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*By Miranda Hoag
From her S. S. Teacher*



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PETER THOMSON, the subject of this little memoir, was born of poor but religious parents, in the south of Scotland. They knew they had no wealth to leave behind them, and desiring to enrich their child, they gave him the best legacy in their power, and, indeed, the best fortune—a religious education. They instilled religious principles into his mind at an early age, and had the happiness of seeing that their labor was not in vain; for in the morning of his days he was afraid of sin, and so hated and shunned it, that he would not play with those children who broke the Sabbath, who told lies, or who disobeyed their parents. He, like every good child, loved his parents tenderly, and was sensible that he owed them a debt he would never be able to

repay ; for, although he was young, he had discernment enough to perceive that his parents regarded his happiness, and that it was his duty to obey them : he was quite grieved if at any time he had offended them, was willing to confess his faults, and to beg their forgiveness. But this was not all ; he also loved his Bible ; for it informed him of Jesus Christ's coming into the world to save young people as well as old, and of his great love to men, though he was hated and opposed by them.

Peter went regularly to church on the Lord's day with his parents, not choosing to stay at home when able to go ; he redeemed time through the week for learning lessons to repeat on Sabbath, and endeavored to do what God required, for his Bible told him that God was a discerner of the thoughts and intents of his heart, and that although he might deceive men, yet God knew all things.

One day as he was going to church he saw his uncle, when he ran up to him, and asked how he did. He loved his uncle, as he had often given him Tracts to read, which Peter was very fond of. One called " Poor Joseph " was his favorite. Often when reading or thinking on it, he used to weep—not with grief, however, but rather with joy, to think that Poor Joseph should as easily find salvation through the Savior as the great or

mighty of the world. Peter could have said the same as poor Joseph did—"Jesus came to save sinners," he would say to himself, "even the chief, and why not save me?" Indeed, when he prayed, (as you must know he never neglected prayer, morning or evening, and would rather have omitted a meal than his prayers in their season,) he used often to repeat the words of Joseph on his knees before God; and, oh! glad was he to know, from what his parents and his Bible said, that the Creator of the ends of the earth was a prayer-hearing and a prayer-answering God; and that, although he was young, yet it was declared in the Scriptures of truth, that those who seek him early should find him. He was very happy at this, and so will every boy and girl be who desire to be good.

Peter's uncle was very glad to see him, and asked if he had learned the question and chapter he had desired him. "O yes," said Peter, "and if you will come home to our house, at the close of the service, I will repeat them. They then went into church, and heard an excellent sermon from these words of our Lord: "Come unto me, all ye that labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest." Peter paid great attention to what Mr. Johnson, the minister, said, as he felt himself interested in the subject, (and so would every one, if they considered the matter aright,)

and because his father made it a practice every Sabbath day to ask him, when he came from church, what he recollected of the sermon. This practice promoted two objects—it kept his attention awake throughout the sermon, and gave his father an opportunity of improving his mind by bringing the truths of the Gospel down to his capacity. He desired him always to ask an explanation of any thing he might not understand. To explain the method Peter's father adopted, I will only mention one example; and it would, I think, be highly useful if every parent were to do the same.

When Peter, and his parents returned home, and had partaken of a wholesome but simple meal, his father, proceeding to improve what they had heard, asked him if he recollected the text. The Bible was produced, and, without any hesitation, Peter found the chapter and verse, and read the text; he was then asked who those were that Mr. Johnson described as heavy laden sinners.

Peter answered, "*All* are naturally sinners, heavy laden with iniquity, and exposed to the wrath of God. Did he not also say, father, that there is none righteous, no, not one?"

"Yes," replied his father; "and how true it is. Did not Mr. Johnson mention that we are unwilling to believe this important truth?"

“Yes; he said we thought ourselves better than we really are, and therefore that we did not need to come to the Savior as heavy laden sinners.”

“Who then, Peter, can prize these words of the Redeemer?”

“I think,” he said, “those whose minds are enlightened by the Holy Spirit to see their lost and ruined state by nature, that they are enemies to God, not only in their hearts, but by wicked works; to perceive the evil nature of sin, as being hateful in the sight of God; and who feel its burden, and are desirous of being freed from its heavy load, which, if not removed, they are convinced will sink them into endless wo.” Peter stopped to see if he had been correct; his father told him he had, and asked if he recollected any more. Peter thought a little, and seemed at a loss: his father, to assist him, said—“Did Mr. Johnson say any thing about Jesus Christ?”

