

GLAD TIDINGS, or

Believe And Live

by

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

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CHAPTER NINE

THE THIRSTY INVITED

"Ho, every one that thirsteth, come ye lo the waters, and he that hath no money; come ye, buy and eat; yea, come, buy wine and milk without money and without price."

Dear reader, if you were traveling along a public highway, and were to hear a loud "**Ho!**" uttered behind you, there are three questions that would naturally occur to your mind.

- First, who speaks?
- Secondly, who is spoken to?
- Thirdly, what is spoken about?

Now, we are traveling to eternity, and we have listened to the solemn call contained in the above text. Let me direct your attention to these three questions.

"Who speaks? It is the great GOD of heaven and earth who thus addresses us.

That GOD who guides the planets in their courses, and regulates the wanderings of the flaming comet; who sustains all Being; from the worm that crawls beneath our feet, to the angel who rolls his deathless song through the courts of heaven; whose awful voice is alike heard in the sighing of the zephyr, and in the thunder which rolls in terrific majesty across the heavens; condescends to speak to guilty sinners like us. let us listen with profound awe, for his very "forgiveness is to be feared."

When we open the pages of the Bible, or go to the house of GOD, we are apt to feel as if we only heard man speak to us. The result is that we sit in judgment upon the Word, instead of permitting the Word to sit in judgment upon us.

Had we stood on the banks of the Jordan, on the occasion of our Lord's baptism, and had we heard the voice of GOD directly addressing us from the heavens, we think that we would have felt it peculiarly solemn.

If while sitting in our own home we were to see a hand start out before us, and write a direct, personal appeal to us on the wall, we think we could never forget it. But in reality there is nothing more solemn in GOD's speaking to us in an audible voice from heaven, or in GOD writing a message upon the wall, than there is in GOD writing it in His Word, and causing the Divine Spirit to point at our hearts, saying, "**Thou art the man.**"

But the fact is that we have got so accustomed to hearing and handling the Word of GOD from our youth, that we fail to realize that it truly is GOD speaking to us. This tendency to become hardened and indifferent under the very abundance of our religious privileges, is a sad sign of the deep depravity of our hearts.

A stranger visiting Niagara Falls for the first time, is thrilled with awe, and trembles at the sound of nature's most majestic voice, as "**deep calleth unto deep;**" but the people who have lived beside the mighty cataract all their days are apt to regard it with indifference and scarcely heed the tones of its powerful voice.

So have we seen many an outcast wanderer, who had not before entered the house of GOD for many years, fall down into broken-hearted contrition under the first sermon he heard, while gospel hardened sinners sit with utter carelessness under the rebukes of the Almighty. Reader, that holy Bible in your home is an awful visitor.

From week to week, the whole year round, it utters GOD's voice to you. Its presence in your household is one of the most solemn events of your life. By it you are to be judged on the last day, and above the ashes of a consumed world, that voice you now little regard, will pronounce your unchangeable doom.

We come to the next question, who is spoken to? GOD here addresses the whole world, and yet he is not speaking to the inhabitants of the world collectively but individually.

He is speaking to us one by one, as we pass before him, in the words, "**Ho, everyone**"

There is a beautiful propriety in this, when we remember that men are to be judged individually. It was so when man first sinned. Adam was first called up and judged, then Eve next, and then Satan.

And in the great day of final account every man is to receive according to the deeds done in his body, and all will find their minutest affairs investigated, as if they alone had occupied the undivided attention of the Judge.

Whenever men get spiritual profit under the preaching of the gospel, it is when they are made to feel that the Word is a personal appeal to themselves.

