



**Man's
EXTREMITY
Is God's
OPPORTUNITY**

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MAN'S EXTREMITY IS GOD'S OPPORTUNITY

“For the LORD shall judge his people, and repent himself for his servants, when he seeth that their power is gone, and there is none shut up, or left.”

Deuteronomy 32:36

In Deuteronomy 32, God was forecasting the future of Israel. Unfortunately, it was not a pleasant forecast. God revealed to Moses that His people would not remain faithful to His covenant. God knew that when they had inherited the Promised Land and had begun to enjoy the blessings, they would quickly turn aside

and begin to worship false gods. This was stunningly foretold in verses 15-18:

❖ **Deuteronomy 32:15-18** But Jeshurun waxed fat, and kicked: thou art waxen fat, thou art grown thick, thou art covered with fatness; then he forsook God which made him, and lightly esteemed the Rock of his salvation. (16) They provoked him to jealousy with strange gods, with abominations provoked they him to anger. (17) They sacrificed unto devils, not to God; to gods whom they knew not, to new gods that came newly up, whom your fathers feared not. (18) Of the Rock that begat thee thou art unmindful, and hast forgotten God that formed thee.

One of Moses' last responsibilities was to teach the children of Israel a song, which would stand as a witness against them in that future generation that suffered judgment:

- ❖ **Deuteronomy 31:19-22** Now therefore write ye this song for you, and teach it the children of Israel: put it in their mouths, that this song may be a witness for me against the children of Israel. (20) For when I shall have brought them into the land which I sware unto their fathers, that floweth with milk and honey; and they shall have eaten and filled themselves, and waxen fat; then will they turn unto other gods, and serve them, and provoke me, and break my covenant. (21) And it shall come to pass, when many evils and troubles are befallen them, that this song shall testify against them as a witness; for it shall not be forgotten out of the mouths of their seed: for I know their imagination which they go about, even now, before I have brought them into the land which I sware. (22) Moses therefore wrote this song the same day, and taught it the children of Israel.

This song is found in the 32nd chapter of Deuteronomy. It recounts God's deliverance from Egyptian bondage, and God's goodness to them through the wilderness wanderings, and in giving them the Promised Land. However, the song also foretells of their apostasy from the God of their salvation, and the resulting judgment:

❖ **Deuteronomy 32:19-22** And when the LORD saw it, he abhorred them, because of the provoking of his sons, and of his daughters. (20) And he said, I will hide my face from them, I will see what their end shall be: for they are a very froward generation, children in whom is no faith. (21) They have moved me to jealousy with that which is not God; they have provoked me to anger with their vanities: and I will move them to jealousy with those which are not a people; I will provoke them to anger with a foolish nation. (22) For a fire is kindled in mine anger, and shall burn unto

the lowest hell, and shall consume the earth with her increase, and set on fire the foundations of the mountains.

The song contains an admonition to consider the “*latter end*” of their ways and decisions.

❖ **Deu 32:29 O that they were wise, that they understood this, that they would consider their latter end!**

If only people would consider the “*latter end!*” People are too short sighted – they do not seem to see beyond the ends of their noses! They do not look to the latter end of their decisions or consider how their choices will affect their children and grandchildren. When they sow their seed, they do not consider the harvest!

God told Israel that their ways would end in destruction and that they would be scattered among the heathen. In the Book of Judges, they went


through a cycle of idolatry, judgment, enslavement, and deliverance, and yet they did not learn the error of their ways. The kingdom of Israel departed from God and worshipped the golden calves of Jeroboam, until God destroyed them utterly through the vicious conquest of Assyria. The kingdom of Judah enjoyed some revivals and times of blessing, and yet they ended up outdoing Israel in their wickedness and idolatry. God destroyed Jerusalem and Judah through the Babylonians, and the surviving Jews were carried far away into captivity in Babylon.

Israel has always been stubborn. They were stiffnecked. They were always rebellious. They have been rebellious against God since He sent Moses to deliver them out of Egypt.

