

# Real Salvation and Whole-hearted Service

By R. A. Torrey

## Chapter 4

### GOD'S BLOCKADE OF THE ROAD TO HELL

"The Lord is not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance." — 2 Pet. iii. 9.

If any man or woman in this audience is lost, it won't be God's fault. God does not wish you to be lost. God longs to have you saved. If God had His way, every man and woman in this audience would not only be saved some time, but saved to-night. God is doing everything in His power to bring you men and women to repentance. Of course, He cannot save you if you will not repent. You can have salvation if you want to be saved from sin, but sin and salvation can never go together. There are people who talk about a scheme of salvation whereby man can continue in sin and yet be saved. It is impossible. Sin is damnation, and if a man will go on everlastingly in sin, he will be everlastingly lost. But God is doing everything in His power to turn you out of the path of sin and destruction into the path of righteousness and everlasting life. God has filled the path of sin — the path that leads to hell — with obstacles. He has made it hard and bitter. A great many people are saying to-day "the Christian life is so hard." It is not. "Christ's yoke is easy, and His burden is light" (Matt. ii. 30). God tells us in His Word, "The way of transgressors is hard" (Prov. ii. 15). God has filled it full of obstacles, and you cannot go on in it without surmounting one obstacle after another. I am to talk to you to-night about some of the obstacles that God has put in the path of sin and ruin.

The first one is the Bible. You cannot get very far in the path of sin without finding the Bible in your way. The Bible is one of the greatest hindrances to sin in the world. With its warnings, with its invitations, with its descriptions of the character and consequences of sin, with its representations of righteousness, its beauty and its reward, with its pictures of God and God's love, the Bible always stands as a great hindrance to sin. It makes men uneasy in sin. That is the reason many men hate the Bible; they are determined to sin, and the Bible makes them uneasy in sin, so they hate the book.

Men will give you a great many reasons why they object to the Bible, but in ninety-nine cases out of a hundred, if you should trace men's objections to the Bible home, you would find the reason they hate the Bible is because it makes them uneasy in their sin. Men sometimes say to me, "I object to the Bible because of its filthy stories," but when I look into their lives I find that their lives are filthy, and that their real objection is not to filthy stories, of which there are none. Stories of sin there are; stories that paint sin in its true colours; stories that make sin hideous — and their objection is not to filthy stories, but because the Bible makes them uneasy in their filthy lives. This is why you hate it. The Bible makes it hard for you to go on in sin. How often a man has been turned back from the path of sin by a single verse in the Bible. Hundreds of men have

been turned out of the path of sin by Rom. vi. 23, " The wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord." Thousands of men have been turned out of the path of sin by Amos iv. 12, " Prepare to meet thy God." Tens of thousands of men have been turned out of the path of sin by John iii. 16, " For God so loved the world, that he gave His only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life." And John vi. 37, " Him that cometh to Me, I will in no wise cast out."

Several years ago a man came into our church in Chicago, who had not been in a house of worship for fifteen or sixteen years. He was a rampant infidel. I don't know why he came in that night. I suppose because he saw the crowd coming, and was curious to know what was going on. He sat down, and I began to preach. In my sermon, I quoted John vi. 37, " Him that cometh to Me, I will in no wise cast out." It went like an arrow into that man's heart. When the meeting was over he got up and went out, and tried to forget that verse, but could not. He went to bed, but could not sleep. " Him that cometh to Me, I will in no wise cast out" kept ringing in his mind. The next day it haunted him at work, and the next and the next, and for days and weeks that verse haunted him, but he was bound not to come to Christ. He came back to the street where our church stands, walked up and down the sidewalk, stamped his foot, and cursed the text, but he could not get rid of it. Six weeks passed and he came into our prayer meeting, and stood up and said, " Men and women, I was here six weeks ago and heard your minister preach. I heard the text, John vi. 37, and I have tried to forget it, but it has haunted me night and day. I have walked up and down the sidewalk in front of your church. I have stamped on the sidewalk and cursed the text, but I can't get rid of it. Pray for me." And we did, and he was saved. One text from God's Word turning him out of the path of sin and ruin.

