

George Muller: His Life and Ministry

BORN: September 27, 1805 in Kroppenstaedt, Prussia (Germany)

DIED: March 10, 1898 in Bristol, England

LIFE: 92 years, 5 months, 11 days

George Muller: His Life and Ministry
1 Corinthians 12:7-11

“But the manifestation of the Spirit is given to every man to profit withal. 8 For to one is given by the Spirit the word of wisdom; to another the word of knowledge by the same Spirit; 9 To another faith by the same Spirit; to another the gifts of healing by the same Spirit; 10 To another the working of miracles; to another prophecy; to another discerning of spirits; to another divers kinds of tongues; to another the interpretation of tongues: 11 But all these worketh that one and the selfsame Spirit, dividing to every man severally as he will”.

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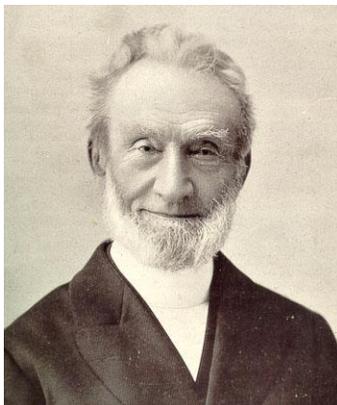
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The Birth of Johann Georg Ferdinand Müller

George Müller was born in Kroppenstedt, a village near Halberstadt in the former Kingdom of Prussia which is today modern Germany. In 1810, the Müller family moved to nearby Heimersleben, where Müller's father was appointed a collector of taxes.

A Sinful Soul

The early life of George was characterized by extreme acts of unrighteousness. So hard was his young heart that while his mother was dying, George, at 14 years of age, was playing cards with friends and drinking.

“The night she was dying, I, not knowing of her illness, was playing cards until two in the morning, and on the next day, being the Lord's day, I went with some of my companions in sin to a tavern, and then, being filled with strong beer, we went about the streets half intoxicated.”

"I grew worse and worse," says he. "Three or four days before I was confirmed (and thus admitted to partake of the Lord's supper), I was guilty of gross immorality; and the very day before my confirmation, when I was in the vestry with the clergyman to confess my sins (according to the usual practice), after a formal manner, I defrauded him; for I handed over to him only a twelfth part of the fee which my father had given me for him."

A few solemn thoughts and desires to lead a better life came to George, but he continued to plunge deeper and deeper into sin. Lying, stealing, gambling, questionable novel-reading, licentiousness, extravagance, and almost every form of sin was indulged in by him.

No one would have imagined that the troubled sinful youth would ever become eminent for his faith in God and for his power in prayer. He robbed his father of certain rents which his father had entrusted him to collect, falsifying the accounts of what he had received and pocketing the balance. His money was spent on sinful pleasures, and once he was reduced to such poverty that, in order to satisfy his hunger, he stole a piece of coarse bread, the allowance of a soldier who was quartered in the house where he was.

In 1821 George set off on an excursion to Magdeburg, where he spent six days in "much sin." He then went to Brunswick, and put up at an expensive hotel until his money was exhausted. He then put up at a fine hotel in a neighboring village, intending to defraud the hotel-keeper. But his best clothes were taken in lieu of what he owed. He then walked six miles to another inn, where he was arrested for trying to defraud the landlord. He was imprisoned for 24 days for this crime when sixteen years of age.

Following his imprisonment George returned to his home and received a severe thrashing from his angry father. He remained as sinful in heart as ever, but in order to regain his father's confidence he began to lead a very exemplary life outwardly, until he had the confidence of all around him. His father decided to send him to the classical school at Halle and following a series of events George finally arrived to study divinity in the University of Halle in Wittenberg, Germany.

While at the University of Halle, Muller came across the writings and ministry of the Moravians, Count Zinzendorf and Professor August Hermann Francke (March 22, 1663 – June 8, 1727), which were to have a profound influence on his own life and ministry. In particular, Muller would learn from Franke the principles upon which an orphanage should be run because Franke himself had been involved in providing for orphans and educating them.

While at the University of Halle, George met a fellow student named Fredrick Beta who, like George, was also steeped in secret sin. Ironically, it was Beta who invited Muller to a Christian cottage prayer meeting in the home of a Christian businessman. At the prayer meeting George was made to feel welcomed. The Holy Spirit began a work of grace in the heart of the young pretender. He began to read the Bible on a regular basis and discuss Christianity with the others who attended the meetings.

Finding Personal Salvation

After seeing a man praying to God on his knees, George Muller was convinced of his own need for genuine personal salvation. As soon as he got home he went to his bedside, knelt, and prayed. He asked God to help him in his life and to bless him wherever he went and to forgive him of his sins. By the grace of God and the power of the Holy Spirit, George Muller became a different person. He stopped drinking, stealing and lying, and began training in earnest to become a missionary. He began preaching regularly in nearby churches and worshipped when he was not speaking.

A Time of Sickness

In 1828, at the age of 23, George Müller became interested in mission work and offered to help with the Jewish community in England through the London Society for Promoting Christianity Amongst the Jews. This Anglican based Society had been established in 1809. Upon arriving in England 1829, George became very sick to the point he believed he would soon die.

A Faithful Friend

In order to facilitate his physical recuperation, George was sent to Teignmouth, in south west England, where he met a man from Scotland named Henry Craik (1805-1866). Craik would become a life-long friend, a respected Hebrew scholar, and an evangelist.

First Pastorate

When George Muller recovered from his illness, he dedicated himself to doing the will and work of God. He soon left the London Society, convinced that God would provide for his needs as he did Christian work. This was the beginning of a life time of living by faith to an extra ordinary degree.

