

THE BOY WHO SHOUTED
“WOLF!” BUT THERE
WASN'T A WOLF

AND OTHER FABLES

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Reformation
Lightning

*To my dear great-grandchildren—
Gwilym, Ezra, Macsen, Gruffydd and Betsan*

CONTENTS

Introduction	xi
Belling the Cat	1
The Boy Who Shouted “Wolf!” But There Wasn’t a Wolf	5
Androcles and the Lion	11
The Donkey and the Dachshund	17
The Cowardly Bat	21
The Battle Between the Sun and the East Wind	27
To Live as a Swan or a Peacock You Must be Born as a Swan or a Peacock	33
The Last Days of the Old Lion	39
The Donkey and the Statue	43
The Bundle of Sticks	49

INTRODUCTION

One day two men were sent to put the Lord Jesus in prison. But as they tried to push their way through the crowds of people who were listening to him they became fascinated by what Jesus was saying and they forgot what they had been sent to do. Transfixed, they only wanted to listen to his words. Eventually they returned empty-handed to their bosses.

“Where is he?” they angrily asked the two men. “We sent you to bring him here.”

The two men looked down at the ground and were embarrassed. “No one ever spoke like Jesus,” was all they could say.

There was another wonderful storyteller whose name was Aesop. But unlike the Lord Jesus no one is really sure who he was. Many think that he was born

on the shores of the Black Sea, 620 years before Jesus was born in Bethlehem. Others think that he was from Africa, maybe from Ethiopia. What we do know, however, is that he was a wonderful inventor of stories. When he died, they were gathered together and have been read and told ever since.

The apostle John tells us that Jesus Christ is “the true light that gives light to everyone” (John 1:9). Every person, man or woman, boy or girl, is made in the image of God. And even though that image has been damaged by our sin, like our creator God we are creative and able to sense beauty. We all have a conscience that tells us what is right and wrong, and all of us can see that it is foolish to live selfish, cruel and lazy lives. So, even though Aesop had never heard of the Lord Jesus, the apostle John teaches us that it was, in fact, the Lord Jesus that gave light to Aesop’s stories.

This book is full of some of Aesop’s most well-known stories. At the end of each tale is a short epilogue that teaches us something of the light that the Lord Jesus brings. My hope is that as you read them your lives and hearts will become illuminated with gospel joy and you will learn to love the Lord Jesus.

BELLING THE CAT

“Belling”. What in the world does that mean? What a strange name for a cat. Did it have a black patch on its back that looked like a bell? How did it get *that* name? Oh, well “Belling” wasn’t the name of this cat at all. Let me tell you how this word “Belling” came about.

The cat was actually called Tibby, and it was a great mouser. Each week, or so it seemed to its owner, it brought a dead mouse in through the cat flap. Its owner didn’t like mice so even though the mouse always gave her a shock, she was happy that one had been caught.

You can imagine that the mice were not so happy, and after yet another of their family had disappeared through the cunning merciless cat, they held a council of war.

“Now what are we going to do about our great enemy? How are we going to stop it disappearing with our brothers and sisters?”

There was a long silence.

Finally a mouse said, “Couldn’t we talk to it?”

There was laughter followed by groans.

“Talk to it? Talk to it? Any time it got anywhere near to us it would just want to kill us. Its nature is to destroy us. We could talk until the cows came home, but then when we had finished it would nod ... and pounce on us and eat us!”

Then another mouse spoke, “There is that big dog who lives with the Smith family next door. Can’t we persuade it to come here and finish off the cat?”

They thought about it for a moment until someone said, “That dog is as bad as that cat. If we went near it we wouldn’t have an opportunity to say a word before it saw us. We would be running to the mousehole for our very lives.”

“Anyway,” someone else said, “as soon as the cat sees the dog coming it shoots up a tree and smiles down at it. It could never catch Tibby.”

What could they do? They couldn’t stay down under the floorboards; they had to forage for food.

Then a young mouse who had been listening with all the rest spoke up quite shyly. “Why don’t we tie a

bell around its neck? Then we could hear it coming and make our getaway.”

Yes, that seemed a brilliant idea to everyone: bell the cat. It seemed an ideal solution that they would bell the cat. There was a quiet pause as they seemed to have found the answer they were looking for.

The silence was broken by one of the most respected of the mice. It cleared its throat and asked a question, “Ahem ... but who is going to bell the cat?” And they all looked at one another and hung their heads and knew it couldn’t be done by even the bravest and strongest mouse. They were quite helpless to defeat their big, strong enemy. They just had to be very careful and look both ways when they came out of the mousehole.

Do you know that you have an enemy too? Your enemy is your sin. When you say, “Me, me, me!” and you want to be first and you won’t let your brother or sister share and when you sulk because you can’t have your own way and shout, “No, no, no!” at your parents—that is sin. Sin makes us miserable. It is our

enemy and it does the same thing to every single person in the world.

So what can we do about it? We can know Jesus. He is the Son of God who died, was buried, rose again and was seen eating and drinking for almost six weeks before he went back to his Father in heaven. *This* living Jesus is more powerful than sin. He took the wrong things that we do, along with all their blame and shame, on himself on the cross. Instead of God being angry and punishing us, he charged his Son and judged him. Jesus accepted that judgement because he loves us and wants us to be with him for ever.

But God does something else as well: he puts a bell around our sin! When we say or do something sinful our consciences hear a sort of bell ring that says, "You shouldn't do that." Then we know that we are facing our enemy and we can ask God to give us strength to fight it. Every believer in Jesus can hear a bell that God has attached to all the sins that tempt us, and that bell rings out a message, saying, "Don't do it! Get away from it! Turn around and go back! I am here to protect you." The Lord Jesus has belled sin.

THE BOY WHO SHOUTED “WOLF!” BUT THERE WASN'T A WOLF

There was once a boy who was the youngest in his family. When he turned twelve he had to do what all of his brothers had done before him, he had to climb up the hill next to his house and keep watch over the flock of sheep who belonged to everyone in the village.

It wasn't long before the boy got bored sitting there all day long. There was nothing to do. All his friends were down the hill in the village having fun.

Then, one day, as he was looking across the valley to the edge of a wood he thought he saw a shadow in the trees. It looks like there's something moving down there, he thought. Afraid, he did what he was told to do, he stood on the edge of the hill, looked

down over the village and shouted as loud as he could, "Wolf! There's a wolf! Wolf! Wolf! Wolf!"

Then to his satisfaction, he saw the blacksmith come out of his forge with his big hammer and begin to run towards him up the hill. After the blacksmith came his father and older brothers. Then the baker and the cobbler and the butcher and the old man with a beard who lived in a cabin down by the lake.

When they reached the top of the hill where the sheep were safely grazing they asked the boy where the wolf was. He pointed to the woods and they ran over carefully looking behind the trees and rocks. When they were sure the wolf had gone, the boy's father went back to his son and said, "Well done. You call us whenever you see the wolf again."

Peace returned to the village and soon the boy got bored again. What a lonely life he was living, he thought. No excitement. No fun. So a week later he went to the top of the hill overlooking the village and shouted again, "Wolf! Wolf! There's a wolf!"

This time, out came the candlemaker, the farmer, the carpenter and the wheelwright along with some of the others puffing and panting up the hill to the boy and the contented sheep.

"Where is it?" they shouted and the boy pointed to the trees again.