

CTL.TODAY

PRESENTS



**THE TWO
BEARS**
BY J.C. RYLE



Gustave Doré

CTL.Today

Presents

The Two Bears

by Rev. J.C. Ryle

This book is gratefully dedicated to
R.T. Spivey and his grandchildren.

Alexandra, Alice, Carson, Claire,
Ellery, Emily, Evelyn, Madeline,
Molly, Morgan, Noah, Robert
Taylor, Wesley, Wyatt



Samuel relating to Eli
Eli's House

Gifts of God upon



The Two Bears

"From there Elisha went up to Bethel. As he was walking along the road, some little children out of the city, and mocked him, "Go on up, you baldhead!" they said. "Go on up, you baldhead!" He turned around, looked at them and called down a curse on them in the name of the Lord. Then two female bears came out of the woods and mauled forty-two of the children!" — 2 Kings 2:23, 24



Dear Children,

Did you ever see a bear? Perhaps not. There are no wild bears in this country now. There are some kept fastened up in wild-animal shows, or locked up in cages in zoos. But there are none loose in the woods and fields. So perhaps you never saw a bear. A bear is a large, shaggy animal with great teeth and claws, and very strong. It will kill sheep, and lambs, and calves, and goats, and eat them. When it is very hungry it will attack men, women, or children, and tear them to pieces! Female bears that have little cubs, are particularly fierce and cruel.

How thankful we ought to be, that we can walk about in our forests, without fear of being caught by a bear!

Now I am going to tell you a story about a godly man, two bears, and some children. It is a story out of the Bible—so you may be sure that it is all true. Stories in other books are often only "make-believe," and tell us things that never really happened. Stories out of the Bible, you must always remember, are true in every word. Never forget that!



Once upon a time, many hundreds of years ago, there lived a godly man whose name was Elisha. He was at first, the servant to a famous prophet of God named Elijah. After Elijah was taken up to heaven in a chariot of fire, Elisha was appointed to be prophet in his place.

From that time to his death—he was a very great and a very useful man. He did many miracles. He used to



Gerbrand van den Eeckhout

go up and down the land of Israel, teaching people how to serve God, and reproofing sinners.

In some places he kept up schools, called "schools of the prophets." In this way he became famous all over



the country. All people knew Elisha, and all godly people loved him.

One day, not long after Elijah had been taken up to heaven, Elisha went to a place called Bethel, where there was a school. Perhaps he went to see how the school was getting along, and whether it was doing any good. All schools need looking after and examining; and it does them good to be examined. It is only bad boys and girls, who dislike being asked what they have learned.

Now as this good old man Elisha got near Bethel, a very sad thing happened. A large number of little children came out of the town, and behaved very badly. They began to mock Elisha, and called him names. Instead of respecting him, like good children, they made fun of him, and said bad things. "Go on up, you baldhead!" they cried, "Go on up, you baldhead!"

They called him "baldhead," I have no doubt, because the good prophet was bald in old age, and had no hair on his head. They said, "Go on up," I suspect, because his master Elijah had lately gone up to heaven as everybody knew. They meant that Elisha had better

Samuel relating to Eli the Judgements of God upon
Eli's House



go away after his master, and not trouble them any more with his teaching. It was as much as saying, "Be off and begone! It is high time for you to go up, as well as your master."

Just think for a moment how wicked these children were! They lived in a town where they might have learned better things. There was a school of prophets at Bethel. But I am afraid they had not used their opportunities, and had loved play better than lessons. They had no business to mock at Elisha, and treat him so badly. He had done them no harm, and had never been unkind to them. He was a godly man, and one who was their best friend. Above all, they ought not to have said, "Go on up, and get away." They ought rather to have said, "Stay with us, and teach us the way to heaven." Truly it is sad to see to what lengths of wickedness even little children may go. It is sad to see how sinful boys and girls may become and what naughty things they will say, even when they live close to a school!