The story of the Bible is not the faithfulness of Israel to the Lord, but the faithfulness of the Lord to Israel. In fact, the entire Old Testament is the story of God's faithfulness to an unfaithful people. Our God is

faithful to His people and His promises! I am thankful that my eternal destiny is not based on my faithfulness to God, but to His faithfulness to me and to His promises. Even when I fall short in my faithfulness to the Lord, He is ALWAYS faithful to me.

Now, in verse 36 is a tremendous truth and a wonderful promise.

 **Deu 32:36 For the LORD shall judge his people, and repent himself for his servants, when he seeth that their power is gone, and there is none shut up, or left.**

In the context of apostasy and divine judgment, God gives this promise of deliverance – ***but only when a certain condition has been met.*** God said, “When I see that their power is gone, I will repent, return and intervene on the behalf of My people. When they have reached rock bottom – when they stop kicking, fighting, and striving to have their own way – when all of their power is exhausted and they have reached

their extremity, that will be my opportunity to intervene on their behalf.”

Let us consider this statement from two different perspectives:

I. THE LOST SINNER'S EXTREMITY IS GOD'S OPPORTUNITY.

There are only two kinds of people, and both are sinners – there are *lost* sinners and *saved* sinners. A saved person has trusted Jesus Christ and His sacrifice for the forgiveness of his sins. He has been “born again,” spiritually “quickenened” or made alive by the grace of God. A lost sinner is simply someone who has never been saved.

Until April 21, 1991, I was a lost sinner. On that wonderful date, I heard the gospel of Jesus Christ for the first time and received God's Son as my personal Saviour. Because of His love and mercy, I am now a

sinner saved by grace! So, when I refer to “sinners” under this point, I am including myself; it is not intended as a term of derision towards someone who is not “religious,” but is a scriptural term referring to all mankind, “*for all have sinned*” (Romans 3:23).

Let me say first that it is not hard for a lost sinner to be saved. The hardest part of salvation was accomplished almost two thousand years ago when Jesus Christ “tasted death for every man” and became the propitiating sacrifice for the sins of the whole world. The hardest part of salvation was fulfilled when He arose victorious from the dead three days later.

Salvation is *finished*. It is *free*. It is *forever*. It is *for whosoever will*.

- ❖ **Romans 5:6-9 For when we were yet without strength, in due time Christ died for the ungodly. (7) For scarcely for a righteous man will one die: yet peradventure for a good man some would even dare to die. (8) But God**

commendeth his love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us. (9) Much more then, being now justified by his blood, we shall be saved from wrath through him.

It is not hard for a lost sinner to get saved. I can take my Bible and show someone how to get saved in just a few minutes, wherever they are, and no matter their past. I have led people to Jesus Christ in churches, in their homes, on the street, in restaurants, walk-in freezers, cars, and cargo trailers, on buses, in washaterias, and in their front yards. In the Bible, sinners were saved on mountains, in boats, up a tree, on the road, in graveyards, in prison, and even nailed to a cross. Salvation is compared to going through a door, taking a drink of water, or eating bread. There is nothing HARD about getting saved.

The hard part of salvation included the incarnation and virgin birth, 33 ½ years of sinless living, a vicious

beating with a scourge, being crowned with thorns and nailed to an old rugged cross. The hard part of salvation including the Sinless One becoming my sin for me and suffering the equivalent of my eternity in hell as His soul was made an offering for my sin. The hard part was the Son of God crying out, "*It is finished*" with His final breath and then dying as the Lamb of God. The hard part of salvation came three days later when Jesus Christ arose victorious from the grave, glorified, never to die again, and ascending back to the right hand of the Father as our Great High Priest.

It is easy to get saved. When the Philippian jailor asked Paul and Silas,

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

Man-made religion complicates that which is simple in the Bible. Man-made religion teaches men to trust in their own goodness or at least in the goodness of their religion and church. The Bible teaches us to trust in the goodness of Jesus Christ alone.

- ❖ **Ephesians 2:8-9 For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God: (9) Not of works, lest any man should boast.**
- ❖ **Titus 3:5-7 Not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to his mercy he saved us, by the washing of regeneration, and renewing of the Holy Ghost; (6) Which he shed on us abundantly through Jesus Christ our Saviour; (7) That being justified by his grace, we should be made heirs according to the hope of eternal life.**

If we really look at ourselves as we are revealed in the mirror of God's Word, we will not like what we see.

