

GLAD TIDINGS, or

Believe And Live

by

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CHAPTER ONE

GOOD TIDINGS

THERE is much misunderstanding in the minds of many in regard to the word "*Gospel*."

Some speak of every thing which they hear preached from the Bible under this general appellation.

"Whether the minister be preaching on the being of a GOD, the Immortality of the soul, or on the moral duties which arise from our social relationships, it is all, by such persons, called preaching the Gospel. Some time ago we heard a minister preach on the subject of prayer. It was a faithful and powerful sermon. It lifted the soul up to GOD, and made many a hearer say "It is good to be here."

At the close of the services we heard one of the hearers say to another, "That was a fine Gospel sermon."

Now the fact is there was not one word of Gospel in it.

A man may preach a whole year, or for that part, a whole lifetime, and preach truth too, and yet not preach the Gospel.

The celebrated Andrew Fuller once heard a young brother preach a sermon which might be called eloquent and learned.

"As far as it went!" said the preacher.

"Yes," said Fuller, "as far as it went, for CHRIST was not preached."

"But CHRIST was not in the text," replied the young man.

"My brother," said Fuller, "there are no by-lanes in this country which do not lead up to the King's highway."

All the lines of truth center in JESUS, and that is a poor dry morsel of a sermon that does not contain enough of the Gospel, to lead any inquiring soul present, to pardon and peace.

We greatly admire the sentiment of one of the ancient Fathers: "Were the highest heavens my pulpit, and the whole hosts of the redeemed my audience, and eternity my day, JESUS alone would be my text."

The Gospel means "*good news*," and is a proclamation from the GOD of heaven to His guilty creatures on earth, that for the sake of what JESUS has done, he will pardon all who trust in His faithful work, and receive them as warmly as if they had never sinned at all.

It comes to tell of a way by which we can come to GOD as joyfully as Adam could before he fell. GOD's Fatherly voice sounds to us from the heavens, saying, "**This is my beloved Son in whom I am well pleased.**" The good news is in that sentence. Observe, the voice from heaven did not say, with whom I am well pleased, though that is true. Neither does it say for whom I am well pleased, though that is also true. But it says "**in whom I am well pleased.**"

It is only when we see GOD in CHRIST JESUS that we can see a well-pleased GOD. In that one sentence, GOD himself preached the Gospel to that awe-struck throng which stood upon the banks of Jordan; and through them to all the ends of the earth.

If we approach GOD out of CHRIST, He is a consuming fire. Let the best man that ever lived come before GOD with the best action he ever performed, and out of CHRIST GOD cannot be well pleased with him. His best performances are in GOD's pure eyes corrupted to the very core by sin.

But let the vilest sinner come to GOD in CHRIST, and there is lifted up upon Him a reconciled countenance, the smile of approval beams upon His soul with the very joy of heaven, and lifting up his eyes to the face of the Judge, he exclaims "**Abba, Father.**"

Indeed a holy and a just GOD could bestow upon guilty man no favor, either temporal or spiritual, except through the worthiness of His Son.

A person once said "how am I to know that JESUS died for me?

The reply was, "Do you acknowledge that you have been all your life a sinner?" "I do."

"And do you believe that the desert of sin is the wrath and curse of GOD?" "Yes."

"Why then is it that you have all your life long been getting nothing from GOD's hand but blessings?"

This enquirer saw at once that the very sparing forbearance of GOD that had permitted him to live, and the goodness of GOD that strewed his pathway with blessings, could only come to him through the death of JESUS.

Suppose, my reader, that a friend comes into your house to-day and says, "I have good news for you," you would understand by that, that he had something to tell you that would make you happy.

And if after he has made his statement you are not any happier than before, one of two things must be the case, either your friend was mistaken as to the nature of the intelligence, and it was not calculated to make you happy; or else you did not believe what he said.

Now when GOD sends the Gospel to us He says it is good news, that is, something intended to make us happy; and if after we have heard it we are not made happy by it, either GOD calls that good news which is not so, or we have not believed his word. Yes, the only reason, why you, my reader, are not now rejoicing in the forgiving love of GOD, is that you have not believed his testimony concerning his Son. You can believe your fellow men when they say they have good news for you; you can take up the newspaper, with a face beaming with expectation, when you are told there is good news for you in it; and yet your neglected Bible lies in your houses containing something calculated and intended to make you unspeakably happy; and you will not believe it.

O, it is matter of vastest difficulty to get men to believe that the whole work of their salvation is finished already!

