

A Steward of the Mysteries of God

by George Kulp

Mr. Smith's ministry was marked by powerful preaching, faith, and perseverance, leading to revivals and spiritual awakening in Nottingham and its surrounding areas.

Scripture: 1 Samuel 2:35, Psalm 139:23, Isaiah 32:20, Jeremiah 3:15, Jeremiah 20:9, Malachi 2:6, Mark 9:24, Luke 11:9, James 5:16

Topics: "Faithful Ministry", "Revival Prayer"

Description

George Kulp preaches about the powerful impact of a faithful priest who aligns with God's will, the blessings for those who sow seeds of faith, and the importance of pastors who feed their flock with knowledge and understanding. He emphasizes the burning passion for God's Word and the purity of speech in serving the Lord. Through the example of Mr. Smith's ministry in Nottingham, George Kulp highlights the fervent prayers, deep concern for souls, and the remarkable results of revival that followed. Mr. Smith's unwavering faith in praying for dying sinners and his dedication to seeing lives transformed through prayer and belief are inspirational testimonies of God's miraculous work.

Transcript

"I will raise me up a faithful priest that shall do according to that which is in my mind."

"Blessed are ye that sow beside all waters."

"I will give you pastors according to Mine heart, which shall feed you with knowledge and understanding."

"But His Word was in mine heart, as a burning fire shut up in my bones."

"The law of truth was in his mouth, and iniquity was not found in his lips."

At the Conference of 1825 Mr. Smith was appointed to the Nottingham circuit. Among the people his ministry was awaited with great expectation, which was strengthened by his first public appearance among them, which happened to be at the meeting of the bands. A person present on that occasion remarks: "He professed in striking language what the blessed God had done for him; the deep concern he felt for the Divine honor, the state of the world, and the salvation of souls; after which he engaged in prayer. Never shall I forget the impressions made upon me by his fine athletic figure, his open and majestic countenance, his powerful and sonorous voice, and, above all, his fervent and mighty prayer. It seemed as if Heaven were opened, and we all believed that success was certain." On the following

Sunday evening, he preached with great power at Halifax-place chapel. His subject was the love of God, and on this (to him) most delightful of all topics he dilated in "breathing thoughts" and "burning words." "I preach in faith," he cried in one part of his discourse. "God will answer prayer, and save souls tonight." About twelve persons at the prayer-meeting that evening professed to receive the blessing of pardon.

This was an encouraging presage of the great work which succeeded; for, perhaps, in no place were Mr. Smith's labors attended with more remarkable results. The spirit in which his ministry was at this time conducted, may be gathered from the following facts. Shortly after his arrival in the circuit, a pious friend remarked to him one morning that he looked very unwell. He said, in reply, that he had spent the whole of the preceding day and night in fasting and prayer, and that he was assured that God would shortly begin a glorious revival in Nottingham and its neighborhood. Some time afterwards a few friends called at his house one evening, and found him in a state of deep depression of mind. He had been meditating on the condition of the sinners in the town and its vicinity, and lamenting, with many tears, their dishonor of God and His laws. One or two engaged in prayer, and then Mr. Smith himself poured forth his sorrows before the Lord, confessing and bewailing the sins of the people with great minuteness and indescribable emotion. His vehement agony was so extraordinary that Mrs. Smith, accustomed as she was to witnessing his exertions, was unable any longer to endure the sight; and withdrew from the room. His friends rose from their knees and gazed on him with astonishment, mingled with apprehension. One of them expostulated with him and besought him to cease. Mrs. Smith turned to him and said: "Go, man, kneel down and cry and sigh for the abominations of the people." For nearly two hours did he call on God with his utmost strength. These exercises were accompanied and followed by signs of a coming revival, and in a short time "there was a great rain."

We now give a few extracts from his correspondence during the first part of the year 1826, which will serve in some degree to exemplify his success:

"Jan. 13. -- A few weeks ago, I was at Ikestone. In the evening we had a very interesting time. Many were in deep distress, and, after a good deal of labor, I think eight persons found peace with God. The following morning, I learned that there were several very unhappy, who had been at the preaching on the preceding evening. I agreed with a local preacher to go to a lace warehouse, where some of them were working. We went. I made a few observations respecting the importance of salvation, etc. Many were much affected: we sang, 'Take my poor heart,' etc., and began to pray. The distressed souls cried aloud for mercy. Such anguish as some of them were in for more than an hour, I have seldom witnessed. After considerable struggling, six found peace with God. May God give stability to His good work! We want more nurses in the church of Christ. Last Tuesday evening, I was at Draycot, in the Derby circuit. We had much of the power of God among us. Many were in distress, and I think about twelve found peace with God."

