

Escape for Thy Life

by Roy Hession

The gospel message confronts the world with the reality of judgment and offers salvation through Jesus Christ, urging us to escape from the world and find safety in Calvary's mountain.

Duration: 56:42

Scripture: Genesis 19:17, 1 Kings 18:21, Matthew 16:26, John 3:16, 1 Timothy 6:10, 2 Peter 2:6-8, Revelation 3:16

Topics: "Warning"

Description

In this sermon, the preacher emphasizes that the Gospel is both bad news and good news. He explains that the world we live in is under the judgment of God because it opposes His will and rejects Jesus Christ. The preacher warns that those who are identified with this world will be involved in its ultimate judgment. However, he also highlights the hope and security found in the cross of Christ, where God pardons and gives the Holy Spirit to those who believe. He concludes by sharing a story of people fleeing from a raging fire, illustrating the urgency of escaping the judgment of God.

Transcript

I want to read to you this evening one of the most dramatic incidents recorded in the Old Testament. I am referring to the overthrow of that wicked city of Sodom, which is set forth on the page of history as an example of divine vengeance on ungodliness, and in particular sexual ungodliness. Even, to be more specific, on the terrible sin, becoming so prevalent today, of homosexuality.

We are going to read this great solemn story from Genesis number 19. Genesis number 19. We have to break into the story somewhere.

It's all part of a great unfolding story of Abraham, and Abraham has been praying for Sodom. Actually, he doesn't appear until the very end of this particular story, but in the previous verses he has been praying for Sodom because God sent two angels to him who are coming on a visit of investigation to see if the people of Sodom have done altogether according to the cry of it which has come up to God. And in that city Abraham's nephew, Lot, is living, and he knows quite enough about what's going on in Sodom to know that what's going on cannot bear divine investigation, and that that city is doomed, and with that doom will be engulfed his own nephew, Lot, and family.

And so he's been praying that if God will only find a few righteous men in it, he will spare it. You remember that famous prayer. And he got it down to ten, but in the event there weren't even ten righteous people

found in that city, and the city was overthrown.

Now we leave Abraham praying up there in the hills, and we come down into Sodom itself, and there came two angels, the same two that had appeared to Abraham, and there came two angels to Sodom at even, and Lot sat in the gate of Sodom, and Lot, seeing them, rose up to meet them, and he bowed himself with his face toward the ground, and he said, Behold now, my lords, turn in, I pray you, into your servants' house and tarry all night and wash your feet, and ye shall rise up early and go on your ways. And they said, Nay, but we will abide in the street all night. And he pressed upon them greatly, and they turned in unto him, and entered into his house, and he made them a feast, and did bake unleavened bread, and they did eat.

And then there's recounted an incident that we needn't read just now, of a terrible happening that took place in the streets of Sodom. It makes it quite clear that that city, even to a man, were all of them indulging in the most blatant forms of homosexuality. Verse twelve, And the men, as the angels said unto Lot, Hast thou here any besides son-in-law and thy sons and thy daughters? And whatsoever thou hast in the city, bring them out of this place, for we will destroy this place, because the cry of them is waxen great before the face of the Lord, and the Lord has sent us to destroy it.

And Lot went out and spake unto his son-in-law, which married his daughters, and said, Up, get you out of this place, for the Lord will destroy this city. But he seemed as one that mocked unto his son-in-law. And when the morning arose, then the angels hastened Lot, saying, Arise, take thy wife and thy two daughters which are here, lest thou be consumed in the iniquity of the city.

And while he lingered, the men laid hold upon his hand, and upon the hand of his wife, and the hand of his two daughters, the Lord being merciful unto him. And they brought him forth and set him without the city. And it came to pass, when they brought them forth abroad, that he said, Escape for thy life, look not behind thee, neither stay thou in all the plain, escape to the mountain, lest thou be consumed.

