

## He Was the Black Sheep

by Walter Lewis Wilson, M.D.

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PREACHERS' SONS are sometimes a heartbreak to their parents, as was the young man who is the subject of this story. His father was a well-known and much loved preacher in a great city in Scotland. The boy had been reared in an atmosphere of goodness and godliness, where much prayer was made for each member of the family, as well as for the spiritual needs of the parish in which his father served. The young man did not like this atmosphere. The prayers at the table irked him, and the religious activities of his father shamed him.

One evening, after retiring to his room for the night, he packed two bags with essential clothing, toilet articles and some trinkets, and lowered them by means of a rope from the window into the yard. After the others had retired, he quietly left home for an adventure in the world. His was to be a life of utter godlessness. There would be no prayers now to hinder, and no fatherly counsel to mar his joys. He was going to live the kind of a life he wanted to live without restrictions.

He found a cheap lodging house in the slum section of the great city, where he could live as a stranger and would probably not meet any of his acquaintances. He began to drink and to smoke, and, of course, this condition soon had him into gambling and other wicked practices. The money he had saved dwindled more rapidly than he had thought, and before many weeks had passed he was bankrupt.

The father and mother searched for him in vain. They told their friends to tell him, if they found him, that if he would return home he would receive a happy welcome, but none of them ever found him.

As he drank and spent his life in riotous living, his body began to feel the effects of it, and he became a dissipated and unhappy wretch. He earned a little by odd jobs here and there, but did not dare to seek work in the better parts of the city, for fear he would be found.

It was the writer's privilege one evening to preach the gospel in a mission in the slum section of the city where this unhappy boy lived. He was about thirty years of age by that time, but looked much older. He attended the service that evening and heard the message on "Christ's Invitations"; calling the "weary to rest"; the thirsty to "drink"; and the seeking ones to "come and see."

At the close of the service the young man made his way to the front to meet me. The tears were streaming down his face as he extended his hand. The following conversation reveals the blessed way in which our Lord touched his heart and saved his soul.

"Would you like to find the Saviour?" I asked, in a kindly tone.

"Yes," he replied, "that is what I came for. Your message has touched my heart deeply, and I want to turn from my miserable ways and become a Christian. My father is well known in this city. He is quite prominent in ministerial circles, and is honored in the church where he is serving. He does not know where I am, and I do not care to tell you my name. I do want to find Christ and be saved."

This confession was a joy to my heart, and so we sat down together with the Word of God to find the Saviour. We read together Matthew 11:28: "Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest", and I said, "I take it from your story that you are quite tired of the path of sin, and would like to return both to the God of your life, and also your earthly father."

"Yes," he replied, "I do. My father has sought all over the country for me, and I know that God has also been wanting me, for I certainly have had no peace in my heart since I left home in order to get away from God. I am ready to come back to God, and if He takes me in I will return tonight to my father and will tell him so."

This admission on his part led me to turn to John 6:37, "All that the Father giveth me shall come to me; and him that cometh to me I will in no wise cast out." I explained the verse, saying, "God wants to give you the Lord Jesus. Only Christ can give you eternal life, and only He can blot out your sins. God sent Him after you, because you have been running away, and have found nothing but trouble and sorrow. Christ will accept you, if you trust Him, and He will give you the rest that your heart desires."

I then turned to the thirty-fifth verse of the same chapter and read, "And Jesus said unto them, I am the bread of life: he that cometh to me shall never hunger; and he that believeth on me shall never thirst."

"Do you not see," I said, "that Christ will give you what you have been trying to find in the saloon, the gambling house and the places of sin which you have been frequenting? You have paid largely for the imitation pleasures the devil has sold you, but Christ will give you freely the permanent pleasures that your heart desires. If you will come to Him tonight, trust Him with your soul, make Him your Lord and

your Saviour, He will accept you at once. Will you do so?"

He nodded his head in assent and knelt with me to pray. Between his sobs he said to God, "Lord, I am coming back to You. I thought that others would be kinder to me than You would be. I thought the world would receive me, but it has robbed me. Now I am coming to You to save me and wash me, and let me go home a Christian man."

I whispered to him, "Why do you not tell the Saviour that you believe in Him—that you believe in His precious blood and in His saving power, and that you take Him for yourself?"

He did not reply, but did say to the Lord Jesus, "I do accept You, Lord Jesus, as my Saviour, and I know that You do take me because Your Word says so."

I then thanked the Lord for revealing Himself to this dark heart.

The young man arose, wiped away his tears, grasped my hand most cordially, and said, "Goodbye, Doctor, I am going home tonight. How wonderful it will be when father opens the door and sees me there. My first words will be "Father, Jesus saved me tonight, and I have come back home to ask your and mother's forgiveness. Will you let me come in and stay?"

I cannot describe the homecoming, for I was not there; but I do know that the father took him in, and there was joy in that home and also in heaven, for Christ had received him as His own child. God grant that this may be the blessed experience of many others who have been running away from God.

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