

He Took My Place



An ungodly sea captain lay in his cabin in mid-ocean, staring death in the face. He shrank back in the presence of "the king of terrors," the dread of eternity weighing heavily upon him. Captain Coutts sent for his first mate and said, "Williams, pray for me or read me a bit from the Bible. I have been very wicked, as you know, and am soon to die."

"You know I am not a praying man, captain, so I can't pray. And I have no Bible to read to you."

"Then send for Thomas, the second mate, perhaps he can pray a bit." The second mate was soon in the presence of his dying captain, when he said to him: "I say, Thomas, I am afraid I am bound for eternity this trip. Get down and pray for me. Ask God to have mercy upon my poor soul."

"I'd gladly do it to oblige you, captain, if I could; but I have not prayed since I was a lad."

They searched the ship for a man who could pray, but they searched in vain; and for a Bible, but none could be found, until one of the sailors told the captain he had seen a book that looked like a Bible in the hands of the cook's boy, a little fellow named Willie Platt. They summoned him to the captain's quarters, and the captain asked him to read.

"Sit down, and find something in it that will help me, for I am afraid I am going to die. Find something about God having mercy on a sinner like me, and read it to me."

Willie did not know where to read, but he remembered that his mother had him read the fifty-third chapter of Isaiah just before he left home.

Willie turned to that blessed chapter that so fully sets forth the love and mercy of the Lord Jesus Christ in dying for poor sinners such as John Coutts, and began to

read. When he got to the fifth verse—"He was wounded for our transgressions, He was bruised for our iniquities: the chastisement of our peace was upon Him; and with His stripes we are healed," the captain, who was listening for his very life, realized that he was surely having his last chance of being saved: "Stop, my lad! That sounds like it! Read it again." Once more the boy read over the blessed words.

"Aye, my lad, that's good—that's it, sure."

These words from the captain encouraged Willie, and he said, "Captain, when I was reading that verse at home, mother made me put my name in it. May I put it in now just where mother told me?"

"Certainly, sonny; put your name in just where your mother told you, and read it again."

Reverently and slowly the boy read the verse: "He [Jesus] was wounded for Willie Platt's transgressions, He was bruised for Willie Platt's iniquities: the chastisement of Willie Platt's peace was upon Him; and with His stripes Willie Platt is healed."

When Willie had finished, the captain was halfway over the side of his bed, reaching toward the lad, and said, "My boy, put your captain's name in the verse and read it again—John Coutts, John Coutts."

He slowly read the verse again: "He was wounded for John Coutts' transgressions, He was bruised for John Coutts' iniquities: the chastisement of John Coutts' peace was upon Him; and with His stripes John Coutts is healed."

When the boy had finished reading, the captain said, "That will do, my lad; you may go now."

Then the captain lay back upon his pillow and repeated over and over again those precious words of Isaiah 53:5,

putting in his own name each time, and as he did so, the joy of heaven filled his soul. Was he saved? Yes, praise the Lord, he was saved! Another poor sinner for whom Christ died "had received Him" (John 1:12). "That if thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus, and shalt believe in thine heart that God hath raised Him from the dead, thou shalt be saved" (Romans 10:9).

Before John Coutts fell asleep in Jesus he had witnessed to everyone on his vessel that the Christ, the Man of Calvary, was wounded for his transgressions, bruised for his iniquities, that the chastisement that he rightfully deserved had fallen on his blessed Substitute, and with His stripes—the stripes that fell on Jesus while on the cross—he had been healed! "God commendeth His love toward us in that while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us" (Romans 5:8).

Beloved reader, do you know anything about this salvation? Have you taken your true place as a poor "ungodly sinner" before God and trusted in Christ for pardon? "Be it known unto you...that through this Man [Jesus] is preached unto you the forgiveness of sins: and by Him all that believe are justified from all things, from which ye could not be justified by the law of Moses" (Acts 13:38,39).