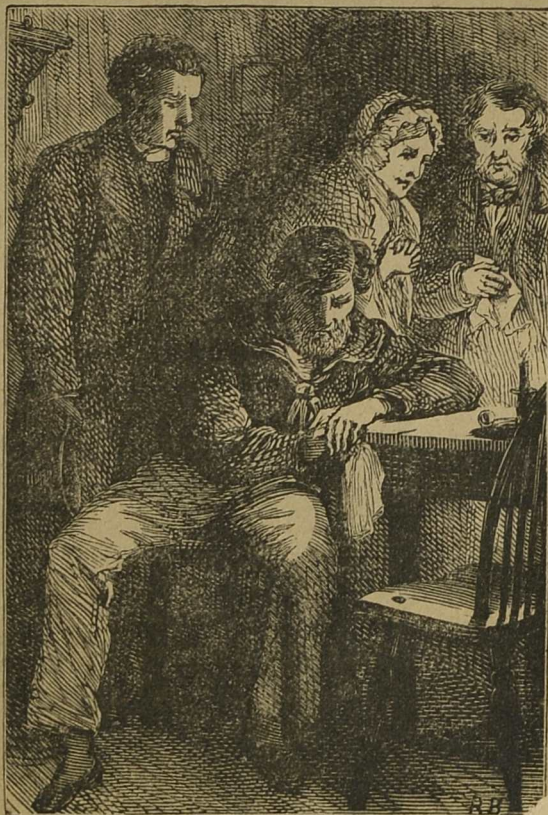


SAILOR SAM



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SAILOR SAM.

It pleased God, by whom my steps were led to Langport, in the service of the Gospel, some years since, to bring there at the same time, a sailor who had run away from his father's home at ten years old and gone to sea. His parents knew not what had become of him, and mourned his loss more sadly than if he had died beneath their roof. After an absence of twenty years, spent in the East India and China trade, he returned

a fine, stalwart man, what his companions would call "a jolly sailor."

He had gone to his native place to seek his early home, and the parents from whom he had recklessly run away ; but they had removed to the larger village of Langport. Thither he went, and having inquired for his father by name, he was told that the man he sought for worked for a Mr. Stuckey. He went to the place of business of Mr. S., and, seeing there an elderly man, he inquired—

"Does Mr. Stuckey live here?"

The old man answered, "Yes ; do you want to see him?"

"No ; but I suppose that I want to have a word with a man that works for him," said the sailor.

Twenty years had so changed both, that there was no recognition on

either side. The old man then asked the younger—

“What is the man’s name, whom you want?”

“Joseph Petheric,” said the sailor.

“That’s my own name,” replied the other.

“Well, if you are the man I’m looking for, *I’m your Sam*,” said the heavy, broad sailor.

“No! you’re not my son,” said the father.

“But I *am* your son,” persisted the sailor.

“Well, if you are, your mother will know you—come along with me.”

They went together to the old man’s home, and the father said to his wife—

“Mother, here is a strange man, who says he is our son Samuel.”

“If he is,” said the astonished mother, “he has a mark made by a piece of wood on the elbow of his left arm, and by that I shall know at once.”

The sailor had off his jacket in a moment, and baring his arm, he said—

“There! will that do for a mark?”

“Yes! oh, yes! it *is* our Samuel—the lost one is found!” the mother exclaimed; and they “fell on his neck and kissed him,” rejoicing like the father of the prodigal son.

The parents, however, soon discovered that their long lost son had returned to them, not only lost to all sense of his soul’s eternal interests, but even to any care for

the morality common among men. Deeply grieved, and yearning over him with a parent's love, they sought by words of tender remonstrance and entreaty, to win him to some consideration of these things, but all in vain; and his parents' society soon became uncongenial and irksome to the sailor. Two of his brothers had heard of his return, and came from a short distance to spend the day with him, and—as they said—“to have a jolly spree.”

The father, who had heard of the proposed preaching by a stranger, entreated Samuel to go with him in the evening to hear the Gospel. But Satan was at work there, as if anticipating that this thoughtless sinner was about to be plucked as a brand from the burning. He refused to

go, preferring the company of his brothers, who were, like himself, "without God and without hope in the world." So the three brothers started for the village tavern to seek congenial company. Finding him immovable, the father said to his son, "Well, Samuel, if you will not go with me, I will go with you;" and there, in that evil place, sat the swearing, drinking sons, and the praying, Christian father.

After a little while, one of the brothers said, "Come, Sam, let us go to another place." They went a little way, the father following with a yearning heart. Presently, Samuel said to his brothers, "Let's go back; there's no fun in having father about after our heels"—and back they went to the father's house. When

there, in reply to further entreaty, Sam said, "Well, I suppose there'll be nothing but sulks in the house, now I'm come home, if I don't go to hear the preaching to-night — so I'll go."

