

THE GOSPEL IN EZEKIEL

Illustrated in a Series of Discourses

by

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CHAPTER ONE

THE MESSENGER

Moreover, the word of the Lord came unto me, saying, Son of man (Ezekiel 36:16, 17).

Having scattered over an open field the bones of the human body, bring an anatomist to the scene. Conduct him to the valley where Ezekiel stood, with his eye on the skulls and dismembered skeletons of an unburied host.

Observe the man of science how he fits bone to bone and part to part, till from those scattered members he constructs a framework, which, apart from our horror at the eyeless sockets and fleshless form, appears perfectly, divinely beautiful. In hands which have the patience to collect, and the skill to arrange these materials, how perfectly they fit bone to bone, and joint to joint, till the whole figure rises to the polished dome, and the dumb skeleton seems to say, **“I am fearfully and wonderfully made.”**

Now as with these parts of the human frame, so is it with the doctrines of the Gospel, in so far as they are intelligible to our understandings.

Scattered over the pages of sacred Scripture, let them also be collected and arranged in systematic order, and how beautifully they fit! doctrine to doctrine, duty to duty; till, all connected with each other, all **“members one of another,”** they rise up into a form of perfect symmetry, and present that very system which, with minor differences but substantial unity, is embodied in the confessions, creeds and catechisms of Evangelical Christendom.

I have said, so far as they are intelligible to us; for it is ever to be borne in mind, that while the Gospel has shallows through which a child may wade and walk on his way to heaven, it has deep, dark, unfathomed pools, which no eye can penetrate, and where the first step takes a giant beyond his depth.

There is a difference, which even childhood may discern, between the manner in which the doctrines and duties of the Gospel are set forth in the Word of God, and their more formal arrangement in our catechisms and confessions. They are scattered here and there over the face of Scripture, much as the plants of nature are upon the surface of the globe.

There, for example, we meet with nothing corresponding to the formal order, systematic classification, and rectangular beds of a botanical garden; on the contrary, the creations of the vegetable kingdom be mingled in what, although beautiful, seems to be wild confusion. Within the limits of the same moor or meadow the naturalist gathers grasses of many forms, he finds it enameled with flowers of every hue; and in those forests which have been planted by the hand of God, and beneath whose deep shades man still walks in rude and savage freedom, trees of every form and foliage stand side by side like brothers.

With the Sabbath hills around us, far from the dust and din, the splendor and squalor of the city, we have sat on a rocky bank, to wonder at the varied and rich profusion with which God had clothed the scene. Nature, like Joseph, was dressed in a coat of many colors—lichens, gray, black and yellow, clad the rock; the glossy ivy, like a child of ambition, had planted its foot on the crag, and, hanging on by a hundred arms, had climbed to its stormy summit; mosses, of hues surpassing all the colors of the loom, spread an elastic carpet round the gushing fountain; the wild thyme lent a bed to the weary, and its perfume to the air; heaths opened their blushing bosoms to the bee; the primrose, like modesty shrinking from observation, looked out from its leafy shade; at the foot of the weathered stone the fern raised its plumes, and on its summit the foxglove rang his beautiful bells; while the birch bent to kiss the stream, as it ran away laughing to hide itself in the lake below, or stretched out her arms to embrace the mountain ash and evergreen pine.

By a very slight exercise of fancy, in such a scene one could see Nature engaged in her adorations, and hear her singing, **“The earth is full of the glory of God,” “How manifold are thy works. Lord God Almighty, in wisdom thou hast made them all.”**

Now, although over the whole surface of our globe, as in that spot, plants of all forms and families seem confusedly scattered, amid this apparent disorder the eye of science discovers a perfect system in the floral kingdom; and just as—although God has certainly scattered these forms over the face of nature without apparent arrangement—there is a botanical system, so there is as certainly a theological system, although its doctrines and duties are not classified in the Bible according to dogmatic rules.

