

AUTOBIOGRAPHY OF JAMES H OLIPHANT

by James H. Oliphant

Oliphant's autobiography documenting his spiritual awakening in 1868 after hearing a sermon on hunger and thirst for righteousness, his subsequent conversion, baptism in August 1869, and the joyful participation of his family in his new life of faith.

22 Chapters

Table of Contents

1. 01 Early Experiences and upbringing
2. 02 First Religious Experiences
3. 03 First Preaching
4. 04 More experiences
5. 05 Visit to a Association
6. 06 Visit to another Association
7. 07 Visit to Churches and Move
8. 08 Trip with G.M. Thompson
9. 09 Trip with E.D. Thomas
10. 10 Meeting at Fulton Kentucky
11. 11 Experience on a train and at a funeral
12. 12 Writing for papers
13. 13 Means question
14. 14 Covet earnestly the best gifts
15. 15 Preaching trip
16. 16 Preaching to dieing woman
17. 17 Chosen as Pastor
18. 18 Peacemakers
19. 19 Predestination
20. 20 Serving Churches
21. 21 Instrumental Music
22. 22 Fiftieth Wedding Anniversary

01 Early Experiences and upbringing

01 Early Experiences and upbringing Autobiography - James H. Oliphant :-

Chapter I My great-grandfather's name was William Oliphant. He was born in Ireland, and brought to North Carolina when a youth. He was a Primitive Baptist, and I heard Elder Gideon Potter tell of preaching at the church of which he was a member, about 1815. He served as a soldier in the Revolutionary war. My grandfather's name was Thomas Oliphant. He began preaching for the Primitive Baptists when nineteen years of age. His son, my Uncle Harvey, began preaching for the Primitive Baptists before grandfather died, and preached five years after grandfather's death, and died. Grandfather died in September before Lincoln's first election in 1860. Uncle Harvey died at the close of the war in April, 1865. My cousin, John T. Oliphant, began preaching before Uncle Harvey's death, and he is still preaching. So grandfather Oliphant and his sons have now been preaching for the Primitive Baptists over a century, and holding the same doctrine and views generally.

I remember grandfather well, and of hearing him preach. He wrote a circular letter for the association which still exists, and which shows his views. He was born in 1781, and began preaching in the year 1800, so he and his son and grandson have now (in 1923) been preaching for the Primitive Baptists 123 years. My father's name was Thomas. He was born in October; 1818, in North Carolina, and died in August, 1889. He joined the church, when a youth, and lived a consistent life all the way. He was a farmer and a hard working man. My mother's maiden name was Carmichael. Archibald Carmichael, her grandfather, was a Primitive Baptist in North Carolina, and was in the Revolutionary war. Grandfather Carmichael's name was Richard, was born in North Carolina, and was neighbor there of Grandfather Oliphant, and they were members of the same church. About 1820 they moved to Indiana and settled not far from Harrodsburg. Here they lived neighbors, and were members of the same church, which was old Hebron, in Greene county, and of which grandfather was long the pastor, and "Uncle Richard" Carmichael, as he was called, was a zealous member. My father and mother were married about 1839, and soon settled on a farm near Hebron church. The farm was in Monroe county. I was born four years before they went on the farm referred to. They lived on that farm until 1881, nearly thirty-five years. Then they spent one year in Nodaway county, Missouri, after which they returned to Indiana where they ended their days. Mother died in April, 1885, and father lived until in August, 1889. They were both members at Hebron church, and were faithful and helpful in every way to it. To them were born fourteen children, three of whom died in infancy, and eleven are yet living, except Richard, who was killed by a runaway team near Ravenwood, Missouri, in December, 1910. Mother died cheerfully and in full possession of her understanding. Her last words were whispered, "You will all come soon." Father died willingly and cheerfully. His last words were, "When I am dead I want my sons to stand around my bed and sing, "Amazing grace, how sweet the sound, That saved a wretch like me."

He died about 1 o'clock p. m., and finished a life full of evidences that he was a sincere and noble man, and we sang the hymn in cheerful, solemn tones as he requested. Mother was contented

about the three babes, and said, "I feel less uneasiness about the dead than about the living." Father was not a gifted man in public. I never heard him pray in the church, but he often returned thanks at the table. They were deeply interested in the church in every way. The White River association was a large body. There were over one thousand members, as I remember. About 1860 there came trouble into the association, and it continued and grew worse, until in 1865 division came. I was an observer and interested in all. Good people went on both sides. There were preachers who tired of the "old paths" and doctrine, who believed in progression. Protracted meetings were held by them at which a hundred joined, and things looked discouraging for those who loved the old ways. Elder E. D. Thomas, of the Danville association, rendered good help, and all the sister associations continued their correspondence with our tried people. As time went by the house of Saul grew weaker, and the house of David grew stronger. The Progressives seemed to think there was room between us and the Missionaries to stand, but experience and time demonstrated that there was not. This fact has often been shown since.

I was born March 10, 1846, and was brought up to work on the farm. My chances for school were poor, such as the common schools afforded. I wish to notice the interest my parents took in my religious and moral training. They sought to fix in our minds a love for honesty, integrity, fair dealing and justice among men. They took us to church, and encouraged us to go when we grew older. Mother talked to us more than father, and she would often tell us her experience, of which I have a vivid recollection yet. She often told us that we needed a blessing that she could not bestow on us. The preachers came often to our home, but when they tried to talk to me I shunned them. But often they would talk of divine things in our presence, and I loved to hear them. In the fall of 1863 I taught my first school. During the school term I got acquainted with Catherine Tague, and at once was interested in her, and we were married September 4, 1864. Her father, Jacob Tague, was a Dutchman, who was born in North Carolina. Her great-grandfather, Michael Tague, was perhaps born in the old country, but her father, Jacob Tague, was brought to Indiana about the time my father was, and they were neighbors. The Tagues were Methodists as far back as I have heard. When we were married we settled in a Baptist neighborhood, where we attended their meetings, but we both felt unconcerned as to our own interests.

Elders Gustin Carmichael. L. G. Burch, Jesse Burch, Mordecai Hatfield, Gideon Potter, Louis Walden and Gilbert Hayse were the home preachers, I believe, of the association. Elder E. D. Thomas was a frequent and welcome visitor in the community, and we attended as we had opportunity, though with no special interest until in 1867.

02 First Religious Experiences

02. First Religious Experiences Autobiography - James H. Oliphant

Chapter II In 1868 I became interested in religion. I met Elder L. T. Buchanan first in September of that year. I attended all the meetings, and my wife was also attentive. I observed in her an increased interest in the church, so we both waited impatiently from one meeting to the next. We were glad to be with the members. My interest was such that I could not conceal it. I thought that I had some affliction coming on me for months. I was so burdened in mind that it was my first thought in the morning and the last before I went to sleep. Without detailing what I did or said, I will mention that I went to hear Elder E. D. Thomas preach, and his text was, "Blessed are they which do hunger and thirst after righteousness, for they shall be filled." He talked of it as follows: "The one that hungers and thirsts is now blessed, in the present tense. If you hunger and thirst after righteousness, you are now blessed. It does not say, blessed are the righteous, but blessed are they that desire to be righteous. Is there one here that longs to be free from sins, that would give the world to be free from all sin, and to enjoy the loving presence of the Savior? If so, you are now blessed. Already has the mercy of God been bestowed upon you, and you now have a pledge for all the fullness of divine blessing."

While he talked in this way I considered my own case. Do I feel the need of mercy? Do I really long to be pure and free from sin? I knew that I did. But this was all new to me. I saw things in a new light. I had thought that I must first be righteous, and I had tried to be in every way that I could. But the preacher urged that if I longed to be righteous then this text applied to me. After it was all over, I went home with a little hope. I saw in my heart the desire, deep and sincere, and I felt that the text must be mine. So ever after that I had a little hope. On Sunday evening after this, I was at an association at Indian Creek church in the White River association. I left the people and went to myself, and in a lone ravine, surrounded with underbrush, alone, I tried to pray, and while there I became satisfied, my trouble all left me. I felt at rest, a solemn composure of mind came to me. I came home Monday evening, and my wife had had a similar experience while I was gone. On Tuesday evening I felt discouraged, and felt that I was deceived. I sent for Elder D. T. Poynter to come and talk to us. He talked as I felt. He said doubts and fears were not uncommon among the Lord's people, that we must expect these things to come to us. By the time he was done speaking, I felt my hope revive, and my joy was restored to me. My wife took part in the conversation, and I was then convinced that it was not common for the Lord's people to live in perpetual joy, but that clouds would come over us all. And now, after forty-seven years of life in the church, I still find dark trials to roll over me, and I am often made to cry, "O wretched man that I am!" On Wednesday my wife and I went to meeting and joined the church, and were baptized by Elder D. T. Poynter. It was a great comfort to have the fellowship of the members. My parents were there, and both were happy. When the hand of fellowship was given to us, father started the song, "O happy time, long waited for, The comfort of my heart."

Mother embraced us, and I enjoyed a sweet, solemn composure of mind. This was August 1, 1869, and I do not remember being harassed with doubt or fear for several weeks.

03 First Preaching

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CHAPTER III.

Soon after the above incident my wife and I went to the Danville association. It was held at Mt. Union church in the Shirley neighborhood, Boone county, Indiana. We went by the way of Center Valley where we first met Murdock Craven, and by Mt. Zion church and Antioch, where we met the Josephs. We enjoyed the meeting and the trip. All was a continued feast. On this trip we first met Elder S. D. Harlin, whom I loved ever afterwards, as a faithful man. On our return we were at Crawfordsville over night. We did not know of any Baptists being in Crawfordsville. I had no doubts, nor fears, no weighty cares on this trip.

Sometime that fall I became interested in the churches. They were weak, and some of them not supplied with pastors. The recent division in the White River association had been followed by protracted meetings by the Progressives. So it looked gloomy for our people. I felt deeply anxious about the churches, and felt impressed that I ought to take some part in a public way. There were three things in my way. My wife was utterly unreconciled to it, was one trouble; my unworthiness was another, and my incompetency. My wife became reconciled to it, so the first trouble was removed, but to this day I am troubled with a sense of my unworthiness and incompetency. I have as good evidence of being called to the ministry as of an experience of grace. The first time I ever took part in public service was at the home of Brother William Sparks, near Stanford, Indiana, at a night meeting. I opened meeting by prayer, and it was a poor little prayer, but I found relief in it. This was in February, 1870. In January, 1872, I was ordained by the following presbytery: Elders Gideon Potter, D. T. Poynter, E. D. Thomas and Deacons J. C. Freeman, George Kinder and Henry Boruff. This took place at Union church in Green county, Indiana, where we first joined. I was called to the care of Spring Creek church in April, 1870, and Guthrie's Creek and Indian Creek by June, 1870. I was also made assistant to Elder Potter at my home church. So in the year 1870, I was called to the care of four churches, and continued to serve that number of churches up to December, 1914, so it was over forty-one years I served four churches continuously.

