

## MEMOIR OF ELIZABETH RUSSELL,

(Formerly Elizabeth Smith.)

(Continued from page 143.)

To S. Evans.

*Llanbaughowey, March, 16, 1828.*

*My dear Sister*—May the great Head of the church and Bishop of souls, still keep thy dear soul within the hollow of his hand....

I sincerely pity your present state. I can well enter into your feelings, having had to pass through trials, if not of the same kind, yet quite as afflictive. What is the cause of your griefs?—You have not told it in full. But I suppose the Lord has in some measure withdrawn the joy of his Spirit. This, without doubt, is sufficient to fill with sorrow the breasts of those who have experienced that his presence alone can make them happy. What words can describe that sorrow! I have lately felt it. For two days I have had to encounter the enemy of my soul; to feel my own infirmities, without my Captain's sight.\* But yet I feel this has been sanctified. {t has taught me more than ever, to look by faith to Christ for all things. I believe the hand that guides me, and has brought me thus far, is filled with blessings; and I know that my Father is too wise to err, and too good to be unkind. Therefore, my dear Sarah, let us look to him. But I feel my faith is weaker when darkness comes. From this learn that darkness comes from coldness on my part; it tells me that God has not all my heart. Lord, help us to give our souls to thee.

Let us daily go and cast our souls on the atoning blood of Christ. Thus renewing our covenant, we shall comprehend the depth of holiness; be lost and swallowed up in God. I am yours affectionately, E. SMITH.

— — — — —

\*It would seem Elizabeth's case to have been only the trial of faith, or travail in birth; or like what the apostle speaks of when he says, "I would that ye knew what great CONFLICT I have for you." Col. ii. 1, 2.—Ed.

—————

To S. EVANS.

*Riscovech, April 9, 1828.*

*Dear Sister*,—I purposed seeing you before I wrote again, but have been poorly; but through the mercy of God I am better than I was. I suppose you received the note I sent by Brother Towler, March 16. I then wanted counsel and comfort myself: the waves of trouble were breaking in upon my soul; I felt all the sorrow of a wounded spirit; though when I wrote my anguish was not so great as it had been.

The cause of my trouble was this: about a fortnight previous to that time | was attacked by two clergymen; and their attack was of a nature to discourage me. And when I was alone the enemy of souls harassed me; and my weak faith sunk, and I began to reason on the work of God in preaching the gospel.

These men reprobated the idea of a woman being useful in the work;—the enemy backed their arguments;—and I was sensible of the vast importance of the work; which led me to cry, as I had done many times before, "Who is sufficient for these things? Who among the sons of men? and much less a weak ignorant young woman!"

In a word, such were the effects of this reasoning that I grieved the Spirit that before had made known to me the will of God in this respect. Through this reasoning, the Lord withdrew the light of his countenance. I lost this respect. Through this reasoning, the Lord withdrew the light of his countenance. I lost the joy that I partook of in feeling the sanctifying power of God—I cannot tell what were my feelings!\*

When I had spoken (preached) to the people, I could not pray for a blessing on what I had delivered; neither could I, for two days, pour out my soul in private; and I had no one to direct me. My state was like David's, when he cried, "Cast me not away from thy presence; and take not thy Holy Spirit from me." And again, in Psalm lxi. "From the end of the earth will I cry unto thee, when my heart is overwhelmed: lead me to the rock that is higher than I."

At length prayer prevailed. I was enabled to look at the sufficiency of the Redeemer; and to cast my soul on the atonement he has made: and I was again restored on the Friday before quarter-day. Glory to that God who delights in mercy. But I did not enjoy the power I had before experienced. But on the Sunday morning, while Bro. Towler was enquiring, "Have ye received the Holy Ghost since ye believed?" I believed for it, and not in vain. I have since experienced some attacks of the enemy, yet at this time I enjoy the smile of God, and I think I could suffer the greatest affliction rather than grieve his Spirit. And with respect to this work, God is my witness, my only object is the glory of his name in the salvation of souls.

