

HIS TOUCH HAS STILL ITS ANCIENT POWER

by

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CHAPTER TWELVE -

HEARING HIS VOICE

"My sheep hear My voice, and I know them, and they follow Me; and I give unto them eternal life; and they shall never perish, neither shall any man pluck them out of my hand"
(John 10:27, 28).

THE WORK OF AN EVANGELIST certainly has its problems, but is by no means without its lighter moments. I pity the Christian worker who cannot laugh. On occasions the sublime and the ridiculous seem to meet. Did I ever tell you the story of Pax?

"Please, sir, I've torn my trousers."

"That's bad, Pax," I said, "can't you change them?"

"No, sir, you see they are the only pair I have."

"Well, what do you want me to do - lend you a pair?"

"Oh, no, sir, they'd be far too big, I thought that perhaps you might be able to sew them up for me."

I was running a camp for boys from some of the poorer parts of London. Pax, a smiling-faced lad of about thirteen, wrapped a blanket round himself, and sat on the end of my camp bed while I turned my inexperienced hand to the repairing of the damage. During the process I asked him if he was enjoying camp. "Oh, yes, sir, very much," was the immediate reply.

"And what do you think of the evening meetings?"

"Well, sir," said Pax, thoughtfully. "I always go to church, I sing in the choir, and I read my Bible every day, and say my prayers. I try to be good, but - er - I don't think I am a Christian. I've never been converted, like you say in the evening talks . . . But I'd like to be, only I don't quite understand."

Here was my opportunity to do some reaping - while sewing! "Now, it's like this, Pax, if you break the school rules, you are punished. It might mean the cane or being expelled. The headmaster makes the rules and is responsible for administering punishment. You wouldn't have

much respect for a master who doesn't punish the boy who has done wrong, would you?"

"No, I don't think I would, sir."

"Well, now, GOD too has made His rules - the Commandments, and has said: **'The soul that sinneth, it shall die.'** As sinners we are condemned to die, but, old chap, the Gospel, which means 'good news,' is just this: **'While ye were yet sinners Christ died for us.'**"

Here I put down the needle and cotton and took up my Bible, and found Isaiah 53:6: "Now, read that verse out loud," I said, handing him the Bible, "I think it will help you."

In a clear voice he read: **"All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned every one to his own way; and the Lord hath laid on Him the iniquity of us all."**

"Who does that mean, Pax? **'All we like sheep have gone astray'**."

He thought a few seconds, and then said:

"It means me, sir."

"Yes, that's right, you have gone astray and have become a lost sheep. But, tell me, what does that verse say GOD has done with your sin?"

He read the verse through to himself slowly, and with a somewhat puzzled expression on his face said: "GOD has laid my sin on Him. Who does that mean, sir?"

"Why, it means the Lord JESUS, while He hung on the Cross. Do you remember the verse of the hymn we sang last night:

"He knew how wicked man had been,
And knew that GOD must punish sin;
So, out of pity, JESUS said
He'd bear the punishment instead."

The puzzled expression vanished like shadows before the rising sun. "I can see it now, sir - JESUS died for me."

"Would you like to kneel down with me now and ask the Lord JESUS to be your own personal SAVIOUR?" I asked.

"Yes, sir, I would,"

As we knelt together I prayed for my friend Pax. Then after a minute or so of silent prayer he prayed aloud, after me, the words of the familiar hymn:

"JESUS, I will trust Thee,

Trust Thee with my soul,
Guilty, lost and helpless,
Thou canst make me whole;
There is none in Heaven
Or on earth like Thee:
Thou hast died for sinners
Therefore, Lord, for me."

After a further chat together, clothed, and in his right mind, Pax set off to finish his game of football. He had gone only a few paces when I called him back. "Pax, I say, it was a good thing you tore your bags, wasn't it?"

"Why, sir," he asked, doubtfully, thinking I suppose, of my abominable stitches! Then his face lighted up:

"Oh yes, sir, I am glad, because now we have had this little talk together."

Some months later I received a letter from Pax telling me how he had become a Sunday School teacher, and was doing his best to bring others to the SAVIOUR. He signed himself,

"Yours sincerely, Pax."

Then the thought must have struck him, "Mr. Rees meets so many boys, he may have forgotten who Pax is," so in all innocence he added, "P.S. - I am the boy who came to JESUS through a hole in his trousers."

