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# GOD'S WRATH

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### 1. An Attribute of God

The clear testimony of Holy Scripture is that wrath is one of the divine perfections. That God must and will punish sin, and the sinner, is written on the pages of Holy Writ from Genesis to Revelation. The Bible makes no attempt to conceal the fact of God's wrath, and that vengeance and fury against sin belong unto Him: "For we know him that hath said, Vengeance belongeth unto me, I will recompense, saith the Lord. And again, The Lord shall judge his people. It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God...for our God is a consuming fire" (Heb 10:30-31; 12:29).

I do know that if man had written the Bible, this fact of God's hatred for sin and His eternal punishment of sin would have had no place in God's Word. But since the Bible was written in heaven and given to man by inspiration of the Holy Spirit to declare unto us the mind, character, and counsel of God, then we read it clearly and positively: "God is angry with the wicked every day. If he turn not, he will whet his sword" and "the wicked shall be turned into hell and all the nations that forget God" (Psa 7:11-12; 9:17).

When preaching or witnessing of the divine wrath of God, we cannot listen to the reasonings of the natural man, who (by nature) hates God; but we must listen to the divine Word of God and bow to the authority of His declaration. Only in the

Bible do we have the solemn but true statements that God hates sin and must punish it, if it has not been put beneath the cleansing wave of the blood of Christ. Where God finds sin He must punish it; it's His very nature, because He is holy. Therefore the very nature of God makes hell as much a necessity as heaven.

First of all, let us listen to God's own challenge concerning His wrath from Deuteronomy 32:39-41. "See now that I, even I, am he, and there is no god with me: I kill, and I make alive; I wound, and I heal: neither is there any that can deliver out of my hand. For I lift up my hand to heaven, and say, I live for ever. If I whet my glittering sword, and mine hand take hold on judgment; I will render vengeance to mine enemies, and will reward them that hate me."

This portion of Scripture is in harmony with the entire Bible, that does not fail to set forth the divine perfections of God, His wrath being one of them. That this portion of Scripture is only an isolated one is far from being true, because a study of your concordance will show that there are more references in Scripture to the anger, fury, and wrath of God than there are to His love and tenderness. You see, because God is holy, He hates all sin; and because He hates all sin, His anger burns against the sinner, as we read in Psalm 7:11, "God is angry with the wicked every day."

The wrath of God is the holiness of God stirred into activity against sin; for it is sin that causes God's justice to be poured out upon sinners in a never-ending eternity of suffering and misery.

Sin is the transgression of God's holy law, and therefore the holy law demands payment. Sin is war on God, and therefore demands condemnation. Sin is guilt, and therefore demands the just penalty of separation from God. Sin is death, and therefore demands a cemetery away from God. Sin is a nature, and demands a putting away. Sin is a character, and demands wiping out. Sin is slavery, and demands that God put it out of His sight. Sin is intolerance of God's will, and therefore the sinner must and will bear the punishment of walking in his own way. This is described in 2 Thessalonians. 1:7-9, "To you who are troubled rest with us, when the Lord Jesus shall be revealed from heaven with his mighty angels, in flaming fire taking vengeance on them that know not God, and that obey not the Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ: who shall be punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord, and from the glory of his power."

Yes, the one who walks after his own will, and obeys not the Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ, shall be punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord, and from the glory of His power. Friend, this is not my word or teaching, but the eternal Word and teaching of Him that cannot lie.

This everlasting destruction is spoken of, in Revelation 21:8, as being in the lake of fire and, as being the Second Death: "But the fearful, and unbelieving, and the abominable, and murderers, and whoremongers, and sorcerers, and idolaters, and all liars, shall have their part in the lake which burneth with fire and brimstone: which is the second death." Death nowhere in Scripture is spoken of as annihilation, for the word death only means separation. The first death, or physical death, is the separation of the soul from the body; therefore, the second death or eternal death, is the separation of your soul from God. The expression in 2 Thessalonians 1:9, "punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord," means that it is from the radiance of the face of the Lord and the glorious majesty of His power; it is separation from God.

This wrath of God against sin is spoken of, in Romans 1:18, as the "wrath of God revealed from heaven"; and it is "against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, who hold the truth in unrighteousness." It is spoken of, in Romans 2:5, as being the "righteous judgment of God" because a holy God can only act in righteousness; therefore His judgments are true and righteous altogether (Rev 19:2). He can act in no other way, therefore, unto Abraham, He revealed Himself as the "Judge of all the earth [who doeth] right" (Gen 18:25), for He cannot act in any other way.

Let us see what the Scriptures say of our God's other attributes, as to where they came from: Psalm 89:2 declares His faithfulness to be in the very heavens. Psalm 136 declares His mercy to be from the heavens. His power is declared to be exercised in heaven in Daniel 4:35. Romans 2:4 declares that His goodness leads us to repentance, and this is given to us from heaven by the Holy Spirit come down from heaven. Romans 15:5 speaks of the God of patience, and this patience is exercised toward sinners from heaven. John 1:17 speaks of the grace of God coming by Jesus Christ, Who came down from heaven. 1 John 4:8 tells us that God is love, and from everlasting; it too comes from heaven and is shown to us from heaven by God our Father, sending His only begotten Son into the world to suffer and die and go through hell for His people.