As long as the sinner can, hide himself in the multitude, and talk about how the preacher spoke to the people, as if it were a matter of no concern to him, the Word is rather a savor of death than of life to his soul; but when the pulpit becomes to him as a judgment seat; when his long forgotten sins are all brought up in review; when he is made to forget the surrounding multitude in the deep sense of his own individual responsibility to GOD; when he is prepared to take the whole guilt of his sins upon himself, and thus to justify GOD and to condemn himself; when he no longer wishes to have "**smooth things**" prophesied to him, but places himself under the most searching and faithful ministry he can find, opening his heart to the rebukes of the Lord, and saying, "**Search me, and try me, and see what wicked way there is in me;**" then, and not till then is the soul in a state to give a hearty welcome to CHRIST's proclamation of love, that love which thrills the heart with all the power of a personal appeal, "**unto you is the word of this salvation sent.**"

GOD is here speaking to the world as at a distance from Him. Do you ask how I know this? I answer, I know it by the use of the word "**Ho.**"

We never cry "**Ho**" to one who is standing near us, but to those who are distant, and whose attention we wish to secure. Now this distance of the sinner from his GOD, is not a local or a geographical one. In that sense he is every moment near GOD. His future Judge "**is about his bed, and about his path, and spies out all his ways.**"

In company or in solitude, when plunging into the mad scenes of dissipation, or devoured by the iron tooth of remorse in secret, that eye that darts through creation at a glance is fixed upon him. And it is this thought that troubles him and dashes many an untasted cup of pleasure from his lips.

Wretched man! He cannot even flee from himself much less from his GOD.

The sinner's distance from his GOD is a spiritual one. It is that state of mind in which the sinner makes a desperate effort to forget GOD; and so far succeeds that though surrounded by GOD, though spared by His grace, and fed by His Providence, GOD is not in all his thoughts, It is that state of mind in which he can live a practical atheist in a world full of GOD.

He forms plans of happiness, but GOD is not in any of them. He enters upon projects that will not bear a glance of GOD's holy eye, and nothing makes him more uneasy than any allusion to the fact that the HOLY ONE is near. Hence, he speaks a great deal of the order of nature, and of the works of nature, and of the laws of nature; and has exalted over the world a certain deity called chance.

Poor wanderer, he is living in the "**far country,**" self-exiled from all that can make life worth possessing, and yet glorying in his shame.

Reader, GOD is speaker to you now.

This is His acceptable time for speaking words to you, by which you may be saved. Do not refuse to listen to Him now, nor have the daring hardihood to bid the Almighty wait your convenience.

Now we know He waits to be gracious, but to-morrow may be too late forever! At any moment life's pendulum may cease its vibrations and stand still; the lamp of life may flicker and go out, and leave you to fill eternity with the bitter lamentation, "**The harvest is past, the summer is ended, and I am not saved.**"

A late writer, when making an appeal to sinners, uses the following illustration:

"On a part of the British coast where beetling cliffs, from three to five hundred feet in height, overhang the ocean, some individuals during a certain season of the year, obtain a solitary livelihood by collecting the eggs of rock-birds, and gathering samphire. The way in which they pursue this hazardous calling is as follows: The man drives an iron crowbar securely into the ground, about a yard from the edge of the precipice. To that crowbar he makes fast a rope, of which he then lays hold. He next slides gently over the cliff, and lowers himself till he reaches the ledges and crags, where he expects to find the object of his pursuit. To gain these places is often a difficult task; and when they fall within the perpendicular the only method of accomplishing it is for the adventurer to swing in the air, till by a dexterous management he can so balance himself as to reach the spot on which he wishes to descend. A basket, made for the purpose, and strapped between the shoulders, contains the fruit of his labor; and when he has filled the basket, or failed in the attempt, he ascends, hand over hand, to the summit.

On one occasion, a man who was thus employed, in gaining a narrow ledge of rock which was overhung by a higher portion of the cliff, secured his footing, but let go the rope. He at once perceived his peril.

No one could come to his rescue or even hear his cries. The fearful alternative immediately flashed on his mind it was, being starved to death, or dashed to pieces four hundred feet below! On turning round he saw the rope he had quitted, but it was far away. As it swung backwards and forwards, its long vibrations testified the mighty efforts by which he had reached the deplorable predicament in which he stood.

He looked at the rope in agony. He had gazed but a little while when he noticed that every movement was shorter than the one preceding, so that each time it came the nearest, as it was gradually subsiding to a point of rest, it was a little farther off than it had been the time before. He briefly reasoned thus: That rope is my only chance of life; in a little while it will be forever beyond my reach; it is nearer now than it ever will be again; I can but die; here goes!

