



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

WILLIAM GREEN

1739 – 1???

I was born in London, September 22, 1739. My mother, being pregnant with me, heard the first sermon which Mr. Wesley preached at the Foundry. Soon after, she found peace with God, and walked worthy of the Gospel to the day of her death, having been a member of the society upward of thirty years.

I had the first part of my education at the Foundry school, so that I was early instructed in the principles of religion. But I was no better than if I had not been instructed at all; for God was not in all my thoughts. Between thirteen and fourteen I was put apprentice to a man who had some degree of the fear of God. For about three years he was able to manage me; but afterward I neither regarded the threatenings of my master, nor the counsel of an affectionate mother, but ran on in my own ways.

When my apprenticeship was done, I was for ten years a faithful servant of the devil. But for the last two years, I was very far from being a willing captive; one hour praying against sin, the next falling into it. I could truly say, “The good that would, I do not; but the evil which I would not, that I do.”

About July, 1770, a person lent me one of Mr. Wesley’s journals. I read it with prayers and tears; seeing much beauty in being persecuted for righteousness’ sake. Soon after, I read Bishop Taylor’s “Rules for Holy Living and Dying”: one passage struck me much: “A true lover of God is more grieved on account of an impure dream than one who does not love him is on account of a gross outward sin.” And it put me upon praying earnestly, that God would give me his love. In August following, Mr. Wesley coming to town, I went with eagerness to hear him. His text was, “My son, give me thy heart.”

But he shot over my head; I understood nothing about it. However, I went in the evening to Moorfields, and heard Mr. Murlin preach. And there it pleased God to touch my heart. I went directly home greatly affected: so that my wife, though a serious woman, could not imagine what was the matter with me.

But these impressions wore off, and I still continued a slave to gaming, my besetting sin. However, I continued to hear on Sundays, and was much pleased with what I heard. And after a time, my dear mother, by much persuasion, prevailed upon me too meet in a class.

From this time my chains began to fall off. I think I had not met above three times, before all my outward sins left me, and I shook off all my old companions. I was now a close attendant on all the means of grace. I clearly saw that I was a fallen spirit; and I as clearly saw that religion was to restore me to that image of God from which I fell. It was now the fear of God took place in my soul.

But in this I was greatly mistaken . I thought myself a good believer; whereas I was then as ignorant of the nature of faith as I am now of Greek. Soon after, I heard Mr. Wesley preach on, “Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved.” I listened very attentively, but still could not find out what faith was.

The same evening I went to Mr. Maxfield’s chapel. He was preaching upon the same text. He said, “Faith is a Divine conviction, that Christ died for me.” But I found I could no more give myself this conviction, than I could make a world. It was now the Holy Ghost convinced me of sin, because I believed not in Jesus.

I went home in deep heaviness, and told my wife I was an unbeliever, and that if I died as I was, I should go to hell. I was utterly slain by these words, "He that believeth not shall be damned." For want of this conviction of unbelief, how many thousands stop short of saving faith!

But though I was so fully convinced of sin, I was far from being discouraged, that I was all hope, knowing that if all the sins of the world were upon me, the mercies of God infinitely surpassed them all.

About Christmas I went to hear the letters read, one of which gave an account of a wonderful work among the children at Kingswood, some of whom were determined not to eat or sleep till they knew their sins were forgiven. I went home full of the spirit of mourning, and yet big with earnest expectation.

The next day my sorrow was so great, that I could do no work; till upon praying with a friend, the cloud began to disperse, and light broke into my soul. But I was determined not to be satisfied with any thing short of an assurance of pardon. In this situation of mind I went to bed.

About two o'clock the next morning, December 30, 1770, I was awakened by a full sense of the love of God. The skies poured down righteousness into my soul, and I could loudly say, –

For me I now believe he died!
He made my every crime his own.

I was now happy in God; his Spirit bearing witness with my spirit that I was a child of God. But about three days after, I was sorely tempted; and a thought striking my mind that I was to be a preacher, this put me upon many reasonings, which strengthened the temptation. I believe the thought was from God: yet for six weeks I was greatly perplexed.

However, I never lost, for one moment, the sense of my acceptance. Yea, and I knew the work of the Spirit was going on, and felt the blessedness of enduring temptation. Being at Spitalfields on Sunday, I was greatly strengthened while those words were singing, –

Even now the Lord doth pour
His blessings from above,
A kindly gracious shower
Of heart-reviving love:
The former and the latter rain,
The love of God and love of man.

My faith was strengthened, my peace flowed as a river, and I had a clearer view of a crucified Saviour. About this time a hymn book of Mr. Charles Wesley's fell into my hands, which speaks largely and particularly concerning entire sanctification. I read it with attention, and comparing it with the Scripture, a fair prospect opened to my view. At the same time I saw my vast distance from it, in a manner I never did before. And yet I wanted to see it more, and could not bow my knee, but words to this purpose flowed from my lips, –

Show me, as my soul can bear
The depth of inbred sin:
All the unbelief declare,
The pride that lurks within.

