

THE BLACKSMITH'S CONVERSION

"Have you conversed with our infidel and scoffing friend, the blacksmith, on the subject of religion today?" said the pastor to a lawyer friend of his.

"I have, and at great length, but was unable to make the least impression upon his mind. You know that he is a man of extensive reading, and is a perfect master of all the latest infidel writers. You know his ready wit; and when he finds he cannot talk you down, he will laugh you down. I can say no more."

"Then you consider his case hopeless?"

"I do, indeed. I believe him to be given over of God to believe a lie; and I expect to see him fill up his cup of iniquity to the very brim, without repentance, and to die a hardened and self-ruined man."

"Shall nothing, and can nothing more be done for him?" And the pastor arose and walked the floor of his study under the influence of deep agitation, while his visitor leaned over the table, with his face buried in both his hands, lost in silent meditation.

It was now a solemn time in the district. The preaching of the pastor for many weeks had been full of earnestness and power. A good number were inquiring what they should do to be saved. Some, too, were rejoicing in hope; and the whole community was moved. But unmoved, unconcerned, stood the infidel, amid the many changes of heart and mind which were going on around him, proud in his position and confident in his strength, and able, as he believed himself to be, to resist every influence, human and divine, which might be brought to bear upon him. The pastor had often approached him, and had as often been repulsed. As a last resort, he had requested his able and skilful neighbor, a lawyer of piety and talents, to visit him, and endeavor to convince him. But it was like attempting to reason with a tempest.

The Elder's Room

The wind howled without, and the snow was whirled in eddies with violence against the casement. On that cold night in January, in that secret and retired chamber, where none but God could hear, a voice was poured out from a burdened soul. The elder was upon his knees. His soul was in agony. The voice of prayer was continued at intervals through the livelong night. In that room was a man pleading with the Host High for an unwonted display of His power and grace, with the confidence that nothing was too hard for the Almighty. It was prayer, as a man would pray for the life of a friend who was on the eve of execution.

The Prayer Meeting

The meeting was still and solemn. The house was crowded to its utmost capacity. An intense interest sits on every countenance, and the voice of prayer is the voice of all. One after another arises and tells the listening company what the Lord has done for his soul. There stands the blacksmith, once the infidel, now the humble believer in Jesus, clothed in a new spirit, and with shining face. "I stand," said he, "to tell you the story of my conversion. I am a brand plucked out of the burning. The change in my views and my feelings is an astonishment to myself; and all brought about by the grace of God, and that unanswerable argument. It was a cold morning in January. The fire was burning and I had just begun my labor at the anvil in my shop, when I looked out and saw

the elder approaching. He dismounted and quickly entered. As he drew near I saw he was agitated. His look was full of earnestness; his eyes were be-dimmed with tears. He took me by the hand; his breast heaved with emotion, and withr indescribable tenderness he said, 'My friend, I am greatly concerned for your salvation!'—and he burst into tears. He stood with my hands clasped in his. He struggled to regain self-possession; he often assayed to speak, but not a word could he utter; and finding that he could say no more, he turned, went out of the shop, and rode slowly away.

"Greatly concerned for my salvation!" said I audibly, and I stood and forgot to bring my hammer down. There I stood with it upraised—"Greatly concerned for my salvation!" Here is a new argument for the truth of religion which I never heard before, and which I know not how to answer. Had the elder reasoned with me, I could have confounded him; but here is no threadbare argument. Religion must be true, or else this man would not feel as he does. 'Greatly concerned for my salvation!'—it rung through my ears like a thunder clap in a clear sky. 'Greatly concerned I ought to be for my own salvation,' said I. 'What shall I do?'

"I went to my house. My poor Christian wife, whom I had always ridiculed for her religion, exclaimed, 'Why, what is the matter with you?' 'Matter enough,' said I, 'Matter enough,'—filled with agony and overwhelmed with a sense of sin. 'The old elder has ridden two miles this cold morning to tell me he was greatly concerned about my salvation. What shall I do? What shall I do?' 'I do not know what you can do,' said my now astonished wife; 'I do not know what better you can do than to get on your horse and go and see him. He can give you better counsel than I, and tell you what you must do to be saved.'