And Lot said unto them, O not so, my lord. Behold, now thy servant hath found grace in thy sight, and thus magnified thy mercy, which thou showed unto me in saving my life, and I cannot escape to the mountain, lest some evil take me, and I die. Behold now, this city is near to flee unto, and it is a little one.

O let me escape thither, is it not a little one? And my soul shall live. And he said unto him, See, I have accepted thee concerning this thing also, and I will not overthrow this city for the which thou hast spoken. Haste thee, escape thither, for I cannot do anything till thou become thither.

Therefore the name of the city was called Zohar, which means little. The sun was risen upon the earth when Lot entered into Zohar. Then the Lord reigned upon Sodom and upon Gomorrah, brimstone and fire from the Lord out of heaven, and he overthrew those cities, and all the plain, and all the inhabitants of the cities, and that which grew upon the ground.

But his wife looked back from behind him, and she became a pillar of salt. And Abraham, now we're going back to Abraham, he get up early in the morning to the place where he stood before the Lord, and he looked towards Sodom and Gomorrah, and toward all the plain, and beheld, and lo, the smoke of the country went up as the smoke of a furnace. A wonder, he said.

How did it go with Lot? And Lot went up out of Zohar. Now verse twenty-nine, Then it came to pass when God destroyed the cities of the plain that God remembered Abraham, praise the Lord, and sent Lot out of

the midst of the overthrow, when he overthrew the cities in the which Lot dwelt. And Lot went up out of Zohar, and dwelt in the mountain and his two daughters with him, for he feared to dwell in Zohar, and he dwelt in a cave, he and his two daughters.

And the verses that I want especially underlined for you are verse seventeen and eighteen, nineteen. And it came to pass when they brought them forth abroad that he said, Escape for thy life, look not behind thee, neither stay thou in all the plain, escape to the mountain, lest thou be consumed. And Lot said unto them, O not so, my lord, behold, thy servant hath found grace in thy sight, thus magnified thy mercy, you've done as much as you have, you've got me out of Sodom, and I cannot escape to the mountain, lest some evil take me, and I die.

At this point in the story, Lot has been dragged by the urgency of the angels out of that doomed city of Sodom. So far, so good. But now, having got out of Sodom, Lot is facing a big dilemma.

Is he going to do as they tell him, to escape to the mountain, or is he going to remain somewhere in the plain? And there are various reasons. They're pulling both ways, either to the mountain or to stay in the plain. He's in a dilemma.

And I want to suggest to you that some of us have been, and may still be, in the same sort of dilemma that Lot was in. Sodom, then, was a city infamous for its terrible wickedness. And Lot, nephew of Abraham, had chosen to live in that city.

Though he was not actually practising the things that the other Sodomites were doing, he was nonetheless identified with its life, if only by his choice of that place as his resident. And he was content to continue there until that day, when the angels brought that solemn news that this city, in which he'd been living so comfortably for so long, was a city under the judgment of God. And it was only going to be a matter of hours before fire, brimstone, sulfur, and much else was going to fall upon that city and raze it to the ground with the loss of the lives of its inhabitants.

And I'm quite sure those angels made it clear to him that just as long as he remained in that city, he would be involved in its overthrow. They told him that his only safety was to escape out of it altogether to the mountain which they pointed out to him. Escape for thy life.

Look not behind thee, neither stay thou on all the plain. Escape to the mountain, lest thou be consumed. Now, this is a very accurate picture of the world into which the Gospel has come.

This is the world which the Gospel of our Lord Jesus confronts. Yes, Sodom indeed is a picture of what we call the world, what the Bible calls the world. When it's used in that sort of sense, it doesn't mean the fields and the scenery.

When the New Testament says, love not the world, in that sense, it means human society organized apart from God. And human society is organized solidly apart from and independent of God. I mean, you've only got to start mentioning the name of God and Jesus in certain company and a chill comes over the whole proceedings.

They don't want you talking about that. They don't want you bringing that sort of thing in. The whole of human society is organized apart from God.

