

The Only Deliverer from the Wrath to Come!

Or, the Way to Escape the Horrible and Eternal Burnings of Hell

By Thomas Vincent

"Jesus, who delivers us from the wrath to come!" 1 Thessalonians 1:10

Past pains may easily be forgotten. *Future* pains are not easily believed. *Present* pains in extremity are so grievous and afflicting that all the wealth and honor in the world cannot countervail them—and, oh, how welcome is such a physician who can give ease and remove them! But if people believingly apprehended what horrible pains and torments the wicked must endure in the unquenchable flames of hell fire, where they can have no *ease*, and their misery shall have no *end*; if they apprehended how fearful a thing it is to fall into the hands of the living God, and to be swallowed up by His wrath, which pursues all who are out of Christ, and who will *certainly* come and may *quickly* seize upon them—surely they would use their utmost diligence now to escape—surely they would, with the greatest inquisitiveness, seek out a place of refuge from the fiery tempest of God's vengeance!

This text, which makes a revelation of the *only Deliverer* from the wrath to come, would sound with most transcendent sweetness in their ears; and the glad tidings thereof, concerning what Jesus has done for His people, would, above all things, be most welcome in their hearts. "Jesus, who delivered us from the wrath to come!"

In the former verse, the apostle tells the Thessalonians what manner of reception he had at first among them, and what the great effect of his ministry was upon them, namely that they were converted thereby, which conversion he sets forth:

1. By the *nature* of it: they were turned from dead idols—the lying vanities which they worshiped and served before—unto the living and true God, to worship and serve Him.
2. By the *consequence* of it, which was their waiting for the second coming of the Lord Jesus Christ from heaven. And here he shows:

First, the *evidence* of this second coming: it will *certainly* be, namely by God's raising Him from the dead and receiving Him into heaven.

Second, the *ground* of their hope and comforting expectation, and waiting for this coming in the text: because this Jesus had delivered them from the wrath to come. The *wicked*, if awakened, look for Christ's second coming with *dread* and fearful expectation, because of the wrath which He will bring with Him—because He will come in flaming fire to take vengeance upon them. The *righteous*, if assured of their saving interest in Christ, look for Christ's second coming with gladness and joyful expectation because He has delivered them from the wrath to come. "Jesus, who delivers us from the wrath to come!"

The doctrine, then, is plainly set forth in the words of the text: **It is Jesus who delivers from the wrath to come.**

In handling this point I shall show:

1. What this wrath is, which is to come;
2. That this wrath, is to come;
3. Upon whom this wrath will come;
4. When this wrath will come;
5. Who this Jesus is, who delivers from wrath to come;
6. How Jesus delivers from wrath to come;
7. How any do or may have a share, in this deliverance by Jesus from wrath to come;

Then I shall make some *use* and *application*.

1. WHAT this wrath is, which is to come.

It is not the finite wrath of the most furious and fierce creatures; it is not the wrath of lions, bears, tigers, wolves, or wild bulls; it is not the wrath of the most potent and tyrannical men, who may exceed all these in ferocity and cruelty. Neither is it the wrath of the devil, whose wrath is great here on earth when let loose to tempt and deceive—but most furiously will express itself hereafter in hell when he is let loose as God's executioner to torment the wicked. But by "the wrath to come" we are to understand the infinite wrath of the sin-avenging God, in comparison with which the wrath of all other creatures in the world is mild, and not in the least to be regarded.

We read in the Scripture of the *wine* of God's wrath (Revelation 14:10), that this wine is red (Psalm 75:8). We read of the *vials* of God's wrath (Revelation 16:1), of the *cup* of God's wrath (Revelation 14:10), of the *winepress* of God's wrath (Revelation 14:19). We read of the *treasury* of God's wrath (Romans 2:5), of the *vessels* of God's wrath (Romans 9:22). By "the wine of God's wrath" we are to understand those plagues and punishments which God does and will inflict upon the wicked for their sins. By "the *redness* of the wine" is meant the dreadfulness of those plagues. By "the *vials* of God's wrath" we mean some smaller plagues and temporal punishments on earth. By "the *cup* of God's wrath" we mean especially the dregs and bottom of it, the greater plagues and eternal punishments of hell. By "the *winepress* of God's wrath" we are to understand the place where the wicked shall be punished. By "the *treasury* of God's wrath" we are to understand the abundance of plagues; by "the *vessels* of wrath," we are to understand the

damned who are appointed to undergo these plagues and torments. These vessels, God will fill to the brim in hell, with the most intensified torments.