Now, my dear sister, I feel relieved now I have told you my thoughts.

I long to see you, that we may talk about Jesus, and mingle our prayers together.

Give my love to all who love the appearing of our Lord. I am your loving sister in Christ,

E. SMITH.

— — — — —

\*She was pretty sure to have a conflict after talking with these men; but if she had held fast her confidence, and against hope believed in hope, she would the sooner have cut through it, and have risen the higher for the conflict —Ed.

—————

After her grandmother's death she entered again on the great work, and laboured in Ludlow, Pillawell, and Presteign circuits, until July, 1828, and the Lord blessed her labours among the people in a powerful manner.

But her trials being very great, she was tempted with atheistical thoughts; the enemy suggesting that such severe trials were inconsistent with the government of a righteous and holy God. With this she was perplexed until one evening, as she was crossing the Llandilo Rocks, in Radnorshire, in the way to her appointment. There was so thick a mist before it was dark, that her road was almost imperceptible; and in the perplexity of her mind, she took a wrong path on the ridge of the mountain, and proceeded in the way of a precipice many score feet deep; and when she was approaching the edge, and just on the point of being dashed to pieces by falling headlong, she in an instant heard an audible voice call, "Stop. — Come back." She stood still and looked diligently, but could see no one; and she immediately perceived her imminent danger. This remarkable interposition of Divine Providence, broke the snare of the enemy, and she thanked God in her heart, and took courage.

About this time, in writing to a friend, she says, "Of late; various have been the conflicts I have had to undergo. But God sees, yes, he knows my weakness, is acquainted with my coldness of love to him—my insensibility to his mercy, his boundless love in saving my soul from hell. Yes, Oh! my God, I must acknowledge myself guilty and unworthy.

"Be thou exalted! be thou adored by all thy hands have made; for hitherto thou hast kept and preserved my tottering steps. And though I have in some measure sunk before the storm, yet thy mercy has held me up. Help me to be in earnest in looking for the promise of the Lord Jesus. — Amen."

Notwithstanding these various trials, she unflinchingly pursued a steady course, and for hours together would spend her time alone, on those solitary Welsh mountains, reading her bible and wrestling with God in prayer for the outpouring of his Holy Spirit. And when we reflect on her devotedness to God, it is no wonder the enemy should use every means to discourage her, and injure her usefulness.

Hence about this time, antinomianism lifted up its head in opposition. One of its preachers spoke one evening against the doctrine of a full, free, and present salvation, against the movements of our Connexion, and in particular against female preaching. When she came into the congregation all eyes were fixed on her. She began the meeting, and soon the silent tears stole down the cheeks of many present; and the antinomian hung down his head in shame and confusion, and soon stole away out of the congregation.

At another place the person at the preaching house, extremely covetous, attempted to make a gain of godliness. They paid her rent, but this did not satisfy; and she so disgusted the people that few attended; and to get another house was difficult; and it was thought the place would have to be given up. But Elizabeth determined to make a further effort: and in the anguish of her soul she went. And that night a man who was in another house, heard the preaching, was wrought on, and offered his house for preaching; it was accepted, and a good work broke out.

This year, 1828, the Conference stationed her to Brinkworth circuit, in Wiltshire. And on leaving Radnorshire she composed the following verses.

1 When Paul upon the shore,  
The Ephesian brethren saw,  
With grief each heart ran o'er,  
While bow'd in silent awe:  
In faith the zealous Paul commends  
To God, the souls of these his friends.

2 Their hearts in sacred love,  
To him united were,  
The flame came from above,  
Which fill'd each bosom there;  
A love unknown to sense and earth,  
The fruit of faith, of heavenly birth.

3 This love dear friends we feel,  
Though we from you must part,  
We've faithful with you been,  
We'll bear you on our heart:  
Oh do not let our work be vain,  
Perhaps we ne'er may meet again.

