



“You will know them by their fruits.” Mt. 7:16

JOHN PAWSON

1737 – 1806

(Methodist)

His Conversion

The time of my deliverance now drew near. I went to a neighbouring village to hear Mr. Hosmer. It was a new place, and many came from various parts to hear the word of God. An extraordinary influence attended the word that night. There was a mighty shaking among the dry bones. Mr. Hosmer preached upon the words of Isa. 41:10: ‘Fear not, for I am with thee; be not dismayed, for I am thy God; I will strengthen thee,’ &c. These precious words were applied to my honoured father’s mind by the Spirit of God, while Mr. Hosmer was reading them, and he was brought into marvellous light and liberty. Here I cannot but admire the wisdom and goodness of God, in the methods He takes to ‘hide pride from man,’ and ‘that he who glorieth may glory in the Lord.’ My dear father, who had long been so great a hindrance to me, was brought into the favour and family of God before me: the consideration of this constrained me to praise God, and yet it greatly increased my trouble. I kneeled before the Lord throughout the whole service, and for a considerable time after it was over, weeping, trembling, and crying to the Lord for mercy; but deliverance was not yet. Mr. Hosmer, in tender compassion to the souls whom he saw in such deep distress, appointed a meeting for extraordinary prayer the next morning, which was Sunday, March 16, 1760.

I went to that meeting deeply distressed, yet with a full expectation of finding the salvation of God. It appeared to me that I had no hope beyond that meeting; that if I did not find the Lord there, I never should find Him; nothing but clouds and thick darkness appeared to me beyond that meeting. Before the service began, a person who tenderly pitied me said, ‘Fear not: the Lord graciously visited your father last night, and you will find the blessing this morning. You have been an instrument in His hand in bringing all the family into the way, and He will not leave you behind.’

These words afforded me no comfort, as I knew very well I must not expect salvation because I had done something good, but wholly by grace, through faith in the blood of Christ. The service no sooner began than the Lord was wonderfully present. A person, who had been ten years by the way-side, was brought into liberty, and walked therein for many years, till he finished his earthly course with joy. I soon heard another, whose voice I well knew, cry for mercy; and his heaviness was soon turned into joy, and he has retained his confidence in God to this day.

I was upon my knees in the middle of the room, and, if possible, in greater anguish of spirit than ever: surely ‘the sorrows of death compassed me about, and the pains of hell got hold upon me; I found trouble and heaviness. Then called I upon the name of the Lord; O Lord, I beseech Thee, deliver my soul.’ He heard me from His holy hill; He spoke, and I heard His voice. He graciously applied that blessed word to my mind, Isa. 43:1, ‘Thou art Mine.’ In a moment I was perfectly delivered from all my guilty fears; my deep sorrow, my extreme distress, was entirely gone. The peace of God flowed into my conscience, and the love of God was shed abroad in my heart abundantly; my whole soul was filled with serious, sacred, heavenly joy; yea, I triumphed in the God of my salvation.

The kingdom of heaven was opened in my mind in that happy hour, and the light of God's countenance shone with resplendent brightness upon me. I did not know that the words applied to my mind were in the Scriptures; but this did not at all damp my joy in the Lord, as I was well assured they were the voice of God to me. But very soon afterwards my brother told me I might find them in the Bible; and I rose early one morning, and, after prayer, opened my Bible upon that very passage. This was a kind of sealing of the promise to my soul.

The deliverance which the Lord wrought for me was so great, and the change in my mind was so extraordinary, that I never could doubt of my acceptance with God through Christ to this day.

My convictions of sin had been so deep, painful, and of such long continuance, that, when deliverance came, it was not only the more welcome, but also the more clear. And as I had been favoured with so clear a manifestation of the love of God to my soul, no one need to wonder that ever since I first acted in a public capacity in the church I have been led to bear my testimony to the absolute necessity of every one's enjoying 'the knowledge of salvation by the remission of sins'; especially as the Scriptures are so remarkably clear and exact upon the subject.