They will acknowledge that the favor of GOD is a precious thing; they will speak of making their peace with GOD; and hope that he will be reconciled to them. But tell them of a love that has already made the peace; tell them of a grace that has already finished the salvation; tell them of a goodness so abundant and overflowing that it has absolutely left them nothing to do, but to believe that all is done; and you seem to them as one who mocks.

"Whenever they think of becoming serious, of cultivating good feelings, of breaking off their outward sins, and of prayer, they think of things that are to qualify them for coming to JESUS, and that will make GOD pleased with them; forgetting that until they go to JESUS through faith, and come to GOD for acceptance through the righteousness of his Son, they have not taken the very first step in true religion.

Self-righteousness, in some form or other, is the universal sin of man.

Wherever man is found to exist, it reigns supreme in the unrenewed heart. The moment the sinner begins to think or speak on religion, this evil shows itself. With the light of the Gospel blazing around him, with Calvary's solemn scenes portrayed in blood before him; he yet feels as if he must be accepted by GOD on the ground of some good prayer, some good feelings, or some good deeds performed by himself.

Now the best obedience that man can render in his fallen state, is imperfect. And an imperfect obedience is just a sinful obedience a wicked obedience.

Now if GOD were to accept men on the ground of such obedience, it would be virtually declaring that his law had been too strict, had been wrong. From that moment his holy law would be impeached, would lose its power among all intelligent beings, and its holy authority would be forever gone.

Let the sinner start for heaven on the ground of his own imperfect righteousness, and he can only get there by trampling, at every step, upon the holy law of the GOD of heaven.

And allowing him at last to get there on the ground of his own imperfect obedience, his presence would strike terror into every holy heart in heaven. The songs of that holy place would die away in groans. Its inhabitants would feel that all protection was gone, all confidence gone if GOD's perfect law was gone. How then can the sinner hope for salvation in a way that would swallow up heaven itself in the misery of hell.

Were GOD to accept the sinner on the ground of his own righteousness:

- It would be declaring the death of his own Son unnecessary.
- It would be saying that it had been in vain that the blood of JESUS was shed.
- It would be to declare the atonement a piece of folly, nay, of absolute wickedness.

The very fact that GOD's own Son had to die, shows that nothing but a perfect righteousness would do, a righteousness so perfect that GOD's pure eye cannot see a single flaw in it. It shows that we needed a righteousness no less than Divine, and here it is provided in CHRIST crucified.

Sinner! abandon at once the vain attempt to make a covering for yourself, by patching together the fig-leaves of your own works; for to you in GOD's great name we proclaim the Gospel's joyful sound a righteousness unto all, and upon all, who believe.

My dear reader, if you are ever saved at all you must be saved by simple faith in CHRIST's work.

We know that the natural heart hates this doctrine, and that:

- It contradicts all man's preconceived notions of religion.
- It lays pride in the dust and leaves the soul no room for boasting.

Take the holiest man now living, and the vilest sinner that treads GOD's earth, and it is faith in the merits of JESUS that has made the difference.

Suppose we had been in the city of Philippi that night when the jailor was converted. It is the dark, midnight hour, and the city is wrapped in silence and gloom.

We stand opposite to a gloomy looking building, and as we gaze upon it through the darkness, it begins to heave to and fro as if rocked in the grasp of an earthquake. Hark! A voice of deep human agony breaks upon our ear.

It is the voice of the jailor himself, smitten by the bolt of divine truth and his words are, "what shall I do to be saved?" And what are the directions which the Apostles gave him?

- Do they tell him he must pray?
- Do they tell him that he must get deeper feeling?
- Do they tell him that he needs more convictions of his sinful state?
- Do they tell him that he must do something to prepare himself for coming to JESUS?

No such directions do we find coming from the lips of these heaven inspired men; though alas! there are not wanting in our day, professed ministers of the Gospel who would give just such instruction.

An enquirer was urged some time ago to go to the Lord's supper, by a minister.

"How can I when I have no hope in CHRIST?" was the reply.

"O come to the communion and you will feel better," said the minister.

How beautifully does the Apostle's words contrast with this. **"Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ and thou shalt be saved."**

And what did the jailor do? Did he say "that is too easy a way of being saved, it is not possible that so vile a man as I am could be saved in that way?"

No! at once he believed in the Son of GOD as his Saviour, and his heart was brimming over with joy.

An old writer says, there are but three steps to heaven "out of self, into CHRIST, and into glory."

If you are out of CHRIST, whatever may be the outward morality of your conduct, you are condemned already living under the curse of the law, and the bolt of GOD's wrath may at any moment strike you. There is but one safe spot for you in the whole universe, and that is as a humble believer at the cross of CHRIST.

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