

Progress Made in Preparation

by Maria Woodworth-Etter

God's power is available to those who trust Him and obey His call to ministry.

Scripture: Joshua 6:20, Joel 2:28, Matthew 3:11, Matthew 25:14, Acts 1:8, 1 John 5:4

Topics: "Faith And Obedience", "Gods Calling"

Description

Maria Woodworth-Etter shares her journey of reluctance and excuses before finally surrendering to God's call to preach, emphasizing the need to trust in His strength and wisdom rather than personal abilities. Through a vision, Jesus encourages her to share the glory of God, the love of Jesus, and the call to repentance, assuring His presence and power. Despite facing doubts and societal challenges as a woman preacher, Maria is reminded of the examples of women and children used by God throughout history, inspiring her to step out in faith and obedience.

Transcript

I thought I would go through a course of study and prepare for the work, thinking the Lord would make my husband and people willing in some way to let me go out and work. But I could not get my mind fixed on my study. Everything seemed empty and vacant, and I was restless and uneasy.

The dear Savior stood by me one night in a vision and talked face to, face with me, and asked what I was doing on earth. I felt condemned, and said, "Lord, I am going to work in thy vineyard." The Lord said, "When," and I answered, "When I get prepared for the work," Then the Lord said to me, "Don't you know that while you are getting ready souls are perishing? Go now, and I will be with you." I told Him that I could not talk to the people; I did not know what to say, and they would not listen to me. Jesus said, "You can tell the people what the Lord has done for your soul; tell of the glory of God and the love of Jesus; tell sinners to repent and prepare for death and the judgment, and I will be with you." Still I made one excuse after another, and Jesus would answer, "Go, and I will be with you."

I TALK WITH THE SAVIOR IN A VISION

I told Him I wanted to study the Bible; that I did not understand it well enough. Then there appeared upon the wall a large open Bible, and the verses stood out in raised letters. The-glory of God shone around and upon the book, I looked, and I could understand it all.

Then Jesus said again, "Go, and I will be with you." I cried, "Lord, I will go. Where shall I go?" And Jesus said, "Go here, go there, wherever souls are perishing." Praise the Lord for his wonderful goodness in revealing his word and will in such a wonderful way, to such a poor weak worm of the dust, I saw more in that vision than I could have learned in years of hard study. Praise His Holy Name. I saw that I must not depend on anything that I could do, but to look to Him for strength and wisdom. "Not by might, nor by power, but by my Spirit," saith the Lord. I was to be the vessel of clay God was going to use to his own glory. I was to be God's mouth-piece, I must trust God to speak through me to the people the words of eternal life.

There was all this time a secret monitor within telling me that I should be calling sinners to repentance. I could not get clear of that reflection by day or by night. Awake or dreaming, I seemed to have a large congregation before me, all in tears, as I told them the story of the cross, Thus for months and years did I debate; and yet did I falter and hesitate, and, like Jonah, trim my sail for Tarshish. I thought if I were a man it would be a pleasure for me; but for me, a woman, to preach, if I could, would subject me to ridicule and contempt among my friends and kindred, and reproach upon His glorious cause.

KEPT MY TALENT HIDDEN

Always when I had trouble I would flee to the strong-hold of faith and grace and prayer. But when I went in secret to pray the words seemed to come to me, "You deny me before men, and I will deny you before my Father and the holy angels." Then I would go to my Bible and search for teaching and examples.

When the Lord put his erring people in remembrance of his great blessing to Israel he said, "Did I not send thee Moses and Aaron and Miriam to be your leaders?" And again the prophets were ordained of God. And when there was trouble on hand Barak dare not meet the enemy unless Deborah led the van. And the noble woman, always ready to work for God and his cause, said, "I will surely go. God's people must not be a prey to the enemy," "Oh, no; call out the men of Israel; Sisera's mighty hosts are gathering."

GOD USED WOMEN

As I continued to read my Bible I saw that in all ages of the world the Lord raised up of his own choosing, men, women and children--Miriam, Deborah, Hannah, Hulda, Anna, Phoebe, Narcissus, Tryphena, Persis, Julia, and the Marys, and the sisters who were co-workers with Paul in the gospel, whose names were in the Book of Life, and many other women whose labors are mentioned with praise. Even the children were made the instruments of his praise and glory. See I Samuel 3:4, Jeremiah 1:6. Numbers 22:28.

The more I investigated the more I found to condemn me. There was the Master giving one, two and five talents, and the moral obligation of each person receiving them, and their several rewards. I had one talent, which was bidden away.

By the Prophet Joel we learn that one special feature of the gospel dispensation shall be, "Your sons and daughters shall prophesy, your old men shall dream dreams, your young men shall see visions; and also upon my servants and handmaids in those days will I pour out my Spirit." It seems by the Prophet Joel, that the last days were to be particularly conspicuous for this kind of prophesying. We cannot reverse God's decree, for it is said: "Heaven and earth shall pass away, but the Word of God shall endure forever."