I well remember the interest that was taken in me by Charles Burch, John Sharr, William Graves, J. C Freeman and others. These men are all dead now. They encouraged me, went with me to other churches, and showed their interest in me in every way. If I failed in an effort to preach, they made excuses for me, and showed in every way that they regarded me as a real sent minister of the gospel. The church at Union prospered and many precious members were added to it during the twenty years I served it. And so at other churches in the association, so that the association became strong again under the faithful service of their ministers and visiting ministers.

04 More experiences

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CHAPTER IV.

I attended Indian Creek church fourteen years, a distance of seventeen miles on horseback. I missed nine meetings during the fourteen years. About the same length of time I served Friendship church, and for a like period I attended Guthrie's Creek church, thirty-five miles away, and Little Flock and Spring Creek, each about twelve miles away, and Plum Creek and Smyrna, both thirty-five miles away. I did all this attending churches on horseback for twenty years. When I think of all that toil and travel I wonder that I am yet alive. The churches were weak in numbers, and cold, when I undertook the task. But our associations everywhere stood with us, and the elders visited us and strengthened us, and we had many additions in all the churches. My brothers, Richard and Peter T., both were ordained and served the churches. Also Solomon Inman and Thomas Mitchell. A period of prosperity was given to White River association. The churches were not well instructed in the doctrine. Some of the most popular elders had imbibed the Fuller view that the atonement was general, but special in its application, sufficient for all the race, but designed for the elect only. My father had become confused on this point, and I studied this point closely. He would visit me and talk it over often and with tears. In studying it, it came to me that the sufficiency of the atonement to save anyone lies in the fact that Christ bore his sins. "The iniquity of us all was laid upon Him." "He bare our sins in His own body." "By His knowledge shall my righteous servant justify many, for He shall bear their sins." I found a great many texts like the above, and it was plain to me that our sins were laid on him.

"My soul looks back to see The burden Thou didst bear, While hanging on the tree, And hopes her guilt was there."

I went to father's a cold winter day and found him mending shoes. I told him I thought that Christ did not merely bear the penalty due sin, but the sin itself. I quoted to him the above texts and others. He objected to the idea. Then I proposed to him that we read the Bible to see whether Christ bore the sins of men or the penalty only. Father saw that if He bore the sin itself and "put it away" "by the sacrifice of Himself" the Fuller view is wrong, and the sufficiency of the atonement to save any sinner lies in the fact that He bore his sins. It was apparent that the death and sufferings of Christ for our sins would certainly result in salvation. Father saw the force in what I said, and agreed that we would try to find out whether He bore the sins of His people or the penalty only. Mother said to him, "Your father held that Christ bore our sins," and quoted the words, "Dear, dying Lamb, Thy precious blood Shall never lose its power, 'Till all the ransomed church of God Be saved to sin no more."

I went home and studied this point with care, and father did also. When we next met he was convinced that my view was right, that Christ did bear the sins of His people and that the atonement and salvation are the same in extent. "He that spared not His own Son, but delivered

Him up for us all, how shall He not with Him freely give us all things?" "He died for our sins that He might deliver us from this present evil world." A great many texts unite the atonement and salvation together as cause and effect in such way as to leave no room to talk of a sufficiency in the atonement to save any only on the ground that Christ bore their sins, and this results in more than a sufficiency, it results in a certain salvation. Father became settled in his views on the subject and remained so until death.

05 Visit to a Association

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CHAPTER V. In the fall of 1870 I made my first visit to the Blue River association, which was held at Stampers Creek church that year. I got off the evening train at Orleans and stayed all night at Brother Chisms'. I was an entire stranger to everyone there. Elder Strickland had heard of an Oliphant that preached and asked if I was the one. He would have me in the stand. I got acquainted with Elders T. M. Robertson, G. M. Thompson, Wesley Polson, F. M. Mattox, William Guthrie, S. McMahan and others, but all the above were dear friends to me while they lived. All are dead now and all the men of that association that were elders then are dead now. But that association now has as many preachers as it had then, and all are as united as they were then. Elder G. M. Thompson preached on Sunday from Deuteronomy, "My doctrine shall drop as the rain, my speech shall distill as the dew; as the small rain upon the tender earth and as the showers upon the grass."

Although it is now nearly forty-two years ago, I remember much that he said. The rain and operations of grace are not left to be directed and controlled by men. The refreshing showers of rain are neither caused nor hindered by men. No effort of men can break the drought or bring down the dew upon the fields. "The wind bloweth where it listeth," so the Lord works where and when He pleases. The rain and dew fall on heathen lands, and the wind blows there, and the rain of grace is equally sovereign. The pope himself can neither cause nor hinder the rain nor dew, nor can all the ministers of earth do so; and they cannot direct the spirit of the Lord. An unexpected revival breaks out in a church and coldness and strife are in one near by. The showers of refreshing fall on the one and are withheld from the other. He talked of the tender herb and the distilling dew that nourishes it, and the mourning soul that is refreshed by the gentle dew of truth. It was a new theme to me and I rejoiced to know that God alone is the Savior and that the rain and blessings of grace are entirely independent of men. Capitalists can form a corner on many things, but not on the rain, or dew, or wind. So the Lord is able to save in all the earth.

I visited William Mattox' home on that trip and attended the ordination of Wesley Polson, and tried to preach from the words, "If any man be in Christ he is a new creature." I made a poor effort. After that I visited Blue River association frequently, got well acquainted with all the elders and loved them all tenderly. I preached in all their churches, saw a great many persons join the church, and helped to constitute Pleasant Grove and Young's Creek churches. I also helped to ordain several elders in that association. I became well acquainted with Elder F. M. Mattox and up to his death we were close, loving friends. I was called on to preach his wife's funeral first, and later he died and at his request I preached his funeral in the Presbyterian Church in Livonia, Indiana, to an immense audience. I used this text: "Which of you intending to build a tower sitteth not down first and counteth the cost whether he hath sufficient to finish it?"-Luke xiv. 28. The tower here is the Christian life of duty. Many begin this tower and leave it unfinished to their discredit. But Elder Mattox finished it all complete, with the last nail and shingle. I loved this dear elder tenderly. We

traveled together a great deal.

I aided in ordaining Elder G. T. Mayfield, and regarded him as a noble man. I was called to attend his funeral in April, 1910. An immense audience was in attendance, giving evidence of the high esteem in which he was held. At his ordination he seemed fearful that he was utterly unworthy to be placed in the office of elder. With tears in his eyes, he said, "When I think how clean one's hands should be, and then how unclean I am, it seems utterly unreasonable I should be entrusted with this office." This was a noble man and he left a noble family.

I was called to attend the funeral of Lensford Lomax, near Paoli, Indiana. I felt serious as I reviewed the forty years acquaintance with Blue River association. O, how many now "Sleep low in the ground" who once were sweet companions to me here, but all are now beyond the storms of life, while I must still be tossed by the billows and driven by the winds of time till I, too, shall join their song. In the divisions that have come on our people, this association has not lost any of its members, nor has division come into its body. Its elders have been content with the old paths, and all stood together. Here is the secret of pastoring a church---teach it that everything new in religion is false, and when elders get to be progressive, and want to modernize our people, avoid them, and encourage the members to be content with the things taught in the word. I met Elder James Noblitt in this association whose company was sweet to me. He stands for Bible truth. In the fall of 1870 I made my first visit to the Blue River association, which was held at Stampers Creek church that year. I got off the evening train at Orleans and stayed all night at Brother Chisms'. I was an entire stranger to everyone there. Elder Strickland had heard of an Oliphant that preached and asked if I was the one. He would have me in the stand. I got acquainted with Elders T. M. Robertson, G. M. Thompson, Wesley Polson, F. M. Mattox, William Guthrie, S. McMahan and others, but all the above were dear friends to me while they lived. All are dead now and all the men of that association that were elders then are dead now. But that association now has as many preachers as it had then, and all are as united as they were then. Elder G. M. Thompson preached on Sunday from Deuteronomy, "My doctrine shall drop as the rain, my speech shall distill as the dew; as the small rain upon the tender earth and as the showers upon the grass."

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06 Vist to another Association

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CHAPTER VI. In 1873 I first visited the Salem association, and made the acquaintance of Elders Joel Hume and James Strickland. I first met Elder Ira Turner at this meeting. The association was large and prosperous, no division had ever crippled its influence. Elder Hume was a great man, eloquent in his address, and was regarded as a leader among our people. Elder Strickland, too, was a fine speaker. I frequently visited this association for many years, and saw many additions made to the churches. At this first visit Brother Moses Endicott took interest in me and bought a coat for me, which I ever remembered. I was also delighted with the singing. I remember John Mangrum and Richard Broomfield and others singing. The entire association was united in sentiment. There was not a Missionary Baptist church in Posey county at that time. In the division with Burnam and others this association did not lose one member. Elder Lemuel Potter moved into this association soon after my first visit to it and worked in harmony with the other elders. I visited these elders and their churches frequently for twenty years, and in turn they visited me, and the exchange benefited our churches very much. The elders above referred to were Primitive Baptists indeed, free from the errors that have from time to time crept into our churches. I remember my visits with these people with pleasure, and the instruction I received from these elders went far towards molding my religious sentiment. I traveled and preached by the week with Elder Potter, who was companionable to be with. In 1878, he came to Union church in Green county, Indiana, my home church, and debated six days with a Methodist preacher. One of the questions was, "Falling from grace." I wrote my first book, "Final Perseverance of the Saints," soon after this debate. Our people patronized it well---over six thousand were disposed of. The debate resulted in good to our people. Congregations were built up, and many additions were made to the church after that debate. I feel sure this was one debate that resulted in good.

Elder Potter and I were close friends to the close of his life, which was in the fall of 1896, and at his request I tried to preach at his funeral, which was held in the Methodist church at Poseyville, Indiana. The text was, "I have fought a good fight, I have kept the faith, I have finished my course; henceforth there is a crown of righteousness laid up for me." An immense audience came to pay a tribute of respect to the dear man of God. It was a trial to me to preach on the occasion. Six Primitive Baptist elders were the pall-bearers. I visited Elder Potter while he lived at Grayville, Illinois, and the churches there were at peace and prospering. Several joined while I was there. I visited these churches several times afterwards and found them to be a sound body of Baptists.

I will speak of the Skillet Fork and Muddy River associations; also the Little Wabash. Elder Lewis Ron was a leading minister and a worthy one among these people, also Elder Lewis Stewart was a noble man of God. All the elders then living in these associations are now dead, but others have been raised up to take their places and perpetuate the doctrine of the Primitive Baptists.

During my visits to the Salem association some of the churches drew out of it and were formed into the Patoka association, and I visited that association and its churches frequently. All the old

elders in the association are dead. The Little Zion association is further east. I visited those churches in 1876, and afterward. Elder T. N. Robertson was one of their elders and he was a noble man of God. During my visits to this association, I visited Little Pigeon church near Gentryville, Indiana. It was near this church that Lincoln's father and mother lived from the time he was seven years old till he was twenty-one years old. The father and mother were members of this church and the mother was buried near the church. I asked old Brother Gentry about Abe's rail splitting record. He said that while Abe was a great reader he was not much inclined to rail making.