"The wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness" (Rom 1:18). Yes, it is revealed, that is, manifested, shown to be poured out upon, caused to be known and felt by all who obey not the Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ. No wonder we are told to flee from the wrath to come, for when God rises up to avenge Himself of sin, it will surely be a "fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God; for our God is a consuming fire" (Heb 10:31; 12:29).

The assurance that God's judgment is sure to come is based upon the resurrection of the Lamb of God Who was sent to die in the place of sinners. Therefore, God commands all men everywhere to repent. Why? because "he hath appointed a day, in the which he will judge the world in righteousness by that man whom he hath ordained: whereof he hath given assurance unto all men, in that he hath raised him from the dead" (Act 17:30-31). Also, it is written in Hebrews 9:27, "it is appointed unto men once to die, but after this the judgment."

We cannot argue with physical death which is separation of the soul from the body. When the grim reaper comes to take us into eternity, who can stand against such an one? All the wealth in the world cannot keep one man, woman, or child, from that appointed hour. All the doctors, medicine, and loving care cannot keep a single soul one second beyond its appointed time of death. That is an appointment we must all keep, for "it is appointed unto men once to die, but after this the

judgment.” So in the same way, you cannot argue with the second death, which is separation from God, in the lake of fire, if you die in your sins. Just as you cannot do away with the first death—I don’t care how much you may deny it, laugh at it, or whatever you may try—so in the same manner you cannot do away with the second death, for every soul which dies outside of Christ. You may deny it, laugh at it, try and flee from it, ignore it, say it is nothing but annihilation, and try to explain it away; but you cannot get away from the plain teaching of God’s Word that after death comes the righteous judgment of God. Why? because God’s Word is truth and every man who denies it is a liar (Rom 3:4; Rev 21:8).

Your only hope and my only hope to escape the righteous judgment of God against our sin, is to flee unto the Lord Jesus Christ, for in Him and Him only has God provided a Refuge from the storm of His wrath (Heb 6:18-19). Only when God sees the blood of His precious Son applied by faith to the doorposts of our hearts, will He pass over our sins (Exo 12:7, 13). Only in Christ has the righteous wrath of God fallen on sin, therefore to be in Him is to be safe. “How do we come to Him?” I hear someone ask. You come to Him by faith; you come crying for mercy; you come confessing your sins; you come with a repenting heart; you come with a broken heart over sin; and you come to Him to receive all of this, for He alone has been exalted to be a Prince and a Savior, and to give repentance and forgiveness of sins (Act 5:31).

You come trusting Him, and His finished work upon the cross. You come believing His precious Word that you are a sinner and deserve His wrath, but, you are looking to Christ, the Lamb of God, to take away God’s wrath from you and your sins, because He bore them in His own body upon the tree. You come just as you are, for you cannot make yourself one bit better; you come casting your whole being upon the whole Christ for time and eternity.

## **2. The Destiny of the Wicked**

The destiny of the wicked is that solemn but undeniable truth that we will consider now; the destiny of every soul that dies outside of the refuge that God has provided—His Son.

Again we quote Hebrews 9:27, for it is there the certainty of the judgment of the wicked is found: “It is appointed unto men once to die, but after this the judgment.” Here death and judgment are clearly distinguished from each other, the one follows the other. So the judgment of the wicked is not death itself, but follows after death. God’s Word declares: “By one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin; and so death passed upon all men, for that all have sinned”; and “the wages of sin is death” (Rom 5:12; 6:23). Then after death follows the judgment of God upon the sinner who dies outside of Christ, for only upon Him has God’s judgment and wrath fallen. If we be found in Christ then we are safe, but if outside of Him, then we abide under the wrath of a holy and just God.

The fact of a future punishment for sinners is set forth clearly in numerous passages: “Rejoice, O young man, in thy youth, and let thy heart cheer thee in the days in thy youth; and walk in the ways of thine heart, and in the sight of thine eyes: but know thou, that for all these things God will bring thee into judgment” (Ecc 11:9). We are told here that a young man may walk in his own will, walk in the pleasures of sin, but they are only for a time; for he must one day give an account to God for all his deeds, and he shall be brought into judgment for his sins. “For God shall bring every work into judgment, with every secret thing, whether it be good, or whether it be evil” (Ecc 12:14).

In the New Testament the record is the same: God “hath appointed a day, in the which he will judge the world in righteousness by that man whom he hath ordained; whereof he hath given assurance unto all men, in that he hath raised him [the Lord Jesus Christ] from the dead,” and “hath committed all judgment” into His hands (Act 17:31; Joh 5:22). “We must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ; that every one may receive the things done in his body, according to that he hath done, whether it be good or bad” (2Co 5:10).

