



My Bible School Lessons

Exploring the Word of God

Lesson #4: "The Plan of Salvation"

The Man Who Died For Cursing-Jack

Jane Bamey's life ambition had been to go as a foreign missionary but her way seemed hedged about. At last she married and moved to California. There she raised her two young boys. California was still a mining country and life was rough.

There in the wild west she heard of a man who lived "over the hills" and was dying of tuberculosis. The miner she heard the report from said: "He is so vile that no one can stay with him. We place food near him once a day and then leave him for 24 hours. Someday we will find him dead the sooner the better! Never had a relative, I guess."

The pitiful account haunted her. For three days she tried to get someone to go to see him and find out if he was in need of better care. She was vexed with the expressions of indifference she received. Then the thought came to her, "Why not go to him yourself You always wanted to be a missionary - here is mission work!"

Surely it would be useless, and she shrank from contact with such a vile one. But at last she went. She found a one room cabin stuccoed with mud. The door was ajar. In one corner, on some straw and overlaid with a checkered blanket, lay the dying man. His face showed lines of hardness. Jane nearly retreated out the door for fear, except that she had heard that he could not move. As her shadow crossed the floor he looked up and greeted her with an angry oath. Jane stepped forward a little closer and again he cursed her.

"Don't speak so, my friend," she said in a pleasant voice.

"I ain't your friend. I ain't got no friends," he barked.

"Well, I'm your friend, and - "

"You ain't my friend," he interrupted. "I never had no friends, and I don't want none now." He swore at her.

Jane stayed out of reach but put the fruit she had brought for him close enough for him to reach, then stepping back to the doorway she asked if he remembered his mother. She hoped to find a tender place in his heart. He proceeded to curse his mother.

She spoke of God. He cursed him. She spoke of Jesus and His death for him. He stopped her with another string of curses and said, "It's all a lie. No one would die for another!"

Finally she went away discouraged, muttering that it was useless. Yet the next day she came again, and she continued to come every day for two weeks. At night she prayed for him in family worship. Still he showed no signs of gratitude. Finally she informed him that she would return no more. That night she did not mention him in her family prayer.

Lesson 1: The Plan of Salvation

"Mama," her youngest son responded. "You did not pray for that bad man."

"No," she answered.

"Have you given him up, mama?"

"Yes, I guess so."

"Has God given him up, mama? Ought you to give him up till God does?"

Jane could not sleep that night. Her son's response kept ringing in her ears. She thought of the dying man, so vile, and with no one to care! Finally she arose and went into another room to pray. She was discouraged by the sense of how little response there had been to her prayers.

"Maybe I've had no faith," she thought to herself. "I don't really care for this man! Nor have I claimed his soul for God." She felt full of shame. She felt a failure as a missionary. With repentance she fell on her face and cried, "O God, give me a new glimpse of the worth of a soul!"

She remained on her knees as minutes ticked into hours until, in her mind's eye, she saw Jesus bleeding for her upon the cross of Calvary - for her and for the dying miner! That night she experienced what she had never experienced before - how to plead for a human soul. She wrestled with God until she felt His presence and assurance.

The next morning her husband asked: "How about your miner?"

"He is going to be saved," she confidently responded.

"How are you going to save him?" he skeptically asked.

"The Lord is going to save him. I don't know whether I'll have anything to do with it or not," she responded.

Always before Jane had gone to see the miner in the afternoon after her housework was done. Generally, after her morning routines were accomplished, she would change her dress, put on her gloves, and walk in the afternoon shadows of the hillsides. But that morning, as soon as the boys had left for school, without gloves or a change of clothing, she hurried to the shack of mud that housed the miner - not to pity a "vile wretch," as she had thought of him, but now to win a soul. She thought the man might die that day.

On her way a neighbor stopped her and said she would accompany her on her mission that day. Jane did not want her to come, but what could she say? So the two of them - no, the three of them went; for the neighbor brought her little girl along. Upon reaching the cabin the little girl was left outside.

As usual, Jane was greeted with an awful curse. But it did not hurt her as before, for now she loved the man.

While changing the basin of water and laying beside it a clean towel for him to use, duties which she had performed every day for two weeks for the ungrateful man, they heard the little girl laughing outside.

"What's that?" the man asked with a different tone in his voice.

"It's a little girl outside waiting for us," Jane responded.

Surprisingly, the man asked to see the little girl.

Stepping to the door, she beckoned for the girl to come inside. As she hesitated, Jane stepped outside and, taking her hand, said, "Come, see the sick man, Mamie."

Lesson 1: The Plan of Salvation

When Mamie saw his face she shrank back in fear, but Jane responded: "Poor sick man. He can't get up. He wants to see you."

Little Mamie looked like an angel with her bright face framed in golden curls and her eyes sparkling, tender and pitiful. In her hands she held the flowers that she had picked from the purple sage along the pathway. Bending down toward him, as she gained more confidence, she said, "I'm sorry for you, sick man. Will you take my posies?"

