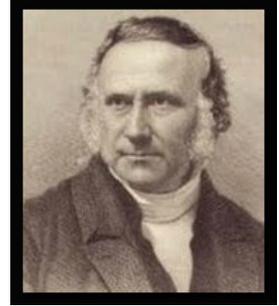


The Choice



Many months after the foregoing sketch was all written, together with the reflections I have made upon it as they are printed above, I had an opportunity for conversation with my persevering friend, and I made another attempt to learn, (as I had sometimes tried to learn before,) what it was that kept her in her unbelief for so long a time, in those dark days of her wearisome perseverance.

“You have asked me that,” said she, “more than once before, and I never could tell you. I have “often thought of it, but it always seemed mysterious to me. I believed the Spirit had led me, but I did not know how. But awhile ago, in one of my backslidings, I thought I found out something about it.”

“Well how was it?”

“I was in a cold state,” said she; “I had lost all the little light I ever had. I knew I had done wrong. I had too much neglected prayer, my heart had become worldly, and for a good many weeks I was in trouble and fear, for I know I had wandered far from God. Then I thought I felt just as I used to, before I had any hope, when I was coming to your house so much. And then I tried to recollect what I did to—come to the light at that time, so as to do the same thing now. But I couldn’t remember anything about it. However, while I was trying, one thing came to my mind which did me some good. You know your sermon that you preached just before I came to have any hope,—I don’t remember the text,—but it was about wandering sinners lost on the mountains.”

“No, indeed, madam, I have no recollection of it.”

“Well, I can’t tell you what it was; I can’t repeat it I may be I can tell enough to make you remember. I know you represented us in that sermon as lost sinners, lost in the woods, wandering over mountain after mountain, in dark and dangerous places among the rocks and precipices, not knowing where we were going. It grew darker and darker,—we were groping along, sometimes on the brink of a dreadful precipice, and didn’t know it. Then some of us began to fall down the steep mountains, and thought we should be dashed to pieces. (I know I thought so.) But we caught hold of the bushes to hold ourselves up by them;—some bushes would give way, and then we would catch others, and hold on till they gave way, broke, or tore up by the roots, and then we would catch others, and others. —Don’t you remember it, sir?”

“Partly. But go on.”

“Well, you said our friends were calling to us, as we hung by the bushes on the brink, and we called to one another, ‘hold on—hold on.’ Then, you said this cry, ‘hold on—hold on,’ might be a very natural one for anybody to make, if he should see a poor creature hanging over the edge of a precipice, clinging to a little bush with all his might,—if the man didn’t see anything else. But you said there was another thing, to be seen, which these ‘hold on’ people didn’t seem to know anything about. You said the Lord Jesus Christ was down at the bottom of the precipice, lifting up both hands to catch us, if we would consent to fall into his arms, and was crying out to us, ‘let go—let go—let go.’ Up above, all around where we were, you said they were crying out ‘hold on—hold on.’ Down below, you said, Jesus Christ kept crying out, ‘let go—let go;’ and if we only knew who he was, and would let go of the bushes of sin and self-righteousness, and fall into the arms of Christ, we should be saved. And you said we had better stop our noise, and listen, and hear his voice, and take his advice,—and ‘let go.’”

“Don’t you recollect that sermon, sir?”

“Yes, only you have preached it better than I did.”

“Well, when I remembered that sermon last spring, in my dark, back-slidden state, I tried to obey it. I ‘let go’ of everything, and trusted

myself to Christ; and in a little while, my heart was comforted,—my hope came back again. And afterwards, when I was wondering at it, I thought, perhaps it was just so when you preached that sermon a great while ago, when I was first led to have a hope of salvation. But I never thought of it before; I don't know how I found peace and hope the first time, if this was not the way. I suppose we have to make our choice whether to 'hold on' to something which can't save us, or 'let go,' and fall into the hands of the Lord."

The efforts of a legal spirit are directly the opposite of an evangelical faith. By nature every sinner resorts to the Law. It cannot save him. He must let go of that, and fall into the arms of Christ. Faith saves, and Jesus Christ is the sole object of faith.