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# 16

## THE SHADOW OF A GREAT SORROW

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*On Oct. 7th, 1859, it was twenty nine years since I was united in marriage to my beloved, excellent wife Mary, who, with very little interruption, except at her confinements, enjoyed very good health up to this time; but at the end of the twenty ninth year of our conjugal union she was laid aside by rheumatism, became a great sufferer, and continued a sufferer month after month, till about the middle of the year 1860; so that for about nine months this most devoted servant of the Lord Jesus was almost entirely helpless, and unable to work. And yet this great affliction to her and to me, was so used by the Lord in the re-establishing of her health and strength, as that she was through this very affliction, which obliged her to rest so much, spared to me and the work of the Lord for ten years longer, than otherwise, humanly speaking, she might have been. When my beloved wife was first taken ill, I said to myself, The Lord has graciously continued to me this beloved wife for twenty nine years in almost uninterrupted good health; it becomes me, therefore, not only to be satisfied with His holy will concerning this affliction, but particularly to seek to look at the Lord's kindness in the almost uninterrupted good health of my dearest Mary, instead of dwelling only on the trial of her present illness.*

*Feb. 6, 1870. On Oct. 7, 1830, therefore 39 years and 4 months since, the Lord gave me my most valuable, lovely and holy wife. Her value to me, and the blessing God made her to be to me, is beyond description. This blessing was continued to me till this day, when this afternoon, about four o'clock, the Lord took her to Himself.*

*Feb. 11, 1870. To-day the earthly remains of my precious Mary were laid in the graver. Many thousands of persons showed the deepest sympathy. About 1200 of the Orphans, who were able to walk, followed in the procession; the whole staff of helpers at the Orphan Houses, who could be spared, and hundreds of believers of the Church, with which she had been in communion; I myself, sustained by the Lord to the utmost, performed the service at the chapel in the cemetery, etc.*

*Shortly after the funeral, I was very unwell, but, as soon as I was sufficiently recovered, I preached my late dear wife's Funeral Sermon.*

*Müller, George. A Narrative of Some of the Lord's Dealings with George Müller. Vol. 3. London: J. Nisbet & Co., 1874. Print.*

In considering the marriage of George Müller and his first wife, Pierson notes the following features of their marriage that enabled them to live such that *“the days of courtship were never passed; indeed the tender and delicate mutual attentions of those early days rather increased than decreased as the years went on; and the great maxim was both proven and illustrated, that the secret of winning love is the secret of keeping it.”*:

1. *their one united object was to live only and wholly for God;*
2. *that they had always abundance of work for God, in which they were heartily united;*
3. *that this work was never allowed to interfere with the care of their own souls, or their seasons of private prayer and study of the Scriptures;*
4. *that they were wont daily, and often thrice a day, to secure a time of united prayer and praise when they brought before the Lord the matters which at the time called for thanksgiving and supplication.*

What characteristics are common to each of these features?

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What does it mean that *“their one united object was to live only and wholly for God”*?

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How does your marriage compare in this area? What are some practical steps you and your spouse could take to foster a greater unity in living only and wholly for God?

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What does it mean that they had *“always abundance of work for God”*?

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How does your marriage compare in this area? What are some practical steps you and your spouse could take to be engaged in an abundance of work for God?

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Why was it so important that neither of the Müller's allowed their abundance of work to interfere with the care of their own souls?

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Do both you and your spouse spend adequate time caring for your own soul? If not, what are some practical ways you can guard time to tend to your own soul?

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How much time do you and your spouse spend in prayer *together*? What practical steps could you take to ensure adequate time is being devoted to prayer with one another?

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Why was it so important that they be unified in each of these pursuits?

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What should you do if you desire to discipline yourself in these areas, but your spouse does not?

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After many years of united service, in February of 1870, the Lord took George Müller's helpmeet home. How did Müller respond?

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Why did Müller go to the Monday evening service just hours after his wife's death?

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Commenting on Mrs. Müller, Pierson says: "*She wore that one ornament which is in the sight of God of great price.*" What is that one ornament? What text(s) support your answer?

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The death of Mrs. Müller was a reminder to many that one day Mr. Müller would also pass from this life to the next. This would prompt them to ask what would happen to the orphans when that happened. What deficiency does Pierson point out in such thinking?

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Why is it so important that we also fight against such a deficiency?

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Below is the sermon preached by George Müller at his wife's funeral as recorded in his autobiography:

*Feb. 11, 1870. To-day the earthly remains of my precious Mary were laid in the graver. Many thousands of persons showed the deepest sympathy. About 1200 of the Orphans, who were able to walk, followed in the procession; the whole staff of helpers at the Orphan Houses, who could be spared, and hundreds of believers of the Church, with which she had been in communion; I myself, sustained by the Lord to the utmost, performed the service at the chapel in the cemetery, etc.*

*Shortly after the funeral, I was very unwell, but, as soon as I was sufficiently recovered, I preached my late dear wife's Funeral Sermon.*

*As all the principal matters connected with her illness, her removal, our happy conjugal life, and her usefulness as a helper to me in the work of the Lord, are contained in the Funeral Sermon, I give it here; and also because the reader will thus be furnished somewhat better with the inner life and the ways of the writer, than otherwise he would:—*

