

ILLUSTRATIONS OF BIBLE TRUTH

by

Harry A. Ironside

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CHAPTER ONE

~ A – C ~

A BUTTERFLY USED TO ANSWER PRAYER

“Is there anything too hard for me?” (Jeremiah 32:27)

An English evangelist, whom I have learned to know and love, Mr. H. P. Barker, tells an interesting story of a poor woman who was being pressed by a tradesman to pay an account which she knew she had already settled. In that case he demanded that she produce a receipt; quite certain she had received one she hunted and hunted, but was absolutely unable to find it. She went through piles of papers and letters, but to no avail – the receipt was not forthcoming. Finally the tradesman came to her again and made a very angry demand upon her for immediate payment.

In her distress she turned to the Lord in earnest prayer, asking Him to bring the receipt to light. Then in a moment or two, a butterfly flew into the room through an open window, and her little boy, eager to catch the beautiful creature, ran after it. The frightened insect flew over to the wall on one side and down behind a trunk. The boy in his eagerness to catch it, pushed out the trunk, and there, behind it on the floor lay the missing receipt! Snatching it up triumphantly, the poor widow showed it to the tradesman, who went away discomfited, as his own handwriting declared, the debt had been paid.

Who can doubt but that He who notes the sparrow's fall and who would have us learn lessons from the ant and the coney and other small creatures, directed even the movements of a butterfly in order that He might answer His handmaiden's prayer!

A GOOD SINNER

“There is no difference: For all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God” (Romans 3:22-23).

“Are you saved, sir?” we asked a gentleman at the close of a Gospel-meeting.

“No, I really can't say I am, but I would like to be.”

“Why would you? Do you realize you are a lost sinner?”

“Oh, of course, we are all sinners.”

“Ah! but that often means little or nothing. Are you a sinner yourself?”

“Well, I suppose I am, but I'm not what you could call a bad sinner. I am, I think, rather a good one. I always try to do the best I know.”

“Then, my friend, I fear there is little use seeking to show you the way of salvation. Good sinners, together with honest liars, upright thieves, and virtuous scoundrels are far from being ready to submit to the grace of God, which is only for poor, vile, hell-deserving sinners, who have no merits to build on, no goodness to plead, but who are ready to be saved alone by the work of Another, and that One the Lord Jesus Christ.”

Further conversation but elicited the fact that the gentleman was far from being ready to be saved and would, according to his own declarations, rather take “his chances” as he was.

A LOST OPPORTUNITY

“As thy servant was busy here and there, he was gone” (I Kings 20:40).

Ambassador Wu Ting Fang was one of the most colorful oriental diplomats ever accredited to Washington. He came as the representative of the Chinese Empire and for several years occupied that post in this country. When he was recalled to China, it was announced that he would leave for his native land from New York City at a given date. Noticing that he would be in the metropolis over the Lord's Day, the pastor of the Chinese Church on the East Side sent him a polite letter inviting him to attend one of their services on that occasion.

The ambassador replied at once. In his letter he told how, when he first came to America, he had been intensely interested in the Christian religion, as he felt that it was in some very definite way the real source of the enlightened civilization of this great country. He said he then and there made up his mind that he would never refuse an invitation to attend a Christian service, if it were at all possible for him to accept. “I have been in this country six years,” he wrote, “and yours is the first such invitation I have ever received!”

What a tragic commentary on the indifference of Christians to the need of those who are strangers to the gospel! Who can weigh aright the guilt of Christians who were acquainted with this great statesman and never once attempted to win him for Christ? Let us all remember the admonition, **“Redeeming the time (buying up opportunities) for the days are evil.”**

A NEGRO PREACHER ON MISSIONS

"I mean not that other men be eased, and ye burdened" (II Corinthians 8:13).

We often hear it said by short-sighted Christians that the work at home is likely to suffer if the church pays too much attention to missions and missionary giving. This has been disproved over and over again. A colored preacher was taking an offering for missions, when a close-handed deacon in his congregation called,

"Preacher, you is gwine to kill this church ef you keeps on taking up money for missions."

"Brother," was the reply, "Let me tell you somethin'. Churches don't die that way. An' ef you evah can show me a church what died of giving to missions, I'll go out an' climb upon the ruins of dat church in de light of de moon and preach on de tex' 'Bressed am the dead what dies in de Lawd!'"

A VICTIM OF WRONG INFORMATION

"Though we, or an angel from heaven, preach any other gospel unto . . . let him be accursed" (Galatians 1:8).

I remember reading a story of a woman who with her little babe was traveling by train through one of the northeastern states. It was a very wintry day. Outside a terrific storm was blowing, snow was falling, and sleet covered everything. The train made its way along slowly because of the ice on the tracks and the snowplow went ahead to clear the way. The woman seemed very nervous. She was to get off at a small station, where she would be met by some friends, and she said to the conductor,

"You will be sure and let me know the right station, won't you?"

"Certainly," he said, "just remain here until I tell you the right station."

She sat rather nervously, and again spoke to the conductor, "You won't forget me?"

"No, just trust me. I will tell you when to get off."

A commercial man sat across the aisle. He leaned over and said, "Pardon me, but I see you are rather nervous about getting off at your station. I know this road well. Your station is the first stop after such and such a city. These conductors are very forgetful, they have a great many things to attend to, and he may overlook your request, but I will see that you get off all right. I will help you with your baggage."

"Oh, thank you," she said. And she leaned back greatly relieved.

By and by the brakemen called the name of the city the commercial traveler had mentioned, and the latter said to the woman, "Yours is the next station. Better get ready and I will assist you to get off."

