

Editor's Note: This article was taken from the GOSPEL AMBASSADOR; or Christian Pilgrim's Friend No. 2 FEBRUARY 1, 1847. Pages 25-30. It is a very moving account of the conversion of a soul under James Wells ministry. I go so far as to say a classic example of true salvation: God, the Holy Spirt first bring conviction of sin, then through the preaching of the word bringing forth the fruit of true salvation.

Countless numbers were converted under James Wells ministry. Countless more since his death and who know how many will be in the future. All to the glory to God!

THE SOUND OF THE TRUMPET AND THE ALARM OF WAR.

"Thou hast heard, O my soul, the sound of the trumpet and the alarm of war."

If not expressed in so many words, yet is this the language in substance, of a child of God when awakened to a sensibility of his sinner ship, and to an apprehension of the righteous indignation of Jehovah, as revealed against all ungodliness. The law of God, in all its inflexibility and righteous demands, and justice determined to vindicate its righteous claims, stands in battle array, declaring war against everything that stands opposed to truth. "Thine arrows are sharp in the heart of the King's enemies; whereby the people fall under thee."

When once the arrow of truth has entered, extraction, by human means, is impossible; the soul, under these circumstances, may attempt to go into the world again, and like the harpooned whale, dive into the depths of darkness, to get rid of pain, endeavoring to stifle conscience, and cast off the convictions which have been produced by the Holy Spirit, much against the fleshly will, and adopt the language of the literal remnant of Judah, saying, "We will not dwell in this land, no! but we will go into the land of Egypt, where we shall see no war, nor hear the sound of the trumpet, nor have hunger of bread, and there will we dwell." In carrying this resolution into effect, the famine and the sword invariably follow; for so says the Lord, "for the sword which ye feared, shall overtake you there in the land of Egypt, and the famine whereof ye were afraid, shall follow close after you there in Egypt, and there shall ye die." Die to every hope of escape by your own exertions, die to everything like prospect of salvation by creature thoughts, or creature actions, and be in just such a state, as to need feelingly the outstretched arm of sovereign mercy, and the revelation to the soul of the sinner's interposer, friend and Savior, in whom the sword of justice finds a sheath, the clamorous law a fulfilment, and by whom the war trumpet lies in silence on the battle field.

Here let me anticipate the enquiry of the reader, What do you know about these things in your own soul? And how did you first become acquainted with the same? I confess that I generally feel a degree of diffidence, in speaking of myself, and my experience of divine things, because I know that it is small, and comparatively insignificant, when contrasted with the revelation that is made to the souls of some of the family of God; but such as it is, I will declare it, and though it be small, yet if it be real, it is a mercy. Half a sovereign is as much gold in its nature, as a sovereign is, and though it may be lacking in quantity, yet if its quality be good it will stand; and it may be remembered, that a half sovereign of real gold, is of more worth than a £50 forged note. The former may be tested by all possible means, it will remain gold still, whether it be filed, or burned, yea, or even melted, it cannot be altered in its nature.

However, as the question has been asked, and as I have been several times as a contributor before the readers of the Ambassador, perhaps a brief outline may be opportune.

