

“FLEE FROM THE WRATH TO COME”

NO. 2704

A SERMON
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DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,
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*“Who has warned you to flee from the wrath to come?”
Matthew 3:7.*

*“Who have fled for refuge to lay hold upon the hope set before us.”
Hebrews 6:18.*

WE will first consider the question of John the Baptist: “When he saw many of the Pharisees and Sadducees come to his baptism, he said unto them, O generation of vipers, who has warned you to flee from the wrath to come?” I have no doubt that the Pharisees and Sadducees were very much surprised to hear John addressing them in that way; for men, who wish to win disciples, ordinarily adopt milder language than that, and choose more attractive themes, for they fear that they will drive their hearers from them if they are too personal, and speak too sharply. There is not much danger of that nowadays, for the current notion abroad now is that gospel ministers can sew with silk without using a sharp needle; and that, instead of piercing men with the sword of the Spirit, they should show them only the hilt of it; let them see the bright diamonds on the scabbard, but never let them feel the sharpness of the two-edged blade! They should always comfort, and console, and cheer, but never allude to the terror of the Lord.

That appears to be the common interpretation of our commission; but John the Baptist was of quite another mind. There came to him a Pharisee, a very religious man, one who observed all the details of external worship, and was very careful even about trifles, a firm believer in the resurrection, and in angels and spirits, and in all that was written in the Book of the law, and also in all the traditions of his fathers, a man who was overdone with external religiousness, a Ritualist of the first order, who felt that, if there was a righteous man in the world, he certainly was that one. He must have been greatly taken aback when John talked to him about the wrath of God, and plainly told him that that wrath was as much for him as for other people. Those phylacteries and the broad borders of his garment, of which he was so proud, would not screen him from the anger of God against injustice and transgression; but, just like any common sinner, he would need to “flee from the wrath to come.” I daresay that the Sadducee was equally taken aback by John’s stern language. He, too, was a religious man, but he combined with his religion greater thoughtfulness than the Pharisee did—at least, so he said. He did not believe in traditions, he was too large-minded to care about the little details and externals of religion. He observed the Law of Moses, but he clung rather to the letter of it than to its spirit, and he did not accept all that was revealed, for he denied that there was such a thing as an angel or a spirit. He was a Broad Churchman, a man of liberal ideas, fully abreast of the age. He professed to be a Hebrew of the Hebrews; yet, at the same time, the yoke of religion rested very lightly upon his shoulders. Still, he was not irreligious; yet here is John the Baptist talking to him, as well as to the Pharisee, about “the wrath to come.” They would both have liked to have a little argument with him, but he talked to them about fleeing from the wrath to come. They would both have been pleased to discuss with him some theological questions, and to bring up the differences between their two sects, just to hear how John would handle them, and to let them see which way he would lean. But he did not waste a moment over the matters in dispute between Pharisees and Sadducees; the one point he had to deal with was the one of which he would have spoken to a congregation of publicans and harlots, and he spoke of it in just the same way to these nominally religious people. They must “flee from the wrath to come;” or else, as surely as they were living men, that wrath would come upon them, and they would perish under it. So John just kept to that one topic; he laid the axe to

the root of the trees as he warned these hypocritical professors to escape for their lives, otherwise they would perish in the common destruction which will overwhelm all ungodly men. This was not the style of preaching that John’s hearers liked; but John did not think of that. He did not come to say what men wished him to say, but to discharge the burden of the Lord, and to speak out plainly what was best for men’s eternal and immortal interests. He spoke, therefore, first, concerning the wrath of God; and, next, he spoke concerning the way of escape from that wrath.

Those shall be our two topics also. First, *the tremendous peril*: “the wrath to come;” and, secondly, *the means of escape*: “Flee from the wrath to come.”

I. First, dear friends, let us think of THE TREMENDOUS PERIL which overtakes all men who do not escape from it.

That tremendous peril is *the wrath of God*. There is a wrath of God, which abides on every ungodly man. Whether men like that truth or not, it is written, “God is angry with the wicked every day;” and, also, “he that believes not is condemned already, because he has not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God;” and yet again, “he that believes not the Son shall not see life; but the wrath of God abides on him.”