He came, but I had not heard a word about him, and did not even know that he was in the place. I preached the Gospel from the fifteenth chapter of Luke—the Father's love to the prodigal son. After the meeting, on my way to my lodgings, I was asked to stop and see a sailor who had lately returned home. I found a fine looking man seated and evidently under much emotion, his chest moving heavily. He may have often heard himself called a sinner by fellow-men, but now God said to him in the secret of his heart—

“*Sinner !*” and his guilty soul trembled at the thought of God’s judgments for sin.

I said to him, “*This is a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptation, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners.*” (1 Tim. i. 15.)

“I dare say it’s all true enough what you say,” he replied, “but Christ will have nothing to do with me. I’m too bad a fellow for him.”

I added, “Jesus Christ, the Son of God, came to seek and to save the *lost* — even ‘the chief of sinners.’ He died for sinners. Such was his grace that in order to save them from the curse of the law which they had broken, he bore the curse in his own blessed person. God will now receive you, if you accept Jesus, and trust in him as your Saviour.”

“Yes, but you don’t know,” said he, “how bad a fellow I am. In twenty years I have not entered a church, or read a word of the Bible, or of any good book; and in the worst crew of wicked sailors that I ever shipped with, I was so much worse than the rest that they named me ‘the ship’s devil.’ Why, sir, in the midst of a storm, when every plank seemed to tremble as the thunder broke and the lightning played around us, I have stood on the deck and madly cursed Him who sent the storm,—No, no! he’ll not save *me*.”

I only added, “JESUS came to save real sinners, even the chief. His blood can wash the foulest clean;” and then said, good night.

I did not call on him to pray for mercy, but rather to believe in a

mercy already provided in the Lord Jesus Christ. The fountain was there, and he was to be shown its waters rather than to be told to ask for it.

The next evening he was again present, and heard the same gospel as the night before,—of present, perfect, and eternal salvation, through simply trusting in the person and precious blood of Christ. The following morning, while I was at breakfast with my host, just previous to leaving the village, the door-bell was rung, and the servant came in, saying,—

“Samuel Petheric is at the door, sir; and he told me to say that he loves the preacher better than the preacher loves him.”

We all thought at once what it meant, and said, “Oh, do tell him

to come in!"—and we ran to meet him as he came. He was no sooner in the parlour than he said to me,—

"Oh, my dear sir! I'm not the sailor you saw on Tuesday night,—I'm another man—a *new man*. I heard the good news again last night, and my heart was opened to receive it: but the peace and joy didn't come just then. But after we went home, *Brother Pomeroy*"—he knew that now every child of God was to him a *brother*—"said, 'Let us pray together;' and so he prayed, and then I prayed; and, as we rose from our knees, I found myself filled with peace and joy. And when I went to bed—No! bed indeed!—I didn't go to bed—who'd think of going to bed on such a night as that? But I went up to my room, and there I re-

joiced and gave thanks to the Lord for my salvation. But all at once I thought—‘Ah! but is it possible—all those dreadful sins of so many years gone—and in a moment?’ And I turned round and said, ‘Ah, Satan, that’s you, is it? Come, come, you’ve had your way long enough—yes! they *are* all forgiven; for “the blood of Jesus Christ, God’s Son, cleanseth from all sin.” So the old enemy had heard enough, and he fled.”

That night the profligate sailor, “the ship’s devil,” was enabled to believe in Jesus Christ, the Son of God; and *in believing* he received the knowledge of salvation, full and free. He was translated out of the kingdom of Satan into the kingdom of God’s dear Son.—Oh! glorious translation—wondrous change!

“My dear sir,” he continued, “I feel as light as a cork ; why, I could clear that table at a spring with only one hand upon it.” He spoke like a sailor as he had been used to speak, and I have given his own expressions. One look at Christ by faith and his soul was saved ; he knew it too, and, like the Philippian jailor, he rejoiced the same night, believing.

He then went on to say—

“Why, there are *two of us here now !*”—striking himself on the breast—“Yes, *two of us*, one holding with the Lord, and the other still holding with the devil. Even this morning, that one that holds with the devil said, ‘Come, Sam, let’s put on our hat, and take a stroll ;’ but the other said, directly, ‘No, no, Samuel, we’ll go and see the servant of Christ, and

tell him what the Lord has done for us.' So here I came. Oh! how I should like to be able to go and tell my old shipmates that Christ has sought me and found me; and tell them about *him*. But there! I suppose I must stay, and have my own faith and hope strengthened, and know more about the Lord, before I try my hand at that; but I can pray for them."