Having found salvation myself, I felt an intense desire that others should enjoy the same unspeakable blessing. I therefore began a meeting for prayer on Sunday evenings, and many of our neighbours attended. As we had no one who could give a word of exhortation, I sometimes read a sermon, and sometimes the Homilies of the Established Church. These had not been heard of for a long time, and therefore were quite new; and the inhabitants, being one and all church people, were very willing to hear them. The minister of the parish, being, as I said before, a determined enemy to true religion, was highly offended, and laboured with all his might to prejudice the people against me. But he lost his bad labour, and was so provoked by the people turning Methodist, that he left the town. I also read select passages from Burkitt on the New Testament; and afterwards I took God's own book, read part of a chapter, and endeavoured to explain it. The people bore with my weakness, constantly attended at all opportunities, and my feeble endeavours were crowned with some degree of success.

His Sanctification

About six weeks after I found peace with God, Mr. Hosmer divided our little society into two classes, and made me the leader of one of them. This was a heavy cross, but I did not dare to refuse taking it up. *The first time I met the class, I was brought into a much higher state of grace than before. From that time I enjoyed the abiding witness of the Spirit; my mind was constantly stayed upon God, and I enjoyed uninterrupted communion with Him...no evil temper, unholy desire, or carnal affection, had any place in my soul; but I was favoured with the continued presence of God...*

AN ACCOUNT OF JOHN PAWSON'S DEATH

The last sermon he preached was in Wakefield, on the 3rd of February, 1806, from Mark iii. 35: 'Whosoever shall do the will of God,' &c. He had for some time complained of indisposition, and now expressed himself as incapable of further labour in the ministry. On Thursday, the 6th of February, he was for the first time confined to his room, being now attacked by an inflammation in his bowels. From this period, he appeared to be fast approaching to the borders of the grave. This was to him a source of consolation, and he frequently declared that when his pain was most acute, his confidence in God was strongest.

On Tuesday, the 25th, to the astonishment of all, he came downstairs without assistance, and, with uncommon earnestness, exhorted those ministers who were present to insist especially on the necessity of enjoying the witness of the Spirit and holiness of heart; and then declared that the only foundation of his hope was the infinite merits of the Lord Jesus. On the same day he said to those around, 'All will be well soon. I can speak of my funeral as cheerfully as of my wedding.' In a conversation he had with a

friend on the necessity of doing all things to the glory of God, he declared that he had never purchased a single article since his conversion but with an eye to eternity, and said, 'I have nothing to do: all is ready.'

Wednesday, 26. -- Having, in the year 1800, under an apprehension that his time would not be long on earth, drawn up a letter of advice to his brethren, to be communicated to them after his death, he, on this day, with great solemnity, put it into the hands of a friend, with an earnest request that it might be read to them at the ensuing Conference, as containing his dying testimony and advice. And, when several friends were present, after expressing, in the most elevated and forcible language, his glorious prospects into eternity, he began to pray with the utmost fervency for the Conference, that they might abide by their original doctrines...

On Thursday, the 27th, to Mr. Smith, from Birstall, he said, 'Give my love to the congregation, and tell them I am going to my precious Saviour; the heaven of heavens is open to my view; I have nothing on my mind; I have nothing to do but die. I have long been sailing to this fair haven. Sometimes the seas have been rough and tempestuous: Satan has often tried to raise a storm, if possible, to upset my little boat; but this he could not effect. No, no; now Satan hath no business with me; he appears to have quitted the field, and given it up as a lost case.' At another time he spoke to this effect: 'All the powers of darkness will never be able to extinguish the flame of divine love that burns within.' Soon afterwards he said, 'It is enough; Christ died for me; I am mounting up to the throne of God.' Then he broke out into the most rapturous strains of praise; and, clasping his hands, said, 'I know I am dying; but my deathbed is a bed of roses; I have no thorns planted upon my dying pillow...

FROM ADAM CLARKE'S COMMENTS AFTER PAWSON'S DEATH

The doctrines of the witness of the Spirit, and salvation from all sin in this life, he considered a depositum entrusted by the especial mercy of God to the care of the Methodists; and was greatly distressed when he found any among ourselves denying them, or attempting to fret them away by far-fetched refined speculations.

The zeal with which he urged penitents to look for present pardon, and believers to expect immediate deliverance from all sin, was great and exemplary. Nothing short of this experience he considered as salvation; and multitudes felt the power of his persuasive arguments in reference to these grand objects, and became living and dying witnesses of the truth...