In 1831 Henry Craik invited Muller to become a minister with him in Teignmouth. George accepted the invitation and became the pastor of Ebenezer Chapel in Devon, a large county in south west England. George accepted on three conditions.

First, the practice of the renting of pews would be abolished.

Second, the church would not pay him a salary.

Third, the church would allow a box to be placed by the door and he would trust the Lord to move people to provide for his keep.

First Marriage

While in Devon, George Muller met and, at age 25, married Mary Groves, the sister of Anthony Norris Groves (1 February 1795 – 20 May 1853) who has been described as the "father of faith missions". Anthony Groves was a successful dentist who was led of God to sell all he had and establish the first Protestant mission to Arabic-speaking Muslims. He settled in Baghdad, now the capital of Iraq. Later, he ministered in southern India. Mary Groves bore George four children. Two were stillborn. One son Elijah died when he was a year old. Their daughter Lydia married James Wright who succeeded Mueller as the head of the Institute. Mary died in 1890 at 57 years old.

The Influence of an Individual

There were two main ideas of ministry that Anthony Norris Groves embraced that would one day influence other individuals who, in the providence of the Lord, became foundational leaders in the Plymouth Brethren movement. Men such as John Nelson Darby, J. V. Parnell, Lord Congleton, and George Müller would adopt Groves' belief that any method used to evangelize other nations should be patterned after those of Jesus Christ and His apostles as described in the New Testament. They also agreed that indigenous [local native] converts should be encouraged to form their own churches without dependence on foreign training, authorization, or finance.

Stepping Out by Faith

During his time as the pastor of the church in Devon, George refused a regular salary, believing that the practice could lead to church members giving out of duty, not desire. He also eliminated the renting of church pews, arguing that it gave unfair prestige to the rich.

Moving to Bristol, England

In 1832, George Müller left Devon to move to Bristol to begin working at Bethesda Chapel. He would continue to preach in Bristol until his death, even while being devoted to other forms of ministry.

In 1834, when he was 28, George founded the Scriptural Knowledge Institution for Home and Abroad. He was disillusioned with the optimistic teaching of post-millennialism, unorthodox theological liberalism, and the use of worldly strategies in relation to mismanagement of missions, such as going into debt and not being sensitive to or dependent on the leading of the Holy Spirit.

The Institute would underwrite several branches of ministry.

- **To run Sunday Schools** and day schools for children and adults to teach Bible knowledge. Eventually George Muller would establish 117 Christian schools ministering to 120,000 young people.
- **Bible distribution.** Reviewing his life's work, it can be noted that George Muller was able to distribute
 - ❖ 285,407 whole Bibles,
 - ❖ 1,459,506 New Testaments, and
 - ❖ 244,351 other religious books and pamphlets.
- **Orphanages**, "to board, clothe and scripturally educate *destitute* children who have lost both parents by death." By the end of February 1835, there were five Day-schools - two for boys and three for girls.
- **Missionary support.**

Funding by Faith Alone

To manage these enormous ministries and others George Muller did not receive government support. He only accepted unsolicited gifts which were prayed for by faith. And faith was honored for millions of dollars were received without begging, solicitation, or “sharing” his needs with others. The monies George Muller received would be used not only to fund the schools and orphanages but also to distribute gospel literature. The money he received was also used to support other faith based missionaries around the world, such as Hudson Taylor.

Orphanages

The main work of George Müller and his wife, or at least the work they are most renowned for was with orphans. This particular ministry began in 1836 with the preparation of their own home at 6 Wilson Street, Bristol for the accommodation of thirty girls. Soon after, three more houses in Wilson Street were furnished; bringing the total of children cared for to 130.

In 1845, as growth continued, Müller decided that a separate building designed to house 300 children was necessary. But the building of a new orphanage had to take place where the structures would not drop the property value of others and would have a good sewage system.

Muller took the matter to the Lord in prayer.

Soon, a piece of property came to his attention and Muller sought out the elusive owner. When the owner of the property was found, he informed Muller that he had been awakened one night at 3:00 am and impressed by God to lower the cost of the property. He would not sell the property for 200 pounds an acre but for 120 pounds an acre, saving Mr. Muller a considerable sum of money.

In June, 1849, at Ashley Down, Bristol, a new orphanage home opened. The architect commissioned to draw up the plans and supervise the work had asked Mr. Muller if he might do the work gratuitously. The response to that request was simple enough, “Yes!”

An important spiritual truth is recognized: “It takes as much faith and grace to be a good receiver as it does to be a good giver”. Christian, someone wants to do something good for you, let them. It will help you personally and will be a blessing to them spiritually. While Jesus has taught us that it is more, “*Blessed to give than to receive*” (Acts 20:35), unless there is a willingness to receive, the person giving cannot be blessed.

Hope for the Hopeless

By 26 May 1870, children were being accommodated in five homes.



New Orphan House, No. 1.

[Facing page 86.]

Orphanage House Number 1 – 300 children
Opened in June, 1849, at Ashley Down, Bristol



Orphanage House Number 2 – 400 children
Opened on November 12, 1857



New Orphan House, No. 3.

[Facing page 86.]

Orphanage House Number 3 – 450 children
Opened in 1862



Orphanage House Number 4 – 450 children
Opened in 1868



House Number 5 – 450 children
Opened in 1870

*Fifty years after Mr. Mueller began his work,
at least one hundred thousand orphans were cared for in England alone.*

When speaking of the properties entrusted to George Muller for his orphans and ministries, it must not be thought the structures were small. They were not. They were huge, costly, and complex, every one of them. And yet, George Müller never made requests for financial support, nor did he go into debt, despite tremendous building costs. Many times George Muller would receive unsolicited food donations only hours before they were needed to feed the children, further strengthening his faith in God.