But what did Elisha do when these children behaved so badly? We are told that, "He turned around, looked



at them" with displeasure. They had probably often done the same thing before. It had become a habit with them which could not be cured. The time had come when they must be punished. And then we are told that "he called down a curse on them in the name of the Lord." That does not mean, you may be sure, that Elisha flew into an angry passion, and swore at the children, as some bad men might have done. He was not a man to say that kind of thing. It only means that he solemnly pronounced God's anger and displeasure against them. He gravely told them, "in the name of the Lord," that God would certainly punish them, and that it was his duty as God's servant to say so. Elisha did not speak in anger. The Judge at the court is not angry with the prisoner when he sentences him to be put in prison. When Elisha pronounced God's curse on these wicked children—he did it as God's appointed servant, firmly and faithfully, but in sorrow. God told him no doubt what to do—and like an obedient servant, he did it.

And what happened as soon as Elisha had spoken? At once two female bears came rushing out of the woods, and attacked these wicked children, tearing

and killing all they caught! Think what an awful surprise that must have been! How dreadfully frightened these children must have felt! What running, and screaming, and tumbling over one another, and crying for help—there must have been! How sorry and ashamed of themselves they must have felt! But with many, it was too late. Before they could get within the walls of Bethel—the two bears had caught and killed forty-two little children! Forty-two little boys and girls that night never came home to Bethel alive! Forty-two little suppers were not eaten! Forty-two little beds were not slept in! Forty-two little funerals took place next day! Some of the other children, I hope, got home safe, and were not hurt. But I am sure they would never forget what they had seen. They would remember the two bears as long as they lived!



Now, dear children, this is a sad story. But it is a very useful and instructive one. Like everything else in the Bible, it was written for your good. It teaches lessons which boys and girls ought never to forget. Let me tell you what those lessons are.

(1) Learn, for one thing, that God takes notice of what children do. He took notice of the "little children" at Bethel, and punished them for their wickedness. Remember, I beg of you, that God has not changed. He is still the same. He is every day taking notice of you.

I believe some people think that it does not matter how children behave, and that God only notices grown-up men and women. This is a very great mistake. The eyes of God are upon boys and girls and He marks all they do! When they do right—He is pleased; and when they do wrong—He is displeased. Dear children, never forget this!

Let no one make you think that you are too young to serve God, and that you may safely wait until you are grown up men and women. This is not true. It is never too soon to become a Christian. As soon as you

Samuel relating to Eli the Judgements of God upon
Eli's House

know right from wrong, you are old enough to begin taking the right way. As soon as you are old enough to be punished for doing wrong, you are old enough



to give your heart to God, and to follow Christ. The child who is old enough to be punished for swearing and telling lies—is old enough to be taught to pray and read the Bible. The child who is big enough to displease God—is also big enough to please Him. The child who is old enough to be tempted by the devil is old enough to have the grace of the Holy Spirit in his heart.

Children, however little and young you are—God is always noticing you! He notices how you behave at home, how you behave at school, and how you behave at play. He notices whether you say your prayers or not, and how you say them. He notices whether you mind what your mother tells you, and how you behave when out of your mother's sight. He notices whether you are selfish, or angry, or tell lies, or take what is not your own. In short, there is nothing about children—that God does not notice.

I read in the Bible, that when little Ishmael was almost dead with thirst in the wilderness, "God heard the voice of the boy." Mark that—God listened to the child's prayer. I read, that when Samuel was only a little boy—God spoke to him.

Samuel relating to Eli the Judgements of God upon
Eli's House



John Singleton Copley

I read that when Abijah, the child of Jeroboam, was sick and dying, God said by the mouth of His prophet, "there is some good thing found in him toward the Lord God."

Children, these things were written for your learning.

Now I will give you a piece of advice. Say to yourselves every morning when you get up, "God sees me! Let me live as in God's sight." God is always watching what you do, and hearing what you say. All is written down in His great books, and all must be reckoned for at the last day. It is written in the Bible, " Even a child is known by his doings."

(2) Learn, for another thing, that it is very wrong to mock godly people and despise God's Word. The little children of Bethel mocked at Elisha, and called him "bald-head." For so doing they were terribly punished.

Dear children, as long as you live, make it a rule never to laugh at the Bible, or to mock Christian people. This is one of the wickedest things you can do. It is pleasant to see boys and girls merry and happy. Youth is the time for laughter and merriment. But take care

Samuel relating to Eli the Judgements of God upon
Eli's House



Pierre Edouard Frère

never to laugh at anything belonging to God.
Whatever you laugh at—do not laugh at God's Word.

