

A LITTLE-KNOWN TROPHY OF GOD'S GRACE – by Rev. Tom Aicken

I do not remember when I first met Jim Storey, though it was several years ago at a Reformed ministerial meeting somewhere in Vancouver. He was one of the older men present, someone who stood out in my mind as well-mannered and humble, someone who clearly loved his Saviour and, from the things he talked about, was keenly interested in the deeper things of God. I met him again two or three times after that, always at functions related to this same ministerial, and, having had opportunity on those occasions to talk with him, I learned that he was the pastor of Renfrew Baptist Church. I did not see Mr. Storey after that until he retired, when he and his wife moved to New Westminster and began attending services at our church. I am so thankful, for the good of our congregation and my own soul, that the Lord brought them to us!

I want to thank Dr. Vernon Storey for the biographical information he gave me on the early years of his father, the Rev. James Storey, for I had no other means of getting it. Jim and I often had long conversations together, but he never talked about himself – except incidentally, to introduce something about the Lord, how good He was and had showed such compassion to him – and only rarely, even then, did I learn anything at all about his life prior to (and during) the war years, 1939-45. James Edward Storey was born in Lowestoft, Suffolk, England on 12 December, 1920. He lived in England through his teen years and, though I am not certain as to the details of his conversion, it would seem that he knew and loved the Lord from his youth and had opportunity to engage in various speaking activities associated with the local Methodist Church. He served his country when the war broke out, and was soon posted to Victoria, Canada as a service corps member associated with the training of Canadian pilots. It was there that he met Nellie Richardson, whom he married in 1942. In 1944, with his wife and son Vernon, he was re-assigned to England and, after the war, to serve for a time in Germany. He left the Air Force in 1946, returned with his family to Canada, and they settled once again in Victoria. The next few years saw the arrival of another son, David (1948), followed by twin daughters, Katherine and Elizabeth (1953).

Mr. Storey worked as a printer, a plasterer, and did various other things as he pursued his calling to be a minister of the gospel of Jesus Christ. There was one incident from those times which is particularly noteworthy, an incident which showcases the providence of God and tells of how Mr. Storey was suddenly catapulted into full-time ministry. He was serving, on a part-time basis only, as a lay preacher at Parkdale Independent Evangelical Church. He had also been working, however, as a plasterer for an employer who was openly and sarcastically critical of his Christian life and service. Mr. Storey thus felt compelled to quit this job, and that very evening, with no prospects for anything else, he went to a Board meeting at Parkdale. During the meeting the elders asked him to leave the room for a few minutes because they needed to discuss something in private. He had no idea what it was about, but left the room wondering if on this already momentous day they were planning to remove him from their pulpit and from having any ministry among them. They later called him back, though, still not knowing that he had left his job as a plasterer and was without gainful employment to support his family, and asked him to accept a call to full-time work as Parkdale's first pastor. How wonderfully the Lord provides! Viewing Mr. Storey's ministry there in retrospect – I take this from the congregation's official records which were written some years later, and I have no doubt that they are accurate -- “The church was growing as a result of Jim's preaching, there were a number attending from here and there

around the city and souls were being won to Christ.” Mr. Storey had occasion in later years to serve several other churches, to teach a few courses at Northwest Baptist Theological College, and also to write an unpublished commentary on the Gospel of Mark.

I remember Jim Storey as a warm Calvinist, as a spiritually-minded man who liked to read, especially the Puritans, and who never lost even in later years his keen desire to learn as much as he could about the soul-refreshing truths of God's glorious grace in the face of Jesus Christ. He was very disturbed by the moral degradation of society, by the plummeting standards he saw all around him, but he was particularly disturbed by the corruptions of his own heart, and therefore, like so many of the older writers and their heirs, he hated his own sinful inclinations even more than those of others. He saw himself to be the chief of sinners, you see, and consequently he was more patient with other people than with himself and much gentler in regard to their shortcomings than with his own. He was, of course, respected and well liked for that very reason. He never promoted himself, but sought the conversion of lost souls, the edification of the saints, and he looked to encourage everyone, young and old alike, in things pertaining to the kingdom of God.

Jim Storey was very encouraging to me, specifically, and a good example to follow. I like to read the Puritans, too – we would often talk about what we had read, and share insights – but to have a friend who thought and lived so much like these historical figures I admire was a special blessing in itself. A man of principle, Mr. Storey was even-tempered and stable. The last generation has seen a lot of change, not only in the world but in churches, yet he was never much impressed by the techniques and strategies of the church growth movement. For one thing, he believed that the fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom, and that, with so many souls on their way to a Christless eternity, we should not be flippant and playful. For another thing, he also believed in the primacy of preaching, that souls are won to Christ through God's own appointed means, so we should preach, therefore, we should not shun to preach the whole counsel of God, and in fervent prayer we should learn to leave the results to Him who gives the increase.

When Mr. Storey retired from the pastoral ministry, I knew that what he missed most was preaching. He was never critical of my preaching, however, and coming out of the service he would grip my hand and tell me something that made me long to get back into the pulpit again. He was a real friend, quiet and unassuming, but always ready to speak a word in season and out of season if it might help someone else in his walk with the Lord. Retired ministers, I know, can sometimes be a real problem in a church, because trading the pulpit for a pew does not always suit them, but Jim took on that role gracefully. When his health was failing and he went at last to hospital, though he could no longer read, it was still the finished work of Christ that he wanted to hear about, and even at death's door it was these meditations of his Saviour which brought him the greatest joy. Jim Storey fell asleep in Christ on 17 July, 1998.

In closing, let me tell you of one last (and very minor) incident. On one occasion, Jim asked me about the size of my feet. I do not ever remember anyone asking me that before, and it made me, just for a moment, a little self-conscious. I looked down, and not seeing anything exceptional about them, I replied with what I thought was the correct answer. For whatever reason, I do not know, but I did not ask him about his sudden and very peculiar interest in my feet. It was just one of those awkward moments which soon passed, and then I forgot all about it. The next time I saw him he handed me his

best pair of shoes, black brogues, which he said were just too heavy for him to wear anymore. I must confess that a smile stole across my face as I recalled, instantly, his unusual enquiry of our earlier conversation. Surprisingly, he had brought these shoes with him from England and I sometimes wear them still today!

Jim was very ordinary in many ways, though very committed to Christ and His Church and well-disciplined in the ways of the Lord. Other ministers have been mightier men of God, have served their Lord with a more impressive display of gifts and attracted a greater following, and as a result much more will be written about them – but it would please me greatly if I could be more like Jim Storey. The shoes, by the way, are a perfect fit, though in other ways I am still trying to fill them.