And it was the world in that sense that crucified Jesus Christ when he came. Could it have done anything else? And the world is the same today, organized apart from God. It's social life apart from him, everything.

And the unconverted man is a part of that world. He belongs to it. He's at home in it.

He's content to remain so. He's known no other social life at all than that of this world, organized apart from God. And there he lives, content, until the day the gospel of the Lord Jesus breaks in upon that man.

And his first word to him is this, Escape for thy life. The gospel is always bad news before it's good news. It begins by telling us that this world in which we have been living, quite happily, is a world under the judgment of God.

It tells us that God has appointed a day in which he will judge the world in righteousness by that man whom he has ordained but whom they have refused, the Lord Jesus Christ. Its people are under his judgment. Its institutions are under his judgment.

It's good as well as it's bad. Yet the whole thing is organized in opposition to the will of God and does not want this Jesus to reign over them. And as such, it's under his judgment.

And as long as you are one with it, identified with it, have never disassociated yourself from it, you are going to be involved in its terrible, ultimate judgment. And so it is the first word of God to man. The first word of the gospel is escape.

You are living in a doomed society that's going to suffer the judgment of God for which the ages have waited so long, living, crying out for him, justice. Truth forever has been on the scaffold and the right on the cross, but it's going to be put right. And if you are one with that world, you cannot but be involved.

Your only safety, and mine, is to disassociate myself from this world that put my Saviour on the cross by daring to let him know I'm changing sides and by escaping to the mountain of the salvation which God has provided. And he tells us what that mountain is, to which you've got to escape. Where only can you be secure from the judgment that's coming upon our world? There is the green hill, far away, outside a city wall where the dear Lord was crucified, who died to save us all.

This then is the gospel call, escape for thy life. Look not behind thee, tarry not in all the pain, escape to the mountain, Calvary's mountain, that green hill, where the dear Lord was crucified, who died to save us all. So here then you've got these very accurate pictures, I see it, of the situation with regard to the world and the gospel of our Lord Jesus.

But I'm particularly interested in the position of Lot, and especially at the point where I read. He's got out of Sodom. Well, thank God for that.

And I think he did. He's breathing with relief. He didn't want to get out, but they wouldn't take no for an answer.

And he was glad, I'm sure, to get out of Sodom. But having got out of Sodom, he was unwilling to get to the mountain. When they told him to escape to the mountain, he said, It's all not so, my Lord, I cannot escape to the mountain, lest some evil take me up there.

He's unwilling to get to the mountain. And he is lingering in the plague. Do you see the position? Out of Sodom, but not at the mountain where there's safety assured.

He's somewhere in between. He's in the plague. And I believe that Lot's position could well be the position of some of us.

And we might have been in that position for quite a time. Maybe, dear friend, you've got out of Sodom. You've turned your back on an ungodly life.

Perhaps some people, please God, haven't been in it, and they certainly don't intend to. For them, they're out of Sodom. But although they're out of Sodom, and not living an ostensibly wicked life, it could well be they've not yet got to the mountain of an assured salvation.

They're not sure that they're saved. They hope so. They think so.

But they're not really gloriously assured they are. They're not sure that sin has lost its power to condemn them. They don't know how it's going to go with them.

They're not really sure that they've had an experience consistent with that scripture which says, if any man be in Christ he's a new creature. No, they're not at all sure they could possibly declare themselves new creatures. They've not got to the mountain of an assured salvation.

They are still lingering in the plane of new resolutions, of trying to be Christians, of doing their best, being perhaps more religious. And if they feel they haven't been religious enough, maybe if they tried a bit harder they might. And they feel that could all help, being more helpful to other people.

What I would call the plane of self-effort. Now, could it be there's some of us here? Could it be amongst the young people? Could it be amongst the older people? Maybe mum's a Christian. Perhaps one or two of the young people in the family is, but dad isn't.

But where is he? Oh, he's not in Sodom. But he's not up there at Calvary's Mountain. He's in the plane, somewhere in between the plane of trying to do his best and being respectable and so on.

