

GLAD TIDINGS, or

Believe And Live

by

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CHAPTER FIVE

SAVING FAITH

FAITH in Jesus is essential to eternal life. There are many important truths in the Bible that a man can be saved without knowing. He may get to heaven without being a Presbyterian, a Methodist, or a Baptist, but heaven's gates will be forever barred against him, if he dies without faith in Jesus.

This is not a way of being saved, it is the way. All that makes heaven happy, all that makes hell miserable, depends on our reception or rejection of this truth.

A man may say he will have nothing to do with this truth, but it will have something to do with him. He may assume the position of a proud neutrality, but Jesus declares such neutrality impossible. **"He that is not with me is against me."**

The death of JESUS throws the soul of man, in spite of himself, upon a new probation. It is his only hope, his only way of escape from the ruin in which he is involved. The Gospel meets him as he lands upon the shores of time, and it must prove to him the Saviour of life or of death. It will leave him amid the unsullied brightness of heaven, or amid the hopeless misery of the lost.

In the Bible things are made plain just in proportion as they are of vital importance.

Things deeply mysterious and hard to be understood, are to be found in that holy Book: but the plan of salvation is not one of them. Indeed, it is so simple and plain, that thousands are stumbling to hell over its very simplicity. Instead of believing in the death of the Son of GOD, as a ground of justification and eternal life, they, are looking for some mysterious influence to come down from heaven, operating upon them like an electrical shock, and filling them with unspeakable rapture.

They are waiting for some wonderful light to break in upon their dark minds, and some mysterious voice to tell them that they are forgiven.

Now faith in JESUS is, not merely to believe that he is the Son of GOD; that he has died to save sinners; that he has made a perfect atonement for the guilty; that he is able and willing to save all who come unto him; and that there is efficiency in his blood to cleanse from all sin.

A man may believe all this, just as the devil believes it all, and yet remain unsaved. It may only be the assent of the intellect to perceived truth. The mind maybe convinced of the creditability of GOD's testimony, and yet that testimony exert no saving influence on the heart.

But when a man really comes to JESUS, he casts himself upon his merits as a poor, lost, undone sinner; conscious that he can do nothing to save himself, or to improve his condition before him; and trusting wholly to his work on the cross for his acceptance with the Father.

True faith makes a close, personal matter of the death of JESUS.

- It says, "He died not only for sinners but for me, the chief of sinners."
- It says, "In myself I am nothing, but JESUS died for my sins; and through his righteousness I know I am accepted."
- It takes GOD at his word.
- It sets before its eyes the awful scene on Calvary, the sinking head, the gushing blood, the open wounds, the dying words of the Son of GOD;
- It remembers that with that Son and his work the Father is well pleased, and through his finished work can be "**just and yet the justifier of the ungodly.**"

The man who thus believes in JESUS knows he is forgiven; not because he has been told it in a dream, nor because it has been whispered to his soul by some mysterious voice, nor flashed upon his mind by some sudden impression; but simply because GOD says it.

To trust to my own impressions and feelings and emotions is sheer fanaticism; but to trust to the testimony of GOD concerning his Son, is highly rational. It is to be able to give a reason of the hope that is in us. And surely there can be no firmer foundation upon which an immortal soul can rest its hopes than the word of that GOD who cannot lie.

Suppose you had offended some dear friend by your bad conduct, and that the sense of that friend's displeasure had become very grievous to you a burden you could no longer bear. At last you go to that friend, confess your fault and ask his forgiveness; and he says, "I freely forgive you." In this case, how could you know you were really forgiven? How could you have an assurance that he was no longer displeased with you?

Would it be by waiting for some inward impression, or some outward voice or some startling light? No; it would be by simply believing your friend's word.

So it is with faith in JESUS; it rests entirely upon the merits of CHRIST's precious blood, and knows that pardon has been bestowed, because GOD has said, "**He that believeth shall be saved.**"

No angel has come from heaven to tell him that his sins have been blotted out, and that his name is now entered in the Lamb's book of life; but he rests upon a testimony better than that of all the angels in heaven, even the testimony of the "Faithful true Witness."

"He that hath received his testimony hath set to his seal that God is true."

We know what it is to put our name and seal to a written document. It is to ratify it, and declare our determination to abide by its contents. So faith rests sweetly upon the work of CHRIST and upon the word of GOD, and knows that there is to be found peace and assurance forever.

The great mistake that many make when inquiring after salvation is, to refuse to come as they are to JESUS. They think that they must wait for deeper conviction, for more feeling, for more love to CHRIST before they can come to him. Hence they keep looking at their own hearts to see if any good feeling is springing up there, which might form a ground of encouragement that they were becoming more fit for going to CHRIST.

The Bible says, "**Blessed are the people who know the joyful sound.**"

That joyful sound comes only from Calvary. It comes from the pale lips of JESUS, quivering in death, as he says, "**It is finished.**"

But the awakened sinner listens at the door of his heart, to hear the joyful sound come from there. But from there it never will come. There is in that heart no good thing, and no voice but that of condemnation will ever come from it.