So saying, he sprang from the cliff, as the rope was next approaching, caught it in his grasp, and went home rejoicing.

In the case of this man every moment's delay was making his case more hopeless.

As he gazed upon that rope he knew it was nearer to him now than it ever would be again. He therefore took the only wise course and at once leaped for the rope.

Dear reader, you stand on the brink of the eternal world, and if out of CHRIST, your peril is extreme. Above you, a GOD, whose law you have broken, whose Son you have insulted, and whose dread curse you have braved. Beneath you the pit of woe opens to receive your soul, made by your rejection of CHRIST, ripe for devouring vengeance.

Behind you is nothing but a moral waste, strewn all over with the wreck of abused privileges, neglected Sabbaths, despised prayers and counsels of pious parents and heaven-sent ministers, and dark traces of your sins. There is not a moment to be lost.

The Lord JESUS lets down within your reach the rope of salvation. The voice of your GOD from heaven is heard urging you to grasp it. Now, now, or it may be forever too late! Angels pause on the wing of love to see what you will do; all heaven is interested in the result; all hell is moved for your destruction; this moment, while your eye is upon these lines, cast yourself in simple trust upon the merits of that Saviour, **"who saves to the very uttermost all that come unto God through him."**

We come now to the third question, What is spoken about?

The whole world is invited to come and accept of salvation, under the figure of water. This is a figure which is very frequently used in the Scriptures, and with a beautiful propriety. JESUS stood on the great day of the Feast and cried, **"If any man thirst let him come unto me and drink."**

Water is essential to our existence, and is therefore appropriately used as an emblem of the salvation that is in CHRIST. Let our fountains of water fail for even a few days; let GOD withhold for a little time the showers that water the earth, and one wild cry of misery would soon go up from the earth's population. Let GOD continue to cut off our supplies of water, and soon our world would become one vast sepulchre.

So salvation, through the death of JESUS, is absolutely essential to the life of the soul.

There are many who think that human nature is not so utterly depraved but that it can restore itself; that there is a little spark of holiness left, a little regenerating principle that only requires to be nurtured and cherished to make man all that his GOD can reasonably require him to be.

This development theory this fancy of man having a little spiritual capital to start with, which, by trading upon it industriously, will make him rich towards GOD, is one which is exceedingly popular in the present day. It builds up the pride of human nature, and allows man to glory in self.

But it is as false as it is dangerous. The Lord says, **"Unless ye eat my flesh and drink my blood, ye have no life in you."**

He does not say that men have a little life, which by good management on their part may be brought to great strength and vigor. No; but He tells us that **"he who believeth on the Son hath everlasting life; and he who believeth not the Son shall not see life; but the wrath of God abideth upon him."**

Without CHRIST, the description that GOD gives of the human soul is, **"dead in trespasses and sins;"** and unless quickened by the grace of GOD it must be forever bound in the chains of the second death.

Another reason why water may be used as a figure for salvation is, its cleansing properties. It is the cleansing element which we use in our homes and upon our persons.

That man's soul is defiled by sin, is not only a doctrine of revelation, but one of universal experience. GOD's holy eye looked down upon our world, and the verdict which He gave as to the state of our race was, **"they are altogether become corrupt."**

For this universal corruption a remedy has been provided in the blood of JESUS, **"which cleanseth from all sin."** But many in the pride of their hearts turn away from GOD's remedy, and propose plans of their own devising.

Some propose education and the general diffusion of knowledge, as the remedy for the sins of the world.

How I would not say one word against education.

Popular ignorance is more to be dreaded than the earthquake, the pestilence, or the famine. The ignorant man, though living amid the refinements of civilization, is still but half a savage. But rest assured that no amount of education can ever purify the heart of man. The first of scholars has often been the first of villains; and men whose splendid intellectual powers have excited the admiration of the world, have been men of gigantic wickedness.

The world is not so badly off for talent as it is for moral purity.

