

# **GLAD TIDINGS, or**

Believe And Live

by

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## **CHAPTER FOUR**

### **THE SPIRIT STRIVING**

A THOUGHTLESS sinner! It is hard to conceive of a more melancholy sight. With the certainty of soon standing in the presence of a holy GOD; with innumerable sins staining his soul, not one of which he can wash away; with a soul more valuable than he has even imagination to conceive of, and that must be suffering or enjoying, when suns and systems shall have gone to the general pile of ruin; with responsibilities under which an angel might tremble; there he is, utterly careless.

The Great GOD has taken such a deep interest in his welfare, that for a time he emptied heaven of the most lovely object in it, and sent his Son on a mission of love to the perishing millions of our race.

The Son so loved him, that he endured the agonies of the cross, and refused to come down till he had finished the work of human redemption. The Holy Spirit feels such an interest in him that though hating his sins with a perfect hatred, He still follows him with the importunities of love. The holy angels take such an interest in him that they watch for his repentance, and yet there he is careless about himself!

But when the sinner begins to think, to look eternity and all its awful realities in the face, his case is truly hopeful.

See that young man taken out of a river, supposed to be drowned. The physician is using every means to restore animation. The mother of that youth hangs over him in an agony of suspense; and when at last there is seen the first movements of returning life the fluttering of the heart, the quivering of the eyelids and the heaving of the deep groan; I see that mother clasp her hands, and turning her tearful eyes to heaven she cries:

“Thank GOD, he lives.”

Sinner, the Book of GOD describes you as "**dead in trespasses and sins**," and this is true, not only of the most abandoned sinners, but of the most amiable and moral. Death appears in different forms, sometimes horrid and revolting, and sometimes lovely and attractive. Go over the battle field, after the conflict is over, and you will see death in some of its most revolting forms; but look upon that babe on its mother's knee, upon whose lovely countenance death has just stamped his seal, and death is seen there in a most attractive aspect; but the man slain in battle and the babe are both alike dead.

And it is the Holy Spirit alone that can speak life into the dead soul.

We might gather around one sinner all the faithful ministers of the Gospel now living, and all the praying people who hold up their arms by their fervent supplications; and they might try by their prayers and exhortations to save the soul of that one sinner and continue their efforts for years, and they could not produce one good thought, nor one saving impression, without the influence of the Holy Spirit.

Dear reader, if this Divine Agent has indeed begun to operate upon your soul, and to produce some signs of spiritual life, it is with you a very solemn and critical period. You cannot remain long in this state, for either you will allow the Spirit to lead you to the Lord Jesus, for pardon and peace; or you will resist him, and sink back into a state of more hardened obduracy.

A crisis a turning point in the history of your soul has come when it will be easier for you to become a Christian, than it ever was before, or perhaps than it ever will be again.

The Spirit has startled your soul from its long and death-like torpor.

The people of GOD are praying for you, and trying to point you to the Lamb of GOD.

The word preached from the pulpit sounds to you now as it never did before; pointed, personal, and solemn, as the blast of the last trumpet, it reaches your trembling heart with an awakening, "**Thou art the man!**"

Memory is turning over the pages of your past life, and the sins you have committed, the prayers and counsels of a pious mother that you have despised, the Sabbaths you have squandered, all are speaking to you in words of rebuke that are heard through every chamber of the soul.

Oh! now is the most favorable time you will ever have to accept the offers of the Gospel!

But resist the Spirit, and your mind will become dark as perdition on the things of GOD, and the things that belong to your personal salvation will be regarded with a sullen indifference. GOD will say, "**He is joined to his idols, let him alone**;" and of all the calamities that can happen to the soul on this side of perdition, to be let alone is the most terrible.

When the benevolent monks who reside on the Alps go out amid the snow storm, to search for travelers who, overcome by fatigue and cold, have sunk down to perish, they always know when they come to a person whose case is hopeless, from the fact that he is very hard to awake, and when they do get him partially aroused, he is very angry at being disturbed, and insists on being allowed to remain where he is.

So is it with those Gospel-hardened sinners who have long resisted the Spirit, and whose souls are bound up in the chains of a mighty lethargy.

When a revival sweeps through a whole community and enters the very house where such a man lives, he slumbers on in indifference, or else becomes a deadly opposer. He even glories in his shame, and boasts of how calm he can keep amid the general excitement.

But the calm he boasts of is like that fearful calm we sometimes see in nature, when a storm is brewing in the heavens, and is about to break forth in desolating power. It is the calm which the sick man feels, when the inflammation that tortures his body has turned into mortification.