The judgment itself is described in these words: “I saw a great white throne, and him that sat on it, from whose face the earth and the heaven fled away; and there was found no place for them. And I saw the dead, small and great, stand before God; and the books were opened: and another book was opened, which is the book of life: and the dead were judged out of those things which were written in the books, according to their works. And the sea gave up the dead which were in it; and death and hell delivered up the dead which were in them: and they were judged every man according to their works. And death and hell were cast into the lake of fire. This is the second death. And whosoever was not found written in the book of life was cast into the lake of fire” (Rev 20:11-15).

This is God’s Word, and we disbelieve it to the peril of our souls; all men shall face this judgment whether we believe it or not. Believe and be saved; disbelieve and be damned. God’s Word is to be believed, not debated or argued. There is coming a day when God is going to judge sinners and punish them for their sin. Call me old fashioned, call me an alarmist, call me what you please; but still remember, that the soul that sinneth it shall die, and every evil work shall be brought into judgment.

The certainty of this coming judgment is described in 2 Peter 2:9 in these words: “The Lord knoweth how to deliver the godly out of temptations, and to reserve the unjust unto the day of judgment to be punished, “ and our Lord Himself asked the question in Matthew 23:33, “How can ye escape the damnation of hell?” Only in Christ, based upon His death in our place, can there be an escape from the damnation of hell. Only by believing in Him and seeking from Him the spirit of repentance from sin, from pride, from self-conceit and self-pleasing, can we be saved from wrath.

Another unchanging truth stands out upon the pages of Holy Writ and it is this; that there is not a single instance in either the Old or New Testaments of a sinner being saved after death. The Bible clearly tells us that death seals the sinner's fate. The Bible nowhere holds out hope for those who die outside of Christ. If death finds you outside of Christ, eternity will hold you in that state forever. "He that is unjust, let him be unjust still: and he that is filthy, let him be filthy still" (Rev 22:11). Nothing could be clearer than this: the unrepentant sinner's doom is sealed at death.

The solemn truth of the Word of God is: "He, that being often reprov'd hardeneth his neck, shall suddenly be destroyed, and that without remedy." No second chance after death; no repentance after death; no confession after death; no hope after death for the unsaved. What a solemn warning God gives us here! And then our Lord Jesus said to His enemies in John 8:21, "I go my way, and ye shall seek me, and shall die in your sins: whither I go, ye cannot come." Once they died in their sins, it was impossible for them to go to heaven, therefore they must face the inescapable consequence of the second death in hell which is separation from God.

Not only do the Scriptures declare that the judgment of God is sure and death seals the sinner's fate, but it is also clear as to what awaits the sinner at death. Our Lord gives us this clear unmistakable picture of what awaits the sinner at death. In Luke 16 we find Christ drawing aside the veil which hides from us what lies beyond death. There He tells us of a rich man who "died, and was buried; and in hell he lift up his eyes, being in torments." The rich man did not go to hell because he was rich, but because he lived and died without God; he lived his life apart from God and His Christ. If we will follow this rich man, we will note that he had not ceased to exist, but had found out what the wisest man on earth, who is without Christ, had never learned: that death does not end it all; and be sure your sin will find you out. We find here that the rich man was far from ceasing to exist, for our Lord said, "and in hell he lift up his eyes, being in torments."

Here we have a conscious being, a conscious person, in a definite place, suffering there, for he was in torment. So great was his anguish that he begged that one might dip the tip of his finger in water and cool his tongue. He was conscious, because the verse is clear that he could feel, he could see, he could think, he could hear, and he could remember his five brethren who were still on earth; and he did not want them to come to this place of judgment with him.

He was told to remember how he had lived in the midst of good things, but he did not use these means to seek Christ and put Him first. Dear friend, what are you doing with the time God has given you to believe the Gospel of His dear Son and turn from your wicked ways? What are you doing with the means God has given you?

Remember this is what a soul will do in eternity; they will be cut off from all pleasures; the fulfilling of any desires; and when they reach out in eternity for someone to love or seek out something in which to take pleasure, they find only the living God Whom they have no heart to love or appreciate. While on earth they had their wives or husbands, children or friends to love; but in hell they will find no one but God to love, and since they did not take time while on earth to seek Him and love Him, therefore they hate Him and gnaw at Him in their pain as they behold His holiness in which they see no beauty, only their sins.

Remember! There will be plenty of time to remember all the lost opportunities you had to seek the Lord, to believe on Christ, while here on the earth; all the lost opportunities to read His Word and find out His will, and all the lost opportunities to love Him.

Also, please do not call our blessed Lord a liar in giving us this story, by opening the veil and letting us look into the life-after-death of the wicked, of those that die outside of Him. Our Lord cannot lie, and what He told us is truth.

We would be guilty of blasphemy if we said our Lord meant something else by these words. We would be charging the Son of God with using language to deceive if He did not mean what He said, for surely He would mislead countless numbers of those who would read the record of His words.

