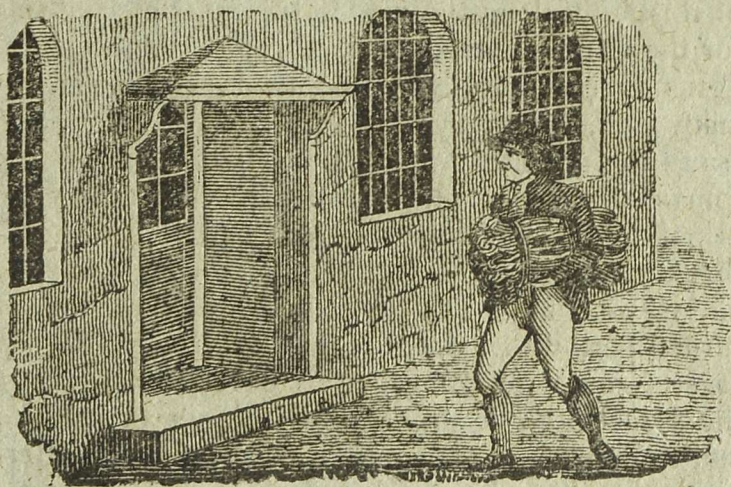


THE  
HISTORY  
OF  
POOR JOSEPH:  
AN AUTHENTIC NARRATIVE.  
TO WHICH IS ADDED,  
THE HAPPY CONVERSION  
OF  
A POOR COUNTRY FAMILY.



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# POOR JOSEPH:

AN

## *AUTHENTIC NARRATIVE.*

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A POOR half-witted man, named Joseph, whose employment was to go on errands and carry parcels, passing through London streets one day, heard psalm-singing in a place of worship. He went into it, having a large parcel of yarn hanging over his shoulders: it was Dr. Calamy's, St. Mary's, Aldermanbury. A very well dressed audience surrounded the Doctor. He read his text from 1 Tim. i. 15. "This is a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptation, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners, of whom I am chief." From this he preached, in the clearest and simplest manner, the ancient and apostolic gospel, the contents of this faithful saying, viz. that there is eternal salvation for the vilest sinners, solely through the worthiness of Jesus Christ, the God that made all things. "Not many rich, not many noble are called" by this gospel (saith the apostle); but "God hath chosen the weak things of this world, to confound the things that are mighty." While the elegant assembly listlessly heard this doctrine, and, if they were struck with any thing at all, it was only with some brilliant expression, or well turned period that dropt from the Doctor, Joseph, in rags, gazing with astonishment, never took his eyes from the preacher, but drank in with eagerness all he said, and trudging homeward, he was heard thus muttering to himself:—Joseph never heard this before; Christ Jesus, the God who made all things, came into the world to save sinners like Joseph; and this is true; and it is a "faithful saying." Not long after this, Joseph was seized with a fever, and was dangerously ill. As he tossed upon his bed, his constant language was, "Joseph is the chief of sinners; but Jesus Christ came into the world to save sinners; and Joseph loves him for



this. His neighbours, who came to see him, wondered, on hearing him always dwell on this, and only this. Some of the religious sort addressed him in the following manner: "But what say you of your own heart, Joseph? Is there no token for good about it? No saving change there? Have you closed with Christ, by acting faith upon him?" "Ah, no, (says he) Joseph can act nothing,—Joseph has nothing to say for himself, but that he is the chief of sinners; yet seeing it is a faithful saying, that Jesus, he who made all things, came into the world to save sinners, why may not Joseph, after all, be saved?" One man, finding out where he heard this doctrine, on which he dwelt so uniformly, and with such delight, went and asked Dr. Calamy to come and visit him. He came; but Joseph was now very weak, and had not spoken for some time, and, though told of the Doctor's arrival, he took no notice of him: but when the Doctor began to speak to him; as soon as he heard the sound of his voice, he instantly sprang upon his elbows, and seizing him by the hands, exclaimed as loud as he could, with his now feeble and trembling voice, "O Sir, you are the friend of the Lord Jesus, whom I heard speak so well of him, and whom I love for what you said of him. Joseph is the chief of sinners; but it is a faithful saying, that Jesus Christ, the God who made all things, came into the world to save sinners,—and why not Joseph? O pray to that Jesus for me, pray that he may save me: tell him, that Joseph thinks that he loves him for coming into the world to save such sinners as Joseph." The Doctor prayed. When he concluded, Joseph thanked him most kindly; he then put his hand under his pillow, and took out an old rag, in which were tied up five guineas; and, putting it into the Doctor's hand (which he had kept all this while close in his) he thus addressed him: "Joseph, in his folly, had laid up this to keep him in his old age; but Joseph will never see old age; take it and divide it amongst the poor friends of the Lord Jesus; and tell them, that Joseph gave it them for his sake who came into the world to save sinners, of whom he



is chief." So saying, he reclined his head. His exertions in talking had been too much for him, so that he instantly expired.