The Bible presents us as unrighteous sinners. All our righteousnesses are as filthy rags in HIS sight. We are as an unclean thing. We are as sheep that have gone astray and cannot find out way back – we are LOST. Yet God was not afraid of our extremity. **Our extremity was His opportunity to show us His love, grace, and mercy.** He can save from the *guttermost* to the *uttermost* those who come to Him through Jesus Christ:

- ❖ **Heb 7:25 Wherefore he is able also to save them to the uttermost that come unto God by him, seeing he ever liveth to make intercession for them.**

Getting saved is easy. It is easy because Jesus Christ did all the work already. He does not need or want your help. He did it all by Himself:

- ❖ **Heb 1:3 ...when he had by himself purged our sins, sat down on the right hand of the Majesty on high;**

In the Old Testament, there were two specific instructions concerning the altar, which is where the sacrifice was made, and which pictures the atonement or salvation:

1. It was to be made of whole stones that were unaltered by man.

❖ **Exo 20:25 And if thou wilt make me an altar of stone, thou shalt not build it of hewn stone: for if thou lift up thy tool upon it, thou hast polluted it.**

Salvation does not need to be improved upon. It does not need to be added to. Just leave it alone. Do not add to it or take away from it. Do not build it of hewn stones or add an attractive design to make it more appealing to the world. If I get involved in it, I have polluted it.

2. **It was to not to have any steps leading up to it.**

- ❖ **Exo 20:26 Neither shalt thou go up by steps unto mine altar, that thy nakedness be not discovered thereon.**

There are no steps to salvation. It is not, "Join our church, do good works, and get baptized, and start keeping the sacraments, and doing the right things, and eventually you will produce salvation." No, no no! There are no steps! Salvation is, ***"Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and thou shalt be saved,"*** where you are, as you are. As the song writer of old wrote, *"Nothing in my hands I bring; simply to thy cross I cling."*

Getting saved is easy. Getting people to repent towards God, acknowledging their need for salvation, acknowledging that only Jesus Christ can save them, is often very hard. In fact, sometimes it is humanly impossible.

The older people get, the less likely they are to get saved simply because our hearts get harder and our

lives get filled up with things that blind us from our need for Jesus Christ. Most people who get saved are saved between the ages of 6 and 12. The second group is 13-18 years old. Statistics indicate that 85% of those who do not get saved by age 18 never will get saved. Therefore, if you are over 18 and you are not saved, you should be alarmed. You are in a bad bracket.

Of course, people do get saved as adults – but they are not as easy to win as children or even young people. They become set in their ways, distracted by the cares, pleasures and pressures of life, addicted to sin, and entrenched in religion and ideologies. Some become so hardened that they are just not going to get saved until they have been brought to their extremity. Then, God will find His opportunity.

A lifeguard was asked why he had allowed a floundering swimmer to almost drown before rescuing him. He said, "I cannot attempt to save a

man so long as he is trying to save himself. He will drown us both.” In the same way, God cannot save a person until they stop trying to save themselves. ***Christ will do all of the saving or He will not do it at all.***

NICODEMUS.

Nicodemus had to be brought to the extremity of his religious understanding. He started by telling Jesus what he knew; Jesus began telling him what he did not know. The religious teacher began with *statements* and ended with *questions*.

- ❖ **John 3:2-10** The same came to Jesus by night, and said unto him, Rabbi, we know that thou art a teacher come from God: for no man can do these miracles that thou doest, except God be with him. (3) Jesus answered and said unto him, Verily, verily, I say unto thee, Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God. (4) Nicodemus saith unto

him, How can a man be born when he is old? can he enter the second time into his mother's womb, and be born? (5) Jesus answered, Verily, verily, I say unto thee, Except a man be born of water and of the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God. (6) That which is born of the flesh is flesh; and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit. (7) Marvel not that I said unto thee, Ye must be born again. (8) The wind bloweth where it listeth, and thou hearest the sound thereof, but canst not tell whence it cometh, and whither it goeth: so is every one that is born of the Spirit. (9) Nicodemus answered and said unto him, How can these things be? (10) Jesus answered and said unto him, Art thou a master of Israel, and knowest not these things?