“O yes,” said Peter; “but there was something before that—now I recollect it; he said, when men had their eyes opened to see their true condition, they were apt to fall into despair, and that the devil was always ready to take advantage of this, and to suggest that their sins were too aggravated or too numerous to be forgiven; that they need not hope for mercy; for He with

whom they have to do, is a holy God, and of purer eyes than to behold iniquity. But, father, did not Mr. Johnson say the devil was a liar, and the father of liars?"

"Yes, Peter, and so he is; for he first leads men on to sin by his lies, and then endeavors to drive them to despair; he deceived our first parents by this means, and he is trying to deceive and ruin us also, both here and hereafter; therefore he well deserves this appellation. He is the father of wickedness, 'the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that now worketh in the children of disobedience;' now, Peter, proceed."

Peter went on: "Mr. Johnson also said, the greatest sinner that desires salvation by Jesus Christ has no reason to despair, because He that died upon the cross for guilty men, invites such to come to him that they may have life, and on coming to him they shall in no wise be cast out; that the blood of Jesus possesses such Divine efficacy, that it cleanses us from all sin; and that it was for this very end the Savior came into the world, (for he came not to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance,) and to encourage such to come, he declared, while on earth, that whosoever

believeth in him shall not perish, but have everlasting life."

Peter paused;—the tears trickled down his cheeks; his father was glad to see him feel so sensibly, and asked him if that was all he had to say. Peter was silent; his father continued,

"You know Mr. Johnson said, as God was holy, and a God of truth, he would not pardon sinners without satisfaction being made to his Divine law; and as man is continually breaking it, it is impossible he can give that satisfaction which it requires. Mr. Johnson then showed clearly how the law and justice of God were satisfied in the obedience and death of his dear Son, who offered himself once as a sacrifice for sin, and who brought in an everlasting righteousness for all them who should believe in his holy name; that in the glorious work accomplished on Calvary, mercy and truth met together, righteousness and peace embraced each other, and that now God receives all who come to him in the name of Jesus Christ, and forgives their sins. Do you remember any passage of Scripture that says Jesus died for sinners?"

“ Yes, there is one in Romans, 5 : 8. ‘ But God commendeth his love towards us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us.’ ”

“ Was not this great love in the Redeemer,” continued his father, “ that he by whom the heavens were created, should become a man, and in that nature die for offenders by the hands of those creatures he had made ? ”

“ Yes,” replied Peter ; “ and I often wonder that I think so little about what the Savior did for me, and that I so often disobey his commandments.”

“ I am glad,” replied his father, “ to see you so sensible of your faults ; pray earnestly to God, that by his grace he may enable you to love his law, to do his will, and that he may give you an increasing hatred to sin, that abominable thing which his soul hateth.”

Peter promised to do so, and it was the desire of his heart to obtain this inestimable blessing.

As they were thus employed, Peter’s uncle came in, and having seated himself, he desired Peter to repeat the chapter and question he had learned, as he was now ready to hear him. Peter

instantly opened his Bible at the chapter, presented it to his uncle, and repeated both it and the question without an error. After he had finished his uncle put his hand in his pocket, and taking out a small book, presented it to Peter, saying he was extremely gratified in seeing him make such proficiency in learning; that he gave him that little book to encourage him to persevere, and he hoped that, as he increased in knowledge, he would likewise be more diligent in his duties, especially in prayer, and in obeying his father and mother, in being kind to every one, even to his enemies: and, after some little time spent in profitable conversation, he departed.

The book given to Peter by his uncle contained an account of the happy deaths of children, some of them even younger than himself; it was called "Early Piety." Peter thought a great deal of it, and was greatly affected with what some of the dear little children said on their death-beds, and it was part of his prayer, morning and evening, that he might live and die as happy as they. It would be well for every child if he learned thus to draw instruction from the books he reads.

When he had been a good while at school, and had learned to be a most excellent reader, and had also made some progress in writing and arithmetic, his parents thought proper to let him go as an apprentice to a neighboring carpenter, whose trade he was anxious to learn. He lived in his master's house, but returned home every Saturday afternoon, and stayed till Monday.

