

The Plan of Salvation

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Chapter 1

CAN YOU REMEMBER THAT IT IS THE PERSON WHO IS SICK THAT NEEDS A DOCTOR?

"For the Son of man is come to seek and to save that which is lost" (Luke 19:10). This is one of the most famous verses in the Bible so far as my heart is concerned. You will remember, at the time the messenger brought the word to Joseph of the baby that was going to be born to Mary, he was told, "Thou shalt call his name Jesus, for he shall save his people from their sins" (Matthew 1:21). The word "Jesus" is the Greek form of the Hebrew word "Jehoshua," commonly called "Joshua," which means "God my Savior."

If we say "The Son of man is come to seek and to save that which is lost," when is a person lost? Fortunately, in one chapter in the Bible there are three parables that set this out before us. The 15th chapter of Luke's Gospel presents three parables, each of which presents something that was lost. There is the parable of the lost sheep. Now that very well known parable is how one sheep wandered away and was lost, and how the shepherd went out and searched for it until it was found, put it on his shoulders and carried it home. Now while we call that parable the parable of the lost sheep, it could very well be known as the parable of the Good Shepherd, because he went out to find it and he was the one that rejoiced when it was found. The parable of the lost sheep could represent any person who knows he is lost and does not know the way home. The sheep would know it was lost and would be frightened out there in the wilderness by itself, but it would not know the way home.

The second parable in that series is the lost coin. You will remember how that story goes — a woman had ten coins and lost one, and she swept the house diligently until she found it. The parable is called the parable of the lost coin, but it could be called the parable of the diligent woman, who was seeking the lost coin. She is the one that found it and she is the one that rejoiced over it when it was found. This could represent a person who is not aware of his plight; he is lost but he does not know it.

Then the third story in that series in Luke chapter 15 is a very famous story. It is commonly called the parable of the prodigal son. This parable could be known as the parable of the waiting father, who has mourned his son who left home. Now this lost son, the prodigal, can represent a person who knows he is lost, yet knows the way home. Remember when the sheep was lost the shepherd went looking for it. The sheep did not know the way home. When the coin was lost the woman swept the house looking for it. The coin would not even know it was lost. But when the prodigal had wandered away, no one went for him. You might say, "Well, that was terrible." No! Stop and think a minute. He knew the way home. "But," you would say, "If only someone had gone to him and persuaded him." Have you ever tried to persuade one who is willful? You would just annoy them. You would just make them resent it. Oh! That boy knew what to do, and when he came to himself he did it! That son knew his father would receive him. He knew how to do it, but, you will remember, he did not come back with any pride. He did not come back full of himself. He knew what to do. He came back repentant and said, "Father, I have sinned against heaven, and before thee, and am no more worthy to be called thy son" (Luke 15:18-19). That was the way to come, that was the way the father received him. When the prodigal came to himself he knew that he needed help, he knew his father could help and that his father would help, and he knew

what to do. No one had to go and tell him. Being lost seems to be a matter of orientation. When I am lost I do not know where I am. The first question that was ever asked of man was when God asked Adam, "Adam, where art thou?" This was a question that brought it all up in Adam's heart and mind. Where has your conduct brought you? Where are you in relation to all reality?

That reminds me so much of the way it was with me before I became a Christian. People would ask me, "Well, now that you are a Christian and are a believer, what do you think of the way in which it used to be with you?" I can know very well, it still runs in my mind. I will tell you what it was like. It was just like seeing a little boy, about four or five years old, all alone in a great big warehouse in the middle of the night, with no lights on. Absolutely dark in this big building, alone, and noises. That is what it was like. Someone will say, "Well, now that you are a Christian and you belong to the Lord, what is it like?" Well, I do not mind telling you that so far as living in this world is concerned, it is many times like living in a big warehouse, many times it is dark, and many a time I have a feeling of being absolutely where I do not know where to go. There are noises! But I am not alone, not any more. There is a hand in mine and an arm on my shoulder. I know that God is looking after me.

Now this brings us in our thinking to the realities of the Gospel, the good news. This is the good news we would send out to the whole wide world. Someone is looking for you like that shepherd went looking for his sheep, as that woman went looking for that coin, as that father was waiting for his son. Someone is looking for you, and the Bible gives us some classic illustrations as far as this is concerned. You remember reading the story of the Ethiopian eunuch who was riding along reading in the prophet Isaiah, and how Philip went over to him, and asked him if he knew what he was reading, and he said, "How can I, except some man could guide me?" I will tell you right away that one of those conditions of being in the dark is when you are ignorant and really do not know what to do. Then, you will remember, Philip was sent to him.

