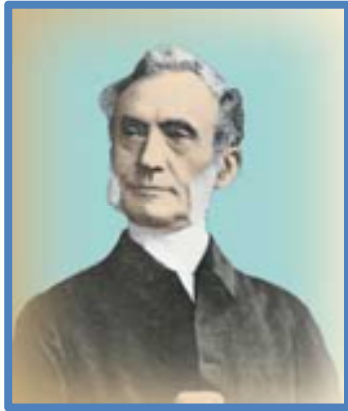


GREAT RESOLUTIONS

Program Eleven

God's Mercy Reaching a Wicked Young Man – George Müller

George Müller (1805 to 1898) is one of the most notable servants of the Lord in the history of the church. Although many consider him as a giant of faith, he himself testified that he was but only a receiver of faith, which came to him and grew in him each time he read and prayed over the Word of God (Rom. 10:17). George Müller never forgot that he was just a sinner saved by grace, and indeed he was, as we shall see.



George Müller

An Amazing Matter

It is an amazing matter that a sinful man can be brought near and fully reconciled to a holy God. This was the case of our dear brother whom we are here considering. Of course, we know that no one is born with the life of God – we all must be born again (John 3:7). None of us have any merit before God, nor can any us by of our own effort or resolve win any favor in God's presence. The Bible tells us clearly that "there is none righteous, not even one (Rom. 3:10)." We all have sinned and have come short of the glory of God (Rom. 3:23).

But we still may be a little slow to believe that God could so dramatically change a person who was such a terrible sinner into a son of God. Believers in Christ come from a variety of backgrounds and conditions. Some of us were good persons like Nicodemus, and some, maybe a bit more like the immoral Samaritan woman. It seems that the Lord delights to save man, regardless of his background and condition. The righteousness of God comes to justify all those who believe without distinction (Rom. 3:22). In the Lord's light we all begin to realize that our salvation

is by His great mercy alone.

A Hardened Sinner

Great was the mercy shown to this young man, George Müller, in November of 1825. The story of his childhood and youth is one filled with wickedness, crime, and hardness of heart. How did he arrive at such a state? No doubt, George's deceitful character began to form at a young age. His father freely gave him money, which he wasted on indulgences of the flesh. George, not being satisfied with what was given to him, began to steal even from his father. One time he was caught and punished, but with little change of behavior. George said, "Though I was punished on this and other occasions, yet I do not remember that at any time, when my sins were found out, it made any other impression upon me than to make me think how I might do the thing the next time more cleverly, so as not to be detected. Hence it came, that this was not the last time that I was guilty of stealing."

As a young teenager, George was controlled by the poisonous sinful nature operating within him. He began to lie, swindle, cheat, and steal. When he was but fourteen years of age, he was running around on the streets drunk while his mother lay on her death-bed. He admitted, "The night she was dying, I, not knowing of her illness, was playing at cards till two in the morning, and on the next day, being the Lord's day, I went with some of my companions in sin to a tavern, and then we went about the streets, half intoxicated." Even her death failed to awaken his sleeping conscience or turn him from his evil ways. During this time George was taking lessons to be confirmed in the church. He said, "In this state of heart, without prayer, without true repentance, without faith, without knowledge of the plan of salvation, I was confirmed, and took the Lord's supper."

By the time George was sixteen his

hardness of heart led him to commit worse crimes and eventually he found himself in jail. His father bailed him out. After being released from jail, George promised his father to change. "I . . . made resolutions to turn from those vices in which I was living, and to study more. But as I had no regard to God, and attempted the thing in my own strength, all soon came to nothing, and I still grew worse."

Wretched Man

George spent his summers partly in study, but mostly in indulging in music, reading novels, frequenting taverns and in many sinful pleasures. He then would form new resolutions to become different yet would break them 'as fast as they were made.' Later he commented, "What a bitter, bitter thing is the service of Satan, even in this world!"