4 Your welfare we have sought,  
In heaven we hope to view  
That which on earth is wrought,  
Our joy our crown are you:  
Farewell, my sisters, persevere,  
Farewell, my friends, still walk in fear.

July 6, 1828, she entered on the Brinkworth circuit together with Bros. Ride, Bell, Petty, Jukes, and Moore. They all were new in the circuit.

She had a zeal for missionary labours; she opened Purton Stoke, where a society was formed, and there has since been a chapel built.

She was appointed to the Stroudwater branch, in Gloucestershire. It was a time when trade was bad, and money and provisions scarce. And in order not to be burdensome to the circuit, she frequently, after returning from her appointments several miles, on cold winter evenings, would go to bed without supper.

Afterwards one of the preachers in the Home branch being taken ill, she was called back into Wiltshire.

It being intended to open a new mission in Berkshire, a missionary meeting for the purpose was held at Wootton Bassett, on Good Friday, 1829. And so extraordinary an Unction from the Holy One came down and rested on the meeting, that Elizabeth, as well as the other preachers present, fully believed the way was open to visit Berkshire, and she was ready to say with her brethren, "Send me."

At the Conference of 1829, the circuit report, in speaking of her, says, "Her preaching talents as a female are more than ordinary; her way is perfectly open, and she has been very useful."

This year I was stationed to Brinkworth circuit, and after walking about one hundred and fifty miles, I arrived at Wootton Bassett, where I saw her for the first time. And the next day, July 4, I went with a number more to a Camp meeting on the mission, where I heard her preach. There were about four thousand present, and the Lord sent the word home to many hearts.

In March, 1830, I was appointed to open a new mission contiguous to that already opened, and Elizabeth came in my place in the mission already opened. Bro. Ride, in his journal, see P.M. Magazine for 1832, page 266, says,

"Sunday, April 18, 1830, Sister Smith commenced her labours on the mission; and the novelty of a female preacher drew numbers to hear. 'The Lord greatly owned her labours, and many were awakened and brought to God.'"

Elizabeth had the new mission at heart, and urged the necessity of continual prayer to God for its prosperity. And the Lord in answer to prayer opened the way in a powerful manner. But I was cast into prison; and during my imprisonment she wrote to me as follows:

*Shefford, May 16, 1830.*

"*Dear Brother,*—We thought some account of the work would be acceptable to you. — Well, blessed be the Father of mercies, who comforteth his unworthy servants in all their afflictions.— Though Thomas Russell is imprisoned for endeavouring to persuade sinners to repent, yet the Lord is bringing them to repentance. He had laid his hand on a farmer at Eastbury, and he let me hold a meeting in his barn last Friday evening. It was the best time I have had on the mission. A woman seemed fastened on her knees to the ground; but professed to be made happy before we left her.

"Bro. Moore went to Chaddleworth last week. The constable came; but he been made a ring, and would not suffer him to come near. It was thought there were twenty on the preacher's side, for one on the other side. They, however, rung their bells, and made a great noise, but the people heard very well.

"On Saturday I went to open Childrey, and preached to a great number of people. They asked, 'When will you come again?'

"Yesterday the Lord was with us at Hastbury, and Eastgarsdon, and at Shefford. At Shefford there was the largest congregation I have seen on the mission. It was a good day. At night we had a softening time. I cannot express what I felt when I stood up before the people. Some came from distant places, and their cry was, 'When shall we have a preacher at our place?'

I led the class after the people were dispersed, and the blessing descended like a gentle shower of rain. There are sixteen in society at Shefford, and six at Soly. The number is increased at Ogborne, Aldbourn, and Bishopstone.

"Mrs. Wells is getting on well, and thanks you for your letter. John Coxhead is getting on very well, and has begun to exhort, and is well received.

"I do not know how much good your imprisonment will do, as to the people. It has opened their hearts. Many who opposed us before, have offered us something towards paying the fine for you. I believe we could soon collect the money for that purpose, if we thought it best. But perhaps it is not the Lord's way.