*“Thou art good, and doest good.”—PSALM 119:68.*

*The reason why I purpose to preach this funeral sermon, is not, because the late Mrs. Müller was my own beloved wife; nor, that I might have an opportunity of speaking highly of her, most worthy though she is of it; but that I may magnify the Lord in giving her to me, in leaving her to me so long, and in taking her from me to Himself. At the same time it appeared to me well, that, as she became the first member of the church assembling at Bethesda, when it was formed in August 1832; and as her whole life ever since then has been of the most blameless character; and as her life was full of most remarkable and instructive events; that, at the departure of such a Christian, we should ponder the lessons which her life is calculated to teach. She had lived to see 2700 believers received into communion in that church, of which she was the first; and when she fell asleep there were 920 in communion in that church, about 1500 having, during the 37 years and a half, either fallen asleep, or left Bristol, about 200 united with other Churches in Bristol, and 70 having been excluded from Fellowship.*

*During the six days that my beloved wife was on her death-bed, my soul was sustained by the truth contained in the words of our text. Whether she was more easy from pain, or in severe pain; whether there was a little prospect that she might yet be given back to me, or whether all hope was gone; my soul was sustained by these words. They were ever present with me, and I rested my soul on them. When it pleased God to take my darling wife to Himself, my soul was so sustained by these words, that if I had gone out that evening to preach, I should have preached on this text. I desire now, as God may help me, for the benefit of my younger fellow-believers in Christ particularly, to dwell on the truth contained in these words, with reference to my beloved departed wife.*

*I. The Lord was good and did good, in giving her to me.*

*II. He was good and did good in so long leaving her to me.*

*III. He was good, and did good, in taking her from me,*

*I. In giving her to me, I own the hand of God; nay, His hand was most marked; and my soul says, “Thou art good, and doest good.”*

*I refer to a few particulars for the instruction of others. When at the end of the year 1829, I left London to labour in Devonshire in the Gospel, a brother in the Lord gave to me a card, containing the address of a well-known Christian lady, Miss Paget, who then resided in Exeter, in order that I should call on her, as she was*

*an excellent Christian. I took this address and put it into my pocket, but thought little of calling on her. Three weeks I carried this card in my pocket, without making an effort to see this lady; but at last I was led to do so. This was God's way of giving me my excellent wife. Miss Paget asked me to preach the last Tuesday in the month of January, 1830, at the room which she had fitted up at Poltimore, a village near Exeter, and where Mr. A. N. Groves, afterwards my brother-in-law, had preached once a month, before he went out as a Missionary to Bagdad. I accepted readily the invitation, as I longed, everywhere to set forth the precious truth of the Lord's return, and other deeply important truths, which not long before my own soul had been filled with. On leaving Miss Paget, she gave me the address of a Christian brother, Mr. Hake, who had an Infant Boarding School for young ladies and gentlemen, at Northernhay House, the former residence of Mr. A. N. Groves, in order that I might stay there on my arrival in Exeter from Teignmouth. To this place I went at the appointed time. Miss Groves, afterwards my beloved wife, was there; for Mrs. Hake had been a great invalid for a long time, and Miss Groves helped Mr. Hake in his great affliction, by superintending his household matters. My first visit led to my going again to preach at Poltimore, after the lapse of a month, and I stayed again at Mr. Hake's house; and this second visit led to my preaching once a week in a chapel at Exeter; and thus I went, week after week, from Teignmouth to Exeter, each time staying in the house of Mr. Hake. All this time my purpose had been, not to marry at all, but to remain free for travelling about in the service of the Gospel; but after some months I saw, for many reasons, that it was better for me, as a young Pastor, under 25 years of years, to be married. The question now was, to whom shall I be united? Miss Groves was before my mind; but the prayerful conflict was long, before I came to a decision; for I could not bear the thought, that I should take away from Mr. Hake this valued helper, as Mrs. Hake continued still unable to take the responsibility of so large a household. But I prayed again and again. At last this decided me, I had reason to believe that I had begotten an affection in the heart of Miss Groves for me, and that therefore I ought to make a proposal of marriage to her, however unkindly I might appear to act to my dear friend and brother Mr. Hake, and to ask God to give him a suitable helper to succeed Miss Groves. On Aug. 15th, 1830, I therefore wrote to her, proposing to her to become my wife, and on Aug. 19th, when I went over as usual to Exeter for preaching, she accepted me. The first thing we did, after I was accepted, was, to fall on our knees, and to ask the blessing of the Lord on our intended union. In about two or three weeks the Lord, in answer to prayer, found an individual, who seemed suitable to act as housekeeper, whilst Mrs. Hake continued ill; and on Oct. 7, 1830, we were united in marriage. Our marriage was of the most simple character. We walked to church, had no wedding breakfast, but in the afternoon had a meeting of Christian friends in Mr. Hake's house and commemorated the Lord's death; and then I drove off in the stage-coach with my beloved bride to Teignmouth, and the next day we went to work for the Lord. Simple as our beginning was, and unlike the habits of the world, for Christ's sake, so our Godly aim has been, to continue ever since. Now see the hand of God in giving me my dearest wife:—1st, that address of Miss Paget's was given to me under the ordering of God. 2nd, I must at last be made to call on her, though I had long delayed it. 3rd, She might have provided a resting-place with some other Christian friend, where I should not have seen Miss Groves. 4th, My mind might have at last, after all, decided, not to make a proposal to her; but God settled the matter thus in speaking to me through my conscience—you know that you have begotten affection in the heart of this Christian sister, by the way you have acted towards her, and therefore, painful though it may be, to appear to act unkindly towards your friend and brother, you ought to make her a proposal. I obeyed. I wrote the letter in which I made the proposal, and nothing but one even stream or blessing has been the result.*

