

MABEL CLEMENT

by

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CHAPTER TWENTY-ONE

Our last chapter must be a kind of sequel to the preceding. The Baptist-inclined of Sterling sent an earnest invitation for Herbert and the aged pastor of Thornton Baptist Church to pay them a visit and hold a meeting in Sterling. About two weeks after the discussion closed a Baptist meeting began in the courthouse of Sterling. The more bitter of the Campbellites laughed and treated the meeting with contempt. But the masses of the people would go; were eager to hear what this new doctrine was. The power of the Lord was present from the very first, and soon souls pierced with a sense of sin began to inquire, "**What must [we] do to be saved?**" The air seemed charged with the Divine presence. Strong men broke down under conviction.

Many led to come by curiosity remained to surrender to Him who died to redeem us. There were many scenes that will never fade from the minds of Sterling. A little boy of twelve years was converted and became anxious for the conversion of a schoolmate of the same age. One night the object of his solicitude and prayer presented himself in trouble to ask Christians to pray for him. He was bowed down with grief, his face buried in his hands. Presently he lifted up his tear-stained face, which was now shining with the strange, but glorious light of a new joy born within.

The little fellow stood up and when the eyes of the two boys met they locked in each other's arms. The angels looked on with joy and many who witnessed that scene talk of it still.

There were many other fadeless pictures stamped indelibly on the memory. The meeting grew in power for nearly three weeks and then closed in glorious triumph. It was evident a signal victory was won for GOD and truth. Many were converted. Mr. and Mrs. Clement were sweetly trusting in JESUS. Mabel with difficulty restrained herself from shouting the night her parents were converted from formalism to true and happy believers. Her tear-stained face shone with celestial light and her whole being thrilled with unspeakable joy. Mr. Tibbs was a bright convert. Bro. Jones declared, "I never knew what religion was before; that's so, sure."

The large audience was somewhat amused one night to see the long, lean form of the spectacled man winding forward to the pew designated for penitents and converts. The tears were coursing down his bony cheeks. He was very happy and had come to confess his love for, and his trust in, the Saviour. He explained afterwards that his mother was a very pious woman, had lived and died a Presbyterian, and that a Campbellite minister had preached her to hell because she was not baptized. No wonder he was glad to see the false doctrine refuted.

It comforted him with the assurance that his mother was not lost, but was happy in Heaven. He proved to be a faithful member of the Baptist church, always sitting in a certain corner and

continuing to some measure his odd maneuvers when pleased by what was preached.

Jeems and his party attended the meeting and sometimes seemed perplexed, but the meeting apparently had no other effect on them. Jeems was, if possible, more positive than ever. The overwhelming arguments to which he never gave utterance still seethed and surged in his mind. Mrs. Morgan and George, who trusted Jeems without reserve, adopted his conclusions and walked in his footprints. These simple folk were left to wander on amid the blinding errors of Campbellism and, perhaps, go down to death deluded.

The meeting continued until it was deemed wise to close it. It was reckoned that 65 or 70 had been converted. Shy of this number were approved for baptism by a company of brethren authorized to act for the Thornton Baptist Church. There was great caution in receiving persons for baptism and membership.

The aged minister kept before the audience the fact that Baptists believe in a converted church membership. Among those received were many of the staple citizens of Sterling. The day set for the baptizing was a bright and beautiful day. An immense audience assembled to witness the burial in baptism of the new converts. A hushed stillness prevailed in the audience. The angels hovered over the scene. The Lord was present to approve and bless.

There was song and earnest prayer and reading of the Scriptures. Then the venerable minister led the candidates down into the water and buried them with CHRIST in baptism. As he came up out of the water with the last candidate, a stranger met him at the water's edge and said: "**See, here is water; what doth hinder me to be baptized?**"

The man of GOD paused and, fixing his eyes upon him, said: "I do not know my friend; it may be there is nothing to hinder. If you have the Scriptural qualifications for baptism, I shall be happy to baptize you."

Stranger: "**I believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God.**"

Minister: "That is good so far, my friend; the Jews did not believe it. Have you turned away from sin and worldliness and believed in JESUS as your personal Saviour?"

Stranger: "**I believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God.**"

Minister: "Yes; did you ever have a feeling akin to that of the Pentecostians when pricked to the heart with Gospel truth, they said: '**What shall we do?**'"

Stranger: "No, I never did."

Minister: "They were happy before they were baptized, for they gladly received the word. Were you ever made happy, my friend?"

Stranger: "No, I never was, but I believe that JESUS CHRIST is the Son of GOD."

Minister: "Yes, that is good; but did you ever feel like the Publican when he smote his breast and

cried, '**God be merciful to me, a sinner?**'"

'Stranger: "No, I never did."

Minister: "Did you ever feel like the jailer who, convinced of his wickedness, tremblingly fell at the feet of GOD's ministers, '**brought them out and cried: Sirs, what must I do to be saved?**'"

Stranger: "No, I never did,"

Minister: "It is said, '**Whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved.**' Did you ever do that?"

Stranger: "No, but I believe that JESUS CHRIST is the Son of GOD and I demand baptism at your hands."

