

## **The Wrath of God, A Necessary Part of Salvation**

Deut. 32:35

### Introduction:

1. On July 8<sup>th</sup>, 1741, Jonathan Edwards, preacher at the church of Christ in Northampton, Massachusetts, preached a sermon in Enfield, Connecticut, entitled "Sinners in the Hands of an Angry God."
2. He based it on the text that we have just read.
3. He said, "On this verse is threatened the vengeance of God on the wicked unbelieving Israelites, that were God's visible people, and lived under means of grace."
4. He went on to refer to the wonderful works that God had wrought towards them and yet they had rejected His counsel and were without understanding (v. 28).
5. The image I get in my head from reading Edwards' sermon is of Israel standing in God's hand over the fires of Hell there separated from destruction by God's grace, and yet their foot is about to slip.
6. Edwards said, "They were always exposed to destruction. They were liable to fall of themselves, and the only reason they had not fallen already was because God's appointed time had not come."
7. We might describe Edwards' sermon as "hell fire and brimstone," even "dangling people over the pit," but one thing is sure, he had a clear perception of the wrath of God against sinners.
8. Without the wrath of God salvation has no meaning. Without the wrath of God grace has no significance. Without the wrath of God the power of the cross is reduced to weakness.
9. What does the Bible say about the wrath of God?

### Discussion:

#### I. The God of the O.T. is a God of wrath.

- A. Edwards was right. This is something that is evident from Deut. 32.
  1. The first half of the chapter speaks of God's blessing on Jeshurun (Israel) (1-14).
  2. But Jeshurun (Israel) grew fat and kicked (15-18).
  3. The Lord responded in wrath (19ff).
- B. It is a theme that permeates all of O.T. history.
  1. It is evident in the flood (Gen. 6-7). Note 6:7.
  2. It is evident in the doom of Sodom and Gomorrah (Gen. 19). Note 19:24-25.
  3. It is evident in the overthrow of the Egyptians. Because of their oppression of Israel God sent ten plagues on them and ultimately destroyed their first-born.
  4. It is evident in the overthrow of the Amorites (and Canaanites) when Israel went in to possess the land (Gen 15:16).
  5. It is evident in Israel being taken off the land when they became idolaters (Deut. 11:17; Josh. 23:16; cf. 2 Chron. 36).
- C. Very few have problems with God's wrath in the O.T. It seems clear from the evidence of the events that we have sited. But some seem to have great difficulty seeing the

God of the N.T. as a God of wrath.

## II. The God of the N.T. is a God of wrath.

### A. Edwards found the God of the N.T. a God of wrath.

1. He saw God's wrath against sin as part of divine justice.
  - a. He said, "Justice calls aloud for an infinite punishment of their sins. Divine justice says of the tree that brings forth such grapes of Sodom, 'Cut it down, why cumbereth it the ground'" (Lk. 13:7).
  - b. Edwards connects O.T. Sodom and the justice of God with the words of Jesus against the unrepentant of His day.
  - c. A similar argument is made by Jesus in Matt. 11:23-24. Jesus reasoned that if the miracles had been done in Sodom that were done in Capernaum Sodom would not have been destroyed.
2. Edwards reasoned from Jn. 3:18 that "He that believeth not is condemned already." His point was that men are already under a sentence of condemnation to hell. Edwards said, Men "are now the objects of that same anger and wrath of God that is expressed in the torments of hell: and the reason why they don't go down to hell at each moment, is not because God is not angry with them. "The wrath of God burns against them, their damnation does not slumber, the pit is prepared, the fire is ready, the furnace is now hot, the flames do now rage and glow. The glittering sword is whet, and held over them, and the pit hath opened her mouth under them."

### B. With this conviction the words of Jesus agree.

1. The parable of the landowner (Matt. 21:33ff) has the landowner putting his vineyard in the hands of vine-growers who beat his slaves, killed another and stoned a third. When the son came they killed him to seize the inheritance. Even Jesus' enemies concluded, "He will bring those wretches to a wretched end."
2. In the parable of the wedding feast the man not dressed in wedding clothes was bound hand and foot and thrown into outer darkness where there was weeping and gnashing of teeth (Matt. 22:1ff).

### C. And so does the rest of the N.T.

1. Heb. 2:1-3 asks an important question. After reasoning that God has revealed Himself to the fathers in the prophets, but has spoken to us in His son the writer reasons . . . "If the word spoken through angels proved unalterable, and every transgression and disobedience received a just penalty, how shall we escape if we neglect so great a salvation?"
2. 2 Thess. 1:7ff speaks of the Lord's return with His angels in flaming fire and His dealing out retribution to those who do not know God and to those who do not obey the gospel of our Lord Jesus.

### D. The cross is bold testimony to the wrath of God against sin and sinners.

1. Rom. 6:23 says, "The wages of sin is death."
2. It may be easier for us to speak of the wages of sin and think of God's wrath against sin. But it is a personal matter. God's wrath is against sinners.
3. The ugliness of the cross epitomizes that wrath.
4. Some might reason, "God would never execute such wrath against us?" He executed it against His son.

III. Edwards' sermon has men dangling over the pit of hell in the hands of an angry God, and yet, in the hands of God.

- A. The image suggests that though God is angry He is gracious. His hands protect the guilty from being consumed in the fire.
- B. By means of the cross His wrath against us is satisfied.
  - 1. Rom. 5:6-9.
  - 2. Rom. 3:23-26.
  - 3. 1 Jn. 2:1-2.
- C. The cross is not a price paid to the devil in order that we might go free. It is the price paid to satisfy the wrath of God. It satisfies justice.
  - 1. God took the penalty of our sin upon Himself.
  - 2. He paid the price.
  - 3. We deserved death. We deserved Hell. With His life He bought us out of our precarious predicament.
- D. The only appropriate response is repentance and faith.
  - 1. We need to turn away from what put us in this predicament in the first place.
  - 2. We need to place our trust in the provision that God has made.
  - 3. He is both just and the justifier of the one who has faith in Jesus (Rom. 3:26).

Conclusion:

- 1. John the Baptist came on the scene preaching, "The axe is already laid at the root of the trees; therefore every tree that does not bear good fruit is cut down and thrown into the fire" (Matt. 3:10). He said, of Jesus, "He is mightier than I, His winnowing fork is in His hand, and He will thoroughly clear His threshing floor; and He will gather His wheat into the barn, but He will burn up the chaff with unquenchable fire" (Matt. 3:12).
- 2. "In due time their foot will slip," God said. Do you feel your foot slipping?
- 3. Jonathan Edwards appealed to the congregation in Enfield, Connecticut on July 8<sup>th</sup>, 1741 with these parting words. "Let every one that is out of Christ, now awake and fly from the wrath to come. The wrath of the almighty GOD is now undoubtedly hanging over a great part of this congregation. Let every one fly out of Sodom. Haste and escape for your lives, look not behind you, escape to the mountain, lest you be consumed."