

Romans 5:20 (J.B.) 51440

Things New and Old: Volume 29, Grace Abounding: Paul the Negro (5:20)

DEAR BROTHER, —As you requested me to give a simple account of what I told you, about the ways of God. with our departed brother F. H. and Paul the once negro slave, I will put it down as nearly as the Lord may enable me.

As our brother H. returned from visiting a sick child, he made a false step on the curbstone, and hurt his ankle, which caused him to go to the infirmary to get the benefit of their appliances, where his wife had formerly been a nurse. He, along with myself, had made it a matter of prayer for twelve months, that he might be directed to a suitable person for a wife. The Lord directed him to the one mentioned above, He knowing what he would need. Our brother only lived two years of married life, and died on the anniversary of his wedding day, but of the two years, he needed a nurse for fifteen months of the time, and the Lord gave him one.

His father, an aged man of eighty years, was very much opposed to his son and his wife, as they were in fellowship as Christians, and would scarcely speak to them. Our brother H. fell asleep at Wakefield, and before his departure, he sent me to ask his father not to bury him in the family vault. The father said he had been a fool all his life, so he supposed he must consent to that. The family vault was on consecrated ground, and our brother wished to be buried by his brethren.

The father went to the funeral, but said he hoped it would be short and sweet. As soon as the service was over, the father called me to him, and said, "My house is open to as many as will go to tea." This was to our intense surprise, as he hated brethren in Christ. Only a little time before, his son went to have a meal with him, and wanted to ask God's blessing, and the father said, I will have none of that nonsense here. He was a scoffer at Christianity. Our brother told me of this, and we both united to ask the Lord for the salvation of the father.

Well, to my great joy, he said he had never seen aught so solemn as at the funeral, such perfect order, without any apparent arrangement; and at the tea table he asked me to say a blessing. After tea the gospel was set before him, and he asked me to have tea with him the following Sunday; and through the seasonable words spoken by the widow, Mrs. H., he found peace in believing, and in a few weeks fell ill and went to be with the Lord.

The night before he passed away he said to the nurse, "If I die before morning, tell them not to bury me in the family vault, but as near to Fred [his son] as they can." He called our sister to his side, and said, "You wrote me every day Fred was ill; and told me once he was living in Rom. 8. I never answered you, but thank God I am living there now; it has been a struggle, but all is peace."

Now as to the Lord's purpose in taking our brother to the infirmary. At the same time, a young man, whose name was Paul, born a slave, from South Carolina, was brought from a ship, he being a sailor, and very ill. Our brother H. took great interest in his soul's welfare, and had him in his room, and bought him a New Testament, and taught him to read John 3.

Paul asked what book it was, and was told that it was God's word to him.

He asked, What God? He was told the God that had made everything.

He then said, "If that God speaks the truth, He must love me, for He says that whosoever believes in Him shall not perish. So then it must mean me, as it does not say either black men or white men." So the word was simply taken as God's word to for he had no creeds to give up.

And it proved to be the word of life, and caused his heart to so rim over with joy, that when in bed the other patients fetched our sister H. to him, thinking he must be going mad. She told him to be quiet, for he said he wanted to be baptized, and go right away to heaven; and he poured water on himself as he lay (a novel way of doing it).

Yet he held fast by God's word, and never once faltered, but was really bright and happy. He was permitted to go from ward to ward to tell them John 3 One man made game of him, but he looked earnestly at him and said, "God will stop you sudden, God will stop you." And the nurses told me they never witnessed such an awful death in the infirmary. He died in a few days, and Paul went to him and said, "Me tell you God would stop you sudden."

Well, Paul was a little better, and thought he could do a little work, so he came out of the infirmary. The first place he found was the meeting-room. On the Lord's day morning he was the first of any one, and sat behind. I could see during the time that his heart was brim full of Christ After the meeting was over, I said to him, "Well, Paul, did you enjoy the Lord's presence?" Oh," he said, "me enjoy the Lord Himself." I could not help feeling a rebuke from that newborn babe, not three weeks old.

We obtained employment for him in a drying house, to dry wood, and it was very hot. When asked if it was very hot, lie said, "It was very hot the first day, and me say the Lord that did save me could make me not feel the heat, and today me could bear it very well." But the Lord did not intend to leave him long with us.

In a week or two he was obliged to give up work, and return to the infirmary. One day he said, "Me just been thinking there will be no black men in the glory, we will all be white, washed in the blood of Jesus." A few days after I met him, and said, "Well, Paul, where are you going?" He said, "Me going back to the infirmary, it may be the Lord is going to raise me up, and if He does it will be all right, and if He does not, it will be all right; but me think if He does, me don't want to give Him more trouble than me can help."

A few weeks after this, Mrs. H. and I called to see him on a Lord's day evening, and found he had been longing to see some of us before he went to the Lord. It was with difficulty we could understand what he said. He said, "Tell mudda—Jesus—mudda—Jesus," &c. And we found he wanted us to send in word to his mother, South Carolina, that he had gone to be at rest with Jesus. Then he told us something about seven shillings, and we found he wanted to send the seven shillings he had earned the few days he was at work to his mother. As he was telling this, one of the nurses came to see me, and said, 'The matron wishes to see you.' And as I was going he said, "Don't leave me." I said, "I will be back directly," and went to see the matron. She said, "Oh you dear fellow, I envy him as he lies yonder. Oh, I would give worlds if I had the peace he has; he is dying," &c. Whilst I was talking to her, his spirit had gone to the Lord.

The nurse found a worn letter under his pillow, very badly written, but the breathings of a mother's love in it. It told out to her darling boy of family loss and trial, and this accounted for his loving desire to send all that he had to his mother. We sent the seven shillings to her, with the news of her boy's death, and received a letter from her daughter sometime after, which told the sad news, that what with the joy of her boy meeting with kind friends, his conversion, along with the sorrow of parting with him, she took to her bed, and died in a few days. Paul's earnest desire when dying was, that his mother might be saved.

He often spoke of his God and his Jesus; and when asked how he was, he would say, "I'se justly bad, mum, but me trust in de Christ; me leaves it all to Him." And when asked if he wanted anything, he said, "If anything, it is more faith." I believe his last words were "Christ is precious," and he calmly fell asleep.

A great many of the Lord's people and from the infirmary followed him to the grave. The matron would have the hearse to the front door, She said, "An honored man like Paul must go from the front door;" a thing perhaps never done before.

The matron left soon after and went to London We heard she was very ill, and Mrs. H went to see her, and had every hope that she found peace, before she passed away. I may add, Paul seemed to be able only to read John 3. Some years have passed away since he fell asleep, yet his dear bright face and eyes are fresh to many of us still.

Thus I have given the facts, and leave them with the Lord to magnify His grace, as He already has done in all His marvelous dealings with His people.

Hull J. B.

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