The chemist may be able to analyze the intoxicating cup, and tell of its deadly properties; and the physician may be able to tell of its bad effects upon the human system; and yet both of them may be abandoned drunkards.

The soul of man needs not only to know what is right, but to love what is right.

This nothing but the salvation of CHRIST can impart. It alone can bring with it a double blessing - knowledge in the head, and love in the heart.

As GOD is both light and love, so the Gospel, which comes from Him, enlightens while it purifies.

But water may be used as a figure of CHRIST's salvation, from its freeness.

How free to the whole race, and how abundant the supply! As it rolls past us in the beautiful river, swells and undulates in the magnificent lake, or leaps and dashes in the mountain torrent, how free it is to all!

The pure gift of GOD, it comes to us "**without money and without price.**" So with the salvation that is in the Saviour. As that river of salvation rolls past us, the Lord's own proclamation is, "**Whosoever will, let him take of the water of life FREELY.**"

Young and old, rich and poor, the learned and the ignorant, the bond and the free; all are pressed and plied by the urgency of inviting love to come.

Oh sinner! if you only knew the gift of GOD, and who is speaking to you, you would this moment begin to ask of Him this living water. Wait not to bring a price in your hand, to purchase what is offered to you as a gift; but come in the depth of your soul-poverty, and be enriched with imperishable treasure.

That was an impressive scene, when GOD commanded Moses to strike the rock in the wilderness, and streams of refreshing water gushed forth for the perishing. About a million and a half of human beings were perishing for want of water, and as the hot wind passed over that scorched and burning plain, where ail vegetation was dying, it carried upon its wings the wild cry of human despair.

By the direction of GOD, Moses takes his stand beside the rock in Horeb, and lifts the rod that is in his hand, and strikes the rock three times; when behold! a clear cool, refreshing stream of water gushes forth and rolls away through the camp of Israel.

See the joy that now beams forth from countenances where but a few moments before despair sat enthroned. I see mothers and fathers running with the precious drink to their perishing children, the strong carrying it to their weak and dying neighbors, and shouting the glad tidings in their ears!

Now the Scriptures tell us that the striking of that rock, and the result was a type of CHRIST:

"And did all drink the same spiritual drink; for they drank of that spiritual Rock that followed them, and that Rock was Christ" (I Corinthians 10: 4).

Those beautiful waters that broke out from the rock in Horeb, were free for all the people. They were not intended for one part of the people to the exclusion of the rest.

Suppose, however, that a man had come and taken his stand beside the gushing waters with an empty pitcher in his hand. His eyes are blood-shot, his tongue cleaves to the roof of his mouth, and his whole appearance indicates extreme suffering for want of water; yet instead of drinking and dipping his pitcher full, he stands saying within himself:

"I am a poor creature; I can do nothing of myself; it is true I am perishing for water, but I must wait GOD's good time;" and he actually stands there expecting that in GOD's good time the water will flow up into his pitcher and fill it full. How long do you suppose he would have to wait? Would GOD work another miracle to satisfy his whim, and to indulge his insolence in refusing to use the heaven-appointed means within his reach?

No; we can all see the folly of such conduct in temporal matters; and yet in spiritual things many of my readers may be following a similar course.

The Rock CHRIST JESUS was stricken for you. The waters of salvation gush forth for you.

The Lord's own invitation to you is, **"If any man thirst let him come unto me and drink."**

And yet instead of taking your Saviour at his word, and simply believing on him as all your salvation now, you are waiting for some specially favored time to come and fit you for. going to CHRIST, by making your heart softer and purer than it is now!

That time will never come, and your heart will become Harder, and you will drift away farther from GOD the longer you stay away from JESUS. The only difference between one man and another in GOD's sight, is that one has believed on the Lord JESUS, and the other has not. Here are two men one of them is a child of GOD, a joint heir with CHRIST, a crown of glory in reserve for him, and the favor of GOD now shining upon his path; the other is under the curse of the law; the wrath of GOD abideth upon him, and dying in his present state his soul will be lost as sure as the GOD of truth has spoken.

Now what has made this vast difference?

Simply, that the one has believed in the Lord JESUS, and the other has rejected him.