Now, Lot's position in the plane was one of extreme peril. First, if Lot had been allowed to stay in the plane, I'm quite sure he would have soon be back in Sodom. There was so much going for him there, it was so much more attractive if he was allowed to stay in the plane.

And if all that's happened to you is as a result of your upbringing, perhaps your visits to Southwold and church, if all that's happened is you've made some good resolutions, you're really going to do your best to live a Christian life and bring up the family right, or as young people, to keep on the clean side of the road, if that's all that's happened, I want to tell you, you'll soon be back in Sodom. I want to tell you such are the pressures in life. But if that's all that's happened, the resolutions of self are going to break down and you won't end up any different from the others.

And then there's another reason why it's a position of great peril. Because in any case, no salvation is promised in the plane of your own efforts. The lava that was going to cover Sodom was going to cover the plane too.

And Lot was going to be no more immune in the plane than he was if he'd been in Sodom. And the truth is that there's no salvation promised us in the plane of our own efforts, our own good resolutions, and so on.

I want to tell you, religious self, in God's sight, is as much condemned and unacceptable as irreligious self.

And if all that's happened, dear one, to you, is you've got into the plane, you're in no real certain sure place at all when it comes to your relationship to God. Salvation is promised only in the mountains. Lot, if he was to be sure and safe, had to escape not only out of Sodom, not only out of the plane, he had to get to the mountain.

So it is with us, Calvary's mountain. That's the only place where Jesus died, the just for the unjust to bring us to God. You must somehow get to the foot of that cross, man.

And you'll never be assured of salvation until you've got there. There's a story that's been told a number of times from this platform, and I must repeat it because it exactly illustrates what I want to say. In Canada, in the hot dry summers, there are sometimes terrible fires that rage across the prairies, and the winds drive those flames forward.

A great wall of flame can go right across the prairies, consuming everything in its path. And all that people do is to take their possessions, put them on trucks and get into cars, and begin to move themselves and their possessions as best they may across the prairies with the flames catching up on them. If something goes wrong with the car, then that's just too bad.

It's a terrible thing for them to see their possessions go, but it's their only way of safety. But sometimes it's such a risky business, so dependent on perhaps worn-out lorries, that they've discovered a better way to assure their salvation. And that is to light a strip of the undergrowth in front of them with fire, with matches, and stand there and allow the wind to send that new wall of flames forward.

And as they stand there with the big wall behind, but this new one in front of them, bit by bit there appears in front of them a bit of safe ground. The fire's already been there, and they take their stand where the fire's been. And on the wall of flame comes and skirts them and leaves them unscathed.

And up there on the mountain, the fire of God's wrath against sin has burnt itself out in the breasts of the Lord Jesus. As he hung there, he said, It's finished. And I believe that meant judgment had fallen and had burnt itself out.

My sins, oh, the bliss of this glorious thought, are nailed to his cross. And the fire burnt itself out in Jesus. The wrath was appeased in him.

And he said, It's finished. And your only safety and mine is not to stay in the plane, but escape to the mountain and stand there, gratefully, where the fire has been. If you're to be saved, not only have you got to give up the sodomite of ungodly life, but you've also got to give up the plane of your own efforts and cast all those poor efforts to become a Christian utterly aside and gratefully standing before that cross say, Upon a life I did not live.

Upon a death I did not die. Another's life, another's death, I stake my whole eternity. And I want to tell you, when you confess yourself a total sinner, when you pour contempt on all your pride and all your resolutions and say, If God sent me to hell, it would be the justest thing he'd ever done.

Please turn the cassette over now. Do not fast-wind it in either direction. And say, If God sent me to hell, it would be the justest thing he'd ever done.

I wouldn't be able to quarrel with him. But upon a life I did not live. A death I did not die.

I stake my whole eternity. I tell you, you're as secure as God can make you. The judgments burnt itself out for you.

