

GOD'S ANSWER TO MAN'S SIN

by

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CHAPTER FIVE

SOUL SUICIDE

"How shall we escape, if we neglect so great salvation; which at the first began to be spoken by the Lord, and was confirmed unto us by them that heard him?" (Hebrews 2:3).

EVERY time I read this verse of Scripture, every time I try to preach on it, there comes to my mind an incident that happened long years ago before I became a Christian. It was about six in the evening, when a farmer, a young fellow, was walking from the village where he had bought some supplies, along the right-of-way of the Pennsylvania Railroad. It was getting dark— not quite dark—just in the gloaming. His arms were loaded with packages. He carried a lantern in his hand. Suddenly he stumbled, fell, and almost dropped the lantern and packages. Somehow he retrieved himself and looked down.

Either by accident or on purpose, three of the ties had been pulled out and a great section of rail had been bowed out. The man knew if the train ever hit the bent rail, there would be a terrible accident. He also knew that at that time of the night the express trains—not one but several, for if you know New York and Philadelphia you know it takes more than one train to get the people from Philadelphia to New York to their daily work and back again— came thundering down the track. He did not have any tools, and if he had it would not have done any good. The job was too big for one man.

He began to feel the shaking of the road-bed. He could hear the blowing of the whistle. The train was coming. He knew he had but a few minutes to do something. He lighted the lantern, dropped his bundles by the side of the track, and started running down the track. The train kept on coming toward him as he continued running toward it. He ran just as hard as he could, looking ahead at the train. He stumbled, fell, and smashed the glass of his lantern. There wasn't anything more he could do. The train was coming, the headlight blazing.

God gave him an idea. He kept on running, and just about the time he and the train met, he jumped off the track and threw the broken lantern into the face of the engineer in the cab. They do not have fool engineers on the Pennsylvania Railroad. When the engineer saw the lantern, he knew there was something wrong. He put on his brakes and stopped about a block away from the bowed-out track. That farmer got a Carnegie Medal.

The Holy Spirit is lifting up the cross of Calvary, the broken, blood-stained body of Jesus. He is throwing it in front of us.

If you keep on this way, there isn't anything ahead for you except death and damnation. "Stop! Look! Listen!" is what the Holy Spirit is saying by this question, "**How shall we escape, if we neglect so great salvation?**"

Analyze this question in your own mind as you follow me. First, the great salvation. Second, how people neglect it. Third, what will be the outcome of such neglect. There are a great many reasons why this salvation is great. I have not time to give all of them, but let me press three home to your hearts as the Holy Spirit gives me utterance.

First, it is a great salvation because of the fearfulness of its cost.

Come with me to Calvary; stand in the shadow of that cross; look up into the agonizing face of Christ; once more listen to the drip, drip, drip, dripping of the life blood shed for your sins and mine. That is the price God paid to redeem us from our sins. Salvation is free, but it is not cheap. It cost more than all the riches of the universe put together. It cost more than all the rest of the treasures, the precious jewels, the powers, the stores, and the wealth of God put together.

When God nailed His Son to the cross to pay the price for our redemption, He beggared Himself. God emptied Himself because He had given Christ, the dearest, the most expensive, the most costly, the very best He had to give. He gave His own heart to bleed out its drops of blood in our behalf. When you realize that, when you understand that, it makes a good Christian of you. You don't have to be begged to come to prayer-meetings. You don't have to be begged to give your money. One good, long, steady look at the Lord Jesus will make you serviceable. One look into the face of the Son of God will make you sacrificial. One long look at the broken, blood-stained body will make you more than anxious, more than willing to show your gratitude, your appreciation to that dying Son of God by your efforts, your desire to do His will.

One good, long, steady look at the cross, my unsaved friend, and, if you have a single drop of gratitude in your heart, it will constrain you to come to Christ, to accept Him as your Saviour, to be baptized, to enter into His service, to give your life as devotedly to Him as He gave His for you on the cruel, cursed cross. The costliness of that salvation is one of the mightiest inducements to draw us to its terms and conditions. The costliness of that salvation is probably among the chief reasons why unbelief is such a terrible sin, the worst of all sins. Ingratitude, dire, bitter, black ingratitude is put to the charge of those who reject the offer of God's mercy in the blood of His Son. Let the price that was paid for your redemption break your hearts and melt your souls.