But *this wrath is in abeyance for a time*; and, consequently, men do not think much either of the wrath that now is, or of “the wrath to come.” It will not, however, always be in abeyance. The sluices of the great deep will be pulled up, and the awful torrents will come leaping forth, and will utterly overwhelm all who are exposed to their fury. This “wrath to come” will in part fall upon men at death, but more fully at the Day of Judgment, and it will continue to flow over them forever and ever. This “wrath to come” is that of which John spoke, and of which we will now think for a while.

I remark, first, that *this “wrath to come” is absolutely just and necessary*. If there is a God, He cannot let sin go unpunished. If He is really God, and the Judge of all the earth, He must have an utter abhorrence of all evil. It cannot be possible that He should think the same of the honest and the dishonest, of the chaste and the unchaste, of the sober and the drunken, of the truthful and the lying, of the gracious and the dissolute. Such a god as that would be one whom men might rightly despise; but the true God, if we understand aright what He is, must hold all sin in detestation. All evil must be utterly abhorrent to His pure and holy soul; and it is not only because He can do it, but because He must do it, that He will, one of these days, let loose the fury of His wrath against sin. As it is necessary, in the very nature of things, that there should be certain laws to govern His creation, so is it equally necessary, in the very nature of things, that sin should be punished, and that every transgression and disobedience should receive a just recompense of reward. This is the inevitable consequence of sin; there is nothing arbitrary about such a result. It is fixed, in the very nature of things, that “for every idle word that men shall speak, they shall give account in the Day of Judgment;” and for every sinful action, they must appear before the bar of God. Do not think when we speak about the wrath of God, that we picture God to you as a tyrant. We do but tell you that this is only the nature of things—that just as if you take poison, it will kill you; or if you indulge in drunkenness, or if you take almost any form of disease, it will bring pain and mischief to you—so sin must bring upon you the wrath of God, it cannot be otherwise. Heaven and earth shall pass away, but not one jot or tittle of God’s law can pass away till all is fulfilled, and one part of that law requires that He should punish all transgression, iniquity, and sin.

And if now, for a time, the full manifestation of that anger is delayed, I beseech you, men and brethren, do not therefore trifle with it. The longer God’s arm is uplifted, the more terrible will be the blow when at last He strikes. To sin against the patience and long-suffering of Almighty God, is to sin with a vengeance. You do, as it were, defiantly put your finger into the very eye of God when you know that He sees you sin, and yet you go on sinning because He does not immediately take vengeance upon you for all your evil works. It is in great love that He restrains His wrath, for He is “slow to anger, and plentiful in mercy.” But as a torrent, that is dammed up for a while, gathers force and strength, and every hour in which it is kept back it gets to be more irresistible, so must it be with “the wrath to come” when at last it does come upon you. If it has waited for some of you for seventy, or sixty, or fifty, or even for twenty years, it will come as an overwhelming flood when at last it bursts the barriers which at present hold it back. Trifle not, therefore, with that long-suffering of God which may be blest to your salvation.

Nor is “the wrath to come” any the less sure because it is delayed. Because sentence is not at once given against an evil work, therefore men say, “we need not trouble ourselves. ‘How does God know? And is there knowledge in the Most High?’ Behold, He winks at our iniquities; He counts them as mere

trifles. No harm will come to us because of them.” But, sirs, if you are prepared to cast away the Bible, I can understand a little that you should talk like that; but if you really believe that the Scriptures are the Word of God, you know what the consequences of your sin must be. Concerning the wicked, it is written, “If he turns not, He will whet His sword; He has bent His bow, and made it ready. He has also prepared for him the instruments of death.” Even if you are so foolish as to cast away your Bibles, yet, unless you think yourselves to be mere dogs and cattle that shall rot back into the ground from where you came, and be done with forever, you must expect that there will be another state of existence in which right shall be vindicated and wrong shall be punished. It seems to lie upon the very conscience of man, in the unwritten code of intuitive knowledge, or of knowledge handed down from father to son, that there must come a time in which God will surely bring every secret thing to light, and visit with judgment the proud and the high-handed oppressor, and vindicate the rights of men and the rights of His own throne. It must be so; and if the wrath tarries for a while, it is none the less sure.

