

Real Life Stories
The Conversion of Millionaire Henry Goodyear

Henry Goodyear lived in London during the late 1800's. It is said that he was a millionaire ten times over. It was also said that he not only had all this wealth, but he lived it up; he owned the greatest home in London; he employed the best servants; he drove the most luxurious carriages; he wore the finest clothes, and he ate the best food.

But, Henry Goodyear hated God. He did not believe that the Bible was true. He did not believe that Christ was real. He had no time for the word "eternity," and less time for the word "hell". However, his sister (also a millionaire) had a young daughter 21 years old who had been wonderfully saved through the preaching of the well-known preacher, Charles Spurgeon. Each Sunday morning and evening she would go to hear Spurgeon preach, and the young girl was growing in grace and in the knowledge of Christ.

She was burdened for her uncle, and one day she prayed to the Lord for quite a long time. Then she went to his big mansion and said to him, "Dear uncle, just for once in your life I would like you to come and hear Mr. Spurgeon preach." She was so sweet, humble, and gracious that the old uncle consented.

The following Sunday the big carriage pulled up in front of her house and they set off for Spurgeon's church. When they arrived, the place was filled to capacity, but they found seats just as the service was about to begin. Then one of the deacons stepped up into the pulpit and said, "Dear friends, Mr. Spurgeon has been taken ill and we regret he will not be at the Tabernacle this evening. We have tried to find a substitute preacher but at such short notice none is available. One of our deacons, therefore, has kindly agreed to stand in for this evening."

The young girl's heart sank and she put her head down, saying, "Lord, why should this happen this evening?" The deacon then stood up, trembling, and read from Genesis chapter 5. It goes something like this: "Adam lived . . . and he died; Seth lived . . . and he died; Enoch lived . . . and he died." And so the deacon went on down the chapter until he finished the whole list. Then he said, "I want to point out two things in this difficult chapter. I want to talk about 'he lived and he died.'"

He had just begun to preach when, for some unknown reason, he had to stop and hold onto the rail. He just could not continue and had to be helped down from the pulpit.

By this time the young girl was completely baffled. She had succeeded in getting her uncle out to the meeting and then Spurgeon wasn't there; then the man had read this peculiar chapter when he could have read about the cross, and had only started to preach, "he lived and he died", when he had to stop, and the meeting was over.

On the way home the old uncle said nothing, and upon arrival he went into the drawing room and began pacing up and down. As he did so, each step seemed to say, "he lived and he died." The big grandfather clock in the corner of the room, with its slow tick-tock, seemed to be saying the same, along with everything else around him.

Eventually he went to bed but could not sleep. All through the night he heard the words, "he lived and he died." In the morning when the butler brought his breakfast on the silver tray, this too seemed to say to him, "he lived", and when he looked out of the window at the rolling lawns and saw his workers and all that he owned, these seemed to say, "he died." Yes, God was working; and when He is on the job you don't need Spurgeon!

In the afternoon the old uncle bowed by the side of the couch and said, "there must be more to this; I know he lived and I know he died. I know you're talking to me God. I'm living and I'm going to die, but that's not the whole message."

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Meanwhile, the young girl in her home had prayed all night and all morning. She said, “Lord, why did you not tell him the rest of the story?” Then it seemed that God said to her, “When you know so much, why don’t you go and tell him?”

That afternoon, when the old uncle was on his knees, the young niece came to see him and found him crying. He said to her, “There must be more to it.” “More to what, uncle?” “He lived and he died,” he said.

“There is more, uncle. Sit down and I’ll tell you. You see, the deacon should have gone on to talk about Christ, because He also lived and He died.” Then she told him how Christ had lived in this world that He might be the Saviour; how He had died to be the sacrifice for sins; and how He finished this great work, rose again from the dead, and said, “Whosoever liveth and believeth in Me shall never die” (John 11:26).

At this point the old uncle jumped up and exclaimed, “Woman, that’s it, that’s it!” So this young woman was the means of pointing her rich uncle to the Saviour.

. . . . By W.