



He being dead yet speaketh

Preached at Bethesda Chapel, Great George Street, Bristol in memory of the late George Müller, by James Wright (his son-in-law)

Hebrews xi. 4

The general truth contained in these words is that a man's voice, which means the influence of his life for good or evil, for God or against God, does not cease when the spirit leaves the body. Abel's voice did not cease when the club of his brother dismissed his spirit; that voice has been sounding down through the ages, and it sounds today; and if we interpret that voice in the light of scripture, it is just this, "Without shedding of blood is no remission". That was a voice for God and for God's truth. It has never ceased. That voice meets today with a sympathetic audience. I believe and trust the majority of those in this place have sympathy with the testimony of Abel's voice, that is, with the truth to which his life and worship were a testimony, that "Without shedding of blood is no remission". The sacrifice which Abel brought signified a life resigned instead of a forfeited life; in other words, it is a vivid picture of the sacrifice of our adorable Lord Jesus on Calvary. Cain's voice, the influence of his life and of his actions did not cease when he died; his voice has come down through the ages, and, alas! it finds sympathetic hearers, for there are too many in these days who glory in a bloodless way of approach to God, and that because they do not recognise their sin, and therefore deny the necessity of a sin-offering.

Beloved friends, what is the trend of your life? What is the present influence of your life? O let me affectionately press that question on every heart. Is it for God, or against God? Is it for God's truth, or against God's truth? Whichever it may be, the influence of your life, your voice, will go on; it will not cease. If now that influence is against God and against His truth, and repentance is not granted unto you unto life, your influence, your voice, will run on the line of Cain's. If, on the other hand, you are today rejoicing in God's revealed way of approach to Him, glorifying in a crucified Christ, standing before God in the righteousness of another, not your own, and "looking for the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ unto eternal life", then your voice, when you are gone, will go on in blessing for God.

I want to apply the general principle here to a particular case tonight. The unusual numbers assembled have one thought pressing on their hearts, that the world has become poorer this week through the departure of one of God's righteous ones. But, "He being dead, yet speaketh", the influence of his life has not ceased, blessed be God, and will not cease. David said of Abner after his death, "Know ye not that there is a prince and a great man fallen this day in Israel?". Beloved friends, George Müller was one whom God had beautified with His salvation, not one beautiful in himself. He tells the unvarnished tale of his childhood and youth in his Narrative, and we learn from that that he was not beautiful even morally. But God beautified him with His salvation. "He will beautify the meek with salvation" (Psa cxlix. 4). There came an hour when that proud, stout-hearted man cowed before God, when he first saw a little company of believers on their knees, and he came out of that room happier than he ever had been. He had not known happiness up to that moment. And when was that? When he bowed before God, when he lay in the dust, when he became *meek*. Meekness does not mean softness. Moses was not a soft man, but he was the meekest man on earth. Why? Because he was subject to the One to whom it is the highest honour to be subject - the Creator, the only Being to whom it is reasonable to be absolutely subject, the God of the whole earth. And this meek man God beautified with His salvation, and by His gentleness made him great. David says: "Thy gentleness hath made me great". George Müller's verdict was the same; it was the gentleness of the blessed God that made him so great spiritually. That gentleness of God, by degrees, marvellously reflected itself in his character. I, who

watched him from day to day, just exulted as I admired the increasing reflection of it in his whole life. That man of iron will could be moved by the touch of a child. He was like God. Why? Because he communed so much with God. You cannot look into the face of God without reflecting a little bit at least of that Blessed One. Many here will remember an expression he was so fond of using when referring to the character of God. "My friends," he would say, "God is a most lovely Being. Have you found God to be a most lovely Being?" That was his thought of God, that was what the Holy Spirit revealed to him, and that made *him* to our eyes (not to his own) so lovely.

Now, I say his voice has not ceased; "He being dead, yet speaketh", and I want tonight, just for a little while, to consider the chief outstanding points of his witness for God, especially in his ministry.

