

GREAT RESOLUTIONS

Program Twelve

A New Life

Part Two on the Life of George Müller

Behold, I make all things new (Rev. 21:5). When a person believes into the Lord and is put into Christ, he becomes a new creation (2 Cor. 5:17). This was the case with our brother George Müller. After his new birth, old things began to pass away, and he was becoming new. In the last program we saw how, by the Lord's great mercy, this hardened sinner was brought to salvation. In this program we will consider how the Lord began a new work of grace in him. Much of his testimony recorded here is shared by him in his own words from his *Narratives*.

Joy and Peace

When one sinner repents there is great joy in heaven in the presence of the angels of God (Luke 15:7, 10). What about joy in the believer himself? When a person is grafted into Christ and begins to experience the flow of life welling up in his innermost being, he also becomes joyful. The Lord desires that His joy would be in us, and that our joy would be made full (John 15: 11). The first disciples experienced this joy (Acts 13:52), and so have countless believers throughout the ages. The Lord's kingdom, into which a believer enters, is a matter of righteousness, peace, and joy in the Holy Spirit (Rom. 14:17).

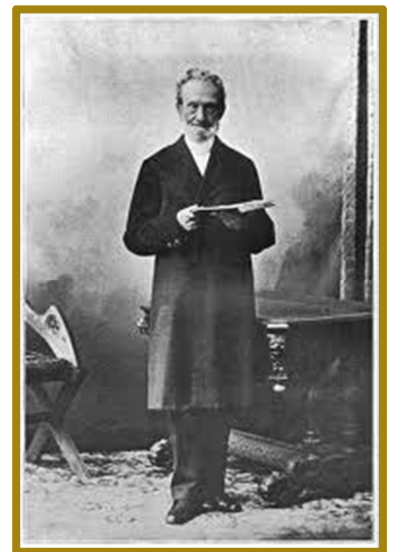
When George was born again he entered this realm of righteousness, peace and joy. He testified regarding the night of his salvation, "Whether I fell on my knees when I returned home [from attending a Saturday evening meeting of Christians in a brother's home], I do not remember; but this I know, that I lay peaceful and happy in my bed. . . For I have not the least doubt, that on that evening, He began a work of grace in me, though I obtained joy without any deep sorrow of heart, and with scarcely any knowledge. That evening was the turning point in my life."

Love for the Brothers

Not only did George begin to experience a true peace and joy within after his conversion, but he also immediately had a love for his new brothers in Christ, and wanted to be with them. "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." This love for and desire to be with the brothers surely was evidence of his new life in Christ. As 1 John 3:14 says, "We know that we have passed out of death into life because we love the brothers. He who does not love abides in death."

Separation

The primary work of God in a new believer is to send light into darkness. It was God's light that shined into the formerly dark world as recorded in the book of Genesis. Now, Christ, as the Light of the world, began to shine into the darkened heart of this new believer. Prior to his salvation, George was in darkness. He was ignorant of his own condition and did not even realize his need for the Savior. But God commanded the light to shine into his heart to illuminate the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ (2 Cor. 4:6). This light does a dividing work, separating things of light from things of darkness. This is why we are told in



2 Corinthians 6:14 not to become dissimilarly yoked with unbelievers. “For what fellowship do righteousness and lawlessness have? Or what fellowship does light have with darkness?”

George was not only called into the fellowship of God’s Son (1 Cor. 1:9), but was also being called out of some negative things. Thus he began to follow in the steps of his forefather, the first called out one – Abraham. George testified: “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. At the time when this change took place, I was engaged in translating a novel out of French into German, for the press, in order to obtain the means of gratifying my desire to see Paris, etc. This plan about the journey was now given up, though I had not light enough to give up the work in which I was engaged, but finished it. The Lord, however, most remarkably put various obstacles in the way and did not allow me to sell the manuscript. At last, seeing that the whole was wrong, I determined never to sell it, and was enabled to abide by this determination. The manuscript was burnt. I now no longer lived habitually in sin, though I was still often overcome, and sometimes even by open sins, though far less frequently than before, and not without sorrow of heart.”

We are told in 1 Corinthians 15:33 that evil companionships corrupt good morals. Sometimes we need to cleanse ourselves from these that we may be a vessel unto honor, sanctified, useful to the master, prepared unto every good work (2 Tim. 2:21).