"April 8. -- God is blessedly moving among the people in various parts of our circuit. More than one hundred and fifty were added to the society the last quarter, and upwards of two hundred and twenty on trial. In two or three places the awakening influence of God seems to be general. The people are distressed in their houses without any outward means, doubtless in answer to prayer. At New Basford the people appear to be panic-stricken. Some of the most wicked have been converted to God. I had a blessed time there last Thursday. The glory of God filled the place, and five obtained mercy. Many souls have been saved there every week for some time past. All who received notes professed to have been set at liberty. The work is going on. In several places it is spring. Hallelujah! At Nottingham souls are saved every week. More than a dozen were saved after Mr. Dawson preached, a few weeks ago, and six found peace with God on the morning of the same day in a private house. I have seen some signal work, also, in

the Mansfield and Ikestone circuits!"

"June 29. -- Although our increase of members has not been very great -- two hundred -- we have four hundred and forty-seven on trial. In some places, the work astonishes the old members: they never saw anything equal to it. Numbers have trusted God for a full salvation, and many more are panting for it. It is the good pleasure of the good God to save -- to save fully. How important it is to hold this truth fast through everything!"

"July 12. -- Many backsliders are returning to the Lord, and cleansing work is going on. Last Sunday night, at Carlton, upwards of twenty, I think, either found peace with God, or obtained a clean heart. We had a still greater night on Monday, at Halifax chapel; and last night, at New Sneinton, many souls were saved. Glory be to God! I have not time to enter into any particulars."

It is, of course, impossible to trace the good which was effected primarily through Mr. Smith's instrumentality, as it extended in numerous ramifications. Many instances there are, in which whole families were brought to the knowledge of the truth, in consequence of the influence which, in the first place, he had exerted upon individual members of them. The following case is too remarkable to be omitted. A young man left his home and his friends in Derbyshire in rather a discreditable manner, and came to reside in Nottingham, a little after Mr. Smith's appointment to that circuit. A pious woman called where he lodged during the time of the fair. With her he was very jocose, and pressed her to go with him to the fair. To this she agreed, provided he would go with her to the chapel. Having gained his consent, she took him to hear Mr. Smith. During the sermon he was deeply convinced of sin, and soon he obtained peace with God. He soon returned home and surprised them all by the great change. His mother asked him how it was he was so constantly happy. He told her his experience and assured her God was willing to make it equally hers. Upon this they prayed till God revealed Himself in her heart, and mother and son rejoiced together in unspeakable joy. Some time afterwards, her other son was married. The young man besought the Lord to grant that on the day of the wedding one soul might be saved; and though up to the very morning there was no appearance of any answer to his prayer, he felt assured that his request would be granted. Upon the return of the bridal party from church, he retired to renew his suit before the Lord. He then came back to the company, and solemnly called upon them to join him in prayer. They did so, and before they rose from their knees, the bride was awakened, and clearly converted. The youth once more withdrew, and confessed and bewailed his sin in only asking for one soul, as he was convinced that God was far more desirous to save the whole than he could be. As he came down from his devotions, he heard a noise in one of the chambers, and, upon entering, found his brother in deep distress, crying to God for the pardon of his sins. In a little while, he also was filled with peace in believing. Shortly after, two musicians, who had been hired to contribute to the hilarity of the party, came in. The bridegroom, in the fullness of his joy, told them they were not wanted. "We have other music," he said, and invited them to unite in it. Again they had recourse to prayer, and once more the Savior answered. Before they ceased praying one of the musicians was convicted of his sins and brought into the enjoyment of the favor of God. The melody of renewed hearts celebrated their espousals to Christ on that happy day, and the burden of their chorus may well have been, "Unto Him that loved us and washed us in His own blood, be glory and dominion forever and ever. Amen."

The strength of Mr. Smith's faith was never more fully displayed than in behalf of dying sinners. The condition of many of these is such as to extinguish all hope in the minds of an ordinary Christian, but I never heard of a case which he regarded hopeless; and what discouraged others, was only a stimulus to him. He was called to visit an aged woman, who was dying in the most miserable circumstances. Her

heart seemed shut up in despair, and she expressed herself as having made up her mind to be damned! Mr. Smith spent several hours with her, exhorting, praying, and reading appropriate portions of Scripture. She repeatedly begged him to desist, assuring him that his efforts were of no sort of use; but every rebuff seemed only to increase his zeal for her salvation. At length she confessed that for many years she had been a backslider; she added that she had sinned away her day of grace, and her salvation was utterly impossible. He now renewed his exertions; his faith appeared to gather fresh strength, and he wrestled yet more mightily with God in her behalf. He considered the infinity of the merits of Christ, that His atonement was available even for her aggravated guilt, that the Holy Spirit was purchased by the blood of the Savior, that a sufficient measure of His influence might be exerted upon her to meet her case, and that this influence might be obtained by believing prayer. He persevered, therefore, in the contest of faith with despair; and at last the dying sinner began to yield, to relent, to weep, to hope that it was yet possible that she might be saved. Shortly afterwards, she ventured to cast her soul on Christ, and the Holy Spirit witnessed in her heart that God had accepted her. She was filled with joy and gladness, and having praised the grace of Christ on earth for a few hours, went to join the remembered thief in paradise.