Despite all of his learning, Nicodemus learned that he knew nothing about the most important thing in all the world – how to be born again so that he could see the kingdom of God!

The Lord told Nicodemus, “You are a master teacher in Israel, respected for your religious learning and knowledge of the scriptures, and you do not know that a man must be born again?” Three times, the Lord told Nicodemus that we have to be born again – not just born physically, but reborn spiritually. Nicodemus did not understand. It did not fit in with he had always believed!

An amazing number of people attend churches who do not know what it means to be “born again.” Some are master teachers, pastors, and seminary professors with more letters after their names than a bowl of alphabet soup. Yet they do not know what it means to be born again. They think that it is baptism or turning over a new leaf; many think that it is a fine thing for

criminals, drunks, and drug addicts – but not good, upstanding church members!

Many religious people know just enough to keep them from understanding the gospel.

❖ **2Timothy 3:7 Ever learning, and never able to come to the knowledge of the truth.**

You cannot tell them anything because they think that they already know everything, when in fact they do not know that they must be born again. They say, “I’m a good Christian, even if I’ve never been born again. I’ve been in church for years; I teach Sunday School, I’m a good person, I don’t need to get saved. I haven’t done anything I need to be saved from.”

Nicodemus was brought to his extremity, and that was the Lord’s opportunity to introduce him to the fact that his religious works and moral goodness were *not enough*. He had to be *miraculously born again* to see the kingdom of God. The Lord’s words stripped

Nicodemus of his self-sufficiency and his self-righteousness so that he could believe on Christ and receive God's righteousness.

Perhaps you are religious but lost. Perhaps you have been in church all your life. You were baptized as a baby. You did not choose to be baptized; the choice was made by someone else. You did not exercise any personal faith in Jesus Christ. Perhaps you memorized the answers and passed a catechism class. Perhaps you have served in church ministries for many years. However, all of this matters nothing if you have not been BORN AGAIN by repenting of your self-righteousness and turning to Jesus Christ for His righteousness.

THE WOMAN AT THE WELL OF SYCHAR.

The Samaritan woman in John chapter 4 had to reach the extremity of her life choices. She was at the end of a lifetime of bad decisions. She had been married five times and was then living with a man - a social outcast

even among the Samaritans. Perhaps when she was younger, she could not be told anything. It is possible that she, like many others before and since, decided to go her own way, make her own choices, and yet all of her decisions were wrong ones.

Now, she is eating the bitter fruit of her ways. Her heart and mind were full of sarcasm, prejudices, and the false religious ideas of the Samaritans. Nevertheless, the Lord met her there at the well, and her extremity became the Lord's opportunity. When she was younger, she might not have listened, but she listened to Christ that day.

The lives of many today are like that of the Samaritan woman. Now in their late thirties, forties, and older, their lives bear the ugly scars of foolish decisions in their teens and twenties. Some are in prison or jail. Some have suffered broken relationship after broken relationship. Some are addicted to drugs and alcohol.

It might encourage such to know that your extremity is God's opportunity. Jesus Christ went out of His way through "enemy territory" because He cared about that woman with a wrecked life. He desires to come and make you whole, where you are, beginning right now.

THE THIEF ON THE CROSS.

The thief on the cross had to reach the extremity of his life. This man was dying a horrible death for his crimes. And he admitted that he deserved to die for whatever he had done, unlike the man crucified on the other side of the Lord, who died cursing Jesus Christ, blaming God and others for his situation, refusing to repent or turn to Jesus Christ for salvation.

❖ **Luke 23:39-41** And one of the malefactors which were hanged railed on him, saying, If thou be Christ, save thyself and us. (40) But the other answering rebuked him, saying, Dost not thou fear God, seeing thou art in the

same condemnation? (41) And we indeed justly; for we receive the due reward of our deeds: but this man hath done nothing amiss.

