



# Introduction



I came as close to heaven as a person can be, without getting in. For three years, I followed Jesus Christ and devoted myself to ministry. I was in the boat when Jesus calmed the storm. I served the bread and fish when He fed five thousand people. As an apostle, I was sent out to preach the gospel, I cast out demons, and I called people to repentance. But today, despite all that I did as a follower of Jesus, I am languishing in hell.

Down here, we are all familiar with the story of the thief on the cross, to whom Jesus said:





HEAVEN, SO NEAR, SO FAR

‘Today, you will be with me in Paradise.’ He was on the brink of hell, but ended up in heaven. My story is different. I was at the gates of heaven, but ended up in hell. I was the disciple who betrayed Jesus.

I want you to know that I was neither a helpless victim nor a hideous monster. I was a person with hopes, dreams, doubts, fears, disappointments, and frustrations very much like you. When I abandoned my faith, I felt that I had good reasons for doing so, though now, I live with perpetual regret.

In telling my story, I seek neither your pity nor your praise. I write only to describe the path by which I came to this abyss, having spent the best years of my life as a disciple of Jesus.