

# Can't Smuggle Your Soul To Heaven

*Evangelistic Message*

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sermonaudio.com

**Preached On:** Tuesday, May 21, 2019

**Evangelism Awakening**

Tampa, Florida 33607

**Online Sermons:** [www.sermonaudio.com/9225](http://www.sermonaudio.com/9225)

Well, there may be a sailor here tonight or a boat-owner. Stay with me, friends, for I have a riveting story about the sea to share with you. I believe, friends, that you'll want to pay close attention to my message this evening because it's an exciting story about a sea captain who made a lawless living as a smuggler of contraband and I want to share with you, friends, because it speaks so clearly of many in our churches today.

Whether you are attending church somewhere right now or not, many of you have visited some kind of church in the past. I know when I was young, I visited many different churches trying to find my way to God but I couldn't find him. My search was in vain. There may be someone here tonight who's trying to find their way to God. I even joined a church once but I still couldn't find my way to God because that church couldn't point me in the right direction. They just gave me some side roads which led to a dead-end.

I couldn't find my way to heaven. I didn't know what to do. I was a church member like some of you who thought I could smuggle my soul into heaven by various means. Some folks try to smuggle their soul into heaven by being a good person. Some folks think good people go to heaven so they'll try to be as good as they can, but they soon realize how bad they can be. Some folks try to smuggle their soul to heaven by good works, by living by the golden rule, by doing unto others as you would have them do unto you. Some people will accumulate a long track record of church service to prove their good works; they may teach a Sunday school class or sing in the choir or work in the nursery. Those are all needed things, friends, but they alone won't get your soul into heaven. I was a Sunday school teacher for years but I still was an unconverted man on my way to hell. My good works couldn't help me – hear me now – and your good works won't help you either, friend. You cannot smuggle your soul to heaven through good works.

Well, some of you ask, "Preacher, I thought good people go to heaven? Are you saying they don't?" Well, friend, I hate to break it to you but good people don't go to heaven, only forgiven people get to go there. You must have your sins washed in the blood of Christ Jesus. You must be born again. Try as you may, you can't smuggle your soul into heaven by good resolutions. Some folks join a church and then go about reforming themselves up to a certain point. They may drop some bad habits, make a new resolution to God to be a better person, to be better next time, but the trouble is good resolutions don't get the job done because of who you are in your natural state. You can't take Jesus as a band-aid to get to heaven. I know some folks try but it doesn't work out too well.

For you to understand why men are sent to hell for all eternity, you must sit under the Gospel preached in the context of the holy law of God. The law must be preached in the power of the Holy Spirit to show man how sinful he is and how greatly he needs a Savior in Christ Jesus. My Bible is plain that when Adam sinned, I sinned, and therefore under the covenant of works, every mother's son is liable to the death penalty in hell. God's law says that whoever breaks his law by sin is guilty and under his condemnation.

Man needs a sin-substitute in the person of Jesus but men try to bypass Jesus on the way to heaven; they try to smuggle themselves into heaven by other means, but Jesus warns, "He that entereth not by the door into the sheepfold but climbeth up some other way, the same is a thief and a robber." Yet men and women will try to bypass Jesus and find some other way to climb up to heaven but to hang on to a rope of sand.

Hear me now, let me explain, friends: men may have good intentions but all men are fallen in their nature. Men come into this world under a curse from Adam's sin in the garden when the first man, Adam, disobeyed God by sin when he ate of the forbidden fruit. Man has ever since chased after forbidden fruit, forbidden fruit is enticing, forbidden fruit is exciting, but it's sin. My Bible says in Isaiah, "All we like sheep have gone astray. We have turned every one to his own way." Listen, friends, sin is going our way when we know it isn't God's way.

Hear me now, young person: that's our problem in trying to smuggle our soul into heaven by our own goodness or good works or good resolution. Sin is still there floating behind us on our sea of life. God's word says in Ecclesiastes, "God requires that which is past." You can't away from your past, friend, anymore than you can get away from your past sins, they follow behind you like bloodhounds sniffing you out, sniffing you out for my Bible says in Numbers 32:23, "ye have sinned against the LORD: and be sure your sin will find you out." Just making good resolutions won't get the job done, friend. You can't smuggle your soul into heaven that way.

I want to share a story with you now, friends, about a man who tried to smuggle his soul into heaven by good resolutions. He was a sea captain by trade and he made his living as a smuggler of stolen contraband. He lived a lawless life, often landed in jail where he promised God he would do better next time when he got out, but he always went back to smuggling again. He's like many of us who keep falling into sin and we keep promising God we won't do it again, we'll do better next time, but as soon as our tears have dried and our resolutions are still fresh in our memories, we end up in that pigpen of sin like a hog in his wallow. No sir, you can't smuggle your soul into heaven by good resolutions, you need power from above, you need a Savior who is Jesus. That's what this sea captain had to learn.

Hear now his story, friends. Give me your undivided attention. Listen to his words: I was the captain of a smuggling boat. At dawn, we discovered a Coast Guard boat in the distance. The Coast Guard was still a long way off and we soon saw her turning toward us. We couldn't possibly get away. We all knew what would happen if we were caught, not only would the boat and cargo be confiscated, we would all be sent to prison.

