

THROUGH NIGHT TO MORNING

by

A. C. Dixon, B.A., D.D.

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SERMON FIVE -

SALVATION

"WHAT must I do to be saved?" Not reformed, for Christianity is neither form nor reform, but a life deeper than both. It is not education, though that is important. It is not civilization, though that, too, is important. Indeed, reformation, education and civilization without salvation is damnation.

"What must I do to be saved?" It is a personal matter. We are not saved in companies, but one at a time. It is the personal relation between you and GOD that brings salvation. **"What must I do?"** Ask that question for yourself, and not for your neighbour; and then hear the answer to the question: "What is salvation?" It may be described as a Historic Fact, a Sudden Experience and a Gradual Process.

I. A HISTORIC FACT

Salvation, first of all, is a great historic fact. You cannot add to it, and you cannot take from it. JESUS CHRIST came down from Heaven; was born of a virgin; grew into youth and manhood; preached and worked miracles; died upon the Cross; rose from the dead, and ascended to glory. Whether you believe it or not, it is true. And it is just as true if you reject it as if you accept it. You may say that the sun does not shine, but it shines all the same. CHRIST was Son of Man and Son of GOD, GOD incarnate.

The resurrection of JESUS CHRIST is the best established fact in history. I know that JESUS CHRIST died and rose from the dead better than I know that Napoleon Bonaparte died on the island of St. Helena. I know it better than that George Washington was the first President of the United States. The proof in favour of the Deity of CHRIST, founded upon His claims, His character and His works, is so overwhelming, that the man who knows the proof and will not accept JESUS CHRIST as Divine, does violence to his reason.

"And brought them out, and said, Sirs, what must I do to be saved? And they said, Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved, and thy house" (Acts 16:30, 31).

And the proof in favour of the Inspiration of the Bible - that it is literature written at the command of GOD, under the guidance of GOD, and preserved by the providential care of GOD, is so overwhelming that the man who knows the proof and does not believe it, does violence to his reason. When you hear a man call himself a Rationalist, because he rejects the Deity of JESUS and the Inspiration of the Bible, put him down as an irrationalist. The historic CHRIST,

with all the Bible claims for Him, is the Mont Blanc of all mountain-peak facts of history.

II. A SUDDEN EXPERIENCE

Salvation, a great historic fact, becomes in him who receives it a sudden experience.

If you do not accept the fact, it is nothing to you. If you reject the fact, you cut yourself off from it. The bakery may have bread enough for everybody in the city, but only those who eat have their hunger satisfied. The reservoir may contain sufficient water to supply all the city, but only those who drink have their thirst quenched.

The Atonement of JESUS CHRIST is sufficient for all the world, but it is efficient only for those who believe. It has in it merit enough for the salvation of this lost race, but GOD's provision is that only those who accept CHRIST - only those who are willing to be saved by His atoning blood - are saved at all.

"Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved." With some people it is a very distinct, sudden experience. That is the case usually with wicked men and women. They can tell you frequently the very minute when the light dawned - when they were born from above. I have a dozen friends of that kind. I think in all my attendance at the Water Street Mission in New York, I never heard a man or woman give an experience that did not give the exact time - and most of them the very minute - when they were converted.

I can see the face of the dear old man - he has entered the Glory now - who stood up the first time I attended the Pacific Garden Mission in Chicago. His face was beaming with joy, and with watch in hand, he said, "Six years, seven months, fifteen days, four hours and six minutes ago I was converted, sitting right in this very place." He had it down to the minute. The Superintendent said, "He came in drunk that night. We told him about JESUS, and he went out sober, rejoicing in salvation; and he has been sober ever since. We always keep that seat reserved for him, because he likes to sit in the place where he accepted JESUS as his Saviour." That man knew when the shackles fell; he knew when the darkness disappeared; when JESUS revealed Himself as a Saviour, mighty to save from drink.

Other people have an experience not so definite, but just as real. This Philippian jailer had an exciting experience. He was shaken out of his bed at night by an earthquake. He was in danger of being executed in place of the prisoners, should they escape. In the midst of all this excitement he met Paul, and asked, **"What must I do to be saved?"**

Another man is sitting in his chariot, quietly reading the Book of Isaiah. There is no earthquake, no excitement. A traveller comes along and is invited to take a seat in the chariot. The invitation is accepted. The traveller explains the Scriptures. The Eunuch accepts JESUS as his Saviour. It was a very quiet transaction. There was no trembling, and yet he was just as much converted as the jailer.

There are some people who like earthquakes; they will not have a religion without an earthquake. And there are other people who cannot endure earthquakes; they want quiet, with no excitement. They prefer not to be converted in a Revival. Some have said to me, "I would like to

be a Christian, but I do not like this excitement. I want to be converted quietly." Some of them have been having a quiet time all their lives.

If anybody wants a good quiet place to be converted in, there are many such places in this city! The jailer was saved in the midst of excitement. The eunuch was saved in the midst of the chariot ride. It matters not whether you are trembling in an earthquake of excitement, or in the quiet of a chariot ride; but what does matter is that you turn from sin to JESUS CHRIST as your Saviour.

Salvation is a sudden experience. Negatively the Bible calls it repentance; positively, faith. But there is no genuine repentance without saving faith; and there is no saving faith without genuine repentance.

What is repentance? Just rub off all theological terms, and repentance is sorrow for sin which leads one to take GOD's side against sin in the name of CHRIST. You have been fighting GOD on the side of your sin; now just change sides and begin to fight sin on the side of GOD in the name of JESUS, and you have repented. That is what David did.