“Let the honour that is conferred on you make you humble; for you have to drink of your Master's cup, and be baptized with his baptism. This is a sign that you shall partake of his glory.

“We do not think it necessary to tell you to pray for us: nor need you ask, ‘Do we pray for you?’ We feel assured you pray for us now you are in the dungeon.

“Thanks be to God, the storm which distresses us, helps us towards the shore; and though there are many changes, it is but one journey, and we shall soon be at the end. And though there are many conflicts, it is but one battle; (and) we shall soon shout VICTORY, through the blood of the Son of God. Yea, we have the earnest of this already, being saved from the dominion of sin, and feeling a desire to be perfected in the image of Christ.

“May you, and all God's people, live in the enjoyment of this, is the prayer of, E. SMITH.”

She now had to take her lot with those who had to suffer the persecution that then raged. One Sunday morning while she was preaching at Chaddleworth, a number of men played musick, and one had a large drum. But some young men, not professors of religion, threatened to kick the end of it in. The musick men went into a house, and sent a boy off to the magistrate, who soon came with other gentry; and while Elizabeth was in a cart praying, he began to take the people into custody; but one young man turned upon him, and the scene was such as might be expected. When Elizabeth rose from prayer, the sight was extraordinary. The magistrate made an apology, said he hoped there was no harm done, and went off peaceably; and soon she had the satisfaction to see a powerful society raised up in that place.

Ramsbury\* was missioned; but the persecution was so severe, that when Elizabeth's turn came, it was left to her option whether to go or not. She went early in the day to visit the people. The preaching had been out of doors, but a man offered her a barn; and while she was preaching, there came a number of young men with eggs, stones, &c., to throw at her. But as soon as they saw her, one of the ringleaders turned and said, “None of you shall touch that woman.” The persecution, for a time, subsided, and a very powerful work broke out; and many spoke of the good they received at that meeting.

The Lord owning her labours induced many professors of religion to come from considerable distances to hear her; and among these was a female of great respect, who had been in another community for years. On her coming to Shefford to hear Elizabeth, the Lord sealed the word on her heart, and she began in great earnest to seek salvation through the alone merits of Jesus Christ.

She gave us an invitation to their village. Elizabeth visited it, a society was formed; and the above mentioned female found peace, and soon after finished her course with joy.

This visit opened our way into several other places, one of which was Market Illsley, a small town, heretofore very hard in matters of religion. Many were determined that neither she nor any of us should preach there. But Elizabeth ventured, and while standing in the open air, in Broad-street, a man came, and swore he would tear her down. But she kept on, knowing God could turn the lion into a lamb in a moment; or that he would in some other way interfere. And when the violent persecutor was within two or three steps of the place where she stood, the power of God arrested him; keen conviction seized his guilty heart; he turned to the Lord, and found pardon, and afterwards opened his house for preaching; where we soon formed a good society.

-----

\*In this place, it is said, they once brought out the engine to play upon Dr. Coke. But he told them they would soon want that for something else, which proved to be the case, for soon a fire broke out, and burned down a great many houses.

It got circulated that we used the black art, and black books, and that Miss Smith was a fortune-teller. This brought many out, and led to their awakening and conversion. Among these was a person from Peasmore, who, when Elizabeth was preaching at a new place, came with a design to have her fortune told. But the Spirit of God sent the word home to her heart; she trembled before the Lord; and took the preacher home with her. Elizabeth stopped all night; and with much difficulty made known the nature of prayer, and persuaded her to begin with the Lord's prayer. This female found religion; and afterwards gave us land for a chapel at Peasmore, which, in October, 1831, Elizabeth had the satisfaction of opening.

At the Conference of 1830, the Brinkworth circuit reported, "Elizabeth Smith, attentive to discipline; a general family visiter; very peaceable: her preaching generally acceptable; not addicted to long preaching; preaches a full, free, and present salvation; is successful in the conversion of sinners; her 'general conduct good; and she has been useful here.'" She was restationed.

(To be continued.)

---

References

*Primitive Methodist Magazine* 1837/176