Does it not appear from this circumstance, that God intended his Word to be a subject of study as well as faith, and that man should find in its saving pages a field for the exercise of his faculties? We are commanded to compare **“spiritual things with spiritual;”** we are to **“search the Scriptures,”** to dig for their treasures, to dive for the pearls. Hence the prayer of David, **“Give me understanding, that I may learn thy commandments.”**

While the trees and flowers that clothe the fields of nature are scattered without much apparent order over the wide surface of the earth, still there are mountain regions lying within the tropics, where, in the course of a single day, the traveler may find laid out in regular arrangement, every vegetable form peculiar to every line of latitude between the equator and the poles. Leaving the palms which cover the mountain’s feet, he ascends into the regions of the olive; from these, to a more temperate climate, where the vine festoons the trees, or trails its limbs along the naked rock; still ascending, he next reaches a belt of oaks and chestnuts; from that he passes to heights shaggy with the hardy pine; by and by, he enters a region where trees are dwarfed into bushes.

Rising above that, his foot presses a carpet of lowly mosses; till, climbing the rocks where only the lichen lives, he leaves all life beneath him; and now, shivering in the cold, panting in the thin air for breath, he stands on those dreary elevations, where eternal winter sits on a throne of snow, and, waving her icy scepter, says to vegetation, **“Hither shalt thou come, and no farther.”** Like some such lofty mountain of the tropics, there are portions of the Divine Word, where, in a space also of limited extent—within the short compass of a chapter, or even part of it—the more prominent doctrines of Salvation are brought into juxtaposition, and set side by side, almost in systematic order. This chapter offers to our attention one of the most remarkable of these; and in illustration of that, I remark—

I. That this portion of Scripture, extending onwards from the 16th verse, presents an epitome or outline of the Gospel.

Its details, with their varied beauties, are here, so to speak, in shade; but the grand truths of redemption stand boldly up, much as we have seen from sea the lofty headlands of a dim and distant coast. We are aware that the Mosaic economy, and many of God’s dealings with his ancient people, were but the shadows of good things to come; and that, when the things are come, as come they certainly are, you may meet us on the very threshold with this question, Why look at the shadow when you possess the substance?

However valued in his absence the portrait of a son may be, what mother, when he is folded in her arms, and she has his living face to look on, turns to the picture? What artist studies a subject in twilight, when he may see it in the blaze of day? True— true at least in general. Yet such study has its advantages. It not seldom happens that a portrait brings to view some shade of expression which we had not previously observed in the face of the veritable man; and when some magnificent form of architecture, or the serried ridges and rocky needles of a mountain, have stood up between us and the last lights of day, we have found, that although the details, the minor beauties, of fluted columns or frowning crags were lost in the shades of evening, yet, drawn in sharp and simple outline against a twilight sky, the effect of the whole was more impressive than when eyed in the glare of day.

Thus it may be well, occasionally at least, to examine the Gospel in the broad shadows and strongly defined outlines of an old economy; and through God’s government of his ancient people, to study the motives, the nature, and the ends of his dealings with ourselves. In this way the passage before us has peculiar claims upon our attention. Applicable, in the first instance, to the condition of the Jews, it presents a remarkable summary of Gospel doctrines, and that in a form approaching at least to systematic order.

- In the 17th verse, we have man sinning—**“Son of man, when the house of Israel dwelt in their own land, they defiled it by their own way, and by their doings.”**
- In the 18th verse, we have man suffering—**“Wherefore I poured my fury upon them.”**
- In the 21st verse, man appears an object of mercy—**“but I had pity.”**
- In the 22d verse, man is an object of free mercy—mercy without merit—**“I do not this for your sakes, O, house of Israel.”**
- In the 24th verse, man’s salvation is resolved on—**“I will bring you into your own land.”**

- In the 25th verse, man is justified—“**Then will I sprinkle clean water upon you, and ye shall be clean.**”

- In the 26th and 27th verses, man is renewed and sanctified—“**A new heart also will I give you, and a new spirit will I put within you; and I will take away the stony heart out of your flesh, and I will give you an heart of flesh. And I will put my spirit within you, and cause you to walk in my statutes, and you shall keep my judgments, and do them.**”