He thinks himself better, his friends congratulate him on his improvement; but the physician looks gloomy, for he knows that soon his heart will be struggling wildly under the attack of death.

So the sinner has resisted the Spirit till his convictions have all left him, and he cries "**peace and safety,**" when destruction is thundering at his door.

The great sin that the Spirit comes to convince of is the sin of UNBELIEF.

The Lord's own words are, "**When he is come he shall reprove the world of sin; of sin, because they believe not in me.**"

It was not enough that Jesus died for the guilty, and made salvation free as the air we breathe, or as the mountain torrent leaping from rock to rock; for such is the deep depravity, of the human heart, that not one of the whole race would have believed in this boundless love did not the Holy Spirit come to convince of unbelief.

***I know of nothing that shows more clearly the extent of our undone and lost state by nature than this, that it needed not only GOD in our nature to die for us, but it needs GOD the Spirit, to convince us that we need such a Saviour at all.***

The proper definition of unbelief, as given by the Bible, is truly fearful. It is there described as making GOD a liar.

Reader, suppose that you were to have your veracity doubted by all around you, day after day. That your family, your neighbors, the persons with whom you do business every day all were to turn away from your words as unworthy of belief, how bitterly would you feel! What indignation would fill your heart!

And how must the Great God feel, when the very creatures for whom he has done so much, for whom he has made infinite sacrifices, refuse to credit his words, and cast them back in his face with contempt. Is it any wonder that the unalterable decree has gone forth from the Eternal Throne, "**He that believeth not shall be damned.**"

But it is not often that unbelief will, in words, contradict GOD. Occasionally some bold blasphemer may dare to do this; but generally the unbelief of the heart will assume a more pious, and therefore a more dangerous form.

As Satan transforms himself into an angel of light, so the sin of unbelief will often come in the garb of the most profound humility. It will, say, "I am too great a sinner for CHRIST to pardon me."

This is a sham humility, and has its origin in an "**evil heart of unbelief departing from the living God.**"

Suppose that the Mayor of this city was to issue a proclamation, calling upon all the destitute poor of the place, to come to his office, and they would get bread freely, "**without money and without price.**"

But suppose on that very day, in passing along the street, that I see a man weeping bitterly, who, upon my asking him the cause of his distress, informs me he is in a starving state, I point him to the proclamation, and show him the office where he can get immediate relief. But he says, "I am too hungry to get anything; the proclamation cannot mean those who are so hungry as I am!"

Why, we would think the man was mad if we heard him speak in this style. We would tell him that his hunger and destitution formed his only qualification for coming.

And this is what the Spirit seeks to impress upon the mind of the awakened sinner. He tells him that his sins which he is making a reason for staying away from CHRIST are his only qualifications for coming to him.

An awakened sinner was once bewailing his sins in the presence of Lady Huntington, and at last in the bitterness of his soul cried out, "I am lost."

"I am glad to hear it," said the pious lady.

"What," said he, "glad to hear that I am lost?"

"Yes," was the reply, "for JESUS came to seek and to save that which, was lost."

The Holy Spirit took that word and applied it to Ms heart; he saw that the cause of his despondency was unbelief; and he there and then received CHRIST by faith, "**and went on his way rejoicing.**"

Another reason why the Spirit seeks to convince of unbelief is, that this is the damning sin, and the cause of every other sin.

Why is this man a swearer, a drunkard, a Sabbath-breaker, or an open transgressor of the law of GOD? It is because he has not believed with the heart on the Son of GOD?

The moment the soul so believes, "**faith works by love, and purifies the heart.**" The Spirit of GOD does not seek to induce the sinner to cut off this outward sin, and another outward sin, leaving the great root of all sin in the heart untouched.

This would be like a man who wanted to cut down a tree and would begin with his knife at the top branches and so work his way down, instead of laying the axe to the root of the tree at once.

The Spirit lays the axe of CHRIST's truth to the root of the tree of unbelief, and at once the man becomes "**a new creature in Christ Jesus.**"

The principle of love to him who died for him becomes the controlling and impelling motive. He works, not for life, but because he has life. Heaven is not merely before him, it is within him.

Remember then, my reader, that whatever may be your convictions and your terrors; whatever may be the number of your prayers and tears, and good resolutions, until you come to Jesus and cast yourself wholly on him, you are resisting the Spirit, you are in a state of unbelief, and exposed, at any moment, to be called into the presence of that GOD who has pronounced such a fearful sentence against this sin.

"Dwell Spirit in our hearts,  
Our minds from bondage free;  
Then shall we know, and praise  
The Father, Son, and Thee."

~ end of chapter 4 ~

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