His parents were extremely anxious that the instructions he had received in early life might not be in vain; they improved the time he was with them, in the end and beginning of the week, as much as they could, giving him that counsel and advice which all parents should give to their children, if they wish them to be happy and respected here, and blessed hereafter. They told him to beware of evil company, as it is that which first leads youth away from the path of duty; to be just and honest, and to act at all times as in the presence of God, who knoweth all things; telling him, however, that it was only by looking earnestly to God for direction and assistance, that he could hope to resist temptation, live a holy life, or indeed do any thing aright; and never to forget to ask every blessing and mercy in the name of Jesus Christ, through whom alone his prayers could find access at a throne of grace; nor did they fail to remind him

of the necessity of faith in Jesus Christ, as his only ground of hope for eternal life.

Thus did the years of Peter's apprenticeship roll along, without any thing remarkable happening to him: he increased, not only in the knowledge of his business, which he considered it of great importance to learn well, but also increased in wisdom and understanding, and in that knowledge which purifies the heart and regulates the conduct; he loved to meditate upon his Bible, and sought wisdom to understand it from God, who hath promised that they that seek shall find, even the teaching of the Holy Spirit. He had seen himself to be a sinner, destitute of any thing attractive to recommend him to the favor of God; and that, instead of obeying his commandments, as he should do, he broke them daily, in thought, word, and action; and he was convinced that unless his sins were forgiven, he could never hope for mercy. He had had many doubts in his mind respecting the way in which God could be just, and yet the justifier of the ungodly; but that same gracious Spirit which at first opened his eyes to see the need of a Savior, led him to put his trust on the Rock of ages. The invitations of the Gospel gave him the greatest comfort; when he heard Christ, in the character of wisdom, say, "I love them that love me, and those that seek me early shall find me,"

it filled him with unspeakable joy; he was enabled to lay hold on Jesus as the hope set before him in the Gospel, and thus was he drawn as with the cords of love. He had long experienced the loving-kindness of the Lord, and gratitude to his Redeemer constrained him to be faithful in every duty; but he still felt the remaining corruptions of his nature very strong; this led him oftener to his knees before God, there to receive grace to help him in every time of need. He knew he was not to live here for ever, and that his time might be but short in this world; it was therefore his unceasing desire to be prepared for the hour of death.

When his apprenticeship expired, he continued two years longer with his employer, to be more perfect at his trade; he however lived with his parents, and, by his industry, greatly contributed to their comfort and happiness. He had now more time than before, and he employed it in improving his mind.

After some years he became the head of a family himself. He is respected by all his neighbors as an honest man, and as an ornament to his christian profession; he makes every exertion to be useful to his fellow-creatures, by relieving their necessities; and, knowing the benefit of a religious education himself, he was anxious that the young people in the village

might receive religious instruction. He spoke to Mr. Johnson, who, with him, thought there was great need of something being done for the young. In a short time there were two Sabbath evening-schools established, which promise to be highly useful.

His aged parents died within a few years of each other, in the faith and hope of the Gospel, looking forward for glory, honor and immortality.

Their son Peter is now the father of a large family, which he is bringing up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord; he is walking in the narrow way that leads to happiness; living by the faith of the Son of God, and in the hope, that when a few short years are passed, he will rest with his Father, and receive a crown incorruptible, and that fadeth not away, eternal in the heavens.

My young reader, are you desirous of being as happy as Peter was? If you are, it is a good desire; may it be followed with the best effects. But never forget, my young friend, that those children only who remember their Creator in the days of their youth, can take any delight in the things of God, or enjoy that happiness which flows from a union with Jesus Christ. Happy are those children who thus know Jesus to be their Savior, and who devote the morning of their days to his service and glory. But, perhaps, you

like better to follow the dictates of your own heart, and the evil example of many around you, than to take the Bible for your rule and guide. Is this your situation, my young friend? Ask your own heart. Do you really love God, and is it the desire of your heart to do all his will, or do you love the ways of sin in preference to his ways? Consider, my dear young friend, the awful consequences resulting from a life of disobedience to your Maker, and the misery awaiting you for the rejection of that Savior through whom alone you and I can escape the wrath to come. You may be young, but can you promise yourself long life? I know you cannot: in a moment you may be called before your righteous Judge. Is it not then of infinite importance to be prepared for death? Certainly it is. Youthful follies may entice you now, but there is a time fast approaching, when those things that now yield you all your happiness, will give you no enjoyment whatever. Think seriously on these things, my young friend; choose eternal life while you have it offered. "Seek the Lord while he may be found, call thou upon him while he is near;" for remember, "now is the accepted time, now is the day of salvation."

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