

myself. My resolutions did me no good; and I gave up all, and just cried for mercy. Awhile after that, I began to be at peace. I do not know how it is, but I have done nothing for myself. Indeed, when I cried so for mercy, I had given up trying to do anything. It seems to me, that when I gave up trying, and cried to God; he did everything for me."

Some months after this, she united with the church, and has lived in its communion ever since, a useful and decided Christian.



There are multitudes in our congregations, who are just waiting, while they ought to be acting—who have a sort of indefinite hope about the aids of the Holy Spirit, yet to be experienced; while they are pursuing the very course to fail of attaining any such aids. They think they must wait. They think wrong. They must work, if they would have God work in them. There can be no religion without obedience. And there is not likely to be, with any sinner, a just sense of his dependence, till he earnestly intends and attempts to obey the gospel. Religion is practical. Much of its light comes by practical attempts. "If ye will do the works, ye shall know of the doctrine whether it be of God."

Probably this young woman would have been led to her Saviour, five years before; had it not been for her error, about waiting for deeper impressions. ✠




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**Westminster Congregational Church**

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## Waiting for Conviction.



HERE was a young woman in my congregation at one time, about whom I felt no little interest, and had for a long time sought an opportunity to speak with her alone, on the subject of religion I had spoken to her more than once, sometimes in the presence of her mother, and sometimes before some other member of the family. But she was very reserved. She seemed entirely disinclined to any conversation on the subject. Her taciturnity was so constant, that I could only ask questions, and she answered only in monosyllables, or not at all. I had some acquaintance with her, as a neighbor and friend, but little as a minister. She appeared to me to possess more than an ordinary share of intellect and amiability. I had often noticed that she gave strict attention to my sermons. But, though many others, some among her acquaintance, and some in her own family had then recently become, (as we hoped,) the children of God; yet she never manifested any special concern. When I thought of her good sense, her candor, her kindness of feeling, and her sobriety, I was surprised that she did not seek God. She was now passing by the first years of her youth, and it pained me to think that they were gone, and that she was now entering the years of her womanhood, a stranger to Christ. I resolved to see her in private, and aim to overcome that obstinate taciturnity, which I despaired of overcoming in the presence of any other person, and which as I supposed, hindered me from perceiving the real state of her mind, and knowing what to say to her.

I called at her house and asked for her. But, as she and her mother, both at the same time, entered the room where I was, I was obliged to say to her mother, that I desired to see her daughter alone, if she would be so kind as to grant me that privilege. "Oh, certainly," said she, and left the room, manifestly disconcerted, if not displeased. I immediately said to the daughter,

"I am always happy to see your mother; but I called this morning on purpose to see you alone."

"I knew you asked for me," said she; "but mother would come in; she always will, when you ask for me. I don't know why it is, but she always seems to be unwilling to have you see me alone."

"And did you wish to see me alone?"

"Not particularly; but mother and I are such great talkers, that you will find one of us at a time quite enough."

"Do you call yourself a great talker?" said I.

"Oh yes, they say I am; and I suppose it is true."

"Well, will you talk with me? I have called on purpose to talk with you on the subject of your religion, if you will allow me that privilege."

She was mute. She cast her eyes downwards, and seemed confused.

"I hope you will not consider me intrusive," said I, "or impertinent; but I have long felt a deep interest in you, and have desired an opportunity to converse with you freely and confidentially about your religious duty."

"I did not know that you ever thought of me."

"Then certainly I have need to beg your pardon," said I. "I must have treated you very impolitely if you did not know that I ever thought of you."

"Oh, no, sir; you have never treated me impolitely."

"And certainly I never will. But permit me to ask you, are you willing to converse with me about your own religion?"

"I have got no religion," said she, with a downcast and solemn look.

"And do you mean always to live without it! And die without it?"

She made me no answer. I paused for an answer, as long as I thought I could, without embarrassing her feelings; but no answer came. I continued:—

"You say you have got no religion. Would it not be wise and well for you to attend to that subject; and aim to "attain a religion, that will secure to you the favor of God and everlasting life?"

She made me no answer. After another pause, I said: "You think of this subject I suppose, sometimes?"

She made no reply.

"Are you unwilling to think of it?"

No answer.