One truth of God which sank deeply into his spiritual convictions was *the complete ruin of man naturally*. His own early history perhaps deepened this, but I have rarely heard anyone who spoke more disparagingly of man's nature; he literally *loathed* what he was in the flesh, "A vile, guilty, hell-deserving sinner". When dealing with inquirers, as I have had the privilege of overhearing him many times, his first question would be, "Have you seen yourself to be a poor, guilty, hell-deserving sinner?" He had no hope of lifting up a soul into the sunshine of God's grace till he found that soul willing to lie in the dust of self-abnegation. Now, was that the narrow-minded prejudice of a good man? No, it was the very truth of God. What does the Word of God say? "Born in sin and shapen in iniquity" (Psa. Li. 5). "That is the Old Testament", you say. But when we come to the New Testament what do we find? "As by one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin; and so death passed upon all men, for that *all* have sinned" (Rom. V. 12), *ie* sinned in their federal head. It is a world-wide verdict: "The Scripture hath concluded *all* under sin" (Gal. iii. 22).

Then he always made prominent in his teaching the fact that this evil bias of the nature of man in the flesh, showed itself as soon as it possibly could in *practice*. That sinful man, by descent, proved himself to be a sinner by *act*. Was that a pessimistic view? No! It was simply meekness, the submission of a humanly great mind to a Creator - to the mind of Deity. Is that unreasonable? What does God say? "All we like sheep have gone astray, we have turned every one to his own way" - an infinite variety of ways, but every one a sinful way. Hence the necessity of a vicarious sacrifice to meet that need, for it follows in close succession; "And the Lord hath laid on Him the iniquity of us all" (Isaiah liii. 6).

Beloved friends, this two-fold confession makes the complete bleat of the sheep of Christ. They have a characteristic bleat, and the first feature of it is, "All we like sheep have gone astray", and the believing sinner, focussing the truth of God on himself, says, "*I* have gone astray". Then to make the complete bleat you must have the second confession, "The Lord hath laid on Him the iniquity of us all". There is the recognition of the atoning sacrifice accepted by God, the substance of Abel's shadow. And there is at once peace with God, because of harmony with God, fellowship with God, delight in the same Person in whom He delights, and never did the infinite mind of the Father more delight in the Son than when He hung as the Surety on the Cross, with the cloud of darkness between His own soul and the Father's face, compelling that mysterious cry, "My God, My God, why has Thou forsaken Me?" No possible explanation can be given of that fact, than that He hung there, "Made sin for us, who knew no sin," that we believing in Him, trusting in Him, might be "made the righteousness of God in Him".

In the utter moral ruin of man, as a revealed fact, and in the redemption of ruined man (in the case of all who accept God's way of salvation, and believe in His beloved Son) by the atoning blood of the Surety, we have two of the outstanding items of revealed truth which were prominent in the ministry,

and the consistent ministry for seventy years, of this honoured servant of Christ. All who have been accustomed to listen to it will know the prominence he gave to these truths.

Why do I dwell on this? Do these truths acquire an atom more authority because held by such an one? Not a bit. But this is the point; look at the great outstanding truths he held, and then connect them with his *life*, because there is the closest connection between the doctrinal truth held and the outcome of the life. It is the custom to speak of George Müller the philanthropist, but it is very rare to see in the magazines and literature of the day any tracing of the connection between his unique character and works and his child-like faith in the verities of God's written revelation. That character was moulded, and those works followed, and were the outcome of his *faith*. He would never have been what he was, and would never have done what he did, if he had not *believed* as he did. His faith was of just the same type as that of the Apostle Paul, who "Believed *all* things which are written in the law and in the prophets". Paul, the apostle, never picked and chose amidst the God-breathed words; he believed all and every statement in the inspired writings, and so did George Müller.

