

The Little Baptist

By J.M. Martin

"And that from a child thou hast known the holy scriptures, which are able to make thee wise unto salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus." 2 Timothy 3:15

Chapter 10

The Country School - Mrs. Brown's Mental Agitations

Soon after Mellie was fourteen years old, she was sent off to a select boarding school in the country, and places under the care of one of her mother's particular friends - a lady of much experience as a teacher. She was gratified at this arrangement; for she not only loved to attend school and study, but she was delighted with life in the country, where she had opportunities of observing nature in all its varied phases. The following letter written to her mother, gives some idea of her situation, and the state of her mind:

"My dear Mamma: - I have now been at Forest Hill Seminary a little more than six months, and, as I have written to you before, my teacher is very kind to me, and shows me all the attention that I could desire. We have a nice and interesting school. The most of the students are young ladies, and though some of them are not much older than myself, they are much larger, and, as you may reasonably suppose, I am, as usual, called *Little Mellie* Brown. They have not learned to call me the little Baptist yet, and upon that subject we have no controversy. My class and roommates are the best girls that I ever saw. Some of them are farther advanced than myself, and they assist me very much in learning my lessons. I wondered how so many girls, so nice and good, could have gotten together, but the teacher told me that the reason was she would not have any other kind in her school; that all had to come were commended, and then they must obey her rules and demean themselves properly, else she would not keep them. It is a good school, and no bad influences can find admittance here. I am so glad that papa sent me here, and I am trying to do all that I can to be a good scholar when I quit school. Two years will be a long time to stay away from home, but then I want to be good and wise, and I'll study hard and think as little about the two long years as possible. Papa will come for me in vacation and take me home for a few weeks, and that will be a happy time.

"I could tell you much about our rambles in the woods, and what fine times we have every day, but that would make my letter too long. I make it a rule to read some Bible every day, for I wish to learn how to be good, and I think the Bible is the book from which to learn my duty to God. I attend church every Sunday, and listen closely to all that the preacher says; and sometimes I feel like I am not good after all my efforts to be so. I fear that my heart is not right in the sight of God. Laura Thompson once told me that I must have a new heart before I would be prepared to associate with the blessed in Heaven, and I have been thinking a great deal about it of late. I never intended to be a sinner, but my Bible tells me that 'the heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked.' And then it says so much about all being condemned under the law, and about God's people having new hearts given them, and having the Spirit to bear witness with

theirs that they are the children of God. I know that I have had no experience of these things, and I am afraid that I am not so good as I thought I was. I know that if I am a sinner God is angry with me every day, for the Bible says so.

"Please write to me, mamma, and instruct me, for I feel as if I were wandering in darkness. Had you talked to me like Laura Thompson did, maybe I could have understood it all better. I can always understand what you say. But I will read and pray and try to find the right way. Mamma, write to me, and pray for

"Your affectionate daughter, Mellie."

Mrs. Brown was glad to hear that Mellie was satisfied and doing well at school, but the latter part of her letter caused feelings of deep emotion. The question pressed heavily upon her mind: Had she done her duty? She had instructed Mellie in almost everything except the "one thing needful." On reviewing the past, she was forced to decide that the kind of training she had given her was liable to make her a strict Pharisee, and nothing more. She had failed to correct an error which seemed prominent in Mellie's mind: that she had only to be good - to be consistent in her morals, and Heaven would be given her as a reward of merit. She had not taught her that her heart was depraved by nature, and must be renewed by the Holy Spirit. Not one word had she ever told about the necessity of repentance and faith, or of the necessity of obtaining a new heart to prepare her for entering the kingdom of Heaven. These facts caused her some sore reflections. She had had her children baptized in their infancy, according to the usage of her church, and in spite of her better informed judgment, and her understanding of the Scriptures, she gave a kind of tacit consent that there was some efficacy attached to it. The creeds of her church, and the creeds of other Pedobaptist churches did, indirectly, at least teach that there was some sort of saving efficacy in baptism, and that children received virtue from the ordinance, that they were thereby brought into a "covenant relation with God." it is true, as she had intelligence enough to know, that the Pedobaptist denominations, generally, have outgrown their creeds; that they neither preach nor profess now what their creeds really teach upon this subject. But while they incorporate in their Confessions of Faith, and Articles of Religion, the exploded theories of past ages, they must, in some respects, be held responsible for the evils arising from misconstructions. If they would be fully and unmistakably understood to believe no more than they publicly teach, they must expunge from their creeds, every expression seeming to teach gross heresy of baptismal regeneration. Creeds, as well as sermons should teach individual responsibility and personal obedience, as well as personal faith. Then there need be no misunderstandings of terms.