On one well-documented occasion, George Muller gave thanks for breakfast when all the children were sitting at the table, even though there was nothing to eat in the house. As they finished praying, the baker knocked on the door with sufficient fresh bread to feed everyone, not only for breakfast but for a month! At 2:00 o'clock in the morning the baker had been awakened by God. He went to the foreman of his factory and said, "I want you to bake enough bread to feed the orphans for breakfast. No, make enough bread to feed them for a week. No, wait. Make enough bread to feed them for a month. I have got to get some sleep!" George Muller was a giant with God, but he had been on his knees praying.

A Matter of Honor

Although Muller never asked any person other than God for anything, he did ask those who supported his work to give a name and address in order that a receipt might be given. The receipts were printed with a request that the receipt be kept until the next annual report was issued, in order that the donor might confirm the amount reported with the amount given. A short letter explained the matter.

"Owing to the great increase of my work, I have found it necessary to authorize two of my assistants, Mr. Lawford and Mr. Wright, to sign receipts for donations, if needful, in my stead.- Donors are requested, kindly to keep the receipts and to compare them with the "Supplement" to the Report, which records every donation received, so that they may be satisfied that their donations have been properly applied.

The "Supplement" is sent with the Report to every *Donor* who furnishes me with his or her name and address.

I would earnestly request all Donors, even those who feel it right to give anonymously, to put it in my power to acknowledge their donations at the time they come to hand; and should any Donor, after having done this, not receive a printed receipt within a week, they would much oblige me by giving me information at once. This interval must, of course, be extended in the case of Donors who send from places out of the United Kingdom. George Müller".

Every single gift was recorded, whether a single coin, a large monetary gift of money, or an old teaspoon. Accounting records were scrupulously kept and made available for scrutiny.

The Setting of High Standards

At the orphanages, every morning after breakfast there was a time of Bible reading and prayer. In this way every child was exposed to the gospel.

And, when a child left the orphanage for whatever reason, that child was given a Bible, together with a small trunk containing two changes of clothing.

The children in the orphanages were always well dressed and, during their stay, received a quality education.

School inspectors were employed to maintain high academic standards. So well taught were the orphan's it was claimed the nearby factories and mines of Bristol were unable to obtain enough workers because of Muller's efforts in securing apprenticeships, professional training, and domestic service positions for the children old enough to leave the orphanage.

Close Inspection of the Worse Kind

On one occasion, the famous English author, Charles Dickens, heard a malicious rumor that the orphans were being mistreated and came down from London unannounced to verify this. Mr. Dickens was concerned about the exploitation of children reflected in his books such as *Oliver Children*.

Initially, George Müller refused to grant access to the renowned author as it was not one of the days set aside to receive visitors to the homes, but Dickens refused to leave. At that point, it is unclear whether Müller showed Dickens around himself, or if he simply gave Mr. Dickens several keys and invited him to go around the homes, or if he tasked one of the orphans to guide Dickens round, but Dickens went back to London and wrote a favorable report on the activities of the orphan houses in his weekly magazine publication, "Household Words".

The name of the magazine took its name from the line from Shakespeare's *Henry V*, "Familiar in his mouth as household words". Theoretically, the paper championed the cause of the poor and working classes (*My Book of Remembrance*, Charles Brewer October 1909).

World Wide Evangelism

In 1870 the beloved first wife of George Muller died. Mary Groves and George Muller had been married for 39 years.



Mary Groves
7 Oct 1830 - 6 Feb 1870
(Time married)

George preached Mary's funeral. We have the full text of the message at Mary's funeral and we have his own memories of this great loss.

“Were we happy? Verily we were. With every year our happiness increased more and more. I never saw my beloved wife at any time, when I met her unexpectedly anywhere in Bristol, without being delighted so to do. I never met her even in the Orphan Houses, without my heart being delighted so to do. Day by day, as we met in our dressing room, at the Orphan Houses, to wash our hands before dinner and tea, I was delighted to meet her, and she was equally pleased to see me. Thousands of times I told her—“My darling, I never saw you at any time, since you became my wife, without my being delighted to see you.”

Then came the medical diagnosis.

“When I heard what Mr. Pritchard's judgment was, viz., that the malady was rheumatic fever, I naturally expected the worst. . . . My heart was nigh to be broken on account of the depth of my affection.”

Twenty minutes after four, on the Lord's Day, February 6, 1870, Mary died. “I fell on my knees and thanked God for her release, and for having taken her to Himself, and asked the Lord to help and support us.”

George Muller recalled later how he strengthened himself during these hours. And here we see the key to his life.

“The last portion of scripture which I read to my precious wife was this: ‘The Lord God is a sun and shield, the Lord will give grace and glory, no good thing will he withhold from them that walk uprightly.’

Now, if we have believed in the Lord Jesus Christ, we have received grace, we are partakers of grace, and to all such he will give glory also. I said to myself, with regard to the latter part, “no good thing will he withhold from them that walk uprightly”—I am in myself a poor worthless sinner, but I have been saved by the blood of Christ; and I do not live in sin, I walk uprightly before God. Therefore, if it is really good for me, my darling wife will be raised up again; sick as she is. God will restore her again. But if she is not restored again, then it would not be a good thing for me. And so my heart was at rest. I was satisfied with God. And all this springs, as I have often said before, from taking God at his word, believing what he says.”