I, for one, thank Him for leaving us this message of warning. Instead of turning away from it in unbelief and prejudice, we should want to hear its message and flee to Christ from the wrath to come. We should cry out like the jailor, "What must I do to be saved?" or like the publican in the temple, "God be merciful to me the sinner."

God has provided a Refuge and a Hiding Place from the storm of His wrath, and this place is in His Son, the Lord Jesus, Who came down from heaven's heights to earth's depths that He might die in the place of sinners. Christ came to die, "the just for the unjust that he might bring us to God" (1Pe 3:18). He Himself bore our sins in His own body on the tree that He might bring us to God (1Pe 2:24).

"For when we were yet without strength, in due time Christ died for the ungodly...God commendeth His love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us" (Rom 5:6,8). That is all we are, ungodly sinners, and yet Christ died for the ungodly. Therefore, recognize that you are an ungodly sinner; believe the message of hope in Christ, for sinners! Look to Him by faith; seek Him for true and godly repentance; cry after Him for mercy; tell Him your need—the desperate need of your soul, tell Him that you are an unworthy soul, worthy only of hell, and trust Him for His mercy. "Seek ye the LORD while He may be found, call ye upon him while he is near: let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts: and let him return unto the LORD, and he will have mercy upon him; and to our God, for he will abundantly pardon" (Isa 55:6-7).

### 3. Why God Must Punish Sin

The theme now will be the reason men came under the wrath of God and why God must punish them in a never-ending eternity of damnation and woe.

These questions can only be answered in the light of Holy Scriptures, in which we read that His glory He will not give to another, and that His counsel shall stand; His throne shall stand forever, and every knee shall bow and every tongue shall confess that Jesus Christ is Lord to the glory of God the Father (Phi 2:9-11).

Let us continue to look at this 16th chapter of Luke and see the picture our Lord Himself gave as He lifted the curtain, and let us look into and catch a glimpse of what happens to a soul that dies outside of the Lord Jesus Christ.

We have said that death does not end it all, but that a conscious person, this rich man, was in a definite place, suffering there, for he was in torments. So great was his anguish that he begged that one might dip the tip of his finger in water and cool his tongue. He was conscious, because the record is clear, that he could feel, he could see, he could think, he could hear, and he could remember his five brethren who were still on earth and did not want them to come to this place of judgment with him.

Let us see too, that no prayer of his was answered, no confession of sin was made, no sorrow for sin was recorded. Why? because the Scriptures clearly teach that when a man dies, he remains the same; if unrepentant, he is always in that state.

You see, that teaching is contrary to Scripture which says that by personal suffering or any other suffering there can be repentance or an atonement or salvation beyond the grave. Only here on earth can there be repentance and confession of our guilt; only in this life will God and can God be merciful to sinners in the Lord Jesus Christ. Where death finds us, eternity will hold us forever and forever.

As we look again at Luke 16, we ask the question, "What was this man's sin—what was this rich man's sin that caused him to be banished forever away from God and consigned to a place of torment?" Ephesians 2:12 gives us the answer: He was "...without God in the world," so he was without God in eternity.

This brings us then to the nature of the natural man. This rich man was born into the world without God, and his sin was that he lived without God in this life; therefore he has lived without God in hell these 20 centuries and shall live without God throughout eternity.

This is a solemn truth, but a truth that is written upon the pages of Holy Writ: that because of Adam's sin, we are born into this world without God. Let me say it with all the earnestness of my soul—hear me, hear God's Word: we are born into the world without God, and unless between our birth and our death we are born again of the Spirit of God, we shall live and die without God. In such a case, though we have gained the whole world, it would have been better for us never to have been born at all. Why? because having lived and died without God, we shall spend an eternity of woe and suffering without God in the lake of fire.

Hear me today, fellow traveler along life's pathway! If you have not God, then you have not His Christ; and he who has not Christ is an alien and a stranger to all that is good, holy, righteous, and true. Therefore if you have any hope for the future, it is an unscriptural hope, a soul-deceiving hope; for as sure as you die without God, you will perish as did the rich man. For there is only one way to know God and be content in Him, and that is to have a personal knowledge by faith of His Son, the Lord Jesus Christ, Who came to lead us back to God.

Again, the sin of the rich man was contentment without God. Born without God was his curse; contentment without God was his sin. Oh hear me, rich and poor alike! If you are content without God, then you are under His curse; for the soul that sinneth it shall die. The Scriptures declare that godliness with contentment is great gain, but contentment without God is damning (1Ti 6:6). The blessed man is the man who can cry with David: As the deer "panteth after the water brooks, so my soul planteth" after God (Psa 42:1)—I can't be content without Him. Also, Jesus said in Matthew 5:6, "Blessed are they which do hunger and thirst after righteousness."

Oh, if you are contented without God in this world, God's greatest curse on this side of the grave is on you! If you are without God, then you are under the reign of Satan who takes you captive at his will (2Ti 2:24-26).

