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# A CLOUD OF WITNESSES: ROBERT MURRAY M'CHEYNE (1813-1843)

## TIMELINE OF HIS LIFE:

- 1813 - RMM born in Scotland on May 21, to Adam and Lockhart M'Cheyne
- 1831 - At age 18 brother David dies (he was 8 years older) and RMM starts seminary at University of Edinburgh
- 1835 - At 22 RMM graduates seminary and licensed to preach under John Bonar. After 10 month trial under Bonar called to St. Peter's (Dundee)
- 1838 - At 25 St. Peter's 1,100 seat auditorium is overflowing
- 1839 - RMM has severe heart palpitations that remove him from ministry. He joins the Palestine enquiry with Andrew Bonar while revival comes to Dundee. RMM returns and witnesses fruit of revival
- 1843 - At 29 RMM dies after contracting Typhoid from visiting sick in his church

Andrew Bonar's journal: March 25, 1843.

"This afternoon about five o'clock, a message has just come to tell me of Robert McCheyne's death. Never, never yet in all my life have I felt anything like this. It is a blow to myself, to his people, to the Church of Christ in Scotland. O Lord, work, for Thine own glory's sake. Arise, O Lord, the godly ceaseth and the faithful fail. My heart is sore. It makes me feel death near myself now....There was no friend whom I loved like him."<sup>1</sup>

## WHAT CAN WE LEARN FROM ROBERT MURRAY M'CHEYNE?

### 1. Pursue God with all your strength... you will find Him!

*"I often pray, 'Lord, make me as holy as a pardoned sinner can be made.'"*

*"I must first see the face of God before I take on any duty."*

*"Do everything in earnest; if it is worth doing, then do it with all your might. Above all, keep much in the presence of God. Never see the face of man till you have seen His face who is our life, our all."*

*"In general it is best to have at least one hour alone with God, before engaging in anything else. At the same time, I must be careful not to reckon communion with God by minutes or hours, or by solitude. I have pored over my Bible and on my knees for hours, with little or no communion; and my times of solitude have been often times of greatest temptation."*

*"No person can be a child of God without living in secret prayer; and no community of Christians can be in a lively condition without unity in prayer."*

*"If I could hear Christ praying for me in the next room, I would not fear a million of enemies. Yet the distance makes no difference; He is praying for me."*

### 2. Apply the Gospel to your sin

*"I am persuaded that I shall obtain the highest amount of present happiness, I shall do the most for God's glory and the good of man, and I shall have the fullest reward in eternity, by maintaining a conscience always washed in Christ's blood..."*

*"I feel, when I have sinned, an immediate reluctance to go to Christ. I am ashamed to go. I feel as if it would do no good to go – as if it were making Christ a minister of sin, to go straight from the swine-trough to the best robe – and a thousand other excuses; but I am persuaded they are all lies, direct from hell. John argues the opposite way – 'If any man sin, we have an advocate with the Father;' This is God's way of peace and holiness. It is folly to the world and the beclouded heart, but it is the way."<sup>2</sup>*

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<sup>1</sup> Cited from <http://www.newblehome.co.uk/bonar/biography1.html>. Bonar lived another 49 years after M'Cheyne's death and died on New Year's Eve, 1892.

### **3. Do all you can to crack, chisel, expose, kill and ruin pride in your life.**

*"I sometimes think that a great blessing may come to my people in my absence. Often God does not bless us when we are in the midst of our labours, lest we shall say, 'My hand and my eloquence have done it.' He removes us into silence, and then pours 'down a blessing so that there is no room to receive it;' so that all that see it cry out, 'It is the Lord!'*

*"I really believed that my Master had called me home, and that I would sleep beneath the dark green cypresses of Bouja till the Lord shall come... and my most earnest prayer was for my dear flock, that God would give them a pastor after his own heart."*

### **4. Love children and call on them to turn from sin and put their sole hope in Jesus.**

*"Think this, little children, you are the pride of your mother's heart, but have gone astray from the womb, speaking lies. Little children who are fond of your plays, but are not fond of coming to Jesus Christ, who is the Saviour of little children, the sword will come on you also."*

*"It is high time you seek the Lord. The longest lifetime is short enough... Oh, if you had to stand as often as I have beside the dying bed of little children – to see their wild looks and outstretched hands, and to hear their dying cries – you would see how needful it is fly to Christ now. It may be your turn next. Have you fled for refuge to Jesus? Have you found forgiveness?"*

*"The greatest want in the religion of children is generally sense of sin. Artless simplicity and confidence in what is told, are in some respects natural to children; and this is the reason why we are so often deceived by promising appearances in childhood. The reality of grace in a child is best known by his sense of sin."*

### **5. Love people who are not Christians yet and tell them all about their lostness and all about the Wonderful Solution, Jesus!**

*"Do not be satisfied without conversion."*

*"Never forget that the end of a sermon is the salvation of the people."*

*"What has the world done for you, that you love it so much? Did the world die for you? Will the world blot out your sins or change your heart? Will the world carry you to heaven? No, no! You may go back to the world if you please, but it can only destroy your poor soul... If you die without Christ, you cannot come back to be converted and die a believer – you have but once to die. Oh, pray that you may find Christ before death finds you!"*

*"The world will say you are an innocent and harmless girl; do not believe them. The world is a liar. Pray to see yourself exactly as God sees you..."*

*"Every wave of trouble has been wafting you to the sunny shores of a sinless eternity. Only believe. Give unlimited credit to our God."*

*"If our neighbour's house were on fire, would we not cry aloud and use every exertion... Oh, shall we be less earnest to save their never-dying souls, than we would be to save their bodies?"*

*"Now do not look so long and so harassingly at your own heart and feelings. What will you find there but the bite of the serpent?... Look to Christ... Look to Him and live. You need no preparation, you need no endeavors, you need no duties, you need no strivings, you only need to look and live... 'For one look at yourself, take ten looks at Christ!'"*

## **WANT TO LEARN MORE ABOUT ROBERT MURRAY M'CHEYNE?**

- *Memoir and Remains of Robert Murray M'Cheyne* by Andrew Bonar. Published by Banner of Truth, 1966. ISBN 978-0851510842
- *Robert Murray M'Cheyne* by Andrew Bonar. Published by Banner of Truth, 1960. ISBN 978-0851510859