This alone will make the difference between those on the right hand and those on the left in the day of judgment. And unbelief alone fixes the great gulf between heaven and hell forever!

One came to our Lord, in the days of his flesh, and said, **"What shall I do that I may work the works of God?"** and the reply was, **"This is the work of God, to believe on Him whom He hath sent."**

Not a single step can be taken heavenward till this is done.

I have lately seen an account of a conversation between a Christian gentleman and a young lady, who was deeply anxious about her soul, that will illustrate this point.

She described herself as "uncertain what to do."

"Why are you uncertain what to do?" he asked.

She replied, "I have been coming daily to these meetings for four weeks, and all that time I have felt anxious about my soul, but all I do does not seem to make my case any better."

"What do you try to do?"

"I have striven to convince myself that I am a sinner as I know I am. But though I know it, as a truth, I do not feel about it as I should."

"How would you feel about it if you could?"

"I would have deep conviction."

"What is your present impression about yourself?"

"That I am a great sinner that is all."

"And what would you have more?"

"That is what I do not understand. My next step should be for deeper conviction. But what further can I do?"

"Your mistake is a very common one," he replied.

"Your next step, and only step, is to go to CHRIST, just as you are. Go to Him at once. You can do nothing. Hitherto you have been relying upon yourself. Renounce all this as a dishonor done to CHRIST, as a Saviour, and go to Him for all the help you need hope for, or desire."

"Oh!" said she, as if a new light had dawned upon her mind, "is that my next step?"

"Not your next as if you had already taken one or more right steps in religion. Going to CHRIST is your first step and only step. He does not say: 'come to conviction come to a deeper sense of sin.' But He says, **"Come unto me?"**

She then exclaimed, "what a self-righteous creature I am! I see it all now. I have been refusing CHRIST, while all this time I thought I was preparing to come to Him."

"Will you go to JESUS now?"

"I WILL," was the emphatic reply.

Suppose a number of the Israelites, after Moses struck the rock, and after they had seen the waters gush forth, had not only refused to drink of these waters, but had gone and commenced striking another rock determined to obtain water for themselves or perish.

Their corpses would soon have lain around the rock, awful evidences of the danger of despising GOD's way of saving us, and of substituting our own. They might have been very sincere in their efforts to obtain water by their own works; they might have spent whole days and nights in the most earnest attempts to accomplish their object; but their sincerity would not make the water flow, nor make the Almighty abandon His own plan and adopt theirs.

Paul bore witness to the sincerity of the Jews, when they were going about to establish a righteousness of their own, and would not submit themselves to the righteousness of CHRIST; but he does not tell us that because of their sincerity, GOD will accept their righteousness instead of CHRIST's. No; sincerity is not religion it does not make error truth, nor change an act of human pride into an act well pleasing to GOD.

Over a river in Scotland a strong stone bridge had been erected. Shortly after its completion a furious storm of rain of some days continuance, raised the waters of the river to a great height. The wild torrent came down with appalling force, bearing on its bosom the trunks of trees and huge blocks of wood. The arches of the bridge were filled with the rushing waters, and the strong structure seemed to shake under the pressure upon it.

A crowd of persons were assembled on each side of the river, afraid to venture upon the bridge, and watching with intense anxiety for the result when all at once a man on horse-back galloped up, and before any one could stop him, rode up to the very center of the bridge. There he stood and in clear tones which rose above the roar of the tempest, exclaimed, "I am not afraid, my friends; I know it will not give way; I am sure it will stand."

That man was the architect of the bridge, and he was thus boasting in the work of his own hands. To many his confidence appeared foolishness, though the result proved that his trust was not misplaced.

What a far more rational ground of confidence has the believer in the work of the Lord JESUS! He feels that the foundation is perfect and can never give way. Amid the storms of coming wrath and the thunders of Judgment, when great billows of fire shall be rolling across our globe, he shall be able to lift up his triumphant voice and say, **"I know that my Redeemer liveth."** **"I know that He will keep what I have committed to Him against this day."** **"Who shall lay anything to the charge of God's elect?"**

~ end of chapter 9 ~

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