

“Acceptable Words” Series.

“EXCEPT JOE WHITBREAD.”



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No. 4

“EXCEPT JOE WHITBREAD.”

THE following circumstances were related by a Christian lady, well known to the writer, shortly before she was taken from this world to be for ever with the Lord.

She was visiting in Dorsetshire, and had been asked by another Christian to see a poor woman at a village about two miles from Bridport. On arriving at the cottage she learned from a neighbour that the woman in whom she was interested had gone out.

But this neighbour, hearing from the lady, Mrs. R——, that she had called to speak with the woman about her soul, said that there was a sick man, Joe Whitbread, living a few doors lower down who would be glad of a visit.

Mrs. R—— immediately went to

the house, and after knocking at the door, walked in. She found the man was alone and very ill, being, in fact, doubled up with pain before the fire.

After speaking with him for a few minutes concerning his health, she turned the conversation to his state before God. He unhesitatingly declared that in that respect he was all right, as he had never injured any one in his life, and was not a bit afraid to die, altogether evincing his state to be one of stubborn *self-righteousness*.

Having heard all he had to say without making much answer, she proposed to read him a little from the word of God. He made no objection, and she accordingly opened her Bible at the scripture commencing Romans iii. 9, reading it as follows, very slowly, and with much emphasis upon the words in italics.

“ ‘ What then ? are we better than

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they? No, in no wise: for we have before proved both Jews and Gentiles, that they are all under sin'—*except Joe Whitbread.*

" 'As it is written, There is none righteous, no not one'—*except Joe Whitbread.*

" 'There is none that understandeth, there is none that seeketh after God'—*except Joe Whitbread.*

" 'They are all gone out of the way, they are together become unprofitable; there is none that doeth good, no, not one'—*except Joe Whitbread.*

" 'Now we know that what things soever the law saith, it saith to them who are under the law: that every mouth may be stopped, and all the world may become guilty before God'—*except Joe Whitbread.*

" 'Therefore by the deeds of the law there shall no flesh be justified in His sight'—*except Joe Whitbread.*

" 'But now the righteousness of God without the law is manifested, being witnessed by the law and the prophets; even the righteousness of God which is by faith of Jesus Christ unto all, and upon all them that believe: for there is no difference'—*except Joe Whitbread.*

" 'For all have sinned and come short of the glory of God'—*except Joe Whitbread.*"

When she came to the last of these verses, he cried out in great distress, "Oh, stop, ma'am! I can't bear it any more! Oh, stop, stop, ma'am!"

She, affecting surprise, asked what was the matter, remarking, "I'm only putting together what God says and what you say. God says '*All have sinned*'; and you say you have *not*; so that must be '*except Joe Whitbread.*'" Only a few more words passed, and she left.

A day or two afterwards, Mrs. R—— paid a second visit ; but to her surprise was refused admittance. His wife was this time at home, and stated that he was confined to his bed, very much worse in health, not able to see any one, and she firmly refused to let her enter his room.

However, Mrs. R—— elicited that he had been visited the day before by the clergyman, who was much surprised to find how his parishioner had been disturbed from the false security in which he had previously been so comfortably lulled ; that he had received the sacrament, administered by the clergyman, who had assured them that he was all right ; and they were charged on no account to admit the lady to see him a second time !

As the man's wife persisted in obeying the clergyman's injunction, Mrs. R—— had very reluctantly to

forego an interview with the poor invalid.

Believing the Lord would yet open a way for her to see him, she made a third visit a few days later when she found the woman tractable, and succeeded in gaining admission to the bed of the dying sufferer. The moment she appeared in his room his face brightened up with joy and gladness, and he exclaimed how delighted he was to see her, having been longing for her to come.

When his transports had subsided, he related what agonies of soul he had gone through since her first interview with him, so much so that a report began to spread in the village that he had lost his reason; but the Lord had revealed Himself to him, and it was all now PERFECT, CLOUDLESS PEACE, and he was longing to depart and to be with Christ.

They accordingly rejoiced and praised together for the wondrous grace that had rescued him from the self-righteousness in which Satan had held his prey. A few days afterwards he fell asleep, having been full of joy from the moment he found peace to that in which his spirit passed into the presence of Him whose precious, perfect work had made him meet to be a partaker of the inheritance of the saints in light.

Dear reader, are you enwrapped with that terrible cloak of *self-righteousness* which so many are folding around them in a blind and fatal self-complacency? Oh, let God's word penetrate your soul, and strip off you every false security—"There is NONE that doeth good, no, NOT ONE." (Romans iii. 12). W. R.