In 1871, at the age of 66 George Muller married again, this time to 57 year old Susannah Grace Sanger. They would be married for 23 years.



30 Nov 1871 - 13 Jan 1894

In 1875, Muller, and Susannah began an extensive missionary journey that would last for 17 years. He would preach in the United States, India, Australia, Japan, China, and almost forty other countries. He averaged preaching one time a day and spoke to more than three million people.

Müller always expected to pay for their fares and accommodation from the unsolicited gifts given for his own use. However, if someone offered to pay his hotel bill en-route, Müller recorded this amount in his accounts.

He travelled over 200,000 miles, an incredible achievement for pre-aviation times. His language abilities allowed him to preach in English, French, and German, and his sermons were translated into the host languages when he was unable to use English, French or German.

In 1892, George Muller returned to England, where he died on March 10, 1898 in New Orphan House No 3.

From the end of his travels in 1892, when he was 87, until his death in March of 1898 Muller preached in his church and worked for the Scripture Knowledge Institute. At age 92, not long before he died, he wrote,

“I have been able, every day and all the day to work, and that with ease, as seventy years since.” He led a prayer meeting at his church on the evening of Wednesday, March 9, 1898. The next day, March 10, a cup of tea was taken to him at seven in the morning, but no answer came to the knock on the door in New Orphan House Number 3. He was found dead on the floor beside his bed.

The funeral was held the following Monday in Bristol, where he had served for sixty-six years. “Tens of thousands of people reverently stood along the route of the simple procession; men left their workshops and offices, women left their elegant homes or humble kitchens, all seeking to pay a last token of respect.” A thousand children gathered for a service at the Orphan House No. 3. They had now “for a second time lost a ‘father’.”

The Daily Telegraph wrote,

“[He]...had robbed the cruel streets of thousands of victims, the gaols of thousands of felons, the workhouses of thousands of helpless waifs.”

The Bristol Times said,

“He was raised up for the purpose of showing that the age of miracles is not past, and rebuking the skeptical tendencies of the time.”

A Man of Prayer

As few others, George Müller was a man of prayer. He prayed about anything and everything and he expected each prayer to be answered. Of course! Why else should one pray?

God promised, *Psalms 81:10 I am the Lord thy God, which brought thee out of the land of Egypt: open thy mouth wide, and I will fill it.*

Jesus said, *Mark 11:24 Therefore I say unto you, What things soever ye desire, when ye pray, believe that ye receive them, and ye shall have them.*

James wrote, *James 4:2 Ye lust, and have not: ye kill, and desire to have, and cannot obtain: ye fight and war, yet ye have not, because ye ask not.*

So George Muller prayed.

Once, whilst crossing the Atlantic in 1877, his ship, the *S. S. Sardinian*, ran into thick fog off the coast of New Foundland. He explained to the captain that he needed to be in Quebec by Saturday, the following afternoon, but Captain Dutton said that he was slowing the ship down for safety and Müller's appointment would have to be missed. George Müller asked to use the chartroom to pray for the lifting of the fog. The captain followed him down, claiming it would be a waste of time.

After Müller prayed, the captain started to pray, but Müller stopped him; partly because of the captain's unbelief, but mainly because he believed the prayer had already been answered. The fog was gone. When the two men went back to the bridge, they found the fog had lifted. The captain became a Christian shortly afterwards.

Another example was when one of the orphan house's boiler stopped working; Muller needed to have it fixed. Now this was a problem, because the boiler was bricked up and the weather was worsening with each day. So he prayed for two things; first, he asked that the workers he had hired would have a heart to work throughout the night, and second, Muller asked God that the weather would let up.

On the Tuesday before the work was due to commence, a bitter north wind still blew but in the morning, before the workmen arrived, a southerly wind began to blow and it was so mild that no fires were needed to heat the buildings.

That evening, the foreman of the contracted company attended the site to see how he might speed the work along. He instructed the men to report back first thing in the morning to make an early resumption of work. The team leader stated that they would prefer to work through the night. The job was done in 30 hours.

The practical and personal faith in God of George was strengthened day by day as he spent hours in daily prayer and Bible reading. In the later years of his life it was his practice to read the Bible through in its entirety four times a year.

A Single Standard

The theology that guided the ministry of George Müller was shaped by an experience in his mid twenties when he "came to prize the Bible alone as [his] standard of judgment". Muller records his esteem for the Bible in his *Narratives*.

"That the word of God alone is our standard of judgment in spiritual things; that it can be explained only by the Holy Spirit; and that in our day, as well as in former times, he is the teacher of his people. The office of the Holy Spirit I had not experimentally understood before that time. Indeed, of the office of each of the blessed persons, in what is commonly called the Trinity, I had no experimental apprehension.

I had not before seen from the Scriptures that the Father chose us before the foundation of the world; that in him that wonderful plan of our redemption originated, and that he also appointed all the means by which it was to be brought about. Further, that the Son, to save us, had fulfilled the law, to satisfy its demands, and with it also the holiness of God; that he had borne the punishment due to our sins, and had thus satisfied the justice of God.

And, further, that the Holy Spirit alone can teach us about our state by nature, show us the need of a Saviour, enable us to believe in Christ, explain to us the Scriptures, help us in preaching, etc. It was my beginning to understand this latter point in particular which had a great effect on me; for the Lord enabled me to put it to the test of experience, by laying aside commentaries, and almost every other book, and simply reading the word of God and studying it.

The result of this was, that the first evening that I shut myself into my room, to give myself to prayer and meditation over the Scriptures, I learned more in a few hours than I had done during a period of several months previously. *But the particular difference was, that I received real strength for my soul in doing so.* I now began to try by the test of the Scriptures the things which I had learned and seen, and found that only those principles which stood the test were really of value."