I left her.—About three days after this I called on her again, and found her in a very solemn and sad state of mind. She said, that on thinking of what I had told her, she believed every word of it,

and tried, with all her might, to do as I had exhorted her. She read her Bible, and prayed, and the more she tried to give up the world, and give God her heart, the more she found that her heart would not yield. She said she "could do nothing with it,—she did not believe there ever was such a heart, so opposed to God,—she never knew before what a sinner she was,—she did not believe there was any possibility of her ever turning to God."

"Jesus Christ," said I, "is able to save you."

She replied, "I suppose he is; but I do not think he ever will!"—As she said this she appeared deeply solemn, and was overcome with her emotions, which choked her utterance.

"Jesus Christ," said I, "is more than able to save you—he is willing."

She lifted her eyes upon me, with a despairing look: "I wish I knew that he is willing."

"You do know it," said I. "His word tells you so. 'Come unto me all ye that labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you, and learn of me, and ye shall find rest for your souls. If any man thirst, let him come unto me and drink. Whosoever will, let him take the water of life freely. Ho! Every one that thirsteth; come ye to the waters. Let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts, and let him return unto the Lord, and he will have mercy upon him, and to our God, for he will abundantly pardon.'"

"Oh!" said she, "I will try to seek God."

I instantly left her. Not long after, (a few days,) I called upon her, and found she was calm, and happy in hope. She said that all her trust was in Christ, and that the forbearance and love of God appeared to her most wonderful. She thanked me for what I had said to her. "You opened my eyes," said she. "When you came here that morning I did not intend to talk with you; and when you began to ask me, I was resolved not to tell you how I felt. And if you had not made me tell, and had not almost forced me to attend to religion now, I should have waited for deeper convictions all my life. But, sir, I think you were wrong, when you told me I did not need any deeper convictions. At that time I knew almost nothing of my heart. I never found out how much it was opposed to God and his demands, till some time afterwards, when I resolved that I would become a Christian that very day."

"And did your resolve bring you to Christ?"

"Oh no! not at all. It did me no good. My heart would not yield. I was opposed to God, and found I was such a sinner, that I could do nothing for

"Perhaps not. But five years waiting has done you no good; and you have no reason to think, that five more would do you any. You have tried waiting; and now I want you to try seeking, as the Bible bids you."

"I would seek the Lord; if I thought it was possible, with my present feelings."

"It is possible. I am confident you would not seek in vain. I know you are deceived. I know you are acting contrary to the commands of the gospel. I know you are putting your own wisdom in the place of God's wisdom, which calls you to seek the Lord, now, to-day. But you are waiting for conviction."

"Now I beg you to hear me, and treasure up what I say. I have several things to say to you. Will you hear me?"

"Most willingly, sir."

"Then, 1. Remember, that God never tells you to wait for convictions, or anything else. He tells you, 'Behold now is the accepted time, behold now is the day of salvation.'

"2. You have no occasion to wait for any deeper impressions. In my opinion, you do not need them. You have impressions deep enough. How deep impressions does a sinner need? What does he need to know and feel, in order to be prepared to come to Christ? I will tell you: he needs to know, that he is a sinner—that he cannot save himself—that he needs Christ to save him. That is all—and you have all that, already.

"3. Deeper impressions never yet came by waiting for them, without prayer and without attempting to flee to Christ—and they never will.

"4. Your duty is to turn from sin and the world to Christ, at once, to-day.

"5. If, after all, you do need any deeper impressions, I will tell you how you may get them, and you will get them in no other way: you will get them just when you aim to do as God bids you, to repent, to flee to Christ, to give God your heart. At present you are excusing yourself from all this, by the false notion, that you have not impressions enough to be able to do so. You do not, this moment, feel condemned for neglecting the great salvation; because you think you cannot attain it till you have deeper convictions. This is your excuse. And it is all a deception, in my opinion. But if you do need more deep convictions, you will get them when you aim to come to Christ. Then you will find you have no heart to do it, no will to do it, no readiness to deny yourself, and renounce the world, and then you will begin to see what an undone and helpless sinner you are, and how much you have need to pray for God's help, as you are not doing now. This is the way to gain deeper impressions, if you need them,—and the only way. Five years more of waiting, or fifty years, will not give them to you.—This is all I have to say."

"Are you unwilling to have me speak to you about it?"

No answer.