Second, it is a great salvation because of the fulness of its contents.

In this great salvation, God offers to us all that we need to take care of the past, to provide for the present, to supply the future. It begins with the unlimited pardon of our sins and ends with the bliss of an eternal heaven. Our sins are washed away in the blood of the cross. Our needs are provided for in the promises sealed by the cross. The Holy Spirit is given to us because when the crucified Redeemer ascended on high after Calvary's tragedy and triumph, He led captivity captive and gave gifts unto men.

By the cleansing blood, we are adopted, sealed children of God, the Father Himself making Himself totally, absolutely, eternally, effectively, providingly, victoriously, joyously responsible for every physical, mental, moral, social, religious, spiritual part of our lives and the lives of those we love, for whom we are responsible.

There is no need for the believer to worry about anything.

“He that spared not his own Son, but delivered him up for us all, how shall he not with him also freely give us all things?”

“If ye, then, being evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more shall your heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to them that ask him?”

The Father will walk with us, talk with us, guide us, instruct us, inspire us, encourage us, enlighten us in His will and way, giving us the grace to do His blessed work. Then, when our life of affliction is ended, when we have come to the end of the way, when at twilight we stand on the brink of the chilly Jordan, with its cold waters laving our feet, the Father will be there to guide us safely through the valley of the shadow of death into the light of the new morning.

Oh, the greatness, the fulness, the completeness of such salvation!

Come ye sinners, lost and hopeless,
Jesus' blood can set you free,
For He saved the worst among you,
When He saved a wretch like me.

To the faint He giveth power.
Through the mountains makes a way;
Findeth water in the desert,
Turns the night to golden day.

In temptation He is near thee,
Holds the powers of hell at bay,
Guides you in the path of safety,
Gives you grace for every day.

He will keep thee while the ages
Roll throughout eternity.
Though earth hinders and hell rages.
All must work for good to thee.

Oh, I know, yes, I know,
Jesus' blood can make the vilest sinner clean,
Oh, I know, praise God I know,
Jesus' blood can make the vilest sinner clean.

Third, this salvation is great because of the freeness of its conditions.

Despite the fearfulness of its cost, despite the fulness of its contents, this mighty, this matchless, this magnificent, this multifarious salvation is offered freely to the children of men. Without money and without price is the price-tag attached to the gift of God's love. Search the Bible, scan its pages, study its declarations! In every conceivable way, in every possible appeal, in every appealing form, the Lord proffers the blood of His Son, the salvation of our souls, to us.

Hear Isaiah: **“Ho, every one that thirsteth, come ye to the waters, and he that hath no money; come ye, buy and eat; yea, come, buy wine and milk without money and without price . . . Seek ye the Lord while he may be found, call ye upon him while he is near; let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts; and let him return unto the Lord, and he will have mercy upon him; and to our God, for he will abundantly pardon.”**

Hear Jesus: **“Come unto me, all ye that labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest!”**

Hear John: **“And the Spirit and the bride say, Come. And let him that heareth say, Come. And let him that is athirst come. And whosoever will, let him take of the water of life freely.”**

These are the words of God. Come, take freely, without money and without price.

The poorest and the richest, the youngest and the oldest, the weakest and the strongest, the Jew and the Gentile, the man, the woman, the child, all of us are on the same level, in the same need, in the same way, facing the same conditions when we come before God. God is no respecter of persons. The condition upon which salvation is granted to us is as enduring as the stars, and more so.

Thank God for that. We all can and do know what we must do. The gates of mercy are as ajar to one as to another. Repentance toward God and faith in the Lord Jesus Christ are the two steps we must take to escape from the penalty of sin into the pardon of God, from the torments of hell into the triumphs of heaven. That is a price all may pay. Those are conditions with which all may comply. God has made them so simple that a child needn't err in pursuing them; that the wayfarer, though a fool, may read and understand. There is no obstacle, no barrier, no difficulty, no trial, no problem in any of our lives that need keep us from God when the offer of salvation is made to us on such free conditions.