I then said to him, "Samuel, you are indeed saved by grace; and now the grace of God, that brings salvation, teaches us that denying ungodliness, and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and—" "Oh, yes!" interrupted he, "Why, the grace of God has been talking to me all the morning about that, just like a father would talk to his child. It

said to me, ‘Samuel, my boy, we have no more now to do with the old ways. It is our business now to please Christ and to follow him.’”

I took leave of him ; but four days afterward, at another village, where I was preaching in a barn, I saw Samuel ; and he did, indeed, look like another man—not at all like the rough sailor I had first seen him. Some Christians were gathered round him, hearing and asking him questions. As I passed by I overheard his reply to some question, which I did not catch. The reply was, “I don’t know, I’m sure, for I’m *only four days old.*”

Instead of being occupied with himself, and inquiring, like Nicodemus—“*how* can I be born again?”—the sailor simply cast himself, by

faith, on Jesus; he *was* born again. One look at the brazen serpent healed the Israelite in the wilderness; a single look at Jesus, as the Lamb of God which taketh away the sin of the world, healed the sinful sailor. The Israelite had nothing to do but to look in order to be healed; the sailor had not a work to do, but just to look in faith, and be saved by what Christ had done and suffered for him. It was not the way he looked, but the object he looked at, that saved his soul. “*Look unto me, and be ye saved, all the ends of the earth.*” (Isaiah xlv. 22.)

What would he have gained by looking at himself and his emotions?—or by trying to love God, before he was born again?—or by seeking to make himself fit to come to God?

Nothing ! What did he gain through looking to Jesus, and trusting in him ? He gained pardon for all his sins, for remission of sins is the immediate consequence of trusting in Jesus. The Lord Jesus said to one of the greatest sinners in Jerusalem, who was led to trust in him, "*Thy faith hath saved thee.*" And so it is still. God pardons those who honour Jesus by trusting in him. But he gained more. He gained everlasting life, for he that accepts Jesus as his Saviour, finds everlasting life in him. Listen to his own words—"He that believeth on me hath everlasting life." It is not *may* have it, or *will* have it, but he hath it *now*, as his present possession. And this was his, not by *feeling* something about himself, but by *believing* something about

another ; and that something he had on the authority of God's word—"the Holy Scriptures."

It is well to understand this. For many are looking into themselves for peace and salvation, instead of looking to Christ. We should seek for grace to have the heart fixed on Jesus. The more simply we cling to him, apart from all besides, the more peaceful and happy shall we be. But as soon as we take the eye off Jesus, we become unhinged and unhappy, because nothing else can satisfy the conscience and the heart.

Many a Christian perplexes himself all his days with the question—"Am I His or am I not?" But this poor sailor knew with the apostle, that "Whosoever believeth that Jesus is the Christ is born

of God," and that "If any man be in Christ, he is a new creature." "As many as received him, to them gave he power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on his name." "They are accepted in the beloved," and are accounted righteous as Christ is righteous.

And now for the sequel of my narrative, which I give precisely as it occurred, to the best of a memory deeply impressed by the scriptural accuracy and clearness of the young convert's faith.

Sailor Sam lived in the power of the new life begotten in him, following faithfully Him who had plucked him as a brand from the burning. I heard of him from time to time, as full of faith and good works, but saw

him only once again, and then at an interval of some years. He was in port at the place of my residence, and came to see me. He told me he was mate of a schooner in the coasting trade, and added—

“My dear sir, the captain is a child of God, and he *knows* it too; but he didn't know it when we first met. When we were both below, and 'twas calm weather and all right on deck, I said to him ‘Captain, shall we read a chapter, and have a little prayer?’ ‘With all my heart, mate,’ said he. So we read and prayed, and as we sat down, I looked across the table and said to him—‘Captain, are you a *son*?’ ‘Ah,’ said he, ‘as to that, I can't say that I am a *son*.’ ‘Then you are an enemy,’ said I. ‘No, mate,’ said he, ‘I know that I am no

longer an enemy.' 'Then,' said I, 'you're a son!' *He knows that now*; and we have happy seasons often together, telling of the grace and precious blood by which we are saved."

Reader are you unsaved? I am bound, in love and faithfulness, to put to you this plain question. I must be clear of your blood. I press it upon you again in all solemnity. *Are you saved or unsaved?* You must be either the one or the other. Which is it? If still unsaved, turn this very day, I beseech you, to Jesus. Cast yourself into the arms of that loving Saviour. He will receive you, forgive you, bless you, and make you happy. Don't trifle with conviction. Be in earnest. If you despise this mes-

sage of mercy, you know not but you may be in hell before another sun goes down. God grant this may not be your awful doom! Come, for all things are ready. Jesus has purchased a full and eternal salvation for every one who will receive it. He is waiting that he may be gracious, and he declares, "Him that cometh to me, I will in no wise cast out." (John vi. 37.)
