

## Psalms 107:23-24 (Frank B. Tomkinson, Compiler) 189892

Him That Cometh, "His Wonders in the Deep" (107:23-24)

"They that go down to the sea in ships, that do business in great waters; these see the works of the Lord, and His wonders in the deep" (Psa. 107:23-24).

THE TEXT HAS BEEN employed on the "great deep," and the power of it is interestingly told by Frank Bullen in the story of the conversion of two of his Scotch shipmates:

Fortunately for me I found myself in the same watch as Jem and the smart young Scotchmen, Ballantyne and Turner. The two latter, though possessing not the slightest pretense to be considered godly, were most amiable fellows as well as being hard-working seamen. And when they found that not only could I do my duty with the best of them, but that I never hung back from a job, they showed their satisfaction in unmistakable fashion, and we were as comfortable together as four men could possibly be. Jem they teased unmercifully at times, but quite good-naturedly. That was only to be expected, as according to his own confession he had been just a rowdy ruffian on the passage out, and many of his doings still remained fresh in their minds. It was easy to see, however, that they were much puzzled at his sweetness of temper, his uniform cheerfulness, and his eagerness to do all that in him lay to justify his high profession. Nothing could shake his steadfast joy.

We had rough weather almost immediately after leaving Port Chalmers, and as usual shipped a lot of water. One afternoon, just as we had finished dinner, Jem stepped out of the fo'castle (I call it fo'castle from force of habit, though it was a house in the middle of the main deck), and as he did so a big sea came hurtling over the side and drenched him to the skin. He started to run forward, and with all his force he struck the bare toes on his right foot against a bolt of iron sticking up three inches out of the deck. All he said was, "T'ank God, t'ank God!"

When he returned to the shelter of the fo'castle, Ballantyne said cheerfully: "Fat's gane wrang wi' ye, mahn? Are ye strucken doomb? Let's hae a few bit prayer frae ye. Ye haena forgotten hoe to say them sewerly?"—meaning, I take it, some of the blasphemous expressions that would have rushed in a torrent from his mouth at such an accident on the passage out.

But Jem's reply was as unexpected by his tormenter as it was disconcerting, for he dropped upon his knees immediately and cried: "Dear Fader Gott, You know I haf been zo bat, zo fery bat, I have been blag like pitch. I tink bat, speak bat, do bat all day, efery day. Unt den You make me know you lofe me; You make me see mineselluf yoost as I was, unt I been afrait. But now I know—glory to Gott!—I know de blag sin is gone; I am all nice unt vite inside, unt I don't afrait any more. Unt Billy ask me to pray liddle, tank You so much, dear Yesus, for dat. I will be glad to break my feets efery day for dat, if I might get de shanse to pring him along to You. Dear Himmelsky Fader, pless him, unt save him, unt pless unt save Bob, too, unt all my dear shipmates, unt all my dear broders unt sesters in Port Chalmers, unt may ve all come togedder in You big House up clere soon, for Yesus Christ's sake, Amen."

My hearty "Amen" echoed his, but besides that there was no sound. Our two watchmates were profoundly impressed, and I fancied I could see a tear glittering in Ballantyne's eye. As for Jem, his face was shining, and the tears were streaming down as if, indeed, the wellspring of living waters had risen so high that it was visibly overflowing. Not another word was spoken. We all turned in and were soon asleep....

So the days rolled delightfully by until it came to pass one night that I was sitting on the capstan on the fo'castle head, keeping my lookout, my gaze fixed upon the dim blue vacancy ahead. I was softly singing, 'God loved the world of sinners lost,' and enjoying myself indescribably. The vessel was only moving through the water about four knots an hour, and from the absence of swell she was so steady that her progress was almost motionless.