Considering the fearfulness of the cost, the fulness of its contents, the freeness and simplicity of its conditions, beloved, is it not startling that so many hesitate, that so many refuse, that so many reject, that so many neglect that offer of God? I believe the angels of glory have difficulty in understanding the folly of human beings in turning their backs on the love of God. Yes, there are multitudes who fail to avail themselves of the tenderness of God's mercy, who live on in their sins, die in them, bear them in the flaming pit of an eternal hell forever and forever. Why? There are many reasons, but the three commonest, I believe, are iniquity, insensitiveness, indecision.

Iniquity has hold of some people. There is some sin in their lives they will not let go. D. L. Moody said that there are but two reasons that kept a soul from Christ, one or both. They are moral cowardice or some besetting sin. This sin need not be very great.

Some nights ago, in a service, I went back to a young woman to speak to her about her soul. She told me very definitely she wanted to be a Christian but said, “Not tonight.” After some pressure she admitted that the thing standing in her way was her dancing. She liked to dance, and she knew it would be frowned on (God grant it be so always) in the church. She was willing to take a chance with her soul, with her Saviour, with Satan, with heaven, with hell, for the bare pittance of a dance. Shades of Judas! Talk about selling Christ for thirty pieces of silver!

It may be some greater sin. Sins are numberless. The devil has plenty of them with which to tempt the human heart, with which to delude the human soul from an acceptance of Christ. It may be crookedness in business, dishonesty in politics, social impurity, anything, everything.

Beloved, you will agree with me, Christian and unsaved, that there is no sin, aye, there are no sins in all the world worth trading for the soul's salvation and the eternal mansions in glory. There is not enough in value the devil, the world, the flesh can offer to any of us that would compensate for the wrath of God's visitation upon us throughout an endless eternity. Whatever your sin or sins may be, bring them in humble penitence and confession to Christ. He will forgive you for the past and give you power and grace to overcome for the present and future.

Insensitiveness claims the souls of some folk. They do not come to church very often. They read their Bibles almost not at all. They do not give the Holy Spirit a chance at their souls. They lack conviction, deep, pungent, earnest conviction for sin, and the need of the Lord Jesus Christ. They compare themselves with church-members, with each other, with the people about them who are more wicked than they are. They minimize their own faults and maximize their own virtues.

Because they are not rank, raw, rugged sinners, because they are not guilty of the more carnal transgressions, because they have social standing, worldly reputation, because they are not drunkards, gamblers, racketeers, jail-birds, they do not feel their desperate need of a Saviour.

Regardless of your feelings in the matter, they, together with you, are lost in sin, on the road to hell, without God, without hope in the world, if you have not repented of your sins and very definitely, very personally, very publicly accepted Jesus Christ as your personal Saviour.

It is written in God's Word, "**Except ye repent, ye shall all likewise perish.**"

- "**Except ye be converted and become as little children, ye shall in no wise enter the kingdom of heaven.**"
- "**Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God.**"
- "**He that believeth not is condemned already because he has not believed on the name of the only begotten Son of God.**"
- "**Without the shedding of blood is no remission.**"

Feel it or not, believe it or not, admit it or not, you need Christ Jesus. Insensitiveness, indifference, will not help at all.

Indecision is the direst trap of Satan. There are more people brought down into perdition by indecision than by any and every other trick the devil uses. He knows our frames, he recognizes our inclinations. He is brilliant enough to know that he cannot start us on the road into sin by some terrific act of transgression. As a matter of fact, he does not need to do it. He does not need to make us vile, wicked sinners. If he can get us to put off the matter of salvation long enough, he has us just where he wants us.

Somewhere there is a story told of a preacher who dreamed that he died and went to hell. He found himself in the very throne room of Satan. Beelzebub was sitting on his throne, while before him at a horseshoe table were gathered all the demons in solemn conference. The devil was speaking to them.

“You are not working hard enough. We are not dragging down as many souls. Those preachers in churches are turning too many to Christ. You must do something about it and speedily.”

Hell grew as quiet as the city of the dead. The demons looked at each other. One of them sprang to his feet and said, “Your Majesty, let me go up there to where that Jew is preaching. Let me walk up and down the aisles to tell the people that the Bible is a lie from cover to cover and that Christ is absolutely false.”

The devil looked at him.