And this is the wrath which is to come, which will be most *bitter*—beyond any gall or wormwood to the taste. This wrath will be most *pure*—without any alloy or mixture of any comfortable ingredients. This wrath will be most *plentiful*—the treasury of which will be opened in hell, and all the damned will be filled with it abundantly. It will be most *weighty*—beyond any mountain of lead, to sink sinners down into the bottomless pit. It will be most *fierce*—and so *powerful* that all the powers of men and devils shall not be able to make the least resistance. It will be *intolerable*—and yet must be borne; it will be *implacable*—so as never to be appeased; and it will be *eternal*—so as never to be ended!

Plainly, the wrath to come, is the same as the punishment of hell, the great effect of the wrath of God. This punishment has two parts: the punishment of *loss* and the punishment of *sense*.

The punishment of *loss*—will consist of the loss of the crown, glory, and happiness of heaven, where the righteous shall be admitted to the immediate vision and full fruition of God the chief good, which will fill them with soul-ravishing, inconceivable, and eternal joy. But from this, all the wicked will be eternally shut out, and wholly denied any share in the least of that happiness which, when they come to understand the worth and excellency of it—will above all things be most vexing to them

The punishment of *sense*—will consist in the horrible pains and tortures which shall in extreme measure be inflicted upon every part of the bodies of all the wicked, by the most dreadful and unquenchable fire into which they shall be thrown; and the horrible anguish which, through the immediate impressions of God's wrath, shall be inflicted upon every faculty of their souls in hell, where they shall have no ease or release forever" Matthew 25:41, "Depart from Me, you who are cursed, into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels!" Revelation 14:10-11, "They shall drink of the wine of the wrath of God, which is poured out *without mixture* into the cup of His indignation, and shall be tormented with fire and brimstone in the presence of the holy angels and in the presence of the Lamb. And the smoke of their torment ascends up forever and ever, and they have no rest day or night."

2. This wrath of God, is TO COME, which implies two things: the wrath is *not yet* come, and it *certainly* will come.

First, the wrath of God has *not yet* come. Had it already come, who could have stood before it? Who could deliver from it? Where it seizes—it crushes and it burns, and that worse than any fire! Where it seizes—it holds and never lets go its hold! But, as it has not yet come, some *sparks* of this fire may be let fall in *temporal* judgments upon sinners in this life; but what are *temporal* judgments in comparison to *eternal* ones! In this world, God exercises His patience towards the wicked. He is angry with them, and His anger smokes against them; but He withholds His wrath from breaking forth into a flame, which would quickly devour all the wicked of the earth should He give way to it and let it loose upon them.

Indeed, we read in John 3:36 that the wrath of God *abides* upon unbelievers; that is, it shall abide upon those who at last are found in a state of unbelief—as surely as if it already were abiding on them! Or, the wrath of God abides upon unbelievers, that is, the *sentence of condemnation unto this wrath* abides upon them. John 3:18: "He who believes not is condemned already." Indeed, it is said of the persecuting Jews who had killed the Lord Jesus and their own prophets, and had forbidden the apostles to preach to the Gentiles, that "the wrath was come upon them to the uttermost" (1 Thessalonians 2:15-16). But we are to understand it thus: the wrath of God was come upon them to the uttermost, not in regard to *eternal* judgments—but in regard to *spiritual* judgments, it being the expression of God's wrath here—to give sinners up to a persecuting spirit, which prepares them for the uttermost and most dreadful punishments of hell hereafter.

But as yet, the wrath of God has not yet come; none in this world does know, or can know—the power of God's anger.

Second, the wrath of God is to come, that is, it will *certainly* come. There are some things which *may* come—such and such temporal *judgments* may come, such and such *deliverances* may come—but there are some things which will *certainly* come. *Death* will certainly come, *Christ* will certainly come; and, as certainly as death and Christ will come, so certainly this *wrath of God* will come. God has *foretold* it; and heaven and earth shall pass away—but not one jot or tittle of what God has foretold shall pass away, until it is fulfilled. God has *threatened* it, and God is not more faithful in His *promises* to His people—than He is true in His *threatenings* to His enemies! God's *justice* engages Him to send it, which can be satisfied in no other way by those who have no saving interest in the atoning sacrifice of Christ.

The wicked are *vessels* fitted by sin for destruction, and *prepared* for wrath; and therefore they shall be filled with it, even as the vessels of mercy are fitted for and shall be filled with glory. God has *treasured up wrath* for the wicked—as they have treasured up sin; and God will give them that which they have so much deserved, and which He has prepared for them. However sinners may escape this wrath for a while, and vainly hope to flee or hide themselves from the stroke of God's vengeance, yet God's right hand will find all those who hate Him; and He will make them as a fiery oven in the time of His anger, swallow them up in His wrath, and devour them with the fire of His indignation! (Psalm 21:8-9).