When the prophet said, "You have sinned," he said, "Lord, forgive me"; and after that he fought sin on the side of GOD. But Saul did not. When the prophet said, "You have sinned," he made some sort of apology for it, and took sin's side against GOD; and the result of it all was that he died a suicide on the battlefield. Every soul that takes the side of sin against GOD will be a suicide for time and eternity.

There is much good time wasted arguing as to which comes first, repentance or faith. A Bible Conference discussed that question for nearly three hours. They just filled the air with fog, blue fog, London fog; and when they got through, there was more fog than when they started! As well argue, if John Jones comes in at that door, who comes in first, John or Jones. Like the Siamese twins, true repentance and saving faith are so joined together that, if you cut them apart, you kill both.

III. A GRADUAL PROCESS

Salvation, a great historic fact, and a sudden experience, now becomes a gradual process.

When you are born again you begin to grow. When you surrender to JESUS CHRIST, the yoke of bondage gives place to the yoke of liberty.

The new birth is not a process but "a crisis with a view to a process." John M. Wood was walking down Water Street, New York City, in delirium tremens with the sixth dismissal from the United States Navy in his pocket, on the charge of chronic alcoholism, without a penny or a friend in the world. He was making his way to the East river, bent on suicide, when he saw a light across the street shining through a transom above a door, and with that light came the strains of the familiar hymn:

"There is a fountain filled with blood
Drawn from Emmanuel's veins,
And sinners plunged beneath that flood

Lose all their guilty stains."

He stopped and said to himself, "That's the song my mother used to sing when I was a youngster. I will go over and see who is singing it before I kill myself."

He went over and found himself in the Jerry MacAulay Rescue Mission. Jerry was talking to them about JESUS, Who, he declared, could save a river pirate, criminal and drunkard like himself. In his direct way Jerry said, "If you mean business, boys, there is hope for you." "Into my blurred mind," said John M. Wood, "came a little ray of hope, and I said, If that is so, I will try it."

He knelt down. Jerry whispered to him some words of promise, and he rose up a new man in CHRIST JESUS. I have heard him thrill great crowds as he said, "I staggered up to the Cross of CHRIST; the blood fell on me and washed me whiter than snow."

General O. O. Howard fought more battles and won more victories than any other General, of the great American Civil War. He was victorious in sixty-four battles, without a single defeat. While I was preaching to the soldiers at Tampa during the Spanish-American War, General Howard came down to assist in the work. One evening, in an address to about three thousand soldiers, he said: "Forty-one years ago, in old Fort Brook, just two miles from this tabernacle, I surrendered to the Lord JESUS CHRIST. Every soldier knows what it means to surrender. Well, I surrendered to JESUS, and I have been following Him as my General ever since, and He is the best General that ever led an army."

At the close of a Sunday evening sermon the preacher said, "If there is anyone here who wants to be a Christian, come forward, and we will pray for you." Some fifteen or twenty went forward and knelt down at the altar. Just behind me were two officers from Fort Brook, in their regimentals, and they were greatly amused; they were having some fun at the expense of the mourners. That made me mad. I said, "I would rather be up there with those mourners than back here with these mockers." So I went up and knelt down with 'the mourners.' The only reason I did so was because I was angry at those officers.

I wanted to show them that I did not like their mocking. After a little while the preacher came, and kneeling beside me told me about the CHRIST of my mother and father; and when I arose from that altar, I was determined to be a Christian. I walked down the aisle with military bearing, and went to my barracks' room at old Fort Brook. I got out my Bible, that I had not seen for months, and laying it on the old table knelt before it. As I read it, I surrendered to the Lord JESUS CHRIST. There came a peace and a joy into my soul I never had before. I got up and walked the room, saying, 'Glory to GOD! Salvation through JESUS! Salvation complete!' I did not sleep a wink that night. I felt that it would be a loss of time to sleep; and I spent the whole night reading my Bible, praying and praising GOD."

The next morning an officer met him on the way to breakfast and said, "Howard, I hear you have turned pious," to which he replied, "I don't care, if I have; I'm not ashamed of it!" The officer said, "If you will come around to my room, I can show you a hundred mistakes in the Bible." Howard said, "There's one thing you cannot show me, and that is that last night at nine o'clock, I didn't surrender to the Lord JESUS CHRIST, since which time I have been so happy that I couldn't sleep. Show me that!" The officer shut his mouth, opened his eyes, and went on. When

you get a man to open his eyes and shut his mouth, there is hope for him. It is when he shuts his eyes and opens his mouth that he discourages you.

Another officer said, "I hear you have turned Christian, Howard. There is a lot of superstition in Christianity. I can talk you out of it in fifteen minutes." Howard said, "You cannot talk me out of the fact that last night I surrendered to JESUS CHRIST and have been so happy that I couldn't sleep." This officer also shut his mouth, opened his eyes, and passed on.

General Howard began at once to pray that GOD would give him every soul in Fort Brook; and before they broke camp, every one in the Fort had become a Christian except one. This one three years later, on a battlefield in Virginia, said to General Howard, "Down there at old Fort Brook you got something I wanted; I wish I had it!" "I preached to him JESUS," said General Howard, "and he accepted Him as his personal Saviour." In less than two weeks a shell burst near him, and he went into the Glory.

Yonder, a poor drunkard, blear-eyed, friendless and penniless kneels down at the old bench in the Jerry MacAulay Mission, and passes a crisis - the crisis of taking GOD's side against sin - accepts JESUS as his Redeemer, and begins the process of growth in grace. And yonder at Tampa, a clean young soldier from a Christian home, kneeling beside the old table in the barracks' room, passes the crisis - the very same crisis - accepts JESUS CHRIST as his personal Saviour and begins the process of growth in grace.

Will you not pass the crisis by accepting JESUS CHRIST as your personal Saviour and begin at once the process of growth in grace.

~ end of chapter 5 ~