Then there is the case of Saul the Pharisee, who was blinded with prejudice and who was faced by the Lord Himself and who then responded, saying, "Who art thou, Lord?" When you are thinking about Saul the Pharisee and you wonder, how was he ever effected by that, just remember he was standing there when Stephen died. You remember how they stoned Stephen and he looked up into heaven and saw the Son of Man standing at the right hand of God? Well, Saul was there and heard Stephen's witness and testimony.

You can think of Cornelius the centurion who sent for Peter to come and tell him. He said, ". . . we are all here present before God, to hear all things that are commanded thee of God" (Acts 10:33). Peter was sent to him. You will remember Timothy, who became a believer because he grew up in a home where there was faith. You remember also how Paul said, "I know the faith that was in thy grandmother Lois, and in thy mother Eunice, and I am persuaded it is in you also." Or you can think of Lydia, that praying woman who came in the place where "prayer was wont to be made" and how Paul was sent and how the Lord opened her heart. Or the Philippian jailer with a guilty conscience, who came and threw himself at the feet of those two prisoners and said, "Sirs, what must I do to be saved?" He was told. Paul and Silas had suffered persecution, that this man might be brought through.

Have you ever had the feeling that you were lost? Then I want to tell you, you could really be of good cheer. "The Master is come and calleth for thee."

Chapter 2

DO YOU REALIZE THAT PAIN SERVES AN IMPORTANT FUNCTION WHEN A PERSON IS SICK?

"Which show the work of the law written in their hearts, their conscience also bearing witness, and their thoughts the meanwhile accusing or else excusing one another" (Romans 2:15).

This brings to our minds the whole matter of the conscience that we have. A guilty conscience hurts, and that is a good thing for the soul. Pain draws attention to the place where something is wrong. Consider hunger in a baby. The baby will let the mother know when he is hungry. Actually, hunger is a form of benefit for the person. It is a pain that prompts sufficient eating for the body. Now something like this happens with a person's conscience. Conscience itself has a function to help me have a sense of balance; it keeps me walking upright. Balance lets me know if I am upright or leaning over. As you have this sense of balance in the body so you have something like that in your consciousness and in your soul; you have a feeling of rightness. Conscience is a kind of built-in regulator that will sort of keep you on the level, so to speak. You may not obey it, you may not follow it, but you will know it. Conscience is a faculty of self-judgment whereby I appraise my conduct as to how it fits an accepted norm. Now it is not a perfect means of self-judgment, because the accepted norm would be wrong. It will not always work because actually a person can dull his conscience. I can modify my conscience by my deliberate choices. If I do something in a certain way and keep doing it in that way, the first thing you know I accept it that way, even though that way may not be right.

When Paul says in Acts 23:1, "I have lived in all good conscience before God," this brings to our mind the idea that a conscience may be good, it may actually be a better conscience and a superior conscience. And here Paul is emphasizing that he has kept in mind the law of God as the accepted norm, and, because he knew the law of God and kept it in mind, he called his conscience "a good conscience seared with a hot iron." He is recognizing the fact that a man's conscience can be perverted, until he actually sees no evil in doing wrong. It is for this reason that Paul would write to Titus and warn him to beware of men who have, as Paul says, "even their mind and conscience is defiled." Peter also urges the believers to so live, "having a good conscience."

A man's conscience has a definite function in his coming to God. He must have a personal feeling of needing salvation. This involves self-judgment, and that is where the function of conscience comes in. If a person senses in himself that he is not right, this leads him to repentance. In fact, it is only the person who feels guilty, after all, who can be saved. If you were to show me a person who is doing wrong and does not feel guilty, I will show you somebody you cannot help. The truth is "that all have sinned and come short of the glory of God." No doubt about that! And when it is recognized, then all the world is guilty before God. Now if a person does not feel the guilt, that means he has not seen the truth, and if he has not seen the truth, I can tell you, that person cannot have the blessing of God. The Old Testament warns us about this: "He that covereth his sins shall not prosper." We have that tendency today, and if you could get your sins properly covered so that no one could know about them, you would feel that everything was all right. In other words, you would have no conscience about it. John writes, "If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us." Or "If we say that we have not sinned, we make him a liar, and his word is not in us." So let the man or woman or young person who feels that he is a sinner take courage. I would like to say, just in my own language, that half of the battle is already won. When once I know I am wrong, when once you know you are not good, the way is open

right to the heart of God. You can come right on in then.

