

The Old Hickory Bulletin

Old Hickory Church of Christ

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The Most Frightening Verse in the Bible!

The Bible teaches that our fundamental purpose in life is to “fear God and keep His commandments” (Eccl. 12:13). This fear of God, coupled with obedience, is necessary for one to be accepted by Him. Peter told the household of Cornelius, “I most certainly understand now that God is not one to show partiality, but in every nation the man who fears Him and does what is right is welcome to Him” (Acts 10:34-35).

Besides just telling us that we need to fear God, the Bible provides us with enough information for us to appreciate the fact that “it is a terrifying thing to fall into the hands of the living God” (Heb. 10:31). Notice just a few examples:

- “Then the flood came upon the earth... All flesh that moved on the earth perished...and all mankind; of all that was on the dry land, all in whose nostrils was the breath of life, died” (Gen. 7:17-22).

- “Then the Lord rained on Sodom and Gomorrah brimstone and fire from the Lord out of heaven, and He overthrew those cities, and all the valley, and all the inhabitants of the cities, and what grew on the ground” (Gen. 19:24-25).

- “The earth opened its mouth and swallowed them up, and their households, and all the men who belonged to Korah with their possessions. So they and all that belonged to them went down alive to Sheol; and the earth closed over them, and they perished in the midst of the assembly” (Num. 16:32-33).

- “In his days of Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon came up... The Lord sent against [Jehoiakim] bands of Chaldeans, bands of Arameans, bands of Moabites, and bands of Ammonites. So He sent them against Judah to destroy it” (2 Kings 24:1-2).

- “Then the kings of the earth and the great men and the commanders and the rich and the strong and every slave and free man hid themselves in the caves and among the rocks of the mountains; and they said to the mountains and to the rocks, ‘Fall on us and hide us from the presence of Him who sits on the throne, and from the wrath of the Lamb” (Rev. 6:15-16).

These are just a few of the passages that give us reasons to fear God. But what would be the most frightening verse in the Bible? I realize that the answer to this question may be a bit subjective. There are a number of verses that could be suggested that demonstrate the importance of serving the Lord in godly fear and the consequences for failing to do so. But let me submit the following passage from the letter to the saints in Rome:

“Or do you think lightly of the riches of His kindness and tolerance and patience, not knowing that the kindness of God leads you to repentance? But because of your stubbornness and unrepentant heart you are storing up wrath for yourself in the day of wrath and revelation of the righteous judgment of God, who will render to each person according to His deeds” (Rom. 2:4-6).

There are many examples recorded in the Scriptures of God’s wrath being poured out against the wicked. Yet Paul described this wrath continually building and building against those who refuse to obey the Lord (Rom. 2:5). This is truly a frightening thought! If you could take every example recorded in the Bible of divine punishment in this life and have them all compound upon one another, the eternal punishment in hell would still be far worse! It is a place of “eternal fire which has been prepared for the devil and his angels” (Matt. 25:41). But even though it has been prepared for them, hell will also be the eternal dwelling place for all those who are lost (Matt. 25:41, 46; 2 Thess. 1:9; Rev. 20:15).

However, God, in “His kindness and tolerance and patience” (Rom. 2:4), has given us a way to escape His wrath. That way is through the sacrifice of Christ.

“But God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us. Much more then, having now been justified by His blood, we shall be saved from the wrath of God through Him” (Rom. 5:8-9).

Through Christ we can be forgiven of sins and saved from the wrath of God. As Paul pointed out, the sacrifice of Christ on the cross was necessary to make salvation possible. But in order to take advantage of this salvation, we must meet the conditions that have been revealed in the gospel (cf. Mark 16:15-16). Jesus is “to all those who obey Him the source of eternal salvation” (Heb. 5:9). We must be “obedient from the heart to that form of teaching to which you were committed” (Rom. 6:17). Paul explained what that teaching includes:

“Or do you not know that all of us who have been baptized into Christ Jesus have been baptized into His death? Therefore we have been buried with Him through baptism into death, so that as Christ was raised from the dead through the glory of the Father, so we too might walk in newness of life” (Rom. 6:3-4).

Those who “do not obey the gospel” (2 Thess. 1:8) stand to receive God’s wrath in the end. Those who have obeyed the gospel in the past, but fall back into the world, are “those who shrink back to destruction” (Heb. 10:38-39). Because God is patient, those in these conditions have time now to make correction (cf. 2 Pet. 3:9). But at the same time, the wrath of God is being stored up against those who refuse to follow the Lord.

If your life is not right with God, take advantage of the time you have now to make things right so that you do not have to experience the full force of God’s wrath against you. If you are following God, continue to do so that you may not lose your reward.

- Andy Sochor

Very Good Advice

We all want progress. But progress means getting nearer to the place where you want to be. And if you have taken a wrong turn, then to go forward does not get you any nearer. If you are on the wrong road, progress means doing an about-turn and walking back to the right road; and in that case the man who turns back soonest is the most progressive man. We have all seen this when doing arithmetic. When I have started a sum the wrong way, the sooner I admit this and go back and start over again, the faster I get on. There is nothing progressive about being pig-headed and refusing to admit a mistake. And I think if you look at the present state of the world, it is pretty plain that humanity has been making some big mistakes. We are on the wrong road. And if that is so, we must go back. Going back is the quickest way on.

- C. S. Lewis

Don't Quit

When things go wrong as they sometimes will,
When the road you're trudging seems all up hill,
When the funds are low and the debts are high
And you want to smile, but you have to sigh,
When care is pressing you down a bit,
Rest if you must, but don't you quit.
Life is queer with its twists and turns,
As every one of us sometimes learns,

And many a failure turns about
When he might have won had he stuck it out;
Don't give up though the pace seems slow--
You may succeed with another blow,
Success is failure turned inside out--
The silver tint of the clouds of doubt,
And you never can tell how close you are,
It may be near when it seems so far;
So stick to the fight when you're hardest hit--
It's when things seem worst that you must not quit.

- Edgar A. Guest

Half of a Virtue

It was winter, and at Time of Snow; and some men Cleaned their Walks, and some did not. And one man who always cleaned his walk seemed to boast and vaunt himself against his neighbor. But water from the snow had run down upon his walk, and Frozen, so that it was like Glass. And I did very nearly break my Neck in that place.

And this man spake ill concerning his neighbor. And he said, They have no Public Spirit, neither do they clean their walks; but Behold, my walk is clean.

And I said, Yea, it is clean, and it is the most Dangerous Walk in town. And he said, Dost thou reprove me for doing my duty, and

dost thou make a virtue of those who Lie in Bed while I shovel my walks?

And I said, He who cleaneth his walk so that it is slippery, should sprinkle it with sand. I praise them not, neither do I think them virtuous. But there is no Vice like the half of a Virtue, nor any sin like a Duty half done. Selah!

- from "Wit and Wisdom of Saged the Sage," by William E. Barton; Pilgrim Press, Chicago, 1919.

> "Let the lover of peace pursue peace, and let him not with his tongue stir up strife which other men must settle with the sword."

THIS WEEK'S LESSONS: Sunday morning: *"Let Us Make God!"* (Text: Exod. 32:1-4); Sunday evening: *Bi-monthly Singing!*

GOSPEL MEETING 2015: Our Gospel Meeting is scheduled for July 19-24, with Jerry Crolius, of Conway, AR, preaching.