No one who reads the Bible, divested of prejudice, and allows that it says what it means, and means what it says, can fail to see that all are condemned by the law of God. And to be saved by the law, would require a perfect and sinless obedience. "For whosoever shall keep the whole law, and yet offend in one point, he is guilty of all." - James 2:10.

A purity equal to the demands of God's law, cannot be attained by depraved beings. The coming of Christ as a mediator between God and man, and His fulfillment of the law in man's stead, is positive proof of man's inability to meet its demands. The fact that

Christ died to make an atonement for sin, is proof that the atonement must be applied *personally*, and its healing effects realized. It avails nothing, that there is a remedy for a disease, if that remedy is never applied. But if the remedy is applied, one thing more is essential to establish its value - its healing effects must be experientially realized, Then, to sum it up: natural depravity is the disease; the blood of Christ is the remedy; the Holy Spirit must make the application, and experimental consciousness of the effects must be felt and known.

Mrs. Brown felt that she knew something of experimental religion. The time when she realized the full pardon of her sins could never be erased from her mind. She knew the meaning of the expressions: "born from above," "brought from darkness to light," "created anew," but her conscience was not at ease, because she had failed to direct the minds of her children to a realization of the fact that they, too, must be "renewed in heart," as a preparation to meet God in peace. She had been teaching them to be Christians, without first teaching them that they were sinners - a very fatal mistake. But what now should she do? She would write to Mellie at once. And she did write to her, to "read her Bible, and pray God to enlighten her mind so that she might feel the full need of repentance." "You have ever been a good child," said her mother, "yet you are by nature sinful, and a child of wrath, and a sinner in the sight of God, and in need of being cleansed by the blood of Christ. Pray, my dear child, that God, for Christ's sake, may pardon your sins and renew your heart, so that you may realize His love in all its fullness. Don't conclude for a moment; that you are better than others, but remember that you are just the character that Christ calls on to repent. Think not that because you were reared up in the church as a baptized member, that this will avail you anything in the great day of accounts. No doubt I have wronged you by not impressing these truths on your mind before this, but the best amend I can now make, is to warn you faithfully and entreat you earnestly, to seek the Lord while He may be found, and call upon Him while He is near. You have long ago decided for yourself that your baptism has secured you *nothing at all*; and, let me assure you that your morality and good deeds, while most worthy and commendable, and well pleasing in the sight of God, are not sufficient to secure the salvation of your soul. You are too young to have much actual transgression laid to your charge, but you are old enough - enlightened enough, to know good from evil, therefore you are old enough for God to judge you and hold you accountable. You will be judged not according to age, but according to your knowledge of your duty. You have no doubt, often read in your Bible, that those who know the Master's will and do it not, shall be beaten with many stripes. I hope, my dear, to soon hear that God has led you out from the dark shadows of unbelief into the bright morning of His love; that you have found your way to the cross of Christ, and realized a happy peace to your soul. If you feel you are a sinner, and are honestly seeking deliverance, all the promises of the Bible are yours. Venture on the Saviour, and trust Him for His grace, for He has never sent one away who sought Him with the whole heart. Whosoever will, may partake of the Water of Life freely."

~ end of chapter 10 ~