- In the 28th verse, man is restored to the place and privileges which he forfeited by his sins—“**Ye shall be my people, and I will be your God.**” “**This land that was desolate, is become like the garden of the Lord.**”

We have our security for these blessings in the assurance of the 36th verse— “**I the Lord have spoken it, and I will do it;**” and the means of obtaining them in the declaration of the 37th verse— “**I will yet for this be enquired of by the house of Israel, to do it for them.**”

Such is the wide and interesting field that lies before us. But before entering upon it, let us consider—

II. *The party who is commissioned to deliver God's message.*

“Who, what is this ambassador of Heaven? An angel? No; but a man. “**Son of man,**” says the Lord. In the first verse of this chapter he says— “**Son of man, prophesy unto the mountains.**” In the 3d verse of the following one he asks—“**Son of man, can these bones live?**” Again, in the 9th verse of the same chapter, he says— “**Son of man, prophesy unto the wind.**” And, still addressing him by the same title, in the 11th verse, he tells the prophet—“**Son of man, these bones are the whole house of Israel.**” By this title Ezekiel is so often addressed, “**Son of man,**” “**Son of man,**” is so constantly sounded both in his ears and ours, that it forces on our attention this remarkable fact, that God deals with man through the instrumentality of man, and by men communicates his will to men.

The rain which descends from heaven falls upon the surface of our earth, sinks through the porous soil, and, flowing along rocky Assures or veins of sand, is conveyed below ground to the fountain whence it springs. Now, although out of the earth, that water is not “**of the earth, earthy.**”

The world's deepest well owes its treasures to the skies. So it was with the revealed will of God. It flowed along human channels, yet its origin was more than celestial—it was divine. Those waters, at whose springs Faith drinks and lives, while conveyed to man through the instrumentality of man, had their source far away in the throne of God; their fountainhead is the Godhead.

No doubt, God could have used other instrumentality, He might have commissioned angels on his errands of mercy, and spoke at all times, as he did sometimes, by their lips. With rare exceptions, however, his ambassadors were men. The patriarchs, prophets, and apostles, by whom in days of old he revealed his will—those missionaries of heaven—were all sons of man. Now in this arrangement observe, in the first place—

The kindness of God to man.

Who has read the story of Moses without feeling that it was a great kindness, both to him and his mother, that he had a mother's bosom to lie on—that God in his providence so arranged matters that the mother was hired to be the nurse of her son? who else would have treated the outcast so lovingly and kindly? And I hold it a singular kindness to man that he is selected to be the instrument of saving his fellowmen. The God of salvation, the author and finisher of our faith, might have arranged it otherwise. **“Who shall limit the Holy One of Israel?”**

The field is the world; and as the husbandman ploughs his fields and sows his seed in spring by the very hands that bind the sheaves of autumn; God might have sent those angels to sow the Gospel, who shall descend at judgment to reap the harvest. But although these blessed and benevolent spirits take a lively interest in the work, and are sent forth to minister to them that are heirs of salvation—although watching from on high the progress of the Redeemer's cause, they rejoice in each new jewel that is added to his crown, and in every new province that is won for his kingdom; and although there he more joy even in heaven than on earth when man is saved—a higher joy among these angels **“over one sinner that repenteth than over ninety and nine just persons”**—yet theirs is little more than the pleasure of spectators. Theirs is the joy of those who, occupying the shore, or crowded on its heights, with eager eyes and beating heart follow the bold swimmer's movements, and watching his head as it rises and sinks among the waves, see him near the drowning child, and pluck its half-drowned prey from the billow; and, still trembling lest strength should fail him, look on with anxious hearts, till, buffeting his way back, he reaches the strand, and amid their shouts and sympathies restores her boy to the arms of a fainting mother.

To man, however, in salvation, it is given to share, not a spectator's but a Saviour's joy; and with his lips at least to taste the cup for which Jesus endured the cross and despised the shame. If that parent is happy who snatches a child from the flood or fire, and the child, thus saved, and twice given him, becomes doubly dear, what happiness in purity or permanence to be compared with his, who is a laborer with God in saving souls? Let me invite you to share in these pleasures, the sweetest, I assure you, out of heaven.

