

GLAD TIDINGS, or

Believe And Live

by

Robert Boyd, D. D.,
Pastor of Wabash Avenue Baptist Church, Chicago

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CHAPTER SIX

OBSCURING CLOUDS

IT has been the experience of all who have had the happiness to be taught in the school of CHRIST, that they have had more difficulty in unlearning than in learning.

The prejudices engendered by an erroneous religious training; the opinions of men of high standing, and of eminent piety; the writings of great men, with whose fame the world has resounded; a blind attachment to the church of our fathers, however far that church may be from the truth; and a whole bundle of preconceived notions in regard to religion, which have no foundation in the Bible; these all stand in our way, as mountain barriers to the reception of "**the truth as it is in Jesus.**"

It is truly melancholy to think of the influence that prejudice will exert on the human mind on the subject, of all others the most important, salvation.

It spreads the darkness of midnight over the understanding, twists and distorts all our modes of reasoning and thinking, and leaves its own horrid impress upon all our conclusions.

It leads men to read the Word of GOD, not to discover truth for themselves, but to find something to sustain their own favorite theories.

These theories are often so absurd, that the letting in of a little common sense upon them, would be enough to dispel them, as the mist is dispelled by the rising glories of the sun.

It has been truly said, that you cannot reason a man out of a thing that he has never been reasoned into; and the only cure for this unhappy state of mind is to come to the Bible as to the foundation of truth, saying, "Lord, what I know not teach thou me."

When the voice of prejudice exclaimed, "**Can any good thing come out of Nazareth,**" the happy convert who had just found the Saviour himself, and whose soul was glowing with desire for the salvation of his friend, had too much wisdom to sit down and enter into an argument about the matter. Had he done so he would in all probability have lost his temper, and have done more- harm than good; but there was holy power in the kind reply, "**Come and see.**"

There is the greatest difference among men as to the reception of gospel truth.

Some receive the truth the first time they hear it. With the rapidity of lightning, conviction of their lost state flashes upon their minds, and at once they go to JESUS for pardon. They can tell the day and the very hour when they were converted. A large portion of the conversions recorded in the New Testament are of this character.

But with many who are truly the Lord's children, it is quite different. The light of the gospel broke upon their minds gradually as the, dawning of the day. They can tell of no sudden terrors, no appalling alarms, no powerful convictions, hurrying them on to the verge of despair, and shaking their souls over the fiery gulf.

Said one, "The Lord awoke me as the mother awakes her babe with a kiss."

Neither can such persons tell much of great raptures and ecstatic joys in their conversion. That the truth as it is in JESUS, in its full orb'd grandeur has arisen upon their souls, there can be no doubt. That CHRIST is unspeakably precious to their souls they know, and there is no hesitation in the tone with which they say, "**One thing I know, that whereas I was blind I now see;**" yet they cannot fix the very day when this great change took place.

They often write bitter things against themselves on this account, and fear that they have never been converted at all. But let such remember that to be in CHRIST is the essential thing - the way in which we have reached that place of safety is of little moment.

When the floodgates of heaven were opened, and a wild deluge was about to sweep the globe of its guilty inhabitants, to be in the Ark was to be safe, whether the Ark had been reached by a few rapid bounds, or by slow and halting steps. So to be able to say, "**I have found him whom my soul loveth,**" is of vastly more importance than to be able to relate an experience full of thrilling alternations of feeling, and with dates as correct as the revolutions of the earth.

One great reason why many are kept from accepting salvation by faith in JESUS is, preconceived and erroneous opinions as to what religion truly is. They have arranged in their minds what they must do, and how they must feel, if they ever become Christians. They have marked out a process in their own minds through which they suppose they must go, a process composed of weeks or months of gloom and terror of soul, of bitter tears and agonizing prayers, followed by a sudden gush of joy; the whole process being as distinctly marked as the various stages of an intermittent fever.

They think that when all these emotions have been experienced, GOD will be changed in his feelings towards them, that then his anger will be turned away from them, and that in consideration of the great change that has taken place upon them, he will forgive their past offences and love them freely.

Tell them that all this attempt to change GOD, and to make themselves more acceptable to him by efforts .of their own, is not only foolishness, but wickedness; that it is repudiating GOD's plan of saving them, and daring to substitute one of their own; that no change needs to be effected in GOD, He having already so loved them as to give His Son to die for them; that there is now absolutely nothing between them and pardon and justification, but to believe in the perfect satisfaction which JESUS has made to a broken and an insulted law; tell them all this, I say, and you do great violence to the notions and feelings, that have been made strong by the culture and indulgence of years.

The state of mind described, is well illustrated by the case of Naaman, the Syrian, (see II Kings 5).

This man had a dangerous and loathsome disease, which cast a dark shadow over his life. The good news reached his ears that there was a man of GOD in the land of Israel who could cure him; and he at once started upon his journey, surrounded with all that pomp and grandeur, which his wealth enabled him to command. As he draws near to the residence of the man of GOD, he arranges in his own mind the whole method of his cure.