I feel quite staggered as I try to speak of this “wrath to come” because *when it does come, it must be something very terrible because Divinity enters into the essence of it.* The wrath of man is sometimes very terrible; but what must the wrath of God be? O sirs, I have tried, these many years, humbly yet earnestly to preach the love of God, and I have never yet reached the height of that great argument, for His love is boundless; but so are all His attributes; and if you consider any one of them, you must say, “It is high, I cannot attain unto it.” But the just indignation of God against sin must be commensurate with His absolute purity. That man, who trifles with right and wrong, and thinks that these are mere arbitrary terms, has no indignation when he sees wrong done; but God, who is infinitely pure and holy, cannot—it is not possible that He should—look upon sin without an awful abhorrence. “Oh!” He says, by the mouth of His servant Jeremiah, “Do not this abominable thing that I hate.” He is not indifferent to sin, but He hates it, and He pleads with men not to do it because it is so abominable and so hateful in His sight.

What will “the wrath to come,” be? If God but touches a man, as it were, with only His little finger, the strongest must at once fail and fall, the mightiest can scarcely open his eyes, and the seal of death is speedily imprinted on his brow. But what will it be when the hand of God shall begin to plague the ungodly, when He shall pour out all the vials of His wrath upon them, and crush them with the bosses of His buckler? What will be their portion when He says, “Ah, I will ease Me of My adversaries, and avenge Me of My enemies?” Think, too, what must be the meaning of that terrible passage—let me repeat it to you slowly and solemnly—“Now consider this, you that forget God, lest I tear you in pieces, and there be none to deliver.”

Thus have I faithfully tried to set before you “the wrath to come.” Now listen to me for a few minutes, and let me have your impartial judgments, while I still further speak upon this important theme. Who, do you think, are the more honest men—those who tell you plainly what the Scriptures say concerning this wrath of God, or those who smooth it over, or deny it altogether? I will not judge them; before the Judge of quick and dead let those appear who dare to be apologists for sin, and to diminish the dread thought of God’s anger against it. But I might, without any breach of Christian charity, be permitted to suspect the honesty of those who use flattering words to please and deceive their hearers; but I could not suspect the honesty of those who preach an unpalatable truth which grieves themselves as much as it is distasteful to those who hear it.

Let me also ask you which style of preaching has the greater moral effect upon yourself? Will you be likely to go and sin after you have heard of God’s anger against it, or will you more readily commit iniquity when you have it salved over, and you are told that it is but a little thing, of which God takes no account? I was in the cabin of a vessel, one day, with a brother minister who was disputing with me upon the non-eternity of future punishment; and the captain of the ship came in, and said, “What are you discussing down here? The scenery is beautiful, come up on deck and admire it.” So I said to him, “This is the question in dispute, whether the punishment of sin is eternal, or not.” “Well,” he said, “We cannot have any theological discussion just now;” but, turning to my opponent, he said, “Don’t you go on deck, and talk to my sailors any of your rubbish. They are bad enough as they are; but if you tell them what I heard you say just now, they will swear and drink worse than ever.” Then, turning to me, he said, “You may talk to the men as much as you like; you will do them good, and not harm by telling them that God will certainly punish their sins.” Now, there is common sense in that argument of my friend; you know that there is. That which is most likely to do good, and to repress sin, is most likely to be right; but that

which gives me latitude to offend my conscience, leads me to suspect whether it could ever have come from God at all, and makes me seriously doubt whether it can be true.

And what, sirs, will be the consequence if it should turn out that we are mistaken when we preach to you concerning the wrath of God? What losers will those of us be who have fled to Christ for refuge? But suppose it should turn out that we are right, where will you be who have despised the wrath of God? We have two strings to our bow; but, to my mind, you have none at all. I would not like to lie down upon my deathbed in the hope that death would be an eternal sleep; that would be a miserable hope even if it could ever be fulfilled. I would not like to risk my destiny in the world to come upon the prospect of being annihilated because I was an unbeliever. It would be a wretched thing to hope for, but what if even that poor hope should fail me? Where should I be then? But I can go with confidence before my God, and say to Him, “Be Your wrath what it may—I know that it must be terrible to the last degree—but be it what it may, I will not dare it; and even if it would not hurt me, yet I would not make You angry, O God, by sinning against You; and if there were no punishment for sin but the loss of Your love, if there were nothing but the loss of heaven, the loss of having failed to please You, my God, I would count that loss to be tremendous and terrible. Let me be reconciled to You, my Maker. Tell me how You can be just, and yet forgive the guilty. To You I fly; oh, save me from the wrath to come!”

Thus have I set before you, as best I can, the tremendous peril.

II. Now, in the second place, I want, for a few minutes, to tell you about THE MEANS OF ESCAPE. John said to the Pharisees and Sadducees, “Who has warned you to flee from the wrath to come?”