*Let me here add a word of Christian counsel. To enter upon the marriage union is one of the most deeply important events of life. It cannot be too prayerfully treated. Our happiness, our usefulness, our living for God or for ourselves afterwards, are often most intimately connected with our choice. Therefore, in the most prayerful manner, this choice should be made. Neither beauty, nor age, nor money, nor mental powers, should be that which prompt the decision; but 1st, Much waiting upon God for guidance should be used; 2nd, A hearty purpose, to be willing to be guided by Him should be aimed after; 3rd, True godliness without a shadow of doubt, should be the first and absolutely needful qualification, to a Christian, with regard to a companion for life. In addition to this, however, it ought to be, at the same time, calmly and patiently*

*weighed, whether, in other respects; there is a suitableness. For instance, for an educated man to choose an entirely uneducated woman, is unwise; for however much on his part love might be willing to cover the defect, it will work very unhappily with regard to the children.*

*From what has been stated, I think it is plain, that "He who is good and doeth good," had given me Miss Groves for a wife. Let us now see for a few moments what I had received in her as God's gift.*

*I mention here, as her chief excellence, that she was a truly devoted Christian. She had, for her one object of life, to live God; and during the 39 years and four months, that I was united to her by conjugal bonds, her steady purpose to live for God increased more and more. She was also, as a Christian, of a meek and quiet spirit. I speak to those who knew her, and not a few of whom knew her 30 years and upwards, and who know what a very excellent Christian she was. If all Christians were like her, the joys of heaven would be found on earth far more abundantly than they are now. In her, God had been pleased to give me a Christian wife, who never at any time hindered me in the ways of God, but sought to strengthen my hands in God, and this, too, in the deepest trials, under the greatest difficulties, and when the service in which she helped me brought on her the greatest personal sacrifices. When, during the years from September, 1838, to the end of 1846, we had the greatest trials of faith in the Orphan Work; and when hundreds of times the necessities of the orphans could only be met by our means, and when often all our own money had to be expended; that precious wife never found fault with me, but heartily joined me in prayer for help from God, and with me looked out for help, and help came; and then we rejoiced together, and often wept for joy together. But the precious wife, who was God's own gift to me, was exquisitely suited to me, even naturally, by her temperament. Thousands of times I said to her, "My darling, God Himself singled you out for me, as the most suitable wife I could possibly wish to have had." Then, as to her education, she was just all I could have wished. She had had a very good and sound education, and she knew besides the accomplishments of a lady. She played nicely and painted beautifully, though not five minutes were spent at the piano or in drawing or painting after our marriage. She possessed superior knowledge of Astronomy, was exceedingly well grounded in English Grammar and Geography, had a fair knowledge of History and French, had also begun Latin and Hebrew, and learned German, when in 1843 and 1845 she accompanied me in my service to Germany. All this cultivation of mind became not only helpful in the education of our daughter, but was more or less used by the Lord in His service to the praise of His name. She was a very good arithmetician, which for 34 years was a great help to me; for she habitually examined month by month all the account books, and the hundreds of bills of the matrons of the various Orphan Houses; and should any tradesman or one of the matrons at any time have made the least mistake, it would be surely found out by her. But, in addition to the good education of a lady, she possessed—what in our days is so rare among ladies—a thorough knowledge of useful needlework of every kind, and an excellent knowledge of the quality of material for clothes, linen, &c., and thus became so eminently useful as the wife of the director of the five Orphan Houses on Ashley Down, where hundreds of thousands of yards of material of all kinds, had to be ordered by her, and to be approved of or to be rejected. My beloved wife could do fancy needlework as other ladies, and had done it when young; but she did not thus occupy her time, except she would with her own dear hands now and then net a purse for her husband while she was in the country for change of air. Her occupation had habitually a useful end. It was to get ready the many hundreds of neat little beds for the dear orphans, most of whom never had seen such beds, far less slept in them, that she laboured. It was to get good blanketing or good blankets, that she was busied, thus to serve the Lord Jesus, in caring for these dear bereaved children, who had not a mother or father to care for them. It was to provide numberless other useful things in the Orphan Houses, and especially for the sick rooms of the orphans, that, day by day, except on the Lord's days, she was seen in the Orphan Houses. The knowledge which is useful to help the needy, to alleviate suffering, to make a useful wife, a useful mother, how far above the value of doing fancy work! Mrs. Müller preeminently possessed and valued useful knowledge. She and her dear sisters had been brought up by a wise as well as loving mother, who saw to it, that, while there was nothing spared with regard to a good school, and the attendance of good masters, &c., her daughters should, also, be eminent in useful knowledge. May Christian mothers, who hear me now, take heed, that their daughters have an education which will make them useful wives and useful mothers.*