Dr. Calamy left this scene, but not without shedding tears over Joseph; and used to tell this little story with much feeling, as one of the most affecting occurrences he ever met with.

*This interesting Narrative has been turned into Verse  
by the late ingenious Mr. SWAINE.*

WAS it a chance? or the unerring hand,  
Which (holding all things at supreme command)  
Gives the bright sun to cheer a world with light,  
And clothes in black'ning shade the dreary night;  
That bid th' event, which follows here, revolve?  
Christian——thy heart can soon this query solve,

A poor man cloath'd in rags, and short of wit,  
Was one day strolling careless through the street;  
A knot of yarn across his shoulders hung,  
And trail'd behind him as he walk'd along.  
Little he thought that he possess'd a soul,  
Or whose the power that bids the seasons roll:  
When sent on simple errands, he could go;  
Nought else he knew, nor aught desir'd to know.  
Alike of things in heaven, or things on earth,  
Of what begets events, what gives them birth,  
Listless, he trudg'd along; 'til with the sound  
Of music rous'd,—he starts, and gazes round——  
Where he perceives a full assembled place,  
And enters, gaping, with unmeaning face.  
(O Lord of hosts! how wond'rous are thy ways,  
Sucklings and babes shall celebrate thy praise;  
While men of honour and of wisdom lie  
Bury'd by sin in endless misery:  
Well did the great apostle truly say,  
Not many rich and mighty love the way:  
The wisdom of the Lord is foolishness  
To those who proudly scorn the way of peace:  
So is their wisdom to the soul that knows,  
That peace which from a wounded Saviour flows.)  
Above the rest a servant of the Lord  
Stood to proclaim the everlasting word;  
Who, with a pause, open'd the sacred book;  
Then, with a voice profound, and speaking look,  
Pronounc'd that faithful word, that Christ came down  
From heav'n's bright mansions, and his Father's throne;  
And put on mortal flesh, that he might save  
A sinning world from an eternal grave.



Yes, how he for the chief of sinners dy'd,  
And every claim of justice satisfy'd.

Poor Joseph trembled, while he heard him speak  
Of wrath to come, as if his heart would break :  
Till through his soul he felt the silver sound  
Of sweet salvation, and a ransom found.  
Struck with astonishment, he fix'd his eyes  
Full on the preacher ; and with glad surprise,  
Drank down the joyful news with greedy ears,  
Which reach'd his heart, and fill'd his eyes with tears.  
The service ended, Joseph trudg'd away ;  
And thus within himself, was heard to say :  
" Joseph was never told of this before !  
Did Jesus Christ, the mighty God, whose pow'r  
Made heaven and earth, and all things, come and die  
To save poor helpless sinners, such as I ?  
Why this is brave ! And if all this be true,  
Who knows but Jesus dy'd for Joseph too ?

Soon after this, a message from on high  
Was sent, to warn poor Joseph he must die ;  
A burning fever rag'd thro' all his veins,  
And rack'd his body with a thousand pains.  
Ye who delight the paths of sin to tread,  
Attend poor Joseph to his dying bed ;  
And listen to the language of his heart,  
When soul and body were about to part.  
No rich variety of speech he knew,  
Heart sprung and simple were his words, tho' few :  
Jesus and Jesu's love, was all his theme :  
Sufficient proof that Jesus had lov'd him ;  
And while with pain from side to side he roll'd,  
These greatest things in little accents told ;  
" Joseph's so vile, there cannot be a worse,—  
Joseph deserves God's everlasting curse ;  
The chief of sinners Joseph is indeed :  
But did not Jesus for such sinners bleed ?  
I heard one say, that Jesus was a friend  
To poor lost sinners, whom he would defend  
From God's just veng'ance, and the pit of hell :  
And if a friend to sinners, who can tell  
But Joseph may be one whom Jesus loves ?"