Reaching forward with his gaunt, bony hand, he reached beyond the flowers and touched the plump, warm hand of the little child. Tears came to his eyes. "I had a little girl once," he said. "Her name was Mamie too. She cared for me. Nobody else did. Guess I'd been different if she'd lived. I've hated everybody since she died."

Now Jane knew why the Lord had impressed this neighbor lady to accompany her with her little girl. Maybe this was the key to his heart. It was then the Holy Spirit gave her words to say.

"When I spoke of your mother and your wife," she said to him, "you cursed them. They must not have been good women or you could not have done so."

"Good women! No. No. They were bad. You don't know anything about them kind of women."

"Well, if your little girl had lived and grown up with them," Jane responded, "wouldn't she have become like them? Would you have wanted her to become like they were?"

He had never thought of that! His sunken eyes looked off into space for awhile. As they came back to Jane's he cried, "Oh God no! I'd rather have killed her first. I'm glad she died!"

Reaching out and taking the poor man's hand, Jane explained, "The dear Lord didn't want her to be like them either. He loved her even better than you did. So he took her away. He is keeping her for you. Don't you want to see her again?"

"Oh, I'd be willing to be burned alive a thousand times," he said in his own crude way, "if I could just see my little girl one more time - my little Mamie!" So Jane began to tell him the gospel story. For the first time Jack listened. As he lay there in deathly silence, his face grew ashy pale. At times he threw up his arms as in mental agony he gasped for air. Finally he grabbed her and said, "What's that you said the other day about talking to someone out of sight?"

"It's called praying," she said to him. "I pray every day and tell Him what I need."

"Pray now! Quick! Tell Him I want my little girl again. Tell Him anything you want to."

Jane took the hands of the child, and placed them on the trembling hands of the man. Then, dropping on her knees, with the girl between them, she asked the little girl to pray for the man who had lost his little Mamie and wanted to see her again.

"Dear Jesus," she prayed, "this man is sick. He has lost his little girl, and he feels bad about it. I'm so sorry for him, and he's sorry, too. Won't you help him, and show him how to find his little girl? Do, please. Amen."

The rays of sunshine seemed to burst upon the little cabin. It seemed as if One stood in their midst with the prints of nails in His hands.

Mamie slipped away soon, but the man kept saying: "Tell Him more about it. Tell Him everything. But, Oh, you don't know how bad I've been!" Then he began to confess - such confessions that Jane had never heard.

Lesson 1: The Plan of Salvation

For three days the poor man kept confessing his sins and asking for forgiveness. Then, finally, he felt a peace and said: "The Man died for me."

It seemed that he must die, but he continued to live for weeks. What a change had come over his countenance. From time to time Jane would tell him about religious meetings she had attended. Finally he responded: "I'd like to go to a meeting once."

So Jane planned a meeting. He couldn't go any place, so she planned a meeting right there in his room. From all the mines around she invited the men who were searching for gold and they came and filled the room.

"Now boys," the dying man said to them, "get down on your knees. This lady is going to tell you about a Man who died for me!"

Jane had been brought up to believe that a woman should not speak in meetings, but she found herself talking freely as she explained the simple story of the cross. After awhile the sick man said:

"Boys, you don't half believe it, or you'd cry! You couldn't help it. Raise me up. I'd like to tell it once."

So they raised him up, and, between his short breaths and gasping coughs, he told the story using the language he knew.

"Boys," he said, "you know how the water runs down the sluice-boxes and carries off the dirt and leaves the gold behind. Well, the blood of that Man she tells about went right over me just like that. It carried off about everything; but it left enough for me to see Mamie, and to see the Man that died for me. O boys, can't you love Him?" He couldn't talk long, but he continued as long as he could.

Days later, there came that look into his face that spoke of death.

Jane stayed as long as she could, but finally she had to leave. Upon leaving she asked, "What shall I say tonight, Jack?"

"Just say good night," he said.

"What will you say to me when we meet again?"

"I'll say, 'Good morning,'- over there."

Next morning the door was closed. Two men sat silently by a board stretched across two stools. When Jane entered, they turned back the sheet for her to look at his face which had lost so much of its hardness even in those few weeks since his conversion.

"I wish you could have seen him when he went," one of them said.

"Tell me about it."

Well, all at once he brightened up, about midnight, and smiling, said: 'I'm going, boys. Tell her I'm going to see the Man that died for me,' and he was gone."

Kneeling beside him, she put her soft, smooth hands over those poor, cold, bony ones of Jack's which had been stained with human blood. They were now softened with the falling tears of Jane. God had heard her prayer for Jack, and Jane herself now had a new appreciation for the death of Christ. He died for Jack. He died for her.

Lesson 1: The Plan of Salvation



At the Cross

Alas, and did my Savior bleed? And did my Sovereign die?
Would He devote that sacred head For such a worm as I?

Was it for crimes that I have done, He suffered on the tree?
Amazing pity! grace unknown! And love beyond degree!

But drops of grief can ne'er repay The debt of love I owe:
Here, Lord, I give myself away, 'Tis all that I can do!