*The second obstacle that God has put in the path of sin is a mother's holy influence and a mother's teaching.*

How many hundreds of men and women there are here to-night who are not yet Christians, who have tried to be infidels, tried to plunge down into sin, but your mother's holy influence and your mother's Christian teaching won't let you go the way you wish to. Sometimes it is years afterward that a mother's teaching does its work. We had in America a young fellow who went west to Colorado in the mining times. He worked in the mines during the day and gambled at night, as so many miners do, but he spent more money gambling than he made in the mines. One night he was at the gaming-table. He lost his last cent. Then he used some of his employer's money and lost that. He felt he was ruined. He arose from the gaming-table, went up into the mountains, drew his revolver and held it to his temple, and was about to pull the trigger, when a word that his mother had spoken to him years before came to his mind, " My son, if you are ever in trouble, think of God." And there, standing in the moonlight, with a revolver pressed against his temple, and his finger upon the trigger of the revolver, and the revolver cocked, he remembered what his mother had said, and dropped on his knees, and cried to God and was saved. Turned out of the path of perdition by a mother's teaching.

*Another obstacle that God has put in the path of sin and ruin is a mother's prayers.* Oh, men, in the desperate hardness of our hearts we often trample our mother's teaching under foot, but we find it very hard to get over her prayers. How often at the last moment a man is saved by his mother's prayers. I have in my church in Chicago a man who stood outside the tabernacle in the old days with a pitcher of beer, and as the people came out of the meeting he offered them drink out of that pitcher of beer. He was hard and desperate and wicked. He had a praying mother in

Scotland. One night when he went home from the meeting where he had caused trouble, in the middle of the night, in answer to the prayers of a godly mother in Scotland, he was awakened and saved without getting out of bed. He came back to Scotland to see his mother. He had a brother who was a sailor in the China seas, and the mother and the saved son knelt down and prayed for the wandering boy, and that very night while they prayed the Spirit of God came down upon that sailor and he was saved, and afterwards became Dr. Morrison, a missionary to India — saved by a mother's prayers.

I stand here to-night a saved man, because when I was rushing headlong in the path of sin and ruin, my mother's prayers arose and I could not get over them. I used to think that nobody had anything to do with my salvation, no living being, for I was awakened in the middle of the night. I had gone to bed with no more thought of becoming a Christian than I had of jumping over the moon. In the middle of the night I jumped out of bed and started to end my miserable life, but something came upon me, and I dropped on my knees, and in five minutes from the time I got out of bed to take my life I had surrendered to God. I thought no man or woman had anything to do with it, but I found out a woman had — my mother — 427 miles away praying, and while I had gotten over sermons and arguments and churches, and everything else, I could not get over my mother's prayers. Do you know why some of you men are not in hell to-night? Your mother's prayers have kept you out of hell.

*Another obstacle is the sermons we hear.* How many thousands and tens of thousands of men are turned back from sin to God by sermons that they hear or read. Sometimes the sermon does its work years afterwards.

I remember once, in my first pastorate, I prepared a sermon on the parable of the Ten Virgins. There was one member of my congregation who was very much on my heart — I prayed that that woman might be saved by that sermon. I went and preached that sermon. I fully expected to see her saved by that sermon, but when I gave out the invitation she never made a sign. I went home and did not know what to make of it. I said, "I prayed for her conversion by that sermon and fully expected her conversion, and she is not converted. I don't know what to make of it." Years afterwards, when I had gone to another pastorate, I heard that this woman was converted. I revisited the place and called upon her, and said, "I am very glad to hear you have been converted." She said, "Would you like to know how I was converted?" I said I would. "Do you remember preaching a sermon years ago on the Ten Virgins? When you preached that sermon I could not get it out of my mind. I felt I must take Christ that night, but I would not, and that sermon followed me, and I was converted years after by that sermon." The sermon I was sure she was going to be converted by. But I did not see it for years.

*Another obstacle is a Sunday School teacher's influence and teaching.* How many it brings to Christ! How many in this audience to-night were brought to Christ by the teaching of a faithful Christian man or woman in the Sunday School? I want to say to you Sunday School teachers that a faithful Sunday School teacher is one of God's best instruments on earth for the salvation of the perishing.

