I have spoken to the brethren, that they may be prepared, in case the Lord should take me away.—Having again little money, and being about to leave Teignmouth for several days, I asked the Lord for a fresh supply, and within about four hours afterwards he sent me, from six different quarters, 3l. 7s. 6d. I left to-day for Dartmouth, where I preached in the evening.—There was much weeping to-day among the saints at Teignmouth. This is already a trial to me, and it will be still more so should I actually leave.—It is a most important work to go about and stir up the churches; but it requires much grace, much self-denial, much saying over the same things, and the greatest watchfulness and faithfulness, in making use of one's time for prayer, meditation, and reading the Scriptures.—I had five answers to prayer to-day. 1. I awoke at five, for which I had asked the Lord last evening. 2. The Lord removed from my dear wife an indisposition, under which she had been suffering.

Having accepted Mr. Craik's invitation to come to Bristol on April 14th, Müller, the next day, which was the Lord's day, informed his congregation at Teignmouth that he believed that his time with them might be coming to an end. The news resulted in "*much weeping*" on the part of the congregation. How might this have prevented Müller from following where he believed the Lord was calling him to?

What man of God from the New Testament, though entreated with tears, chose rather to follow the path the Lord had laid on his heart?

Müller began his journey to Bristol on April 20th having spent the two previous days preaching in Dartmouth and Torquay just south of Teignmouth. On that first day of travel he had opportunity to preach twice, first in Exeter and then in Taleford in the evening. In this Müller's zeal for the lost and for the proclamation of the Word can clearly be seen.

Unfortunately, Müller's zeal for "ministry" had a negative effect in that he had sacrificed private communion with the Lord for the sake of these public opportunities. This resulted in the failures he records concerning the second day of his journey:

April 21. This morning I rose a little before five, and attended a prayer meeting from a quarter past five to a quarter past six. I spoke for some time at the meeting. Afterwards I prayed and read again with some believers, and likewise expounded the Scriptures. The Bristol coach took me up about ten. I was very faithless on the journey. I did not speak a single word for Christ, and was therefore wretched in my soul. This has shown me again my weakness. Though the Lord had been so gracious to me yesterday, in this particular, both on my way from Teignmouth to Exeter, and from Exeter to Taleford, and had given me much encouragement, in that he made my fellow-travellers either thankfully to receive the word, or constrained them quietly to listen to the testimony; yet I did not confess him to-day. Nor did I give away a single tract, though I had my pockets full on purpose. O wretched man that I am!

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

How prone do you find yourself to give so much toward public duties that you neglect private ones? Has this

had any discernible effect on your spiritual life?

Müller himself calls attention to this in his autobiography saying, “I would offer here a word of warning to my fellow-believers. Often the work of the Lord itself may be a temptation, to keep us from that communion with him which is so essential to the benefit of our own souls.” Pierson has an extended reflection on this that we would do well to ponder:

Here Mr. Müller had the grace to detect one of the foremost perils of a busy man in this day of insane hurry. He saw that if we are to feed others we must be fed; and that even public and united exercises of praise and prayer can never supply that food which is dealt out to the believer only in the closet—the shut-in place with its closed door and open window, where he meets God alone. In a previous chapter reference has been made to the fact that three times in the word of God we find a divine prescription for a true prosperity. God says to Joshua, “This book of the law shall not depart out of thy mouth; but thou shalt meditate therein day and night, that thou mayest observe to do according to all that is written therein: for then thou shalt make thy way prosperous, and then thou shalt have good success.” (Joshua 1:8.) Five hundred years later the inspired author of the first Psalm repeats the promise in unmistakable terms. The Spirit there says of him whose delight is in the law of the Lord and who in His law doth meditate day and night, that “he shall be like a tree planted by the rivers of water, that bringeth forth his fruit in his season; his leaf also shall not wither; and whatsoever he doeth shall prosper.” Here the devout meditative student of the blessed book of God is likened to an evergreen tree planted beside unfailing supplies of moisture; his fruit is perennial, and so is his verdure—and whatsoever he doeth prospers! More than a thousand years pass away, and, before the New Testament is sealed up as complete, once more the Spirit bears essentially the same blessed witness. “Whoso looketh into the perfect law of liberty and continueth” (i.e. continueth looking—meditating on what he there beholds, lest he forget the impression received through the mirror of the Word), “this man shall be blessed in his deed.” (James 1:25.)

Here then we have a threefold witness to the secret of true prosperity and unmingled blessing: devout meditation and reflection upon the Scriptures, which are at once a book of law, a river of life, and a mirror of self—fitted to convey the will of God, the life of God, and the transforming power of God. That believer makes a fatal mistake who for any cause neglects the prayerful study of the word of God. To read God’s holy book, by it search one’s self, and turn it into prayer and so into holy living, is the one great secret of growth in grace and godliness. The worker for God must first be a worker with God: he must have power with God and must prevail with Him in prayer, if he is to have power with men and prevail with men in preaching or in any form of witnessing and serving. At all costs let us make sure of that highest preparation for our work—the preparation of our own souls; and for this we must take time to be alone with His word and His Spirit, that we may truly meet God, and understand His will and the revelation of Himself.

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

What does Pierson identify as the key element of “true prosperity and unmingled blessing”? Do you agree or disagree? Why or why not?

Though Pierson (and Müller) stresses the importance of this discipline in the Christian life, the two paragraphs above touch upon several other disciplines. This ought to remind us of the first principle of mortification which is _____.

How many of the Spiritual Disciplines can you find mentioned in the two paragraphs quoted from Pierson above?