Some boys and girls, I am sorry to say, are very thoughtless about this. They think it clever to make fun of those who read their Bibles, and say their prayers, and attend to what is said at Church. They laugh at other boys and girls who mind what their mothers say, and try to corrupt them. Some, indeed, are so wicked, that when they see other children trying to do what pleases God—they will point their fingers at them, and cry, "There goes a little saint!

Now, all this is very wrong, and offends God exceedingly. There is One in heaven who sees these wicked children, and when He sees them He is greatly displeased. We cannot wonder if such children become trouble-makers, and turn out badly. All who despise God's people, despise God Himself. It is written, "Those who honor Me I will honor, and those who despise Me shall be lightly esteemed."

I read in the Bible that Ishmael was turned out of Abraham's house because he mocked his little brother Isaac. At the time when Ishmael did this—he was only

Samuel relating to Eli the Judgements of God upon
Eli's House

a boy. But, boy as he was, he was old enough to offend God by mocking, and to bring himself and his mother into great trouble.



Dear children, some of you perhaps have godly fathers and mothers, who tell you to read your Bibles and say your prayers. I hope that you never laugh at them behind their backs, and mock at what they tell you about God's Word. Be sure, if you do this, that you commit a great sin! It is written, "The eye that mocks at his father, and despises to obey his mother — the ravens of the valley shall pick it out, and the young eagles shall eat it!"

(3) Learn, in the last place, that sin is sure to bring sorrow at last. It brought wounds and death on the little children of Bethel. It brought weeping and crying to the homes of their parents. If these wicked boys and girls had not displeased God—they would not have been torn apart by the bears.

Dear children, as long as you live, you will always see the same thing. Those who will have their own way and run into sin, are sure, sooner or later—to find themselves in trouble. This trouble may not come at once. It may even be kept off for many long years. But sooner or later, it is sure to come. There is a dreadful hell at last, and those who will go on sowing sin—are sure at last to reap sorrow.



Adam and Eve ate the forbidden fruit in Eden—and what was the consequence? Sorrow! They were cast out of the garden with shame.

The people before the flood would go on eating, and drinking, and despising Noah's advice about the flood. And what was the consequence? Sorrow! The flood came, and they were all drowned.



The people of Sodom and Gomorrah would go on sinning in spite of Lot's warnings. And what was the consequence? Sorrow! The fire fell from heaven, and they were all burned up!

Jean Baptiste Camille Corot



Esau despised his birthright. And what was the consequence? Sorrow! He sought it afterward too late, with many tears.

The people of Israel would not obey God's command, and go up into the land of Canaan, when He commanded them. And what was the consequence? Sorrow! They wandered forty years in the wilderness.

Achan would not obey the command of Joshua, but took money, and hid it under his tent. And what was the consequence? Sorrow! He was found out, and publicly stoned to death.

Judas, one of the twelve Apostles, would not give his whole heart to Christ, but coveted money, and betrayed his Master. And what was the consequence? Sorrow! The money did him no good, and did not make him happy—and he hanged himself!

Ananias and Sapphira told a great lie to Peter and the Apostles, in order to be thought well of. And what was the consequence? Sorrow! They were both struck dead in one day!



Judas

Almeida
Dona 1880

Dear children, remember these things to the end of your lives. The wages of sin is death! Sin is sure to bring sorrow at last! Those who tell lies, or steal, or hurt others, may not suffer for it at first. But their sin will surely find them out! Sooner or later, in this world or the next world, those that sow sin, like these wicked children of Bethel, are sure to reap sorrow. The way of transgressors is hard!

And now I will finish all I have been saying, with three parting directions. Consider them well, and lay them to heart.

(1) In the first place, settle it in your minds, that the way to be happy—is to be really holy in the sight of God. If you will have your own way, and follow sin—you are sure to have trouble and sorrow.