This is a privilege and a pleasure free to all. It is one which kings cannot purchase, and yet beggars may enjoy; and one also (and what more could be said of it?) which enhances the joy of heaven. While every saint shall have one heaven, some shall have more; those who have helped to fill its mansions shall possess many heavens in one. In proportion to the number they have brought to Christ, they shall multiply their joys—the joys which eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, and which entereth not into the heart of man to conceive. In this arrangement I observe again—

The honor conferred on man.

Did Moses occupy a noble position when he stood aloft on a rock amid the dying Israelites, and there, the central figure of the camp, on whom all eyes were turned, raised that serpent, to look on which was life?

Nobler still his attitude and office, who, with his foot on this dying world, lifts up the cross—**“Jesus Christ and him crucified”**—that, whosoever looketh and believeth on him, might not perish, but have everlasting life.

Give me the bleeding Saviour, make me the instrument of converting a single soul, and I grudge not Moses his **“piece of brass;”** nor envy him the honor of saving a thousand lives, that are now all quenched in death. Great honor to the memory of the mighty men who swept like a hurricane through the camp of the Philistines, and, cleaving their way through opposing foes, drew the water of Bethlehem for their king; yet, rather than be one of David’s mighty men, it would content me to be one of Christ’s humblest, and hold the cup of life to a pauper’s lips.

All honor to the prophet who went up to heaven in a chariot of fire; but nobler still his departure, who, as he ascends to glory, leaves spiritual sons behind him to weep by the cast off mantle of his flesh, and cry, **“My father, my father, the chariots of Israel and the horsemen thereof!”**

What honors does this world offer? what stars, what jeweled honors flash on her swelling breast, to be for one moment compared with those which they win on earth, and wear in heaven, who have turned souls from darkness to light—from the cursed power of Satan to the living God?

Each soul a gem in their crown, they that have turned many to righteousness shall shine with the brightness of the firmament, as the stars, forever and ever. How has the hope of this touched, as with fire, the preacher’s lips, sustained his heart, held up prayer’s weary hands, and proved an ample recompense for those scanty rewards which God’s servants too often received at the hands of men, for the penury which has embittered, and the hardships which have pressed on their lot!

Their master was rejected and despised of men—a man of sorrows and acquainted with grief, and the disciple being no better than his Lord, they have shared in his sufferings. But, if fellow-sufferers, they are fellow-laborers with Christ—his associates in the noblest work beneath the sun.

Despised as the teacher of the Gospel may be, the apostle raises him to an eminence from which he may contemplate this world, with all its grandeur and glory, rolling away into dark oblivion. Viewed in the light of eternity, the church stands on a loftier elevation than the palace, and the pulpit offers man a grander position than the throne of empires. To ministers of the Gospel belongs the high preeminence of being able to say, **“we are fellow laborers with God;”** and, with such an associate—in such lofty company, devoting his life to such a cause—no wonder that Paul confronted a skeptic, sneering, scoffing world, and bravely said, **“I am not ashamed of the Gospel of Christ.”**

I am anxious that you should understand that the honors that I have spoken of are not reserved for pulpits. The youth who, finding Sabbath rest in Christian labors, holds his Sabbath-class; the mother, with her children grouped around her, sweet solemnity sitting in her face, and the Bible resting on her knee; the friend who deals faithfully with another’s soul; any man who kindly takes a poor sinner by the hand, and seeking to conduct him to the Saviour, says, **“Come with us, and we will do you good;”** **“Arise, for we have seen the land, and behold it is very good;”** these, not less than ministers of the Gospel, are fellow-laborers with God.

