

“Refuge from Wrath”

The God which most sinners, including Christians, have crafted for themselves – is a toothless God, a jovial Santa Claus type God, a God who loves us in the way we want Him to love us. He is a God who is never angry, and never pours out His wrath upon us. Such a God does not exist for those who hear and believe His Word.

Do you have ears to hear? Have you heard about the wicked in Noah’s day who were drowned by God’s wrath – the Sodomites who were pummeled with fire and brimstone – the Egyptian slave masters afflicted with plague after plague – the bodies of the Egyptian armies left scattered on the shores of the Red Sea – or the Israelites themselves, attacked by their enemies at God’s direction?

And before you continue telling God who He is – saying that the God of the New Testament is different – do you hear what Jesus has to say? The one true God is the same God in the Old and New Testaments – the difference being that the Son of God, Jesus, has now taken on human flesh.

We cringe when we hear what He says to us today – but it is not out of character when Jesus says – “I have come to cast fire on the earth” – and, “Do you think that I have come to give peace on earth? No, I tell you, but rather division.” Folks, there are not two Gods, but one. So, what are we to do with such a God?

The Lord of hosts tells you today – “Do not listen to the words of the prophets who prophesy to you, filling you with vain hopes” – empty hopes. “They speak visions of their own minds, not from the mouth of the Lord,” He says.

That sounds like a lot of preachers today with their own self-crafted visions – operating on the basis of the way they see things. Such vain preachers “say continually to those who despise the word of the Lord, ‘It shall be well with you’; and to everyone who stubbornly follows his own heart, they say, ‘No disaster shall come upon you.’”

“Do whatever your little hearts desires. Don’t worry, everything’s fine. No disaster will come upon you.” In other words, there is no wrath of God – no anger – no God like the only true God who reveals Himself to us in His Holy Scripture.

The truth is that we are ALL vain preachers – despising the Word of the Lord – and substituting our words for the Lord’s Word. We live by our own visions for who God is – living as experts in SELF-JUSTIFICATION.

What do I mean by that? Justification has to do with our standing before God. It’s like a courtroom – where God is the judge – and we are the accused. In an attempt to exonerate ourselves before God – we act as our own counsel, and offer our own defense.

We are truly guilty sinners – but being the vain preachers we are – we mount a defense in which we argue the opposite. We try to get all the evidence thrown out – lying about what we have done, or failed to do – telling ourselves that we have nothing to fear as we stand before the judgment seat of God.

If you don’t think this applies to you – you’d better keep listening. If you find yourself saying – “What I did isn’t all that bad – everyone does it – I’m not like that person” --- then you are self-justifying. You are a vain preacher.

If you try to convince yourself, and others (and especially God) – that your actions are done for the sake of LOVE. If you cover up your adultery, saying that you LOVE that person – if you condone homosexuality because “it’s not wrong for two people to LOVE each other” – if you defend your greed for money and possession, saying that you are doing all this for your family because you LOVE them --- because, after all, GOD IS LOVE --- then you are self-justifying. You are a vain preacher.

If you tell yourself that God doesn’t notice if I sin – or that He doesn’t care – or that nothing will happen --- then you are self-justifying. You are a vain preacher.

Dearly beloved, God IS love, and He loves YOU – and that’s exactly why He tells you not to listen to vain preachers, including yourself. Because God IS love – He crushes vain preachers “like a hammer that breaks the rock in pieces.”

Because He loves YOU – God sends preachers to faithfully preach HIS Word – so that you may know the one true God, and His TRUTH. That’s why He preaches to you today – to turn you from your sin – so that you don’t end up where you are going (where sin leads you).

And that's why you should gather your family with you to hear the preaching of God's TRUTH – the truth that God IS a God of wrath. His anger burns against all sin because it hurts and harms the very people He LOVES – it brings death and destruction to those for whom He desires life and peace.

As He Himself says: “The anger of the Lord will not turn back until He has executed and accomplished the intents of His heart.” The TRUTH is that all sin will be burned up. The question is – what to do with your sin? If it remains with you – then your end will be destruction.

The “intent of God's heart” is not destruction, but your salvation. He says, “In the latter days you will understand it clearly.” In these latter days, God's own Son has come in the flesh. Jesus says, “I have a baptism to be baptized with” – a baptism by fire – one in which all of God's wrath at sin is poured out – not on YOU – but on His own Son.

Christ has come in the flesh to take all your sin as His own, into His flesh – and in your place, He endures all of its wrath, destruction, and death. All this He does “for you” – because GOD IS LOVE – and He loves YOU.

Beloved of the Lord, do not hold on to your own sin, or try to make excuses for it. Don't try to justify yourself – lying to yourself – saying “all is well with me” – “no disaster will come to me.” Rather, flee from God's wrath at sin – to the refuge of His infinite mercy – which is yours, in Christ Jesus.

Only sinners need a Savior from sin, a Savior from God's wrath and destruction. So, tell the TRUTH – confess your sin – and flee for refuge to your Savior Jesus Christ. In Christ, all your sin IS forgiven. In Christ, you ARE justified before God – that is, God declares you “not guilty” – for the sake of His Son, Jesus Christ.

You who are loved by God, in Christ, you have no fear to stand before God – for He is your forgiveness, your justification, your deliverance and salvation. Amen.

The peace of God which passes all understanding, guards your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus. Amen.