Take a Scriptural illustration.

The children of Israel had fiery flying serpents sent among them, the sting of which was deadly. The people were dying, on the right hand and on the left. GOD commanded a brazen serpent to be lifted up in sight of the perishing, assuring them that whosoever looked in faith would be instantly cured.

Here is a man who has been wounded, and is in a dying state.

His friends have taken him out in sight of the saving object, and urge and entreat him to look and be saved. Instead, however, of, looking at the brazen serpent, he keeps looking at his wound. He keeps telling of its painfulness, of the increase of bad symptoms, and, bitterly bewailing his miserable state.

Would his looking at, and talking about his malady save him?

No; he would die under the very shadow of the object of salvation; not because there was no saving power in it, but because he would not do what GOD commanded, look at the brazen serpent, instead of at himself.

Dear reader, JESUS says, **"Look unto me, and be ye saved."**

But you say, "I cannot go to JESUS with such a hard heart. I have too little feeling, and must wait till I can get more conviction of sin."

All this arises from the pride and self-righteousness of your heart. Suppose that you could feel that your heart was growing better, that you had more feeling, and that upon making this discovery, that you were to begin to rejoice; what would this be but rejoicing in yourself instead of in CHRIST. It would only be making a savior of your feelings, your emotions, your penitence, instead of the heaven appointed Saviour.

And this is one great reason why the religion of many professors of the present day is so fitful and unreliable. They live by feeling, and our feelings are as changeable as the veering winds. Hence no dependence can be placed in such professors.

They are either in the raptures of excitement or sunk down into the stupor of indifference.

When they feel well they will do well.

Their religion is not like the peaceful river, rolling calmly on, day after day the same, but it is like the mountain torrent, caused by heavy rain that comes foaming madly down, but in the dry season, when it is most wanted, is nowhere to be found. It is not like the steady light of the sun, brighter and brigh-ter to the perfect day; but it is like the glare of the lightning, which, on a dark night dazzles your eyes with the sudden illumination of earth and skies, and then leaves you to plod on in greater darkness than before.

True faith trusts in JESUS alone, and as he is **"the same yesterday, to-day, and forever,"** its confidence is not destroyed by change of feeling. On that terrible night, when **"the angel of death spread his wings on the blast,"** and breathed destruction upon the first born in the Egyptian families, the Israelites were saved by simply obeying the Word of the Lord, and sprinkling the doorposts with blood.

They did not need to bar or barricade their doors to keep the destroyer out. It was not necessary to sit up all night clasping the first born in their arms, or sending up fervent prayers that he might be spared to them.

No; if they believed the Word of the Lord, and did what that Word required, they could go to bed and sleep calmly and sweetly under the protection of blood.

So with the believer in JESUS; he is under the protection of the precious blood of CHRIST, and he knows that his soul is safe in the keeping of infinite love.

If the Israelite's faith in GOD's word, and in the protecting power of the blood, began to fail, he would at once be thrown into an agony of fear and doubt; and as the critical hour approached, and as he heard the first wild despairing cry from the home of his neighbor that the destroyer had visited, he would be apt to resort to all kinds of expedients of his own devising, for the protection of the loved one. If he had steady faith, however, in GOD's remedy, no doubt would disturb the calm repose of his soul.

An old writer says, "Faith will be staggered even by loose stones in the way, if we look man-ward; if we look Godward, faith will not be staggered even by inaccessible mountains stretching across and obstructing apparently our onward progress. '**go forward**,' is the voice from heaven; and faith obeying, finds the mountains before it flat as plains.

How strong is faith when it comes fresh '**from the fountain of redeeming love!**'"

Another old writer says, "For every one look you give at your own evil heart, give fifty at CHRIST."

This waiting for joy and peace, and love to spring up in our hearts before we believe in JESUS, is as unphilosophical as it is unscriptural.

We cannot produce emotions by trying to feel. Suppose I were to say, "I will now begin and feel sorry;" I could not feel sorry by mere trying. But let me fix my mind upon some sorrowful subject, on my mother on her death-bed, with her pale and quivering lips, giving me her dying charge; and the emotion of sorrow will spring up without my trying to produce it. If I say, "I will now begin and feel joyful," I cannot produce that emotion by any direct effort. But let me fix my mind upon some joyful fact, and at once my heart will be filled with real gladness.

So let the sinner look to JESUS, as he utters the deep death groan that rends his bleeding heart; and let him believe that all this suffering, all this boundless love was for him, and as one says, "he must be more or less than a man," if it does not melt him down into penitence and love.

Hence the Bible tells us that "**faith worketh by love and purifies the heart.**"

To expect good emotions before faith in JESUS, is to expect the effect before the cause.

"Let no sense of guilt prevent you,
Nor of fitness fondly dream;
All the fitness he requireth
Is to feel your need of him."

~ end of chapter 5 ~

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