The reason you are contented without God and His Christ is that you do not see, nor feel, nor understand your need of Him. Why? because your spiritual eyes are blinded by the god of this world, Satan. Not only that, but you are led captive by Satan at his will. Therefore, for you to be saved and delivered from his power and seek the God of the Bible, that you may be content with Him and His Christ, a stronger one than Satan must come and deliver you. You cannot of yourself deliver yourself. No man by nature can be a Christian, because by nature you are without God.

You may boast of your free-will and say that you could turn to God easily if you chose, and perhaps someday you believe you will, but at present you like sin better. But be not deceived, my friend, you cannot turn to God when you please. In this you are under a strong delusion. You may be able to do any earthly thing at your own will: you can give your time and thoughts, your money and your best energies, to any of the things of the world that interest you; but you cannot turn from sin and seek and find God when you please. It is true that if you seek Him He will be found of you, for He has said, "Seek and ye shall find." But the devil will not ever let you seek Him unless God is working in your life. This is the reason I am sent

today with this message to tell you to flee from the wrath to come, because God has sent His Son to be a sacrifice for your sin that He might reconcile you to God.

I would urge you to cry after Him to help you, while the Spirit is working, because you cannot help yourself without Him. If indeed there is a cry after Him, He put it there, for by nature you are content without Him.

How very few seemingly ever come to know their totally depraved condition, and their desperate need of the work of the Holy Spirit, the strong One, in their hearts and lives to break the power of Satan.

Let me ask you today in all love, Do you really believe that in God's sight you are a Christian, that you have God and His Christ? The question is not, Are you moral and respectable, or a good father, mother, husband, wife, child, friend, or neighbor? It is not, Are you true and just in your dealings, or do you attend to all the church duties of your religious denomination? Many do this and more than this, and yet they are not Christians; not saved because they have not God or His Christ. The one question is: Do you know God and His Christ? Do you possess Him and His life?

If you do, then you have received Him since you were born, because you did not come into the world with Him, for you were "without God in the world." If you have God and His Christ, then you have experienced a second birth; and this has been wrought in you by the Holy Spirit, and by the Holy Spirit Christ has been formed in you. He has given you faith to believe, for salvation is of the LORD (Jon 2:9).

You see, the object of Christ's work was not only to make a way by which man could approach God, but by which, as a God of mercy, God could get access to man. It was man's sin that put the barrier between himself and God, and to remove that barrier, Christ died (Eph 2:13-14). Christ shed His blood to satisfy the claims of God's justice against man, and so putting away sin by the sacrifice of Himself, made a way by which God could return to man.

Therefore, it is the office of the Holy Spirit to take the things that are Jesus Christ's and show them unto us. These truths of the work of Christ for us and the work of the Holy Spirit in us, in conviction and deliverance, are absolutely necessary to salvation; without knowing them and receiving them no man can be saved.

My cry today, is that the Holy Spirit will so work in your heart that you who are without God in this world will know of your sad estate: that you are without God. That you will put all your trust in Christ for His salvation and His deliverance from sin and from the wrath of God. For surely John 3:36 is true, "He that believeth on the Son hath everlasting life: and he that believeth not the Son shall not see life; but the wrath of God abideth on him."

#### **4. What Christ Says**

We have been endeavoring to set before you the Scriptural teaching of the wrath of God and the exercise of His divine justice. That His wrath is one of His holy attributes and perfections, is everywhere declared on the pages of Holy Writ. Therefore, since the Scriptures make no attempt to conceal the fact of God's wrath and His vengeance and fury against sin and the sinner, then woe be unto me if I do not faithfully declare it as being part of the whole counsel of God.

I believe that one of the grave errors of our day is the preaching of the love of God at the expense of His wrath and justice. In this respect, the Lord Jesus is shown as having come to show us the love, mercy, goodness, and kindness of God, which is true; but also He has come to warn us of the awful danger of abiding under the wrath of God forever, if there is no turning unto God from sin.

We must keep in focus that the Lord Jesus Christ, as the Eternal Word of God, came to show us God, the Father, and reveal unto us God's mind, express His will, make known His perfections, and lay bare His heart unto His creatures.

Let's see what the Scriptures teach about the wrath of God, the eternal punishment of every Christ-rejector, by looking at two Scriptures, John 1:1, 14. "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God...And the Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us, (and we beheld his glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father,) full of grace and truth."

Now as the Word of God came down from heaven to reveal unto us the Father, then we can surely understand that He came not to misrepresent Him, but to tell Him forth.

Perhaps we could understand the impact of this more if we understood what a *word* is, and why Christ is called the Word of God.

1) A word is a medium of manifestation. I have in my mind a thought, but others know not its nature, but the moment I clothe that thought in words it becomes recognizable. Words then make objective unseen thoughts. This is exactly what the Lord Jesus has done; as the Word, Christ has made manifest the invisible God.

2) A word is a means of communication. By means of words I transmit information to others. By words I express myself, make known my will, and impart knowledge. So Christ, as the Word, is the divine transmitter, communicating to us the life and love of God.