Reproached, yet Burdened

In the beginning of his Christian life George Müller “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.” Early on, he began to taste bearing the Lord’s reproach. The Lord said in Matthew 5:11 that a believer is blessed when reproached and persecuted and while some speak lies and evil things against us because of the Lord. As the apostle Paul said, “indeed all who desire to live godly in Christ Jesus will be persecuted (2 Tim. 3:12).

This did not deter him from caring for his friends in love and praying for them. He and his friend Beta took opportunity once to relate to their former friends their new found joy and burden for them. In George’s words: “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 . . . 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 bedroom, where I continued to pray for them. After a little while 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.”

First Love and Consecration

George found himself constrained by the One who loved him and died for him (2 Cor. 5:14). It was not that he first loved the Lord, but that the Lord first loved him (1 John 4:19). George testified, “It had pleased God to teach me something of the meaning of that precious truth: ‘God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life.’ I understood something of the reason why the Lord Jesus died on the cross, and suffered such agonies in the Garden of Gethsemane: even that thus, bearing the punishment due to us, we might not have to bear it ourselves. And, therefore, apprehending in some measure the love of Jesus for my soul, I was constrained to love Him in return. What all

*And these things were
some of you; but you
were washed, but you
were sanctified . . .
(1 Cor. 6:11)*

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.”

George soon learned that his first fresh love for the Lord must be maintained. Not unlike all relationships, his love for the Lord could not be taken for granted. Early on in his Christian life, he was drawn away. “But soon, alas! I was drawn aside. I used frequently to meet a young female, who also came to the meetings on Saturday evenings; and being the only pious female of my own age, whom I knew, I soon felt myself greatly attached to her. This led away my heart . . . My prayers now became cold and formal, and at length were almost entirely given up. My joy in the Lord left me. In this state I continued for about six weeks. At the end of that time, about Easter 1826, I saw a devoted young brother, named Hermann Ball, a learned man, and of wealthy parents, who, constrained by the love of Christ, preferred laboring in Poland among the Jews as a missionary, to having a comfortable living near his relations. His example made a deep impression on me. I was led to apply his case to my own, and to compare myself with him; for I had given up the work of the Lord, and, I may say, the Lord Himself, for the sake of a girl. The result of this comparison was, that I was enabled to give up this connection, which I had

entered into without prayer, and which thus had led me away from the Lord. When I was enabled to be decided, the Lord smiled on me, and I was, for the first time in my life, able fully and unreservedly to give up myself to Him.

It was at this time that I began truly to enjoy the peace of God, which passes all understanding.”

First Learning to Live by Faith

From this experience, George’s heart was stirred once again to give himself to the Lord for His service. Although just a young believer in the Lord without much growth in life or equipping in the Word, he nonetheless desired to become a missionary. He had received the life of the One who came not to be served, but to serve (Mark 10:45).

Shortly after his first consecration, George wrote a letter to his father and brother to share with them his new found joy: “In this my joy I wrote to my father and brother, entreating them to seek the Lord, and telling them how happy I was; thinking, that if the way to happiness were but set before them, they would gladly embrace it. To my great surprise an angry answer was returned.

With the revival of the work of grace in my heart, after the snare above referred to had been broken, my former desire, to give myself to missionary service, returned, and I went at last to my father to obtain his permission, without which I could not be received into any of the German missionary institutions. My father was greatly displeased, and particularly reproached me, saying that he had expended so much money on my education, in hope that he might comfortably spend his last days with me in a parsonage, and that he now saw all these prospects come to nothing. He was angry, and told me he would no longer consider me as his son. But the Lord gave me grace to remain steadfast.

He then entreated me, and wept before me; yet even this by far harder trial the Lord enabled me to bear. Before I went away I took an opportunity of reminding my brother of my former wicked life, and told him that now, having been thus blessed by God, I could not but live for Him. After I had left my father, though I wanted more money than at any previous period of my life, as I had to remain two years longer in the university, I determined, never to take any more from him; for it seemed to me wrong, so far as I remember, to suffer myself to be supported by him, when he had no prospect that I should become what he would wish me to be,

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namely, a clergyman with a good living. This resolution I was enabled to keep.