Some of George's reform steps led him to gain esteem among his fellow-students, but he admitted, "I did not care in the least about God, but lived

secretly in much sin, in consequence of which I was taken ill, and for thirteen weeks confined to my room. During my illness I had no real sorrow of heart. . . I cared

nothing about the word of God. I had about three hundred books of my own, but no Bible. I practically set a far higher value upon the writings of Horace and Cicero, Voltaire and Moliere, than upon the volume of inspiration. Now and then I felt that I ought to become a different person, and I tried to amend my conduct . . . I used to refrain from certain things; and on the [Lord's] day itself I was serious, and also swore once or twice to God, with the emblem of the broken body in my mouth, to become better, thinking that for the oath's sake I should be induced to reform. But after one or two days were over, all was forgotten, and I was as bad as before."

In the midst of this situation, George's

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father wanted George to be educated as a clergyman. This had nothing to do with the Lord's calling, but only that it was looked upon as a good profession for a comfortable living. He sent him to a classical school so he would be equipped for university studies and eventually prepared to become a clergyman.

Although George entered the university as a student of divinity, and even began to preach within Lutheran circles, he testified, "I was as truly unhappy, and as far from God as ever."

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Still young, George was already a hardened sinner. He was ignorant of even the most fundamental truths of God and surely did not know the way of salvation. He had lost all proper moral sense. His conscience had become callous. He was a deceiver of men and hypocritical before God. He even cheated and stole from his own family and friends. He was truly lost and without God in the world.

His condition is aptly described in Romans 3. He did not understand nor seek out God. He had turned aside and had become useless. He did not do good, but practiced deceit. His way of life was filled with vanity, sin, and misery. He did not know the way of peace, and there was no fear of God before his eyes (3:10-18).

But God

Things were about to change for George Müller. Although he was in the process of learning theological doctrines, the Lord's great love still had not touched him. He may have read how Christ died for the weak and ungodly, but the words had no effect upon him. He did not *know* that God had commended His own love to him in that while he was yet a sinner, Christ died for him (Rom 5: 6 and 8). He was still dead in his offenses and sins, still walking according to the age of this world and still under the spirit which is now operating in all the sons of disobedience. George was still conducting himself in the lusts of his flesh, and was by nature a child of wrath. The Lord in His rich mercy

was about to make this one alive in Christ, a new creation (Eph. 2:1-5). This would far surpass any change George previously hoped would have come about by all his resolutions.

Touched by the Lord in a Home

What George did not realize was that the Savior God, who had chosen him in Christ before the foundation of the world, had His eye upon him. God was preparing an environment and doing a sanctifying work to prepare this one to come to Him. At this time George ran into Beta, a fellow-student and a back-sliding Christian who had departed from the Lord for a time to participate in the temporary enjoyment of sin in the world. They began to travel and spend time together. After this Beta repented and came back into the fellowship.

One Saturday afternoon George asked Beta what he was doing that evening. Beta told him that he had started to return to a gathering of believers on Saturdays. A few friends met to sing, pray and to read the word of God and a printed sermon in a believer's home. Upon hearing this George felt at once a wish to go with Beta, though he couldn't explain why. This gathering had nothing of the world to draw him. It was not at all the way he had been spending his Saturday nights – in card-playing, drinking and dancing. George was empty. Sin had left a great void in him. Now there was just something within him motivating him to go to this gathering at the home of Mr. Wagner. Although Beta was a bit unwilling at first to bring him, he decided to bring George.

Little did George know, but this Saturday evening was to be a turning point in his life. He found himself in a completely new environment surrounded by a unique group of people and an atmosphere he was not used to. Feeling a bit awkward at first, he wasn't sure of his welcome and made an apology for being there. Brother Wagner graciously assured



Mr. Wagner's Home

him, "Come as often as you please! House and heart are open to you." George later testified that he never forgot that warm welcome.

George did not realize until later how happy believers are to see an evil doer begin to turn to God. George began to taste the sweetness of the hymn-singing and then witnessed a brother fall on his knees to pray for God's blessing. This made a lasting impression upon him for he had never seen anyone on his knees praying. The time also included the reading of a chapter from the word of God and a printed sermon. George said, "At the close we sang another hymn, and then the master of the house prayed. Whilst he prayed, my feeling was something like this: "I could not pray as well, though I am much more learned than this illiterate man. The whole made a deep impression on me. I was happy; though, if I had been asked why I was happy, I could not have clearly explained it."