3) A word is a method of revelation. By his words a speaker exhibits both his intellectual caliber and his moral character. By our words we shall be justified, and by our words we shall be condemned; and Christ, as the Word, reveals the attributes and perfections of God. How fully has Christ revealed God! He displayed His power; He manifested His wisdom; He exhibited

His holiness; He made known His grace; He unveiled His heart; and He faithfully declared His justice and hatred for sin. He held nothing back that would reveal unto us our glorious living God.

If our Lord Jesus Christ as the Word faithfully spoke of God and His glorious attributes, then we could expect Him to tell us of the justice of God, His punishment of sin, and the final abode of the wicked. Therefore, we had better give heed to the words of the Son of God, for it is written that in these last days God has spoken unto us by His Son (Heb 1:2).

Listen now, for this is not my Word, but the Word of Him Who came down from heaven as the eternal Word to speak forth the character, mind, and will of God the Father!

In John 3:36 our Lord faithfully declares the wrath of God upon every one who does not believe in the Son of God, Whom God had sent down from heaven as the Way back to heaven: "He that believeth on the Son hath everlasting life: and he that believeth not the Son shall not see life; but the wrath of God abideth on him." This is very clear, that every unbeliever, every Christ-rejector, every person who has not believed to the saving of his soul, right now abides under the wrath of God, is right now subject to His anger and fury, because He is holy, and hates sin.

This is not only true of individuals, but also of nations and cities, as our Lord faithfully warned of coming judgment in the cities wherein most of His mighty works had been done. Listen to Matthew 11:20-24, "Then began he to upbraid the cities wherein most of his mighty works were done, because they repented not: Woe unto thee, Chorazin! woe unto thee, Bethsaida! for if the mighty works, which were done in you, had been done in Tyre and Sidon, they would have repented long ago in sackcloth and ashes. But I say unto you, It shall be more tolerable for Tyre and Sidon at the day of judgment, than for you. And thou, Capernaum, which art exalted unto heaven, shalt be brought down to hell: for if the mighty works, which have been done in thee, had been done in Sodom, it would have remained until this day. But I say unto you, that it shall be more tolerable for the land of Sodom, in the day of judgment, than for thee."

What our Lord is saying here is that the punishment for sin in hell will be a lot less for those who have had only the light of nature to go by, than it will be for the inhabitants of the United States who have had the light of God's Word to go by and have turned from it to go their own way (Rom 2:1-16).

In Matthew 5:29-30, 18:7-9, and Mark 9:43-50, our Lord faithfully warns us of the consequences of yielding our bodily members as members of unrighteousness and sin. Listen to one of the most searching warnings given by our Lord, "If thy hand offend thee, cut it off: it is better for thee to enter life maimed, than having two hands to go into hell, into the fire that never shall be quenched: where their worm dieth not, and the fire is not quenched. And if thy foot offend thee, cut it off: it is better for thee to enter halt into life, than having two feet to be cast into hell, into the fire that never shall be quenched: where their worm dieth not, and the fire is not quenched. And if thine eye offend thee, pluck it out: it is better for thee to enter into the kingdom of God with one eye, than having two eyes to be cast into hell fire: where their worm dieth not, and the fire is not quenched. For everyone shall be salted with fire."

The word "hell" here is *gehenna*, the name of a ravine starting from the northwest of Jerusalem, which sweeps around the southwest angle of the city, then meets the Kedron below the pool of Siloam. This valley is the traditional site of the fire-worship which began in the reign of King Ahaz; and after its desecration by King Josiah, it became a common receptacle for the refuse of the city, and later in Jewish thought it became a symbol of the place of future punishment. The city garbage, where worms gnawed and fires burned continually, is a vivid picture of everlasting punishment, and our Lord used it because the people of His day knew about this place.

Also, *gehenna* is the word used in the New Testament to designate the place of the final abode of the wicked dead, which is the lake of fire of Rev. 21:8 which reads: "The fearful, and unbelieving, and the abominable, and murderers, and whoremongers, and sorcerers, and idolaters, and all liars, shall have their part in the lake which burneth with fire and brimstone; which is the second death."

The worm, like the fire, is undying, and is the conscience of the inhabitants of hell, which is revived to gnaw at a man for eternity because of his foolishness in spending his time here on earth in sin and pleasure, and not preparing himself for eternity in obedience to the Gospel.

Also, our Lord gives us the clue here as to how the bodies and souls of men in hell shall be preserved. The expression "salted with fire" gives it to us. Salt is a preservative; therefore when we are told that "everyone" who is cast into Gehenna shall be "salted with fire," we learn that the very fire itself, so far from consuming shall preserve. If it be asked, "How can this be?" we answer, "Because that fire is prepared by God Himself." We read in Matthew 25:41: "Depart from me, ye cursed, into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels." He Who kept the burning bush from being consumed before Moses, and He Who kept the three Hebrew children from dying in the fiery furnace of King Nebuchadnezzar, can also keep the bodies of those in hell from being destroyed.

