

The Paint Salesman and His Ship

by Walter Lewis Wilson, M.D.

A NICELY dressed gentleman about fifty years of age called at my hotel room and requested an interview. Evidently there was a great burden on this man's heart, for I noticed that it was difficult for him to keep his poise and to refrain from weeping. There were tears in his eyes and the quivering chin told of unseen difficulties in his heart. I invited him to be seated and to tell me his story. To put him at ease, I said, "You are with a friend now, and if you wish to unburden yourself, you may freely open your heart and tell me all that is in it." This seemed to relieve him somewhat, and gradually he gained composure and began to tell his story.

There were quite a number of burdens in this man's soul. One of them was concerning his finances, another with his domestic affairs, but uppermost there seemed to be sorrow of heart over his wasted life. In describing his life to me, he said, "I have been somewhat like a ship, away out at sea, with no cargo, no captain, no place to go and getting nowhere. Life becomes unbearable at times. I wonder how I will ever weather the storm and where I will land at the end of the journey."

Upon making inquiry I found that he was a paint salesman. He had travelled all over the United States and handled large contracts, but in his prosperity he started drinking. Drink caused him to neglect his business and his home, so that he lost both. His body began to wear down under the strain, so that his mind was unable to handle big contracts and to work out intricate details. All of this had distressed and disturbed him greatly, and caused him to seek help.

We talked together about his early experiences. There had been some church life in his younger days, but no conversion and no consecration. For many years he had neglected to read his Bible, and had stayed away from Christian influences. The friends he had made during those years had now deserted him, because of his lack of money and his loss of ability. His wife also had left him and was working in a downtown store to support herself. She had not really deserted him, but had promised to return to him whenever he was able to make a living for both of them. In his loneliness and distress, he was now turning to the Lord. What a blessing!

I said to him, "Are you lost, Mr. —? Do you consider yourself a guilty sinner?" He replied almost before I had finished the question, "Yes,

yes, I am lost and very wicked. No one needs to convince me of that. It is a terrible burden on my soul, and I can hardly stand it. My sins have wrecked my business and my body and my home, so that there is nothing at all left but misery."

"This is good news to me," I said, "for there is a Saviour for bad people, and the Lord loves to rebuild wrecks. Even though you may be well along in years, the Saviour can give you even yet a life of loveliness and fruitfulness, which will bring joy to you and blessing to others."

"That is what I have come to hear about," he said; "do tell me all you can that will help me."

It is not difficult to deal with one who is under conviction, and realizes his need of salvation. Wisdom is needed, of course, in order to use the right Scriptures in such cases, but God will give this wisdom to those who ask Him. We took the Bible and read Isaiah 44:22, "I have blotted out, as a thick cloud, thy transgressions, and, as a cloud, thy sins: return unto me; for I have redeemed thee." He looked at me somewhat surprised, and said, "Does this tell me that I am to be saved by something that has already been done?" I replied that such was certainly the case. "Were you expecting that God would do something to save you?" I asked. He earnestly replied, "Yes, I have been asking God for several days to please do something to save me and enable me to get rid of my sins, but He would not answer me, and I could not find Him. It never occurred to me that I was to believe on something that was done for me in the past. Please tell me more about it."

It was the earnest desire of his hungry heart for an explanation of God's loving heart, and I was happy indeed to give it. "At Calvary's Cross the Lord Jesus suffered for you, gave His life for you, and paid the debt you owed. He wants you to know about it, Mr. —. He wants you to turn the ship over to Him, let Him be the Captain, let Him put on the cargo, and let Him direct it to the proper port." He looked somewhat perplexed by this explanation, and I could see that his mind was not clear on either the greatness of Christ or the efficacy of His finished work. I then turned to Colossians 2:14 and read, "Blotting out the handwriting of ordinances which was against us, which was contrary to us, and took it out of the way, nailing it to his cross."

After I had read this verse carefully and slowly to him, he rose from his chair, asked me for the Bible, stepped over to the window where there was better light, and read the verse through several times himself. Slowly and thoughtfully, he said, "Yes, I see; Jesus took away the

things that were written against me. This verse says so, and I believe it is so. Isn't it strange that I never knew that before. God certainly did a good job of it. If He blotted them out and took them away, and nailed them to His Cross, then there certainly isn't anything left against me. Let me alone, Wilson, for a few minutes. Do you mind if I walk around this room awhile? I must let this truth get into my heart."

Mr. — paced back and forth in the room, weeping as he walked. I handed him a new, clean handkerchief, because he had soaked his own, and it was distressing him a bit. He dried his tears. After a few minutes of walking, he sat down again, rested his head in his hands as though in deep meditation, and said, "Well, that burden is gone! What a relief to have it gone! My, this is wonderful! I never heard of this before. No one ever told me, but I can easily see that the Bible is clear about it, and I believe God."

In order to help him further, I said, "Would you like to talk to the Lord Jesus about this matter and tell Him what you think of Him?" In prayer one may easily learn just the condition of the heart and the soul of the person with whom he is dealing. What he says to God will reveal to you how much he has seen and understood. We knelt at our chairs, and I suggested that he just talk to the Lord Jesus in his own way and with his own words, telling him what he thought of Him. He seemed glad to do so, and said, "O God, I thank You for sending Jesus to save me! I tried about everything there was to get peace, but never came to You about it, and no one else ever told me to come to You about it until today. I thank You for Jesus. I believe He died for me and that He took my sins away, and I am Yours now. Amen."

Before we rose, I said to him, "You thanked the Father nicely, but you did not say anything to Jesus. Why not tell Him also?" Without replying, he began to pray again, and said, "Lord Jesus, I do thank You for putting away my sins. You certainly did it, and my sins are gone. I thank You for taking the burden away. I can go now and sell some paint and quit being such a failure, and I know You will help me to get my home back and to make a living. I am trusting You with everything I have, and I am turning the ship over to You right now. I sure made a mess of trying to run it, and now I'm going to watch You do it." We rose from our knees and rejoiced together.

Before leaving my room, Mr. — said, "What a difference there is now. I have been carrying a terrible load, but now my sins are gone, and my guilt is gone, and I belong to a real Saviour. I am going to make Him my Captain—no, He is my Captain right now, and I know we shall navigate successfully. I am going down tomorrow to see my wife and

tell her what a wonderful change has come to me through Jesus. She may know Him already. She is a fine woman, but, anyway, I'll tell her about it, and I expect the Captain to fix up this crew, so we can get on together. You'll pray for me, won't you?"

I assured him that I would be glad to do so, and he left with a radiant spirit and a buoyant step.

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