

# EXPERIENCE OF A MISSIONARY.

ILLUSTRATING SALVATION BY FAITH.

[The following is part of a letter recently received from a brother in the foreign missionary field. Before he left this country, he was esteemed a very devoted Christian; but his soul labored under the sense of a want that was not met, and he earnestly desired that he might be wholly sanctified unto God. Amid the labors and afflictions to which he has been called, he has received "the blessing." His account of his experience is published in the hope that it may instruct and encourage others. "The testimony of the Lord is sure: making wise the simple."]

J—, Feb., 1861

My dear departed wife and I have often, yes, always, remembered you and your family, and our stay with you, with the deepest interest and affection, especially on account of the more intimate heart-acquaintance which we there secured with the blessed Savior, and we hoped to continue those instrumentalities for growth in grace by, at least, some written communications. I write now, not to communicate any external news, but to speak of those things of the inward kingdom which used to interest us in those half-hour chats in your family.

The religious experience of my wife and self since we came here, has been, in the main, about the same; though I feel that there was in her the greater depth of faithfulness and earnestness of spirit.

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Until within three or four months, most of my inward life in J — was one of struggling in dimness, doubtings, fearings; in short, all those varieties of experience which are the result of a heart bound with a multitude of little cords of unbelief, struggling for the attainment of that which it feels conscious of having once possessed, but which is now lost: with a *knowledge* that it can be recovered, but without such an all-pervading *belief* as actually brings it again into possession. And I found unbelief strong, subtle and perplexing, in proportion as my heart had been previously confiding and my experience clear and blessed. There were those rounds of believing and disbelieving; sinning and repenting, repeated in periods of from one to four weeks or so. But this was true, the circles grew larger as time passed, the lights and shades of experience brighter and darker, the struggles more desperate, and the temporary triumphs more triumphant. Each battle did increase my knowledge, strength, and faith, though these would seem finally to reach a point where they would be overtopped and prostrated. My heart, instead of having Christ in it as an overflowing spring, was like a pump through which water

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must be forced; and I would get weary. Instead of having Jesus in my heart as a sun that would shine of itself, I was continually striking light from some religious truth, as from flint-stones, by my own efforts; and, of course, I could but tire after a while. These things I did without being conscious of it; so subtle is unbelief.

During this time I read several works on sanctification and the inner life. I greedily devoured all that I could get from these sources, but still seemed spell-bound in unbelief. My heart would not persevere in going where the intellect clearly perceived the road. All this time I believed that I should be loosed from these bonds sooner or later; but when, or just how, I knew not. I believed that Jesus had taken hold of me with a grasp that he would not relax till he had brought me where he wanted me. I was not in a state of mind in which I shrunk from any calamity, sorrow, or sacrifice, which it might please God to lay upon me. There was, indeed, often a feeling that would welcome anything of the kind that would thoroughly subdue me. I shrunk from nothing but *the* thing necessary, which was to perseveringly arouse myself from my slough of spiritual sloth

and unbelief, and lay resolutely hold of Jesus as my *only* hope, and portion, and joy forever.

During most of the time of which I speak, I inwardly chafed under the burdens and perplexities of my daily life, which were just few enough, though many, so that I thought I could carry them alone: but I could not; and not carrying them to Jesus, except now and then, when they became insupportable, the legitimate result was inward chafing. But about the time brother W. went away, my cares became so many, that I could no longer have any possible hope of meeting them alone, and I threw myself upon Jesus in more permanent and solid rest than I had known before. Those petty chafings were at an end. But I have now reason to believe that my soul was not then on a foundation where it would abide. Soon God took my wife. To that I found my heart as supple as a weaned child's:—not a murmur; nothing but thanks. But it cut the cords of my bondage and made them fly as nothing else had done. My soul breathed with a freedom which it had known in some former experiences. But I soon found that a work was yet to be done. I found my heart unconsciously trusting to the influences of my

wife's death upon me, and, of course, these would not last long in holding my soul in its proper place, a work which only the omnipotent Jesus can do. Soon after her death, I had several weeks of ill health, which gave me more time for reading and reflection. I was reading Upham's "Life of Faith." As I was lying upon the lounge one day, having just finished his chapter on consecration, my heart heavy with thoughts, the book unconsciously almost dropped from my hand, as the mental conversation ran about as follows:—

"What is the use," said I to myself, "here you are, a professing Christian, engaged in a Christian work, often expressing confident expectations of heaven, and a desire to go there, as though it were a settled case with you; yet if you ask yourself the question: 'Are you really Christ's and he yours, you for him and he for you, inseparably and forever?'—there is a silent something that hesitates, flutters, and says: 'I don't know.'"

"Well, what is the use of being thus unsettled; you can be established through and through."

"Yes."

"Will you then, now settle it once for all: and

do you consecrate yourself from first to last from least to greatest, wholly to Christ?"

"Yes! I will."

"Do you believe the past is wholly forgiven?"

"Yes."

"Why?"

"Because God says so."

"Do you believe you are now accepted and Christ is yours and you are his?"

"Yes; I do."

"Why?"

"Because God says so."

"Do you believe you will be kept for the future?"

"Yes."

"Why?"

"Because God says it."

All this was silent, but oh! such earnestness as I cannot express, not much emotional, but earnest and sincere. From that time my soul has walked in a new life. There have been some vacillations of trembling unbelief, when the body has been very weary, or disordered somewhat, and temptation has pressed very heavy; some jarrings of the wall with which my soul is fortified, but no successful breach has been made.

My testimony is that of the Psalmist — "When I said my foot slippeth, thy mercy, O Lord, held me up."

That great question about which an eternal settlement should be made, has not become unsettled. *My soul know's a power, all in Christ, which it never knew before.* All unrest and anxiety, whether from hasty sin or any other source, which has a tendency to disorder my inner life, is hushed to rest in Jesus. Now I look upon two short but distinct periods of my life before this and since my conversion, when my soul knew this liberty; but it was not renewed and established in knowledge, as now. One of these times was just before I came to Brooklyn. My heart would fain have persuaded itself that it was so there, but I now see that I had begun to be fogged out of the track. I was too unwatchful and unprayerful, and the many new things with which I came in contact turned my attention from the source of my strength. As near as I can determine, my experiences are best described in Bushnell's sermon on "The true problem of Christian Experience." I seem to myself to have gone the third circle of which he speaks.

These experiences, which I have now related, have been wholly silent and internal. None would suspect I was passing through them, except as I told them, and I have, for the most part, kept them to myself and my wife till within three or four months. I find that the relation of these experiences to others, at proper times, and under proper circumstances, strengthens me, as does also this expression of them to you. I hope I shall not make the impression upon your mind, that I think there is anything in my experience extraordinary or remarkable; for I do not. I consider it nothing more than what God has intended to be the ordinary work of his grace in the heart, and to be looked upon as a matter of course. There is of late a revival in all our hearts as brethren, as well as among the people, and there is a freedom of breaking our hearts to each other, that has not been before; and we find that we have all been having very similar experiences. There has hitherto been a sort of indefinable something that has held us from opening our hearts to each other, in consequence of which we have all lost much to our inner life.

F. J. D.