(2) In the second place, if you want to be really holy, ask the Lord Jesus Christ to make you holy, and to put His Spirit into your hearts. You cannot make yourselves good, I know. Your hearts are too weak—and the world and the devil are too strong. But Jesus Christ can make you holy, and is ready and willing to do so. He can give you new hearts, and power to



overcome sin. Then take Jesus Christ for your Shepherd and Friend. Cast your souls upon Him. Jesus, who died on the cross to save us, has a special care for little children. He says, "I love those who love Me; and those who seek Me early—shall find Me." "Let the little children to come unto Me—and do not forbid them."

(3) In the last place, if you want to be kept from the evil that is in the world, remember daily—that God sees you—and live as in God's sight. Never mock at godly people, or make fun of the Bible. Love those most—who love God most, and choose for friends those who are God's friends. Hate sin of all sorts. When sinners entice you, do not go along with them. Hate that which is evil. Cleave to that which is good.

Dear children, if you live in this way, God will bless you, and you will find at last that you have "chosen the good part which cannot be taken from you."

Remember these things, and you will have learned something from "The Two Bears".

————The End————

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Eli's House

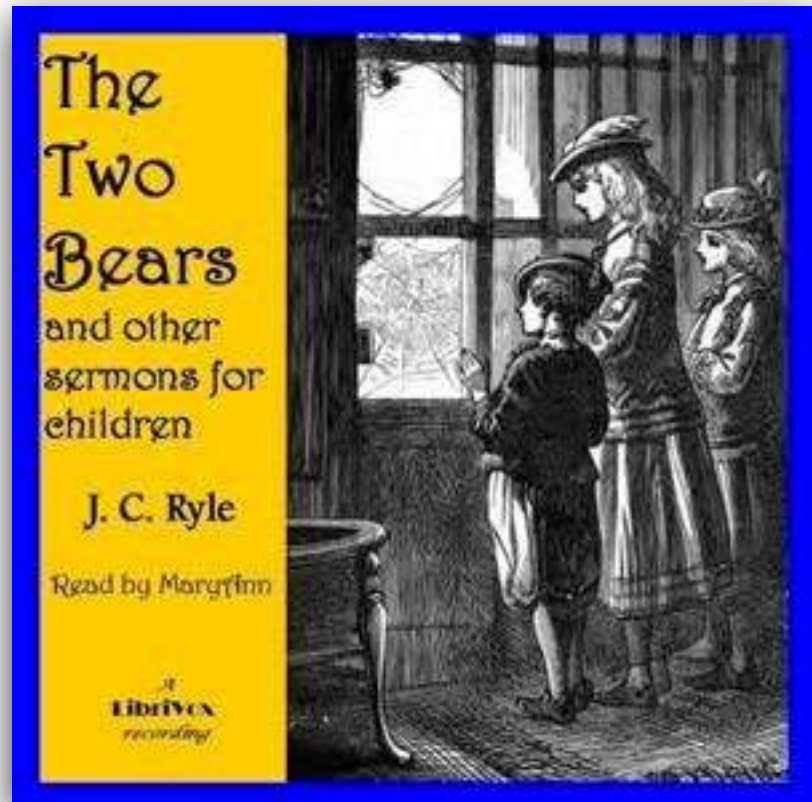


The Two Bears and Other Sermons for Children

By Rev. J. C. Ryle

(1816-1900)

”Let no one make you think that you are too young to serve God. That is not true. As soon as you know right from wrong, you are old enough to begin taking the right way. As soon as you are old enough to be punished for doing wrong, you are old enough to give your heart to God, and to follow Christ.” So Rev. Ryle speaks to children of all ages. He does not speak down to children, for even the littlest ones can understand great spiritual truths. Instead, he teaches them in simple language what it means to be a true follower of Jesus and challenges them to live a better life whatever their age by following Jesus’ example – messages we adults could profit from as well. (Introduction by MaryAnn)



LibriVox: Free Audio Books: The Two Bears and Other Sermons for Children
Link: goo.gl/7Nw6vV (Total running time: 2:29:56 Read by MaryAnn Spiegel)

Other Children's Stories by J. C. Ryle

<http://gracegems.org/B/RyleChildren.htm>

Samuel relating to Eli the Judgements of God upon
Eli's House

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