The train moved on and shortly afterwards came to a full stop. The woman hurried to the end of the car, the man who was helping her carrying her bag. When they reached the vestibule, there was no one there. "You see," said the stranger, "these trainmen are very careless. The conductor has quite forgotten you." But he opened the door, assisted the woman with her baby down the steps, and just as he boarded the train again it moved on.

A few minutes later the conductor came through the train and looking all about, said, "Why, that is strange! There was a woman here who wanted to get off at the next station. I wonder where she is."

The commercial man spoke up and said, "You, you forgot her, but I saw that she got off all right."

"Got off where?" the conductor asked.

"When the train stopped."

"But that was not a station! That was an emergency stop! I was looking after that woman. Why, may, you have put her off in a wild country district in the midst of all this storm, where there will be nobody to meet her!"

There was only one thing to do, and, although it was a rather dangerous thing, they had to reverse the engine and go back a number of miles, and then went out to look for the woman. They searched and searched; finally, somebody stumbled upon her body. She was frozen on the ground, her little babe dead in her arms. She was the victim of wrong information.

If it is such a serious thing to give people wrong information in regard to temporal things, what about the man who misleads men and women in regard to the great question of the salvation of their immortal souls? If men believe a false gospel, if they put their trust in something that is contrary to the Word of God, their loss will be not for time only, but for eternity.

ACCEPTED IN THE BELOVED

"He hath made us accepted in the beloved" (Ephesians 1:6).

Years ago I was preaching in the small town of Roosevelt, Washington, on the north bank of the Columbia River.

I was the guest of friends who were sheep-raisers. It was lambing time and every morning we went out to see the lambs – hundreds of them – playing about on the green. One morning I was startled to see an old ewe go loping across the road, followed by the strangest looking lamb I had ever beheld.

It apparently had six legs, and the last two were hanging helplessly as though paralyzed, and the skin seemed to be partially torn from its body in a way that made me feel the poor little creature must be suffering terribly. But when one of the herders caught the lamb and brought it over to me, the mystery was explained.

That lamb did not really belong originally to that ewe. She had a lamb which was bitten by a rattlesnake and died. This lamb that I saw was an orphan and needed a mother's care. But at first the bereft ewe refused to have anything to do with it. She sniffed at it when it was brought to her, then pushed it away, saying as plainly as a sheep could say it, "That is not our family odor!"

So the herders skinned the lamb that had died and very carefully drew the fleece over the living lamb. This left the hind-leg coverings dragging loose. Thus covered, the lamb was brought again to the ewe. She smelled it once more and this time seemed thoroughly satisfied and adopted it as her own.

It seemed to me to be a beautiful picture of the grace of God to sinners. We are all outcasts and have no claim upon His love. But God's own Son, the "Lamb of God, that taketh away the sin of the World," had died for us and now we who believe are dressed up in the fleece of that Lamb who died. Thus, God has accepted us in Him, and "there is therefore no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus." We are as dear to the heart of the Father as His own holy, spotless Son.

"So dear, so very dear to God,
More dear I cannot be;
The love wherewith He loves His Son,
Such is His love to me.
So near, so very near to God,
Nearer I could not be,
For in the person of His Son,
I am as near as He."

AN ARROW SHOT AT A VENTURE

"Ye must be born again" (John 3:7).

When Bishop John Taylor Smith, former Chaplain General of the British Army, was in this country at the time of the D.L. Moody Centenary meetings, it was my privilege to hear him one noon hour in Christ Church, Indianapolis. The sanctuary was crowded with eager listeners, to

whom the Bishop spoke most solemnly, yet tenderly, upon the necessity of the new birth, using the text quoted above. As a telling illustration, he related the following incident:

On one occasion, he told us, he was preaching in a large cathedral on this same text. In order to drive it home, he said:

“My dear people, do not substitute anything for the new birth. You may be a member of a church, even the great church of which I am a member, the historic Church of England, but church membership is not new birth, and '**except a man be born again he cannot see the kingdom of God.**' The rector was sitting at my left. Pointing to him, I said, You might be a clergyman like my friend the rector here and not be born again, and '**except a man be born again he cannot see the kingdom of God.**' On my left sat the archdeacon in his stall. Pointing directly at him, I said, You might even be an archdeacon like my friend in his stall and not be born again and '**except a man be born again he cannot see the kingdom of God.**' You might even be a bishop, like myself, and not be born again and '*except a man be born again he cannot see the kingdom of God.*'”

Then he went on to tell us that a day or so later he received a letter from the archdeacon, in which he wrote: “My dear Bishop: You have found me out. I have been a clergyman for over thirty years, but I had never known anything of the joy that Christians speak of. I never could understand it. Mine has been hard, legal service. I did not know what was the matter with me, but when you pointed directly to me and said, You might even be an archdeacon and not be born again, I realized in a moment what the trouble was. I had never known anything of the new birth.”

He went on to say that he was wretched and miserable, had been unable to sleep all night, and begged for a conference, if the bishop could spare the time to talk with him.

“Of course, I could spare the time,” said Bishop Smith, “and the next day we got together over the Word of God and after some hours we were both on our knees, the archdeacon taking his place before God as a poor, lost sinner and telling the Lord Jesus he would trust Him as his Saviour. From that time on everything has been different.”

It was a striking example of the absolute necessity of birth from above, and of the sad possibility of being deceived with a false profession and going on for years not understanding one's true condition before God.

~ end of chapter 1 ~

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