

The Little Baptist

By J.M. Martin

"And that from a child thou hast known the holy scriptures, which are able to make thee wise unto salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus." 2 Timothy 3:15

Chapter 1

The Surprise.

"O mamma! look here! This Bible that brother gave me, is a *Baptist* Bible. I am sure that brother didn't know it, else he would not have given it to me; and I *won't have it*. The merchant cheated him; don't you think he did, mamma?"

"Why, darling, what have you found in it to make you talk so? Don't you know that your brother brought you the best Bible he could find, and are you not going to be satisfied with it?"

"No, mamma, because it's a Baptist Bible - *I know it is*; and I don't want a Baptist Bible. I do wish Buddie hadn't gone to college, so I could have him take it back and get me one of the right kind. O, it is such a nice book, I am so sorry there is a mistake about it. *I do wish it was right*."

"Yes, but it is right, dear; I don't understand your crazy notion. Yours is like your brother's Bible that he carried away with him; just like the large family Bible from which I have often read to you; the reading in all of them is just the same."

"But, mamma, mine is a Baptist Bible; *it is in fact*. It tells so plainly of baptizing people *in rivers*, and places where there was *much water*, and about *going down into* the water, and coming *up out of* the water, just for all the world like Mr. Coleman, the Baptist preacher, baptizes people. And surely, if the big Bible reads that way, you would not have had Dr. Farnsworth to sprinkle a little water on my face, and to just wet his fingers and rub them on little sister's face, and call it *baptism*. And, mamma, if the big Bible does read that way, why did you always skip those places when you were reading to me?"

"O, fie, child! you ask more questions in a minute than I could answer in a day; but there is one thing you may understand, that is, that the Baptists, the Methodists and *our church*, as well as all other Protestant churches, have the same kind of Bibles."

"Why, mamma, they don't all do alike, yet don't they all say they believe the Bible? I can't see how it is, unless their Bibles are wrong?"

"No, my dear, the difference is in the way different people understand the Bible. The Baptists understand it to teach some things just the reverse of what Presbyterians and others do; but this only amounts to an honest difference of opinion."

"Well, but mamma, is not Dr. Farnsworth as smart as the Baptist preacher? Mr. Coleman talks just like my Bible reads, and if he can understand it, why can't Dr. Farnsworth understand it, too?"

The speaker was little Mellie Brown, with rosy cheeks and flaxen hair, who had just passed her tenth birthday, on which her brother Frank had given her a very fine little pocket Bible. At the time of the conversation she was sitting in her little rocking chair at her mother's side, reading the third chapter of Matthew; and when she read the account of John the Baptist baptizing the people in the Jordan, she was persuaded that the bookseller had practiced a fraud on her brother, by selling him a Baptist Bible. Such a thought as evading a plain declaration of Scripture, had never entered her mind. But in her child-like simplicity, she had supposed the Bible to mean what it said, and to say what it meant. And she had received the impression that the Baptists were in error, regarding the action of baptism, which very readily explains her great surprise when she began to read the Bible for herself.

Mellie had been taught that the Bible was the Word of God, and that all its teachings should be obeyed. Her mother had taken much pains to cultivate her mind, and took pride in witnessing the unfolding of her genius. She was so remarkable for intelligence and sober thought, that she attracted special attention, and became the favorite among her acquaintances. Books were her chief delight, and whenever she got a new one, she was devoted to it, until she had read it through. So her new Bible became her constant companion. She had a great desire to know the meaning of all she read and spent much of her time in asking questions of her mother and others, touching what she had been reading.

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