

SAVED AT SEVENTY.



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HALF-PENNY.

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IN a miserable-looking house up one of the courts in the town of Brentford lived a poor old woman, who had reached the advanced age of ninety years. Everything around bore marks of a past generation, and was in keeping with the heart and age of the one who owned them. She was in every sense of the word a poor woman; but she was rich in faith, giving glory to God. A few articles of furniture, and an old stump bedstead in one corner of the room, comprised her all, but these were amply sufficient for one whose heart was set upon the things of God. She was careful for nothing, but in everything, by prayer and supplication, with thanksgiving, made known her requests unto God.

It was a singular place to discover a believer in the Lord Jesus Christ. I don't

know by what means exactly she was brought to a knowledge of Him as her Saviour; but there she was,—a whole-hearted believer in Him and His redeeming work! and what was still more singular, as I learned from her own lips, she had reached the age of seventy before she was converted. In a way peculiar to Himself, and according to the actings of His own sovereign grace, God had revealed Christ to this poor woman in her sin and ignorance—I say ignorance, for at the time of her conversion she was unable to read. As soon, however, as she knew what it was to have a purged conscience, and forgiveness of sins, her one desire was to learn to read, in order that she might see with her own eyes, “what the Spirit said about her Lord.” Closely and perseveringly did the convert of seventy pursue her task, and to the source from which her soul derived life, she went for knowledge, in order that that life might be strengthened; and her only lesson-book, and her only reading book too, for the remaining twenty years was the New Testament. Charmed with this newly-acquired treasure, her time was chiefly spent over its

pages, learning of Him who was meek and lowly in heart, and thus her soul found rest. As may be supposed, her heart and mind became stored with the inestimable and unsearchable riches of Christ; and with marvellous power, truly, did the word of God wean her thoughts and affection from things on the earth, and set them unwaveringly upon Christ on high, so that, miserable as the dwelling appeared, and small as was her weekly pittance, she was content with the things which she possessed. The world to her was indeed a wilderness, where Christ was not owned: she needed nothing to adorn or soften down what she so fully realized it to be a barren desert, a scene abounding with evil, through which she was passing as a pilgrim in company with God, who in His wisdom thought fit to withhold those things that might have drawn her eye aside from Himself. Who can conceive the depth and sweetness of communion that a child of God, in such circumstances, is privileged to enjoy, when the heart is thus set free from every tie?

God is a jealous God, and will not have His people's heart set upon perishable things,

nor occupied in the accumulation of "stuff," or He may allow the *thief* to deprive and the *fire* to destroy, in order to restore the wandering heart to Himself, that it might gather its happiness from a source that will not fail.

On the occasion of my visit, I found the poor old woman confined to her bed, her end evidently drawing near. It was a scene of triumph, death had lost its sting—the grave its victory: she was more than conqueror through Him that loved her. She had not believed in vain, and now, in the hour when most are in the gloom of uncertainty, racking doubts filling their hearts, the peace of God which passeth all understanding kept her calm, but rejoicing in hope. Her soul seemed absorbed with the preciousness of Christ as the Holy Ghost had revealed Him to her. The learning of twenty years was not calculated to leave her in darkness and doubt, but rather to yield its own divine fruit, which it did abundantly. There were several Christians in the room at the time, but no comfort or consolation was needed, she drew strength for herself in the energy of faith from the Lord Himself, and we could only

look on, and wonder and adore ; and very blessed were the lessons learned at the bedside of one who was about to have an abundant entrance into the presence of Him she loved.

What a marvellous manifestation of grace ! She had lived in the world a stranger to God for the space of seventy years—a life of sin, labour and sorrow, at that advanced age was brought to a knowledge of Christ, and the cleansing power of His precious blood ; and then for twenty years sat down and sought to “know him and the power of his resurrection.” And sweetly did she know Him too, and bore powerful testimony to the grace that saved her.

Whilst standing by her bedside, listening to *her* estimation of Christ, and the glory that lay on before, I interrupted her, and asked, “What is the world, with all its glory and all its wealth, to you in such a moment as this ?” I shall not soon forget the expression of her countenance, as she turned her large earnest eyes upon me for a moment in mute astonishment, then breaking silence, said “The world ! why, I’ve seen Jesus ! and ten thousand world’s wouldn’t purchase Him from my heart ! I’m going to be with Jesus, I shall be with

Him presently : bless His name ! Precious, precious Jesus." Happy old woman, thought I, the *Person of Christ* is everything to thee, with Him thou art blessed beyond measure ; in Him thou art enriched beyond all conception. What indeed, is the world, looked at from a death-bed, but as the flower of grass which a breath of wind may carry no one knows whither. Still less, yea, altogether worthless is it when seen in the light of the incomparable glories of a risen Christ, to believe in whom is *life eternal*,—in whose presence is fulness of joy, and at whose right hand are pleasures for evermore. How careless is man respecting these things. "But the *natural man* receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God : for they are foolishness unto him : neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned" (1 Cor. ii. 14). Man is toiling hard, rising early, sitting up late, and eating the bread of carefulness in his thirst for riches, and honour, and power, not knowing that they cannot minister to the positive need of his soul, and alas ! make him careless concerning the gift of God, which is everlasting life.

The old pilgrim continued a few months, and was then “with her Lord Jesus”—with Him whose blood had washed away the accumulated wickedness of seventy years, and made her whiter than snow, and meet to dwell with Himself in heaven.

Truly wondrous is the grace that works in ways, and places, and by means that are outside the thoughts of man. GRACE—the GOD OF GRACE is working in saving power, in every part of the world (the great scene of *death*, under the sway of Satan), penetrating the palace and the hovel; taking up the prince in his dignity, and the beggar in his rags; the young man in the bloom of years, and the poor hoary-headed sinner; the religious man going about to establish his own righteousness, and the bold infidel, the open and avowed enemy of God—yea, working in convincing and converting power among the sons of men, and cleansing them from their sins *in the precious blood of Christ*, for God is rich in mercy, and willing to save—and save to the uttermost—all who come unto Him by Christ. Jesus says, “All that the Father giveth me shall come to me: and him

that cometh to me I will in no wise cast out. For I came down from heaven, not to do mine own will but the will of him that sent me. And this is the Father's will which hath sent me, that of all which he hath given me I should lose nothing, but should raise it up again at the last day. And this is the will of him that sent me, that every one which seeth the Son and believeth on him, may have everlasting life: and I will raise him up at the last day." (John vi. 37—40.)

G. C.