*We have seen now, that God Himself had given me my beloved wife; we have also seen how suitable she was to me; and, in the gift of such a wife, a good foundation for real conjugal happiness was laid. And were we happy? Verily we were. With every year our happiness increased more and more. I never saw my beloved wife at any time, when I met her unexpectedly anywhere in Bristol, without being delighted so to do. I never met her even in the Orphan Houses, without my heart being delighted so to do. Day by day, as we met in our dressing room, at the Orphan Houses, to wash our hands before dinner and tea, I was delighted to meet her, and she was equally pleased to see me. Thousands of times I told her—"My darling, I never saw you at any time, since you became my wife, without my being delighted to see you." This was not only our way in the first year of our marriage union, nor in the tenth, in the twentieth, and in the thirtieth year, but also in the fortieth year of our conjugal life. Thus I spoke to her many times since the seventh of October, 1869. Further, day after day, if anyhow it could be done, I spent after dinner twenty minutes or half an hour with her in her room at the Orphan Houses, seated on her couch, which the love of a Christian brother, together with an easy chair, had sent her in the year 1860, when she was, for about nine months, so ill in rheumatism. I knew that it was good for her, that her dear active mind and hands should have rest, and I knew well that this would not be, except her husband was by her side; moreover, I also needed a little rest after dinner, on account of my weak digestive powers; and therefore I spent these precious moments with my darling wife. There we sat, side by side, her hand in mine, as an habitual thing, having a few words of loving intercourse, or being silent, but most happy in the Lord, and in each other, whether we spoke or were silent. And thus it was many times, since October 7, 1869, viz., in the fortieth year of our conjugal life. Our happiness in God, and in each other, was indescribable. We had not some happy days every year, nor a month of happiness every year; but we had twelve months of happiness in the year, and thus year after year. Often and often did I say to that beloved one, and this again and again even in the fortieth year of our conjugal union—"My darling, do you think there is a couple in Bristol, or in the world, happier than we are?" Why do I refer to all this? To show what a remarkably great blessing to a husband is a truly Godly wife, who also in other respects is fitted for him.*

*But while I own in the fullest degree, that the foundation of true spiritual happiness in our marriage life was laid, in that my dearest wife was a decided Christian, and fitted for me by God in other respects, and thus given to me by Him; yet, at the same time, I am most fully convinced, that this was not enough for the continuation of real conjugal happiness during a course of 39 years and four months, had there not been more. I therefore must add here the following points: 1. Both of us, by God's grace, had one object of life, and only one—to live for Christ. Everything else was of a very inferior character to us. However weak and failing in a variety of ways, there was no swerving from this one holy object of life. This Godly purpose, and the Godly aim, day by day, to carry out this purpose, greatly added,—of necessity added,—to true happiness, and, therefore, to an increase of conjugal happiness also. Should this be wanting in any two Christians, who are united by marriage ties, let them not be surprised if conjugal happiness, real conjugal happiness, is also wanting. 2. We had, all the 39 years and four months, the blessing of having an abundance of work to do, and we did that work; by God's grace we gave ourselves to it; and this abundance of work greatly tended, instrumentally, to the increase of our happiness. Our mornings never began with the uncertainty of how to spend the day, and what to do; for as the day began, we had always an abundance of work. I reckon this an especial blessing, and it greatly increased our happiness, and sweetened exceedingly the little while we had for rest in each other's society. Many true Christians even make the mistake of aiming after a position in which they may be free from work, and have all their time on hand. They know not that they wish for some very great evil, instead of some very great blessing. They forget that they desire a time, when, for want of regular occupation, they will be particularly exposed to temptation. 3. But great as habitually our occupation was, and especially during the last 25 years, we never allowed this to interfere with the care about our own souls. Before we went to work, we had, as an habitual practice, our seasons for prayer and reading the Holy Scriptures. Should the children of God neglect this, and let their work or service for God interfere with caring about their own souls, they cannot, for any length of time, be happy in God; and their conjugal happiness, therefore, must also suffer on account of it. 4. Lastly, and most of all to be noticed is this: we had for many*

years past, whether 20 or 30 years or more I do not know, besides our seasons for private prayer, and family prayer, also habitually our seasons for praying together. For many years my precious wife and I, had, immediately after family prayer, in the morning, a short time for prayer together, when the most important points for thanksgiving, or the most important points for prayer, with regard to the day, were brought before God. Should very heavy trials press on us, or should our need of any kind be particularly great, we prayed again after dinner, when I visited her in her room, as stated before; and this, at times of extraordinary difficulties or necessities, might be repeated once or twice more in the afternoon; yet very rarely was this the case. Then in the evening, during the last hour of our stay at the Orphan Houses, though her or my work was never so much, it was an habitually understood thing, that this hour was for prayer. My beloved wife came then to my room, and now our prayer, and supplication, and intercession, mingled with thanksgiving, lasted generally 40 minutes, 50 minutes, and sometimes the whole hour. At these seasons we brought perhaps 50 or more different points, or persons, or circumstances before God. The burden of our prayer was generally of the same character, except when prayers were turned into praises, or when fresh points were added, or when peculiar mercies or blessings, or peculiar difficulties and trials, led during a part of the time to a variation. We never thus met for prayer without having, on various accounts, cause for thanksgiving; but, at the same time, our seasons for prayer never arrived, without our having abundant cause for "casting our burden upon the Lord." These seasons for united prayer, I mean in addition to the family prayer, I particularly commend to all Christian husbands and wives. I judge that it was in our own history the great secret for the continuation not only of conjugal happiness, but of the love to each other, which was even more abundantly fresh and warm than it had been during the first year, though we were then exceedingly fond of each other.

