

Light at Eventide

Several years ago I spent a few days in a small Gloucestershire town where meetings for the reading of God's word were being held. One evening the Christian lady in whose house I was staying told me of an old man in an adjoining village who appeared to be very near to his last day on earth. Calling at his cottage I found him sitting in a chair near to the fire, obviously very ill indeed.

After a few minutes of general conversation I ventured to enquire as to how he stood in relation to God and to the life after death. Immediately, in no uncertain terms, he insisted that he had nothing to fear, and raising the large stick which he had in his hand, he struck the floor saying "I have kept the law of God all my life, no man can do more." Nothing I could say seemed to have the slightest effect; time after time he repeated the words, accompanied on every occasion by a thud on the floor with his walking stick. At last I left the cottage saddened in heart, the sadness to be increased by the subsequent knowledge that the old man had lived anything but an exemplary life!

The next morning over breakfast my hostess told me that the old man had been asking after me several times during the night. Encouraged by this and seeking help from the Lord I went at once to see him again, taking with me my son, at the time quite a little chap. Greeting him warmly I remarked that I understood he had been asking for me, and, waiting for his reply, I was intensely disappointed to see the same action with the stick and to hear the words so many times repeated the day before – "I have kept the law of God all my life."

My little boy was sitting on the floor playing with a small toy, and as I looked at him I realized that to reach the conscience and heart of an obviously dying man I must speak to him as simply as I would to my boy. I told him that nothing we had done or could do, availed for salvation. We had all sinned – done what was wrong in God's sight, and God must punish sin. If we had to bear the punishment we should be sent away from the presence of God forever. But God Himself had provided a way – the only way – in which we could be forgiven and have our sins washed away. God's own Son – the Lord Jesus Christ – had come from heaven to earth. He was sinless, spotless and holy, and He alone could be our Saviour. His Name is to be "JESUS, for He shall save His people from their sins." To do this He must pay the penalty of sin, which is death; and so He died on Calvary's cross – the "Just for the unjust." He shed His precious blood, and it is "the blood of Jesus Christ (God's Son) which cleanseth us from all sin." God offers us salvation through faith in Christ, ceasing from our own efforts to keep the law, and putting our trust in that finished work which He did on the cross; owning Him as our Saviour and Lord. Neither is there salvation in any other."

To this simple relating of the "old, old story of Jesus and His love" the old man listened without a word or a movement. Then, suddenly, he raised his stick! Was I to hear the same words again? – "I have etc. etc." But NO! bringing the stick down to the floor with a bang, and with tears streaming down his rugged face, he said "I've got it; I've got it!" What have you got?" I asked. "It comes to me in words I heard from my old mother:

*"I'm a poor sinner,
And nothing at all;
But Jesus Christ
Is my all in all."*

The note of reality in his voice was unmistakable, and we rejoiced together. After some further conversation and a short prayer we left the cottage, thanking God for His long-suffering

and sovereign mercy. A few days afterwards the old man was taken to be with the One he trusted in that day, but in the meanwhile he had given testimony that the work in his soul was real.

Do you know this Saviour as your “all in all” – or are you trusting to your own works? – perhaps more respectable “works” than those of the old man we have referred to, but in God’s sight they are of no account for the salvation of your precious soul. The following verses of a hymn which the writer has valued and enjoyed and proved the truth of for over sixty years contain the simple, yet truly important facts, of the gospel message. May they find an echo in your heart too!

“Precious, precious Blood of Jesus
Shed on Calvary,
Shed for rebels, shed for sinners,
Shed for me.
Though thy sins are red like crimson,
Deep in scarlet glow,
Jesus” precious blood can make them
White as snow.”

From “Personal Evangelism” By F.A.H.

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