"I mounted my horse, and pursued after him. I found him alone in his little room, where he had shed many a tear over such a reprobate as I, and besought God to have mercy upon me. 'I am come,' said I to him, 'to tell you that I am greatly concerned for my own salvation.'

"Praised be God!" said the elder. 'This is a faithful saying and worthy of all acceptance, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners,' even the very chief, we are told; and he began at the same Scripture and preached unto me Jesus. On the same floor we knelt, and together we prayed—and we did not separate that day until God spoke peace to my soul.

"I have often been requested to look at the evidences of the truth of religion, but blessed be God, I have evidence for its truth HERE," laying his hand upon his heart, "which nothing can gainsay or resist. I stand here tonight thankful to acknowledge that God sent an argument to my conscience and heart which could not be answered nor resisted, when the weeping elder came to me to tell me how greatly concerned he was for my salvation. God taught him that argument when he spent the night before Him in prayer for my soul.

"Now I can truly say I am a happy man. My consistent, uncomplaining wife, who so long bore with my impiety and unbelief, rejoices with me, that by the grace of God I am what I am—that whereas I was blind, now I see."

He sat down, overcome with emotion, amid the tears and the suppressed sobs of the assembly. All were touched, for all knew what

he once was, and all saw what he had now become.

"Remember, that by the space of three years I ceased not to warn every one night and day with tears."—Paul (Acts 20:31).—Selected.

"LET US REASON"

Come, let us reason together and let us search our hearts before God and find just how we stand. Are we doing all that he has called us to do? Have we lost sight of this world and looking direct to God for all our blessings and instructions, or, are we planning continuously ways and means that we might receive more blessings here on earth? Have our ways and our thoughts made law that we might enjoy ourselves more as we think or do: Brethren, I say, and still believe, through the dictations of my heart before God, and as the spirit leads me and that is why I am writing this article today: that the professing people of today are trying to form too many opinions and forms and ceremonies and taking up the things of this world that the lost ones of today are heedless to the cry of the church.

The churches are mixing up too much with the ways of this world. At the present time one hears more lectures in the church than sermons.

The churches are taking up the issues of the governments and lecturing, canvassing. Yes, and even quarrelling over their differences. Even in their church papers we are canvassed.

Now, Brethren, let us get the stray one's heart right and he will be led into all truths according to my Bible. Let us lift up Christ and him crucified and he will draw all men unto him, and when he becomes a child of God he won't need any laws made by man to lead him to do the things he should. "Therefore wait ye upon me, saith the Lord, until the day that I rise up to the prey; for my determination is to gather the nations, that I may assemble the kingdoms, to pour upon them mine indignation, even all my fierce anger: for all the earth shall be devoured with the fire of my jealousy. For then will I turn to the people a pure language, that they may all call upon the name of the Lord to serve him with one consent." Zeph. 3:8-9. We find all through our Bible that God is a jealous God; so therefore, why flirt with the world, "let us not be weary in well doing for in due season we shall reap if we faint not." Gal. 6:9.

"Be not deceived. God is not mocked, for, whatsoever a man soweth that shall he also reap. Gal. 6:7. For by thy words thou shalt be condemned. Matt. 12:37. But let your communication be yea, yea; nay, nay: for whatsoever is more than these cometh of evil. Matt. 5:37. Be ye therefore perfect even as your Father which is in heaven is perfect. Matt. 5:48. There is a way that seemeth right unto a man but the end thereof are the ways of death. Prov. 16:25. The fining is for silver and the furnace for gold: but the Lord trieth the hearts." Prov. 17:3.

I, Jesus, have sent mine angel to testify unto you these things in the churches. I am the root and the offspring of David and the bright and morning star. Rev. 22:16. And behold I come quickly and my reward is with me to give every man according as his work shall be. Rev. 22:12.

May God help us, that our works may be righteous, to receive the reward that God has for us (eternal life).

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