Another very outstanding point in his doctrinal views and teaching was the great truth of *justification by faith alone*. That truth is taught in many passages of Scripture, eg, as the summing up of a long argument the Apostle says: "Therefore we conclude that a man is justified by faith without the deeds of the law" (Romans iii.28), and George Müller "concluded" and held firmly by that: "By the works of the law shall no flesh be justified" (Galatians ii.16). He held firmly that any attempt to build up a righteousness by law-keeping ended in complete dissatisfaction and wreck, so that "by the deeds of the law there shall no flesh be justified in His sight; for by the law is the knowledge of sin" (Rom. lii.20); and the great object of the Divine Law-Giver was to make that fact patent, and to show the necessity of His own provision for redemption - justification by faith alone, that is, counting the sinner righteous when he trusts in another. When the believing sinner lies down under the verdict of God as lost, ruined, and undone, and trusts in the perfect work of the Lord Jesus Christ for salvation, then his is the blessedness described in Psalm xxxii. "Blessed are they whose iniquities are forgiven, and whose sins are covered; blessed is the man to whom the Lord will not impute sin" (Rom. iv.708); where the Apostle says that, in these words, "David describeth the blessedness of the man unto whom God imputeth righteousness without works". But is there in Psalm xxxii anything about the imputation of righteousness? Not a word. So you see the argument of the Apostle is to this effect, that where the Lord does not impute iniquity He does impute righteousness. The whole current of the argument deals with the non-imputation of iniquity, plainly showing that where sin is not imputed through faith in the atoning Surety, the righteousness of that Surety *is* imputed, and thus the believing sinner may cry with joy and exultation:

*"Jesus, Thy blood and righteousness
My beauty are, my glorious dress"*

Another great outstanding truth, and closely connected with the other, that George Müller firmly believed as taught in Scripture, and delighted in, was the great truth of *sanctification* - sanctification wrought *for* the believer by the blood of Christ, and sanctification wrought *in* the believer by the Holy Ghost.

Now, to show again that this was no vain dream or opinion of his own I just refer to two passages. Many might be quoted, but to save time I only refer to two (Hebrews xiii, 12): "Wherefore Jesus also, that He might sanctify the people with His own blood", that is *separate* the people unto God, "suffered without the gate". Every guilty sinner who recognises the infinite preciousness of that atoning sacrifice

as securing the forgiveness of sin is called to recognise another blessing, the *setting apart* of the forgiven one for God by the blood of the atoning Surety. Not only sin blotted out, not only the righteousness of the Surety imputed to him, but the saved and righteous one *set apart* by that blood for God. There was a type of that in the consecration of the priests of the Levitical economy, part of the function being the putting of the blood on the right ear, the thumb of the right hand, and the great toe of the right foot of the candidate for that priesthood, who by that blood was *sanctified*, set apart. So Jesus, through His perfect work, entirely, perfectly sanctifies in the sense of setting apart for God the moment we rest in Christ.

Then comes the other aspect of sanctification, that is, the actual approximation to the pattern of Christ's life, and this is the result of the work of the Holy Ghost. The sinner is not saved by this work of the Holy Spirit *within* him, for the Holy Spirit, we are distinctly told in Galatians iv. 6, is sent into our hearts, "*because ye are sons*". No man has the Spirit *in* him till he is a son of God. But *how* do we become sons of God? (John i.12). "As many as received Him (Jesus) to them gave He power (or the right or privilege) to become the sons of God". Who become the sons of God? Those who have *received* Him. What is it to "receive" Christ? "even to them that *believe* on His Name"/ those who are resting on His death for salvation, they are born again, born them, for it goes on, "which were born", not of natural descent, "not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God". When? When they receive Christ. So we are not regenerated by any external ceremony or sacrament or operation upon the flesh. Circumcision with the Jews introduced the subject of it into a national condition of blessing on earth; but regeneration, which introduces it into the heavenly family, is not by anything done on the flesh, or anything put into the mouth, but that great fact, that central act of grace which takes place when the poor, guilty sinner acknowledges his sin and embraces Christ for salvation. When he received Christ by faith he is born again. Then he is a son, of course he is; the one who is born of anyone is his son. The sons of God are *really* sons of God; it is not a mere name or title given by courtesy, it is a *reality*. We are sons of God by birth just as much as we are the sons of an earthly parent by birth. Now, because we are sons, sons *born*, God sends His Spirit into our hearts, so that the whole process of sanctification takes place after this; not one atom of it can commence till the Spirit is sent into our hearts, and He is not sent into our hearts till we believe.