He already in imagination sees the prophet hastening to meet him, and moving his hand over the diseased place, lift up his eyes to heaven and invoke the Almighty aid, when suddenly his whole frame thrills under the consciousness of a perfect cure

This was Naaman's plan, but it was not GOD's.

The simple message is sent to him, "**Go and wash in Jordan seven times, and thou shalt be clean.**"

What a severe blow to the man's preconceived notions! The scowl of displeasure is on his brow, and indignation is in his heart, because GOD will not carry out his prepared program. GOD's way of cure was too simple a way, and too humbling to his pride. But at last, through the persuasions of love, he went and did what the Lord commanded, and at once he was made whole.

So my dear reader, cast away your own notions and prejudices; cast from you with a noble scorn the self-righteous pride that would lead you to question the wisdom of GOD's way of saving you; and this hour salvation shall come to thy heart.

See that poor diseased woman in the days of our Lord, pressing her way through the crowd that she may touch the hem of his garment. See how pale and weak and helpless she is, in herself. The crowd, surging and swaying to and fro, sometimes carry her far from the object of her hope.

But she does not give up. She does not say what can such a poor, weak, invalid as I am do? She does not sit down and philosophize about the likelihood of a mere touch of the hem of the Lord's garment doing her any good. She presses her way forward, and at last her trembling hand just touches his garment, and at once her bent and shriveled form expands into health and vigor.

Our Lord instantly looked round, and enquired who had touched Him. There were many crowding and pressing upon Him, but he knew that one believing soul, in particular, had touched him with the hand of faith. He felt that healing power had gone forth from Him to some believing heart.

Reader, that blessed Saviour is near you while you are reading these lines.

You need not ascend to the heights to bring him clown nor descend into the depths to bring him up; you need not go to the uttermost ends of the earth in pursuit of him; you need not wait to find him at protracted meetings, or penitent seats, though many have found him there. He is nigh you this moment, yea in your heart, if you but believe his word. There is but the veil of unbelief between you and him this moment, and let that be torn away and the peace of heaven will pervade your heart as you cry, "**My Lord and my God!**"

It not infrequently happens, that after the plan of salvation has been presented in the plainest way, we are met by the assertion, "I cannot believe."

Now this is an assertion which plainly contradicts your Maker to his face. The Lord who made you must know what you can, and what you cannot do; and the very fact that he commands you to believe, and threatens you with eternal punishment for not believing is the highest evidence that you can do it.

JESUS says, "**Ye will not come unto me that ye might have life,**" and you have the boldness to say to that Saviour, "I cannot come unto thee."

Suppose for example that a man has insulted his best friend, and when urged to go and confess his fault and ask his friend's forgiveness, he says, "I cannot do it." What does he mean by that "cannot?" Does he mean that his limbs have become paralyzed so that he cannot go to his friend's house? No. Does he mean that he has lost the power of speech, so that he cannot ask the injured man's forgiveness? No.

The meaning of his "cannot," is, that he has such an obstinate, bad temper that he will not do it. The perverse pride of his heart is such, that he will not do what the voice of GOD above him, and the voice of conscience within him, alike declare to be his imperative duty.

It is so with the sinner. He is going about with a great deal of zeal to establish for himself a righteousness, but he will not submit himself to the righteousness of CHRIST.

He thinks himself very humble, very brokenhearted and contrite; he declares his willingness to do any thing required of him.

Ask him to stand up in public meeting and express his desire for the prayers of GOD's people, and he will promptly do it. Ask him to attend inquiry meeting, and he will do that. Ask him to go home and pray and read his Bible, and his compliance is prompt; but there is one thing he will not do. He will not do the very first thing that his GOD requires of him, that is to believe in JESUS.

He says he has repented of sin, and declares his readiness to give up every sin; but the very first sin the Spirit points out he refuses to abandon, that is the sin of unbelief.

He is like a man who has a broken limb. The physician is called in, and the man professes to be willing that his medical attendant should handle the limb in whatever way may be necessary. The hand of skill passes along the limb, pressing here and there, till at last it rests upon the injured part, when the patient starts, and exclaims, "Ah, Doctor, you must not touch there!"

"Yes, but," says the doctor, "that is the very place to be touched, and if you will not let me touch that, there is no use of my staying here."

So, sinner, the Spirit of GOD pours a whole flood of light on the sin of unbelief, and points that out as the murderer of your soul; and you not only refuse to give it up, but speak as if you could not give it up, and as if your GOD had laid you under the absolute necessity of calling him a liar!

Oh! do you not see that there is an unfathomed depth of pride in your heart that is keeping you from JESUS? If you are willing to be saved, the Saviour is willing, and what then, is to hinder the lost from being found? No more precious blood was shed for John, or for Peter, or for Paul, than has been shed for you, and if ever you are saved at all, you must be saved as they were, by the application of that blood to your own soul by faith.

There is no reason on GOD's part why you should not this moment be saved. Any barriers that remain are of your own putting up, and keeping up. Throw open the door of your heart and invite the blessed Lord to come in.

Ye ransomed of JESUS, Come sing of his love,
He stooped down to raise us To mansions above:
The Lord on him our transgressions did lay,
And he bore the huge burden, and bore it away."

~ end of chapter 6 ~

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