Paul describes his own self-consciousness along this line: "I am carnal, sold under sin. For that which I do I allow not." That is, the very things that I practice I do not approve. "For what I would," what I want to do, "that do I not." I do not practice the very things I think are right. "But what I hate, that I do. If then I do that which I would not, I consent unto the law that it is good. Now then it is no more I that do it, but sin that dwelleth in me. For I know that in me (that is, in my flesh,) dwelleth no good thing" (Romans 7:14-18).

This is the frame of mind of a person who is in the presence of God and is conscious of the fact that so far as he personally is concerned, he is not good. Someone reading this may have this kind of feeling deep down in his or her own heart — "I am just not what I ought to be." I would like to come to you very gently and quietly and faithfully and say to you, "Take courage. When you have seen your need, you are already halfway there." Take for instance, Job, who was a righteous man. You can read about him and what kind of man he was, but before the book of Job is over you will find Job saying something like this: "I have heard of thee by the hearing of the ear; but now mine eye seeth thee; wherefore I abhor myself, and repent in dust and ashes" (Job 42:5-6): Seeing God gave Job a real consciousness of his own shortcomings. Or listen to Isaiah, "Then said I, Woe is me! for I am undone; because I am a man of unclean lips, and I dwell in the midst of a people of unclean lips: for mine eyes have seen the King, the Lord of hosts" (Isaiah 6:5). Just to come into the presence of God and to be conscious of God brings a normal, natural reaction; I feel my own unworthiness. After God had manifested Himself on the Day of Pentecost and Peter had gotten up to preach about it, when he was through preaching, the multitude said to him, "Men and brethren, what shall we do?" (Acts 2:37). And you remember what Peter told them to do, "Repent and believe on the Lord Jesus Christ." Or the Philippian jailer who, after that earthquake, when all the prison had been broken open, but Paul and Silas did not run away, came and fell at their feet saying, "Sirs, what must I do to be saved?" You see, all of these expressions are along the same line of thought, the same mood. These people felt themselves wrong and they felt themselves in need. Let me say to you, if our conscience condemns us, let us humbly thank God and sincerely confess our own sinfulness.

Then let us commit ourselves entirely and completely unto God. Christ is ready to be our advocate. Christ is willing to be our advocate and to intercede for us. We read in Hebrews 7:25, "Wherefore he is able also to save them to the uttermost that come unto God by him, seeing he ever liveth to make intercession for them." Again in Hebrews 9:14 we read, "How much more shall the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered himself without spot to God, purge your conscience from dead works to serve the living God?" If your conscience is functioning and bothering you, thank God. Take courage. Let it lead you straight to the throne of mercy in repentance and then when you have committed all to God, believe on Him, trust in His grace. Rejoice in His mercy.

Chapter 3

CAN YOU UNDERSTAND WHY GOD CANNOT OVERLOOK SIN?

"If thou, Lord, shouldest mark iniquities, O Lord, who shall stand? But there is forgiveness with thee, that thou mayest be feared" (Psalm 130:3-4). "There is forgiveness with thee." When the human being would turn to God and call upon God, his iniquities come to mind. His sins come between him and God. Sin is anything not like God, anything contrary to, different from God. We read in Paul's writings, "All have sinned, and come short of the glory of God" (Romans 3:23). In Isaiah 59:1-2 it is written, "Behold, the Lord's hand is not shortened, that it cannot save; neither his ear heavy, that it cannot hear: but your iniquities have separated between you and your God, and your sins have hid his face from you, that he will not hear." No one can deny the reality of sin. For example, we read in I John 1:7-10, "But if we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship one with another, and the blood of Jesus Christ his Son cleanseth us from all sin. If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us. If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness. If we say that we have not sinned, we make him a liar, and his word is not in us." Sin cannot be denied, ignored or overlooked. Sin must not be belittled. Because of sin, Christ died. So if one were to think about God, and have in mind and heart to want to come to God, and one feels that he is a sinner, this means that he is thinking straight. That is the truth — he is a sinner. And now we want to note the Gospel, the glad tidings — sins can be forgiven!