In reading such a narrative we must be careful. Mr. Muller was not saying he did not value what God has said to other individuals. He did. Even the apostle Paul was dependent upon his "books". While in prison the apostle asked Timothy to come and visit him. *2 Timothy 4:13 [Timothy], The cloke that I left at Troas with Carpus, when thou comest, bring with thee, and the books, but especially the parchments.*

Charles Spurgeon, when instructing his student's in the Pastor's College would speak on the importance of books in his two lectures, *Commenting and Commentaries*. In introducing his first lecture Spurgeon began by saying the following.

"In order to be able to expound the Scriptures, and as an aid to your pulpit studies, you will need to be familiar with the commentators: a glorious army, let me tell you, whose acquaintance will be your delight and profit. Of course, you are not such wiseacres [soothsayers] as to think or say that you can expound Scripture without assistance from the works of divines and learned men who have labored before you in the field of exposition. If you are of that opinion, pray remain so, for you are not worth the trouble of conversion, and like a little coterie [exclusive group] who think with you, would resent the attempt as an insult to your infallibility. It seems odd, that certain men who talk so much of what the Holy Spirit reveals to themselves, should think so little of what he has revealed to others".

When Mr. Muller said that he gave himself to the Scriptures and laid aside his commentaries, he did not mean he laid aside his books forever, but depended more and more upon the illuminating work of God the Holy Spirit. And that is wise. A printout of the books in his personal library takes more than 20 pages.

The Doctrines of Grace

In his personal study of Scripture, George Müller came to believe in the doctrines of election, particular redemption, and final persevering grace while staying in Teignmouth, Devon in 1829. This discovery was enhanced by a chance encounter Muller had with a nameless man who changed his life forever.

"Through the instrumentality of this brother the Lord bestowed a great blessing upon me, for which I shall have cause to thank Him throughout eternity. Before this period I had been much opposed to the doctrines of election, particular redemption, and final persevering grace; so much so that, a few days after my arrival at Teignmouth, I called election a devilish doctrine. . . I knew nothing about the choice of God's people, and did not believe that the child of God, when once made so, was safe for ever. . . . But now I was brought to examine these precious truths by the word of God."

About forty years later, in 1870, Mueller spoke to some young believers about the importance of what had happened to him at Teignmouth. He said that his preaching had been fruitless for four years from 1825 to 1829 in Germany, but then he came to England and was taught the doctrines of grace.

“In the course of time I came to this country, and it pleased God then to show to me the doctrines of grace in a way in which I had not seen them before. At first I hated them,

‘If this were true *I* could do nothing at all in the conversion of sinners, as all would depend upon God and the working of His Spirit.’

But when it pleased God to reveal these truths to me, and my heart was brought to such a state that I could say, “I am not only content simply to be a hammer, an axe, or a saw, in God's hands; but I shall count it an honor to be taken up and used by Him in any way; and if sinners are converted through my instrumentality, from my inmost soul I will give Him all the glory; the Lord gave me to see fruit; the Lord gave me to see fruit in abundance; sinners were converted by scores; and ever since God has used me in one way or other in His service.”

If you are not familiar with the doctrines of election, particular redemption, and final persevering grace in their technical, biblical, and theological sense then let me encourage you to apply yourself to Scripture. Illuminated by the Holy Spirit you will learn the great doctrines of grace as Mr. Muller did.

Practical Concerns

As George Muller wrestled with doctrinal issues he also struggled with practical concerns. One spark that ignited a local firestorm involved Müller’s desire to determine faith and practice by the "infallible standard of the Holy Spirit". At the time, he and Henry Craik were pastors of the Bethesda and Gideon fellowships in Bristol. Membership at Gideon was open to all believers, while only believers who had been baptized could claim full membership of Bethesda, although all believers were welcome at the communion service.

Müller consulted Robert C. Chapman on the issue of accepting unbaptised believers into church fellowship. Mr. Chapman was of the opinion that a distinction should be made between unbaptised believers who "walked disorderly" and those who lived according to the Bible. George Müller and Henry Craik discussed the issue and decided the counsel of Mr. Chapman was wise, unbaptised believers, who otherwise lived according to Scriptural principles, should not be denied church membership.

Immediately, dissention arose from the church at Gideon regarding the presence of unbelievers at Communion. Furthermore, some brethren at Gideon held the view that pews were private property and so could be and should be rented out. Besides, the practice was a good source of dependable income.

In opposition, Muller and Henry Craik believed the policy and practice of renting out church pews created a class distinction and division within the body of Christ that was unnecessary and unbiblical. God’s work should be funded by God’s people, God’s way and that is by grace.

So great was the division that George Müller and Henry Craik felt compelled to withdraw their fellowship with the Gideon church, concentrating thereafter on the Bethesda Chapel.

Dissent among the Brethren

George Muller would find himself entangled in other theological and practical concerns because of his involvement as an early leader in the Plymouth Brethren Movement. The movement had begun in a home in Dublin, Ireland but soon spread other places including a fellowship at Plymouth, England. This particular fellowship of believers became the most well-known among the movement and people in the district began to calling those who met, "brethren from Plymouth", resulting in the designation "Plymouth Brethren".

One of the foundational leaders of the movement was John Nelson Darby (1800 – 1882), a man of decidedly strong opinions, and novel ones too, especially in the area of eschatology. In 1848 John Darby began to oppose the teaching of another early leader within the Christian Brethren Movement, Benjamin Wills Newton (1807-1899). Although initially a close friend of John Nelson Darby, they began to clash on matters of church doctrine and practice which ultimately led to the 1848 split of the Brethren movement into the Open Brethren and Exclusive Brethren.