This man, in his final hours, reached a *place of repentance*. He knew and acknowledged his guilt. He knew that his death was just. He knew that the Lord was innocent, and he somehow knew that Jesus was the Christ, the Lord, and that He was dying for his sins.

It is hard to think of a greater extreme than this man was in at that moment. He was only minutes away from death and eternity – an eternity separated from God in the fires of hell.

His extremity became the Lord's opportunity.

❖ **Luke 23:42-43** **And he said unto Jesus, Lord, remember me when thou comest into thy kingdom. (43) And Jesus said unto him, Verily I say unto thee, To day shalt thou be with me in paradise.**

Thank God that He is good, gracious, merciful and ready to forgive! He was willing to save even a condemned man who had nothing to offer except his faith. God saved that man through his dying prayer. That same day, he was with the Lord in paradise!

Dear reader, are you saved ? Salvation is not hard. It is easy, if we will turn to Jesus Christ and receive Him personally as our Saviour!

II. THE SAINT'S EXTREMITY IS GOD'S OPPORTUNITY.

1. The extremity of the backslidden Christian can become God's opportunity.

The Prodigal Son is the great example of a backslidden, wayward, rebellious Christian. He was a son when he left home, a son while in the far country, and a son when he came home again. Therefore, he is a picture of a backslidden saved person, not an

unsaved person. An unsaved person is not a child of God (Gal. 3:24).

The Prodigal had a rebellious streak. He would not yield when he was at home. He wanted out. He did not want to submit to his father's authority, live by his ways or obey his rules. He left, taking his inheritance and wasting it in the bars and brothels of the far country.

His rebellious, stubborn streak was hard to break. He was not interested in returning from the far country as long as he had enough money to live the wild life. Even when that was gone, he was too stubborn to admit his sin and return home. Rather than face the father, he sold himself into bond service to a citizen of that country. Even when it meant feeding pigs, he hung on to his stubborn pride.

❖ **Luk 15:15 And he went and joined himself to a citizen of that country; and he sent him into his fields to feed swine.**

Even that could not meet his needs. He began to be in want. He became so hungry that he began to covet the husks that the swine were eating.

❖ **Luk 15:16 And he would fain have filled his belly with the husks that the swine did eat: and no man gave unto him.**

The last phrase of verse 16 is why we often do not see backsliders come to repentance: **“No man gave unto him.”** The Prodigal had gotten himself into a mess – and no one was bailing him out. Not his father. Not his mother. Certainly none of his fair-weather friends.

Too often, people underwrite the backslider's ways. We bail them out when they need to be left alone. We do not have enough guts to practice the tough love that people need. Why should they repent towards God if they can count on us to bail them out of their problems? It may be that we need to get out of the way and let God break people so that they can return to a place of genuine healing and restoration.

The father did not. He did not send a dime. He loved his son and wanted him back, but he was not going to subsidize his son's foolish living. The boy needed to come to a place of repentance. His stubborn pride had to be broken.

When the Prodigal reached his extremity, God had His opportunity.

- ❖ **Luke 15:17-20** And when he came to himself, he said, How many hired servants of my father's have bread enough and to spare, and I perish with hunger! (18) I will arise and go to my father, and will say unto him, Father, I have sinned against heaven, and before thee, (19) And am no more worthy to be called thy son: make me as one of thy hired servants. (20) And he arose, and came to his father...

At rock bottom – or in his case, the pigpen – he turned back to God. He acknowledged his sins. He “came to himself.” Then he arose and headed back to the

father, humbled, ready to accept a position as the lowest servant in the father's house.

It may be that you are a Prodigal son or daughter – or one who is chafing to get out of the father's house. The lights of the far country beckon you. Perhaps you have already wasted your life in riotous living. It may be that you are even now in the hog pen of sin's consequences – or perhaps you are almost there. When you reach your extremity – when you are done rebelling and running from your Heavenly Father, He will be waiting for you back at the house.