So there is a sanctification *for* believers by the blood of Christ, and a sanctification wrought out *in* believers by the Holy Ghost. It was this double aspect of sanctification which George Müller held and taught consistently for the whole term of his ministry. This explains that oft-mistaken passage in Philippians ii: "Work out your own salvation with fear and trembling". You don't work *for* salvation, but you work it *out*, as the Holy Ghost within produces a life corresponding with the faith that unites to Christ.

Another truth that became, soon after his conversion, exceedingly dear to the heart of George Müller was that of the *second personal appearing* of "the great God and our Saviour Jesus Christ". He has often told us how the acceptance of that truth as a revealed truth of God's Word gave a remarkable impulse to his zeal and effort in missionary labour. He believed that the Lord Jesus will come again personally in the clouds of heaven as He went into heaven, and that that event will close the present dispensation; that this same Jesus, which is taken up from you into heaven, shall so come in like manner as ye have seen Him go into Heaven" (Acts i. 11). Mr Müller received this with the simplicity of a child, and his soul woke up to the joy of the thought that the hope of the Church is the personal coming of our Lord and Saviour. Death is not the hope of the believer. Death is, as the apostle says, "far better", better by far than life here, because it introduces the redeemed spirit into the immediate presence of God,

better by far, because it involved complete deliverance from temptation to sin, and introduces the soul into an innumerable fellowship of redeemed spirits, and because it is one stage further in the development of God's purposes, it is far better. But it is not the *best*; no, the best is the coming again of the Lord Jesus, and when He comes, with a might shout similar to (only on a mightier scale) which He called Lazarus forth, He will call up from the grave every believer, and instantly they will receive glorified bodies, and any who are alive on earth at that moment will be "caught up", changed and clothed with glorious bodies, both meeting in the air.

Dear Mr. Müller did not believe in what is called "the Secret Rapture", but he never made it a matter of unprofitable controversy. He believed that Scripture declared that certain events will take place first, and that these events are to be watched for by the believer. These events stand in relation to the advent of the Lord as the semaphore stands to the incoming train. You go down to the station to meet a beloved friend, whom you know is coming by a particular train, and while waiting you watch the signals. As long as the semaphore stands at right angles you know the train has not passed the last station, but presently the arm of the semaphore dips, and soon the train rushes into the station. What were you *waiting* for? The dropping of the semaphore? No, for your friend; but you delight to watch for the signals, because they show that your friend is so near.

The great outstanding fact to which he gave prominence in his ministry was that the One whom we have not seen and yet love, and believing rejoice in with joy unspeakable, will come again *personally* and part asunder the clouds and fill our hearts with joy. He had no time to take part in the controversy about the particular circumstances or attendant details; it was the great outstanding fact of His return that absorbed his thoughts. And let me press this thought, that looking for intervening events does not lessen the *power* of the hope in the least. Peter says: "We ... look for new heavens and a new earth". He knew that the millennium must run its course of a thousand years' blessedness, and then the final conflict between Satan and God must take place first, yet he says: "We *look* for new heavens and a new earth". The moral power of the hope of the coming of the new heavens and new earth was not lessened by those events intervening. Who shall say that the expectation of a few little events on the earth, the uprising of the antichrist, and a fierce tribulation, lessen the moral power of the hope of the coming of Christ? Not in the least; they point to the nearness of it, and we wait on the tiptoe of expectation as we see these signs gradually unfold.

I have spoken of the work of the Lord Jesus yesterday on the Cross, and I have spoken of the blessed hope of His return tomorrow morning. But, dear friends, dear Mr Müller never lost sight of Him as *the present ever-living High Priest* before the Father.

