

VOICES FROM HEAVEN AND HELL

by

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CHAPTER FIVE

"The Scriptures Are Not Sufficient"

by Dives

"I am known as Dives although that is not my real name. Through no great fault of my own I am a dweller in hell. There are those who speak of suffering hell upon earth as though any torment upon earth can compare to the torment of hell. They do not know what they are speaking about. No torment upon earth is unending. There is always some break such as sleep. There is always some one on hand to help or comfort. But torment in hell is unending. It is day and night. It can best be compared to being in a flame of fire. This burning flame of fire cannot be extinguished. There is no pause. There is no rest. There is no comfort. It is anguish, anguish, anguish; suffering, suffering, suffering; torment, torment, torment.

"Do I deserve this endless anguish, this everlasting suffering, this eternal torment? Let me tell you my story and you can judge for yourself.

"While upon earth I was respected in my community. Although I did not attend the synagogue as faithfully as I should nevertheless I was not irreligious. During the Passover I went through all the required ritual. The prominent Rabbis, Scribes, and Priests respected me.

"I was a man of extreme wealth. It was through my own efforts and ingenuity that I became rich. After the accumulation of wealth I retired from business in order to enjoy life. I had more money than I could possibly spend so why not enjoy it? Why not eat, drink, and be merry if one has the means to do so? There were only a few in my town who could afford to dress in purple and fine linen. The purple was the garment of royalty. The fine linen which I wore daily was imported from Egypt. Its glory was its dazzling whiteness. For much of this I had to pay its weight in gold. There were few who could afford to dress as I did.

"My friends and I dined sumptuously every day. My banquets were the talk of the town. I was not satisfied with the food which Palestine could supply but imported delicacies from other nations. The world-famous wines of Lebanon were plentiful at my table. I spared no expense and my tables literally groaned under the weight of food. We did eat, drink, and were merry.

"There is always a fly in the ointment. The fly in the ointment of my enjoyment was a beggar by the name of Lazarus. During a banquet one of my servants called my attention to the fact that Lazarus was lying at the gates of my mansion and desired food. I knew something about this beggar. He had some disease which prevented him from working. If he had been as diligent as I was he would not have been reduced to this position for he would have saved enough to keep him during his sickness and old age. I have no sympathy for men who do not provide for their future.

"I had heard that he was a deeply religious man. His name indicated that. It means '*GOD is my trust.*' All the good his trust in GOD did him! For all his prayers and devotions he was nothing but a diseased beggar. It just goes to show that such religious fanaticism does not pay. It makes one no richer and now this religious Lazarus was, bothering me for food from my table.

"I rose up and went to the porch to observe this beggar who had come to annoy me in the midst of our merriment. He was a filthy sight. He had sores all over his body. Some dogs were standing by him. They licked his sores as though they would heal him with their tongues. That picture often torments my mind. Lazarus had dogs, at least to comfort him and to moisten his fevered body with their cool tongues.

"But to me it was a revolting sight and I hastened back to the banquet hall to forget this beggar. One of my servants asked if he should carry out food to the beggar. I said, 'No.' Then this servant had the impudence to suggest that perhaps I could spare some of the crumbs which had fallen upon the floor. I replied that not one crumb would I give to Lazarus. 'But the beggar is starving,' insisted this servant. 'It matters not to me,' I replied. 'That is his concern. Besides he has great confidence in GOD. Let GOD help him. I do not want to hear about this beggar any more. Tell the musicians to play. This is a time for merriment and not for thinking about diseased beggars.'

"They told me the following day that Lazarus had died. 'Good riddance!' was my thought. 'The sooner that type die the better. They are a disgrace to the community.' They dragged him to a field and buried him in a few feet of ground. Even the Rabbis did not consider him important enough to give him a proper funeral.

"It was not long after this that I took ill. Four physicians attended me. They did everything humanly possible to heal me. But nothing seemed to help. I did not want to die for I hated to leave all my possessions. However, I was not afraid to die. I was a Jew and a descendant of Abraham. My Rabbi had told me that all the children of Abraham would enter into Heaven. Besides I had lived a good life. I was a respected citizen and had made my mark in the community. Why then should I be afraid to die? I lived as good and perhaps better than most people. I had committed no crimes.

"I died and I awakened in hell. I lifted my eyes and afar off I beheld Abraham with Lazarus in his bosom. I cried out; '**Father Abraham, have mercy on me, and send Lazarus, that he may dip the tip of his finger in water, and cool my tongue; for I am tormented in this flame.**' I called Abraham '**father**' to remind him of my claim on him. Was I not his descendant and as such deserving of his mercy and favour? If I could be successful in obtaining the least favour on the ground of his fatherhood it would not be difficult to obtain greater favours. The favour I asked

was indeed small. I did not ask for a cup of water. I did not ask for as much as could be carried in the palm of his hand. I did not ask for so much as a drop of water. All I asked was that he might dip the tip of his finger in water and cool my burning tongue. Just to feel moisture on my tongue for a moment would bring such relief and would strengthen my claim on Abraham.