- ❖ **Luke 15:20-24 And he arose, and came to his father. But when he was yet a great way off, his father saw him, and had compassion, and ran, and fell on his neck, and kissed him. (21) And the son said unto him, Father, I have sinned against heaven, and in thy sight, and am no more worthy to be called thy son. (22) But the father said to his servants, Bring forth**

the best robe, and put it on him; and put a ring on his hand, and shoes on his feet: (23) And bring hither the fatted calf, and kill it; and let us eat, and be merry: (24) For this my son was dead, and is alive again; he was lost, and is found. And they began to be merry.

2. The extremity of the unyielded Christian can become God's opportunity.

Jonah was saved, and called into the ministry. He had preached with power and been used by God. Then, God called him to go to Nineveh.

Jonah had done fine as long as his will matched God's will. However, when God's will went against his will, Jonah showed who was really in charge. Jonah was self-willed, not submitted to God's will.

Many Christians do fine as long as God agrees with them. However, when they are called or commanded

to do something that they do not like or wish to do – that is when we find out who is really in charge!

Jonah rebelled and went the opposite direction. He boarded a ship for Tarshish. The devil will always have a ship waiting at the dock if you want to leave God's will! He was unyielding. Even in the storm, he told them to toss him overboard. He would rather die than yield to God. However, you do not always get to choose when you have had enough! God had a fish prepared that swallowed Jonah whole.

After the first day in the whale's belly, Jonah was still unrepentant. After two days, he clung to his stubbornness. After three days, however, he reached his extremity, and God had His opportunity.

❖ **Jon 2:1,9-10** Then **Jonah prayed unto the LORD his God out of the fish's belly... But I will sacrifice unto thee with the voice of thanksgiving; I will pay that that I have vowed. Salvation is of the LORD. (10) And the LORD**

spake unto the fish, and it vomited out Jonah upon the dry land.

It is far better to yield to God's will in the first place. However, if we do not, God can tear us down and put us under until we are finally ready to do the will of God.

3. The extremity of the faithful Christian can become God's opportunity.


Sometimes God brings even faithful, serving Christians - Christians in the center of His will - to a place of extremity. These places do several things for us:

- 1) They expose our limitations. This brings humility.
- 2) They exalt God's ability, causing Him to receive the glory.
- 3) They exercise and increase our faith.
- 4) They are used of God to show Himself mighty for the benefit of those watching our lives.

Israel was brought to the extremity of the Red Sea. Before them was an impossible situation; behind them was an unstoppable army. There was nothing they could do but stand still and watch God work a miracle. Their extremity became God's opportunity.

Extremities will come into our lives. Fiery trials will try us. We will find ourselves immersed in temptations (James 1:2-3). Problems will come which have no human solution. These are the times that "try men's souls." Yet our God is still as mighty today as He was when He parted the Red Sea for Moses.

You may be facing something today for which you have no solution and perhaps even no human options. But you can still pray. You can cast your cares upon the Lord. Consider the words of Moses to Israel as they stood trembling between the waters of the Red Sea and the rising dust cloud of Pharaoh's chariots:

 **Exodus 14:13-14** **And Moses said unto the people, Fear ye not, stand still, and see the**

salvation of the LORD, which he will shew to you to day: for the Egyptians whom ye have seen to day, ye shall see them again no more for ever. (14) The LORD shall fight for you, and ye shall hold your peace.

Our extremities are God's opportunities. They serve a purpose. They humble us, exalt our God, increase and strengthen our faith, and to show others what a mighty and good God we serve.

Man's extremity becomes God's opportunity. It may be as you come to the end of this booklet that God has shown you your need to receive Jesus Christ as your personal Saviour. Turn to Jesus Christ today, confessing that you are a sinner that needs to be saved, and ask Him to forgive you of all your sins, trusting that His sacrifice on the cross and

resurrection from the dead are sufficient for your salvation.

Perhaps you would like to pray something like this from your heart:

“Dear God, I know that I am a sinner. I need to be saved. I know that my good works, church membership, baptism, and religion cannot save me. I ask you, based on the blood of Jesus Christ, to forgive me of my sins. Dear Jesus, please come into my heart. As best I know how, by faith I receive you as my personal Saviour. Amen.”

“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.” John 3:16

If you have received Jesus Christ as your Saviour as a result of reading this booklet, or if it was a blessing or encouragement to you, please let us know.

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