By this question, he seemed to imply that *there is no way of deliverance from “the wrath to come” but by flight*. Sinner, you cannot endure the wrath of God. If your ribs were granite, and your nerves were brass, you could not endure the wrath of the Almighty; no, not even for a moment. If a man had a toothache, how dreadful it would seem to him to have to bear that pain for twelve months for certain, even if he knew that there would be an end to it then; but what must the anger of God be when He comes to deal with our entire manhood, and to punish our sins forever and ever? We cannot bear it; we must flee from it. What does this mean?

It means, first, *immediate action*. You must escape, man. If you remain where you now are, you will certainly perish. You are in the City of Destruction which is to be overwhelmed with the fiery flood of “the wrath to come.” You must be in earnest to escape from it before judgment is executed upon the place, and all who are in it; you must “flee from the wrath to come.”

Fleeing means not only immediate action, but *swift action*. He that flees for his life does not creep and crawl; he runs at his utmost speed, and he wishes that he could ride on the wings of the wind. No pace that he can reach is fast enough for him. Oh, if God the Holy Spirit will make you, whom I am now addressing, feel your imminent danger, you will want to fly to Christ with the swiftness of a flash of lightning; you will not be satisfied to linger as you are even for another hour. What if that gallery should fall about your ears? What if God should smite the house while you are still in your sins? What if, in walking home, you should walk into your graves? What if your beds should become your tombs? It may be so with any one of you, so there is no time to linger or delay. Haste is the word for you; God sends it to you, and says, “Today if you will hear His voice, harden not your hearts;” “behold, now is the accepted time; behold, now is the day of salvation.”

To flee also means *to go straight away at your objective*. A man who flees for his life does not want any circuitous, round-about roads. He takes short cuts; he goes over hedge and ditch that he may get where he wants to be in the shortest possible space of time. So, straight away to Jesus is the only direction for you just now. Some people will recommend you to read books which I am certain you cannot understand, for no living soul can; or perhaps you may meet with persons who want to explain to you some wondrous mystery. Listen to them, if you like, at the Day of Judgment, when the great business of your salvation is over; but just now you have not any time for mysteries, you have no time for puzzlements, you have no time to be confused and confounded; the one thing you have to do is to go straight away to Jesus, straight away to Jesus. You are a sinner, and He is the only Savior for sinners; so trust Him, God help you to trust Him, and thus to find immediate salvation! It is a straight road to Christ. The plan of salvation is not a thing that is hard to be understood. “He that believes on the Son has everlasting life;” and he shall never come into condemnation; for he as passed from death unto life. There is the

gospel in a nutshell; lay hold of it, and live by it. You have not time for anything else, and you have no need of anything else; so flee, “flee from the wrath to come.”

Notice how John the Baptist explained to those Pharisees and Sadducees the way in which they had to flee. He told them, first, that *they must repent*. There is no going to heaven by following the road to hell. There is no finding pardon while continuing in sin. Depend upon it, Mr. Drunkard; you will not be forgiven for your drunkenness if you still go on with your drinking. Let not the man who is unchaste imagine that he can go on with his sin and yet be forgiven. Let not the thief dream that there is any pardon for him unless he quits his evil course, and tries to make such restitution as he can to those whom he has wronged.

There must be repentance, then, and *that repentance* must be practical. Note how John put it: “Bring forth therefore fruits meet for repentance”—evidences of true amendment of life. It is no use whining and crying, and going into the inquiry rooms with a lie in your right hand, and then going home to swear and drink, or to break the Sabbath, and to live as you like, and all the while hoping to enter heaven. No, sin and you must part, or else Christ and you can never keep company. You remember that message that John Bunyan thought he heard when he was playing at tip-cat on a Sunday on the village green? He suddenly stood still with the stick in his hand, for he thought he heard a voice saying to him, “Will you leave your sins, and go to heaven, or have your sins, and go to hell?” That is the alternative which both the law and the gospel put before men. “Flee from the wrath to come;” but there is no fleeing from wrath except by repentance of sin, and by fruits meet for repentance, evidences of a real change of heart and life.