07 Visit to Churches and Move

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CHAPTER VII. In 1876, I visited churches west of Worthington, Indiana, near Linton, Dugger, Alum Cave and Pimento. I formed the acquaintance of two elders, Moss and Hamilton Burge. I preached at Samaria, Good Hope, Little Flock, and Hartford church near Pimento. I frequently visited these churches and many delightful visits I had with them. Elder W. Thompson lived at Pimento, and served the church there as pastor till his death. He constituted that church. About 1879 I was called by the church to assist him, which I did till his death. I was then called to pastor the church and have done so till now. All the elders above referred to are dead, but others fill the vacancies.

I moved from Buena Vista to near Linden in March, 1890, and spent a very unhappy year. Afterwards I moved to Crawfordsville, and in November, 1892, I moved to Pimento, Indiana, where I lived on a farm near there for seven years, and then moved to my present home in Crawfordsville, Indiana. During all these moves I was pastor at Pimento. The Pimento Church first called Wm. Thompson as pastor in 1867. When he was too old and infirm to serve I was called to assist him and after his death I was called to pastor and still serve it. It has never had but two pastors during its history. Brother I. N. Kester was first called to serve as moderator, and still serves. He has been a faithful, good officer all these forty-four years. It is said, "they that love will labor and suffer." I felt drawn to Pimento church on my first visit there, and it seemed that the church was drawn to me, and so we still are united as church and pastor. There has been no division in the church, no strife, nor confusion. We have had coldness and barrenness at times, but these can be borne when the members love each other. Three of my children, Ollos W., Jacob T., and Irene, belong, also one son-in-law, P. L. Combs, and my oldest son's wife, and Walter's wife. His first wife was the daughter of Deacon L. H. Weeks. She died in August, 1906, leaving two little girls, Ethel and Edith, who kept house with their father till April, 1910, when he married Sister Mabel Wible. We had six children and have never had a death in our flock till the death of our dear daughter-in-law. We have been greatly blessed in these things, but we know the time is not far away when we shall have our share of the doings of death. Our church at Pimento has been well attended all the time I have attended it. I have been with these people at all seasons, in sickness and death, and have gone with them to the grave a great many times. A generation has passed away since I first went there. In November, 1893, Fairbanks church was constituted, mostly members lettered out of Pimento, which reduced our membership at Pimento. I attended Fairbanks church fourteen years, and I enjoyed the church a great deal. It is truly a Primitive Baptist church. There is a strong Baptist sentiment at Pimento. I have four children living near there, and things on this account favor my continuance there as pastor.

08 Trip with G.M. Thompson

08. Trip with G.M. Thompson Autobiography - James H. Oliphant

CHAPTER VIII. In February, 1879, I arranged to go to Ohio with Elder G. M. Thompson. We were to meet at Indianapolis, and go to Marion, Ohio. We failed to get together at Indianapolis and I went on alone. I got to Marion near midnight. I waited there till morning when Elder Lewis Seitz (the second) came for me. I have always been subject to discouragement and I was especially "blue" then. I had missed Elder Thompson, I was alone, and far from home and an entire stranger, and with a heavy heart I went to meeting the next day, but I was blessed with unusual liberty. At the close of the meeting two girls, daughters of Elder Seitz, came to the church, telling their experiences. They both told how they had seen themselves lost sinners. They had had such an awful sense of their sinful state. It was one of the sweetest meetings I had ever attended. Twenty years later I went there again. Before I got off the train I asked about those two girls and was told they had lived worthy lives as Baptists. I was delighted with their lives. But in a day or two Elder Thompson came and we traveled and preached together for thirty-five days. Our first meeting was at Rocky Fork.

There were several incidents on the trip that were deeply interesting. A young man at Honey Creek church professed a hope while we were there. Next morning he came to where I was stopping with his grandfather (Elder Seitz). When the old elder saw the young man he read in his face that his burden was gone. They took each other in their arms and rejoiced together.

It was a beautiful sight to see them rejoice together. I do not remember all the churches I visited. I met the two Elders Seitz, Elder Barker, Elder Sherwood, Elder Pritchard, and Elder Wm. Dodd. They were a grand set of men. Churches were sound and content with the old Primitive Baptist doctrine. They are all dead now and gone to their reward. I remember Elder Dodd as a scholarly man, also Elder Sherwood and Elder Pritchard as able ministers of the gospel.

We heard a man preach who labored to show that Christ died as a substitute, and that where a legal substitute suffers for the principal it has the effect of relieving the principal from suffering. In this way the words "If one died for all then were all dead," are to be understood, representatively dead. He related a circumstance of a man that had been drafted into the army in France. A friend took his place as substitute, and went into the army. In course of time he was killed, and the war went on. Later he was drafted again. He refused to go, and pleaded that he was dead. He explained how his substitute had stood in the ranks in his place, and while doing so was killed, and now, as the man was slain while acting in his place, he was legally exempted from service. He urged that Christ's death could be legal on the grounds of substitution only, and His death must necessarily free His people from suffering. Our trip was a pleasant one all around. There were additions at all the churches. Elder Thompson, when in the spirit of preaching was a wonder. He was a great preacher indeed, a precious gift. Sometimes he would get in the dark and almost fail. I have visited our Ohio churches several times since those old preachers are all gone, but young men are raised up to perpetuate the truth. I love our Ohio brethren as faithful men. They have

been tried, and are faithful.

09 Trip with E.D. Thomas

09. Trip with E.D. Thomas Autobiography - James H. Oliphant

CHAPTER IX. In company with Elder E. D. Thomas I first visited the North District association, in Kentucky, in the fall of 1885. It was held that year with the Cane Spring church. Elder William Rupard was the moderator. Elder Rupard was among the best preachers I ever met.

While he was able and sound in doctrine, he was deeply experimental, and was a comforting preacher. I also met here Elder James J. Gilbert, whom I have greatly enjoyed for many years. He was an able minister. I also met Elders Cris Newland, J. N. Culton and others. These churches were well taught and were an excellent body of Baptists. I do not remember better listeners than attended at that meeting at Cane Spring, and it seemed easy to preach to them. On my return home I visited Goshen church, and I received numerous invitations to visit them again. In 1886 I visited the association again, and this year it was held at Liberty church. I tried to preach Friday, Saturday and Sunday. I felt impressed that I must preach there on Monday, and Elder Rupard consented to it. On Monday the large house was full of people and solemnity rested on every face. I tried to preach, and Elder Rupard extended the opportunity for members, and Brother Boone Elkins came and gave his hand. When the song closed, Elder Rupard said, "What do you want, Boone?" He replied, "For forty years I have had a little hope and have been waiting for a better one, and have concluded to come with the hope I had forty years ago." While he was talking his daughters came and put their arms around his neck, and gave a reason of their hope. A lady on the second seat back called Elder Rupard and told him she wanted to join, but was so crowded she could not get out. Without another song or word of exhortation they continued to come forward until twenty-four were added to the church. Tears flowed freely from all eyes and all were melted in love. Elder Rupard remained and baptized the people the next day, and I went to Lulbegrad church, where others joined. I think there were one hundred persons joined the church during my visit among them. I never saw more evidence of the hand of the Lord with me than I saw among the churches there. When we preach of the power of God in conversion of sinners, and then have it proven by converts coming and bearing witness to it in their experiences, it is inexpressibly good, and this was my happy privilege on this visit. I shall ever remember those dear brethren.

Brother Columbus Thompson, of Winchester, Kentucky, and Brother David Chenault, of Richmond, were dear brethren to me, and others that I have not space to name. Many of them are gone to their rest in heaven. I continued to visit these people almost every year for twenty years. On one trip my wife went with me and enjoyed it very much. Many noble people will be greatly disappointed if there is not a heaven. We enjoyed a foretaste of it often among these people. I often heard the members shout the praise of God while among them.

I also visited in the Tates Creek association, near the North District association, where I met Elder Henry Clark. I dearly loved him for his gentleness and firmness as a Primitive Baptist, but death has taken away hundreds of these dear people, and nearly all the elders have gone. It has been some years since I visited among them. We hope to meet again where there is no parting. We

have thought of it and talked of it and sung of it, many years, and we hope some sweet day to realize all our hopes.

10 Meeting at Fulton Kentucky

10. Meeting at Fulton Kentucky Autobiography - James H. Oliphant

Chapter X In November, 1900, I attended the national meeting at Fulton, Kentucky. It was the largest gathering of Primitive Baptists I ever saw. Fourteen states were represented, and numerous preachers from many state; were there. The old London Confession was publicly read and approved, section by section. I served as moderator of the meeting. I thought it was prudent to hold that meeting, and some thought that it would be prudent to hold such a meeting every year, which seemed to me to be unwise. I met a great many elders at this meeting. Elders Hanks of Georgia, Webb of Texas, Little of Arkansas, Verell of Mississippi, Stevens of Arkansas, Cayce of Tennessee, and many others. The meeting was made up, for the most part, of true Primitive Baptists. There were many tears shed as the strong sentiments of the London Confession were read and considered. None could see the manifestation of love for the old doctrine that was there made without being impressed that these truths will still survive many years to come. It has long been predicted that the Primitive Baptists will pass away "when the ministers now living are dead." But as death takes the old ones away, others are raised up to take their places. The doctrine of our people is taught in the Bible, and is in harmony with the experience of all the children of God and common sense. It has the elements that will endure strong opposition, and even persecution, and will yet live as the centuries go by. When the Lord comes again He will find these principles still dear to many who "love His appearing."

After this meeting I visited several of the churches in Tennessee. I was at the home of Elder S. F. Cayce, of Martin, Tenn. He was an able minister of the New Testament and had the love and confidence of the Baptists. I was at the home of Elder Claude Cayce, who was then a young preacher. I also met Elder J. C. Ross, of Greenfield, Tennessee, who was a precious gift. I met at this meeting many Baptists in western Kentucky, and afterwards I visited the churches in south of Paducah, Kentucky, where I formed numerous acquaintances among our people. I found a great many Baptists in Tennessee and western Kentucky. Where we find our churches content with the old paths, we find precious happiness, and this was the state of our people in that part of the country. They were as entirely free of pride, and a desire to modernize our people as any Baptists I have ever met.

Elder S. F. Cayce was born in 1850 and died in 1905. He was an able preacher and a true Primitive Baptist. He held a great many debates and was a strong debater. He was loved by our people throughout the country, and frequently visited our churches in Indiana, and was greatly appreciated. I visited churches in Illinois---Carmi, Calvin, Grayville and other points in southern Illinois---where I met Elders Arnold, Hunsinger, Fuller and others.

