

DAVID LIVINGSTONE

MISSIONARY EXPLORER OF AFRICA

by

Jessie Kleeberger

Copyright © 1925

by

Gospel Trumpet Company

Anderson, Indiana

edited for 3BSB by Baptist Bible Believer in the spirit of the Colportage Ministry of a century ago

~ out-of-print and in the public domain ~

CHAPTER ONE

THE CHILD ON THE DOORSTEP

"Mother, do tell us again the story of how your grandfather once played he was crazy."

This was the request of young David Livingstone, and it was rewarded by the repetition of that story he and his brothers and sisters liked so well.

Their great-grandfather, Gavin Hunter, could write, while most of his neighbors were totally ignorant of the art. On one occasion a poor woman had him write for her a petition to the minister to have her allowance increased. And for this he was arrested and taken to Hamilton jail. Thoughts of his wife and three hungry children at home made him almost desperate.

He remembered how David had one time saved his life by feigning madness before the Philistines. So he slobbered his beard with saliva, and when a friendly sergeant asked him if he were really mad he confessed that he was only feigning insanity for the sake of his wife and three children at home. He knew they would starve should he have to suffer the usual penalty, that of being sent either to the army in America or to the plantations. The sergeant secured his release and giving him three shillings (seventy-two cents) sent him home to his wife and "weans."

"Ay," said the mother, "mony a prayer went up for that sergeant, for my grandfather was an unco godly man. He had never had so much money in his life before, for his wages were only threepence [six cents] a day."

This story of poverty was only a common one among the ancestors of David Livingstone. And that great man, even after he had won the applause of the world, dared still to claim the poor as his class, and on the epitaph on the tombstone of his parents he expressed his thanks to GOD for "poor and pious parents," refusing to change the "and" to "but." Indeed, one look into the beautiful eyes of his mother told of a soul that was strong in her trust in GOD and lovingly devoted to the care of her family. Five sons and two daughters there were, but two sons were taken from her in their infancy.

David, the second of the living sons, was born Mar. 19, 1813, in Blantyre, a little village of Scotland.

David's grandfather, who could trace his ancestors back for six generations, could proudly say that he had never heard of one person in the family being guilty of dishonesty. And his last precept to his children was - "*Be honest.*"

David's father was a total abstainer at a time when there was no such thing as prohibition and when the idea of abstinence was very unpopular. He had seen so much of the awful effects of drunkenness that he was determined his children should never see him drink liquor. Another new and unpopular cause which he championed was the Sunday-school. He was a tea peddler, but spent his Sundays and spare time in conducting Sunday-schools and prayer-meetings, and he always took a supply of tracts with him when he went out to sell tea.

He was a kind, but stern man. It was his habit to lock the door at dusk, at which time all the children were expected to be in the house. David one time was tardy, and upon reaching home found the door barred. He took the situation very calmly, and having obtained a piece of bread from some one, sat down quietly on the doorstep, deciding to spend the night there. However, his mother found him and showed mercy. Though only a child, the boy had already learned the lesson which proved so valuable to him in his hardships in Africa - to make the best of the least pleasant situation.

Another valuable lesson learned in his childhood was that of perseverance.

When he was only nine years old he learned the entire 119th Psalm and repeated it with only five mistakes. His reward this time was a New Testament from his Sunday-school teacher. But the habit of persevering in difficult tasks became a part of his life, and it was that which took him through the trackless jungles of Africa and made him a blessing to that dark continent.

Grim poverty cut short the school-days of the promising lad and sent him to work in the cotton factory at the age of ten.

"It went to my heart like a knife," his mother said. "And yet I was as proud as a queen last Saturday night when he brought me his first week's wages, a whole half-crown [sixty cents], and threw it into my lap."

The first wages he spent for himself went for a *Ruddiman's Rudiments of Latin*; for the wolf that robbed him of his boyhood school-days could not steal from him the ambition that makes the world's great men.

He attended an evening class from eight to ten. Then going home, he would study till twelve o'clock or later if his mother did not awaken and snatch the book from him. Then, beginning at the mill at six o'clock in the morning, he would work until eight o'clock at night, stopping only for his meals.

David, like his father, was very fond of reading.

He devoured every book that came into his hands. Novels, however, were never allowed in the house. While at work he would place a book on his spinning-jenny and manage to catch a sentence occasionally, though he never had more than one idle minute at a time. Thus, by making use of every moment, he acquired for himself a liberal education, and friends were surprised in after years to hear him quote long passages from the classics.

A holiday once in a while gave David and his brothers a chance to roam the country in search of botanical, zoological, and geological specimens.

The story is told that he one time caught a good-sized salmon, which was against the game laws, and having no other convenient way of hiding it, he put it into the leg of his brother's trousers. Thus he created considerable sympathy for the boy with the swollen leg as they passed through the village on their way home.

He also took a great interest in studying books of science, and later he found this knowledge of great value to him in his work in Africa.

Among his brothers and sisters David seemed to be a favorite. It was his delight to give pleasure to the rest of the family. If anything interesting happened during the day he was ready to tell it to the family around the evening fireside. He kept up this habit in after years when he was studying in Glasgow, and his Saturday evenings at home were eagerly looked forward to by his sisters, for he would tell all the happenings of the week.

David was only twelve years old when he began to feel the awfulness of sin and to wish that GOD would give him peace in his soul. Still he felt that he was unworthy to receive such a great blessing until after the HOLY SPIRIT had worked some miraculous change in his heart. In his ignorance he waited for that change instead of accepting the pardon that CHRIST offered. And putting it off, he drove the spirit of conviction from his heart. Still there remained in his soul a hunger which none but GOD could satisfy. Was there no rest for him? Would GOD never send peace? Would he be lost forever? These were some of the thoughts that haunted him every little while throughout his teens.

It was when he was nearly twenty that he read *Dick's Philosophy of a Future State*.

This book showed him his error. He could see now that all he needed to do was to seek GOD with all his heart, hand over to him the penitent soul, and accept the pardon purchased by JESUS' blood on Calvary. "**Whosoever will**," JESUS had said, and that meant David Livingstone, too. This new life now penetrated the young man's whole being. The love of GOD flowed warm and free through his soul, and he could now say, "**For me to live is Christ.**" Anywhere in God's service he was willing to go.

"Now, lad, make religion the every-day business of your life, and not a thing of fits and starts; for if you do, temptation and other things will get the better of you." This was the advice of David Hogg, one of David Livingstone's spiritual advisors in the little city of Blantyre, Scotland, where he lived. And we shall see how carefully Livingstone made religion the every-day business of his life.

~ end of chapter 1 ~