I now pass on to the second part of our precious text:—

II. *The Lord was good, and doing good, in so long leaving to me my precious wife.*

I think it has been clearly shown to the Christians who hear me, that God, the Father of our Lord Jesus, and my Father, through faith in His name, gave to me my beloved wife; and I will now endeavour to show as clearly, that God's hand was most distinctly seen in leaving her to me as a companion in joy, and sorrow, and service for 39 years and four months. I have stated before, that we were married on Oct. 7, 1830. On Aug. 9, 1831, my beloved wife was, after seventeen hours' suffering of the severest kind, delivered of a still-born child. Her life had been in the greatest danger, humanly speaking, and remained in the greatest danger for several weeks afterwards, so that two medical gentlemen visited her daily, or even two or three times a day. That she did not sink at that time, but was raised up again, and given back to me for 38 years and six months more, was of God, and was, I believe, the result of my most earnestly crying to God for this blessing. But my dearest wife never was fully again in health and strength what she had been before. The second time when her life was again, humanly speaking, in the greatest danger, was when, four months after our arrival in Bristol, her confinement came on, Sept. 16, 1832. She was very ill. She was in the greatest danger. I was the whole night in prayer. But God had mercy on me, and not only spared my precious wife to me, but made her also the living mother of a living child. Our beloved daughter was given to us on Sept. 17, 1832. On March 19, 1834, she became the living mother of a living male child; but that time was in as marked a way free from great peril, apparently, as the two previous times had been the reverse. In this, too, I own the hand of God. About a year after this she was staying in the house of a Christian friend, at Stoke Bishop, and, while out walking, suddenly a carriage drove up and turned speedily round, and my beloved wife was all but killed; but God in a marked way preserved her life, though she was somewhat bruised by falling whilst she sought to save her life. On June 12, 1838, my beloved wife was taken ill. Often had I prayed respecting her hour. She continued in most severe sufferings from a little after nine until midnight. Thus hour after hour passed away, until eleven the next morning. Another medical gentleman was then called in, at the desire of the one who attended her. At three in the afternoon she was delivered of a still-born child. The whole of the night I was in prayer, as far as my strength allowed me. I cried at last for MERCY, and God heard me. For more than a fortnight after her delivery, my precious wife was so ill, that her two medical attendants came twice or three times daily. Her life was in the greatest danger, humanly speaking. But this time also "He who is good, and doeth good" gave her back to me, to leave her yet 31 years and six months longer to me, and to make her

more useful to me, and in the Orphan work than ever. The hand of God, in sparing her life in 1838, was most marked. In 1845 my beloved wife accompanied me the second time to Germany, where I intended to labour in the Gospel, and, especially, in writing German Tracts, and circulating them in many tens of thousands, together with my Narrative in German. Soon after our arrival in Stuttgart she was taken very ill; but God restored her then also, and gave her back to me for 24 years and six months longer. In the summer of 1859 she complained about the weakness of her left arm, which increased after a time more and more, instead of decreasing; and towards the end of October, being exposed to a draught, this weak left arm became exceedingly painful, and after a day or two swelled greatly, and especially her hand became greatly enlarged. Now that very ring, which at the wedding on Oct. 7, 1830. I had put on her finger, needed to be broken off. Her arm and hand became worse, and continued thus week after week. That room, in which I had been in the habit of paying those happy visits to my beloved wife after dinner and at other times, was now, week after week, for a long time, without her. But this was the state of my heart at that time. When this most heavy affliction began, I said to myself, "Twenty-nine years the Lord has given me this precious wife with comparatively little illness, and shall I now be dissatisfied, because He has been pleased to afflict her thus, in the 30th year of our conjugal union? Nay, it becomes me rather to be very grateful for having had her so long in comparatively good health, and fully to submit myself to the will of the Lord. This my soul was enabled to do. Keenly as I felt her absence from the Orphan Work for almost nine months, with the exception of a very few times, when she drove up to give various directions, yet, as I saw the hand of God in the whole, and was enabled to take the whole out of His hand, my soul was kept in peace, whilst day by day we were able still to have our precious seasons for prayer, and whilst day by day also we entreated God, that, if it might be, He would graciously be pleased yet to restore that feeble arm and hand again, and spare her longer to me for service. At last, in April, 1860, my dearest wife was brought so far, as that our kind and most attentive medical attendant could recommend her to go to Clevedon and use the warm sea-baths for the benefit of her arm and hand. I therefore took her to Clevedon, our daughter remaining with her, and myself going down as often as I could. The warm sea-baths seemed to agree with her well, and progress appeared to be made, when one day, returning from the bath, she slipped as she was stepping out of the road on the footpath near her lodgings, fell against the wall with her head, and on her weak arm, which she carried in a sling, and which had made her so helpless in not being able to break the fall. She seemed as dead, and our dear daughter ran to the lodgings to get help. But when she returned, her dear mother, who had been stunned by the fall, had revived, and could be moved to her bed. All now seemed gloomy and dark indeed. The prospect of removal of the rheumatism from the arm and hand, appeared entirely gone, and my precious wife was worse than ever. I now went down evening after evening to Clevedon, after the day's work on Ashley Down, to wait on her by night. Her suffering was very great for some time; but gradually this wore off, and she was brought back to the state in which she had been when she first went to Clevedon; and, after a stay of more than three months at Clevedon, there had been granted considerable improvement. She now returned to Bristol, spent about six weeks at home, and I then took her and my daughter to Teignmouth for a month, that she might have further change of air, and further the use of warm sea-baths, which evidently had been of considerable use to her. By the time we returned from Teignmouth, my dearest wife was so far restored, as to the use of her arm and hand, that she could take her work again at the Orphan Houses, and her dear hand was so far reduced in size, that her wedding ring, being put together again by a jeweller, could be put on again. How good was the Lord in sparing to me my dearest wife in this illness in 1859! How good to me, in that she was not killed on the spot, when she had that heavy fall at Clevedon! I magnify Him for it! "He is good and doeth good." But I cannot dismiss this part, without noticing one point in particular. My dearest wife had worked so hard in 1856, 1857, 1858, and 1859, when, through the opening of the New Orphan House No. 2, and the prospect of the opening of the New Orphan House No. 3, there was such an abundance of work, that her health had been brought into a very low state, and her strength had been greatly reduced. I begged her not to work so much, but it was in vain, she loved work; she never could bear to be idle. And thus it came, on account of her very low state of health, that the rheumatism had so much effect on her. But now see how the Lord worked. This very illness, most painful though it was to her, and most trying as it was to me, became God's precious instrument in sparing to the Orphans their true friend, and to her own dear sisters a sister, to her