"The Gospel Light," a paper started by Elder H. A. Todd, in 1902, caused deep trouble among our people by introducing Fuller sentiments and reproaching our people in many ways. In 1904, S. B. Lockett, of Crawfordsville, wrote "A Candid Review of the Gospel Light," and soon after this pamphlet appeared "The Light" was discontinued, and "The Primitive Baptist" took the task of

supplying its patrons. S. B. Lockett has been a distinguished writer, but he never excelled this little pamphlet. Elders Todd and Hackman went at once to the Missionaries. There were nearly a dozen of our elders that left us and went to the Missionaries. They tried first to modernize our people, and, failing to do so, they left us. It seems that there have ever been men among us who sought to make our people more acceptable to the world. The first move of this kind that ever came under my notice was in 1861-1865. A dozen preachers in southern Indiana went into Arminian practices, such as protracted meetings, mourner's benches, and Sunday schools. Division resulted, in which White River association was nearly evenly divided. I have seen this same move repeated several times since. It is the same spirit, a desire to conform more and more to the world. I have no doubt but that on and on through time men will rise up among us to repeat this move, and I think there will ever be men to oppose these efforts, and preserve our people from ruin by these "would be" reformers.

I visited our people in Missouri in 1896. Elder G. M. Thompson then lived at Ashland, Missouri, and was pastor of Goshen church, I went first to his house. He was born in 1811, and died soon after I visited him. I was delighted to spend a week with him and his brethren.

I had traveled with him a great deal in Indiana, Ohio and Missouri and enjoyed him much. After visiting with him at his churches, the Missionary Baptists in Ashland requested me to preach in their house, which I did. When I was done Elder Thompson arose and began to talk. As he talked he warmed up to his subject, grew eloquent and walked down the aisle, to the middle of the house. I never listened to anything finer than that address. I shook his hand and bade him goodbye that evening and never saw him afterwards.

I then went on up the Missouri river and visited churches, and met a number of elders, among whom were Elders Cash, Sisk, Higdon, Brown, Elkins, Sears, Hardesty, Jones and my dear brother in the flesh, Elder R. A. Oliphant. I made numerous acquaintances and met with churches that were genuine Primitive Baptists. It was one of the most pleasant trips of my life. Elder Cash of St. Joseph, Missouri, took charge of the "Messenger of Peace" when its founder, Elder J. E. Goodson, died. On this trip I formed Elder Cash's acquaintance and we have been fast friends ever since. He has visited me and my churches here, and I have since visited him. A great many of those elders have died since, and members also. Among the elders that have died are Elders Thompson, Sears, Pollard, Elkins and my brother, R. A. Oliphant. Elder Elkins visited me here. He was an excellent preacher and a dear lover of the principles of our people. He was born in 1843, and died in 1909. I visited the West Union church in Nodaway county, Missouri, on this trip. It was composed mostly of members from our old home church in southern Indiana. I knew almost every person at the meeting there. I had baptized many of them before they moved to Missouri.

I am solemnly impressed with the nearness and certainty of death as I recall the men and women whom I have met in my journeys. "Which hope we have as an anchor of the soul," a hope that we shall meet where "None ever grow old" where our trials will forever end, and I can truly say "I would not live away."

11 Experience on a train and at a funeral

11. Experience on a train and at a funeral Autobiography - James H. Oliphant

CHAPTER XI.

I was introduced to a Christian preacher just as I was getting on a train. He was rather overbearing in his turn and looked at me and said, "Predestination." I said, "Yes, the word is in the book and we believe the book." We took the same seat and he read a paper denouncing the doctrine and our people in the strongest terms. It pointed out that the advocates of the doctrine are growing fewer---that education and science drive them as fog before the rising sun; that they are now so few the world will not long be annoyed by them. It was a bitter attack. After he was done he asked what I thought of it. I said, "He argues from our small numbers that we shall soon disappear from the earth. When the world was drowned by the flood only a few were right, and the many were wrong. When Sodom was burned up only a little few were right, and the many were wrong. When the prophet prayed he said, 'I am left alone, and they seek my life.' So again the few were right, and the many wrong. Now, Elder, tell me when the majority was right." I pressed him to tell me and he could cite no time when the majority was right. "Well," I said, "if those in the right are always the few, you better come over to us."

I was once called to attend a funeral in the country and a lady went along to sing. After we were started, she said, "What do you people believe in?" I said, "We believe in religion." She said, "You believe in predestination, I hear." I told her, "Yes, we believe in that, too." "Well, I don't see how sensible people can do that," she said.

I asked her if she knew the meaning of the word. She said, "No." "Did you ever study the subject much?" She said, "No." "Well," said I, "you are not prepared to give an intelligent opinion if you do not know the meaning of the word."

She asked, "What does it mean?" I gave her as its meaning, "For one to determine beforehand what he will do." It is one of three ways; you do, and then determine to do; or, you determine to do, and then do; or you do without determining to do, either before or after you do. I asked her which way she did. She said, "I always determine to do first." Well," I said, "you are a Predestinarian, yourself." A Predestinarian is one that believes that God first determines what He will do. If you can find out anything that He does you may know He first determined to do it. If it be to make a world, or save a sinner, or raise the dead, or any other act of God, He first determined to do it. She seemed to be satisfied with this.

If it is good and praiseworthy for God to save a sinner in time, it would certainly be no harm for Him to determine to do so before time, Predestination is essential to all intelligent action. Among men, it is inseparable from intelligence. Persons often denounce it that have never studied it closely. God never does a cruel thing, therefore He never predestinated a cruel thing; He does not predestinate to punish the wicked except for their sins. There is an important distinction between the foreknowledge and the predestination of God. A failure to see this leads to confusion. In 1899,

I had a correspondence with Elder S. H. Durand on the subject of predestination. It was first published in our periodicals and afterwards in book form. He urged that all things both good and evil are predestinated. I maintained that "predestinate" denotes causation; that to say that God predestinates all things, both good and evil, is to say that God sustains the same relation to sin that He does to holiness, and this is to make Him the cause of it. I urged that to deny that God is the cause of sin is to deny that He decreed it. We allow that

12 Writing for papers

12. Writing for papers Autobiography - James H. Oliphant

CHAPTER XII.

I aided Elder Lemuel Potter in writing for his paper, "The Church Advocate," from the time that he started it. In the summer of 1896 he became afflicted and felt assured that his time on earth was short, and he arranged with Elder R. W. Thompson to unite "The Monitor" and "Advocate" into one paper. At Elder Thompson's request I continued to assist in supplying the columns of the new paper. For many years I aided Elder Hassell in furnishing editorials for his paper, "The Gospel Messenger." Also Elder S. F. Cayce urged me to aid him with his paper, "The Primitive Baptist," and at his death I agreed to aid his son in it, which I have done. For many years I assisted Elder Waters, of Washington City, in supplying "Zion's Advocate" with editorials, as also I have done for Elder Walter Cash, of St. Joseph, Mo., for his paper, "The Messenger of Peace." I have written much for these five papers in the last twenty years. I am sure many blunders have been made, but yet the brethren urge me to continue to write for them. I am situated to know of the oneness of all these papers, and union and close fellowship has ever existed between these periodicals and their editors.

I published my book, "Final Perseverance of the Saints" in 1878, and "Principles and Practices of the Primitive Baptists" in 1883. I later published a book entitled, "Regeneration." All these books were well patronized. In 1890 I published the first edition of my hymn book---3,000---and several editions were printed later. I wrote a book entitled, "Justification," which Elder S. F. Cayce, of Martin, Tenn., published in 1899. I also published "Thoughts on the Will," which has been well received by our people. The last book I wrote was a neatly bound book of 170 pages, entitled, "Practical Suggestions for the Common People" for young people. I have been satisfied with the reception given all these books. The writing of these books, and writing for our periodicals, together with my correspondence, has required much time and labor, and I feel its effect in myself. In addition to the above books, I published the "Durand Correspondence" which has been received favorably by our people. For forty-five years I have had the care of four churches which I have attended, and have had more than one thousand funerals. All of this together has required much travel and labor, also much patience, and I suppose I may say much patience on the part of the churches and of other elders to bear with me. I attach no value to it all in respect to merit. "Jesus only" is my hope. I feel no desire to repeat life. While many pleasures and happy seasons have been enjoyed, I find, too, that many tears and heartaches have been endured all along the way.

"I would at once have quit the field Where foes with fury foam, But, ah! my passport was not sealed, I could not yet go home."

"The time my God appoints is best, His to fix my time of rest."

It becomes us to quietly trust the Lord, not to murmur at trials, not shirk duty, but to cheerfully endure and take up the cross. This is my weakness: I am so distrustful and prone to see the dark

side. "He that has brought me safe thus far Will help me all my journey through."

13 Means question

13. Means question Autobiography - James H. Oliphant

CHAPTER XIII. In 1880 to 1886 a difference arose on the "Means" question and division resulted. Some churches in Missouri, Indiana, Ohio and Virginia, and in Kentucky, were affected by it. Elder Pence and I discussed the question in the "Messenger of Peace," then published by Elder J. E. Goodson. The "Means" party held that eternal life is conveyed by means of the written or preached word, that the work of quickening sinners, dead in sins, is effected by means of the preached word. I will not attempt to give the arguments produced by Elder Pence and the "Means" brethren, but will give some of the positions I took, and views by our people.

I maintained that all the use that God or men have for the Bible is summed up in the word, "teach"---"GO teach." That under no circumstances is there anything more done than is expressed by the words teach, edify, etc. Then I contended that there is something in true religion not produced by teaching, and if so, there is something in religion that is not produced by means of the word. I contended that the natural man cannot understand the things of the Spirit, so he needs a preparation for the right hearing of the word before he can be benefited by it. That all the benefit that men receive from it is through their understanding of it, and to say that men derive capacity to understand by means of the word is to say they are benefited by it before they understand it.

I contended that life is an entity. "He that hath the Son hath life." The Son is an entity, if not, then the Son is nothing. So life is an entity. "The gift of God is everlasting life." Life here is an entity; it is an entity or it is nothing. THE WORD, WRITTEN OR SPOKEN, IS A NON-ENTITY. That is, if you take away the ink and paper from the Bible, nothing remains, then nothing would be left. The ink and the paper are not the word, so the word is a non-entity. To say that an entity is conveyed by a non-entity is an absurdity.

I contended that "God has reserved a place at the genesis of life" where He alone acts, and that there is a clear distinction between life and the motions of life; that repentance, love, hope and joy are the motions and evidences of life. I conceded that repentance, peace, joy, etc., may be instrumentally produced by the word, but these must be distinguished from life. I contended that in the reception of life we are passive, but in repentance, faith, etc., we are active. I conceded that in all those things in which we are active we could admit instrumentality. But in the new birth we are not active, but passive. "It is not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God." In giving you a watch you must actively receive it, but not so in giving life, it is passively received. To say that a sinner must be willing to receive eternal life is to say that he must have the motions of eternal life before he has the life. We never think of the dead in their graves consenting to the resurrection in order to its being successful. We could admit that every right thought we have of God, or spiritual things is produced by means; but life is back of the thinking as truly as it is back of any other act. Thinking does not produce the new life. It may tend to its growth, as physical actions tend to the development of the physical life.

I contended that there is a distinction between regeneration and conversion. "Regeneration is the motion of God in the soul, conversion is the motion of the soul to God." "In regeneration we are passive, and receive from God; in conversion we are active and turn to God." "Regeneration is instantaneous; one instant we are dead in sin, the next we are spiritually alive. Conversion is gradual and by degrees." "Regeneration is a preparation for the right hearing of the word, and not a right hearing of the word a preparation for regeneration."