"Perhaps this time is not agreeable to you. Would you prefer to have me call at some other time?"

No answer.

"My dear girl," said I earnestly; "I did not come here to embarrass you, or annoy you in any manner. I love you, and wish to do you good. But if you prefer it, I will leave you, at once. I will not intrude myself upon you, or intrude upon your attention a subject, to which you do not wish to lend your mind."

"Why sir," said she, "I am glad to see you."

"Why, then, will you not talk with me?"

"Indeed, sir, I do not know what to say."

"Pardon me, my dear girl; I do not wish to embarrass you, or blame you; but certainly you could answer me some of the questions I have asked. And now allow me to ask you again; do you think much on the subject of religion? or have you any concern about it?"

She made me no answer.—After a painful, but brief pause, I continued:—

"I beg you to speak to me. Say anything you think or feel. I assure you I have no feelings towards you, but those of kindness and respect. I will treat you politely and kindly. But, my child, your silence embarrasses me. I am afraid to say another word, lest I should hurt your feelings. You might deem another question an impertinence."

"You may ask me," said she, with a forced smile.

"Then," said I, "are you giving any serious or prayerful attention to religion?"

"No, sir, not at present."

"I thank you for the answer. But let me ask; do you not think that you ought to attend to it, earnestly, and prayerfully, and without delay?"

She did not answer, but appeared quite confused. The blood mounted to her cheeks. I pitied her.

"Believe me," said I, "I do not mean to confuse you; but why do you not speak to me, and tell me your feelings plainly and freely? And I will hold all that you say, as confidential as you please to make it."

"Well, sir, I will. But I know you will not like it."

"No matter for that," said I.

"I do not wish to oppose you; but I do not think it would do any good for me to attend to religion, with my present feelings."

"Pray, what do you mean? I do not understand you."

"I mean," said she, "that I have no particular anxiety about religion; and I do not believe it would do any good for me to attend to religion, till I have some greater anxiety about it."

"And are you waiting for such an anxiety?"

"Certainly I am."

"Do you expect to get it by waiting? Do you think it will ever come to you?"

"I do not know, indeed," said she, very sadly. "I used to hope so; but I have waited for it a long time."

"Does the Bible tell you to wait for it?"

"I do not know, as it tells me to wait. But it speaks of conviction, of broken and contrite hearts; and Christian people speak of awakenings, alarms, and distresses of mind, and influences of the Holy Spirit, with those who are led to religion. And you preach such things; as if these were the beginning. And if I have none of these, how can I begin to seek God?"

"Did you ever hear me preach, that one should wait for these?"

"Yes."

"No, never! my child."

"Yes I have, I am sure."

"Never, never! I preach nothing like it."

"I remember your text, sir; and you always preach the text: 'On thee do I wait all the day.'"

"Yes; and in that sermon I told you, that waiting on God was one thing, and waiting for God was quite another. The first was right, and the last was wrong. We wait on him by such things as prayer. Did I not tell you so?"

"Yes, sir; you did."

"And do you pray?"

"No."

"Then you do not obey my sermon, and wait on God."

"How can I, with no conviction?"

"How do you expect to get conviction!"

"I do not know."

"Do you know and feel, that you are a sinner against God, and not reconciled to him?"

"Yes, I do."

"Do you know, that you cannot save yourself, and need Jesus Christ to save you?"

"Yes, I know it;" (said she, with a very significant accent upon the word, know.)

"Then you have some conviction."

"You may call it conviction, if you will; but I have no deep impressions."

"And are you just waiting for such impressions, before you will do anything; and when they come, you mean to seek God?"

"Yes, sir."

"Then, you may wait forever!"

"Oh! I hope not!"

"Probably you will! Such deeper impressions seldom come, by waiting for them. How long have you been waiting for them already?"

"About five years, sir."

"And have you gained anything, in those five years—any deeper impressions?"

"I do not know as I have."

"Will you gain anything, by waiting five years more?"

"I am afraid not;" (said she, sadly.)

"And I am afraid not," said I "You may wait on, till you have just waited into the grave, and your waiting will do you no good!"

"What shall I do?"

"Seek ye the Lord while he may be found. Call ye upon him while he is near."

"What! with my present impressions?"

"Yes; with just your present impressions."

"I do not believe, it will do any good."