3. WHOM this wrath will come upon.

First, the wrath of God will come upon all the DISOBEDIENT. Colossians 3:5-6, "Put to death whatever in you is worldly: sexual immorality, impurity, lust, evil desire, and greed, which is idolatry. Because of these, God's wrath comes on the disobedient." These are such as do not yield obedience unto the law of God—but live in and allow themselves the practice of known sins, and the neglect of known duties. They are such as are under the power of reigning sin—who are willing servants of sin, who yield up their members as instruments of unrighteousness to sin (Romans 6:13), who serve divers lusts (Titus 3:3), and who make provision for the flesh, to fulfill the lusts thereof (Romans 13:14).

They are such as are blasphemers, swearers, murderers, adulterers, drunkards, thieves, covetous, unrighteous, extortioners, revilers, scoffers at religion, persecutors of God's people; or who have an enmity to the power of godliness. They are such as are proud and boasters, such as are disobedient to parents without natural affection, such as are lovers of pleasure more than lovers of God, such as are liars and unfaithful, such as are idle and slothful, such as live in envy and malice, such as are given to revenge and cannot forgive injuries, and other like sinners. These are all children of disobedience, upon whom the wrath of God will come. Ephesians 5:6: "Let no man deceive you with vain words, for because of these things comes the wrath of God upon the children of disobedience."

Let none deceive you with vain words—neither deceive yourselves with vain thoughts—as if you might escape the wrath of God, although you live in the practice of such and such sins. See how vain and groundless the security of such people is. Deuteronomy 29:18-20, "Let none of those who hear the warnings of this curse consider themselves immune, thinking, 'I am safe, even though I am walking in my own stubborn way.' This would lead to utter ruin! The Lord will not pardon such people. His anger and jealousy will burn against them. All the curses written in this book will come down on them, and the Lord will erase their names from under heaven! The Lord will pour out on them all the covenant curses recorded in this Book of the Law!" Moreover, we read in Galatians 3:10, "Cursed is everyone who does not observe and obey all these commands that are written in God's Book of the Law."

Such as are guilty of any transgression of the law (while out of Christ) are under the curse, and liable to God's wrath. Hebrews 2:2, "The people were punished for every violation of the law and every act of disobedience." Hence it is that the children of *disobedience*, are called children of *wrath* (Ephesians 2:2-3).

Second, the wrath of God will come upon all HYPOCRITES. It is more peculiarly appropriated unto them, as their portion. Matthew 24:51, "He shall cut him asunder, and appoint him his portion with the hypocrites; there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth." Whoever escapes God's wrath, hypocrites shall not escape; whoever is pardoned, hypocrites shall be punished. These are such as have a *form* of godliness—but deny the *power* thereof; such as make some *outward show* of reformation—but are without *inward transformation*. These are such as are like painted sepulchers, fair and beautiful without—but within are full of rottenness! These are such as make it their great business to *appear* religious, and take no care to *be* pious—but are rotten at heart and cover carnal designs with a cloak of profession. As their sin is most offensive unto God here—so His wrath will certainly come upon them with the greatest severity hereafter!

Third, the wrath of God will come upon all IMPENITENT and UNBELIEVING people. Luke 13:3, "Except you repent, you shall all likewise perish." Mark 16:16, "He who believes not, shall be damned." Repentance and faith are two great duties of the gospel, and wrath is particularly threatened to such as do not obey the gospel; to such God will render indignation and wrath, tribulation and anguish (Romans 2:8-9). And Christ will come in flaming fire to take vengeance upon them (2 Thessalonians 1:8). Such as are impenitent and unbelieving, neglect the salvation of the gospel which, by faith in Christ alone, is attainable! Thus sinning against the only remedy—they cannot escape! Hebrews 2:3, "How shall we escape—if we neglect so great

salvation!"

4. WHEN this wrath of God will come.

First, the wrath of God will come in part upon the wicked immediately, after the separation of their souls from their bodies. The souls of the wicked, as soon as they are loosened by death from the ruinous habitation of their bodies, presently appear before God, are condemned to hell, and are dragged by the devil, hell's jailer, into that prison where they are bound in chains of darkness, filled with horror and anguish until the day of eternal judgment! The Scripture tells us of disobedient spirits, thrown into prison (1 Peter 3:19).

