

# ***Fort Payne church of Christ***

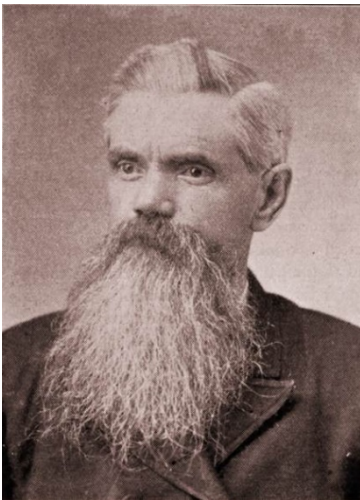


## **The Weekly Moment**

*A Weekly Motivational Message*

Wednesday, July 11, 2018

### **James Semple Bell 1838-1910**



JAMES SEMPLE BELL was born, October 20, 1838, in Antrim, Ireland. His father's name was originally spelled "B-e-a-l-l;" but in a Bible given to his father by a minister of the "Covenanters," the name was spelled "B-e-l-l," and so written afterwards. His mother's maiden name was Jane Semple. His father died April 25, 1842.

Young Bell was sent to school near home, and his love of books was encouraged because he was a delicate child. He manifested especial interest in history, biography, and travels, and read all the books of that kind he could get. In those days the histories, controversies, and creeds of the three "branches" of the "one church" were living questions and an important part in the education of children. In this way, the mind of young Bell was directed to, and interested in, the question of religion and churches at an early age.

When about seven years old, he was placed under a teacher whom he soon learned to love and greatly admire. This teacher was a bachelor, because the choice of his young heart had "been suddenly laid in her grave, near which was his schoolhouse." In this, there was a melancholy and poetic pathos and romance, which made an impression on young Bell's mind. The teacher was an experienced and a very fine educator, as well as a remarkably kind-hearted and gentle-mannered man. The pupil completed the prescribed course of study in seven years, with no vacation except an occasional sea trip.

In the course of study, the Bible was carefully read, and much of its contents was memorized; but the catechism and articles by "royal authority" were the more important matters of study. In early manhood he came to America, and learned to be a printer in Western Ohio, diligently pursuing the while his studies in religious and political history, science, and philosophy.

He went from Ohio to Illinois, and after a little experience in the world, he began to see that a knowledge of the Bible and of creeds and church controversies did not constitute exactly the kind of an education essential to success in his worldly occupation as a printer and a journalist. There were nine different churches in the Illinois town where he lived, all represented by learned and zealous men. All of them could not be safely right, but all of them might be dangerously wrong in their doctrines, sacraments, and injunctions for daily life.

As a business man, soliciting and depending upon the good will and patronage of all kinds of church people, he was embarrassed and handicapped in honest efforts to show no preference for one church as against other churches, when he really felt no special interest in any of them. In this embarrassing position, an aged Christian, a total stranger, of gentle manner and kind speech, came to him and got him to promise that he would read carefully Matthew's history of Jesus of Nazareth, and then tell him what he thought of it. The final result was a clear and heart-deep faith in Jesus as the Christ, the Son of God, and a newborn courage of his convictions which moved him to openly confess his faith and be baptized into Christ, May 7, 1858.

A few months afterwards he returned to Western Ohio, and his relatives and friends urged him to tell them about the change in his religious convictions. Accordingly, he met the people in rural schoolhouses and private residences and explained the matter to them as best he could. With no thought or desire of becoming a preacher, he had to visit many places in Western Ohio and Eastern Indiana to explain the change in his religious convictions; and the more he explained, the more the people seemed to want to hear it explained again. He got into public debates with various "ministers," and before he knew exactly how it all happened he was considered a preacher.

He was married to Miss Hannah Cusick, in Providence, R. I., May 17, 1861, and during the Civil War they lived in New York City, where he worked in a printing office. While living in New York, he preached in a church then north of the city; and after two years he moved near Troy, N. Y., where he lived three years; and from there he moved to Kentucky, where he made his home for twelve years. He has traveled and preached extensively in the United States and in Canada.

Soon after he became a Christian he began to write for the American Christian Review, edited by Benjamin Franklin. He became personally acquainted with the late John F. Rowe, founder and (to the time of his death) editor of the **Christian Leader**, and their mutual friendship was never jarred during nearly thirty years. Four years before the death of Editor Rowe, while Mr. Bell was on a visit at Rowe's home, in Cincinnati, OH., Mr. Rowe said to him: *"If you outlive me, I wish you to be editor of the **Christian Leader**."* On his deathbed, he repeated this request; and when his son, Fred. L. Rowe, made this known, Mr. Bell accepted the responsibilities of that position *"until an abler disciple shall assume that useful work."* He served as editor of the **Christian Leader**, published from Cincinnati, OH., but had his home in Pekin, N. Y. He was a vigorous and versatile writer, and the policy of his paper, as he defined it, was to accept the New Testament *"as the only and all-sufficient rule of a Christian's faith and duty. . . . It shall not inculcate anything of private opinion or the inventions of men, as having any place in the faith, the worship, the work, or the government of the churches of Christ. If the recorded teaching of Jesus and of his apostles be not the creed or rule of a sect, then the Christian Leader does not and shall not represent a sect; for it shall adopt and indorse no other teaching as the Christian's faith and duty."*

Think about it.

Here's hoping you'll make the "most of your minutes" this week.

Hope to see you at Bible Study tonight.

In Christian Love,

*Bob Strickland*