But many of you will say that these words of our Lord are merely figurative expressions. I ask, "How do you know that? Where has God told you in His Word that the expressions of His wrath are only merely figurative?" Was our Blessed Lord, Who was sent down from heaven, playing with words? Was He saying one thing and meaning another? Did He come to misrepresent the Living God? I think not.

Personally, I believe that when our Lord said fire, He meant fire. I refuse to blunt the sharp edge of His Word. Was the Deluge figurative? Was it figurative fire and brimstone which descended from heaven and destroyed Sodom and Gomorrah?

Were the plagues upon Egypt figurative ones? Is it figurative fire which shall yet burn this earth and cause the very elements to melt with fervent heat? No! In each of these cases we must take the words of Scripture in their literal meaning.

Let those of you who dare deny these words of our Lord give answer to Him. I dare not refuse them, soften them, tone them down, or explain them away; but faithfully declare unto you these solemn words, that if you die without Christ, you shall live without Christ in a never-ending eternity of suffering and woe.

Listen again to our Lord's words in John 3:36! "He that believeth on the Son hath everlasting life." What a promise! What a blessing that He has given us this promise of deliverance, by believing on Him, trusting Him, and relying upon Him alone for the salvation of our souls.

Are you in Christ? Have you committed your soul unto Him?

## 5. A Solemn Word

We will now consider a solemn word from Ezekiel 21:9-10: "A sword, a sword is sharpened, and also furbished: it is sharpened to make a sore slaughter; it is furbished that it may glitter: should we then make mirth?"

It was in a time of great hardness and impenitence in Jerusalem that this prophecy given to Ezekiel was delivered, and it was only three years before the wrath of God was to be poured out upon them. First, all was mirth and sensuality in Jerusalem. Second, the false prophets prophesied peace, and the people loved to have it so. Third, there was no noise but that of revelry within the devoted city. But in the midst of that den of revelry, the lone prophet heard the muttering of the distant thunder. The faithful servant of God saw God arming Himself as a mighty man for the war, with the glittering sword of vengeance in His hand; and Ezekiel called aloud to his fellow countrymen who were all at ease, "A sword, a sword is sharpened...it is furbished that it may glitter: should we then make mirth?"

My friends, those of you who are unsaved, outside of Christ today, you are in the same situation as Jerusalem was. In these many years, how many messages have you heard from God? How many times has He sent His messages to you with His Word? Has not His Word, the Bible, been in your houses, a silent but most powerful pleader for God? Has not His providence been in your families, in sickness and health, in plenty and poverty? Do not all of those things cry unto you to flee from the wrath to come? Do not all of these cry unto you to cling to, trust in, and hide by faith, in the Lord Jesus Christ, the only and all-sufficient Savior?

And what makes it worse, you are saying: "Soul, take thine ease, eat, drink, and be merry, for there is yet plenty of time." But my friend, please listen: "A sword, a sword is sharpened, and also furbished; it is sharpened to make a sore slaughter; it is furbished that it may glitter; should we then make mirth?" Should you go on in a state of ease and laughter while yet you are lost and abide under the wrath of God?

There are five things that I would like to set before you to show to you today the folly and unreasonableness of you who are outside of Christ, God's Refuge for poor sinners, to make mirth and to be at ease in your sins.

*First*, it is folly because you are under condemnation. It is a common idea today that men are under probation, as Adam was, and that Christless persons will not be condemned till the Day of Judgment; but this is not the case. The Bible declares: "He that believeth not is condemned already...he that believeth not the Son shall not see life; but the wrath of God abideth on him" (Joh 3:18, 36). "Cursed is [Now!] every one that continueth not in all things which are written in the book of the law to do them" (Gal 3:10).

Christless soul, listen to me! You are at present in for horrible pit; you are already judged guilty before God; you are already in prison, ready to be brought out to execution. Therefore, is it not folly to go on in sin and pleasure, in ease and carnal serenity, when the sword of God's justice hangs over your head?

Listen again! You have already been tried in the balance and found wanting; you have been condemned by the righteous Judge. Your sentence is passed, and if you die today, tonight, outside of Christ, your portion is fixed forever in the place of unending torment.

*Second*, it is unreasonable for you to live at ease and in a state of mirth, for the instruments of destruction are already prepared for you. Yes, not only are you a Christless person, condemned already, but the instruments of your destruction are prepared and ready. The sword of vengeance is sharpened and also furbished.<sup>1</sup> The disease by which you are to die, may already be working in your veins. The accident by which you will drop into eternity is even now waiting for you and all the circumstances of it are ready. The bullet that is to take you out into eternity may at this moment be even in the chamber of the gun, waiting to be used. Now shall you go on in mirth and laughter and not flee to Christ for the salvation of your never-dying soul?

Listen! The place in hell is ready; for we read in God's Word that hell is moved to meet you at your coming (Isa 14:9; 5:14). Oh what a thing this is then: that you can go on in pleasure and madness when the disease is ready, the accident is ready, the bullet is ready, the grave is ready, yes, and hell itself is moved to meet you at your coming!