“Sit down. That trick has run its course. Every person in that crowd believes the Bible to be the Word of God and Christ the real religion. You had better think up something else.”

Again the pit grew silent. Another demon stood to his feet. The devil recognized him. “Your Majesty, let me go up there. I’ll tell them that they are too wicked to be saved, that Christ doesn’t want to save them; that they have sinned away their day of grace.”

“You sit down, too,” said the devil. “They read in the Bible the invitations and promises of God. The Holy Spirit is warmly pressing upon their hearts the invitation of Christ. They know Jesus will save them. You cannot trap them that way.”

Again a stillness settled on the abodes of torment. Minutes slipped past. The devil and his minions sat in deep cogitation. Suddenly there sprang to his feet one of the largest of the imps. “Your Majesty, I know how we can fill the chambers of hell. I’ll go up there. I’ll walk up and down that congregation. I’ll stand by the side of those sinners. I’ll tell them, ‘You are lost. You are going to hell. Christ died for you. He can save you. You need to go to heaven.’ “

The devil rose to his feet. “If you tell them that,” I he cried, “they will all come to Christ.”

“Wait,” said the other.

“When I get through telling them all that, I’ll whisper, gently, softly, insinuatingly, ‘What is the hurry? Put it off. Not tonight. Wait until the revival is over. Some other time. Not tonight.’”

Beloved, if you were to let the voice of God die out of your ears, you could hear the voice of the demons saying, “What is your hurry? Not now. Put it off.”

Oh, I beseech you, by the mercies of God, by the blood of Christ, by the appeals of the Spirit, by the fires of hell, by the joys of heaven, heed not Satan’s emissary. Hear the voice of God as He cries to you, “**Behold, now is the accepted time: Behold, now is the day of salvation.**”

“**Today if ye will hear his voice, harden not your hearts.**”

God says now; the devil says no. Heed the Lord and be saved lest the gates of mercy be closed against you; lest the time of your preparation be ended; lest the patience of God be exhausted.

Permit, then, this last question: How shall you escape if you neglect this great salvation?

- You know you have sinned.
- You know your record is stained with your transgressions.
- You know you cannot save yourself.
- You know you must die.
- You know you must face God in the judgment.
- You know that to escape from hell and enter into heaven, you must avail yourself of that salvation.

But, suppose you neglect it? Supposing you go on and on indefinitely, hesitating, refusing, delaying, supposing you die unrepentant, unconfessed, unforgiven? How shall you escape?

There is no escape for God. He must punish you. His law is unchangeable, immutable as the stars forever and ever. He can play no favorites. He can make no exceptions. As you lived, so shall you die; so shall you face the judgment. The wages of sin, the curse of the law, the wrath of God, the condemnation of a holy justice must be visited upon you, or God is no more than a weak, pusillanimous bogey-man. The very pillars of eternity, the very foundations of the universe, the very essence of God, cry for your condemnation. There is no escape for God.

There is no escape for you. You cannot put off the death angel. You cannot hide from the judgment. You cannot deny your sins. You cannot pay the forfeit without plunging into hell. No argument, no excuse, no alibi, no consideration of any sort or description will obviate the fact that you have transgressed God's law and denied God's Son.

In the awful nakedness of exposure, with the mass of your sins piled high about you, with the stern record of your transgressions bared before God, there is no escape for you, my unsaved friend, if you reject Christ. Even Jesus will be your enemy. Even the Holy Spirit will be your accuser. Even the very choicest of your loved ones and friends will be compelled, heartbrokenly, to witness against you. The blood that alone could have washed away your sins will cry aloud your neglect, your disobedience, your refusal.

“He that despised Moses' law died without mercy under two or three witnesses: of how much sorer punishment, suppose ye, shall he be thought worthy, who hath trodden under foot the Son of God, and hath counted the blood of the covenant, wherewith he was sanctified an unholy thing, and hath done despite unto the Spirit of grace? For we know Him that hath said, Vengeance belongeth unto me, I will recompense, saith the Lord. And again, The Lord shall judge his people.”

There is no escape for you.

