

CHAPTER XVII.

JOY AND PEACE IN BELIEVING

As I set out of church on Sunday, the 1st August 1854, I took leave of my mother, cast a glance at my wife, who sat in a corner, and spoke to my brothers and sisters, who were playing in the yard. I met some Christian friends, who walked with me to church. It was Mr. Beynon's turn to preach that evening. He was not aware of my intention of going after the service to Mr. Taylor's house for shelter, with a view to receive baptism as matters had been finally settled only late the evening before. But it so happened that Mr. Beynon preached on the same parable, which had led me to decide only three or four days previously. I listened to the sermon most attentively, and it convinced me of the wisdom of the step I had taken. His last appeal was most impressive. Yet at the conclusion of the service, in spite of my firm resolution, which had been strengthened by the powerful discourse of the evening, I began to hesitate; the keeping away from home was so difficult. My Christian friends were waiting to accompany me on my way to my home, and the devil suggested that I might quietly go away with them. But the Lord was dealing with me mercifully, and was taking me as a brand out of the fire (Zech.iii.2). Mr. Taylor, who stood at the door, asked me, "Are you coming?" I immediately answered "Yes." This good man was like the angel who appeared to Peter in prison and bade him follow him. I accompanied Mr. Taylor to his bungalow. Then I felt as if the load of sin and sorrow that oppressed me had suddenly dropped off, and unspeakable joy filled my heart. I read and prayed, then lay on my bed a-thinking. I had put out the lamp, but still the room appeared to be full of light; and one like the Son of God, arrayed in glory, I thought came to me as to a friend, and as sense of perfect safety and peace possessed my soul. I felt refreshed and happy, as the weary wanderer who has been pinched with cold and hunger does when he finds rest and shelter in his home. Light and joy almost overwhelmed me, and I was lost in blessedness. The experience of this night was unique, and the memory of it will never die. The vision of God then given was a dim reflection of that which the children of God enjoy in heaven. I was indeed standing on Pisgah or the Mount of Transfiguration, or I was in the land of Beulah. "He brought me to the Banqueting-house, and His banner over me was love" (Song of Solomon, ii 4). I had several such visions in those days, but none so glorious as this. I have no copies of letters written to friends at this time, but I find an extract from one of them published in Mr. Spurgeon's "Feather for Arrows," which I may here transcribe: - "How I long for my bed- not that I may sleep, for I lie awake often and long- but to hold sweet communion with my God. What shall I render unto Him for all His revelations and gifts to me? Was there no historical evidence of the truths of Christianity, were there no well established miracles, still I should believe that the religion propagated by the fishermen of Galilee is divine. The holy joy it brings to me must be from heaven. Do I write boastingly, brother? Nay, it is with tears of humble gratitude that I tell of the goodness of the Lord."

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