And because of that old rugged cross, God, for his sake, Christ's sake, pardons you, forgives you, and gives you the Holy Spirit. And you find, the air is very exhilarating up there in the mountain. My goodness, it's good up here.

Oh, how marvellous. The smell of smoke seems to have gone. The sun's shining.

There's joy in my heart. I've got peace with God. How in the world have I come by it? Not by making a new promise, but by confessing yourself to be a failure.

Not by turning over a new leaf, by turning back the old and seeing and believing that Jesus took it all on that cross. And I want to tell you, you've only got to begin to talk to God like that and electricity gets turned on in your soul. So we've got here a lovely picture of the Gospel.

Escape for thy life, look not behind thee, neither tarry in the plain, escape to the mountain, lest thou be consumed. Now you say, where's the dilemma? Well, I said it, I'm talking about Lot's dilemma. Well, where was the dilemma? Why, here.

If Lot was to escape to the mountain for safety, it would mean he'd have to resume the pilgrim life. Years before, Abraham and himself had lived up there on the mountains. They'd lived as pilgrims, as strangers, as foreigners.

They came from another country. They never intermixed with the others, they were different. And they lived in that different part on the mountain and they lived in different sort of accommodation.

They didn't build houses. Abraham had promised him, by God, the whole land. He wasn't going to start building on land which he hadn't yet possessed.

It was all going to be his one day, and so it was. Because of the spiritual reasons, Lot never lived in an ordinary house. Lot and Abraham lived in tents.

Frankly, it didn't appeal very much to Lot. I'm not suggesting that our campers feel like Lot did. But maybe sometimes when the weather's wet and the wind high, you might have been guilty of having an envious thought of us in the school.

And I believe that Lot didn't find it very appealing, always have to live out his life in tents. There were so many discomforts. And up there in the mountains there were wild animals.

And worse, I think, for Lot was, it made him distinctive. They were different from everybody. The Hebrews, men from the other side, that's what the word Hebrew means.

They were always distinctive. And I don't think Lot liked being distinctive. And so it was, when the choice was put to him, as it was at last, where will you prefer to live? We can't continue together? We're having trouble between our respective herdsmen? Lot, if you choose that way, said Abraham, I'll choose the other.

I'll give you first choice. And of course there was hardly a moment's hesitation. What his choice was, it was of course the cities of the plain and Sodom in particular.

And here he's being told to escape to the mountain. And I suppose from one point of view he wanted to. If it's true what's going to happen to Sodom, it's surely the part of wisdom to escape to the mountains.

If he stays he'll be consumed. But he says, there are no towns in the mountains. No, none at all.

There are no city lights up there. Not at all, none at all. There are no discos up there.

Exactly, you've got it right, not one. It means to say that if I escape to that mountain, I'm going to have to live the life of a pilgrim once again. You're dead right.

I'll be so different from everybody. How right you are. Ah, he wanted to escape to the mountain to save his soul, to save his skin.

But he was held back by the thought that it would mean leaving all the facilities of city life in the plane. And that was his dilemma. If the mountain, no cities.

If the plane, however, he'll be consumed along with the people of Sodom. And that's the dilemma which many people, young people who are beginning to face up to the biggest decisions of life and older people are facing. That if they come to Jesus, if they receive the Lord Jesus, if they go to him and receive eternal life and the forgiveness of their sins, it's always going to involve them in a pilgrim life.

It's always going to involve them in heart separation from the world. It's going to mean they're going to make him Lord, not merely as a convenient saviour, but the Lord who's going to take over their lives. It always means they're going to be different from other people.

I tell you there's no possibility of a person, young or old, really knowing real salvation without bearing in some degree the reproach of Christ of being a marked man and perhaps dropped from polite society. You're no longer going to be the favourite. Friends that liked you perhaps won't want you so much.