The following letter, which is the last he ever wrote, a short time after which his right hand forgot its cunning, I shall subjoin as his own last testimony to the power of God to save, and his concern for the full establishment and final prevalence of those glorious truths which he now found to be the support of his soul, when his heart and flesh failed. The occasion of it was simply this. On hearing that his disorder was rapidly gaining ground, but not knowing how low he was then reduced, I wrote a very pressing letter to him and Mrs. Pawson, to take easy journeys, and come immediately up to London, where he might have the best medical advice, and to continue with me till the Lord should be pleased to restore him. In this I was affectionately joined by my brother and sister Butterworth, who wished him to come and make their house his home. When this letter was read to him, he was much affected, and poured out his soul in ardent prayer for those who had requested him to take this journey. Notwithstanding his great weakness, when his nephew Mr. Entwisle, and Mr. James Burton, had retired from his room for a short time, he struggled out of bed, put on his morning-gown, got his writing-desk to his bedside, and wrote the following comparatively long letter, after which he never dictated nor wrote another:

'WAKEFIELD, Friday, March 7, 1806.

O My Adam, my most affectionately beloved and highly esteemed friend and brother, for whom, God

knoweth, I ever had a sincere regard, but now tenfold more so than ever; I return you my sincerest and most cordial thanks for your kind invitation to me to come to London. Alas, how little did you know the state I was then in! Nevertheless, your love and kindness so tenderly expressed, call very loudly upon me for suitable returns of gratitude and love to you, and good and tender-hearted Mrs. Clarke, as well as to kind and generous Mr. and Mrs. Butterworth, to whom return my warmest acknowledgements.

‘O my dear brother, what I have suffered, what I now continue to suffer, and what still lies before me, is only known to God. But, glory to God in the highest, I am in the hands of Him who ever was, and who never can cease to be, infinitely wise and infinitely good; whom I have found to be so to me, an unworthy worm, to the present hour. For ever blessed be His glorious name!

‘What I have experienced of the power and goodness, of the unmerited mercy and love, of God during this affliction, is not to be described by me. O the views, the soul-transporting views, of that heavenly felicity that my soul hath been favoured with! My loving friend, praise the name of the Lord with me and for me. And you may tell all my beloved London friends, that J. Pawson dies a witness of the saving power of those precious truths which have been taught, believed, and experienced among us from the beginning of Methodism. Alas, for the double refinements which a Mr. _____, or anyone else, may have found out! Give me good old Methodism in its unadorned simplicity and plainness; in its spirit, life, and power; and they may (set) up one church, and try to set up another as high as they can. But God, and God alone, shall be exalted, and His name glorified by all His redeemed creatures through one eternal day.

I write thus freely to you from the grave’s mouth, because I know your very soul loves the good old truth; and I trust you will live and die by it, and in full possession of it in your heart! But I must give up; I can do no more. I have had a sore bout with this incoherent scrawl; and whether you will be able to make it out or not, I cannot tell. My head is so weak that I can scarcely spell a word right.

Ten thousand times ten thousand blessings attend you, your beloved Mary, and all your family! God Almighty bless, preserve, and keep you, and make you an abundant blessing to your family, the Church, and the world! J. Pawson’s dying prayer for you is that goodness and mercy may follow you all the days of your life, and that you may dwell in the house of the Lord for ever! Surely, if the love of the people and preachers, joined together, can keep me from the grave, I must not die at this time. I never saw anything like it in the whole course of my life.

‘Farewell for ever! Bless the Lord for me, and we shall all eternally enjoy Him very soon. ‘I am most affectionately and eternally yours in Christ Jesus,

‘J. PAWSON.’

Thus lived, thus died, John Pawson; a man of irreproachable integrity, of unspotted life, and of very extensive usefulness. As he honoured his God with his body, soul, and substance, so God honoured him with the highest affection and strongest confidence of His Church and people, with an unction and baptism of the Holy Ghost, and with such a victory and triumph over sin, death, and the grave as would have been glorious even in apostolic times.

It is scarcely necessary to say to your readers in general that this heavenly man entered on the enjoyment of the eternal inheritance on the morning of Wednesday, March 19, 1806, in the sixty-ninth year of his age. Precious in the sight of God is the death of His saints; and their name shall be had in everlasting remembrance.

ADAM CLARKE. LONDON, January, 1807 Source: Originally from “Lives of Early Methodist Preachers” by Thomas Jackson the Enter His Rest website