This is what the Bible is about. Man created in the image of God was made of the dust of the ground and fell because of sin. All men fell in him, so that every person born into this world is born to sin. Just to be human means that one is to be a sinner, but sinful man can be saved by the Son of God who came into this world as Jesus of Nazareth and is now known as Jesus Christ. What this means is that my sins, which are real, which I have personally committed, and the sins of my parents and the sins of mankind, can be forgiven. The most important aspect that we forget so easily is the price that was paid. When we talk about God forgiving sin, we are not to have in mind that He will just dismiss it, that He just writes it off the books. Not so fast! There is always the danger that when I can have anything that is free, I may not really appreciate what it is worth. There is with reference to the forgiveness of sin, a subtle tendency that if I am not careful I will be inclined to flatter myself by giving myself the idea that I deserve some of the credit for being forgiven, as though I had done something that made me worthy. There have been some people who have developed a whole doctrine along this line. They talk about doing penance for sin, as though you could work for it, as though you could actually earn such credit that you could be forgiven because you earned it. But that is not the way the Bible puts it. It is actually a form of works, and it is offered for my justification. You will remember that this is the burden of Paul's letter to the Galatians.

In Galatians 2:16 Paul has a long sentence in which he speaks of this: "Knowing that a man is not justified by the works of the law . . . for by the works of the law shall no flesh be justified." It is just not possible to be justified by the works of the law. So we can rejoice not only because this is done for us and it is not left up for us to do, but it is being done right. If I were to try to work for my salvation, my efforts would be just as limited as I am, but when Christ Jesus works for my salvation, I have all the power of the Lord on my behalf. There is an astonishing story in the Old Testament. Do you remember the story that is told of the prophet Hosea, whose wife forsook him and became a harlot, living with other men? Then there came to pass in the course of Hosea's life-time the most astonishing thing. He took her back to be his wife without penalty, because of his grace toward her. Though his wife forsook

him for other men, Hosea took her back freely, giving expression to that marvelous statement, "I have loved thee with an everlasting love."

As a matter of fact, that whole story is so astonishing that it has staggered many students of Scripture who say it is just impossible. It just cannot be true, but it does show the grace of God. Even so, there is an astonishing incident in the New Testament in the life of Jesus of Nazareth, and that is also a story that causes a great many people to feel it cannot be true. That is the case of the woman taken in adultery, when she was brought before Him. There was not any doubt about her sin. They knew it. They caught her right in the very act, and they brought her before Him. You will remember they asked Him what they should do, whether they were to stone her to death. Now you will recall how He, writing on the sand, with His back toward them, said, "Let him that is without sin cast the first stone." Then one after another, pricked by their own conscience, walked away until finally He turned around and faced her, and He said, "Where are thine accusers? Hath no man condemned thee?" She said, "No man, Lord." Then came these remarkable words, "Neither do I condemn thee. Go thou and sin no more."

For myself, in my own understanding of this, I have been blessed all through my years as a Christian by the parable of the lost sheep. You will remember that very simple thing. One sheep wandered away and the shepherd went to find it, which has particularly touched me. Another thing that has particularly touched me is what he did when he found it. We read these words, ". . . and when he had found it, he laid it on his shoulders rejoicing." I must tell you that I have many, many times thought of the fact that he did not do what some of us would be inclined to think of doing. He did not cut a switch and get behind that little sheep, and then just whip it all the way home, telling it, "Now you be sure and do not go away again." No! What does it say? When he found it, he laid it on his own shoulders rejoicing. I think perhaps the reason why that is so meaningful to me is that I can see myself there. That is exactly how I am going to get to Glory. He is going to take me in His own free grace. It is the power of God that He saves by grace freely. Now Paul discusses this even more plainly in Romans 4:2-8, "For if Abraham were justified by works, he hath whereof to glory; but not before God. For what saith the scripture? Abraham believed God, and it was counted unto him for righteousness. Now to him that worketh is the reward not reckoned of grace, but of debt. But to him that worketh not, but believeth on him that justifieth the ungodly, his faith is counted for righteousness. Even as David also describeth the blessedness of the man, unto whom God imputeth righteousness without works, saying, Blessed are they whose iniquities are forgiven, and whose sins are covered. Blessed is the man to whom the Lord will not impute sin."