You'll find you're just not invited perhaps, as you once were. Oh, the great things they tell us about life in the mountains, what was that? The air's very exhilarating up there, the sun's shining, there's peace up there, but there are none of these other things and it means I'll have to be a pilgrim. It says that Jesus gave himself for us that he might deliver us, listen, from this present evil world.

And my dear friend, if you're not prepared to be a marked man for Jesus, you will never get a real up-to-date experience of his dear, precious salvation. Yes, it does mean you'll have to confess it and be different. It could interfere with friendships.

It would mean you dropping some of the tainted things of the world and many of its empty pleasures. And that's a dilemma. We want to be saved, of course we do.

We've been brought up in Christian homes maybe, we've had every encouragement to turn our lives over, we've received so many good things because of God's goodness to our family, but we're held back by the fact that we shall have to embrace a pilgrim life again. The reproach of Christ. On the other hand, if you love the world, and you must have it, you're going to embrace a certain judgment.

And so this is the great dilemma that people face. I do hope that the many thousands that went forward in the stadiums somehow had that borne in upon them, that the Spirit showed them, you're settling this dilemma in the favour of the Lord Jesus. Well then, what happened? Well, Lot suggested a compromise.

He said, I cannot escape to the mountain lest some evil take me and I die. He said, there's a little city here, it's called Zohar, quite convenient. It's only a little one Lord, only a little one.

I agree with you, big cities are wicked, but this is only a little one. Now I said, couldn't you see a way to let me go there? Couldn't you defer the judgment till I got ensconced in Zohar? And do you know, God's grace was such that God said yes. And much relieved, Lot found his way to this little city.

And he hoped he was going to be secure. Actually, he didn't stay more than a day or two because it was just too hot for comfort, Zohar. And you know, it's very easy for some of us to have made for ourselves a compromise.

No, not real commitment. Not really getting us a total sinner to the foot of the cross. Giving up even everything, even our righteousness.

But we found for ourselves a little city. Small, unoffending forms of worldliness. You know, we're not so narrow-minded in our church, you know, much nicer.

And all sorts of worldlinesses are tolerated. Not that they were ever ruled out by a law, but the general consensus was in the old days, that doesn't go with the Christian testimony or that doesn't. But you know, these days, if you know how to do it, you can get away with a whole lot.

And you don't have to go the whole way and we find little cities for us. You know, some of the things that I do, well, there's no moral issue in them. I mean to say, a bit of tobacco, where's a moral issue that I ought to face up in that? But listen friend, why did you ever begin when you were much younger? There was no appetite there.

There was no desire that had to be satisfied. There was only one thing that prompted us in those days and that was to be like the world. That was all there was to it.

You didn't want to be different. But now you're coming to Jesus, that's the one thing you and I have got to be willing for. A little city, yes, but it's a compromise.

And we'll see it didn't work out with a lot. With regard to our friendship with the opposite sex, oh, you didn't be too particular, only a little petting. But petting can lead to something much more serious, tragic sometimes.

But we justified it because it was Zohar, a little city, just a little bit of the world's way. It could be true with regard to drink. I mean to say, share is the thing to have.

I mean when you're invited out, you can't stand out like a sore thumb and always ask for something different. A few years ago, I was over in America and the telephone bell rang. And it was the voice of a friend of mine, an Irishman, an evangelist, who was working then in America taking campaigns.

And his voice was husky. He was under the influence of drinking. He said, Roy, you're in this country, can you somehow come over and help me? I'm in a terrible place.

And the pastor took over from him on the telephone and told me that this friend of mine was really an alcoholic. And it had come to the surface in the middle of a campaign. I later learnt how it happened.

I never knew he was. He'd lived a wild life before he was saved. He'd sung in my meetings in various parts of this country.

I'd never guessed that was a problem. I don't think it was at that time. But apparently he went to a Christian home to take meetings and he was offered sherry.

And the end result was an alcoholic. Thank God, Jesus has rescued him. And the saints have rallied round, but he was finished.