In Mr. Moody's first Sunday School in Chicago he had a class of very unruly girls — nobody could manage them — but finally he found a young man who did manage them. One day this young man came into Mr. Moody's shop (it was before Mr. Moody went out of business) and said, "Mr. Moody" (and he burst into tears). Mr. Moody said, "What is the matter?" "The doctor says I have consumption, and that I must go to California at once or die," and he sobbed

as if his heart would break. Mr. Moody tried to comfort him, and said, " Suppose that is so, you have no occasion to feel so bad. You are a Christian." " It is not that, Mr. Moody; I am perfectly willing to die, I am not afraid to die, but here I have had this Sunday School class all these years and not one of them saved, and I am going off to leave them, every one unsaved," and he sobbed like a child. Mr. Moody said, " Wait, I will get a carriage and we will drive around and visit them, and one by one you can lead them to Christ." He took the pale teacher in the carriage and they drove around to the homes of the girls, and he talked to them about Christ until he was so tired that he had to be taken home, and the next day they went out again, and they went out every day until every one of these women but one was saved. Then they met for a prayer meeting before he went away. One after another led in prayer, and at last the one unsaved girl in the whole company led in prayer too and accepted Christ. He left by the early train the next morning, and Mr. Moody went down to the train to see him off. As they were waiting, one by one the girls dropped in, without any pre-arrangement, until every one of the young women was on the platform. He spoke a few words of farewell to them, and as the train pulled out of the station he stood upon the back platform of the car with his finger pointing heavenward, telling his Sunday School class to meet him in heaven.

*A kind word or an act God often throws as an obstacle in the path of sin.* A lady friend of mine was standing in a window looking out on Bleeker Street, New York. A drunkard came down the street. He had been a man in high circumstances; he had been the mayor of a Southern city, but had gone down through drink, and was now a penniless drunkard on the streets of New York. He had made up his mind to commit suicide. He started for the river, but as he was going down Bleeker Street he thought, " I will go into a public-house and have one more drink. I have spent a lot of money in that public-house, and I can certainly stand the man off for one drink." He went in and asked for a drink, and told the man he had no money to pay for it, and the man came around from behind the bar and kicked him into the gutter — you are welcome, men, just as long as you have money — kicked him into the gutter. My friend, looking out of the window, saw the poor wretch picking himself up out of the gutter, and she crossed over and wiped the mud off with her handkerchief, and said, " Come over in here. It is bright and warm and you will be welcome," and the poor wretch went over and sat down behind the stove. The meeting began, and one after another gave their testimony, and when the meeting was over that lady came and spoke to him about his soul, and his heart was touched and he was saved. He got one position and then a better one, and finally was made manager of one of the largest publishing houses in the city of New York. One day he came to my friend, and said, " I have some friends down at a hotel; I want you to meet them." She went to the hotel, and he introduced her to a fine-looking, middleaged woman and a fine-looking young lady, and said, " This is my wife and daughter " — beautiful, refined, cultured ladies whom he had left and gone down to the very verge of hell; but a kind act and a word of invitation to Christ had turned him out of the path to perdition, when he was within one step of hell, into the path that leads to glory. Oh, let us go as the missionaries of God's grace and block the path of sinful men and women with kindly deeds, and thus turn them to righteousness and to God.

*Another obstacle that God puts in the path of sin and ruin is the Holy Spirit of His work.* How strange it is. You and I have experienced it. When we were right in the midst of a carousal a strange feeling came into our heart, an unrest, a dissatisfaction with the life we were living, a longing for something better, memories of home, church, mother, Bible, and God.

A man one night was playing cards at the table. He was a man wholly given up to the world, belonged to one of your noble families, not a nobleman himself, but connected with members of the nobility — a wild, reckless, English spendthrift, and there he sat playing cards, and suddenly the voice of God's Spirit spoke in his heart. He thought he was about to die. He sprang up from the table, threw down his cards, rushed to his room. There was someone in the room. He thought at first, " It won't do to pray while the maid is in the room." But he was so much in earnest that he did not mind anybody. He dropped down by his bed and called upon God for Christ's sake to forgive his sins.

That man was Brownlow North, who did such a great work for God in Ireland and Scotland in '59 and '60. Oh, friends, listen. Last night as you were in some den of infamy, there came into your heart a wretchedness, a sense of self-disgust, a longing for something better, a calling to a purer life — what was it? God's Spirit. As you sit in this place here to-night (all over this building) there is a stirring in your heart, and you are saying to yourself, " I wonder if I had better not become a Christian to-night?" Almost a determination to stand up as soon as the invitation is given out. What is it? God sending His Spirit to blockade the road to hell. Listen, men, listen to God's Spirit to-night. Yield; accept Christ.