

The boy inside his clothes

Boys and girls, I am going to tell you the story of a boy named Ralphie. Ralphie was a boy who fell on hard times. You see, his daddy had been killed in an automobile accident, and his mother had been hurt so badly that she had to be put in a wheelchair, and she couldn't wash and iron for Ralphie. Now that was a big problem for Ralphie since he just couldn't keep clean. Ralphie and his mother had to leave their nice comfortable home and move in with a cross old auntie. Her name was Aunt Agatha and she was cross too. She just couldn't understand how a boy could get so dirty; neither could anyone else, except mother. She always seemed to understand.

One day Ralphie went to a Bible class and in the class the teacher showed a most interesting book. It was a "Wordless Book." Then she asked, "Did you boys and girls ever see a book like this? It hasn't a single word in it, and yet it tells a most wonderful story. Would you like to hear it? All the children were nodding their heads, and Ralphie sat right on the edge of his chair so as not to miss a word. Then the teacher did an unusual thing: she turned to the last page, and began the story from the back instead of the front. She said that she liked to tell the best part first. The color of this page was gold, and she began to tell about a beautiful place called Heaven where the streets are paved with pure gold. In Heaven, she said, no one ever gets sick. In fact there will not be any toothaches or headaches. Heaven is also a wonderful place because Jesus will be there to love and care for us. Yes, Heaven is the kind of place that we would all like to go to when we die; however, there is something that will keep us out of that beautiful place."

Then she held up the black page and told them that sin will never into that beautiful place. Ralphie knew what sin was: it was the bad things he did like talking back to his aunty and telling lies so he wouldn't get caught when he disobeyed. The teacher told them this Bible Verse: "For all have sinned and come short of the glory of God." All of us are sinners because we were born with sinful hearts because of Adam's sin. Adam disobeyed God in the garden of Eden and since he was a sinner, all his children (and that is all of us) are sinners too.

Then the teacher turned to the red page and said, "This red page stands for the blood of the Lord Jesus. God knew we were going to be sinners and He knew there was nothing we could do to get rid of our sins, but He loved us so much that He was willing for His own Son to come to this earth and die for our sins. Sin had to be paid for and Jesus paid for all of our sins on the cross. We should be punished for our sins, but the Lord Jesus was willing to take that punishment for us."

Look at this white page, the teacher continued as she pointed to the next page. It speaks of a clean pure heart. The fact that Jesus died for us does not save us, unless we accept Him as our Savior (receive Him into our heart). When we do this, He comes in and washes all of our sins away. He gives us a clean heart. Then when we die we can go to the beautiful haven. Is there a boy or girl who would like right now to open his heart and receive the Lord Jesus as Savior?

Ralphie was the first to raise his hand. He did want to go to heaven for he knew that his daddy was there. They had often talked together about being saved so that you could go to heaven. With the teacher he prayed that Jesus would come into his heart and wash away all his sins. When Ralphie got home, he told his mother about what he did. She was so happy for she too knew Jesus as her Savior.

The next morning, cross old Aunt Agatha gave Ralphie his clean shirt, scolding him the whole time. "It's no use giving you a clean shirt, it will be dirty before you get to school, and here are your pants. I've ironed and ironed them, but they'll be all baggy at the knees by noon. How do you get the knees so dirty?" Here are your stockings and your shoes: I'm sure that they will look horrible by the end of the day. Poor Ralphie- there was a great big lump in his throat, and it didn't help that he had his English book in his hand. He could handle spelling and math, but why oh why did he have to learn English.

When Ralphie went in to tell his mother goodbye, she looked him all over. My, but you look nice this morning. Do try to keep yourself clean today. But as she kissed him goodbye, she said, if you forget and get all dirty, remember that you are clean on the inside and the boy on the inside is more important than the boy on the outside. When mother put that kiss on his cheek, he forgot all about that scolding old Aunt Agatha gave him. Ralphie just knew he could keep clean today; he would try very hard. But by noon, he was a mess: everything about him was dirty.

Just then the door opened and in walked the principal. Boys and girls, I have been telling you that I was going to get a new boat. Well, my boat has come. It's down at the lake and it's a beauty too. How many of you would like to go for a ride this afternoon? All the heads bobbed up and down. Who wouldn't go to the lake rather than study? Then the principal said, I've decided to let everyone go who can answer the four English questions the teacher is going to put on the board.

The questions were not hard, and soon the class was busy- all but Ralphie. Oh why did it have to be English Ralphie thought as he chewed the end of his pencil. Finally he got the first three questions, but he just couldn't get the last answer. Ted, his pal across the aisle whispered over, "Hurry up, Ralphie; you aren't going to get to go." It's no use Ralphie said; I just can't get the answer to the last one.

When the teacher had her back turned, Ted wrote the answer down quickly and slipped it across the aisle. "Here it is. Copy it down quick and you can go to." What a chance! He reached for his pencil but as he did so, he caught sight of one dirty sleeve and then the other. This brought to mind his mothers parting words, "Remember Ralphie, you're clean inside, and the boy inside the clothes is more important than the boy outside."

Ralphie struggled for a moment, whispered a prayer for help, then took his pencil and wrote across Ted's paper, "Thanks, but I can't cheat like that because I'm a Christian."

Ralphie was the only one who didn't make the boat ride. There were some great big hot tears about to come out of his eyes when he started home, "and besides," he thought, "Aunt Agatha will be waiting for me, and what is she going to say?" Surely enough, there she was in the doorway, waiting for him. "Just look at you young man; you're the dirtiest child I ever saw." This was too much for Ralphie. He brushed past his Auntie and up the stairs to his own room. He was just about to have a good cry when he heard someone at the door, downstairs. He brushed past the tears and listened. Why, he knew that voice. That was his school teacher. What was she doing here? Ralphie went out in the hall and looked to see what was going on. He saw the teacher hand something to his mother. It was the note that Ted had given to him with the answer. "I thought you'd like to see this," the teacher was saying to Mother; "I'm so proud of Ralphie, that he didn't cheat even to get to go on the boat ride. I'm sure he really wanted to go, and this wasn't easy. Yes, I know he gets dirty on the outside, but he is so fine inside." Then the teacher left.

Ralphie peered down the stairs to see what would happen. His mom was crying and then old Aunt Agatha came around the corner wiping tears out of her eyes too. When she saw Ralphie, she said to him, "Yes, you do get yourself dirty, but I'm proud of you that you didn't cheat to go on the boat ride. You know Ralphie, when you told me you had a white heart, I didn't believe you. I didn't believe that you knew what you were talking about, but now I do, because you acted like it in school today. You know, if having a white heart can make you be so different, I believe I want one too." "Oh Aunt Agatha, do you mean it? Do you really?" Ralphie threw his arms around his Auntie and hugged her good.. "Let's kneel down here and tell Jesus that you want to be saved." Believe it or not, cross old Aunt Agatha knelt down and asked Jesus to come into her heart and save her.

The next day at school, Ted said to Ralphie, "Ralphie, I don't know what's the difference between you and me, but there must be something. I know what I would've done if I needed an answer so I could go on the boat ride. There has to be a difference, do you know what it is?" Ralphie told Ted about his being a Christian. Then Ralphie took out the Wordless Book that his Bible Club teacher had given to him and showed Ted how to be saved. When Ted heard how his dark heart could be made white, he told Ralphie, "I want Jesus to come into my heart like he is your heart." So right there under the tree in the school yard, Ted bowed his head and prayed that Jesus would come into his heart to wash away his sins with His Blood.

Boys and girls, remember never to cheat. And if Jesus isn't in your heart, why not ask Him in right now?

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