What minister would invite an alcoholic as the evangelist for his campaign? But God's wonderful rest taught him. And I heard my dear friend say in a meeting in front of a number of ministers that he was an alcoholic. That's what the alcoholic does and is advised to do.

Never say, I was, but I am. Even if he's been dry for ten years, it means he can never touch the merest portion of it because of this thing that's grown up. And it started through being offered sherry in a Christian home.

And so these things aren't such little cities after all. They can have bigger consequences. But we can call them little cities, matters in which we've not really escaped fully to the mountain.

Well, how did it go with Lot? Well, he didn't spend more than a night or two there. For we read that Lot feared to dwell in Zohar. It was just too near that appalling, mighty convulsions, volcanic convulsions going on around Sodom.

And eventually he did get to the mountain and found a convenient cave. And the thing is, it won't work. You know when we compromise, we lose the joy of the Lord on the one hand and then somehow you don't get the fun that the world gets.

You get neither one nor the other. And the simple truth is this, young people, older people, it's got to be with regard to Jesus, all or nothing. You got that? All or nothing.

Quit the whole thing. But happy are the people who make it all. And they get all that Jesus has to offer.

But I haven't quite finished yet. Why is there this dilemma? I mean, we all have it at various levels, very often. Moral delivers in our Christian lives.

And at bottom it is because of self-interest. You see, Lot's desire to get to the mountain, which there was a desire, I'm sure, was really self-interest. He didn't want to be destroyed with Sodom.

He was concerned for number one. But his desire to have something in the plain was also self-interest. It was self-interest pulling one way and self-interest pulling the other.

And so it is with us. Maybe our very desire to become a Christian could be pure self-interest. I want to save my skin.

I don't want to have caught disaster. My desire, however, for the good things of the world and even the tainted things of the world is also self-interest. There must be found another motive altogether.

Saviour, Thy dying love, Thou gavest me, nor should I withhold, dear Lord, from Thee. Another motive, another motive. You may have heard of the famous Count Zinzenthoff, the man who was the founder of the Moravian communities in Germany before the Reformation, that community through whom John and Charles Wesley came to know Jesus.

We owe a lot to the Moravians in England. Way back in history it began with a wealthy young nobleman. Before he settled down to Korea at court he was sent on the grand tour of all the great sites of Europe.

And he came at last to a certain city, the name of which I've forgotten, in Germany, where there was a famous painting of Jesus on the cross. There's an old-fashioned book which isn't published now - if you ever get it, you get it called From Death Unto Life, is it? A little book of illustrations. I'm not sure even that I've got right.

You see, I am 76. I'm allowed to forget a few things. What? Yes, that's it, Journey from Death Unto Life.

And in that there's a story of how this was painted, this extraordinary painting, an altarpiece it was, of Calvary and of Jesus there. But I'm not going to tell you the story. That in itself is a romance.

The painter painted it as a message and he was often at the back of the gallery praying for the people who came to see this great painting. One day a count, Count Zimzendorf, came in to see, among all the other sites, this great site. And he was absolutely transfixed as he looked into the eyes of the crucified.

And he dropped his eyes to the words underneath, All this I did for thee, what hast thou done for me? He sank to his knees, buried his face in his hands. The time for closing the gallery had come, everybody had left, but this young count was still upon his knees before that picture. And the caretaker had to come and ask him politely if he would leave, that he might close it.

And he did. He'd had a real meeting with Jesus. He couldn't answer that question, All this I did for thee, what hast thou done for me? And all there was of that proud life, he laid at the feet of Jesus without reserve.

His wealth, his position, his reputation, all became Christ's. The Reformation hadn't really begun by this time, I think I'm right in saying that. But he made this great surrender and he gave his estate over to God.

And there was at that time a spiritual movement on called the Mennonites. And he invited them to come and find refuge on his estate and they set up this spiritual community at a place called Hern Hood. Wesley went over there with his questions and found much help and they came over to England.

He found another motive. There was no dilemma. It wasn't, what's going to be best for me to go to heaven or have the world? All this he's done for me.