"But, alas, Abraham did not grant my request. He said; **'Son, remember that thou in thy lifetime receivedst thy good things, and likewise Lazarus evil things: but now he is comforted, and thou art tormented. And besides all this, between us and you there is a great gulf fixed; so that they which would pass from hence to you cannot; neither can they pass to us that would come from thence.'**

"He acknowledged my physical descent from him but not that I was a genuine son entitled to all the promises. My strategy did not work. And reminding me of the good things which I enjoyed upon earth! The very remembrance of them torments my mind and soul. It makes hell even worse. And how was I to know that there was an impassable gulf between hell and Heaven? How was I to know that there was not another opportunity to gain Heaven in the life after death? How was I to know that I would be placed in hell and abide there forever? It is not fair. There was nothing upon earth to warn me. If GOD were a GOD of mercy why did He not send a special message of warning? Ah, that is it! It is GOD's fault. I will call that to the attention of Abraham.

"So I called to Abraham and said: **'I pray thee therefore, father, that thou wouldest send him to my father's house; for I have five brethren; that he may testify unto them, lest they also come into this place of torment.'** Yes, if Abraham would send Lazarus to my five brothers with a message of warning, it would be sufficient to warn them. They knew Lazarus for they were present at the banquet when I refused to send out food to feed him. If he were to come to them risen from the dead they would believe him. He could tell them to place their trust and faith in GOD and to turn away from their sins. He could tell them what a terrible place hell is. He could tell them of the endless torment, suffering, and anguish. He could tell them about the beauty of Heaven and the eternal happiness of all those who are the true children of Abraham. Ah, if GOD had only sent Lazarus with such a testimony to me, I would have repented and placed my confidence in GOD rather than in my wealth. GOD did not warn me sufficiently. So let Lazarus now testify to my five brothers.

"Alas, Abraham did not heed my plea. He failed to see that I was not sufficiently warned. He sternly said to me; **'They have Moses and the prophets; let them hear them.'** I suppose he meant that I should have listened to Moses and the prophets while I was upon earth. In my generation there were few who took Moses and the prophets seriously. We were too busy. There was too much to occupy our time. There were those like Lazarus who liked that sort of thing. But all my associates were busy getting and spending.

"Of course, I remember some of the teachings of Moses. From a child I was taught the law and the prophets. It was through Moses that we received the ten commandments. The sum of the second tablet of the law was that we should love our neighbour as ourselves. Who could keep such a law? That would mean that I would have to feed every beggar that came along. That would not be possible. And Moses said that the only way we could live in the favour of GOD was to keep that law. Otherwise the wrath of GOD would abide upon us. But surely GOD should

realize that we could not keep such a law.

"It is true that some of the prophets gave messages of warning. They told us to worship the living GOD more than silver and gold. Some of them were dismal prophets. I remember this was especially true of Jeremiah. He was so pessimistic.

One young Rabbi read from his prophecy for several sabbaths. I asked him if he could not find pleasanter reading and that if he persisted in reading from Jeremiah I would stay home and cut off my contributions. He soon stopped.

"There were other prophets of woe and judgment. There was Hosea who warned that sin would reap retribution. There was Joel who told us to rend our hearts rather than our garments. Amos, Micah, Zephaniah and others spoke of the judgment of GOD against sin. But no one took their messages too seriously. It was all right for their day but it had no application for our days. I know that my five brothers, even as I, would not consider their messages sufficient to turn them from their sins to the worship of GOD. Abraham was wrong. Moses and the prophets were not sufficient to cause one to repent. I told him so. I said: **'Nay, father Abraham; but if one went from the dead unto them, they will repent:'**

"Ah yes, my brothers needed one who had risen from the dead. I know that if Lazarus had appeared to me after he died I would have believed him instantly. I would have repented of all my sins and lived a truly religious life. Father Abraham was wrong. But all that he said was: **'If they hear not Moses and the prophets, neither will they be persuaded though one rose from the dead.'**

"I tell you Abraham was wrong. The Scriptures are not sufficient to convince one of the reality of hell and of the punishment one will receive for sin. Moses and the prophets are not enough. We should have heard from one risen from the dead and then we would have repented. I tell you it was no fault of my own that I did not repent. It is not my fault that I am in this flame of fire. It is GOD's fault. It is His responsibility. I do not deserve unending anguish. I do not deserve everlasting suffering. I do not deserve eternal torment. Surely, surely, surely you will agree that Moses and the prophets are not sufficient guides of the life after death. The Scriptures are not sufficient."

~ end of chapter 5 ~