It was therefore early in life, that I was made to hear the sound of the trumpet, and the alarm of war, for when engaged one Lord's-day afternoon in some childish sports on the banks of the river Thames, condemnation sounded in my conscience, as a breaker of God's holy law. God in the terribleness of his majesty, appeared as a punisher of sin, and this made me afraid; yes, tremblingly afraid; and although that did not prevent me from sinning again and again, in the same way, yet I could not do so with impunity, or without having it recorded on my conscience. That the trumpet and the alarm of war sounded in my ears, one or two facts subsequently experienced, will serve to show. All my relations being worldly people, (although occasionally attending a place of worship,) I on Sabbath days accompanied them in their pleasures and pursuits, but I can truly say, that those pleasures were turned generally into sorrows to me, in consequence of the consciousness that I was the subject of, that I was sinning against God, and by the fear of the consequences of the same. Upon one occasion, we went to Richmond on Sunday, on an excursion in a boat; on our return home a violent storm of thunder and lightning arose, we ran on a bank and were nearly all upset; although naturally timid of stormy weather, yet my fears on this occasion, arose more from a knowledge of God, as being angry with the wicked every day, than from anything else; and I believe that I was the only one in the boat, who was the subject of such anxieties. I heard the sound of the trumpet and the alarm of war." On another occasion, Sunday afternoon, (being winter,) I went in company with a near and dear relation to slide and skate upon the ice. The moment I went on, these words came to me with convincing power, attended with horror of feeling: "*The way of transgressors is hard.*" I have never forgotten the words, I felt them to be a reproof, and a rebuke, and although it did not please the Lord to withhold me from sinning against him from time to time in this way, yet would he not allow me to settle down comfortably in these things but sounded the trumpet and the alarm of war in my conscience, so that I trembled again and again. Passing by many circumstances in which the trumpet sounded in connection with lying, swearing, and other things, I confine myself to another circumstance connected with the Sabbath day. A journey into the country to visit some friends, was contemplated and carried out. I had anticipated a deal of pleasure, but here again was I spoiled by the sound of the "Trumpet," and found that I was seeking pleasure in a way opposed to God's law; I believe I was the only one in company, concerned about soul matters, and I now believe that the Lord's eye was upon me for good, "Preserved in Christ Jesus." The whole of the day from the time that we went out until we returned at night, more or less quickly did these words follow me, and I could not shake them off, "If thou turn away thy foot from the Sabbath from doing thy pleasure on my holy day, and call the Sabbath a delight, the holy of the Lord honorable and shall honor him, not doing thine own ways, nor finding thine own pleasures, nor speaking thine own words; then shalt thou delight thyself in the Lord, and I will cause thee to ride upon the high places of the earth, and feed thee with the heritage of Jacob thy father, for the mouth of the Lord hath spoken it."

Long as this scripture is, and although I had not remembered reading the words with any particular attention, yet did they come to me with all that clearness and force, and that repeatedly, and made as clear an impression on my mind as though a person were articulating them in my ears and following me at the same time. And being convinced in my soul of my want of conformity to them; yes, that I was the very reverse of what they expressed; they were indeed to me "the sound of the trumpet, and the alarm of war." I felt that I deserved the wrath of God to be poured out, I had no plea to offer; the truth of that scripture was experienced by me, "Every mouth shall be stopped." I knew nothing of Jesus Christ, nothing of God's salvation, was as ignorant of his methods of mercy as the Hindoo barbarian, who prostrates himself before the car of Juggernaut; I only knew in the light of God's commandments that I was a sinner,

and a great one, though comparatively young in years. I had now left the house of my parents, and was serving an apprenticeship at a distance therefrom, exposed more than ever to temptations of every sort; the public house, the theatres, and the concert room were in turn visited, yet the sound of the trumpet followed me wherever I went, and in whatever I did. But the time was at hand when that scripture was to be fulfilled with regard to myself. "Thou shalt arise and have mercy upon Sion, for the time to favor her, yea, the set time is come."

The prey is to be effectually taken from the mighty, and the lawful captive is to be delivered. Satan is not much longer to have and to lead captive according to his will into every foolishness, while God's law is condemning every step, for the *last time* that I was permitted to go to any of these trumpety concerts, I was seized with an extraordinary horror of feeling (the sound of the trumpet), I could not attend to the pleasures of the party; there was no seat on which I could sit, nor corner in which I could stand, not because the place was full, but because the place was too hot, and the seats lined with prickling thorns. I rushed out of the place, and ran home to my lodgings, lay down on my bed, and knew not what to do; the alarm of war in my conscience was great, and I had no hope other than that which resolution to pursue a different course could afford. I endeavored to pray but had not the spirit of prayer. I resolved to attend a place of worship, not only on Sundays, as was my custom, (and perhaps the theatre on Monday,) but on week evenings also, with resolves to be better and to do better; and the ministers that I was in the habit of hearing quite coincided in their preaching with this resolve, being ministers of the letter and not of the Spirit. But I could not settle down in this, but went from place to place, thinking that I heard better here, and then better there, and could indeed find no resting place, and felt that I was destitute of the "one thing needful that is, the *right religion*," without knowing, however, what it was. How earnestly did I wish that I could get to live or lodge with some people who were in possession of this, that I, perchance, might possess it too. And, here I behold the wisdom and goodness of a covenant God, and desire ever to praise his holy name for his wondrous works to a weak, ignorant, unworthy, and rebellious sinner, for just at this time he, in his providence, brought a young man, named James Betts, (who had been previously made acquainted with the truth, this right religion, that I longed for,) to work in the same shop in which I was employed; after some little time, and having had conversation together, he perceived, I suppose, or thought he perceived, life, although he found me very dark in my mind. He, however, invited me to accompany him to hear the minister that he was favored to hear from time to time; to this I readily agreed, and was glad of the offer; for without knowing anything about sentiments, as professed by different denominations, I was glad to have the opportunity of hearing his minister. I accordingly went with him to hear Mr. James Wells, of the Surrey Tabernacle, Borough Road, London, and there was in that ministry, to me, an indescribable something, which differed so much from any thing that I had ever heard before, that I was astonished. He was reading a chapter in Proverbs, and commenting thereon, and dwelt upon these words, "It is better to dwell in the corner of a house-top, than with a brawling woman and in a wide house."