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<sup>1</sup> **furbished** – made ready for service.



Dear Christless soul, how hard your heart must be that you continue to go on in mirth, and in laughter, in ease and not seeking the Lord while He may be found and calling upon Him while He is near! What madness not to cry after Him, search His Word, confess unto and seek Him with all your heart.

*Third*, it is unreasonable because the sword may come down at any moment. Not only are Christless persons condemned already, and not only is the sword of vengeance ready, but the sword may come down at any moment.

Your neck is bowed before God and the whetted sword is held over you, and yet can you make mirth? Can you really be taken up with business and worldly things, in getting rich, and in building and planting, and perhaps this very night your soul may be required of you as was spoken of the rich man in Luke 12? Can you fill up your time with games and amusements, foolish books and entertainments? Can you fill up your houses after work with loose talk and behavior, adding sin to sin, treasuring up wrath against the day of wrath, when you do not know what hour the wrath of God may come upon you? Can you go prayerless to your bed tonight; yet you may be in hell before morning? Oh, what an awful thought of a prayerless, Bibleless, and Christless soul going on in ease when eternity awaits you!

*Fourth*, it is unreasonable because God has made no promise to Christless souls to stay His hand for one moment. All the promises of God are yea and amen, that is, they are true; God always fulfills His promises. But the same Scripture says that the promises are “yea and amen in Christ Jesus.” Yes, all God’s promises are made to Christ, and to sinners that cling to Christ. There is not one promise in the Bible for any soul outside of Christ except the promises of judgment. Oh that today you would hear His voice and harden not your heart, but flee to Him for rest (2Co 1:20-21; Heb 3:7-8).

Let me speak to you Christless souls who are at ease today. Many of you know that you are in a Christless state; and yet you know that you are at ease and happy. Why is this? It is because you hope to be brought to Christ before you die. You say, “Another day will do; I will close in with Him some other time, but not now.” But, did you know, my Christless friend, that God has nowhere promised to bring you to Christ before you die? God has laid Himself under no manner of obligation to you. He has nowhere promised that you shall see tomorrow or that you shall ever hear another sermon. There is a day near at hand when you shall not see a tomorrow. If this be not the last message, yet there is a sermon to be preached that *will be* your last one.

Oh, that you would understand today that the sword of God’s justice and wrath is hanging over you, that you might flee the wrath to come by fleeing to Christ.

*Fifth*, it is unreasonable because it is to be a sore slaughter. The command to the prophet in Ezekiel 9 was: “Go ye through the city, and smite: let not your eye spare, neither have ye pity: slay utterly old and young, both maids, and little children, and women; but come not near any man upon whom is the mark.” Such is the sore slaughter waiting upon all unsaved souls; all Christless souls shall perish, young and old. God will not spare, neither will His eye pity!

Think of this, my gray-headed man and woman, you who have lived in sin, and have never come to Christ! If you die in this condition, you will certainly perish in the sore slaughter!

Think of this, middle-aged men and women, hard-working merchants and farmers, laborers and hired men, you who make money, but have not sold all for the pearl of great price (Mat 13:36-37); you will certainly perish in the sore slaughter!

Think of this, young people who live without prayer, yet go on in a state of mirth and laughter, who make pleasure your god; you too, will fall in that sore slaughter!

Think of this, my dear children, you little ones who have made glad the hearts of your parents; if you be outside of Christ, you too shall be in this sore slaughter!

Think with me again! This is the Word of God, listen then! “Be not afraid of them that kill the body, and after that have no more that they can do. But I will forewarn you whom ye shall fear; Fear him, which after he hath killed hath power to cast into hell: yea, I say unto you, Fear him” (Luk 12:4-5). And you know Who gave this warning—none other than God the Son Himself!

Let me summarize these last points. I have plainly set before you Scriptures showing you what your case is: First, that you are condemned already; Second, God’s sword is ready; Third, it may come down at any time; Fourth, God has made you no promise to stay His hand; and Fifth, it will be a sore slaughter. Consider then, my Christless soul, is it reasonable to believe a lie, to deceive your own soul, and to say, “Peace, peace, when there is no peace”?

Therefore wisdom cries to you today, “Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved!” (Act 16:31). “Seek ye the LORD while he may be found, call ye upon him while he is near. Let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts: and let him return unto the LORD, and he will have mercy upon him; and to our God, for he will abundantly pardon” (Isa 55:6-7). Hear the Word of the Lord! He calls this day! “Come now, and let us reason together, saith the LORD: though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they be red like crimson, they shall be as wool” (Isa 1:18). “To day if ye will hear his voice, harden not your hearts,” but while it is today, close in with Christ. Turn unto Him with all your heart, trusting in His promised mercy (Heb 3:7-8, 13, 15).

Unto you who know Christ and are safe in Him, what praise should go up from your heart unto Him Who gave Himself for you, and unto Him Who called you out of darkness into His marvelous light!