Once in Bristol, Müller joined with Brother Craik and the Lord seemed to clearly bless the ministry of these two men. This blessing did not immediately confirm to either of these men that the Lord was clearly calling them to this location. Rather, they decided that they needed to leave Bristol before making a decision as to whether they should settle there. Why do you think they felt they needed to leave to make this decision? Was this a wise course? How might you apply this principle in other areas of your life?

During the time away from Bristol the Lord confirmed to both of His servants that they were to proceed with the establishment of a ministry in that city. By late May both men had relocated to Bristol. On August 13th a formal body of believers was constituted as a church. Müller says in his diary that this was done “*without any rules, desiring only to act as the Lord shall be pleased to give us light through his word.*” What did Müller mean by this statement? Is this a wise course to follow? Why or why not?

At the outset of Müller's and Craik's ministry the Lord appeared to bless the efforts of Mr. Craik over that of Mr. Müller. Müller could have easily become embittered with jealousy, but he did not. Rather, he sought to ascertain what the causes of this might be. He came to three conclusions and resolved to remedy his own deficiencies.

This circumstance led me to inquire into the reasons, which are probably these:

- 1. That brother Craik is more spiritually minded than I am.*
- 2. That he prays more earnestly for the conversion of sinners than I do.*
- 3. That he more frequently addresses sinners, as such, in his public ministrations, than I do.*

This led me to more frequent and earnest prayer for the conversion of sinners, and to address them more frequently as such.

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

What mark of a healthy church member is displayed in this line of thinking?

Have you struggled with jealousy over the spiritual progress or ministry of others? Do you think that the reasons you do not see more fruit in your own life can be traced back to deficiencies in these three areas?

On February 9th 1833 Müller records the following in his diary:

I read a part of Franke's life. The Lord graciously help me to follow him, as far as he followed Christ. The greater part of the Lord's people whom we know in Bristol are poor, and if the Lord were to give us grace to live more as this dear man of God did, we might draw much more than we have as yet done out of our Heavenly Father's bank, for our poor brethren and sisters.

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

Franke's life work would prove to be an inspiration and pattern for much of Müller's life to come. Within a few months Müller was sufficiently drawn to set about helping the poor and the orphans within his community. As always, when Müller became convinced that a path was pleasing and glorifying to the Lord, he set out to obey as best as possible.

June 12. I felt, this morning, that we might do something for the souls of those poor boys and girls, and grownup or aged people, to whom we have daily given bread for some time past, in establishing a school for them, reading the Scriptures to them, and speaking to them about the Lord. As far as I see at present, it appears well to me to take a place in the midst of those poor streets near us, to collect the children in the morning about eight, giving them each a piece of bread for breakfast, and then to teach them to read, or to read the Scriptures to them, for about an hour and a half. Afterwards the aged, or grown-up people, may have their appointed time, when bread may be given to them, and the Scriptures read and expounded to them, for, perhaps, half an hour. About similar things I have now and then thought these two years.—There was bread given to about 30 or 40 persons to-day; and though the number should increase, in the above way, to 200 or more, surely our gracious and rich Lord can give us bread for them also.

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

Seemingly, a door was opening toward this end. After having shared his heart with Mr. Craik, a location was brought to their attention which appeared to be suitable for the establishment of a school for poor boys and girls. Not only was a location available at a reasonable price but an aged brother had volunteered to do the teaching.

The door, however, only seemed to be opening. The establishment of a school, at this time, was hindered due to the potential disruption to the neighbors of the proposed building. Müller did not let this setback prevent Him from ultimately pursuing these desires. It would have been easy to give up, but he believed that a ministry to the poor children of Bristol and surrounding areas was surely “of God.” Müller notes in his autobiography:

But though, at this time, this matter was not carried out, the thought was, from time to time, revived and strengthened in my mind, and it ultimately issued in the formation of the Scriptural Knowledge Institution, and in the establishment of the Orphan-Houses.

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

The Lord often closes the door on our plans. What enabled Müller to not give up on this endeavor? Why did he believe this to be a work “of God”?

When the Lord shuts a door in your life, how do you respond? How do you evaluate if He is saying “no” or “not now/not here”?

NEXT LESSON:

A TREE OF GOD'S OWN PLANTING

February 12. I prayed little, read little of the word, and laboured little to day. On the whole an unprofitable day. May the Lord in mercy give me fervency of spirit!

February 19. Brother Craik preached this evening on Mark 4:30–41, and was enabled to give out precious truths. Oh that I did feed more upon them! For several weeks I have had very little real communion with the Lord. I long for it. I am cold. I have little love to the Lord. But I am not, yea, I cannot be satisfied with such a state of heart. Oh that once more I might be brought to fervency of Spirit, and that thus it might continue with me for ever! I long to go home that I may be with the Lord, and that I may love him with all my heart. I fear that the Lord will chastise me at the time of my dear wife's confinement. Lord Jesus, take thy miserable sinful servant soon to thyself, that I may serve thee better! Within the last week I have repeatedly set out, as it were, afresh; but soon, very soon, all has come again to nothing. The Lord alone can help me. Oh that it might please him to bring me into a more spiritual state!

February 20. By the mercy of God I was to-day melted into tears on account of my state of heart. Oh that it might please the Lord to bring me into a more spiritual state!

February 21. Through the help of the Lord I am rather in a better state of heart than for some time past.—I was led this morning to form a plan for establishing, upon scriptural principles, an Institution for the spread of the Gospel at home and abroad. I trust this matter is of God.

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