I contended that God is the giver of life. "With Thee is the fountain of life." We never expect means of any kind tending to produce animal or vegetable life, nor need we to expect means to produce spiritual life. I contended that the gulf between living and not living is so broad and so deep that divine power alone can deliver from death in sin; that life spiritual, as well as in the natural, can only come from the previous touch of life. I contended that God alone can introduce that current of life which shall endure while the eternal ages shall roll on; that He alone can implant in the soul that which shall never be rooted up, but bear the fruit of a beautiful life on earth while we live, and after death in distant worlds live on to the eternal glory of God and to the safety and eternal happiness of the sinner rescued from woe.

I contended that the angels, or pope or priest have no power to control or direct the spirit of God in His life-giving work, that the "Son quickeneth whom He will," and that to God alone belongs all the glory of our salvation, while all the benefit is ours. I consented that the preached word, in the spiritual kingdom, does no more than the rain and dew do in the vegetable kingdom. Rain and dew, with warm sun, will make living things grow, but will not make dead plants live. Little children learn early in life that vain is the help of man when death must be dealt with, and a discerning minister learns that sinners need more than what he can do for them. We need the arm of the Lord to be revealed in our assemblies. God is not a local, inactive being, carrying on His kingdom by means of men or angels, but He is an omnipresent, active being, carrying on the work of grace to His glory and our good. This will give some idea of the issues that were discussed in that trouble. The idea that the written word is the means of the eternal salvation of men will lead to the idea that the heathen are lost for the want of it; lost for want of human effort. It promotes trust in men and money, while these sentiments from which we plead promote a reliance on the Lord. In all these divisions good people are alienated from each other, families are divided, and distress comes to many hearts. But the truth is better understood, and more searched into. I hope that I may never see division again. It is ruinous to our churches, and a generation must pass away before the evil effects of division are gone. The Danville association and the White Water suffered considerably. In Ohio there were churches divided, and some in Virginia, but the body of our people throughout our country stood with us, continued correspondence with us, visited us, nourished us, and our churches have lived to this day. Let us try to live in peace and avoid questions that gender strife. Let us seek to build up our cause by speaking the truth in love.

14 Covet earnestly the best gifts

14. Covet earnestly the best gifts Autobiography - James H. Oliphant :-

CHAPTER XIV.

It is said we should "1 Corinthians 12:3 covet earnestly the best gifts." The church may lawfully covet the best gifts. The true minister is a gift to the church, and no church can live without such a gift. The church should be thankful for a gift, and should do its duty by that gift. It is a hard office to fill; he has expenses to care for his loved ones, and often churches fail to do their duty by their ministers. "1 Corinthians 12:31 "Yet show I unto you a more excellent way " This points out the most essential gift. It is to love the church, to love the Savior; not learning, nor diplomas, but sincere love to God and his cause. This will enable him to deny himself and serve the churches, not for filthy lucre's sake, but of a ready mind. 1 Peter 5:2 "The Spirit said, Separate me Saul and Barnabas to the work whereunto I have called them." Acts 13:2 "When a true gift is in the church the members will find it out, and it will not be necessary to urge one's own ordination. All Israel knew the lad "Samuel was a prophet in Israel." 1 Samuel 3:20 "When all the church is sure there is a gift in the body it is a time of gladness, We should pray the Lord of the harvest to bless us with faithful men, and when the Lord blesses the church with a gift it should do right by him.

I have had the care of a family all the way, and children never cease to be a burden to their parents, though they have homes of their own. I left home often in tears and left my wife in tears; but the brethren have generally been kind and aided me to pay my debts and buy my groceries. While some have been neglectful, shamefully so, there have been true brethren that came to my relief. My father-in-law was opposed to my becoming a minister. He thought that I would fail to support my family. But he was convinced that he was wrong before he died. I have always paid my debts, and always had plenty to eat and to wear. I am out of debt, and have a home. The brethren have been good to us and I love them very much. I have not had a great many friends, but they have been dear, good ones. Some are dead and some are yet spared to me, and I shall have dear friends until I am called home. A Presbyterian minister once asked me how it was that I had a home and things with no salary, and no system to raise money from the people. I told him that we believed that if a man loved the church and the members, and preached to them for their good, that good people would notice it, and would want him to keep at it, and would fix it so that he could keep at it. I told him that I believed this, and had given my life to the churches on this principle, and I could sincerely recommend it as a safe course to pursue. I hope I have been called to the ministry. I have about the same evidence of it that I have that I have had an experience of grace.

If you have a minister in your church that you believe to be a gift to the church, use him as such. If you have a wedding in your home, call on him to perform the ceremony. If you have a death in your home, do not send away for someone else, but call on him. It is so that a true minister will be inclined to doubt his fitness to be of any service to the church, and when the members discard him in these things it will discourage him.

15 Preaching trip

15. Preaching trip Autobiography - James H. Oliphant

CHAPTER XV. In 1892 I went to see our people in West Virginia, Maryland and Washington, D. C. I first left the railroad at Great Capon. I was not expected there, having come a day later than expected. No one was at the train to meet me, so I inquired for Elder T. N. Alderton. I found he lived two or three miles out. I walked out to his house. It was mountainous. I saw a man plowing with a team of cattle harnessed as horses. It was interesting to me to see such a team. I found Elder Alderton at home. He was born in 1849, died in 1906. He was a fine specimen of our race, a large and fine looking man. I felt drawn to him on our first acquaintance, and we were fast friends till his death. We had meeting at his home a day or two. The church there has since built a nice house.

We then went to Page county, Virginia, to a church of which he was pastor, and met a nice audience of plain people. I first met Elder S. K. Booton at this place, who was an interesting man. At this church I first saw a public collection taken up among Primitive Baptists by passing baskets around. I was sorry to see it at the time, but I .felt better satisfied about it after hearing them talk about it. They said it had been their custom from the settlement of the country. They thought that outside friends and well-wishers were glad to help the church when it was made convenient to do so. This custom prevailed in all the churches as I remember. There are a great many Primitive Baptists in the "Page Valley," and they are a noble set of Baptists, sound in the faith, and worthy people. I visited the church at Luray and found that division had come to them over the Means question. A lawsuit resulted since then, and the court decided in favor of our people, thereby holding that our brethren there were the true Primitive Baptists. It was a righteous decision, I am sure, and I rejoiced with our people in their being sustained in their efforts to maintain our sentiments in the world.

I was at the home of Elder T. S. Dalton, who then lived in Stanleyton, Virginia, and we have been true yoke fellows ever since. He is an ornament and an honor to our people. I was at Front Royal, where Elder John Clark started "Zion's Advocate." He was born in 1804, started "Zion's Advocate" in 1853, and died in 1882. He was truly a great man. I visited the churches he had served and stood in the pulpits which he had once occupied. The brethren loved him dearly.

I was at Fredericksburg on this trip and walked over the battlefield there, and the graveyard where our slain soldiers were buried. I enjoyed all these Virginia people and found them hospitable and generous. It was on this trip I was at Manassas Junction and preached in one church there, which is built on the Bull Run battle ground. It was interesting to hear men who were in it detail the circumstances of the battle. On this trip I first met Elder C. H. Waters, of Washington, D. C. He afterwards visited me here and our churches, and we esteemed him as a true and able defender of our cause. I met also Elders Norton and Oliver, of Washington. Our people have two churches in the city of Washington, one in care of Dr. Waters and the other of Elder Rowe, of Baltimore. I met him once, but not on this trip. He is an able and noble man. I enjoyed our people in the city.

They are nice, good people, humble and plain as those I met in the country. As I recall this visit, and the good meetings we had, and the enjoyment I had at their homes, I feel tender. I love these people and all their elders. No division of sentiment, no jealousy among their elders, but peace and love in all their churches.

I was at an association and the elders present. Each of them was doing what he could to keep from being elected moderator of the meeting. They were making an earnest effort, and it looked so good, each one trying to stand foot of the class. A spirit like this brings peace and keeps peace. The capitol buildings were all interesting to me. I visited the White House in company with Dr. Waters. Harrison was then president, but he was away. His private secretary was a plain man, and treated us with the utmost respect.

While in Washington I reserved a day to go to the ocean, and when I went to the depot to make this trip I found a special car had been placed for my use. I was astonished at this, and thought I was not equal to the occasion, but when I found it was for me alone, I felt easy. Some of our people were connected with railroad people, and the company furnished the car free. This was the first and only time I ever saw the ocean, and it was grand. I spent the day on the seashore and was in sight of the ships that go up the bay to Baltimore and Annapolis and other points. At all times of the day there were from ten to twenty ships in sight. The tops of the smokestacks were the first in sight and last out of sight. I noted many things of interest at the coast, but will not detail them. I returned that evening to the city in time for church. I greatly enjoyed the members and elders in the city. I shall ever remember Elders Waters, Norton and Oliver. All lived in the city and did all they could to make my visit pleasant.

I have visited these people in Virginia several times since. I was at Culpepper where James Ireland was once imprisoned for preaching, and saw the ground on which the jail stood where they burned pepper and tobacco to keep him from preaching. I was at Roanoke, which is a good town. We have a large church there and it is good to meet with them. Quite likely I shall never see these places again, but while I live I shall remember them as the salt of the earth. Elder R. H. Pitman has now made his home in Luray, Virginia, and is an excellent preacher and good young man. I hope he will be a blessing many years to come.

"Blessed are the peacemakers for they shall be called the children of God." We ought to be peaceable, Christ is our example and He was peaceable, "The Prince of Peace." We ought to "strive together for the things that make for peace." We ought to love each other, and watch over each other for good. If Christ has loved us, and given Himself for us, we ought to love each other. We all have our trials and heartaches; we ought not to increase each other's burdens. Our burdens are heavy enough; we ought to try to lighten the cross for one another. If we are called to the ministry, the cause is a common one, and we need each other's help and prayers. We are all en route to the same home, let us be fellow pilgrims together. I love peace, and as I get older I see more and more how good it is to live in peace. There are many reasons why we should bear with one another, and forgive one another. The Lord bears with us in our evil ways, and has forgiven us all our sins. Then let us bear with one another and forgive one another. When we come to death we shall not regret that we have been patient and forbearing and forgiving, one to another.

16 Preaching to dieing woman

16 Preaching to dieing woman Autobiography - James H. Oliphant

CHAPTER XVI. A lady who was low with tuberculosis sent me a request to visit her. When I got to her home, I asked her why she had sent for me. She explained that she was near death, that she was a poor sinner, with no hope, and that the thought of being banished from the loving presence of the Savior, and from all that are good, was so distressing to her she felt it was unbearable, and she sent for me to hear me talk, to see if I could find any comfort for her. Her mother requested that I talk to her husband in her presence. He was a lawyer and belonged to the Methodists.

I told him I must talk to his wife from a Primitive Baptist point of view and he said for me to pursue my own course. I then said, let us find the difference between law and gospel. I will first ask, What is law? "It is a telling what we must do, and the penalty if we do not do it." We both agreed on this definition for law. Next we will find what gospel is. We found it to be, "good news," "glad tidings." News is never true conditionally, but is true, even though it is not heard, or not believed when heard; that is, it does not have to be told, or believed, to be true. I said to him I will not preach law to your wife, I will preach gospel to her.