But while poor Joseph thus his interest proves,  
One standing by, with cautious tone, replies :  
" But, Joseph, we are told by one that's wise,  
That nothing's so deceitful as the heart—  
How do you find yourself about that part ?  
Remember what the word is to all men :  
None can be sav'd but what are born again.  
Have you no token thereabout for good,  
No relish, no desire for heavenly food ?  
Have you no inward evidence, to prove  
That you are lov'd with everlasting love ?



'Tis a great thing to be an heir of heaven,—  
 To see your sins, and see them all forgiven :  
 To have your soul redeem'd with precious blood,  
 And, as a pilgrim, walk the heavenly road :  
 To tread the path of holiness below,  
 And drink the streams from Zion's rock that flow :  
 To live by faith upon the Son of God,  
 To own his sceptre, and to kiss his rod :  
 To die to sin, and live in righteousness ;  
 To be possess'd of covenanted peace ;  
 To trust for life in Christ, and Christ alone ;  
 And none but such shall sing around his throne."

Poor Joseph listen'd, and with artless tongue,  
 Resum'd the burden of his former song ;  
 " Joseph has nothing for himself to say,  
 He's deep in debt, and nothing left to pay :  
 Joseph's a sinner—Jesus came from heaven,  
 And shed his blood that sin might be forgiv'n :  
 Jesus did die to set poor sinners free,  
 And who can tell but Jesus dy'd for me ?  
 Joseph desires to love him for this love,—  
 And why not Joseph sing his praise above ?  
 Thus he went on, till almost sunk beneath  
 His burning pains, he stopp'd to gasp for breath.  
 Now each one thought—'Tis done ; poor Joseph dies ;  
 Groaning he clos'd, or seem'd to close his eyes ;  
 His pulses languid and his struggles few,  
 Eternity was all he had in view.  
 Meanwhile, in came that servant of the Lord,  
 Who first in Joseph's ears proclaim'd the word ;  
 Ghastly and pale, between the jaws of death,  
 Just ready to resign his feeble breath,  
 Upwards he look'd—and trembling with surprise,  
 The briny moisture starting in his eyes,  
 Sir, is it you ? with quivering lips he cry'd,  
 'Twas you that told me first how Jesus dy'd  
 For sinners such as Joseph, weak and poor,  
 That seek the bread of life at mercy's door ;  
 Oh pray for Joseph to that loving Lord !  
 Tell him, that Joseph trusts his holy word ;  
 And loves him as the sinner's only friend.  
 Who dy'd his chosen people to defend."

He pray'd : poor Joseph held his hand the while,  
 Press'd it and thank'd him with a peaceful smile ;  
 Then from his pillow took a purse of gold,  
 " This was (he said) to keep me when grown old ;  
 Which, for the poor belov'd of Jesus take,  
 And tell 'em, Joseph lov'd them for his sake."  
 Then calmly met th' uplifted hand of death ;  
 Bless'd the kind Saviour with his fleeting breath,  
 And dy'd.—With tears, the preacher left the place ;  
 And Joseph's gone to sing redeeming grace.



## THE HAPPY CONVERSION

OF

## A POOR COUNTRY FAMILY.

THE following authentic Narrative was related many years ago, by the Rev. Mr. Price (assistant and successor to Dr. Watts) to Dr. Ashworth, Tutor of the Daventry Academy.

A gentleman in London, being in an ill state of health, was advised to walk out daily into the country. In one of his excursions, about five miles from town, he saw a small cottage at a little distance, and being weary, made up to it, that he might rest himself. On entering the house, he found a poor woman with four children, who were chiefly employed in spinning wick-yarn for candles. During his stay, the following conversation took place:—"Good woman (said he) your house, I observe, is sadly out of repair: I wonder how you do in the winter season! Surely, you must be very uncomfortable?" "It is but a poor place, indeed, Sir, (said the woman); but it is a mercy that it is no worse; it is better than we deserve; and we are under the care of the same kind Providence in the winter as in the summer." Surprized at this unexpected reply, he wished to find out her religious principles. "To what parish (said he) does your house belong?" She told him. "And how far do you live from the village?" "Three miles, Sir." "That is a long way for you to go to church: and I suppose you go to church on a Sunday?" "I hope, Sir, we make conscience of worshipping God on a Sunday, and on other days." "I hope you do: but do you not go to your parish church?" "No, Sir, we do not." "Not go to church! What do you do then, —and where do you go?" "We go to meeting, Sir." "Go to meeting! Why, were you brought up to go to the meeting?" "No, Sir." "How came it about then, that you should forsake the church to go to meeting?"



