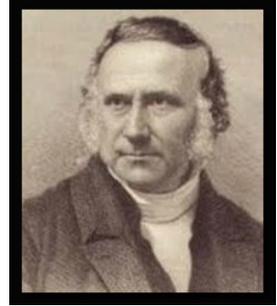


## *Bad Advice*



A few weeks after this, I had a similar request from another young man, whom, also, I had often seen, and with whom I had many times conversed about his salvation. We were leaving the church, at the close of the evening service, when he met me at the door, and said to me, that if I was willing, he would go home with me. He seemed to be under just and deep conviction, as a sinner; and more so, when I had conversed with him in the former part of the same day, than I had ever seen him before. I knew it was not in my power to teach him any important truth, which I had not already taught him; and I feared, that anything which I could say to him would diminish, instead of increasing the impressions which the Holy Spirit was making upon his mind. I wished him to realize, that his help must come from God. I recollected the case of the other young man. He appeared just like him, when he made the same request. I have never known two persons more alike. Consequently I refused his request. He entreated; but I would not yield. I wished to treat him affectionately; but as he said he had no question to ask me and nothing new to tell me, I refused to allow his accompanying me home, and bade him good night. As he turned away, he seemed ready to sink; and I could not but hope, that he was about to give up all his attempts to save himself, and flee to the Saviour of sinners.

A few evenings afterwards he came to the meeting appointed for conversation, with a very altered look. I asked him;

“Do you think you have made any progress, since I saw you, in seeking the Lord?”

“No, I do not think I have.”

“Do you think you ever will?”

“Oh yes, I believe I shall.”

“When?”

“I don’t know when; but I am not discouraged. I mean to keep on.”

“Keep on in what?”

“In seeking religion.”

“Then you are keeping on now, without religion.”

“I suppose so.”

“Is that a good way to keep on? keeping on in impenitence, in enmity against God, in ‘trampling under foot the blood of Christ and doing despite to the Spirit of all grace?’ It seems to me, that you would do well to stop, and turn about, instead of keeping on towards perdition, any longer!”

“Why,” said he, “ought I to be discouraged?”

“Certainly; the sooner you are discouraged from ‘keeping on’ towards ruin, the better.”

“I am not much troubled about that.”

“So I perceive. But you were troubled, when I parted with you a few evenings since.”

“Yes, I was then, very much.”

“And what has altered your feelings? Is there not quite as much reason for your being troubled now?”

“I do not know, but there may be as much reason—but just after I left you and was going home, I met Mr.— and told him how I felt, just as I had told you; and he told me not to be discouraged, but to keep on, read the Bible and pray, and I should find peace of mind, by and by.”

“He told you wrong. He ought to have told you, to turn from sin to God instantly, embracing Christ in faith; not to keep on in your wicked rebellion, ‘according to your hard and impenitent heart, treasuring up wrath against the day of wrath.’ ‘To-day’—the word of God says, ‘today, if ye will hear his voice, harden not your heart.’ A ‘sinner is always hardening, when he is intentionally delaying; because he is sinning by disobedience, and sin always hardens. Your mind was relieved by what he told you?”

“Very much. I have felt more at peace since.”

“The peace of the wicked! peace in sin! peace, without Christ! peace, while there is no peace! peace, while exposed to eternal perdition!” He smiled at this; though I spake with the utmost solemnity; and I left him. I saw him many times afterwards; but he seemed to have turned his face towards the world. His attention to religion continued for a little while; but it was not long, before all appearances of seriousness had left him. He soon became one of the most stupid and indifferent sinners I have ever seen; and continued to be so, as long as I knew him. I have not

a doubt, that his interview with that man, (who was an excellent member of my church,) helped to dissipate his serious impressions. His heart seized upon an idea presented to him, and misinterpreted it, and wrought it into an excuse. The idea presented to him, beyond all question, was, the idea, that he ought not to despair in God, but keep on 'striving to enter in at the strait gate'—not to keep on, in his impenitence. But he took it as a sedative to his conscience. The directions of God's word are the only safe directions for inquiring sinners. The more accurately we see their hearts, the more appropriately we may bring scripture truths to bear upon them. In this perception of their state and this application of divine truth, consists the skill of anyone, who would guide them to Christ. There is no reason to believe, that the Holy Spirit ever leaves awakened sinners; only as they leave the truth of God, for some error, or some sin. Truth is the Spirit's instrumentality. 'Sanctify them through thy truth, thy word is truth.' We never should cease to cry to a sinner, 'flee, flee; till, safe within the city of refuge, he cannot be reached, by the sword of the avenger of blood.