Suddenly into my meditations came the sound of a broken voice, and turning sharply around, I saw Ballantyne standing near. By the bright light of the moon I could see that his rugged face was working, all its jovial dimples were gone, and down his cheeks big tears chased each other. Now one thing is always noticeable in the truly converted man or woman—their hearts grow very soft, their pity great, for any one in distress. So I was deeply moved, and, springing off my perch, I clutched his hand, eagerly inquiring what was the matter. All that he could say was that he was an awful sinner. He wanted to tell me what his life had been, but I would not hear. I told him that I had no right to be his confessor, and that his telling me could do no good. Maybe I was wrong, but that was how I felt about it. What I could do to comfort him I did, telling him exactly how I had found peace, and assuring him that he need not weary himself in trying to force an open door — that the Lord was far more anxious for him to come than he was— deeply stirred as I could see him to be. I was afraid to talk too much, however, because I had seen people actually confused out of all comprehension, and I had been taught by experience that at the supreme moment of the birth of a soul the nurse must stand aside and allow the Physician to do His work unhindered. There will be plenty of scope for nursing afterward. I believe we stood in perfect silence for about ten minutes while I was sending up an incessant stream of wordless petitions that it might please the Lord to set this anxious soul at liberty.

Presently he spoke: "Tom, lad, let's hae a bit pray'r frae ye."

I gladly responded, but even as I knelt I could not help remembering the occasion, so shortly before, when he had put almost the same request to Jem in the hope of hearing that much-trying man give vent to his feelings in some of the foul words that had been his usual speech. Resolutely pushing away the hindering reflection, I said:

"Dear Father, here's poor Willie Ballantyne brought face to face with You at last. You've done it Yourself, and no one but himself can prevent him from being set free. I needn't ask You to save him; You've done all that; but I do ask You to make him see that it is so. Loving Lord,

You've been pleading with him for a long time; make him give up struggling against You; make him as happy as You make everybody who give themselves right up to You. And we'll bless You and praise You with all our hearts, with all the new words and powers You give us. Amen."

I had no sooner finished speaking than Ballantyne broke in:

"Lord Jesus Christ, I ken Ye've sauvit me. I cannot feel't; ma heid's all dizzy like; but I'm believin' wut Ye've said about not ca'asting oot ony puir vratch 'at comes t'Ye. A'am's bad's ah can be, a drucken, swearin', feckless loun; there is na onythin' tae be said fur ma 'at's guid. But ah ken fine 'at Ye love me fur all ahm sae bad. Here ah a'am, take ma, an' mak somethin' oot o' ma, fur ah've made an awfu' mess o' mysel. Amen."

Then springing to his feet, he kissed me, while I hardly knew whether I was in the body or out of it. All I knew and realized most profoundly was that He who came to do the will of His Father was doing it now, and no one else had any hand in the wonderful work at all.

As soon as ever we had quieted down, if that be the correct expression to use where all had been so quiet, I said: "May I go and tell Jem, Willy?" "Aye," he answered readily, "ye may that, Tom."

In a moment I sprang off the fo'castle and flew around the corner of the house, coming crash up against Jem's broad chest with a force that nearly knocked all the breath out of my body. What little remained was speedily dispersed, for Jem, flinging those long arms of his around me, gave me a hug like that of a grizzly bear, so that I hung limp and helpless across his body while he gasped in broken tones:

"Bob's foun' de Lord. Bob's foun' de Lord."

Then my condition alarmed him, and he set me gently down, full of solicitude as to whether he had hurt me. I thought my ribs were cracked, but, finding I was all right, I eagerly inquired how this strange thing had come about. He told me that for the last hour he had been pleading with Bob in consequence of a question the latter had put to him almost identical with that asked me by Ballantyne. And this was the result. Then I told him my wonderful news, and for a few moments I thought he would have a fit. In the midst of our mutual rejoicings our two chums joined us, and from thence till eight bells we had such a prayer meeting as I had never attended before or since.

The bell brought it to a close, but when we were relieved and went below we could not sleep. We sat up in our bunks and sang as if we would burst our breasts, as the bird sang, of whom George Macdonald says:

Our shipmates of the other watch came in and looked sourly at us, the big German especially. How well I remember his sarcastic question: "Vell, you all goes mat, ain'd id?" When we tried to tell them what had happened, they went out firmly convinced that we had gone mad, and muttering disgustedly. But what did we care? What did anything matter now? The Lord had lifted up the light of His countenance upon us, and our cups were overflowing. It was the tongue of the dumb singing. But to try and explain it would be as easy as making a color-blind man appreciate the glories of a tropical sunset.

—From "With Christ at Sea."

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