Minister: "But you do not have the Scriptural qualifications for baptism."

Stranger: "I believe what the Eunuch did and Philip baptized him."

Minister: "But that Eunuch was a devout praying man, a proselyte to Judaism who had been all the way up to Jerusalem to worship. Your only reason for demanding baptism is that you believe JESUS CHRIST is the Son of GOD. I suppose you always believed that. Let me see," and turning to a tall, fine-looking gentleman who stood nearby, the minister inquired: "My friend, are you a Christian?"

Gentleman: "No, sir."

Minister: "Do you believe that JESUS CHRIST is the Son of GOD?"

Gentleman: "Yes, sir; I am not conscious that I ever had a doubt of it."

Minister: "Do you love GOD? Do you love CHRIST?"

Gentleman: "I think not, for CHRIST says, '**If ye love me, keep my commandments.**'"

Minister: "That is correct," Then turning to the stranger: "You see a man can believe all you do and have no love for GOD, or CHRIST, or Christians. Yea, devils believe that JESUS is the Son of GOD and have confessed it. Do you have a new love for GOD and CHRIST that prompts you to ask baptism?"

Stranger: "I confess I feel about as I always have, but I thought it would be a good thing for me to obey the Saviour in baptism. I have always been taught this is obedience and the one thing necessary to salvation."

Minister: "This is one act of obedience and only one. Many other things are necessary. The Book says: '**If any man be in CHRIST. . .**'"

Stranger: "But how do we get into CHRIST? Are we not baptized into CHRIST?"

Minister: "Yes, formally. But really by creation. Paul says: '**We are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works, which God hath before ordained that we should walk in them.**' (Ephesians 2:10). Baptism is one of the good works we do after creative power has put us into CHRIST."

Stranger: "Can I not put myself into CHRIST, then?"

Minister: "No more than you can create a world and whirl it into the sublime march of worlds. This is GOD's work and He alone can perform it. But let me finish my quotation "**If any man be in Christ he is a new creature: old things are passed away; behold all things are become new**' (II Corinthians 5:17). Is this your experience? Is there anything new in your heart, or in the world around you?"

Stranger: "I confess not."

Minister: "My friend, you are not a Scriptural subject for baptism. The Lord lead you to repent and savingly believe in our Lord JESUS CHRIST. Then come and we will be glad to receive you and baptize you."

There was profound silence and perfect attention while this interesting colloquy was going on. The stranger and the audience seemed convinced he lacked some things necessary to make him a Scriptural subject for baptism. He turned away thoughtfully and strode off in silence as if he were alone in the world. An arrow had reached his heart, and, like the wounded deer, he sought some secluded place to weep and die.

Though entirely unknown to the venerable man of GOD, he was wellknown to many of the audience. Some months after this he presented himself to the Baptist congregation in Sterling and craved baptism again and membership with them.

He had fought against impressions made and convictions wrought in his heart at the baptism mentioned above. But it was to no purpose. His mind was clouded, his heart was sad, his conscience troubled him, his happiness was gone. After a long and hard fight he yielded. His conquered soul cried out:

"I can hold out no more; I sink by dying love compelled, And own CHRIST conqueror," He told a genuine Christian experience, answered all questions satisfactorily, and was gladly received for baptism and after that for membership. He was very happy and proved to be one of the substantial members of the Baptist church at Sterling. He always contended it was a great mercy he was not baptized when he first demanded baptism, saying his mind accepted Gospel truth but his heart was unchanged and untouched - that he believed in Christianity, but had not felt its power. He fears that many thousands get in as he tried to get in, i. e., unconverted.

It was announced that the meeting would probably close that night and that a sermon would be preached to the new converts.

The meeting resulted in the organization of a Baptist church of 70 members. Mr. Clement, Mr. Tibbs and Bro. Jones were chosen and set apart to the deaconship. Arthur was chosen superintendent of the Sunday School. He acquitted himself creditably. Mabel took charge of one of the ladies' classes in the Sunday School and was an active member of the church every way. The aged pastor at Thornton ministered acceptably to the church for one year, after which Herbert was settled as pastor and preached with great zeal and power for years.

One of the favorite theories of the church was that church members should be thoroughly indoctrinated and its members were all well posted in Bible doctrines.

It is five years since occurred the foregoing events. In passing through Sterling we come upon a very attractive home. We pause to look. Everything is tastefully arranged. Beauty and elegance are crowded into the premises. We enter the gate adorned with costly moulding. We pass up the paved walkway. The yard is filled with flowers of the choicest classes. The green soft sward sets off the banks of small flowers and the rich hues of the many colored roses. The air is loaded with fragrance delicate to the smell. Ornamental urns of exquisite mould bedeck the verdant yard. A few trees promising shade stand here and there. How sweet must life be here!

As we draw nearer the house there is a sweet little child playing with toys on the veranda. It is the picture of health and happiness. It is strange, but have we not seen that face before? We look through the door ajar: There sit two persons, the father and mother of the child. We see at half a glance they are content in the light and love of home. No happier companions are to be found in Sterling. Who are they? Reader, they are Arthur and Mabel.

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