Then John went on to say to the Pharisees and Sadducees that they must *give up all the false hopes which they had cherished*: “Think not to say within yourselves, We have Abraham as our father.” Those Pharisees said, in deed, if not in word, “It really does not matter though we act the hypocrite, for Abraham is our father;” and the Sadducees said, in effect, “Though we are unbelievers, it is of small consequence, for Abraham is our father.” “No,” answered John, “you must abandon all such false hopes as that.” And if any of you, dear friends, have said, “We shall be all right, because we are regular church people;” or if you have said, “We are all right, for we are Baptists, we are Methodists, we are Presbyterians; our father and mother, and our grandfather and grandmother were good Christian people.” Ah, yes! And so may your great grandfather and great grandmother have been, but your pedigree will avail you nothing unless you personally quit your sins, and lay hold on Christ as your Savior. Nor is there anything else upon which you can depend for salvation. Your baptism, your church going, your chapel going, your eating of the Lord’s Supper, your saying of collects, your family prayers, your giving of your guineas, everything of your own put together will all be less than nothing, and vanity, if you trust to it. You must flee away from all such false hopes as that, and get a better hope, even that of which my second text speaks: “That by two immutable things, in which it was impossible for God to lie, we might have a strong consolation, who have fled for refuge to lay hold upon the hope set before us.”

John the Baptist did not tell his hearers all this, for he did not come to preach the gospel to them. He came to preach the law, but he did sufficiently indicate where they must go, for he said to them, “There stands one among you, whom you know not.” “He shall baptize you with the Holy Spirit, and with fire.” It is to Him, even to Jesus, that you must flee; if you would be saved, you must be among those who have fled for refuge to lay hold upon the hope set before you. That is the real refuge for sinners—the laying hold of Christ, the getting a faith-grip of Jesus as the one atoning sacrifice, the looking to Him with tearful but believing eyes, and saying, “Jesus, Son of God, I trust in You; I put myself into Your hands, and leave myself there, that You may deliver me from ‘the wrath to come.’”

I pray you, brethren and sisters, wherever you are, you who think you are so good, be anxious to get rid of all that fancied goodness of yours. I beseech you, if you have any self-righteousness about you, to ask God to strip it off you at once, I should like you to feel as that man did, who had a forged bank note and some counterfeit coin in his possession. When the policeman came to his house, he was anxious not to have any of it near him; so, shake off your self-righteousness. You will be as surely damned by your righteousness, if you trust in it, as you will by your unrighteousness. Christ, alone, the gift of the free grace of God, this is the gate of heaven; but all self-satisfaction, all boasting, all exaltation of yourself above your fellow men, is mischievous and ruinous, and will surely be deadly to your spirit forever.

How does Christ deliver us from “the wrath to come?” Why, *by putting Himself into our place, and putting us into His place*. Oh, this blessed plan of salvation by substitution—that Christ should take a

poor, guilty sinner, and set him up there in the place of acceptance and joy at the right hand of God, and that, in order to be able to do so, Christ should say, “Here comes the great flood of almighty wrath; I will stand just where it is coming, and let it flow over Me” And you know that it did flow over Him till He sweat, as it were, great drops of blood, and more, till He cried aloud, “My God, My God why have You forsaken Me?” and still more, till He cried, “It is finished,” and He bowed His head, and gave up the ghost—

*“He bore, that you might never bear,
His Father’s righteous ire;”—*

and so, suffering in your stead, and putting you into the place of acceptance which He Himself so well deserves to occupy, He saved you from “the wrath to come.”

I used to think that, if I once told this wondrous story of “free grace and dying love,” everybody would believe it; but I have long since learned that so hard is the heart of man, that he will sooner be damned than be saved by Christ. Well, you must make your choice, sirs, you must make your choice for yourselves; only do me this one favor, when you have made your choice, do not blame me for having tried to persuade you to act more wisely than I fear your choice will be. I sometimes tremble as I think of the account I have to give in concerning the many thousands who crowd this place to listen to my voice. What if my Master should say to me, at the last, “You flattered them; you tried to run with the times; you did not dare to preach to them the old-fashioned gospel, and to tell them of hell, and of judgment, and of atonement by blood?” No, my Master, You will never be able to say that to me. With all my faults, and infirmities, and imperfections, I have sought to declare Your truth, as far as I knew it, to the sons of men. Therefore, my hearers, I shake my skirts free of your blood. If any of you shall reject Christ, I will have nothing to do with your damnation. Be spiritual suicides if you will; but I will not be your soul-murderer, nor act like Saul wished his armor-bearer to do when he bade him thrust him through with the sword. I implore you to “flee from the wrath to come.” Escape by quitting your sins, and laying hold on Jesus; and do it this very moment, for you may never have another opportunity to do it. May the Lord, in His infinite mercy, grant you grace to trust in Jesus! Amen and Amen.

**EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON:
MATTHEW 3; 11:20-30; REVELATION 7:9-17.**

Matthew 3:1, 2. *In those days came John the Baptist, preaching in the wilderness of Judea, and saying, Repent you: for the kingdom of heaven is at hand.*

His was a preparatory ministry; his work was to prepare men’s minds for Christ; and never is the heart of man so ready to receive Christ as when it is in a state of repentance. When it is weary of sin, then is it that Christ comes in, and is welcomed by the soul conscious of its guilt, tired of it, and longing to be rid of it.

3, 4. *For this is he that was spoken of by the prophet Isaiah, saying, The voice of one crying in the wilderness, Prepare the way of the Lord, make His path straight. And the same John had his raiment of camel’s hair, with a leather girdle about his loins; and his meat was locusts and wild honey.*

Everything about him was impressive, and everything was suitable to the message he had to deliver. He was so dressed as to be noticed at once as a man of ascetic habits. He was not the chaplain of a prince, otherwise he would have been clothed in soft raiment. He was not one who had a gentle message to deliver, else would he not have gone into the wilderness, and summoned the people to come away from their avocations to listen to him. He was the rough pioneer to prepare the way for the King.

5, 6. *Then went out to him Jerusalem, and all Judea, and all the region round about Jordan, and were baptized of him in Jordan, confessing their sins.*

That was his baptism—a baptism of repentance, and of confession, preparatory to the coming of the Master. See what power there was in John because God was with him. I do not know that he had any remarkable eloquence. Certainly, some things about him were rather repulsive than attractive. But when God is with a man, the people must listen to him. Jerusalem must pour her thousands out of her gates, and the rural districts must yield their hundreds; for if God speaks, no matter by whom, He will have human ears listen to His voice.

7, 8. *But when he saw many of the Pharisees and Sadducees come to his baptism, he said unto them, O generation of vipers, who has warned you to flee from the wrath to come? Bring forth therefore fruits meet of repentance:*

Answerable to your repentance, congruous therewith, arising out of it, and truly proving its reality.

9, 10. *And think not to say within yourselves, We have Abraham as our father: for I say unto you, that God is able of these stones to raise up children unto Abraham. And now also the axe is laid unto the root of the trees:*

No mere pruning and trimming work did John come to do; he was the handler of a sharp axe that was to fell every worthless tree.

10. *Therefore every tree which brings not forth good fruit is hewn down, and cast into the fire.*

It is not enough to hew it down. Into the fire it must go; and John minces not his words about the matter, he speaks straight out the message of his Master.

11, 12. *I indeed baptize you with water unto repentance: but He that comes after me is mightier than I, whose shoes I am not worthy to bear: He shall baptize you with the Holy Spirit, and with fire: whose fan is in His hand, and He will thoroughly purge His floor, and gather His wheat into the garner; but He will burn up the chaff with unquenchable fire.*

See the humility of the true servant of Christ. He is not willing even to exercise the office of a slave, and to carry his Master's shoes, or to unloose the laces of them. And who among us is worthy to occupy even the lowest office for Christ? There is an honor about it that far transcends any worthiness of ours. To serve Him at all, is honor indeed. But, brethren, fix your eyes upon Christ, and recollect what a baptism it is into which He baptizes us—not with water, but into the Holy Spirit and into fire. Can we bear it? Can we endure the fire? It will only burn up that which ought to be burned; and happy is he to whom God has imparted that eternal life which can never be consumed.

13, 14. *Then came Jesus from Galilee to Jordan unto John, to be baptized of him. But John forbade Him, saying, I have need to be baptized of You, and You come to me?*

This is one of the most striking proofs that the ordinance of baptism is not to be neglected by any of Christ's followers, for even He who, in Himself, could have had no need for it—who is Himself the Baptizer with the Holy Spirit and with fire, yet comes to the baptizer in water, and asks to be immersed.

15. *And Jesus answering, said unto him, Suffer it to be so now: for thus it become us to fulfill all righteousness.*

Nothing that appertains to righteousness must be neglected; the little as well as the great must be observed.