In the course of the year, a pretty little chapel was built at New Basford; and there were several events connected with the work of God in that place sufficiently striking to demand insertion in these pages. The first exhibits faith resulting from effort. Mr. Smith called on a person who had been a Socinian. After some conversation, he complained that he was unable to believe the Divinity of our blessed Savior. It was one of those cases, with which every minister is familiar, where argument would have availed nothing. "We will pray about it," said Mr. Smith; "and if you will only try to believe, I will forfeit my head if God does not give you the power." The result answered his anticipations. The man became there and then a true believer, and united with the society.

The following illustrates the clearly Mr. Smith's counsel: Mrs. M____ had the happiness of seeing all her children but one converted to God. He was the subject of many prayers, but he persisted in his sins, seldom went to church, and avoided meeting Mr. Smith, of whose expostulations he was afraid. The mother requested Mr. Smith's advice. "Lay your hand on one thing at once," was his reply, meaning that she should define to her own mind a distinct object of petition, and not cease till her prayer was answered. She did so, especially in reference to her ungodly son; and a short time afterwards, returning from the chapel, where Mr. Smith had been preaching on the subject of prayer, she said to the young man, "Now I believe that the Lord will have mercy upon thee; for He has heard my prayer on thy behalf." The impression which these words produced was indelible. In about a fortnight afterwards, he was brought into the enjoyment of true religion, and became an active leader and local preacher.

Mr. Smith was one evening preaching at New Basford, and the Spirit was very present. In the congregation was a woman who had recently begun to seek the Lord, and her husband was very wicked. During the sermon this man came to the door of the chapel and angrily said: "Is Mary C____ here? If she does not come out, I will break her legs." Mr. Smith stopped in his discourse and cried, "Lord, lay Thy hand on that man, put a hook in his nose, and Thy bridle in his mouth," etc., and then proceeded. A prayer-meeting, as usual, followed, and, before it was concluded, the man returned to the chapel. But he was now a different character. He came to tell the people that God had forgiven all his sins. It appeared that when, at the conclusion of the first service, his wife returned home, accompanied by a pious female, they found that, in the interval, God had powerfully wrought on him, and he now gladly joined them in prayer for pardon. Some persons were sent for to pray with him, and in a short time the Lord answered, and poured out upon him the regenerating and adopting Spirit. When he thus publicly declared the mercy

of God to him, incredulity sat on almost every countenance; nor could the people be persuaded "that he was a disciple," till his Christian deportment manifested the greatness of the change which had been effected in him.

The following is another characteristic incident, which occurred in the early part of Mr. Smith's residence at Nottingham. While, on one occasion, he was preaching at a village in the circuit, the whole audience appeared to be moved, and cries and groans resounded from every part of the chapel. The extraordinary scene which followed at the prayer-meeting attracted a considerable number of careless, or scoffing spectators, who crowded in at the door, producing much confusion by their behavior, and arresting the progress of the work of God by their unhallowed spirit. Mr. Smith went to them and begged them to kneel down, and join in the worship. This they refused to do. He then fell on his knees and again entreated them. Finding, however, they were unmoved, he rose from his knees and stretching out his arms, he drove them all out of the place, declaring that he would not suffer God to be insulted in His own house. The Lord then wrought a great deliverance. Fifteen persons were saved that evening.

One of the very noticeable things following in the wake of the revivals held by Mr. Smith, was the practical results as seen in the homes and social life of the people. So it is ever where the Gospel is preached in its purity and with the Holy Ghost sent down from Heaven. This is well illustrated by the following:

An English workman and his wife lived an unhappy life. The woman was a scold. Her person was untidy, and her house the abode of disorder and negligence. Some good women got up a tea-meeting, and the workman and his wife were of the company. The next day, the benevolent women took a run among the families of the invited. In their rounds, they came to the home referred to. It was a loathsome place. Squalid poverty and filth met the eye everywhere. The children were offensive, and the woman, stout and strong, but clearly disheartened, sat composedly in the midst of the disorder. She gave her visitors a sullen welcome, evidently ashamed to have the ladies look on the squalid poverty in which she lived. The visitors were practical women. In reply to the inquiry, "Why not clean up?" the woman said, "What's the use? Jim spends all his time in the ale-house. He don't know dirt from cleanliness. He does but little else than drink and swear. I have to support the family, and I have no time to clean my own room." In the meantime, the ladies began to put things to rights and tidy up matters. The poor woman was surprised with the ease her visitors went to work, and how little trouble it was to make things tidy. They persuaded her to clean her children; make herself look decent; sweep up the room, and even clean the doorstep. Her work done, the wife waited for her husband. He came in due time. Somehow he forgot to stop at the tavern. He was sober for once in his life. He drew near to a clean door-stone, whitened after the manner of English door-stones. He thought he had made a mistake. He leaped over the stone, that he might not soil it. On opening the door, he found a clean room, well-dressed children, and a tidy wife. "Come in, Jim; this is all for you." He turned and fled. Soon he came back with his arm full of goods. He sat down to a fine tea. The clean door-step began a new life.

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