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THE BIRTH AND THE NEW LIFE

“One Saturday afternoon, about the middle of November 1825, I had taken a walk with my friend Beta. On our return he said to me, that he was in the habit of going on Saturday evenings to the house of a christian, where there was a meeting. On further inquiry he told me that they read the Bible, sang, prayed, and read a printed sermon. No sooner had I heard this, than it was to me as if I had found something after which I had been seeking all my life long. I immediately wished to go with my friend, who was not at once willing to take me; for knowing me as a gay young man, he thought I should not like this meeting. At last, however, he said he would call for me.—I would here mention, that Beta seems to have had conviction of sin, and probably also a degree of acquaintance with the Lord, when about fifteen years old. Afterwards, being in a cold and worldly state, he joined me in this sinful journey to Switzerland. On his return, however, being extremely miserable, and convinced of his guilt, he made a full confession of his sin to his father; and whilst with him, sought the acquaintance of a christian brother, named Richter. This Dr. Richter, who himself had studied a few years before at Halle, gave him, on his return to the university, a letter of introduction to a believing tradesman, of the name of Wagner. It was this brother, concerning whom Beta spoke to me, and in whose house the meeting was held...

That evening was the turning point in my life.—The next day, and Monday, and once or twice besides, I went again to the house of this brother, where I read the Scriptures with him and another brother; for it was too long for me to wait till Saturday came again...

Now my life became very different, though not so, that all sins were given up at once. My wicked companions were given up; the going to taverns was entirely discontinued; the habitual practice of telling falsehoods was no longer indulged in, but still a few times after this I spoke an untruth...I now no longer lived habitually in sin, though I was still often overcome, and sometimes even by open sins, though for less frequently than before, and not without sorrow of heart. I read the Scriptures, prayed often, loved the brethren, went to church from right motives, and stood on the side of Christ, though laughed at by my fellow-students.”

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

One Saturday afternoon in November of 1825, George Müller was walking with his friend Beta who invited him to a small Christian gathering. What were the circumstances that led up to your conversion? Did the Lord use a particular individual or group of believers in this process? Have you thanked the Lord for the individual(s) He used? You may not remember the exact date or moment that your heart was awakened to the truth of the gospel, and that's OK, but try to take a few minutes to think back to that occasion and consider the ways that God brought that about.

Prior to Beta's invitation, Müller had no particular interest in the gospel or the things of God. Yet, when the invitation was extended he felt irresistibly drawn. How can we account for this?

Some have questioned Müller's conversion experience because there was no great period of "law-work" in which he was brought to see the sinfulness of his way of life. Pierson comments that "*Our rigid theories of conversion all fail in view of such facts.*" He then recounts this story: "*We have heard of a little child who so simply trusted Christ for salvation that she could give no account of any 'law work of believers after'* And as one of the old examiners, who thought there could be no genuine conversion without a period of deep conviction, asked her, 'But, my dear, how about the Slough of Despond?' she dropped a courtesy and said, 'Please, sir, I didn't come that way!'" From where does the idea of a "Slough of Despond" come?

What was Charles Spurgeon's one main concern about that book?

How does the author of that work address this issue in his sequel?

We should learn from this that, though salvation is found in none other than Jesus Christ, the Lord draws his elect to Christ in various ways.

Once the work of conversion was done in Müller's heart a change of life ensued. How did this new heart and new life impact the prodigal lifestyle that Müller had previously enjoyed?

Spend a few minutes meditating on how the work of salvation affected your lifestyle as a new believer. Record how God began to reshape and reorganize your actions and desires.

The change in Müller's life was not just a negative one of turning away from sin, but also a positive one of turning to Christ. Prior to salvation, the Spiritual Disciplines were virtually non-existent in Müller's life. What disciplines began to be practiced by Müller immediately after his conversion?

What positive changes took place after your own conversion? Were there any of the Spiritual Disciplines that you began to practice?

As Müller began to practice the Spiritual Discipline of Bible Intake, one passage in particular captivated his mind, John 3:16. He came to realize that, “*What all the exhortations and precepts of my father and others could not effect; what all my own resolutions could not bring about, even to renounce a life of sin and profligacy: I was enabled to do, constrained by the love of Jesus.*” What, if any, passages of Scripture were particularly sweet and powerful to you during the infancy of your Christian life? Why?

In addition to the reading of Scripture (Bible Intake), Müller also began to read missionary journals. These had a profound influence on his life in addition to the Bible. What Spiritual Discipline might this fall under?

Were there any Christian books, magazines, commentaries, etc. that had a particular influence in your life during this time? If so, why?

As Müller read through the missionary journals he began to be stirred and convicted that the Lord might have him to go to a foreign land for the extension of His kingdom. As this desire was forming, it was almost quenched by his attraction to one of the young ladies that attended the Saturday evening gatherings. There was nothing inherently sinful about this attraction, but it did prove to be a distraction for Müller. During this six-week period Müller's practice of the Spiritual Disciplines waned, as did his joy.

Early in your Christian life, were there any particular distractions or besetting sins that hindered your progress in the Spiritual Disciplines? How did you respond? How long did this last?

Müller eventually realized that the relationship that he was pursuing with this young woman was not one that he had entered into in faith and prayer. He severed the relationship and returned to a pursuit of the knowledge of God through the Spiritual Disciplines. This was the second great sacrifice that Müller had made, the first being the burning of the novel he had been translating. What sacrifices have you made as a result of being transferred from the kingdom of darkness to the kingdom of light? Do you regret these sacrifices?

The joy that Müller was experiencing as a new believer overflowed and he desired to share it with others, most specifically with his father. After coming to faith in Christ, were you particularly burdened for any friends or family? Did you share the good news with them? If not, why not do so now?

Müller's father did not respond kindly to the news of his son's sudden conversion and new found devotion to Christ. In fact, when his son expressed a desire to go to the mission field he practically disowned him. Have you lost the favor of friends or relatives because of your faith in Christ?

“To be heavenly-minded, really and truly, we must be assured our sins are forgiven; and this we know simply from the Divine testimony, that those who put their trust in Jesus have the forgiveness of their sins.”

—Müller, George. *Jehovah Magnified: Addresses*. Bristol, England: The Bible and Tract Depot of the Scriptural Knowledge Institution, 1876. Print.

NEXT LESSON

MAKING READY THE CHOSEN VESSEL

On my return from my father to Halle, I found that the more experienced brethren thought that I ought for the present to take no further steps respecting my desire to go out as a missionary. But still it was more or less in my mind.—Whitsuntide and the two days following I spent in the house of a pious clergyman in the country; for all the ministers at Halle, a town of more than 20,000 inhabitants, were unenlightened men. God greatly refreshed me through this visit. Dear Beta was with me. On our return we related to two of our former friends, whose society we had not quite given up, though we did not any longer live with them in sin, how happy we had been on our visit. I then told them how I wished they were as happy as ourselves. They answered, we do not feel that we are sinners. After this I fell on my knees, and asked God to show them that they were sinners. Having done so, I left them, and went into my bed-room, where I continued to pray for them. After a little while p 16 I returned to my sitting room, and found them both in tears, and both told me, that they now felt themselves to be sinners. From that time a work of grace commenced in their hearts.

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