Was this the modern counterpart of the man in the Gospels who came through a hole in the roof?

When pointing these lads to CHRIST, knowing, as I did, the appalling conditions in which they lived, I often said to myself, "What chance have they of standing firm?" Sometimes the boys themselves realized what they were up against. However, a sense of weakness in spiritual things is often a good sign, for His strength is made perfect in weakness.

I remember at one camp there were four older lads from very poor homes. They had left school and had started work, so had to return from camp early. They came to say goodbye to me after the evening meeting, since they were to leave early next morning. "Sorry you have to go," I said, "but listen, there's been something about this camp you lads haven't liked, isn't there?"

"No, sir," they chorused, "We've had a grand time."

"Oh, yes, I know you have enjoyed the games and fun, but there's been something you haven't enjoyed, and I'm going to tell you what it is." They shuffled their feet and looked awkward, while I went on, "The officers and most of the boys have given their hearts and lives to CHRIST, and you four haven't. Isn't that right?"

There was silence for a minute, then the tall lad standing on my right said something I shall never forget:

"Yes, sir, that's right. But you don't know what it's like down our street, and the sort of lives we have to live. We've talked it over, sir, and we've decided that if we got converted like the others we couldn't keep it up. So you see, sir, we've decided not to be converted."

I was completely nonplussed for a minute, then I stretched out my hand and said to the leader, "Hold on to my hand, will you?" He put his fingers round my wrist.

"Now, don't let go."

"No, sir."

"Promise you'll hold tight?" He nodded and gripped harder. The others were watching with interest, wondering what was to happen next.

"Now, are you ready?"

"Yes, sir."

I gave a sudden jerk and wrenched free.

"Now, try again," I said. "You put out your hand this time." He did, and I put my big hand round his all-to-skinny wrist, and said, "Now, you get free!"

He pulled and twisted, losing his breath and going red in the face with the effort. He tried all the tricks he had learned from "Sexton Blake" and "Bullet-Proof Dick," but still we did not come unstuck.

"I can't, sir," he said at last, "it's no use."

"But why not?" I said, "we came apart the first time, now we're stuck; why is that?"

"That's easy, sir; first time I had hold on you, now you've got hold on me."

"That's just how it is if you come to JESUS. He doesn't expect you to hold on to Him, but He is strong, and He has you in His hand, and says, "**Neither shall any man pluck them out of my hand.**" Do you think when He has died for you that He will let you go once you come to Him. Can't you trust Him to keep you?"

Before sending them to their tents to think the matter over, I asked them to promise that they would come and tell me of their final decision before leaving next morning. while the porridge was cooking, each one of those lads told me that he had trusted the Good Shepherd.

This soul-winning is certainly thrilling work, but what is sometimes even more thrilling is meeting, years later, those whom one has led to CHRIST, and finding that they are following on to know the Lord. From time to time I meet young men who were converted as lads at these camps, and who, in spite of difficulties, have remained true to CHRIST.

In London recently, I was invited to address a young men's Christian fellowship, where I spoke on the Gospel as the power of GOD. One of the points I made was that JESUS CHRIST is not only able to save but also able to keep.

My address was followed by discussion, during which a Service man said: "I can support from my own experience that what Mr. Rees says is perfectly true. Some years ago at a camp he was running I came to know CHRIST as my SAVIOUR, and from that day He has kept and satisfied me."

Soon after the war broke out my wife opened a Forces restroom and canteen in the Somerset village where we were then living. Each evening before opening the workers met for prayer, with the result that a number of men accepted CHRIST as SAVIOUR. One Sunday evening while conducting a well attended service for the men, I threw the meeting open, giving an opportunity for any Christian Service man to speak a word of testimony.

There were a number of strangers present, mostly airmen from a large camp near by.

Immediately one of these men sprang to his feet, and addressing me said: "Well, Mr. Rees, a chum of mine told me about the meetings here, so to-night I came here for the first time. But my eyes nearly dropped out of my head when that door opened suddenly and you stepped on to the platform. Although it is nearly ten years since I saw you I recognised you at once. I don't suppose you remember me, I was only a kid then. I came down from London to a boys' camp you were running in Surrey."

Then he turned and spoke to the other Service men: "It was at that camp that I found CHRIST, and during the past ten years He has kept me true to Him. If you have never trusted the SAVIOUR why not trust Him now: What He has done for me He is able to do for you.

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