Think not that this noblest work is our exclusive privilege, or stand back as if you had neither right or call to set to your hand. What although in the church you hold no rank? No more does the private who wears neither stripes on his arm nor epaulettes on his shoulder; but although a private, may he not die for the colors which it is not his privilege to carry? If it is not his business to train recruits, it is his business, and shall be his reward to enlist them. Now to this office, to recruit the ranks of the cross, the Gospel calls you—calls all—calls the meanest soldier in the army of the faith.

“The Spirit and the bride say come.” But more than they should call. Where sinners are perishing, where opportunity offers, where a door is open, where the rule, **“Let all things be done decently and in order,”** is not outraged and violated—call it preaching if you choose, but in God’s name let hearers preach.

Has God gifted any with power to speak of Christ? Then, with such high interests at stake, from forms which churches, not their Head—man, not God, has established, we say, **“loose him and let him go.”** **“Let him that heareth say come, and let him that is athirst come; and whosoever will, let him take of the water of life freely.”**

Thou art a **“son of man;”** you bear the prophet’s title, whatsoever otherwise you may be. Let me call you to the prophet’s office. The Master hath need—much need of you. Thousands, tens of thousands, are dying in their sins. Although every minister were as a flaming fire in the service of his God, every bishop were a Latimer, every reformer were a Knox, every preacher were a Whitefield, every missionary were a Martyr, the work is greater than ministers can accomplish; and if men will not submit that the interests of nations and the success of armies shall be sacrificed to routine and forms of office, much less should these be tolerated where the cause of souls is at stake. I say, therefore, to every Christian, **“the Master hath need”** of you.

Take a living, loving interest in souls. Don’t leave them to perish. It may be the duty of others permanently and formally to instruct, but it is yours to enlist. **“This honor have all his saints.”** And in attempting to engage you in the work at least of enlisting others, and of recruiting, out of your family, and friends, and neighborhood, the armies of the faith, I call you to a work in which every man may bear his share, and one which offers honor as exalted as its pleasures are pure.

It was no honor to Elijah to gird up his loins, and with the storm at his back to run abreast of the smoking horses of Ahab’s chariot. Considering who the parties were, it had been as meet, I think, that the king should have run and the prophet ridden. But to run by the chariot where Jesus sits, his crown on his head, his bow in his hand, and his sword by his thigh; to employ our feet in offices that have employed angels’ wings; to bear the news of mercy to a dying sinner; and to gather crowds around the Saviour, that they may strew his path with palms, and swell the song of Hosanna to the Son of David— for such a work a king might cast off robes and crown.

Yes—I think that he would not demean, but rather dignify his office, who should descend from a throne where subjects kneel, to bend his knee before God by a peasant’s bed, or leave his palace for a cell, to watch, and weep, and pray with one whom crime had consigned to death.

And, as surely as yon planet worlds that roll and shine above us draw radiance from the sun around which they move, so surely shall they shine who spend and are spent in Jesus' service; they shall share his honors, and shine in his luster.

The man, however lowly his condition, who, some way between his cradle and the tomb, has converted even one soul to God, has not lived in vain, nor labored for nought; but has achieved a great work. He may be well content to go down into the grave by men unpraised, by the world unknown. His works, if they have not proceeded, shall follow him; and needing no tablet raised among moldering bones and tombstones, he has a monument to his memory, where there are neither griefs nor graves, more costly than brass or marble. Others may have filled the world with the breath of their name; he has helped to fill heaven. Others may have won an earthly renown; but he who, one himself, has sought to make others Christians—who, reaching the rock himself, draws another, a perishing child, brother, friend, neighbor, up—plucked from the flood himself, pulls another out—who has leaped into the depths that he might rise with a pearl, and set it lustrous in Jesus' crown—he is the man who shall wear heaven's brightest honors, and to whom, before all else, the Lord will say, "**Well done, good and faithful servant, enter thou into the joy of thy Lord.**"

Weak in yourselves, but strong in God, go forth on this enterprise, your prayer the wish of Brainerd, "Oh that I were a flaming fire in the service of my God!" In this arrangement we see, lastly,

The wisdom of God.

