

A close-up portrait of a man with a full, well-groomed beard and mustache. He is wearing a black leather captain's cap with a gold-colored emblem featuring a ship's wheel and crossed anchors. He is also wearing a brown, textured knit sweater. He has a warm, friendly smile and is looking directly at the camera. The background is a plain, light-colored wall.

ready
NOW

O Captain, won't you
give your heart to Jesus?

In the City of Liverpool, many years ago, on a cold, cloudy morning, the Captain of a steamer was coming down the street on his way to the steamer, when he noticed a poorly-clad, hungry boy standing in front of a fine restaurant.

The Captain placed his hand gently on the boy's shoulder and asked, "What are doing here, my young man?" The boy, with a piteous look, said, "O sir, I was just standing here looking at the good food they have to eat in there."

"Well," said the Captain, "I have but thirty minutes to spare before my steamer leaves; but if you had on clean clothes, a clean face, and your hair combed, I would take you inside the restaurant and get you something to eat." The boy, with a look of love and gentleness, and with tears in his eyes at the Captain's kind words, brushed his hair with his hand and said, "I am ready now." To which the Captain replied, "Well, my young man, God bless you; come with me into the restaurant and I shall get you something to eat." As the boy began to eat, the Captain asked, "Where is your Mother, son?"

"Mother died when I was about four years old," he replied.

"Where is your father?"

"I haven't seen my Father since Mother died."

"And who takes care of you?" inquired the Captain.

The boy, with a look of calm resignation, said: "When my Mother was sick, just before she died, she told me that Jesus would take care of me; she taught me how to pray and love Jesus."

The Captain, with tears in his eyes, said, "I have just a few more minutes before my steamer leaves, and if you were only dressed real well and had a clean face I would take you with me on the steamer – you could wait on me."

The young lad looked up into the Captain's face and cried, "O Captain, I am ready now." The Captain put his arms around the boy, saying, "Come with me, my young man, and

you will always be my boy." They both hurried to the steamer and when on board the Captain introduced him to his men, saying: "He will wait on me and his name is 'Ready Now'. He is always ready and you must not call him by any other name than 'Ready Now'."

The young boy cleaned up after the good Captain had given him a new blue suit of clothes, and he began his pleasant duty of waiting on the Captain, and did so most faithfully.

The Captain learned to love the young boy dearly. Shortly after he had been on board though, he was taken ill, and one day he said to the good Captain: "I feel sick; I have awful pains in my chest. O Captain, I want to be close to you." The kind-hearted man took the young lad in his arms and pressed him to his heart. He soon fell asleep and was carried very carefully to his berth. A few days later the Doctor said to the Captain, "I have done all I can for the young lad; he is seriously ill and will die."

"O Doctor," cried the Captain, "save him! I can't give him up."

But the child continued to grow worse. One day the boy sent for the Captain whom he loved so dearly, and as the Captain looked into his face, he saw that death was very near. The young boy, in a low, weak voice, said: "O Captain, I do love you. You have been so good to me. But I know I am going to leave you; I am going to where Jesus and Mother are. I can see my dear Mother, she is looking for me. Oh, she looks so sweet; and I see the angels, too; I have heard them sing so sweetly. Yes, Captain, I am going to be with Jesus. O Captain, won't you give your heart to Jesus? Meet me in Heaven, Captain. Jesus loves you; won't you let Him save you and become a Christian?"

The Captain with deep emotion and trembling voice

replied, "I have been thinking about it, my dear boy. I will attend to it soon."

"But when?" again asked the boy. "When will you be ready to give your heart to Jesus?"

"Well," said the Captain, "I will not put it off much longer."

"O Captain, won't you let Jesus save you? When will you be ready?"

With tears streaming down his cheeks, the Captain fell on his knees and cried: "I am ready now – ready now." And there on his knees with a broken and contrite heart, the Captain gave his heart to God, surrendered to Jesus.

About half an hour afterward some of the men came to the Captain's quarters and found him kneeling in prayer, the young boy's arms around his neck – the child cold in death's embrace; the spirit had returned to God who gave it. He had pleaded with the Captain to the end, and had won. A faithful little worker for Jesus to the last.

The Captain immediately resigned his position with the shipping company and went out to preach the Gospel of the grace of God to poor, lost sinners and to tell of the dear young boy, who had been the means in God's hands, of leading him to the blessed Saviour.

"Dear Reader, will you kindly permit me to ask you this question, Are you a Christian? Do you know Jesus as your own personal Saviour, in the forgiveness of your sins? If not, I beg you to say as the Captain did, 'I am ready now – ready now.'"

"Behold, now is the accepted time." II Corinthians 6:2.

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www.evangelicaltract.com