By the way I would here observe, that the Lord afterwards, in a most remarkable way, supplied my temporal wants. For shortly after this had occurred, several American gentlemen, three of whom were professors in American colleges, came to Halle for literary purposes; and as they did not understand German, I was recommended by Dr. Tholuck to teach them. These gentlemen, some of whom were believers, paid so handsomely for the instruction which I gave them, and for the lectures of certain professors which I wrote out for them, that I had enough and to spare. Thus did the Lord richly make up to me the little which I had relinquished for His sake. 'O fear the Lord, ye His saints; for there is no want to them that fear Him.' (Psalms 34:9)

Lessons Learned Regarding Guidance

In the process of coping with his father's resistance to his desire to serve the Lord, George began to learn a few lessons regarding seeking the Lord's will. Because he was restless and impatient, he initially sought to know the Lord's mind by purchasing a lottery ticket. Instead of patiently and prayerfully waiting on the Lord, he attempted to ascertain whether he should go to the mission field by whether or not he had some gain through the lottery.

George recounts: "Very soon afterwards I was led to see in some degree, and since then much more fully, the error into which I had fallen respecting the lot. In the first place it was altogether wrong, that I, a child of God, should have anything to do with so worldly a system as that of the lottery. But it was also unscriptural to go to the lot at all for the sake of ascertaining the Lord's mind. We have many exhortations in the word of God to seek to know His mind by prayer and searching the Holy Scriptures, but no passage which exhorts us to use the lot." He did here also mention that although the way of choosing lots was once used in the New Testament (Acts 1:26), this was prior to the Spirit being given to the apostles in order to lead them.

This experience proved profitable in the

long run, for George began to realize how short he was of knowing the Lord in the way of truth. He said, "I ought to have said to myself, how can an individual, so ignorant as you are, think about being a teacher to others? For though I was truly begotten again, and rested upon Christ alone for salvation, still I should not have been able to give a clear explanation of even the most elementary truths of the Gospel. How then could I be fit to teach others? The first thing therefore I ought to have done, was, to seek through much prayer, and searching the Scriptures, and a holy life, to obtain more knowledge of divine things."

Later he testified more saying, "To ascertain the Lord's will we ought to use scriptural means. Prayer, the word of God, and His Spirit

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should be united together. We should go to the Lord repeatedly in prayer, and ask Him to teach us by His Spirit through His word. I say, by His Spirit through His word. For if we should think that His Spirit led us to do so and so, because certain facts are so and so, and yet His word is opposed to the step which we are going to take, we should be deceiving ourselves."

Vitality through Prayer and the Gospel

As a young believer in Christ, George Muller began to sense and to know this new life within. He shares the following testimony: "The Lord very graciously gave me, from the very commencement of my divine life, a measure of simplicity and of childlike disposition in spiritual things, so that whilst I was exceedingly ignorant of the Scriptures, and was still from time to time overcome even by outward sins, yet I was enabled to carry most minute matters to the Lord in prayer. And I have found 'godliness profitable unto all things, having promise of the life that now is, and of that which is to come.' Though very weak and ignorant, yet I

had now, by the grace of God, some desire to benefit others, and he who so faithfully had once served Satan, sought now to win souls for Christ.”

“I may mention a few instances. I circulated every month, in different parts of the country, about 300 missionary papers. I also sold and distributed a considerable

number of tracts, and often took my pockets full in my walks, and distributed them, and spoke to poor people whom I



met. I also wrote letters to some of my former companions in sin. I visited for thirteen weeks a sick man, who, when I first began to speak to him about the things of God, was completely ignorant of his state as a sinner, trusting for salvation in his upright and moral life. After some weeks, however, the Lord allowed me to see a decided change in him, and he afterwards repeatedly expressed his gratitude, that I had been sent to him by God, to be the means of opening his blind eyes. May this encourage the believing reader to sow the seed, though he does not see it spring up at once.

Thus the Lord condescended to begin to use me soon after my conversion, though but little; for I could bear but very little, as I did not see at that time, as I do now, that God alone can give spiritual life at the first, and keep it up in the soul afterwards. How imperfectly, however, on account of my ignorance, some of these things were done; I will show by the following instance. Once I met a beggar in the fields, and spoke to him about his soul. But when I perceived it made no impression upon him, I spoke more loudly; and when he still remained unmoved, I quite bawled in talking to him; till at last I went away, seeing it was of no use. Though none had sought the Lord less than myself, when He was pleased to begin His work in me; yet so ignorant was I of the work of the Spirit,

that I thought my speaking very loudly would force him into repentance towards God, and faith in the Lord Jesus.”

These experience of George Müller as a young believer should encourage us to follow the Lord by the life and light within us. Thank the Lord that we too have been delivered out of the authority of darkness and transferred into the kingdom of the Son of His love (Col. 1:13).

Marty Robert and Bill Lawson

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