All the issues that led to the split within the Brethren movement are interesting but sometimes difficult to follow. Suffice it to say here that Mr. Muller was kind enough to receive into his fellowship individuals who had once sat under questionable teachings concerning Christ but no longer. John Darby did not want Mr. Muller to receive such people into his congregation but to exclude them as he had persuaded other Plymouth Brethren assemblies to do. In July 1849, Darby called on George Müller to discuss the concerns, but Müller had many prior engagements and could only receive Darby for 10 minutes. It was impossible to fully discuss the problem in such a short time, and the two men never met again. The division remained and so there were Open Brethren and Exclusive Brethren.

No doubt George Muller, as a man of peace and graciousness, did not really want to engage John Nelson Darby. By many accounts Mr. Darby was a man known to have an indomitable will to power. He was known to rule others with an iron fist, condemn without mercy those with whom he disagreed, and was also engaged in questionable teaching of his own. In particular there was the issue of a novel idea called the pre-tribulation rapture doctrine. The concept was gaining momentum as a result of the literature of the Brethren movement, despite its absence in any of the historic creeds of Christendom, or its discussion in any of the historic church counsels.

George Müller was very suspicious of this teaching declaring that, "scripture declares plainly that the Lord Jesus will not come until the Apostasy shall have taken place, and the man of sin shall have been revealed..."

While various views concerning end time prophecy can be endlessly debated, George Muller did not want to become embroiled in the controversies. His over-riding desire was to preach Christ, and feed the hungry, while providing for the poor and proving that God answers prayer. He accomplished his goals in an extraordinary way. Following his conversion to Christ, George Muller strove to hurt no one, and to help everyone. Surely the Lord said to this dear man, "Well done, thou good and faithful servant. Well done" (Matthew 25:21).

Lessons to Learn

1. Finding a faithful friend is important. Ask the Lord to give you someone special in your life. George Muller found a lifetime and faithful friend in Henry Craik.
 - *Ecclesiastes 4:9 Two are better than one; because they have a good reward for their labour. 10 For if they fall, the one will lift up his fellow: but woe to him that is alone when he falleth; for he hath not another to help him up. 11 Again, if two lie together, then they have heat: but how can one be warm alone? 12 And if one prevail against him, two shall withstand him; and a threefold cord is not quickly broken.*
2. Be a person of one Book, the Bible. Allow the church to have no other Book but the Bible.
 - *Joshua 1:8 [Joshua,] This book of the law shall not depart out of thy mouth; but thou shalt meditate therein day and night, that thou mayest observe to do according to all that is written therein: for then thou shalt make thy way prosperous, and then thou shalt have good success.*
 - *Psalms 119:16 I will delight myself in thy statutes: I will not forget thy word.*
3. Ordinary faith can become extraordinary when exercised by a consciousness of the heart and mind (See Doctrine of Faith).
4. What you teach and believe can be and will be imparted to others. George Muller was influenced by the ideas of Anthony Groves, and history was made.
 - *1 Corinthians 11:1 Be ye followers of me, even as I also am of Christ.*
5. Ministers of the gospel, and ministries of the gospel, do not have to engage in fund raising activities in order to receive money for ministry. I do not say it is totally wrong to do so; I do contend that a faith based ministry is honorable and pleasing to the Lord. If you teach on giving, teach the twenty four New Testament principles of grace giving based on 2 Corinthians 8-9, and the local church will never be in financial want.
6. Any New Testament pattern of evangelism of the nations should include the following principles.
 - Prayer. *Luke 10:2 Therefore said he unto them, The harvest truly is great, but the labourers are few: pray ye therefore the Lord of the harvest, that he would send forth labourers into his harvest.*
 - Fearlessness. *Luke 10: 3 Go your ways: behold, I send you forth as lambs among wolves.*
 - Dependency. *Luke 10: 4 Carry neither purse, nor scrip, nor shoes: and salute no man by the way.*

- A peaceful spirit vs. a confrontational spirit. *Luke 10:5 And into whatsoever house ye enter, first say, Peace be to this house. 6 And if the son of peace be there, your peace shall rest upon it: if not, it shall turn to you again.*
- Graciousness and Gratitude. *Luke 10:7 And in the same house remain, eating and drinking such things as they give: for the labourer is worthy of his hire. Go not from house to house. 8 And into whatsoever city ye enter, and they receive you, eat such things as are set before you:*
- Spiritual Power. *Luke 10:9 And heal the sick that are therein, and say unto them, The kingdom of God is come nigh unto you.*
- Spiritual Authority. *Luke 10: 10 But into whatsoever city ye enter, and they receive you not, go your ways out into the streets of the same, and say, 11 Even the very dust of your city, which cleaveth on us, we do wipe off against you: notwithstanding be ye sure of this, that the kingdom of God is come nigh unto you. 12 But I say unto you, that it shall be more tolerable in that day for Sodom, than for that city.*
- Servitude. *1 Peter 5:2 Feed the flock of God which is among you, taking the oversight thereof, not by constraint, but willingly; not for filthy lucre, but of a ready mind; 3 Neither as being lords over God's heritage, but being ensamples to the flock.*
- Non exploitation. Do not use the ministry as a means to get rich. *2 Peter 2:1 But there were false prophets also among the people, even as there shall be false teachers among you, who privily shall bring in damnable heresies, even denying the Lord that bought them, and bring upon themselves swift destruction. 2 And many shall follow their pernicious ways; by reason of whom the way of truth shall be evil spoken of. 3 And through covetousness shall they with feigned words make merchandise of you: whose judgment now of a long time lingereth not, and their damnation slumbereth not.*

There are many other principles of New Testament evangelism to pattern one's ministry after. Search for them in your personal study of Scripture.