Thank God, there is an alternative. You are still in the time of grace. You are yet in a savable condition. The hands of God are stretched out to you. The blood of Christ is available for you. The Holy Spirit still invites you. You may be saved with an everlasting redemption. The matter is in your hands. The decision is yours to make. God has done all He can do. Christ has done His part; has done it well. The Holy Spirit is pleading for your soul with all His might. The answer is yours.

- Will it be sin or salvation?
- Will it be Satan or Saviour?
- Will it be God or the curse?

- Will it be life or death?
- Will it be heaven or hell?

- Neglect is refusal.
- Neglect is rejection.
- Neglect is defiance.
- Neglect is destruction.
- Neglect is death.
- Neglect is hell.

This moment may determine your eternity. Will you repent of your sins, put your faith in Christ, confess Him as your Saviour before men?

Some years ago Daniel Curry, a Methodist circuit rider, lost his way on the Nebraska prairies. The night came. It was too late to go much farther. Curry dismounted, unsaddled and hobbled his horse, built a little fire, cooked the little supper he wanted, arranged his saddle blanket and saddle, and prepared to sleep. By the light of the fire, he read his Bible, lifted his heart and soul to God in prayer, loosed his clothes, stretched out on the blanket, pillowed his head on the saddle, and slept. He dreamed that he died and that his soul knocked on the pearly gates of glory. The angel opened the gates and asked his name and reason for being there.

“My name is Daniel Curry,” answered the preacher. “I have come to claim the mansion in the sky that Jesus promised me long years ago.”

The angel leafed the pages of a book on the table by his side. “I am sorry,” he said, “but your name is not in this book. There is no place for you in heaven.”

“I don’t care whether my name is in your book or not,” spoke Curry. “I know it is in the Lamb’s Book of Life, and I am coming into heaven.”

“Do you want to argue it out with God?” asked the angel.

“No,” said Curry, “not unless I have to. But if you will not let me in any other way, take me to God.”

“Stand still,” said the angel. He stepped to Curry’s side, put his hand under Curry’s armpit, spread his mighty wings, and with a rush, soared up into the air bearing Curry with him. On and on flew the angel with the speed of thought. Curry kept his eyes open against the rushing wind. Suddenly he began to see a blazing, brilliant light, as of a thousand suns rolled into one. It blinded him. He closed his eyes to the glare. The angel sped for the very heart of that illumination. Suddenly he stopped and gently lowered himself and Curry to the pavement. The preacher looked down. He was standing on something that resembled crystal glass. He looked up. There on a white throne, high above him, sat one like unto the Ancient of Days, even the Lord God. Curry was stricken with terror. He was face-to-face with God. His knees gave way, and he prostrated himself on the ground. From the figure on the throne came a voice —stern, clear, solemn: “Who art thou; what seekest thou?”

Curry tried to rise, tried to speak, but fear had entered into his very bones. He could neither move nor utter a word. Again came the voice: “Who art thou? What doest thou here?”

Unnamable dread, horrible fear took possession of Curry's soul. His strength was gone. His mind refused to work. His lips were sealed with the awful-ness of the Presence he was facing. Again came the dread speech. "Speak, mortal. Who art thou? What seekest thou?"

Just as the preacher felt that hell itself was yawning at his feet, there came the sound of sandaled feet, the soft murmur of cloth rubbing against cloth. Someone came to his side, bent over him, lifted him to his feet. An arm stole across his shoulders with the hand placing itself on his left breast. He looked over at it and saw a diamond-shaped scar. Daniel Curry knew it was well with his soul. From the majestic figure on the throne came the repeated question: "Who art thou? What doest thou here? What seekest thou?"

The figure at Curry's side spoke, gently as the summer breeze, sweetly as the lullaby of a mother to a sleeping child, tenderly as the cooing of the turtledove in the land. The words flowed up:

"Father, this is Daniel Curry. Whatsoever sins he has committed, whatsoever transgressions may blot his record, whatsoever iniquities may stain his past, charge them all to Me. Daniel Curry confessed Me before men, and I am now confessing him before Thee, my Father in heaven."

Beloved, it may not be just that way, but the Bible says, "**Whosoever, therefore, confesseth me before men, him will I confess also before my Father which is in heaven.**" Come accepting and confessing Christ, and from now throughout an endless eternity you may rest assured that you are God's in Christ.

~ end of chapter 5 ~

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