

WHEN GEORGE MET GOD

AT thirteen years of age, George had a mind and will of his own. He would leave school no matter what his parents or others advised him to do. He had never liked school, and, because of his impediment of speech, had never been much of a scholar. Stutter as he might, he felt himself to be a man, and was determined to do a man's job; therefore he got busy and ere long was engaged to assist a local greengrocer in his home city.

A Moderate Drinker

It was great business in the boy's eyes to accompany his boss on the daily rounds, and when that same boss pulled up at a hotel to do business, and brought out a glass of "light shandy" to his boy assistant, George gulped it down and felt himself "a man indeed." As this continued, George, feeling pride in his manhood, called himself "a moderate drinker."

A Hard Drinker

Sad to say, long before George reached his late teens he found himself "a hard drinker," slowly but surely falling into the slavery of a sinful habit. In his own words, as he confessed, "Drink

had become a necessity in my life and was so for years. I found myself drinking seven days a week."

Yes, and more than drink had now gripped the manhood of George. Gambling had laid its stranglehold upon his soul, and nearly every Saturday found him on the racecourse or the dog course, trying for "the big win," which never came his way.

The sweet girl, whom he had married in his young manhood, set her heart on changing his habits; but she found, like his parents, that George had a mind and will of his own, and he would not bend even to the beseechings of tender, human love.

"No Fear of God Before His Eyes"

Grim years of depression swept over the land, but George would not change his course, not even for the pleadings of the mother of his six children. He was now thirty-eight, an alcoholic, with a passion for gambling and money making, and "No fear of God before his eyes." Speak to him of God, and he would reply: "Oh, I believe in God, but what do I want Him for? I have my club; my pals; my drink; my gambling and my gay parties. What do I want Him for?"

A Brave Man

Yet, in infinite mercy, the Almighty God did not leave George to his own ruinous ways and wretched end. Towards the end of 1951, while working as a van salesman, the merciful God brought a godly man, Les Wilks, across George's godless pathway. He was a brave man who, in spite of rebuffs and resentments, insults and sneers, told George that he stood in need of a personal Saviour, even the Son of God, Jesus Christ.

An R.S.L. Meeting

Les Wilks invited George to attend an R.S.L. meeting, along with himself, and thinking of a good time, with plenty of drink, George accepted. Imagine his disgust to find himself in a Men's Meeting at a certain church building in his home city. When George challenged his friend for calling it an "R.S.L." meeting, the latter replied: "Yes, that is true. It is the 'Returned Sinners' League.'" George's only comment was: "While I wished I could be like those men, the Devil's vice-like grip was too strong upon me."

Smitten with Dread Disease

Soon after the above, George's little three-year-old son (in whom his heart was wrapped up) was smitten with the dread disease of Polio. The laddie was rushed to hospital, with seemingly little hope of recovery. Thus, one black Sunday, George departed from the hospital and entered his own home, feeling a heart-broken and defeated man. But again, God had a man to meet the man who was fighting against himself and his God. George's eldest daughter had a boy friend, who was an earnest Christian, and he happened to be in the home that day. Seeing the



GEORGE JONES AND HIS FAMILY

pitiful plight of George in prospect of his little lad's death, he made this suggestion: "Why not let us pray for the boy?"

"Would You Pray?"

Something tingled up and down the spine of heart-broken George, as he turned and said: "Would you pray for my little laddie, as I cannot pray?" The young man prayed and, in a few days' time, George was himself praying and pleading with tears that the great God would help him in his hour of greatest need, and spare

his son. Also he made promises to God that if He would spare his boy, George would change his whole mode of living. His heart had been rebellious to God, with such charges as, "If He is a God of love, why should my innocent three-year-old laddie be stricken with this dreadful disease?" But now his rebellion was reduced to prayers for pity and pardon. How did God deal with George? Mercifully and graciously. After many months the little lad was restored to full health and strength. How did George respond to God's mercy?

"A Voice Kept on Asking"

Like many another, when the need was met and the boy restored, prayer ceased. Gratitude was forgotten, old habits returned; drinking and gambling became the order of the day once more. Nevertheless, a Voice kept on asking George, "When are you going to pay the debt of your promises to God?" Vainly George tried to drown that Voice. He must do something about it. Well, he would turn over a new leaf and prove to God from the power of his own mighty manhood how he, George, could keep his own promises.