7. Beware of false humility. If God has given you certain gifts, then do not boast in them, but do not minimize the grace of God either. I mention this point because George Muller tended to downplay his extraordinary gift of faith. In fact, he died it.

“Think not, dear reader, that I have *the gift of faith*, that is, that gift of which we read in 1 Corinthians 12:9, and which is mentioned along with “the gifts of healing,” “the working of miracles,” prophecy,” and that on that account I am able to trust in the Lord. *It is true* that the faith, which I am enabled to exercise, is altogether God's own gift; it is true that He alone supports it, and that He alone can increase it; it is true that, moment by moment, I depend upon Him for it, and that, if I were only one moment left to myself, my faith would utterly fail; but *it is not true* that my faith is that gift of faith which is spoken of in 1 Corinthians 12:9.”

The reason George Muller was so adamant in making a distinction between the *gift of faith* and the *grace of faith* is because he wanted to encourage all Christians to believe that God could really be trusted to meet their needs as the needs of his ministry had been met. And that of course is true. But it is also evident that George Muller had extraordinary faith in God which was honored.

Supplemental Material

- Doctrine of Election
- Doctrine of Particular Redemption
- Doctrine of Final Persevering Grace
- Doctrine of Faith
- Doctrine of Grace Giving

24 New Testament Principles of Giving

2 Corinthians 8 – 9

1. Only Christians have a right to give to the work of the ministry.
 - *2 Corinthians 8:1-2 Moreover, brethren, we do you to wit of the grace of God bestowed on the churches of Macedonia; 2 How that in a great trial of affliction the abundance of their joy and their deep poverty abounded unto the riches of their liberality.*
2. Giving is to be according to grace and apart from coercion.
 - *2 Corinthians 8:3-4 For to their power, I bear record, yea, and beyond their power they were willing of themselves; 4 Praying us with much intreaty that we would receive the gift, and take upon us the fellowship of the ministering to the saints.*
3. Before giving of money the heart should be given to God.
 - *2 Corinthians 8:5 And this they did, not as we hoped, but first gave their own selves to the Lord, and unto us by the will of God.*
4. Gracious giving encourages others.
 - *2 Corinthians 8:6 Insomuch that we desired Titus, that as he had begun, so he would also finish in you the same grace also.*
5. One area of Christian grace enhances another.
 - *2 Corinthians 8:7 Therefore, as ye abound in every thing, in faith, and utterance, and knowledge, and in all diligence, and in your love to us, see that ye abound in this grace also.*
6. The giving of financial resources is a great indication of the true status of the heart.
 - *2 Corinthians 8:8 I speak not by commandment, but by occasion of the forwardness of others, and to prove the sincerity of your love.*
7. Christ has set the best example of giving.
 - *2 Corinthians 8:9 For ye know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that, though he was rich, yet for your sakes he became poor, that ye through his poverty might be rich.*
8. Grace giving is planned as well as spontaneous. There is a settled commitment to make giving a part of one's Christian ethics.
 - *2 Corinthians 8:10 – 11 And herein I give my advice: for this is expedient for you, who have begun before, not only to do, but also to be forward a year ago. 11 Now therefore perform the doing of it; that as there was a readiness to will, so there may be a performance also out of that which ye have.*

9. Giving is to be based upon financial reality. In the Old Testament economy giving was a fixed portion of one's income. In the New Testament the principle is not as rigid.
 - *2 Corinthians 8:12 For if there be first a willing mind, it is accepted according to that a man hath, and not according to that he hath not.*
10. God's people are not to exploit one another.
 - *2 Corinthians 8:13 For I mean not that other men be eased, and ye burdened:*
11. God and God's people will honor and remember those who honor and remember others in time of need.
 - *2 Corinthians 8:14 But by an equality, that now at this time your abundance may be a supply for their want, that their abundance also may be a supply for your want: that there may be equality:*
12. The New Testament saints are not to be overshadowed by the Old Testament believers.
 - *2 Corinthians 8:15 As it is written, He that had gathered much had nothing over; and he that had gathered little had no lack.*
13. The guidelines for grace giving are reasonable being rooted in love and concern.
 - *2 Corinthians 8:16-17 But thanks be to God, which put the same earnest care into the heart of Titus for you. 17 For indeed he accepted the exhortation; but being more forward, of his own accord he went unto you.*
14. All moneys given to the work of the Lord should be accounted for.
 - *2 Corinthians 8:18-20 And we have sent with him the brother, whose praise is in the gospel throughout all the churches; 19 And not that only, but who was also chosen of the churches to travel with us with this grace, which is administered by us to the glory of the same Lord, and declaration of your ready mind: 20 Avoiding this, that no man should blame us in this abundance which is administered by us:*
15. Christians should be concerned what God and man says about their financial dealings.
 - *2 Corinthians 8:21 Providing for honest things, not only in the sight of the Lord, but also in the sight of men. 22 And we have sent with them our brother, whom we have oftentimes proved diligent in many things, but now much more diligent, upon the great confidence which I have in you. 23 Whether any do inquire of Titus, he is my partner and fellow helper concerning you: or our brethren be inquired of, they are the messengers of the churches, and the glory of Christ. 24 Wherefore shew ye to them, and before the churches, the proof of your love, and of our boasting on your behalf.*

16. Excessive pleas for money is beneath the dignity of the Christian minister and is a poor reflection of faith and trust in God's people to do right in this area.