own daughter a mother, and to her poor husband a precious wife for ten years more. This very illness obliged her to rest, beyond what she otherwise would have done. She was also medically ordered to take more nourishment than otherwise she would have taken; and by October 1860 she was in a far better state of health than she had been for years. How true that word, therefore, in this instance: "We know that all things work together for good to them that love God." Rom. 8:28. We have seen now "How good the Lord was to me" in sparing my dearest wife to me 39 years and four months, as she might have been removed from me far sooner. It now lastly remains, to show—

III. "That the Lord is good and was doing good" in the removal of the desire of my eyes.

Perhaps all Christians who have heard me, will have no difficulty in giving their hearty assent that "the Lord was good, and doing good" in giving me such a wife; and they will also, probably, most readily admit that He was good, and doing good in leaving her to me so long; but I ask these dear Christian friends to go further with me, and to say from their hearts, "The Lord was good, and doing good" in the removal of that useful, lovely, excellent wife from her husband, and that at the very time when, humanly speaking, he needed her more than ever. While I am saying this, I feel the void in my heart. That lovely one is no more with me, to share my joys and sorrows. Every day I miss her more and more. Every day I see more and more how great her loss to the Orphans. Yet, without an effort, my inmost soul habitually joys in the joy of that loved departed one. Her happiness gives joy to me. My dear daughter and self would not have her back, were it possible to produce it by the turn of the hand. God himself has done it, we are satisfied with Him.

During the last two or three years it was most obvious to my loving heart and eye, that my precious companion for so many years was again failing in her health. She did not only considerably lose flesh, but evidently seemed much more worn than she used to be. I begged her to work less, and to take more nourishment; but I could neither prevail as to the one nor the other. When I expressed my sorrow, that she lay awake at night for two hours or more, she would say, "My dear, I am getting old, and old persons need not so much sleep." When I brought before her, that I feared that her health would be again reduced, as in 1859, and that I feared the worst, she would I say, "My darling, I think the Lord will allow me to see the New Orphan Houses No. 4 and No.5 furnished and opened, and then I may go home; but most of all I wish, that the Lord Jesus would come, and that we might all go together." Thus her dear mind and hands would be at work, and as there was such an abundance of work in such a great variety of ways to be done, she was generally all the day at work at the Orphan Houses. Under these circumstances she caught cold in the early part of January, which brought on a most distressing cough, and that to such a degree, that she never had had nearly as bad a cough all the previous 39 years. With difficulty only I could prevail on her to allow me to send for our dear medical friend; for she ever made little of her own illnesses, whilst most solicitous about the health of others, especially myself and daughter and her sisters. I now pressed affectionately upon her, she would drive to and from the Orphan Houses, also lie down a little on her couch after dinner, which had been advised by our kind medical friend. It was during the time of this distressing cough, that I felt her pulse, because I wished to know how it was with her health generally; and I found she had a very feeble, irregular, and intermitting pulse, which only too much confirmed my fears about her health, during the last two or three years. Still my precious wife would not allow that there was much the matter with her. Through the medical means, the entirely avoiding night air, going to and fro in a fly when she went to the Orphan Houses, the use of a more generous and somewhat altered diet, and the resting a little more than usual, the distressing cough was so entirely removed, that scarcely the least trace of it remained, and my beloved one was again able to go out to Public Worship in a fly on the mornings of the Lord's-days, Jan. 23rd, and Jan. 30th, but stayed at home in the evenings, to avoid a return of the cough. On Sunday, Jan. 30th, there was an additional reason for not going out in the evening, because she felt a pain across the lower part of her back, and in her right arm. This pain was rather worse than better on Monday, Jan. 31st, and we considered it better to send for our dear medical friend, to call and see her, if possible before we started for the Orphan Houses; but as he was already from home, visiting his patients, my dear wife set off in a fly to the Orphan Houses, our daughter accompanying her mother, to work for her under her direction, as it was feared her pain would prevent her doing anything actively herself. The day passed tolerably, though the pain increased, instead of decreasing. At tea-

