GEORGE MÜLLER: DELIGHTED IN GOD

A Book Review

Presented to

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by

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Introduction

Roger Steer is a writer, broadcaster and author of twelve books. He now works as an online tutor and leader in his local church in Devon, England. Steer covers the magnificent life of George Müller in the book, *George Müller, Delighted in God*. This book highlights the many answers to prayer that Müller received from God as the visionary for an Orphanage, Day Schools, Sunday Schools and preacher in Bristol, England. Müller emphatically gave Christendom and the world an example of the power of God that was tangible. He writes concerning his purpose behind the orphanage:

> Now, if I a poor man, simply by prayer and faith, obtained, *without asking any individual* (Müller's italics) the means for establishing and carrying on an Orphan-House: might be instrumental in strengthening the faith of the children of God, besides being a testimony to the consciences of the unconverted of the reality of the things of God (58).

This review will give a brief account of the life of George and discuss aspects of Müller's life and ministry that are great encouragements and inspirational for a faithful ministry.

Summary

George Müller was born in Prussia in September of 1805 (11). His father was a tax collector in the city of Heimersleben while George was growing up. In his teenage years, George had the reputation of being a playboy and was arrested for building up a large amount of debt in 1821 (11-2). However in 1825, his life of rebellion would end, as he became a Christian after visiting a local house meeting with a friend (17-8). In the spring of 1829, Müller travelled to London, England in order to pursue the calling of being a missionary to Jews that were scattered throughout the world (19-21). While he was in Teignmouth ministering, George met and married Mary Groves in 1830 (35-6). He began ministering with Henry Craik at two churches in Bristol

about 1832 (45-6). By 1834, the two had founded the Scriptural Knowledge Institution, which sought to establish Day Schools, Sunday Schools and Adult Schools, to distribute Bibles and to aid missionary work (49). As a result of the plight of orphans in England, God lead George to pray about establishing an Orphanage in 1835 (54-5). By the end of the year, he had received the first monies to begin the work God had laid on his heart (55). Müller writes about his endeavor, "I don't look to Bristol, nor even to England, but the living God, whose is the gold and silver" (61). In April of 1836, the first children arrive and God continues to provide even today (65). After several strong years, Müller endured some of the most difficult years of the ministry in both financial and theological troubles, however God remained faithful. In light of some complaints from neighbors and need for more room, Müller plans to buy and establish separate grounds for the orphan work. In 1849, the first Ashley Down home is ready for children (116). A second home is opened in 1857 (128). A third was completed in 1862 (134-5). The fourth and fifth houses were opened in 1869 and 1870 respectively (161). Mary Müller would leave to go be with her Lord in 1870 (164-5). George married Susannah Sanger in 1871 and began his worldwide preaching tours in 1875 that would last 17 years (169-71). During this time, Müller travelled over two hundred thousand miles and visited forty-two countries. In 1894, Susannah Müller dies, leaving George as a widower for the second time (219). Müller would die only four years later at the age of ninety-two. During his lifetime, he was given £1,453,513 13s 3d to care for over 10,000 orphans (237). The only person he asked for money directly was his heavenly Father.

Personal Application

There are three areas that George Müller is an encouragement to the writer of this review toward a faithful gospel ministry. George Müller's devotion to the Word of God,

persistence in believing prayer and emphasis on practical religious experience are inspirational. The fact that Müller read the Bible over 100 times from beginning to the end is a great testimony of his value of God's Word. This was the fuel for his daily life and prayers. He shares about his approach to the new day in the following:

> That thus my heart might be comforted, encouraged, warned, reproved, instructed; and that thus, by the means of the Word of God, whilst meditating upon it, my heart might be brought into experimental communion with the Lord. . . The first thing I did (early in the morning), after having asked in a few words the Lord's blessing upon His precious word, was, to begin to meditate on the Word of God, searching, as it were, into every verse to get blessing out of it (91).

Müller strongly believed and experienced that the Word of God was the fuel for the Christian life. He depended upon constant and thorough meditation upon the Scriptures to help him accomplish his daily task and prepare for his weekly preaching responsibilities.

The second way that the life of George Müller inspires and encourages faithful ministry is his persistence in prayer. There might not be another example of believing, persistent prayer equal to George Müller. His prayer life was fueled by a radical faith in God. It is challenging to think of the reality of what George Müller accomplished only by relying on God. He never, in his life, asked a person for anything related to his life or the ministry to the Orphan. This approach is foreign to the modern approach to ministry. There is a constant clamoring for finances from churches and pastors in order to support what God has called them to do. The church prefers worldly principles for raising funds as opposed to radical trust in God to provide. The modern church would probably make fun of George Müller if they knew him. In addition, to prayer characterized by trust in God, Müller persevered in prayer. He prayed on behalf of orphans for over fifty years. It is so easy to feel moved to pray about something for a short season, but Müller shows us that we should continue steadfastly in prayer because God desires to answer prayer. His entire autobiography is a diary of prayers that were answered by the faithful

God of the universe because of perseverance and faith. He is an example of how we should continue in prayer. Müller writes that his life was not simply a bed of roses, "Of all the seasons that I had ever passed through since I had been living this way, up to that time, I never knew any period in which my faith was tried so sharply as during the four months from December 12th 1841 to April 12th 1842" (95). Though it was trying, Müller continued as any Christian minister should in the life of prayer.

The third aspect of Müller's life that is inspirational to ministry is that he emphasized a practical Christianity. Though he was very sound doctrinally, the Christian life was not a realm for merely abstract theologizing. He was convinced that the Word of God should be lived out in a practical manner. Notice the way Müller applies Romans 8:28 to the death of his wife in the following:

> It pleased God to take to Himself my beloved wife, after He had left her to me twenty-three years and six weeks. By the grace of God I am not merely perfectly satisfied with this dispensation, but I kiss the hand which administered the stroke, and I look again for the fulfillment of that word in this instance, that 'in all things God works for the good of those who love Him' (219).

It is simply apparent that George Müller was convinced about the practical nature of the Christian life and the application of God's Word to all aspects of human existence. In contrast, many today are satisfied with head knowledge of the Scriptures. Pastors find it difficult to talk about how they are applying the principles of God's Word to their own lives as they preach truths that are foreign to their congregations. Müller reminds us powerfully the importance of watching our lives and our doctrine so that we might save our hearers and ourselves.

Conclusion

As mentioned above, George Müller is a giant example of faithfulness in Christian ministry. His life is the consummate life of faith. He is a great example to ministers today

because he took God and His Word seriously and sought to know it thoroughly. He also exhibited a life of faith in God that manifested itself in believing and persistent prayer. He personally witnessed that answer of thousands of his own prayers and many were answered after he died. Lastly, he lived a practical Christianity. He longed to see the objective realities of the gospel applied to his life and practice. As a result, Müller is remembered as a great man of God, who we should seek to learn from in order to trust God more and be more faithful in ministry.