

18 *Post-Script: A Parable for Our Time*

The Parable of the Drowning Man

During a tempest, a man fell overboard from a vessel. He began to drown. The boat's captain told the second lieutenant to throw a life-preserver overboard. He did so. Then a self-appointed leader among the crew began to scream to the drowning man not to use the life preserver. In fact, he screamed out that if he took hold of it he would surely die. The self-appointed leader told the drowning man the only means of escape was to stop any effort to tread water. By being calm and making no effort, he would be safe and secure from all alarms. Comforted by these sing-song words, the drowning man followed this advice. As he did so, he continued to drown. Then the drowning man saw the life preserver drifting further and further away. Then he remembered he had heard the captain command the life preserver be sent to him. He realized he needed to make the effort for the life preserver. However, the preserver had drifted too far away. When he made for it, he lacked the strength to reach it, and drowned.

The Meaning of the Parable of the Drowning Man

The captain is Jesus. The life preserver is the gospel of costly grace. The second lieutenant represents the twelve apostles. The other voice of the self-appointed leader represents the pastors who teach cheap grace. The drowning man represents sinners who need to hear the gospel. The instruction to not take the life preserver are the lessons of pastors which dismiss and distort Jesus' gospel. The message to the drowning man to stop any effort to save himself is the doctrine that tells the lost that cutting off body parts causing sin

is irrelevant to secure salvation. The screaming of the self-appointed leader among the crew represents the tactics of mistranslating passages and repetition of indoctrination to serve cheap grace. The sing-song words of the comforting message represents the false consolation to millions that they are saved even though they are ungodly and have never repented. It symbolizes doctrine reinforced by songs like “Just as I am” which suggest no repentance is necessary to be saved. God loves just as we are — unrepentant and unchanged. The drifting of the preserver represents the ever increasing danger that the lost world will not learn of the true gospel of costly grace until it is too late. The drowning man being swallowed by the tempest represents damnation.

He who has ears to hear, let him hear.

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