My prayer was answered: I had a surprising view of the total sinfulness of my heart. I knew this discovery was from God. I believed it possible to be saved from all sin before death. I believed it possible to be thus saved in a moment: and I believed that moment was near. So that I could cheerfully sing, –

The glorious crown of righteousness
To me reach'd out I view:

Conqueror through him, I soon shall seize
And wear it as my due.

In this state of mind I went to Spitalfields chapel. Mr. Wesley's text was, "Now is the day of salvation." He addressed himself chiefly to believers. I found I was one to whom this word of salvation was sent. An inexpressible hunger and thirst for full salvation took place in my soul.

And I thought, surely I shall be filled therewith. But the question is: When? The answer was, If thou canst believe, now is the day of salvation. And I was as clearly convinced of unbelief, as I was before my justification. God told me his time was now. Unbelief told me it was not now. O the wickedness of a heart that is but partially renewed in the image of God!

As I formerly that I only wanted faith in order to be justified, so now I felt that I only wanted faith in order to be sanctified. But I knew every one that asketh receiveth. I therefore gave myself to prayer, nothing doubting but God would answer. For two days I prayed continually. I prayed in my shop: I prayed in the street: I prayed rising up: I prayed lying down. The Lord heard and answered me. At the end of two days, it seemed my strength failed me, and I could only say, "Lord, I will believe: help thou my unbelief!" I was enabled to bring the words to the present moment. I felt that faith which bringeth salvation, and rejoiced with joy unspeakable and full of glory. In that moment I was as clearly saved from sin as ever I was justified. And this blessing was bestowed upon me only eight weeks after the former.

Surely when God gives any blessing, it is his will that we should keep it. But I did not keep this long. I fancied, because I had much love, I had much knowledge, and that therefore few could teach me. I forgot that I had need every moment of the intercession of Christ. And I tied my own meaning on several texts of Scripture, which exposed me to a flood of unwise enthusiasms. This brought on some loving opposition from my brethren, which was not always received in the spirit of meekness. And I sunk lower and lower, till I had no longer any pretense to perfect love.

But notwithstanding my great unfaithfulness, God did not wholly withdraw himself from me. I still retained a sense of acceptance, which indeed I have not lost an hour since I first received it. But... My natural tempers again prevailed, and I could not keep myself from idols. I was barely kept from outward sin. And this, I knew, was not by my own strength.

Toward the latter end of the year 1774, it pleased God to stir me up anew. I was deeply convinced of my fall. I again felt foolish desires, the fear of man, and various other evils in my heart. And I could truly say –

'Tis worse than death my God to love
And not my God alone!

...Yet in the midst of all I poured out my soul to God in much prayer. In the midst of all a thought sprung up, "I will go to the Tabernacle." I went, being still in the spirit of prayer. Mr. Joss preached from part of the fourth chapter to the Romans. Although I could not agree with him, that "all believers are staggerers," yet his preaching so much below my experience was sanctified to me. I looked to God, and the spirit of supplication was poured into my soul. I was athirst for God, I opened my mouth wide, and indeed he filled it. He spoke to my heart, "I will cleanse thee from all thy filthiness and from all thine idols." These words passed my mind several times, before I attended to them.

At length I started and thought, surely this is the voice of God to my soul. I determined to hold the promise fast, though Satan endeavoured to tear it from me. This was about the middle of the sermon, the latter part of which was made very useful to me, the Spirit of God applying it in another sense than the preacher intended it. I went home, praying all the way, my whole attention being fixed upon –

The sure prophetic word of grace,
That glimmer'd through my nature's night.

I then felt unspeakable happiness in my deliverance. But a query came. "How will it be tomorrow?" It was answered in my heart, "Tomorrow shall be as this day, and much more abundant." The next morning I rose to the preaching with ease, which before seemed an impossibility.

In the course of a day there are not wanting in a family many little trying circumstances. Some temptations also to pride, to anger, and to self-will, presented themselves. But in all things I was more than conqueror. The fear of man was likewise removed; so that I could reprove, warn, and exhort every one. Meantime the promises flowed into my heart without obstruction. I easily perceived the change was universal, and felt that I was "cleansed from all my idols, and from all my filthiness."

And I seemed to have light equal to my love; so that in one week I had a clearer insight into the life of faith, than I had had for several years ... I have a constant witness of the work wrought in my heart by the Spirit of holiness. I have received in this world a hundredfold: and I know that when my earthly house of this tabernacle is dissolved, I have a building of God; a house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens!

Source: "The EXPERIENCE of several eminent Methodist Preachers with an account of their Call to and Success in the Ministry in a series of letters written by themselves to the Rev. John Wesley" J. Collard, Printer, New York 1837

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