MY FIRST MEETING

The first meeting that I undertook to hold was in a little town where we had lived some years before, right among my husband's people. It was a cross for me to talk to those people; but I said, in the name of God, and by his sustaining grace, I will try and leave the result with him, As I rose to speak, this text came to my mind; "Set thy house in order, for thou shalt die, and not live."

When I began to talk upon the subject the man-fearing spirit left me, and the words came to me faster than I could give them utterance. My sister-in-law broke down and left the house. We continued the meeting a few days, and twenty claimed to be converted. People were converted all through the neighbourhood. One who came to this meeting afterward became my son-in-law.

I continued to keep house, and spent as much time in holding meetings as I could, to give my husband a chance to attend his work, I was anxious to raise money for us to go West. I would ride seven miles and hold meetings on Saturday evening, and three meetings on Sabbath - sometimes in different churches--and then ride home over a hilly and rough road. By this time I would be nearly exhausted and hardly able to walk around to do my work, But the last of the week I would go again; and often through the week I held meetings in the towns around where I was born and raised, where we had lived since we were married.

GOOD RESULTS

It was a cross for me to speak before my own folks, and the people whom I had always known. But God wonderfully blessed my labors in every place. Wherever I went the house was crowded. I did not write my sermons or have sketches of sermons. I would take a text and trust God to lead me in His own way. I was holding meeting for a few days where I was raised, and the house was crowded every night. One night I could not get a text. The people came pouring in until the house was packed. I began to get frightened. A brother said to me, "The Disciples are turning out to-night," There I was, with several hundred people before me and no text--nothing to talk about. Everything was empty. I began to plead with Jesus. I told him he had called me to preach, that here was this starving multitude and I had no bread to give them. To verify his promise and to glorify himself in manifesting his power to this people, the words came to me, "What are you going to do with Jesus, that is called the Christ?" and also the place to find the text. Jesus seemed to whisper in my ear, "I am with you - be not afraid," I opened the meeting and repeated the text. As I did so the power came, and seemed that all I had to do was to open my mouth. The people all through the house began to weep. I talked one hour and a quarter. The power came as it did when I received the baptism of the Holy Ghost. It seemed as if the house was full of the glory of God. I felt as if I was drawn tip over the people, Glory to God for helping a worm of the dust.

LED IN A BAD PLACE

For the glory of God and the encouragement of those who are engaged in working for lost souls, to prove that no place is too hard for God, if we only trust Him, I will tell you the victory God gave me at a place called "The Devil's Den," It was distinguished for infidelity and skepticism. There was an old free church in which no one was ever known to be converted. Some of our best ministers had tried to hold meetings here, but had gone away in disgust. This place was six miles from home. I had several times refused to go to this place, but at last concluded to go, believing God would shake the foundation of infidelity, and that there would be a shaking among the dry bones. A large crowd met me. They had come through mere curiosity, expecting to see me back out. I had to do all the talking, all the praying, and all the singing. But God was there in mighty power. Some of those infidels turned pale and trembled in their seats. For a few

days I could hardly find a place to stay. I appointed day-meetings; but they said, "Oh, you cannot have meetings in daytime; no one will come," I told them if no one else came I would go and pray for God to pour out his power upon the people. About the fourth day some were brightly converted. They went to work.

The news spread like fire, and the Christians and singers and ministers came for miles around. There were hundreds who could not get into the house. The doors and windows were open, and the order was so good that I think nearly all the people outside could hear. I held the meeting two weeks, and seventy-five came out on the Lord's side. One old man and his wife, about seventy-five years old, and nine of their children, were converted. Nearly all who came out were over twenty years old. Some of the hardest sinners in the whole country were converted. They had to confess that God was there in wonderful power. I organized a Sabbath-School of one hundred and fifty scholars, and put in a man for superintendent who had been a noted drunkard; appointed two prayer-meetings, for each week, and established meetings every Sabbath. Different ministers promised to furnish them with preaching. The people said it was a glorious work, but that it could not last; that when I left it would go down, Bless God, I have heard of only one who went back to the world!

Praise God, the work is going on, and the wilderness of sin has been made to blossom as the rose where there was cursing and blaspheming, there is singing and praising God. Let us never be discouraged; but lean hard on God, and He will give us victory every time, if we only trust Him and give Him the glory. Praise God for victory through faith in his promise and through the efficiency of the blood of the Lamb!

Let me say for the encouragement of those who are starting in the work of the Lord, God has promised to be with us always, even to the end. We are nothing but the clay God speaks through. It is "Not by might, but by Spirit, saith the Lord of Hosts." If the Holy Spirit is dwelling in our hearts and shining out through our lives and actions; if we, by faith, take God at his word, we will find at all times and places that his grace is sufficient, and he will give us victory every time. We must claim the victory by faith, before the walls fall. (Joshua 6:20.)

"This is the victory that overcometh the world, even our faith."-- (John 5:14.)

"He shall baptize you with the Holy Ghost and fire."--(Matt. 3:11)

"But ye shall receive power, after that the Holy Ghost is come upon you."--(Acts 1:8.)

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