Now, that was just the hinge of his life. The Orphan Houses grew out of that. Where is Jesus now? "Christ is not entered into the holy places made with hands, which are the figures of the true, but into heaven itself, now to appear in the presence of God for us"; that is, as the Great High Priest and Advocate; and you remember the promise connected with this truth: "Greater works than these shall ye do"; you poor, weak things in yourselves, greater works shall ye do than He did before the Cross. Why? "Because I go unto My Father, and whatsoever ye shall *ask in My Name* that will I do, that the Father may be glorified in the Son" (John xiv, 12, 13). In other words, the *present position* of the Lord Jesus as the High Priest of His people gives such mighty power to all prayer. Every believer stands before God with the whole value of the work of the blessed Christ attaching to him, and therefore when that dear child of God, that believer in His dear Son, comes to the throne of grace, and with his eye on the High Priest proffers petitions according to the mind of God as revealed in the Word, then

in the moving words of the Apostle John: “This is the confidence we have in Him, that if we ask anything according to His will, He heareth us” (1 John v. 14).

Mr. Müller just received that truth like a little child, but he held it with the grasp of a giant. It was that which made him such a man of prayer. He believed that, through the merits of the High Priest, God the Father was willing to give answers to the prayers of the weakest of His children. O how he delighted in saying, “Not only to poor George Müller, but to the weakest of His children who looks at that High Priest, He is delighted to bless His children for His sake”. So, whenever he came to God, it was with a deep consciousness of his unworthiness, and often when we were on our knees together, to hear his confessions of his utter unworthiness, you would have thought it was some vile, hardened sinner, so utterly disclaiming all merit in himself, but laying hold with such delight of the claim he had on God because linked to His son. He used to say, “I am the darling of my God and Father”. Well, the darling of his father need not be afraid to ask for anything, and the darling of God need not be afraid to ask Him for anything. But why was he the darling of the Father? Because he was in Christ, and the beauty of Christ was on him. So he just went on asking, and if the answer did not come, he did not take it to mean a refusal, but he asked the more. And if it were yet delayed, what was his petition? “Lord, suffer not our faith to fail; if thou art withholding the answer to try our little faith, do not let our faith fail”. That was how that happy child used to talk to his Father in my presence. And I say again, his strong apprehension of the Lord Jesus as the Great High Priest in the present of God was the very hinge of his happy Christian life.

But now I come to what was the basis of all this. How did he know that he was a sinner? How did he know that he came into this world as a sinner? How did he know that he was a sinner under condemnation and deserving the righteous judgment of God and eternal banishment from His presence? How did he know that through believing Christ he received the remission of his sins? How did he know that through believing Christ he was robed in the perfect righteousness of the Son of God upon him? How did he know that through the precious blood of the Cross sanctification was wrought out? How did he know that when he believed he became a son, and God sent His Spirit into his heart? How did he know that the Lord Jesus was the Great High Priest interceding in the presence of the Father? How did he know He was coming in the clouds of heaven?

He knew all these things because “God who at sundry times, and in divers manners, spake in time past unto the fathers by the prophets, hath in these last days spoken unto us in His Son” (Heb, i, 1,2). The Scriptures are all “God-breathed”, and are the written revelation of His mind and will, the communication He has been pleased to make to the poor, fallen race of man. The transition from oral teaching to a written revelation, so far from stumbling George Müller, filled him with delight. He saw in the 1st epistle of John the words, “I write”, “I write”, “I have written”, he understood that these were the words of the last apostle, and that oral testimony would cease with him, and that John was attracting the attention of Christians to the written Word. He delighted when he opened the Book of Revelation and read, “He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the Churches”. How did the Spirit say it? John was in Patmos. What did he do? He wrote on parchments, and sent these seven parchments, one to each of the seven Churches, and when these parchments were read in the congregation there assembled every ear heard the *Spirit speaking*. The epistles of John mark, to every spiritual mind, the transition from oral teaching to the written revelation, and stamp the written revelation, every word of it, with the same Divine authority that clothed the spoken words of the Son of God and the spoken words of His apostles. There is not one tittle of difference between the authority of the words that fell from the lips of the Son of God and the inspired words that fell from