Jesus of Nazareth, you will remember, told a parable of the Pharisee and the publican going into the temple and then pointed out that the publican, who "would not lift up so much as his eyes unto heaven, but smote upon his breast, saying, God be merciful to me a sinner," went down to his house justified. Christians have had this in mind when they sing this song, "Jesus paid it all, all to Him I owe. Sin has left a crimson stain. He washed it white as snow." Or we sing, "There is a fountain filled with blood, drawn from Immanuel's veins. And sinners plunged beneath that blood, lose all their guilty stains." Many of you, I know, have sung this old hymn over and over, "There is power in the blood"; and how often we join in singing, "Just as I am, without one plea, but that thy blood was shed for me, and that thou bids't me come to thee, O Lamb of God, I come." The classic attitude of Christ Jesus toward sinners has always been expressed in those famous words, "Father, forgive them, they know not what they do." So we rejoice and you can rejoice. "For thou hast cast all my sins behind thy back." You can be forgiven. Freely! Just receive it. "I, even I, am he that blotteth out thy transgressions for mine own sake, and will not remember thy sins" (Isaiah 43:25). So the word is to you and to me, "Repent and believe." Because it is marveously true, Christ receiveth sinful men.

Chapter 4

DO YOU REALIZE THAT TO BECOME A CHRISTIAN, A PERSON MUST MAKE SOME DEFINITE DECISION TO ACCEPT CHRIST?

"Almost thou persuadest me to be a Christian." These famous words were spoken by King Agrippa after he had heard Paul give his testimony in court. You can read it in Acts 26:28. When the king with his wife had been sitting, listening to the charge against Paul and then listening to Paul's defence, and when he heard the presentation, what Paul had to say about why he was going around preaching the Gospel, this was his response. And you remember how the Apostle Paul said, "I would to God, that not only thou, but also all that hear me this day, were both almost, and altogether such as I am, except these bonds" (Acts 26:29). But you will recall that Agrippa did not follow through, but he arose and walked out. These words of King Agrippa bring to our minds a vital aspect in the whole matter of becoming a Christian. He heard Paul. He was impressed by what Paul had to say, and was almost persuaded to be a Christian, but he did not become one.

The Christian Gospel may be widely known to many people, but it will not be operative in anybody unless that person accepts Jesus Christ. If being a Christian meant acting a certain way, if that is what it was going to mean, then becoming a Christian could mean beginning to act that way. You could be a little bit of a Christian, then more of a Christian, then more of a Christian and then so on until finally you could be called a Christian. But that is not the way it goes.

It is to be feared that it is a popular thing today to stress that being a Christian means acting a certain way, doing a certain way. But we need to recall what is actually involved when you use this word "Christian," because the word "Christian" in the Bible is never used as an adjective. It is only used as a noun. The word "Christian" has a relationship to the word "person," like the word "wife" has to the word "woman." Not every woman is a wife, yet every wife is a woman. We can see at once that no woman can become a wife by herself. We know that what will make this woman a wife is that she belongs to the man and the man belongs to her. It is what makes persons actually commit themselves to each other that makes for a husband and wife.

This reminds me of back in the days of the first World War, when I volunteered for duty in the Canadian Army. I can remember going to the recruiting office, and walking in there as a civilian and signing the necessary papers, and walking out of that office in less than 15 minutes as a soldier, because I had committed myself to serving in the Canadian Army for the duration of the war and for six months thereafter.

Something like that is involved in becoming a Christian. The Gospel is proclaimed everywhere. When you are preaching the Gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ or telling about the Lord Jesus Christ, you will know that from God, in the Name of the Lord Jesus Christ, one word goes out to the whole wide world: "Come." Then when a person comes, he is told to look. Then when he looks, he is told to believe. When he believes, he is told to receive and accept. Now this whole matter of deciding to come can be started in a moment and in a crisis. It is like getting married. There is a lot more to being married than the wedding ceremony. That ceremony is very important and it can start there, but the whole matter of being married goes on from there. Now, coming back to the matter of being a Christian. This decision which normally follows conviction is a result of being persuaded. For instance, the classic procedure is presenting the Gospel. There is the witnessing on the part of Christians, whether they are preachers, teachers, missionaries, friends, parents, whoever it may be, when we are told that Christ Jesus came for us. There

is consideration on our part.