15-17. *Then he suffered Him. And Jesus, when He was baptized, went up straightway out of the water: and, lo, the heavens were opened unto Him, and He saw the Spirit of God descending like a dove, and lighting upon Him: and lo a voice from heaven saying, This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased.*

This doctrine of repentance was preached by the Master as well as by the servant. Turn to the 11th chapter of Matthew's Gospel, and let us read a few verses, beginning at the 20th.

Matthew 11 Verse 20. *Then began He to upbraid the cities wherein most of His mighty works were done, because they repented not:*

They listened; sometimes, they applauded; but they repented not; and there is nothing really accomplished until men have repented. In vain have we preached until men are brought to repent; so the Master said:—

21, 22. *Woe unto you, Chorazin! Woe unto you, 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.*

Listen to that, you gospel-hardened sinners, you who have heard, and heard, and heard, but have not repented. See how great is your sin, for you have rejected what others would have received if it had been presented to them. See how your guilt accumulates and its punishment also.

23, 24. *And you, Capernaum, which are exalted unto heaven, shall be brought down to hell: for if the mighty works, which have been done in you, 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 you.*

Sodom!—that is the blackest place of all. Ah, me! Will that verse ever fall, like a millstone, upon any one of my hearers, to grind him to powder, because you heard the gospel, and rejected it, intending always to receive it, but never receiving it at all? From such a doom, may God in mercy deliver you!

25-30. *At that time Jesus answered and said, I thank You, O Father, Lord of heaven and earth, because You have hid these things from the wise and prudent, and have revealed them unto babes. Even so, Father: for so it seemed good in Your sight. All things are delivered unto Me of My Father: and no man knows the Son, but the Father; neither knows any man the Father, save the Son, and he to whomsoever the Son will reveal Him. Come unto Me, all you that labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take My yoke upon you, and learn of Me; for I am meek and lowly in heart: and you shall find rest unto your souls. For My yoke is easy, and My burden is light.*

Just by way of contrast to what I am going to say in my sermon, let us read a few verses in Revelation seven.

Revelation 7 Verse 9. *After this I beheld, and, lo, a great multitude, which no man could number, of all nations, and kindreds, and people, and tongues, stood before the throne, and before the Lamb,—*

Our numbering can go a very long way, what, therefore, must be the countless hosts of the redeemed who are to be “a great multitude, which no man could number”? And what an infinite variety there will be among them, seeing that they shall not only be “of all nations,” but out of those nations they shall be “of all kindreds, and people, and tongues”—that is, all sorts and conditions of men, of every race, and of every age from the first century down to the last. Christ’s immeasurable redemption price must bring to Him a great reward. Isaiah long ago foretold that “He shall see of the travail of His soul, and shall be satisfied;” and it is no little result that will satisfy Him for such travail of soul as He endured.

This great multitude “stood before the throne, and before the Lamb,”—

9. *Clothed with white robes,—*

To set forth their purity, their victory, and their entrance into the marriage state, for such was the color usually worn on such occasions. “Clothed with white robes,” to show that they had entered into their rest, so that their garments were no longer soiled through their toil. They have reached their everlasting Sabbath, their weekday service is over forever.

9-11. *And palms in their hands; and cried with a loud voice, saying, Salvation to our God which sits upon the throne, and unto the Lamb. And all the angels stood round about the throne, and about the elders and the four beasts, and fell before the throne on their faces, and worshipped God,*

The angels form the outer ring. The elders, who represent the Church of the redeemed, are nearer to the throne of God than even the holy angels are. Nearest to God in heaven are those who have been redeemed from among men. How high a dignity—how noble an estate—awaits us by and by! But, all alike, both saved men and unfallen angels, “fell before the throne on their faces, and worshipped God,”—

12-17. *Saying Amen: Blessing, and glory, and wisdom, and thanksgiving, and honor, and power, and might, be unto our God forever and ever. Amen. And one of the elders answered, saying unto me, What are these which are arrayed in white robes? And from where have they come? And I said unto him, Sir, you know. And he said to me, these are they which came out of great tribulation, and have washed their robes, and made them white in the blood of the Lamb. Therefore are they before the throne of God, and serve Him day and night in His temple: and He that sits on the throne shall dwell among them. They shall hunger no more, neither thirst anymore; neither shall the sun light on them, nor any heat. For the Lamb which is in the midst of the throne shall feed them, and shall lead them unto living fountains of waters: and God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes.*

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