time she drove home with her sister Miss Groves, who also had been for weeks in a very feeble state of health, and with my daughter; I remained, to go in the evening to our usual public prayer-meeting at Salem Chapel. When I came home, I found our dear medical friend, Mr. Josiah Pritchard, had been, ordered my dearest wife to bed, and to remain in bed, and to have a fire lighted in her bedroom, stating that it was acute rheumatism, or what is commonly called rheumatic fever. She suffered much pain during the following night, but the next day, and the night from Tuesday to Wednesday especially, the pain was still more severe, and her limbs became one by one so painful, that she could neither move them, nor bear them to be touched, except the arm and hand which had been so weak ten years before. When I heard what Mr. Pritchard's judgment was, viz. that the malady was rheumatic fever, I naturally expected the worst, as to the issue, on account of what I had found out about the action of my dear wife's heart, when I felt her pulse; but though my heart was nigh to be broken, on account of the depth of my affection, I said to myself, "The Lord is good, and doeth good," all will be according to His own blessed character. Nothing but that, which is good, like Himself, can proceed from Him. If He pleases to take my dearest wife, it will be good, like Himself. What I have to do, as His child, is to be satisfied with what my Father does, that I may glorify Him." After this my soul not only aimed, but this, my soul, by God's grace, attained to. I was satisfied with God. On Tuesday, Feb. 1st, I was alone in the room of my precious wife at the Orphan Houses. She was at home in bed, a thing which had not been the case for more than nine years, as far as I can recollect. There were hanging in her room a number of precious texts from the Holy Scriptures, printed in large type, arranged for each day in the month, called, "The Silent Comforter." The sheet then turned up, contained these words, "I know, O Lord, that Thy judgments are right, and that Thou in faithfulness hast afflicted me" (Psalm 119:75). I read this again and again, and each time my inmost soul responded, "Yes, Lord, Thy judgments are right, I am satisfied with them. Thou knowest the depth of the affection of Thy poor child for his beloved wife, yet I am satisfied with Thy judgments; and my inmost soul says, that Thou in faithfulness hast afflicted me. All this is according to that love, with which Thou hast loved me in Christ Jesus, and whatever the issue, all will be well." There was also written on that sheet of "The Silent Comforter," "My times are in Thy hand" (Psalm 31:15.) My heart responded, in reading these words, "Yes, my Father, the times of my darling wife are in Thy hands. Thou wilt do the very best thing for her and for me, whether life or death. If it may be, raise yet up again my precious wife, Thou art able to do it, though she is so ill; but howsoever Thou dealest with me, only help me to continue to be perfectly satisfied with Thy holy will." During the whole week, whilst my beloved wife was lying on her death-bed, these lines of the precious hymn—"One there is above all others—O how He loves!" were ever present with me:

"Best of blessings He'll provide us,  
Nought but good shall e'er betide us,  
Safe to glory He will guide us,  
Oh how He loves!"

My heart continually responded—"Nought but good shall e'er betide us." My inmost soul was assured, that however my loving Father acted with His poor child, it would be for his good. On Wednesday, Feb. 2nd., my beloved wife being comparatively free from pain, I read to her before I went to the Orphan Houses, this verse out of the eighty-fourth Psalm—"The Lord God is a sun and shield: the Lord will give grace and glory: no good thing will he withhold from them that walk uprightly." Having read the verse, I said, My darling, we have both received grace, and we shall therefore receive glory; and as, by God's grace, we walk uprightly, nothing that is good for us will He withhold from us." She evidently was blessed through this verse, for she spoke about it to our daughter in the course of the day. To my own heart the verse was a great support, for I said to myself again and again: "I walk uprightly, and therefore my Father will withhold nothing from me, that is good for me; if therefore the restoration of my dearest Mary is good for me, it will be surely given; if

otherwise, I have to seek to glorify God by most perfect submission to His holy will." On Thursday, Feb. 3rd, I evidently saw how grave Mr. Pritchard considered the case to be, indeed on Wednesday evening already; for I was to give to my dear wife every two hours a small quantity of beef tea during the night, or a teaspoon full of wine in a table-spoon full of water. At such occasions I had always about one minute of prayer with her. On Friday evening Mr. Pritchard said, that it would be a comfort to him for Dr. Black to see Mrs. Müller, as the case was a very grave one. I told him, that I was perfectly satisfied with his treatment, but if it would at all be a comfort to himself, to make an appointment with Dr. Black. This, however, could not be till Sunday, the 6th of Feb., as Dr. Black would be out of town on Saturday. Saturday morning I stayed home till nearly dinner time, to be with the dear invalid as long as I possibly could; and when at last I left her, I said, "My darling, I am sorry to have to leave you, but I shall return as soon as I can." She sweetly replied, "You leave me with Jesus." When I came home, she was about the same as when I had left her; but, during the coming night, her pains and sufferings exceeded the pains she had had before. I was almost the whole of the night seeking in one shape or other to alleviate her suffering, and the trial she now had, that she had not the use of one of her limbs. At last, from two to four in the morning, she was easier; but the sufferings of that night brought her soon to the close of her earthly pilgrimage. About ten in the morning dear Mr. Pritchard, who from the first had called twice a day, and who to the utmost had done all that medical skill, coupled with Christian kindness, could do, called to see her, and found her, as I thought, much worse. He proposed at once to send for Dr. Black, and to wait till he arrived. About eleven o'clock Dr. Black very kindly came, examined the dear invalid, and confirmed what Mr. Pritchard had told me just before, that all hope of recovery was gone. After the medical gentlemen had left, I felt it now my duty to tell my precious wife, that the Lord Jesus was coming for her. Her reply was "He will soon come." By this, I believe, she meant to indicate, the Lord will soon return, and we shall be re-united. As there was yet life, I felt it my duty, to do to the last, every thing that medical skill could devise, and that love on my part could do. At half-past one p.m. when I gave her the medicine, and a little later a spoonful of wine in water, I observed that she had difficulty in swallowing, and a few minutes later, that she could not distinctly articulate. She tried to make me to understand, but I could not. I sat quietly before her, and about a quarter of an hour later I observed, that her dear bright eyes were set. I now called my dear daughter and her aunt, Miss Groves, stating that the loved one was dying. They at once came to the bedroom, and we were presently joined by Mrs. Mannering, another sister of my dearest wife. We all four sat quietly for about two hours and a half, watching the last moments of that much loved one, when about 20 minutes after four in the afternoon of Lord's day Feb. 6, 1870, she fell asleep in Jesus. I now fell on my knees and thanked God for her release, and for having taken her to Himself, and asked the Lord to help and support us.