On the basis of that consideration and looking to Jesus of Nazareth, hearing the words that are said, there can be conviction. On the basis of this conviction there can be acceptance, and the individual can commit himself to the Lord and receive the Lord in his own heart and soul. Now it is sadly true that you can go a long way without reaching that final stage. There may be some who, despite exposure, stop short of that final commitment.

I want to bring some classic cases to you so that you will be able to sense what I mean. In Matthew 19:16-26 is a very well known story of the rich young ruler. This young man had heard of Jesus of Nazareth and had been impressed, and he came to see Him. He asked Him a question. He said to Him, "Good Master, what must I do that I might have eternal life?" You will remember how the Lord talked with him a bit and finally told him what to do. ". . . go and sell that thou hast, and give to the poor, and thou shalt have treasure in heaven: and come and follow me" (verse 21). That was all that it would take. Then you will remember how the story goes. The young man went away sorrowful, for he had great possessions. He could not let go of what he had. He had to let go of it to receive Christ, and he could not.

This reminds me very much of the problem that I used to see in my children at home, and I remember one time particularly. This certain child had his hand full of toys and I came to give him something. That little fellow was really in a dilemma, as you would say. What in the world could he do? He could not take it because his hands were full and he could not let go of what he had in his hands because he wanted them. He just cried, and I had to think to myself, "How true it is about people. Hands full of this world and then we offer them heaven and they try and try, one way or another, to have all this and heaven too." No! it is not like that. You are going to have to empty your hands to receive what God wants to give you. That young man went away very sorrowful. He could not let go of what he had and when he could not let go, he could not receive what Christ Jesus had to offer.

Some of you will remember King Herod, who was greatly impressed by John the Baptist. He thought John the Baptist was a great preacher. As a matter of fact, the evidence is that he thought of John the Baptist as being a greater preacher than Jesus of Nazareth. He listened to him many, many times. But he did not act on the basis of his impression. He was impressed by John the Baptist but he did not act that way. He did not obey the word that John the Baptist brought him, and you will remember the sad result. He ended by having John the Baptist beheaded. Take the case of Pilate. Do you remember Pilate sitting on the bench and Jesus of Nazareth being brought before him? Now when you read that story in the four Gospels, you cannot help feeling that Pilate had nothing personal against Jesus of Nazareth. As a matter of fact, he sympathized with Him. He would have been glad to have Him escape the indictment that was leveled against Him. You will remember how he wanted Him to defend Himself. Pilate went out among the people and said, "What shall I do then with Jesus which is called Christ?" He was, as I say, profoundly impressed by Him, but he did not act on that impression. He bound Him over and committed Him, condemned Him to be crucified. Although he was greatly impressed by Him, he had made this great mistake. He stopped at the half-way mark and wound up condemning Jesus Christ to death.

Take the case of Judas, who was one of the twelve apostles. Any way you want to look at him, you will have to consider that among them he would be one of the good men following the Lord Jesus Christ. But he did not fully yield himself and ended by betraying Jesus of Nazareth and being known all over the world as a traitor. Take the case of Felix the Governor. He was so impressed by Paul that at one point he said, "Go thy way for this time; when I have a convenient season, I will call for thee." But you know he did not, and he ended by leaving Paul bound in jail. Or even this Agrippa, with whom we started our

discussion here, "Almost thou persuadest me to be a Christian." But the political consideration evidently affected him in such a way that he did not do it and he ended by binding Paul over to appear before Caesar. What I am sharing with you just now is this: You may have heard the Gospel, you may even understand enough about it to know that you could be saved through Jesus Christ, but I want to tell you something very soberly. If you do not come on the basis of what you know and you do not come when you have heard the call, you may be in great danger of losing everything, because of this peril of the half-way mark.

Chapter 5

DO YOU REALIZE THAT EVERY CHRISTIAN EXPECTS TO ARRIVE AT HIS ETERNAL HOME AND GO TO HEAVEN SAFE AND SECURE?