Second, the wrath of God will come in fully upon all the wicked together at the last day, called "the day of judgment and destruction of ungodly men" (2 Peter 3:7). When the Lord Jesus shall come to judge the world, He will bring the treasury of God's wrath with Him, and render unto all the wicked, that wrath and vengeance which is their due. Therefore this day is called "the day of wrath and revelation of the righteous judgment of God" (Romans 2:5). This will be a dreadful day unto the wicked, when the heavens shall pass away with a great roar and, like a scroll, be rolled together; the elements shall melt with fervent heat and be dissolved. It shall be a day when the sun shall become as black as sackcloth, and the moon become like blood; when the powers of heaven shall be shaken and the stars shall fall from heaven to the earth like figs from a tree when it is shaken with a mighty wind; when there shall be exceedingly loud thunderings, and exceedingly horrid lightnings and tempests; when the last trumpet shall sound and a mighty shout shall come down from above and awaken all the sinners who are asleep in the dust; when Christ the great judge of the world shall come forth from His Father's house and make His appearance in the world with millions of mighty angels, and all the saints at His right hand clothed with majesty and brightness of glory; when the wicked shall come forth from their graves.

As soon as they shall open their *eyes*, they shall see heaven and earth on fire about their ears, and the Lord Jesus coming towards them in flaming fire to take vengeance upon them; as soon as they open their *ears*, they shall hear the dreadful trumpet and shout in the air, and the howling and lamentations of all their fellow sinners about them upon the earth!

Oh, the dread and confusion which the wicked then shall be filled with—when they are summoned and dragged to the tribunal seat of Christ—and there have the books opened before them, where all their sins are written, and which will then be made manifest to the whole world; and when the sentence "Depart, you who are cursed, into everlasting fire!" shall be passed upon them; and when the Lord shall open the treasury of wrath to them, and give them that portion thereof, which is their due; and when they shall see the mouth of hell open beneath them, and a horrible flame issuing forth from there, giving notice of a more horrible fire within which is prepared for them!

Oh, the dread! Oh, the shrieks! Who can dwell with such devouring fire! Who can inhabit such everlasting burnings! How welcome would a great rock or mountain be—if they could find any that would fall upon them, and hide them from the wrath of the Lamb, and keep off the strokes of God's vengeance, which then will be inflicted upon them!

But, the *sentence* being pronounced—the *execution* will follow—and none can escape it! From Christ's tribunal seat, the wicked will be thrown into the fiery prison of hell, where they will be shut down and shut in, and that forever! There they will *lie*; there they will *fry*, and there they will *cry*! Though always dying—they will never die! The fire there will burn most dreadfully and continually, yet will never be extinguished! The wicked will be tormented there in every part and in extreme measure, and their torment will never be ended!

5. WHO this Jesus is—who delivers from wrath to come.

In the text He is called "Jesus," and the reason for this name we find in Matthew 1:21, "You shall call His name Jesus—for He shall save His people from their sins." This Jesus is God and man in one person. He is the eternal Son of God, of the same essence with the Father, equal to Him in power and glory, who before the world, was appointed in time—to be the Redeemer of mankind; and when the fullness of time had come, He took upon Himself a true, human body and soul. He was conceived by the Holy Spirit, was born of a lowly virgin, lived in a lowly condition, was owned by a voice from heaven to be the only begotten and beloved Son of God. He preached the glad tidings of salvation to sinners, confirmed His doctrine by many miracles, died for the salvation of sinners (that being the cursed death of the cross), was raised up the third day, appeared to His disciples after His resurrection, and, after forty days, in the sight of many, ascended up to heaven where now He is at the right hand of God, making intercession for us.

6. HOW Jesus delivers from the wrath of God to come.

First, by His DEATH, whereby He has purchased deliverance, having hereby satisfied God's justice. In His death, and in *our place*—Jesus underwent that punishment which our sins deserved. His *body* was nailed to the cross, which was an accursed death; and His *soul* was afflicted with the immediate impressions of God's wrath—which was so weighty and grievous that any mere creature would have sunk under it! But He, being both God and man, bore up and broke through and got loose from the bands of death. The dignity of His person, put an infinite merit on His sufferings—and so His sufferings became a sufficient satisfaction to justice, and that was accepted as fully as if sinners had done it in their own persons. We read that Jesus Himself "bore our sins in His body on the tree" (1 Peter 2:24); that "He gave His life a ransom for many" (Matthew 20:28); that we are "redeemed with His blood" (1 Peter 1:18-19); that we are "reconciled through His death" (Romans 5:10). Jesus delivers from wrath by His death—having therein undergone it Himself—in place of His people.