‘ I will tell you, Sir.—About four years ago I was visited with a heavy and dangerous affliction; and being apprehensive that if I died I should perish for ever, I became very unhappy. I had such a sense of sin, and such apprehensions of the wrath of God, that I was a terror to myself, and to those about me. As my affliction increased, and the danger became more apparent, I was increasingly wretched, conceiving myself to be approaching the brink of Hell. I cried to the Lord, to have mercy on my poor soul; though I could scarcely entertain any hope of obtaining it. It was however my last resort, and all that I could do. I told my husband and neighbours of my distress; but they could not understand my case: I was to them an object of wonder and pity. They tried to sooth and comfort me, by saying, “ You are a very honest and industrious woman, a quiet and peaceable neighbour, a good wife, and a good mother; God also is very merciful, and you are a penitent: if, notwithstanding all this, you should go to Hell, woe be to thousands.” But alas! all that they could say was of no use. I found they could not understand the state of my mind.

‘ Meanwhile my fever increased, and I was thought to be on the point of death. Several of my poor neighbours were about me, expecting every breath to be the last.—“ She is just going!” said one of them.—I could not speak, but was perfectly sensible, and heard those words; at which I thought, if I were going, I was going to Hell. It pleased God, however, to spare me; and I hope it was in mercy. From this time the fever abated, and I gradually recovered. But my distress of mind did not abate. I considered that though, through the mercy of God, I was spared a little while, yet I was still the same wretched, vile, and guilty creature: I needed mercy, but almost despaired of obtaining it. I used, at this time, to watch my heart, and pray in my poor manner; but could find no relief. Such was my unhappiness, that I had no heart to attend to the common



concerns of my family. I again told my poor neighbours the state of my mind; but they knew not what to say, more than they had said: and I could not be easy. They then wished me to go to the minister of the parish.

‘ Soon after this, I felt inclined to take my neighbours’ advice. I went to the clergyman, and told him the exercises of my mind from the beginning. He appeared to be much surprized; but advised me to come to church and take the sacrament, and make my peace with God. I thanked him for his advice, and thought I would follow it. Accordingly, I went to church for more than a quarter of a year, and took the sacrament; but found no relief. The preaching was no way suitable to my case. I wanted something to relieve my mind, but knew not what would do it.

‘ One Sabbath day my husband and I, after having been at church in the forenoon, and there being no service in the afternoon, were sitting by a ditch-side, eating our bread and cheese: having heard that there was a meeting, at which a Mr. TIBWELL preached, about two miles farther, I felt a strong desire to go that afternoon and hear him. On expressing it to my husband, he made many objections: “That (said he) will be the way to be ruined indeed. You know that my master is a great enemy to the Presbyterians; and he would turn me off from his service. Our landlord also greatly dislikes them; and he would turn us and our children out of doors. Besides, you know that my lady gives her dole at Christmas.—She is now very kind to us, and we have more of her charity than some of our neighbours: but she is very strict to the church; and if she come to hear that we go to meeting, we have nothing more to expect from her.” Alas! said I, all this is nothing to me: I am so distressed about my soul, that other things are of no account. If you will not go with me, I will go by myself.—I immediately rose up, and set forward; and when my husband saw me determined on going, he went with me. But when we arrived at the place he refused to go in, that he might have to say, if called in question, that



he was not in the place. I however went in; and soon after, the congregation being assembled, the minister came: my eyes followed him. After singing, he prayed—But Oh, how was I affected in his prayer! He was large in the confession of sin, particularly of heart sins; and very earnest in his petitions for mercy to poor sinners, pleading the merits and mediation of Christ as the only ground of hope. He prayed out my very soul! Never did I feel before as I did then. My expectations were raised to a very high pitch. When he took his text, I was all attention: it was the former part of the parable of the sower. He began, by describing those hearers that are compared to the way-side. The ground was hard, and did not receive the seed; and partly through ignorance, inattention, and the influence of Satan on the mind, no good was produced. Next he spoke of the stony ground hearers. On these, he observed, some effect was produced; but it was of short duration, and at last came to nothing. Then he came to speak of worldly-minded hearers, who also brought no fruit to perfection.—I followed him all through his sermon; but it was an awful one to me. I thought it all belonged to me. I therefore went home, with my mind more burdened than before. I saw that I was every thing that was vile and abominable; and could not help crying out, *Woe is me, for I am undone!*

