

Rev. Charles Matthews

Transcription of obituary published in the Primitive Methodist Magazine by Joseph Dixon

CHARLES MATTHEWS was born in the county of Berks, December 18th, 1806. It was his great privilege that his friends were pious, set before him a good example, and was diligent to train up their children in the path of virtue.

He went to a school in the village where they resided and received a little education; but his friends thinking to make him a great scholar, removed him to another, where he made great progress in learning, and remained there till they removed to the parish of Brinkworth, in the county of Wilts. Here he bore the plainest marks of morality, he revered the holy Sabbath, gave a regular attendance at the Established Church, and also at the Independent Chapel. He was a dutiful and obedient child to his parents, who never knew him to swear an oath nor tell a wilful lie. But still his heart was not set right toward God, for when the Primitive Methodist preachers arrived in the neighbourhood, he discovered by the light of the gospel which they preached, that he was in darkness and in bondage; and he cried earnestly to the Lord for deliverance. He joined the first class that was formed in the parish of Brinkworth, and continued to seek after the one thing needful till Nov. 20, 1825, when the preacher, in the class meeting, described the nature of faith, and Charles ventured his soul on the Lord Jesus Christ, was delivered from the bondage of corruption, and was enabled to rejoice in a sin-pardoning God. And he continued a steady and useful member in the society, his conduct corresponding with his profession.

About this time, through missionary exertions, there was a great field open for labour, and he was requested to assist, but he felt a backwardness in taking up the cross. He, however, was at length prevailed upon, and his labours proved profitable to the souls of many. He shunned not to declare the whole counsel of God, but preached the terrors of the law and kindly invited to the blood of sprinkling. He had a warm zeal, and was full of love. His way was fully open, and he was kindly received.

When he had been about three years a local preacher, he received a call to labour as an itinerant preacher in the Motcomb circuit. To this he consented; but on his journey he was taken ill through sleeping in a damp bed. He arrived at Motcomb November 29, 1828, but was not able to preach of about ten days. His journal states that his affliction was very heavy, and his spirits very low, being amongst strangers; and many thought that he would never recover. But through medical assistance, and the blessing of God, he was again restored, when he thanked God for the affliction, seeing it was a means of refining him for the work that was laid before him; and it humbled him under the mighty hand of God.

The first sermon he preached, he was very weak after so great an affliction; but the Lord strengthened him and made the word a blessing to the people. He laboured one year and six months in Motcomb circuit with great success; many souls were brought to God under his ministry, and many more awakened to a sense of their danger. May the Lord keep them faithful unto death.

March 8, 1830, he again took cold, and was disabled from pursuing his labours; but he remained in the circuit till May 15, when he came home to his father's home. Here he began to gather a little strength, and hopes were cherished by his friends that he would again recover. But being invited to Witney, to see Brother Paddison, who had been his colleague in the Motcomb circuit, and whom he considered as a father to him, he set out; but after walking about seven miles his strength failed, and he was obliged to return. He also was overtaken in a storm, which caused him to take a fresh cold. And from that time he continued to grow worse. He suffered but little pain, but grew very weak; his earthly frame wasted gradually whilst his soul

was ripening for glory. His affliction proved to be a lingering consumption, and though there was but little hopes of his recovery yet he felt it his duty to use the means.

As long as his strength enabled him, he attended the means of grace, and was blest with patience, faith, and humility, whilst his friends viewed him with looks of pity and sorrow, to see the paleness of his countenance and the decline of his body, expecting in a short time he would be called from them to his everlasting home. But he told them God's will must be done, and all the time of his pilgrimage he seemed to be resigned to God's will, either to be any thing or nothing so that he might glorify God. When he was unable to attend the means of grace, I visited him, and always found him thirsting after more of the love of God. His delight was to talk of Jesus, and what he had done for poor sinners, Many of the preachers and members visited and prayed with him, for which he was very thankful, and rejoiced to see them; saying, that without an alteration he should soon leave them, as he was drawing near to his journey's end. The enemy greatly assaulted him, tempting him to murmur against God, on account of his being likely to be cut off in the bloom of youth. Also suggesting that he would fall short of heaven at last. But he found God's grace sufficient to preserve him in the hour of temptation. I endeavoured to encourage him by describing the nature and effects of faith. He seemed to eat up the words as though they were drops of honey. We then prayed together and had a happy time, and he rejoiced that he had overcome Satan by faith in the Lord Jesus Christ.

On the morning before his departure I found him in a happy and heavenly frame of mind. I inquired if he was fully resigned to the will of God. He testified that he was, and should soon be with him in glory. I prayed with him and the Lord enabled him to rejoice. Heaven shone in his countenance whilst he grappled with death, and with many smiles, he often repeated, "I shall soon be there." On the same day, January 4, 1831, he fell asleep in the arms of Christ, in the twenty-fifth year of his age.

Approved by the Circuit Committee.

References

Primitive Methodist Magazine 1831/316