the lips of His apostles. They spoke by the same Spirit. The Lord Jesus spoke nothing of His own accord. "Whatsoever I speak, therefore, even as the Father said unto Me, so I speak." He spoke by the Spirit that dwelt without measure in Him. So did the apostles; they spoke as inspired servants - everything they wrote was inspired. But that inspiration has not been transmitted; there is no such inspiration now. People talk in a loose way about "inspired language". There is no such thing. I may speak by the direction and aid of the Holy Spirit so as to refresh the souls of my fellow-believers. I may, if God choose to use such an unworthy instrument, speak so as to be instrumental in the conversion of souls, but that does not make me inspired - it does not make me the means of communicating *fresh truth to the Church*. The canon of inspiration is complete.

Now, the plenary, verbal inspiration of the Scriptures was the basis of George Müller's faith. He took every word between the covers of this Book and believed it. He "reasoned OUT OF the Scriptures", not *about* them. Where did you ever find Paul reasoning *about* the Scriptures, discussing whether this or that verse was inspired? No, he took every bit of the Scriptures as *God-breathed*. "All Scripture," said he, "is given by inspiration", or "God-breathed". That being the basis, you see that Mr. Müller had a rock for his faith. "Faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the Word of God" (Rom. X. 17), and therefore his faith did not fluctuate - he had unswerving faith in the written Word of God. And therefore, dear friends, there was in him no such variation of experience as is met with so often in believers. Why, it is the habit of some believers to regard a faith that is up and down, and mixed with dark experiences, as something extremely superior, spiritually. He did not think so; he never wavered from a simple acceptance of forgiveness - he knew he was a forgiven sinner on his way to God - and was as certain he should be in the present of God as that he was sitting on his chair. He counted the minutest wavering in that certainty as *sin* against God. No sin is so gross as unbelief, and if God says I am a forgiven sinner it is black unbelief, and an awful sin, to have a doubt about it - that is, to *harbour* any doubts. They may be injected into the mind, but God has given us the shield of faith. What for? To hold up and repel the fiery darts of the wicked one as they come. Such faith is not anything prodigious! Not any *wonderful* attainment - it is child-like simplicity, believing that God *means* what He says in His Word, and just taking Him at His word. As dear Mr. Chapman says, "Such believers in God ought to be as plentiful as blackberries".

I should have said that Mr. Müller was a great lover of the Scriptures. He often said, "I am a lover of the Word of God", and he had read it from cover to cover several hundreds of times. All his spare time he went on reading it, seven or eight chapters a day being his usual portion. He was always reading the Word of God, and the more he read it the more he loved it. When he got to the end of Malachi he would turn back again to Genesis, and when he got to the end of Revelation, he would go back to Matthew. That was his way of reading it, for he regarded the Old and New Testaments as two letters from his Heavenly Father, and it was this continual, constant reading of the Word that laid the foundations of his faith.

Of, dear friends, do let the example of this beloved departed one be just a stimulus to us to follow him in his simple, child-like faith. "He being dead, yet speaketh." I feel immeasurably poorer since Thursday morning, but it is an immense joy to think that the accents of that voice will come back again, and again, and again, and the many truths he has taught me, not simply by his actual teaching, but by his simple, incidental actions. He would often come into my room when a letter brought joyful tidings - not when it was sorrowful, but when something came that would make us both glad, he would come in. And then, just as simply as if he were addressing a third invisible person in the room, he would say, "Oh, Father, we thank Thee for this!" The presence of God was a great deal more real to him than my

presence, and therefore it was most natural for him to turn from me to Him. That was his child-like faith, and that is what we want.

Now, God grant that his example may lead us earnestly to pray that this grace of simple, child-like faith may be ours!

The logo for Müllers is written in a large, black, cursive script. The letters are fluid and connected, with a prominent 'M' at the beginning and a 's' at the end.

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Tel: 0117 924 5001 Email: admin@mullers.org