Evidently she dreaded to be banished from the just; her words showed that she loved the good and pure. She loved the just, and these are evidences of grace. I first quoted to her the words "Blessed are the poor in spirit." I asked her husband if this was law or gospel. He said it was gospel and in no degree conditional. I said to her, Does this describe your case? Are you "poor in spirit"? She said, "Yes, I am surely that." Well, you are a "blessed" woman; just as sure as you are poor in spirit you are blessed. The verb is present tense---now blessed. If you know you are poor in spirit, I am sure you are blessed.

Again, I asked her if she was "poor in spirit," and again she answered, "Yes," while tears filled her eyes and ran down on her cheeks. This text is pure gospel---no law in it, and I applied it to her case. The next text I used was, "Blessed are they which do hunger and thirst after righteousness, for they shall be filled." I said to her, "Do you do this?" "Yes," she said. To hunger and thirst for anything is to greatly desire it. Do you greatly desire a perfect righteousness? "Yes, I would give all the world to be righteous." I explained, it does not say blessed are the righteous, but "They that hunger and thirst after righteousness." This is a statement true at all times and in all places, like two and two are four. This is true everywhere. So in all the world we may say, "Blessed are they which do hunger and thirst after righteousness." Persons that do this realize they are poor sinners, and unrighteous. They see and feel the need of a perfect righteousness, and that they are unable to produce it. They see the need of the righteousness that "exceeds the righteousness of the scribes and the Pharisees." They discard their own righteousness as of no value, and as "filthy rags," and long for a pure righteousness that fits them for death. Again I said, "Do you hunger and thirst after righteousness?" She said, "Yes, this is a new view of things to me. I have never been happy and full of love and peace, but I am sure I do hunger and thirst after righteousness." Well, you are "blessed" present tense, now blessed. She urged, "But I am unworthy." The text does not

say the happy or the worthy, it says, "They which do hunger and thirst after righteousness," and you feel sure you do that. So this text is to you, it is for you. It means that the Lord has already blessed you with the quickening of His spirit, and you are now blessed. You have been born again, and when you come to the trial you will find one there to sustain you in the last trial.

She said, "What must I do." I quoted "To him that worketh not but believeth." To believe is not to work---it is to depend on Him that labored. It is, "simply to the cross I cling." Jesus came to save sinners, not the righteous, but sinners. My sister, you tell me you are a sinner, and a poor sinner; here is your hope. Had He come to save the righteous, then the text would not be to you, but sinners---poor sinners---and such are you. You need a sinner's friend, and I preach Him to you. When I would stop talking she would urge me to go on. It was a new view of things to her, and she said it was good and comforting to her, but she had "never been happy and made to rejoice." I then told her she certainly felt better and more hopeful than when I came. She said she did. She had thought that Jesus came to save the righteous, the good, and the holy, and I had urged another view. I cited the thief on the cross, and Paul's case, and Manasseh's and my own. I told her I needed a sinner's friend, and not the Savior of the pure and the good, and that I still needed such a Savior. I told her that I regarded her as a Christian, that Christ had died for her, and the work of grace had been done for her, and when death came to her she would be ready to go, and the dear Lord would support her. She enjoyed this way of preaching. She said it was new to her, but it gave her a little hope. I bade her goodbye after some hours talk with her. Within a day or so her mother wrote to me that she was dead, and wanted me to know that she found the help I spoke of, that she was filled with love and hope, and was reconciled to go. She sent me her tenderest regards for my visit to her. This was an interesting time with me, and I remember it as one of the plainest instances and proof that the gospel is to be addressed to those who have hearts prepared to receive it. Wesley applied the words, "Come unto me all ye that labor and are heavy laden" to everybody. It is clear to me that the words describe the persons addressed, and are not to everybody.

It has been my happy privilege all my life to now and then see one that was burdened with a sense of guilt and sin in my audiences, I love to see them. I love them, and after I have tried to apply the gospel to them, and once and awhile I have seen them rejoice in hope and come to us and tell of the mercy of God. These have been sweet seasons to me. A great many come into our audiences that feel no burden of sin, no "desire for the sincere milk of the word." There is no sweetness to them in the name of Jesus, nor in the gospel. It is thus with all "Till the eyes of their understanding are opened that they may know what is the hope of His calling." Martha said, "If thou hadst been here my brother had not died." We need the "arm of the Lord revealed" in our meetings. Without Him we labor in vain. We may pray the Lord to go with us and be with us, and give us wisdom and skill to preach right, and prepare the people to hear rightly. While the Lord prepared Peter to go to the house of Cornelius, He prepared the house of Cornelius to hear. So we need the help of the Lord to save our poor, little, suffering churches from extinction. If but few attend our solemn feasts, if the masses reject us, we must appeal to God to sustain us. It is trying to see our old members die and not have enough young ones come in to fill the vacant places.

17 Chosen as Pastor

17. Chosen as Pastor Autobiography - James H. Oliphant

CHAPTER XVII.

I was chosen pastor of Crawfordsville church in 1890, and have served it as pastor since. Elder M. M. Van Cleve was a member up to his death. He was dear, good companion, loving and forbearing. Elder David Bartley was a member here several years, until he moved away and has since died. Elder M. M. Canine has lived here several years. He is a good spirited brother. My wife and I moved our membership here in 1890, and it is still here. Our church is in peace, and we have tried to avoid everything like pride or show. We have gone along here just as we always have. Our deacons are S. B. Lockett, Owen Wilson, Bennett Swain, and Clay Gott, all worthy, good men. We have had a great many deaths in the church, perhaps as many as we have had additions. Our meetings have been good and spiritual all the way. The church has been as liberal to me as I think it should be. Sister Mary Van Cleve left one hundred dollars in her will to me, which I appreciated very much.

I met Brother S. B. Lockett first in 1887, and then in 1890. We moved here, and I have been his pastor since. He has been much help to me in every way, and there has never been one unkind word or act. His aid to me has been valuable. I realize these relations will soon terminate. I often feel discouraged here in this city, but we must not yield to discouragement, but trust in God, and do right. A great many elders have visited us here, among whom are Elders Waters, Dalton, Pitman, Hassell, Bretz, Cayces, Cash, Thompson, Daily and numerous others. All came preaching what I have tried to preach, no discord nor dissension, nor any jealousy that I saw or felt.

I have been pastor at Pimento thirty-four years, and there has never been a vote against me. It is wonderful that fellowship should remain so strong after all our varied experiences together. The deacons are Preston Beauchamp and L. H. Weeks, both are worthy men, and ever kind to me. We have had many deaths there in the thirty-two years, but have had as many or more additions. Almost a generation has died there. Judge Wilburn, of Princeton, has been an attendant at our meeting there for many years; he has been very kind to me, and I hope the Lord will bless him in spiritual comfort. I. N. Kester has been moderator there for over forty years, and has been a true, faithful brother to me. Our hearts were united on our first acquaintance, and we have ever continued in closest fellowship. I should long ago have failed had not the Lord blessed me with friends, true and faithful. The church at Pimento has been kind and liberal to help me keep up my expenses. I have tried to be true to our cause, and our people have generally been true to me. I have felt discouraged at Pimento often, and thought I would quit there, but we have all been together so long, and it is only a little way to the journey's end, and if they still desire it we may stay together until the warfare ends. Elder M. B. Moffett visited us often there, and a great many elders have visited us and preached to us the same sentiments I have tried to preach.

I have been pastor at Palestine some years. A precious membership meets there, and they have been kind to me in every way. Dan I. Darnell, Dil Michael, and J. P. Christie are the deacons, and they have all been kind and good to me. I have felt discouraged there, but I hope all these churches will be blessed with a revival. Elder E. D. Thomas was a father to me. I knew him as well as any man knew him, and I learned as much from him as from anyone. Also Elders Lemuel Potter, G. M. Thompson, Wm. Rupard, Joel Hume, James Strickland, Benjamin Lampton, Gideon Potter and Elder Waldon; all these men are dead. I labored with and traveled with them and they did much to mold my views. I often think of them and the sweet seasons we have all had together. They were great and good men, above reproach and evil report. I hope to realize in death the things of which they often spoke.

18 Peacemakers

18. Peacemakers Autobiography - James H. Oliphant

CHAPTER XVIII.

"Blessed are the peacemakers, for they shall be called the children of God." By being peaceable ourselves, and striving for peace, we show the spirit of our Master. By introducing new things in the churches we become peace-breakers. It is certain that a man is not a peacemaker that presses customs on the churches that tend to division. Efforts have been made all along to change our churches so as to be more popular, and every effort has been a failure. Persons who have observed these efforts, and seen the results, ought to know it is a vain thing to try to modernize or change the Primitive Baptists. I saw it tried in 1860 to 1870 in central southern Indiana, and it proved a failure. Had those preachers gone to the Missionaries at once, it would have been better for all concerned. But they pressed new methods and sentiments, and urged it was consistent with Primitive Baptists for them to do so, and thus widened the breach and increased the trouble. This has been true of all the divisions I have known. Should I become dissatisfied with the customs of our people I would not try to change our people to my way of thinking, I would go over at once to where I could have these things without trouble. An organ will not trouble an Arminian church, and if we want it we can have it there without any trouble, but it will distress our people to press it on them. I am sure there is room with us for lawful improvement; we ought to be more devoted, more prayerful, more attentive to our church and duties; we ought to exhort each other more to love and good works. Improvement in these things will not cause trouble, nor division; they are scriptural and right, and will be attended with good results, and if those who are favoring the organ would use their efforts to improve our churches in these ways they would do good and not harm.

If we can make up our minds to be plain Primitive Baptists, and be content with it, we shall be happier and more useful. I am wishing I could see peace among our people in all places, and a union in an effort to encourage true piety and devotion, and to encourage our children to seek a home among our people. It is said that "Those that love may prepare to suffer." I have loved the Primitive Baptists from youth, and I have grieved for our people when I have seen efforts to reform them. I have grieved over the coldness that has been among us from time to time, but it is good to trust the Lord, and I believe the Lord will save His people and His truth, and preserve it to time's end.

19 Predestination

19. Predestination Autobiography - James H. Oliphant

CHAPTER XIX. The subject of predestination has been threshed out among our people very much in the last few years, and has brought division in some localities. I never approved such expressions as "The absolute predestination of all things." It does not distinguish between right and wrong. These two are as different as any two things can be. To say that God is in no way concerned about the course of sin, does not seem right, either. The Fulton meeting, November, 1900, denied that Satan or chance so ruled as to determine what the world's history shall be. It appears to me that God does take some control of events so that this is not a world of chance.