However highly gifted he may otherwise be, it is a valid objection to a preacher, that he does not feel what he says; that spoils more than his oratory. An obscure man rose up to address the French Convention. At the close of his oration, Mirabeau, the giant genius of the Revolution, turned round to his neighbor, and eagerly asked, "Who is that? The other, who had been in no way interested by the address, wondered at Mirabeau's curiosity.

"Whereupon the latter said, That man will yet act a great part; and, asked to explain himself, added, he speaks as one who believes every word he says.

Much of pulpit power under God depends on that—admits of that explanation, or one allied to it. They make others feel who feel themselves. How can he plead for souls who does not know the value of his own? How can he recommend a Saviour to others who himself personally despises and rejects him? Unhappy indeed, and doubly blind those whose leader is as blind as they are; and unhappiest of all the blind preacher; for while leader and led shall fall into the ditch, he falls undermost—his the heaviest condemnation, the deepest and most damned perdition.

In possession of such a man— of one who has adopted the church as other men the law, or army, or navy, as a mere profession, and goes through the routine of its duties with the coldness of an official—the pulpit seems filled with the ghastly form of a skeleton, that in its cold and bony fingers holds a burning lamp.

It is true that a man may impart light to others who does not himself see the light.

It is true that, like a concave speculum cut from a block of ice, which, concentrating the rays of the sun, kindles touchwood or gunpowder, a preacher may kindle fire in others, when his own heart is cold as frost.

It is also true that he may stand like a fingerpost on a road, where he neither leads nor follows; and God may thus in his sovereign mercy bless others by one who is himself unblessed.

Yet commonly it happens, that it is what comes from the heart of preachers that reaches the heart of hearers. Like a ball red hot from the cannon's mouth, he must burn himself who would set others on fire. Still, although the ministry of men who are themselves strangers to piety, although a Judas or Simon Magus in office—is an evil to which the church, in every age and under every form of government, stands more or less exposed, it were a poor refuge to seek exemption from such an evil, even in the ministry of angels; because, while man may not feel what he preaches, angels could not. How could they?

- They never felt the stings of conscience;
- They never hung over hell's fiery gulf, and saw the narrow ledge they stood on crumbling away beneath their feet, and sent up to heaven the piercing cry, "**Lord, save me, I perish;**"
- They never felt the power and peace of Jesus' blood; pursued by a storm of wrath,
- They never flew to the Rock of Ages, and folded their wings in the sweet and safe serenity of its welcome clefts;
- They never thirsted for salvation;
- In an agony for pardon they never felt ready to give a thousand worlds for one Christ;
- They never, as we have done, trod the valley of humiliation, and walked with bleeding feet and weeping eyes its flinty path;
- They never knew what it is, "between them and their home in heaven, to see death's gloomy passage.

And, more appalling still, a flight which makes the saint grasp his sword with a firmer hand, and lift up his shield on high—Satan, the enemy, posted there, and striding across the passage to dispute the way— never knowing what it is to have been in bondage, having neither country nor kindred here, how could they preach like Paul? how could their bosoms burn with this apostolic fire—"**I could wish that I myself were accursed from Christ for my brethren, my kinsmen according to the flesh?**"

"We have somewhere read of a traveler who stood one day beside the cages of some birds, that, exposed for sale, ruffled their sunny plumage on the wires, and struggled to be free. A way-worn and sun-browned man, like one returned from foreign lands, he looked wistfully and sadly on these captives, till tears started in his eye, and turning round on their owner, he asked the price of one, paid it in strange gold, and opening the cage set the prisoner free; and thus and thus he did with captive after captive, till every bird was away, soaring to the skies and singing on the wings of liberty.

The crowd stared and stood amazed; they thought him mad, till to the question of their curiosity he replied— "I was once myself a captive; I know the sweets of liberty."

And so they who have experience of guilt, have felt the serpent's bite, the burning poison in their veins, who on the one hand have felt the sting of conscience, and on the other the peace of faith, the joys of hope, the love, the light, the liberty, the life, that are found in Jesus—they, not excepting heaven's highest angels, are the fittest to preach a Saviour, to plead with man for God, or plead with God for man.