There was dead silence as we stared at each other in dismay. The Coast Guard was coming up fast behind us. Suddenly I thought of a way out. Hastily we rigged a screen at the stern to hide our deck, then I sent the men in a line to hand up the cargo and pitch it overboard. We worked fast. Nothing was heard but the splash of the cargo dropping into the sea. The hold was empty and fast, we'd soon be finished.

I saw the ship's boy was also exhausted so I sent him to see if the Coast Guard was very far off. In a minute, he came rushing back gasping, "It won't sink!" I ran to the stern of the ship, the sun was just rising behind us and there in that long line of light were the packages of cargo bobbing up and down in our wake. The first package in line had just reached the oncoming Coast Guard boat. Helplessly, we stood and stared. The proof of our guilt was spread out for all to see. In our ears rang the words, "It won't sink!" In prison from time to time, I would resolve to correct my ways but resolving is one thing, doing is another, as soon as we were free, I went back to smuggling.

A few years later, I went out in a boat at night, it was New Year's Eve and in spite of myself, I began to review my life. I saw myself as a child saying my prayers. I heard my mother tell me of one who came down from heaven to bring life to the world. The more I thought, the more horrified I was. God had created me and I had lived and was still living as though there was neither God nor eternity. I got on my knees and prayed that God would help me, I would be another man, I wouldn't touch a drop of liquor. I made many more resolutions about what I would do and what I wouldn't, and I began to feel very good about myself. On further reflection, I saw that there were a lot more things I ought to clean up, I must throw overboard everything that didn't belong. My life was to be completely changed. My resolutions were getting more serious, my heart grew lighter, and I was happy in the thought that I had become a new man.

Having made this decision, it seemed as if everything was in perfect order. I was ready to go back to land when suddenly the moon broke through the clouds and shone across the water to my boat. The memory of that morning when chased by the Coast Guard I had cast the cargo into the sea, came over me with overwhelming power. I heard the cry, "It won't sink!" How blind I was. I had tried to lighten the ship by casting the cargo overboard and there it was all floating behind me like an accusing line stretching up to the throne of God. All that I had done, said, or thought, was there before God and it wouldn't sink. Fool that I was, I thought I could drown all my wickedness without the thought of the holiness of God. If I had been able from that moment on to do only what was good, it would not have changed the evil done in the past. What good was it to be forming good resolutions for the future when the past couldn't be hidden?

Tears filled my eyes. I was hopelessly lost. Then I remembered something, hadn't I been told about Jesus, the Savior of sinners? Hadn't he died on the cross for me? And if I turned to him now, wouldn't his precious blood wash away my many sins? Wasn't there grace and mercy for even me? All at once, everything was clear. Yes, the Lord Jesus had died for me, he had borne the punishment of all my sins. If I accepted that, they would all be cast into the depths of the sea. "Their sins and iniquities I will remember no more,"

came to my mind. I was filled with joy, entirely relieved of my burden. I turned my boat toward shore. I was a new man. I had gone out a lost sinner but I was coming back redeemed of the Lord.

Friend, is that sea captain you? That man had to get lost before he could be saved. He had to realize good resolutions wouldn't get him to heaven. Friend, look out on the water of your life, look out on the rolling waves as your sins and your past comes up before you. But listen to this, friend, God can cast all your sins into the depths of the sea never to rise again. God's word is clear in Micah, "Who is a God like unto thee, that pardoneth iniquity, and passeth by the transgression of the remnant of his heritage? he retaineth not his anger for ever, because he delighteth in mercy. He will turn again, he will have compassion upon us; he will subdue our iniquities; and thou wilt cast all their sins into the depths of the sea."

Listen, friend, only Jesus can bring you to heaven. Your sins must be washed in his blood. That's how they are cast into the depths of the sea never to rise again in accusation. Look unto Jesus, friend, look unto him alone to save you. Cast yourself entirely upon him in repentance and faith. You must come to him and surrender to him.

I'm going to end our time tonight, friend, by singing a hymn. Listen to me, friend, if God's been dealing with your heart tonight, don't delay, don't turn back, come to Christ for forgiveness of sin. Jesus is the only refuge for sin. Jesus says, "I am the way, the truth and the life: no man cometh unto the Father but by me." Jesus is the refuge for sin, friend. Come to him as I sing.

"All to Jesus I surrender,  
All to Him I freely give;  
I will ever love and trust Him,  
In His presence daily live.

I surrender all,  
I surrender all.  
All to Thee, my blessed Savior,  
I surrender all.

All to Jesus I surrender,  
Humbly at His feet I bow,  
Worldly pleasures all forsaken;  
Take me, Jesus, take me now.

I surrender all,  
I surrender all.  
All to Thee, my blessed Savior,  
I surrender all.

All to Jesus I surrender,  
Lord, I give myself to Thee;  
Fill me with Thy love and power,  
Let Thy blessing fall on me.

I surrender all,  
I surrender all.  
All to Thee, my blessed Savior,  
I surrender all."