Five Months of Desperate Effort

Then followed five months of desperate effort on George's part to pay the debt of his promises to God. "Oh, how hard I tried," he tells us, "to lead a good life! But as a man trying to lift up himself by his shoelaces, I was hopeless." Ah! George was being brought down to the dust by a revelation of his own helplessness to save his own soul from the stranglehold slavery of sin.

A Christian Convention

In the midst of the hopeless struggle, about April, 1952, George was invited to a Christian Convention, where an old-time Methodist minister, Walter Betts, was the preacher. As George looked around the Hall on that Thursday night, he felt an inward conviction that most of the happy people in the congregation had something he didn't have. He was impressed, and attended again on the Friday night. However, that seemed enough for his liking, and Saturday night found him in the vestibule of his club, waiting for a lift in a car to the place where he intended to spend the night in drinking and revelry; but suddenly an Open Air Gospel Meeting commenced at the opposite corner. George felt drawn to walk over and listen, and yet he fought against

the desire until he heard a loud voice raised in denunciation of the Gospel, and in the contention that there was no God.

Arguing for God

Swiftly George moved across and entered into the conflict, arguing that there was a God. Finally, George challenged his opponent to accompany him to the Convention Hall, trying (as he afterwards confessed) to help the man and still sensing his own need. They listened to the Missioner and left the Hall still in uncertainty. Sunday morning found George and his new-found friend (Jack) at a local Baptist Church. Their hungry hearts were crying out for "The Bread of God." On Monday night George decided he would take Jack up to the Convention Hall to have a talk with the Missioner because he knew the man needed Christ.

"Oh, I'm O.K.!"

The Missioner spoke to Jack and then, turning to George, said, "And how about yourself? Have you accepted Christ?" Fighting hard to hold his assumed place of presumed faith, he retorted: "Oh, I'm O.K.!" That lie brought conviction of sin home to his heart, and, with tears streaming from his eyes, he fell to his knees and began to plead with the Saviour for forgiveness, salvation, and cleansing from sin. He arose from his knees knowing in his heart that the Lord had answered, and he was a new creature in Christ Jesus.

Did it Work?

George had repented of sin, received Christ as his living Saviour, and was cleansed in His Blood, being forgiven his sins. So he felt in his soul. But did it work? The drink desire was marvellously defeated. The gambling lust departed with the drink. A new longing to be a true husband and father sprang up within him, and also a yearning to witness for his Lord and Saviour. However, he stuttered badly. How could he speak? He prayed for help, and the Lord heard him and healed his impediment of speech, so that he was enabled to testify to Christ with a measure of fluency.

Five weeks after his conversion, a devoted minister of Christ, A. H. Betteridge, visited George's wife and spoke to her about her soul. "Oh, I am a Christian!" she protested. "I don't smoke, I don't drink, I don't swear."

Mr. Betteridge reminded her that God's Word said, "All have sinned and come short of the glory of God." Slowly the Light of Truth dawned upon her heart and she realised that it was "Not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to His mercy He saved us"; and George's wife came to her knees and opened her heart to Christ as her own personal Saviour.

"Does it Work?" You Ask

After seven years George's home has been transformed; his six children have professed salvation in Christ, and he and his wife are constantly witnessing to the world, by all ways and means, to the worth of their Saviour. George has travelled far and wide telling the "good news" of Salvation in Christ, and numbers of souls have been pointed to Christ by his witness. So George, the alcoholic, who thought he could do without God, has "in Christ" become an advocate for God's salvation to multitudes of other men. George, the gambler, has become a giver of "Good Tidings" to the world, even "the Good Tidings" of the Gospel of Christ, which he has proven, and is proving, as "the power of God unto Salvation to everyone that believeth."

George, the swearer and loose talker, now looks up to Heaven with a new song in his mouth, saying, "After seven years in Christ, I can say, 'It works! Praise God, it works!'" Try it yourself, my reading friend, confess yourself a sinner in the sight of God, accept Christ into your heart as your personal Saviour; and then witness, as George, to God's Glory: "It works! Praise God, it works!"

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Who will be delighted to receive a letter from you and to help with a word of counsel.