Predestination, as defined by Liddle and Scott, means, "for one to determine beforehand what he will do." Note, "WHAT HE WILL DO." This makes the matter easy so far as what God does---all of His acts are predestinated. This is plain and easy. Some have held that predestination relates entirely to salvation. In the places where the word is used that is the subject, but other words are used that convince me that predestination relates to the works of God in providence as well as in grace---God's decrees extend to His providence as well as grace. I am convinced that it would be extreme to hold that Satan and chance control and direct all that is sinful. This never seemed right to me. At our meeting at Fulton this matter was considered, and so far as I can understand it we said about the right thing. The history of Joseph, and in all that is said of the crucifixion, it seems to me that God is more than a silent, disinterested spectator as to the course of sin. We are sure that God permits it, if the word "permit" means "not hinder." We know He does permit it. I see no objection to the notion that "He determined not to hinder it."

I have seen the subject treated in this way: Divide all events into two groups. In the first, we place all things that God does or causes to be done, and say, these events were "efficaciously decreed, or predestinated." In the other group, place all sinful events and say they were "permissively decreed," meaning that God determined not to hinder them. No sinful event shall ever occur that will dishonor God, we may be sure of this, for God will care for His honor---God will deal with all sin so as to secure His own glory in it. It is a hard subject to fully comprehend. It is easy for all of us to see that we are to blame for sin. There is something within that makes us know this, and we are sure if ever we are saved it will be entirely of mercy.

I attended an association in Missouri in 1881. Some of the elders refused to go on the stand with me because I held that sinners are to blame for sin. I told the elders I would be willing to give my place to another, and let them stay, but the people would not let it be that way. So I went on the stand, and at least one elder went home that morning; and two others in the evening. I took for my text Ephesians i. 6---"To the praise of the glory of His grace." I had a good audience and all understood that I had been rejected for holding that men are to blame for sin.

I claimed that Paul was endeavoring to give enlarged views of the doctrine of grace, "To the praise of the glory of His grace." One word is put on another to give the highest idea possible of "grace."

In the second chapter he says, "But God who is rich in mercy." The word mercy is a strong word, but Paul intensifies it by the word "rich." In my text we have the idea of grace raised as high as words can raise it. But if it be true that the sinner is not to blame for sin, why talk of grace or mercy? To be without blame is to be in a good condition, and grace is unnecessary if men are without blame. I have heard our people sing, "Amazing grace how sweet the sound," but if we find the sinner without blame, there is nothing "amazing" in his salvation. Paul says, "That we should be holy and without blame before Him in love." When the work of grace is completed we shall be without blame. But if the sinner is without blame why the work of grace to make him so? I appealed to the heart experience of God's people. Surely we have confessed our sins to God, and that we were alone to blame for our sins. The brethren were satisfied with my positions, and sang a hymn and gave me the hand in warmest fellowship. An Irish brother reached his hand and said, "The wecked flaes when no man pursues." That sentiment was dropped by those people, and union among them resulted from the meeting.

It is experimental to trace our sins to ourselves, to confess our guilt, not only our sins, but our sinfulness. We confess it all as ours, Surely this is right, and we plead for mercy. Death and ruin are our just wages, and life and heaven only comes as a gift.

20 Serving Churches

20. Serving Churches Autobiography - James H. Oliphant :-

CHAPTER XX.

We were poor when I commenced serving churches. The churches were not rich, either, and I was foolish enough to think I would care for my family and the churches, too, all without any help from anyone. Brother Moses Hodges, of Spring Creek church, was the first one to offer to give me money. He offered to give me one dollar and I refused to take it. He said that I would see different after awhile, and I found he was right. I think now I ought to have pursued a different course in regard to the matter. I ought to have taught the churches their duty and insisted on their doing it by me. I owed it to myself and family, and the interest of the churches required it. A minister should not be "entangled with the affairs of this life" when the church is able to prevent it. We found it necessary to do hard work and make what we could. I farmed in the summer and taught school in the winter, sold goods part of the time, and being away so much the business did me no good. I sold goods on credit and failed to get part of it. Truly my wife and I had a hard time to care for our family. I served the churches on horseback and muleback. I could detail at least three instances of my horse being washed away by my attempting to cross swollen streams, in all of which I had narrow risk of being drowned. Once I attempted to cross a bridge that was covered by back water from White river. The water on the bridge was two feet deep, and by mistake I guided the horse so that he stepped off at the middle of the bridge. We went under together, but I kept in the saddle, and the horse swam out. I went to a home and dried my clothes and went on to my appointment. My wife and I knew well what hardships were and saw the need of economy, and practiced it rigidly. We loved the churches and enjoyed them very much, and the members loved us. I want to repeat that I ought to have pressed on the churches their duty to their pastors. Remember, he has a family of loved ones that must be clothed and fed, and he must give his time to the churches, and the churches ought to care for him. In my early experience as a minister I bought and shipped cattle and hogs and mules, but I think I would now be better off if I had not done it. In 1890 we moved to near Crawfordsville, Indiana. We were in low circumstances financially, and our children were all with us, and we felt that the task of caring for our family was a big one. The move made it necessary for me to give up the care of all the churches in White river association. I well remember how sorrowful I felt when I drove my team away from my old home in Monroe county, Indiana. I went up a hill from which I could look back and see my home, and the church house that I had built, and the home of some of the members. Tears ran from my eyes. I loved those people, and I knew they loved me, but I felt it was right for me to move. Since then we have been favored with a little better success in worldly things, but we have been more favored in the way of assistance, and I have had an easier way to fill my appointments.

During all my life I have never suffered my business to keep me from meeting, but once. We made it a rule of life to take our children to meeting, and I have had the love and confidence of my children, and I love them in return most tenderly. My grandchildren all are partial to "our church." I

hope the Lord will enable them to know the truth and love it long after my labors shall close. I believe I counted the cost of a minister's life before I began. I expected toil and to make sacrifices. I did not expect to become popular as a minister, and in this I am not disappointed. I think I am respected as a citizen, and as a neighbor, but the doctrine of salvation by grace is not in harmony with public sentiment, and those who preach it will not share largely in the friendship of the world. But we should "overcome evil with good," and make our neighbors respect us by doing right.

It is important that members of the church attend regularly, and are not too late to church. Sometimes the rear seats are filled first and the front seats are left vacant. This is a bad way to do. If the clerk of the church is a slow penman he ought to prepare the minutes at home as nearly as he can, and this will prevent waiting on him. It is an impatient wait for a slow clerk to prepare a minute after the business of the church has closed, and can easily be prevented by the preparing of the minutes at home. Or let the clerk at each meeting read the minutes of the preceding meeting. In this way the minutes can be made at his leisure between meetings at home.

Churches sometimes ignore the home preacher by sending a distance for an elder to attend weddings and funerals. We must not deny that for such occasions members sometimes have a choice, but it is discouraging to a pastor to be ignored when words of comfort are needed for the bereaved. Some good elders do not approve of funeral preaching. It occurs to me that it is lawful and expedient to preach on such occasions. "Wherefore comfort ye one another."-I Thes. v. 18. This is Paul's idea of what is proper on occasions of death. We cannot benefit or change the state of dead, but we might speak words of comfort to the living at a time when such words are needed. A dear friend of mine says that at her funeral she does not want to be taken to the church house, and that she wants no show or display, but only a quiet little meeting, where some dear brother will read a chapter and offer prayer. I like this idea well and it would be sufficient for me. The time for our departing out of the world is an important time. "Better is the day of one's death than the day of his birth." Solemn as it is, it awaits us and is sure to come to us. "The living know that they must die." A lady died who requested that at her death a private member should read and sing and pray at the funeral. The brother did as he was requested. He had been accustomed to "say grace" at the meals, and a very few times had prayed orally, and he dreaded to try to fill the request, but in felt weakness he made the effort. If death were to come to some of my loved ones, and it were left for me to arrange, I would not feel unfavorable to this course. Those who desire some particular elder, even if he lives at a distance, should be allowed to have their choice, but if the choice should be like that of the lady referred to it would be as pleasing to me as any other choice could be. The first twenty years of my ministry were spent at Buena Vista, Indiana. No other minister lived near of any order, and I was called to attend funerals of different denominations, and often it consisted of reading, singing and prayer. A minister is subject to many weaknesses. He may become jealous or envious of one more gifted than himself. "Take heed to yourselves and all the flock." We should wage an unrelenting war on evil passions, such as envy or jealousy. I believe we can lay aside evil thought of our brethren if we love them and regard them as true servants of the churches. But we have seen men that we regarded as untrue, and not faithful, and we have churches in love with such men, and then we have felt a spirit of jealousy. But I feel that I am now free of such an ugly jealousy of worthy men. "Jealousy is as cruel as the grave."

There was a sister in the church when I began trying to preach who would often insist that in our preaching we should doctrinize our experience, and show how the experience of every Christian

supports the doctrine of grace. She urged that the same spirit that dictated the words of the Bible also gives our experiences, and he who preaches most in harmony with experiences preaches most in harmony with the Bible. I thought she was right in this, and when I have found Christian men and women that found fault with the doctrine of free grace I have appealed to their own experiences for support, with questions something like the following: What did you learn about it in your experience? Did you begin with the Lord, or did the Lord begin with you? Did you learn by experience that you could do something to remove sin, or that you could not? If you learned that you were not able to make yourself right, why not tolerate this sentiment in the pulpit?

I preached the funeral of Hardin Edwards in Green county, Indiana, many years ago, and went home with his brother George for dinner. I had known George Edwards well for many years. He belonged to an Arminian church, but I felt sure that he had an experience. He told me that he esteemed me as a Christian man, and that he enjoyed the most of my preaching, but he would enjoy it more if I would give everybody "a chance" in my preaching. I replied, "Tell me how you came to be a Christian." He said that in early life he was wild and indifferent as to his religious welfare, but after he was grown he became deeply concerned about himself---that he was burdened with a sense of sin and ruin so that it was ever on his mind that he was ruined by sin. I said, "George, do you have any idea what caused you to see all this sinfulness in yourself?" He said it was a mercy in the grace of God that enabled him to see his condition as it was. I then said to him, "That is what I preach; but if the Lord would bestow as much mercy and grace on others as he did on you, what effect would it have?" He said it would have the same effect on them it had on him. "Well," I said, "you have learned the doctrine I preach of the Lord." He went on to say how he had tried to do right and how he found sin mixed with all he did; that instead of getting better he seemed to get worse until he saw himself lost and justly condemned, no hope, there was nothing good in himself. And in this extreme distress he gave up all hope of salvation from anything he could do, and when he sank in despair his burden was gone and peace filled his soul. "Well," I said, "don't I preach that you nor anyone else can do anything to put away sin? I preached just what you professed to be true on bended knees before God, and is what you confess to God, why not believe it when it is preached to you?"

I have tried all through life to teach that experience is a great teacher. We must confess this, or deny experience altogether, and say it is a deception, and those that have been blessed with it will not forget or deny it.