‘There was, however, one thought which afforded me some relief. I had till now considered my case as singular; for I had never met with any person who had the same views and feelings as myself: but now I perceived there was a person who understood the state of my mind. I reflected on the prayer, and on the sermon; and my mind was filled with thought. Understanding that Mr. Tibwell meant to preach upon the latter part of the parable the next Sabbath, I longed for its return all the week, that I might hear it through; hoping also that he might be directed to say something which would afford relief to my afflicted soul. Well, the Sabbath returned; and a



blessed one it was to me! I was again greatly impressed and affected with the prayer; and when the minister described the good ground, he shewed what it was originally all wild and barren; but that it was made good by the influence of divine grace. It was broken up by convictions of sin, which entering deeply into the soul of the sinner, he was brought to see sin exceeding sinful, and to feel the plague of his own heart. Thus the spirit was made tender, and the mind teachable, and prepared for the reception of the gospel.—Then he opened up the great truths of salvation through Jesus Christ; and directed the hearers to him, as the only Saviour from sin, and the curse of the law to which they were exposed. He shewed, that pardon of sin, peace with God, justification and sanctification, all came freely to the chief of sinners, through the atonement and righteousness of Christ; and that these being applied by the Spirit of God, were made effectual to their conversion, and in the issue were productive of good fruit in the present life, and in the life to come of everlasting joy.

‘Now was my heart filled with comfort—Now I was led to see the way of escape:—now a foundation was laid for my hope to rest upon. I returned home with joy; and could now attend to my family affairs with cheerfulness. From this time I attended constantly at the same place, and that with great delight: every Sabbath was a feast-day to me: and I have this additional comfort, that my husband also attends constantly and cheerfully under the gospel with me; and I trust that he also is converted to Christ. He now prays in his family; and we never lived so happily as we do now.’

‘Thus, Sir, (added the poor woman) I have given you some account of the reasons why we left the church, and go to the meeting. I hope we have both got good by it, and that there is no harm in that, Sir.’ “No (replied the gentleman); I assure you, that your story is not a little interesting to me; and I hope you will persevere in your attendance on the gospel.” ‘Yes, Sir (said she) I hope we shall; for,



surely, I can say from experience, that *Wisdom's ways are ways of pleasantness, and all her paths are peace.*

“ Well, good woman, can you read ? ” ‘ Yes, Sir, I can now read better than I could before. ’ “ And what good books have you got ? ” ‘ I have but one, Sir; and that is the Testament. ’ “ Let me look at it, if you please. ” ‘ Dear Sir, I am ashamed to shew it you, it is such a tattered piece; for before I knew the worth of it, I let my children play with it; but now I take it to meeting with me; and when the minister mentions a text that is in it, I turn to it, and read it. [Giving the book into his hand, she added] *There is all John in it, Sir; and there is sweet reading in John!* ’ “ Yes, good woman, there is sweet reading in John; and I am glad that you have tasted the sweetness of it.—And can your children read ? ” ‘ Yes, Sir; my two eldest girls can read pretty well: for I send them once or twice a day to a neighbour, who is a better scholar than I, and she teaches them. ’

After making the poor woman a present, to enable her to buy a new Bible and Testament for the children, the gentleman took leave of them. He soon after related the story to Mr. Price, and he to the pious Lady Abney, who sent for the man and his wife, that she might hear the tale in their own simple way. Being much interested in it, she desired them, whenever it suited them to come to their meeting, to come and dine at her house. She also took the eldest daughter into her service, who, by her good conduct, so far recommended herself, as to be advanced to one of the first stations in the family: and on her being afterwards married, was presented by her ladyship with fifty pounds, towards putting her and her husband into business. After this, she took another of the girls into her service, paid the poor people's rent, put the other children to school, and allowed the parents what the children could have earned, if they had been kept at their work. Thus, a kind Providence appeared for them in a way which they never expected; and all their fears were removed, which once seemed to forbid their attendance on the gospel.