Through that simple time in the home George began to experience an unexplainable new joy. On the way home he told Beta, "All we saw on our journey to Switzerland and all our former pleasures are as nothing compared to this evening." He was never to forget this time, which brought to him a new peace and rest within.

The Lord was beginning a new work in this sinner's heart. The Lord had sovereignly arranged through this little company of saints to have something of His shining penetrate this hardened one's heart. That night George had a little taste that the Lord is good. With such a taste there was a tug on his heart to return to Mr. Wagner's home again. He could not wait until the following Saturday for another taste of that living bread. He therefore visited that home again three times before Saturday! This was

Come as often as you please! House and heart are open to you.



Mr. Wagner

the Lord's sowing of the good seed into George Müller's heart. The Lord chose to use a former backslider to bring George to the home of an uneducated older brother with a few shining believers to begin a good work in him that all his father's disciplines, his own previous efforts, and all his education could not do. These saints helped to turn this sinner from a multitude of sins and from the error of his way and to save his soul from death (James 5:20). Thus, the work of the Lord's full salvation was initiated in George Müller.

Good Seeds Sown

It is worthwhile to consider the initial experiences of our dear brother and the impact these experiences had upon his whole life and service. In particular, four little seeds sown at the beginning of his life in the Lord seem to have had long-lasting effect upon George Müller and bore much spiritual fruit.

The 1st seed is the impact of the Lord's great love and mercy shown to such a great sinner. George, like the sinful woman in the house of Simon the Pharisee (Luke 7), was forgiven much. Those who have been forgiven much love much. The fact that George Müller was forgiven much caused him to love the Lord much and to show compassion to sinners in his days to come.

Second is the seed of the homes. It is of great significance that George Müller's Christian life began in a home. Watchman Nee notes that the homes of believers have played a crucial role in the history of the church from the earliest of days. As he expressed, "In the homes there is a delightfully unofficial air about the gatherings." There is a certain simplicity and intimacy in a home that is not found in large edifices with all the formalities of religious service. Many who might not be willing to go to a 'church' may be happy to come to a private home. This is where George Müller first encountered the living God – among a simple group of saints in the reality of what they proclaimed. This way of meeting left a long-lasting impression upon him. Home meetings became a regular and frequent part of his life. The day before he died, George

Müller had participated in a simple prayer meeting in his own home.

The third seed that is worth noting is the reading of the Word of God. George saw this small company of believers and heard them reading the Scriptures during his first visit to Mr. Wagner's home. Prior to that time, although he was a divinity student, he did not even possess a Bible. He testified, "I never had been at any time in my life in the habit of reading the Holy Scriptures. When under fifteen years of age, I occasionally read a little of them at school; afterwards God's precious book was entirely laid aside, so that I never read one single chapter of it, as far as I remember, till it pleased God to begin a work of grace in my heart. Now the scriptural way of reasoning would have been: God Himself has condescended to become an author, and I am ignorant about that precious book, which His Holy Spirit has caused to be written through the instrumentality of His servants, and it contains that which I ought to know, and the knowledge of which will lead me to true happiness; therefore I ought to read again and again this most precious book, this book of books, most earnestly, most prayerfully, and with much meditation; and in this practice I ought to continue all the days of my life." As we shall see – George Müller consistently and habitually read the Bible for the rest of his days.

The fourth seed of vital importance is that of prayer. On that first night, in Mr. Wagner's home, George observed ones praying. The genuineness of their prayer in spirit so touched him and gave him an eternal taste of the Lord that he could never forget it. Believing prayer became the hallmark of the life and service of our dear brother. He was burdened to let believers know that our God is a living, prayer-hearing God, and that it is our privilege and right to bring all persons and matters before Him in our prayers. Hallelujah for these four seeds. We will note their growth and development in the coming programs.

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