There have been times with me all along that I felt cast down and discouraged to a great extent, and found no light and liberty in preaching. At such times I have wished I could quit trying. I went to Guthries Creek church in 1876, and while there I was under a cloud---a little audience and no light or liberty. I felt almost sick as I looked on to a life spent amid discouragement. The brethren there were good and loved me very much, but I was in the dark, and I thought I was mistaken about being called to the work of the ministry. I decided to quit and make no more appointments. I was thirty-five miles from home and I selected a route for home that would not take me near persons that would ask me to have meeting for them. I was thoroughly discouraged, and resolved to give it all up and stay at home with my wife and growing family. It was a lonely trip I made home, and I was deeply in sorrow. I stopped on the way with a Methodist for dinner, and I told him how sad and lonely and discouraged I felt. I wanted to tell someone my sorrows. He said he expected my liver was bad, and that I needed something to stimulate my liver.

I have often thought of what he said. This cheerless feeling gave way to brighter and more hopeful feelings. I gave out other appointments, and filled them. We are apt to think our sorrows all gone when we are full of hope---that we shall never be in the dark again, and when we are under the cloud we conclude there is never any more sun for us. But I learned years ago that when we are on the mountain top we should remember that we must go down into the dark valley; and when we are down in sorrow's cavern, remember that by and by we shall be lifted up; and that "that part of the wagon wheel that is now at the top will soon begin to descend, and that part that is now in the mud, will soon be lifted up." This has been my experience through life. When I am blessed with light and liberty, when my cup runs over, I try to avoid pride; and when I make the saddest failures, I try to avoid being unduly discouraged. We need to watch against pride in times of prosperity, when brethren are eulogizing and expressing admiration for the sermon; and when we are down we need to watch against overmuch sorrow. We ought not be affected either by our failures or our success, but let all go together.

We learn over and over again that we "dare not trust in ourselves." When I first was blessed with a hope, "I thought my trials over and all my troubles gone; That joy and peace and pleasure should be my lot alone; But now I find a warfare that often brings me low, The world, the flesh and Satan, they do beset me so."

Although I was reared by Baptists, and thought I believed their doctrine, yet I see I did not. I grew up believing in conditional salvation. I think it natural for men to do this, but after I obtained a hope I still had this about me. "The first liquor put in the pot leaves a little of its odor ever after."

I resolved never to sin again, and to be a good, true and faithful man, and as I went into my little store I resolved never to sin again. Since then I have learned that "When I would do good, evil is present with me." "The evil that I would not, that I do." "Ye can not do the things that ye would." I have had lessons along this line that have destroyed, to a great measure, all my self-reliance, and prepared me to love the doctrine of grace. I do not think men can learn the doctrine of grace as they learn science at school, but by actual experience and tests of self. They come to see and know the weakness, ignorance and unfaithfulness of human nature until it is plain that if our hope were dependent on our own steadfastness we would perish in the end. When we learn it this way we never forget it, and as we go along the way we are more and more confirmed in this view---we "grow in grace." We do not get better and better, but we grow stronger and stronger in the belief that a work, or conditional system would not suit our needs. Such a system would be good enough if we were good enough, but while it is true that "the evil I would not that I do," we must not make our eternal all depend on so frail a peg as human faithfulness. No one can understand how grace alone can save us who has not seen his own sinfulness; no one can see the riches of God's grace that has not seen the sinfulness of sin. When one learns it this way, he never forgets it. "All shall be taught of the Lord."

21 Instrumental Music

21. Instrumental Music Autobiography - James H. Oliphant

CHAPTER XXI. In 1910-11-12 there was considerable confusion and strife among our people concerning the use of instrumental music in our churches. The arguments in favor of it were drawn from the fact that it was used by Israel under the law. Those places in the Psalms, and other places where it was mentioned with favor, were brought forward to sustain the practice. The 150th Psalm was frequently quoted. Verse iv. of that Psalm says, "Praise Him with the timbrel and dance." If this chapter sustains the organ, it does also the dance. The subject was discussed in a general way, and our people settled it generally and rejected it. It was first introduced by Pope Vitalian in the Catholic church in the year 666. There is no trace of it in the New Testament. Israel was a political, and even a military institution, as well as a religious institution. In deciding what part of the Old Testament service is to be retained in the worship of God under the new is to be determined by the course of Christ and His apostles, and as they did not bring the organ from the old into the new, we have no authority to do so. The offering of sacrifices and burning of incense, etc., was not retained in the New Testament service. These things, with instrumental music were folded up and laid aside. The great body of our people took this view and I hope it is settled among our people. There are several in Georgia---perhaps two thousand---that have gone off with this move, while in Georgia there are near fifteen thousand that stand with our people generally. I think the move has collapsed everywhere else. I have felt much interest in this move, and very anxious to see it fail. I hope I will never live to see another time of strife and confusion among our people. It seems there have ever been some among us that want to make some change somewhere in our doctrine or practice. I have lived to see a number of these movements, and all of them have failed. Members that go off after these efforts have divided again, some return to the fold, and others drift into the Arminian churches, and so the cause proves a failure.

I think the advocates of the organ in the church will repeat the history of other similar movements. The friends of this move have urged that we ought not to non-fellowship the organ brethren, but hold them still in our fellowship, and labor with them to reclaim them from the error. This plea looks pretty well, but if we decide to fellowship it, it will be difficult to labor with brethren who want it. All that the most ardent friends of the organ could ask is that we fellowship it, and agree to bear with them while they use it. But this would make it difficult to see how we could labor with them to give up a practice that we stand ready to fellowship. The labors of our editors have been faithful in opposing this innovation. I have felt bound to these precious brethren for their faithful labors in rooting up this weed. The Monitor and Elder Cash's paper and Elders Cayce, Hassell, Webb, Branscombe, Waters and Gold, all have stood together in defense of truth and right on this subject. I can not tell how much I love these faithful men. Trials yield much good, they strengthen our bonds of love, and they reveal the firm lovers of truth to one another. I sincerely hope I will never see another division, but I trust the Lord will enable me to be faithful if I do.

Elder Lemuel Potter once said that the Primitive Baptists had ever stood by him---they had loved him and sought his good all the way. He said the reason they had done so was that he had stood by them and their sentiments. Elder Potter saw this right, he was a fearless and faithful friend to our people.

Here is a good example for our young ministers. Let them stand up for our people with whatever ability they possess, and they will find the Primitive Baptists will stand with them. But when they begin to favor new methods and sentiments they will be deserted by the rank and file of our people. When Elder S. F. Cayce died his son Claude asked me to do what I could for the paper. I promised to do so while the paper stood firmly for truth, and the dear young brother has been true to our cause and I believe will be to his journey's end. I traveled and preached with Elder S. F. Cayce, and loved him dearly, and when he died I felt sure that one of our best elders had been called home, and I cannot express the pleasure it gives me to see the paper continue to be a sound and good Primitive Baptist paper. The Lord blessed Elder Cayce in his sons to take his place in maintaining our people's cause.

Sometimes we grow pessimistic and fear our pulpits will be empty of faithful men, but this will never be. The truth is with us, and it will not die or cease from the world. Young men will be raised up to take the places of the old. The plea has been made that we drove off the young men that left us and went to the Missionaries. I am convinced that this is a mistake. Where young men have the cause at heart, and love the truth, they will not be driven off. I am satisfied that these young men tried to modernize our churches, to carry our people to the Missionary ground, and failing to do it they left us, and I have not felt that we are the worse off for their going. When elders get tired of the plain, old fashioned ways of our people it is better to go where the things they want are practiced without giving trouble. Better for those who distress and divide our people to go elsewhere. We should be kind and gentle to our young elders. We should love them, and esteem them highly. We know the battle of life that awaits them, we know, too, the cares and burdens they must endure, and the trials their wives must go through, and we should be their friends and encourage them. I can assure them that if they love the principles of our people, and stay with them, they will always have faithful and loving friends that will help them with the burdens of life.

I have been favored with kind and loving friends all the way---the best of friends. Drs. Williams and Taylor have joined me in the study of the scriptures often in their office, and in our investigations we only sought to find the truth without any effort to support any hobby, and this is the only way to profit in the study of the scriptures.

If you have a burning desire to know the truth, and can find kindred spirits that share in this desire, you will find it profitable and pleasant to meet with them often, and as you read the Bible at home make texts for your meeting and then confer as to its teaching. How few persons are there who enjoy a close study of the Bible, who are willing to "search the scriptures," and with hearts touched by the Holy Spirit, to try in every way to find the teaching of God's word. With such efforts and such hearts, good results will come from such meetings. A good way to study the Bible is to read it in the order it stands, and read slowly, and get an idea as to the teaching of each verse as you read it. Never leave a verse until you have an opinion as to its teaching. Perhaps you will occasionally find verses you can not understand, or get any idea of, but let your custom be to get some opinion of all of them as you read. The bee does not extract the honey from the blossom by a hasty and

careless passing over it, but by going down into every part of it. So every sentence is a blossom from which to gather the sweets of truth. We need the spirit of God to open our understanding that we may understand the scriptures. "Lord open Thou my understanding that I may behold wondrous things in Thy law."

22 Fiftith Wedding Anniversary

22. Fiftith Wedding Anniversy Autobiography - James H. Oliphant

CHAPTER XXII. The 4th of September, 1914, was our fiftieth wedding anniversary. I could hardly realize that fifty years had gone by. As those who are young look at life, fifty years seems a long period, but as we look back over fifty years to our youth it seems but a span. My sister and her husband, J. M. King, from Missouri, were present, also my sister, Mrs. Boyd, from Bedford, and Mrs. Acuff, from Bloomington, were here; also my wife's sister, Mrs. Stultz, from Bloomington, Indiana, and her brother and his wife; William Tague, from Russiaville, other relatives and friends from different parts of the state were present, and brethren, sisters and friends living in our town, with our children and grandchildren, all came to have a good enjoyable time and had it. I felt solemn as I realized I had come to be an old man, and knew that we are nearing the close of life. If life were to live over I do not know that I could improve on it. I realize that Jacob's statement to Pharoah, "Few and evil have been the days of my pilgrimage," is my case. If I am not a Christian I never expect to be, and my experience of life confirms my long held views of salvation by grace. Not only is it true with me that my hope of heaven lies wholly in the mercy of God, but as I see the usual course of men's lives the only hope that anyone has is in the mercy of God.

I am now pastor at Vincennes church, and within the last two years we established a church at Coatesville, Indiana, and have a nice congregation there with some additions. I also serve the church here and at Pimento, Indiana. I realize that "I must decrease." It is serious to become infirm and see ourselves fail for want of strength, but so it is, our younger men must take charge of the cause. If we can grow old gracefully and lovingly and willingly, and cheerfully yield to younger men, it will be well. We have many young men among us that are called to the work, and will be a blessing to our cause long after we are gone home. The Savior said, "Upon this rock I will build my church, and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it." Matthew 16:18 It is sweet to cast all upon the Lord. As we survey our weakness as a church---our fewness,---we can see that "Except the Lord build the house they labor in vain that build it." Israel was driven from every other hope in all their history. As soon as they started from Egypt they were made to know that God only could care for them. "Stand still and see the salvation of the Lord." Exodus 14:13 The Red sea was divided by the hand of the Lord before them and soon they were blessed to see the hand of the Lord in their behalf; but they must learn it again and again all the way and this was all written for our learning. As we see truth rejected by a sin-loving world, and note the strength of the opposition we can plainly see that if our people live as a denomination the Lord must sustain us.

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