The brawling woman was free-will; and the wide house was universal charity; the house-top was the sovereignty of God and explained why and wherefore it was better to dwell in the latter than in the former. Now this laid the axe to the root of all my preconceived notions of theology, which might be summed up in these two ideas, that is, that the Lord Jesus Christ died for everybody, and that everybody might be saved if he would, although nearly 15 years' experience of felt helplessness had not been sufficient to convince my judgment that free-will was false. The sovereignty of God was a subject I knew nothing about, although a subject of it, but had never heard it spoken of before. This however worked in my mind like leaven. I went again, when Mr. W. was dwelling upon the helplessness of the creature, the depravity of his nature, and his entire unworthiness by virtue of sin and union to Adam the fallen. This fitted like mortice and tenon, and I could enter feelingly into the truths advanced, for I was a subject of

the selfsame things; and this was the first time that I ever heard an experimental sermon or had any reason to believe that I was in the right path. But the minister did not stop here, for having spoken of depravity, he went on to state things that I had never heard of, things that did my soul good, "A fountain opened for sin and for uncleanness, to the house of David and the inhabitants of Jerusalem." Not of helplessness merely, but of "Help that is laid on one that is mighty." That it was the design of the triune God, an expression of the Father's love, and wrought in the soul by the Holy Ghost; that the acts of God were eternal, once done, done for ever; that his purposes of grace were as immutable as his own character. All of which entered my soul and was sweeter to me than honey or the honey-comb. I had no need now to enquire which is the right religion, for this brought with it its own evidence, made a way for itself; and truly was that scripture exemplified in my experience, "The entrance of thy words giveth light, it giveth understanding to the simple;" and proves another declaration of holy writ, "He is abundantly willing to shew unto the heirs of promise, the immutability of his counsel." I felt as sensibly the veil of ignorance removed from my understanding, as though a person had removed a covering from before my literal eyes. I have sometimes compared the change experienced, to that of coming up out of a dark vault, in which I have been incarcerated all my life time, into the broad day-light. "He brought them out of darkness and the shadow of death and brake their bands asunder."

On another occasion, Mr. W. preached from these words, "Ought not Christ to have suffered these things, and to enter into his glory." To describe the pleasure of soul that I experienced under that sermon, human language is insufficient; the two disciples under the same circumstances could not express it; all they could say, was, "Did not our hearts burn within us while he talked to us by the way and opened to us the scriptures." For when the minister spoke of the glorious person of Jesus in his complexity and qualification for suffering; the work of Jesus in all its important branches; the necessity of it, and the glory of Jesus in the consummation of it; I say, these things won my affections, and bound my soul fast, while in another sense, they set my soul at liberty to adore and praise his holy and blessed name. In going home after the service, so full was my soul of blessedness, arising from the discovery of the pearl of greatest price, that I literally leaped as a hart, and the distance, three or more miles, was as nothing; and such I believe is the effect generally produced, more or less, when the truth is received in the soul in the love of it.

Thus, then, O my soul, not only hast thou heard the sound of the trumpet, and the alarm of war in the instances named, and many more besides; but thou hast also heard the sound of another trumpet, and the proclamation of peace, by and through the effectual victories of the prince of peace. The great trumpet that Isaiah predicted should be blown, and they shall come (said he,) which were ready to perish in the land of Assyria, and the outcasts in the land of Egypt, and shall worship the Lord in the Holy Mount at Jerusalem. The sound of this trumpet is a joyful sound, every note of it echo's love eternal, mercy free, power great, and salvation everlasting. "Blessed are the people that know the joyful sound; they shall walk, O Lord, in the light of thy countenance."

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