What have I done for him? There's another old story how likewise from one of these old gospel books of a Roman Catholic man who became, even in the ranks of Rome, a great preacher of the gospel way back. And he tells the story of his conversion. He with a bunch of other young fellows went into a cathedral and they looked at it all and there they saw the confessional and a priest tucked away inside and they decided they'd have a laugh and they'd get one of their number to go and make a bogus confession.

Go on, you do it. No, you do it. He said, all right, I'll do it.

And one of them went and he knelt before that little window and said, Holy Father, and so on. And he made a confession. Outrageous it was, but quite bogus.

For that priest wasn't as full as they thought. And he knew what that young man was up to. Now said the priest, my son, there is penance for you to do because of what you confessed.

I want you to go across the cathedral to that great crucifix, that great statue of Jesus on the cross. I want you, he said, to go and kneel down in front of that crucifix and look up into the eyes of the crucified and you're going to say aloud, this is your penance. All this you've done for me and I don't care a damn.

And you're to say it three times. Didn't quite know what to do. That is your penance.

And that priest kept his eye on him until he walked across and he knelt down before that statue and he said those outrageous words. He hardly managed to finish them. He wept.

And that was the day when it was more than kneeling in front of a crucifix. Jesus himself came into his heart. Jesus himself forgave his sin, took over his life and he became, in later years, a great voice for God.

Another motive, another motive. And there's no dilemma. Not dilemma.

Your dilemma. And you know, it may not be the dilemma with regard to initial salvation, it may be all sorts of issues in your life later on. Moral issues.

One half pulls you one way, the other half pulls the other. It's only because itself is at the back of either course. Another motive.

Saviour, thy dying love, thou gavest me, nor should I ought withhold, dear Lord, from thee. Well, are you prepared? Am I prepared to settle that dilemma? Are you prepared to see he loved you in your shame, he loved you when you were so far from God? Thou didst not spare thine only son, but gavest him for a world undone, then freely with thy blessed one, thou gavest all. And so tonight, the end of this Sunday, I say, Lord, I want to tell you something.

I've been compromising. I've been torn both ways. I've been in a little city, if not the complete Sodom, a little city, a Zohar.

I beg you, flee from that city. Free, free to Calvary. Stand tonight without reservation where the fire's beating.

It'll be a happy night for you. God bless us, God help us. Let us bow our heads in prayer.

Lord Jesus, Thou knowest, we've seen our situation in this old story of the destruction of Sodom, of that mountain to which Lot was bidden to flee. Lord, this dilemma in which Lot found himself gives us furiously to think. And we ask for, all of us, we think of young people who've been limping between two opinions, not quite sure whether they're saved.

Only in the plain, not at the mountain. And they're not at the mountain because they're scared it's going to cost them too much. Not as much as it costs Thee, Lord.

Nothing. We're going to be the gainers all the way along. Lord, we ask that Thou would help us, even tonight, some of us, get this great issue settled.

We ask it in Thy dear name. Amen. Our closing hymn is Hymn 457.

457. We'll sing it to the beautiful tune of Stracathro. Approach, my soul, the mercy seat where Jesus answers prayer.

Approach, my soul, the mercy seat where Jesus answers prayer. Thy promise is my only plea. This is the language to use.

Thy promise is my only plea. It is my answer now. The Lord is my shepherd.

He will watch over me. He shall not depart.

Audio: <https://sermonindex1.b-cdn.net/18/SID18779.mp3>
Source: <https://sermonindex.net/speakers/roy-hession/escape-for-thy-life/>

Grow in Your Walk with Christ

Listen and read messages that will stir your heart for Christ and point you to deeper repentance and devotion.

- 50,000+ Sermons from speakers past and present
- 3,900+ Classic Christian Books freely readable online
- 1,200+ Bible Translations and Commentaries
- Over 450k forum posts — Join our vibrant online Christian forum

www.sermonindex.net