

Esther's Experience in the Basement

by Walter L. Wilson, M.D.

Esther, a young woman about thirty years of age, was a school teacher who had been reared in a religious home. Having been sprinkled as a baby and confirmed at about the age of twelve, she decided that her life should be a religious one, and that she would maintain her faith in the veracity of the Scriptures throughout her college training and the State Normal experiences. She was a very quiet girl, kept her thoughts to herself, made few friends, and to many seemed difficult to understand.

During a series of meetings which I conducted in the city where she taught, Esther became greatly interested in the matter of her personal welfare. She had experienced nearly everything that the church offered, except a genuine conversion. She realized that her entrance into the church was only a formal matter. The entire confirmation class had been taken into the fellowship of the church and she was merely one of the group. She gave assent to all the facts contained in the catechism, but had never accepted those facts for the salvation of her own soul. She knew about Christ and believed what she had learned, but she had never met Christ in a personal, soul-saving experience.

Night after night, this young lady sat near the front of the church with her Bible and listened most intently. A storm was raging in her bosom, doubts filled her mind. However, several days passed before she came to me with her difficulty, distress engulfing her heart. She was beginning to realize why her religion was such a forced thing. She had to maintain it and keep it going. The Bible to her was a dry book. It was only a text-book to be studied in order to ascertain the facts. To her Jesus Christ was only the leader of her religion. She sought to follow Him as a soldier follows his captain, but she did not have a personal interest in Him as a child does in her father.

As she witnessed one after another of her friends coming to the Lord Jesus Christ in saving faith and finding a new peace, her distress deepened, until one evening she came to me at the close of the service and told of the sorrow of her heart and the doubts which were filling her soul. Esther would not admit that what she

believed was insufficient, and yet the preaching convinced her of this fact. She realized in her soul that something was lacking and always had been. Her experience in religion was similar in character to that of her school work. She studied the doctrines that were taught her by the pastor, she sought to acquaint herself with the teachings of the church, but none of these things satisfied the craving of her heart or gave her peace with God.

As I presented to Esther the work of Christ at Calvary, she would say, "But I believe all that already; I have been taught to believe that ever since I entered Sunday School as a little girl. I never have doubted that Jesus died for sinners, and I believe the Bible from cover to cover."

"I am sure that you do, Esther." I said, "and yet there is certainly something wrong or you would not have this distress of heart."

What I said to Esther seemingly failed to meet the need, for no light entered her darkened mind, and no peace came to her troubled soul. I returned to my room after this first meeting with her to plead with the Spirit of God for wisdom in dealing with this difficult case. Esther was acquainted with the facts of the gospel, she was more or less familiar with the teachings of the Bible concerning Calvary, she understood somewhat the doctrines of salvation, and yet she was not saved. I asked the blessed Lord to give me the needed wisdom in dealing with her case. Nightly thereafter, Esther came to me for further help. Again and again I sat with her pouring over the Scriptures, passing from verse to verse, and sought to show her the need of making this Saviour her very own, but my labor seemed fruitless.

The closing night of the meeting came and I went to the church early for a season of prayer, intending to use one of the Sunday School rooms in the basement for the occasion. As I entered the church, the janitor, who stood at the door, said, "There are two young ladies waiting to see you, doctor. They are in the reception room down stairs and asked me to tell you of their desire to see you." My heart went up at once to God for wisdom, and again I asked the Holy Spirit for the words to say that would bring peace to these friends. Entering the reception room, I found Esther with another teacher who was also in soul trouble. It is always rather difficult to deal with two souls at the same time, for their minds are divergent and usually the line of ministry given to one, does

not apply to the other. I felt the need of special wisdom from God in handling this difficult situation. The Holy Spirit is given to God's children to make us wise in His work, therefore we may call upon Him when we are face to face with problems which seem to difficult to handle.

Seating ourselves around the center table, we took our Bibles and began to search for that portion of truth particularly suited to these troubled souls, in order to bring them in touch with the Lord Jesus Christ. I read with them John 1:12— "But as many as received him, to them gave he power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on his name."

"What is it, Esther, that keeps you and perhaps your friend from accepting the Lord Jesus? Is there something in your life that you do not wish to give up? Are you holding some doctrine that is not compatible with the gospel? What is the trouble? Do tell me."

"There is nothing at all in the way," she replied. "I do believe everything that you have said. I am not a heathen and I am not an unbeliever. I accept fully every thing you have told me about the person and work of Jesus Christ."

By this answer it was quite clear to me that her difficulty was not a lack of believing the facts, but rather a failure to appropriate the Person. She had never yet taken Jesus Christ as her own Lord and Saviour. "Tell me, Esther, when did you come to the Lord Jesus yourself and tell Him with your own lips that you would take Him to save your soul, and that you believe that He blotted out your sins?"

She studied this question for several minutes and then replied: "I grew into Christianity. I was always a Christian. There never was a time in my experience that I did not believe everything you have told me."

"Then you were never lost were you, Esther?" "No, I never was," she answered.

"I am sorry to hear you say so," I said quickly, "for the Lord Jesus came only to save lost people, as He said — 'The Son of man is come to seek and to save that which was lost' (Luke 19:10). You never will be saved, Esther, unless you see that you

are lost, and you are lost. You are just a religious sinner who joined the church without being born again. You have admitted all of the facts and accepted all of the teachings, but you have never yet knelt as a suppliant for mercy at the feet of Jesus Christ, nor saw Him dying there at Calvary for you; neither have you accepted Him personally for yourself."

Esther's face reddened, the tears started, and her body shook with emotion. She was under great conviction. For the first time it seemed that the Holy Spirit had revealed to her the sin of professing to be a Christian without possessing Jesus Christ. Her friend trusted the Saviour at once. She saw her need and realized the sufficiency of Christ. She was saved quickly; Esther was not.

"Will you kneel with me now?" I asked her, "and tell the Lord Jesus Christ that you will turn your case over to Him, that you will commit your soul to Him, and that you will accept Him just now, the sacrifice for your sins? You must take him, Esther, or He will not be yours. You must present yourself to Him as a guilty sinner, seeking pardon and forgiveness, otherwise you will only be an outsider, observing His power, but not receiving the blessing of it."

We knelt together. The friend who was saved was rejoicing in the Lord, but Esther, in her grief, was seeking the Lord, while I was pleading silently with the Holy Spirit to bring light into her soul. Silently we prayed for a while, and then I said: "Esther, do tell the Lord Jesus what you will do with Him, tell Him so. If you do, then accept Him at once, cast yourself into His arms by faith; He will receive you and save you immediately." She burst into tears and cried out, "Lord Jesus, I do accept You just now. I have known about You, but now I take You. I knew You died for sinners, but now I know You died for me. Do take me as I am and let me be altogether Your own."

A quiet "Amen" came from my lips, as I heard those blessed words of devotion to Christ Jesus. "Thank You, for bringing Esther to Yourself. Thank You for showing her the value of Thy wounds. Thank You, Holy Spirit, for revealing Christ to this heart, and leading her to the side of the Saviour." We arose from our knees with joy and peace. The last night of the meeting was gloriously crowned with the deliverance of these troubled souls.

When the evening service was dismissed, others, too, were saved,

but the song of praise that came from Esther's lips seemed to transcend the others. Hers had been a wonderful deliverance.

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