My soul was so sustained, and so peaceful, that had I had physical strength, and had I not had plain home duties, I could have preached immediately after; and the portion on which I should have preached, would have been the one which forms the text of this sermon.

I now repeat again—"The Lord was good, and doing good," in taking my beloved wife; because, 1. She had worked long, very long and very much on earth, and He was now pleased to appoint her to other service. 2. "He was good, and doing good" in releasing her from her pain and suffering, which she had endured to so great a degree during the last week of her life. 3. "He was good, and doing good" in keeping her from a state of protracted suffering, to which, humanly speaking, she would have been subject, even if life should have been continued to her. 4. "He was good, and doing good" in taking her, the weaker vessel, first, instead of removing me and leaving her. I adore the Lord's kindness in this, in sparing her this heavy trial, as I think it would have been to her, and I gladly bear it for her. 5. "He was," most of all, "good, and doing good" in giving to my dearest wife what had been long the desire of her heart, even to be with Jesus. As long as two years since, my daughter had seen the following, written by her dear mother, in one of her pocket books, kept at the Orphan Houses, of which I knew nothing, but which precious jewel my dear daughter pointed out to me two days after the death of her dear mother, and which is now before me. The words written are these—"Should it please the Lord, to remove M. M. [Mary Müller] by a sudden dismissal, let none of the beloved survivors consider, that it is in the way of judgment, either to her or to them. She has so often, when enjoying con-

scious nearness to the Lord, felt, 'How sweet it would be, now to depart and to be for ever with Jesus,' that nothing but the shock it would be to her beloved husband and child, &c., &c., has checked in her the longing desire, that thus her happy spirit might take its flight. Precious Jesus! Thy will in this as in everything else, and not hers be done." With such words before me, and knowing besides, as I do, the deep personal attachment my dearest wife had to that Blessed One who hung for us on the cross, can it be otherwise than that my inmost soul should rejoice in the joy which my loved one has now, in being with the Lord Jesus for ever? The depth of my love for her is rejoicing in her joy. Remember that word of our Lord, "If ye loved Me, ye would rejoice, because I said, I go unto the Father" (John 14:28). As a husband, I feel more and more every day, that I am without this pleasant, useful, loving companion. As the director of the five Orphan Houses, I miss her in numberless ways; and shall miss her yet more and more. But as a child of God, and as a servant of the Lord Jesus, I bow, I am satisfied with the will of my Heavenly Father, I seek by perfect submission to His holy will to glorify Him, I kiss continually the hand that has thus afflicted me; but I also say, I shall meet her again, to spend a happy eternity with her. Will all who bear me now, meet my precious wife? Only those will, who have passed sentence upon themselves as guilty sinners, and who have put their trust alone in the Lord Jesus for the salvation of their souls. He came into the world to save sinners, and all who believe in Him, shall be saved; but without faith in the Lord Jesus we cannot be saved. Let all those, who are as yet not reconciled to God, by faith in the Lord Jesus, be in earnestness about their souls, lest suddenly a fever should lay them low and find them unprepared, or lest suddenly the Lord Jesus should return again, before they are prepared to meet Him. May the Lord in mercy grant, that this may not be the case. Amen.

The reader has seen, from the Sermon, how much I was sustained, when thus bereaved, and now, after the lapse of more than four years I would say to the praise of God, that throughout, without one moment's exception, I was enabled most fully to bow under the hand of God, and to be to the full satisfied with His holy pleasure. But while thus enabled to glorify God by perfect submission to His will, I, at the same time, felt myself deeply bereaved. That most lovely companion, who had been so greatly a help to me, was no longer to be found in my home. In Jesus I found, as in my never failing Friend, my repose and solace; my soul was unspeakably blessed through this bereavement; but my earthly joy was all but gone, with the exception, that I had left a most beloved, a most affectionate daughter, who for 24 years as a believer had been to her parents all they could wish. When now between eight and nine o'clock in the evenings, I went home from the Orphan Houses, instead of in company with my beloved Mary, as for so many years past (for she was always with me), I said to myself: "I shall not meet my beloved wife at home, but I shall meet the Lord Jesus, my precious Friend; He will comfort me; and I thanked God, that He had left my beloved daughter to me, who always watched for my arrival, to greet me, and did all she could, to soothe my bereaved heart. But the loss was great, the wound was deep, and, as weeks and months passed on, while continuing habitually not only to be satisfied with God, but also to praise Him, for what He had done in thus bereaving me, the wound seemed to deepen instead of being healed, and the bereavement to be felt more and more; which, no doubt in a great measure, was connected with the state of my nervous system, which had been greatly affected through my bereavement.

Müller, George. *A Narrative of Some of the Lord's Dealings with George Müller*. Vol. 3. London: J. Nisbet & Co., 1874. Print.

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## NEXT LESSON:

# THE PERIOD OF WORLD WIDE WITNESS

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