"The Lord knoweth how to deliver the godly out of temptation." That is the way Peter put it and this is the great message of the Bible. Living in this world is dangerous. It is surrounded by peril. The Lord Jesus is quoted as having said, "These things I have spoken unto you, that in me ye might have peace. In the world ye shall have tribulation: but be of good cheer; I have overcome the world" (John 16:33). Things could happen that would be bad, and this is what makes the call of the Gospel so welcome. How well we know these words, "Come unto me, all ye that labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you, and learn of me; for I am meek and lowly in heart: and ye shall find rest unto your souls. For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light." This is the way it is recorded in Matthew 11:28-30, these wonderful words of invitation, telling the world about salvation through Jesus Christ. We want to write everybody that God sent His Son into the world to seek and to save the lost, and we tell people how they can be saved through Jesus Christ. This does not make anything hard. They were hard before we spoke. It is only that we are seeing things as they are and then we tell what God promises to do, and the promises of God are wonderful. This is what the Bible sets forth, and this is what we seek to write you. Because if I can tell the Gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ clearly to you, you will learn of better things. In Christ there is order rather than confusion, light rather than darkness, life instead of death, victory instead of defeat. There is pardon. I know that because of sin and because the things that enslave us we become addicted to, there is this experience of slavery to where we are not our own. We cannot do even if we want to do, but in Christ Jesus there is freedom. "If ye continue in my word, then are ye my disciples indeed; and ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free" (John 8:31-32). I know that living in this world is marked by strife. So many times there is contention, opposition. But in Christ Jesus there is peace.

The plan of salvation that we have been writing about has been demonstrated to us in the Bible. We can see it in the history of Israel. When you think back on the days when Israel began as a nation, and you will remember they were slaves in Egypt, you will recall that while they were slaves there was trouble; but when they came out of Egypt and were passing through the desert, they were learning the will of God. Finally they came to the land of Canaan, which was the land of peace and power and plenty, where they could have rest. This procedure, this pattern, is shown over and over again in the Bible. This is the message of the Scriptures, the message of the Bible, the revelation of God. Another world is prepared for us. A world in which there is no death, because it is eternal life. There is no disease or pain, because there is health. There are no demons to haunt or distress or harass us, because there is peace. There will be no disasters, because all is good. That other world that I have been writing about

this way, the heavenly world, is a spiritual world. Now what a good many of us do not fully remember, some have not even heard I expect, and many of us will wonder about, is that this heavenly world is available now.

The Gospel of Christ calls the person, any person, any believer, into the spiritual world now. If you have been hearing the Gospel, you have heard the word, "Come, now! Abide in Christ, now! Go in the service of God, now!" This is the thrust of the Gospel. It is such an unfortunate thing that today so many people are enamored by what is almost like a mirage. They want to solve the problems of man by controlling the world, and oh! how much heartache this causes, and how much distress this causes. Some time ago I used this illustration. I wonder if you remember it. Suppose you were to think of a boy drowning in a lake. What should you do? You know you will have some people come along and tell you that if you drain the water out of the lake the boy would not drown. You would say to me, "That is not practical." You are right! It is not practical. But have you heard anything like that? When you see people in trouble, people say, "Well, the way to get over this trouble is just to control the evil. Just control the world, just change all the people in it, and then you will be all right." Do not wait to do that. If that boy is drowning in the lake, do not try to drain the lake, rescue the boy. That is the way it is with reference to the Gospel. You will remember the way it was with Noah, when he was facing the time when the whole world would be covered with water, and the ark was made to deliver him out of the flood. God knows how to do that. When Jacob was meeting Esau, we recall that he was in danger of being killed by Esau, and spent the whole night in prayer until he was changed, and his name was changed from Jacob to Israel. You can think of Joseph. Remember what kind of a life he had, how things were against him on every side, but he was afterwards able to say, "God meant it for good." Death? Certainly! But there is resurrection! Disease? Yes! And like the leper you can say, "Lord, if thou wilt, thou canst make me clean." And He did! Or the woman with the issue of blood, who said, "If I could only touch the hem of His garment." She did, and He did! He can heal your heart, your soul, your life. Demons? They are around, but you know the Lord Jesus is more powerful. He is able to deliver you. Disaster? You can remember the disciples in the storm at sea, and when they were in the midst of that storm how He came walking on the water. "Be not afraid; it is I." Then standing before them, He said to the waves, "Peace, be still." You see, the Lord Jesus Christ is our Saviour. All the blessing of God is available in Him, now! As we live day by day we have an advocate with the Father. Our safety is assured. He ever liveth to make intercession for us, and so we do not hesitate to say to the whole wide world: "Come to the Savior, make no delay. Here in our midst, He is standing today, tenderly saying, Come." Listen, now is the time! Today is the day! We can be saved, now!!