Each Sabbath morning the gates of heaven might have opened, and, sent by God on a mission worthy of seraphic lire, an angel might have lighted down upon this sanctuary, and, flying into the pulpit, when he had folded his wings and used them to veil his glory, he might have taken up the wondrous theme of salvation and the cross.

No angel would leave heaven to be a king and fill a throne; but, I believe, were it God's will, there is no angel there but would hold himself honored to be a preacher and fill a pulpit. Another and very different messenger appears—a frail, dying, sinful man—one who is bone of your bone, and flesh of your flesh; and if his humanity made Jesus the better Saviour, it makes his servants the better ambassadors, that they also are touched with their people's infirmities, and are made in all points like as they are, and especially in this point, that we cannot add, **“yet without sin.”**

It is true that in us the instrument which God employs is in itself a humble one—in itself worthy neither of honor nor respect: the treasure is committed to earthen vessels, sometimes of the rudest form and the coarsest clay. What of that? If the letter from a foreign land brings good tidings of his son, does the father quarrel with the meanness of the paper? While tears of joy and gratitude drop on the page, does he so much as notice it? If the dish offers safe or savory meat, a starving man enjoys it none the less that it is not served up on gold or porcelain. An ointment worthy of the Master's head, and exhaling odors that fill the house, is as welcome from a sinner's as an angel's hand—from a vessel of the poorest earth as of the purest alabaster.

Even so will saving truth be to you, if God's people. Without turning him into an idol, and giving the honor to the servant which is due to the Master, I am sure you will respect the servant for his Master's sake. Are some of you yet sinners in the gall of bitterness and bond of iniquity? Because we are ourselves sinners, and know what it is to have been captives, we are the fitter to address you.

“We know that you are not happy, nor can be happy in sin; its pleasures perish in the using, and pain in the recollection; and it is madness, the height of madness—for a man to stake eternity on the chances of a to-morrow, and purchase sin's short-lived joys at the expense of eternal happiness. We know that out of Christ, as you have no safety, you can find no true peace.

“There is no peace, saith my God, to the wicked;” **“they are like the troubled sea which cannot rest;”** in storms a raging ocean, and in summer's serenest day ebbing or flowing, and breaking its billows, like the world's joys and happiness, on a beach of wrecks and withered weeds. Seek Christ, seek your peace through him and in him; and, saved your self—yourself plucked from the wreck—oh, remember the perishing, and let the first breath and effort of your new life be spent for others.

I give you an example; and in the words spoken for a fellow-sufferer's life, see what you should do for a fellow-sinner's soul.

During a heavy storm off the coast of Spain, a dismantled merchantman was observed by a British frigate drifting before the gale. Every eye and glass were on her, and a canvas shelter on a deck almost level with the sea suggested the idea that there yet might be life on board. With all his faults, no man is more alive to humanity than the rough and hardy mariner; and so the order instantly sounds to put the ship about, and presently a boat puts off with instructions to bear down upon the wreck.

Away after that drifting hulk go these gallant men through the swell of a roaring sea; they reach it; they shout; and now a strange object rolls out of that canvas screen against the lee shroud of a broken mast. Hauled into the boat, it proves to be the trunk of a man, bent head and knees together, so dried and shriveled as to be hardly felt within the ample clothes, and so light that a mere boy lifted it on board. It is laid on the deck, in horror and pity the crew gather round it; it shows signs of life; they draw nearer; it moves, and then mutters—mutters in a deep, sepulchral voice— "*There is another man.*"

Saved himself, the first use the saved one made of speech was to seek to save another.

Oh! learn that blessed lesson. Be daily practicing it. And so long as in our homes, among our friends, in this wreck of a world which is drifting down to ruin, there lives an unconverted one, there is "*another man,*" let us go to that man, and plead for Christ; go to Christ and plead for that man; the cry, "**Lord save me, I perish,**" changed into one as welcome to a Saviour's ear, "**Lord save them, they perish.**"

~ end of chapter 1 ~

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