

DR. WILSON'S STORIES OF SOUL-WINNING

by

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CHAPTER TWENTY-NINE

THE DETECTIVES COULD NOT FIND HIM

Dr. Leonard was a very prominent pastor in one of our large cities. He was loved by the whole community and honored by the city fathers. He had a son who had come to maturity with a rebellious spirit against the church, and therefore against his parents. The father and mother sought to help the young man to know the Lord, and to love the way of righteousness, but to no avail. He rebelled against “religion” as he called it, and wanted none of it. His parents guarded him very carefully from worldly influences, had him attend church with them regularly, and sought by patience and kindly counsel to bring him to Christ.

The young man endured this for some years, in fact, until he had finished his schooling and graduated from college. He then felt that he could safely and properly sever his relationship with his family, and go out into the world on his own responsibility. One night he took a few belongings, leaving most of them in his room, and during the night slipped away unseen, and unheard.

The next morning the parents found his bed had been untouched, and most of his garments were there. His books and many other personal belongings were in their accustomed place, but the traveling bag was gone, and the young man was nowhere to be seen. He dropped out of sight during the night.

The father employed a national detective agency to find the boy. Photographs were sent throughout the country. The homes of his relatives were secretly watched. The mail that went to the relatives was inspected. Telephones were tapped in places where there was a possibility that the boy might be contacted. All of this was to no avail. The lad apparently had just evaporated from society. The father spent a great sum of money seeking to track down his son, or to get some information concerning his whereabouts.

It was my privilege to conduct a series of meetings in that city. The church was located near a hospital and the meetings were attended by patients from the hospital, nurses, and others from different parts of the city.

The Spirit of God was moving among the people, hearts were being touched, and each evening there were those who expressed their desire to know the Saviour.

On one of these evenings, an usher came to me as I was helping a nurse with a spiritual problem and said, "There is a young man on the front seat who wishes to have a personal visit with you."

The nurse had a meeting with the Saviour that evening and returned to the hospital new born, and with a new Saviour, and with a new song. As soon as she left, I went to sit beside the young man, who looked much older than he really was.

Here is the story that he related to me:

"Five years ago I slipped away from my home during the night, taking only a few things with me. My father is Dr. Leonard, whom you may have known as the leading preacher of this city. He and my mother were devoted to me, and kept insisting that I go with them to the church and participate in the church activities. I rebelled against this program for I wanted to see the world, and to enjoy the things in the world which were denied to me by my parents. I saw other young men who lived as they pleased, and seemed to be much happier than I. I felt that since I was a grown man I should have the right to live as I pleased, go where I pleased, and do what I pleased. Still, as the preacher's son, I knew it would never be proper for me to go out openly into the ways of the world, and thus disgrace my parents.

"After leaving my home, I took up lodging down in the part of a slum district where I thought I could be hidden from the eyes of the godly people who associated themselves with my father's church, and with other religious groups. I grew a beard as you see, and this completely disguised my looks. I bought some old clothes at a pawn shop, so that I would not be recognized. I went in for sin rather heavily. I began to do all the things I had been wanting to do. I began to drink, to smoke, to carouse generally with others who were living for the Devil. I contracted some diseases which are the result of that kind of living. I found it much more difficult to obtain work than I had anticipated, and therefore had to live in the cheapest surroundings, in filthy rooms, and to eat in the cheapest places I could find.

"Dr. Wilson, I have had five years of that kind of life, and all the time knowing and seeing in the papers that my father was making every effort to find me. I knew that my mother was praying, and all the congregation in the church joined in praying that John might be found. I fought my conscience. Bible verses kept coming to my mind reproving me, for I knew very well that I was building up a terrible record which must be met some day at the judgment throne. I made up my mind that I had had all the life of sin that I wanted, and was ready to come back to my home, and to find the Lord.

"Last night I came to the definite decision to seek some way out of my wicked ways and come back to my father and mother. I did not want to return as I was. I wanted to return to them in complete separation from sinful things and with a heart ready to follow the counsel of my father and mother. As I passed along this main street, I noticed the sign in front of this church that a doctor would give an address this evening.

“I thought that since the address was to be in a church, it would have something to do both with God and with the body. I needed help in both ways, and that is the reason I came to the service tonight. The message you gave was exactly what I needed,—so here I am, tell me what to do.”

I read to the young man from Luke 15, “**This man receiveth sinners, and eateth with them.**” I could see that this sweet invitation of our Lord affected his heart. He had been thinking that God would be very severe on him because of his deliberate disobedience to the truths that he had learned.

When I saw that this thought was in his heart, I read to him the story of the prodigal son in this same chapter, Luke 15:11-32. I said to him, “You will notice, John, that the father was waiting for his son; he was waiting with kisses, with a ring, with shoes, with a fatted calf, and with a new robe. He was waiting to give a wonderful welcome to his wandering boy. You will notice also, John, that the father said nothing whatever about the path he had taken, the ingratitude, nor the sins that had been committed. The father took the same position as God in the Old Testament when He said to the one who was repentant and returned to God, ‘**None of his sins that he hath committed will be mentioned unto him**’ (Ezekiel 33:16). The Saviour is waiting for you to come, as you are, just now, and the Saviour will welcome you, and so will the Father Himself.”

The tears came to John’s eyes. He bowed before the Lord, and kneeling to Him, he trusted his soul to Christ, and gave himself back to his Heavenly Father. The work was finished in his soul.

As he rose from his knees, he extended both hands to me, and said, “I am going straight home now. Probably father and mother have retired, but I will ring the bell, and when the butler comes to the door, I will tell him to tell my parents, ‘John has returned home, safe and saved.’”

That must have been a wonderful reunion.

~ end of chapter 29 ~

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