

## THE ARROW DRIVEN DEEPER

Finding it impossible, on account of the number, to have much conversation with each individual at the inquiry meeting, I at one time abandoned the practice of conversation for a few weeks, and addressed them all together. I found this was unacceptable, and concluded, therefore, to return to the former custom. It was on one of those evenings, when about seventy persons were present, and I was passing rapidly from one to another, that I came to an individual who had never been there before. Said I: "What is the state of your feelings on the subject of your salvation?" "I feel," said he, "that I have a very wicked heart." "It is a great deal more wicked than you think it," said I; and immediately left him, and addressed myself to the next person.

I thought no more of it till a few days afterwards, when he came to me with a new song in his mouth. He had found peace with God, as he thought, through faith in Jesus Christ. Said he: "I want to tell you how much good you did me. When I told you that I had a very wicked heart, and you answered that it was a great deal more wicked than I thought, and then said nothing more to me, I thought it a most cruel thing. I expected something different. I thought you would say more, and my soul was wonderfully cast down. I did not believe you. I was angry at your treatment. I thought you did not care whether I was ever saved or not; and I did not believe you knew anything about my feelings. But the words rung in my ears, "A great deal more wicked than you think." I could not get rid of them. They were in my mind the last thing when I went to sleep, and the first when I woke. And then I would be vexed at you for not saying something else. But that was the thing which drove me to Christ. I now know it was just what I needed. I thought, when I went to that meeting, my convictions were very deep. But I have found out they were very slight. You hit my case exactly. If you had talked to me, my burden would have been diminished. But you fastened one idea on my mind. You drove the arrow deeper, when I expected you to do just the contrary; and I could find no relief till I gave up all into the hands of Christ. I know you read my heart exactly."

After some few minutes' conversation with him, he said to me, "I want to ask you a question. I have been thinking of it a great deal, and I cannot conceive how you know what to say to each one, where there are so many. We have been talking about it some of us, and we cannot understand how it is that you can know our thoughts and feelings, when nobody has told you. How

can you know what to say to one after another, when there are so many, and some of them you have never seen before, and they say so little to you?"

"I have only one rule on that subject," said I. "I aim to conspire with the Holy Spirit. If I perceive any one truth has impressed the mind, I aim to make its impression deeper; because the Holy Spirit has already made that impression, and I would not diminish it by leading the mind off to something else. If I perceive any error in the individual's mind, I aim to remove it; for I know that the error is of sin, and not of the Holy Spirit."

"But," said he, "our impressions are so different."

"No matter. They are of the Holy Spirit if truth has made them; and he can choose the kind of truth which is appropriate to any sinner, better than I can. I just aim to conspire with the Holy Spirit."

Said he, "I am confident if you had said much to me, or anything, to turn my mind away from that one thing, it would have done me hurt. You have no idea how much you increased my trouble that night. I somehow wanted you to lighten my burden, - you made it heavier. Then I was soon led to see that none but God could help me. I had partly begun to think my heart was improving. I found out the contrary, and turned to God in despair. He gave me peace, through Jesus Christ."

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## FASTING AND PRAYER

The sixteenth day of March, in the year 1831, was observed, by the church, in which I was pastor, as a day of fasting and prayer. This appointment was made with special reference to the outpouring of the Holy Spirit; to seek, by united prayer, the revival of God's work in the midst of the congregation. The meetings for prayer were held in the church building, and a large portion of the members were present.

The next week, as I was returning home from a religious meeting late in the evening, and had turned into an unfrequented crossroad, in order to shorten the distance I had to walk; I was startled at the sudden sound of footsteps behind me, which seemed to be those of a man rapidly approaching me in the dark. I did not know but some evil-minded person might intend to do me harm in that obscure place, and under cover of the impenetrable darkness of one of the darkest nights that I ever saw. I did not choose to run, for, in that case, I should never know why I was so hotly pursued. I felt

glad, that I had some corporeal strength; and though I cannot say that my courage very specially forsook me, yet I had no particular liking for a hostile attack and a tussle in the dark.

As the footsteps so rapidly approaching me appeared to be directly in my rear, like a lover of peace I crossed to the other side of the road; and not preferring an attack in the rear, I stopped and faced about. My pursuer espied me, and, without slackening his pace, ran directly towards me across the street, till, coming within ten feet of me, much out of breath, he called my name. "That is my name, sir," said I. He came close up to me, panting for breath, and stopped in silence. After a few heavy and rapid breathings, he spoke. He told me who he was, and why he had run after me. He was a young man of my congregation, to whom I had never before spoken. I did not know him personally. He had just come from the schoolhouse where I had been preaching; and, not willing to be seen by his companions speaking to me, he had waited till they were out of the way, and then run after me, through the obscure street into which he had seen me turn. He wanted to see me, for he felt that he was "a sinner unreconciled to God, and in danger of hell." "What shall I do?" said he; "I can't live so another week. Is there any way that such a one as I am can be saved?"

I had a long conversation with him standing there in the dark, (for he did not choose to go home with me,) and I found, that his first impressions of any particular seriousness had commenced in the church, on the Fast-day, the week before. He was an apprentice in a mechanic's shop, where there were more than a dozen other irreligious young men. The master of the shop (not a professor of religion), told the whole of them, that if they wished to attend church on the Fast-day, they need not work.

They accepted his proposal. And as he himself afterwards told me, that was the reason why he went to church that day himself. He said, he "did not expect the boys would take his offer, but would prefer to stay at home and work;" and if they had done so, he would have done so too; "but when they were all going to church," says he, "I was ashamed to stay at home."

That young man, his employer, and almost the entire number of those young men in the shop, became communicants in the church before the close of that year. Thirteen persons were received into the church, whose seriousness commenced that day, in the church, while the people of God were praying for that very thing. "The

Lord is with you while ye be with Him.' 'Before they call I will answer; and while they are yet speaking, I will hear.'