- *2 Corinthians 9:1-2 For as touching the ministering to the saints, it is superfluous for me to write to you: 2 For I know the forwardness of your mind, for which I boast of you to them of Macedonia, that Achaia was ready a year ago; and your zeal hath provoked very many.*

17. God does hold His people accountable for what they do with the resources entrusted to them. While Paul commends the Christians at Corinth he also holds them accountable.

- *2 Corinthians 9:3 Yet have I sent the brethren, lest our boasting of you should be in vain in this behalf; that, as I said, ye may be ready:*

18. There is shame when God's people give large sums of money to matters that do not promote the kingdom of God and the salvation of souls.

- *2 Corinthians 9:4-5 Lest haply if they of Macedonia come with me, and find you unprepared, we (that we say not, ye) should be ashamed in this same confident boasting. 5 Therefore I thought it necessary to exhort the brethren, that they would go before unto you, and make up beforehand your bounty, whereof ye had notice before, that the same might be ready, as a matter of bounty, and not as of covetousness.*

19. There is a spiritual principle of sowing and reaping.

- *2 Corinthians 9:6 But this I say, He which soweth sparingly shall reap also sparingly; and he which soweth bountifully shall reap also bountifully.*

20. The spirit in which money is given to the work of the ministry is just as important as how much is given.

- *2 Corinthians 9:7 Every man according as he purposeth in his heart, so let him give; not grudgingly, or of necessity: for God loveth a cheerful giver.*

21. Those who put the interest of God's work first will not lack funds.

- *2 Corinthians 9:8-10 And God is able to make all grace abound toward you; that ye, always having all sufficiency in all things, may abound to every good work: 9 (As it is written, He hath dispersed abroad; he hath given to the poor: his righteousness remaineth forever.*

22. One reason why God gives us resources is so that we can give to others.

- *2 Corinthians 9:11 Being enriched in everything to all bountifulness, which causeth through us thanksgiving to God.*

23. Grace elicits a spirit of thanksgiving to God and appreciation.

- *2 Corinthians 9:12–13 For the administration of this service not only supplieth the want of the saints, but is abundant also by many thanksgivings unto God; 13 Whiles by the experiment of this ministration they glorify God for your professed subjection unto the gospel of Christ, and for your liberal distribution unto them, and unto all men;*

24. Grace giving induces prayer.

- *2 Corinthians 9:14 And by their prayer for you, which long after you for the exceeding grace of God in you. 15 Thanks be unto God for his unspeakable gift.*

Conclusion.

Let these principles of grace giving prevail in the church and there will never be a lack of resources for God's work.

Special Terminology

- **Post-millennialism.** Post-millennialism is a theological interpretation of chapter 20 of the Book of Revelation which views the second coming of Christ as occurring *after* (Latin *post-*) the "Millennium", which is a Golden Age or era of Christian prosperity and dominance. Post-millennialism is an extremely optimistic view of the progressive movement of society and world history.
- **Theological liberalism.** Theological liberalism flourished in the 19th century as some Christians wanted to elevate the teachings of Christ, such as the Sermon on the Mount, as a standard for a world civilization. While this goal was commendable liberal theology was not careful to keep historical orthodoxy. Liberal theologians proclaimed they wanted to "free" people from the "pagan belief" in the supernatural, which meant miracles. In 1910, the Presbyterian Church made a belief in the authenticity of miracles one of the five tests to distinguish true believers from false professors of faith masquerading as "liberal" Christians.
- **The Use of Worldly Strategies.** In context, to understand what is meant by "worldly strategies" there must first be an understanding of the Industrial Revolution. The Industrial Revolution has reference to a period from the 18th to the 19th century whereby major changes were being made in agriculture, manufacturing, mining, transport and technology. These changes had a profound and mostly positive effect, on the economic and cultural conditions in the United Kingdom, while spreading throughout Europe, North America, and eventually the world. The emphasis on business principles and concepts was fine, until these worldly concepts and principles were brought into the local church and religious institutions. Suddenly, there was a crisis for the kingdom of God is different from the world. While the church is to operate according to sound business principles, men and women of faith do not live by sight with a view only to profit and loss; rather, they live with a heart's desire to know the will of God. God's people seek to avoid debt for the Scripture says, "*Owe no man any thing, but to love one another: for he that loveth another hath fulfilled the law*" (Romans 13:8).

Proverbs 6:1-3 offers wise counsel. "*My son, if thou be surety for thy friend, if thou hast stricken thy hand with a stranger, 2 Thou art snared with the words of thy mouth, thou art taken with the words of thy mouth. 3 Do this now, my son, deliver thyself, when thou art come into the hand of thy friend; go, humble thyself, and make sure thy friend*".

Over extension of buildings and budgets has destroyed many ministries. George Muller saw it was destroying the good work of missions. He would be different. He would not use worldly strategies but sound gospel principles to manage the work of the Lord.

A Few Statistics on the Faithfulness of God

- The 117 schools George Muller founded collectively ministered to numbered over 120,000 students.
- The orphans he took care of numbered between 8,000 and 10,000 total. It is estimated that a third left as born again believers and so were instrumental in bringing many other thousands to Christ.
- Over 400 missionaries received financial assistance to a greater or lesser degree. Among the many missionaries was Hudson Taylor. Over a quarter of a million pounds was sent forth. 63 missionaries were sent out from Muller's Church, Bethesda, alone.
- Ten churches were planted, six of which were fully self supported at the time of his death.
- Many of the works of George Muller continue to this day.