Second, by His INTERCESSION, Christ delivers from wrath to come. Having offered up Himself as a sacrifice to satisfy divine justice for sin, He pleads the merit of it at the right hand of God on behalf of sinners for their redemption. He is called not only our *Surety*—to atone for our sins (Hebrews 7:22); but also our *Advocate*—to plead for us in heaven (1 John 2:1). Our deliverance from wrath to come, the damnation and punishment of hell, proceeds not only from Christ's *death*, whereby He has purchased it—but also from His *intercession*, whereby He effectually accomplishes and obtains it. And therefore the apostle joins both together in the procurement of freedom from condemnation. Romans 8:34, "Who is the one who condemns? Christ Jesus is the One who *died*, but even more, has been raised; He also is at the right hand of

God and *intercedes* for us." And upon this account He is said to be able to save unto the *uttermost*! Hebrews 7:25: "Wherefore He is able to save to the uttermost, all who come unto God by Him, seeing He ever lives to make *intercession* for them."

Third, by His sending His Spirit to *effectually call* people to Himself, Jesus brings them into a state of salvation, and gives them an actual interest in this deliverance, which He has purchased for them. This leads to the next particular.

7. HOW any have a share in this deliverance by Jesus, from the wrath to come.

This is by *faith* in Jesus Christ. This saving faith is wrought by His Spirit in effectual calling. It occurs when the Lord, by His Spirit, opens the eyes of sinners, convinces them of the guilt and evil of their sins, awakens their consciences, and works contrition and a sense of their misery and danger; and when the Lord shows and persuades them how utterly unable they are to save themselves, that no reformation or righteousness of their own, which either they have or can attain unto, can procure deliverance from wrath for them; and that no mere creature in the world is able to help in this case. The Lord by His Spirit—reveals Himself as the only Savior and all-sufficient one, who is most willing to save and deliver them. He most *powerfully* and *irresistibly* and yet most *sweetly* bows their wills, and *inclines* them to choose Him for their Savior; and, grieving for sin and renouncing their own righteousness, inclines them to rest themselves upon Him for salvation. And this, accompanied with a free and resolved delivering up of themselves to His teaching and government, is *effectual calling*.

Herein the Lord, by His Spirit, draws and lays hold on sinners, and enables them by faith to lay hold on Him—and hence arises their union to Christ, and saving interest in Christ. And hence they come to have a share in the deliverance by Christ, from wrath to come.

When the jailer cried out with trembling to Paul and Silas, "Sirs, what must I do to be saved?" the direction given him was, "*Believe* on the Lord Jesus Christ, and you shall be saved" (Acts 16:30-31). It is faith which gives a saving interest in Christ, and hereby an interest in the deliverance which He has purchased. It is faith which *unites* us to Christ, whereby we are said to be *in* Him—and there is no condemnation to those who are *in* Christ Jesus (Romans 8:1). We are *justified* by faith (Romans 5:1), and so are absolved from the guilt of sin and all obligation to punishment. The Lord Jesus Christ, having fully satisfied God's justice for our sins by His death in our place, and this being imputed to us through faith, and accounted as if we had done it ourselves (as a surety's paying our debt is accounted by the creditor as if we had paid it), we are acquitted, and no more exposed to the wrath of God and punishment of hell—than if we had never committed any one sin to deserve it!

Use—*Information*

1. See here the worth of Jesus! He is *the* Deliverer, and the *only* Deliverer from wrath to come. Jesus Christ is a person of the greatest worth in Himself; the divine and human natures, being united in Him, render Him *infinitely glorious* and *altogether lovely*. And hence it is, that He is replenished with such transcendent excellencies and perfection as are not to be found again in any

creature, either in earth or heaven. Jesus Christ is esteemed to be the most worthy person by those who know Him, and understand what real worth is, especially sinners, when awakened, and made sensible of the curse which lies upon them for sin, and the wrath of God which hangs over them! And when they come to apprehend how fearful a thing it is to fall under the strokes of God's vengeance, and see no way of escape but by Jesus, the only Deliverer from future wrath—then, of all *people* and *things* in the world—Jesus Christ is most precious to them! Never did there appear in the world a person of such high dignity, of such admirable beauty and such wonderful love as the Lord Jesus Christ, who came down from the Father and clothed Himself with our nature that He might become our Savior, Redeemer, Surety, and Advocate, and that He might deliver us from wrath to come!

2. See here the value of Christ's death! Hebrews 9:22: "Without shedding of blood, there is no remission of sin." And if there is no remission of sin—then there is no deliverance from wrath to come! If *guilt* remains, then *punishment* will ensue—God's eternal *wrath* in hell. It was not the blood of bulls and goats sacrificed under the law, which can remove guilt—and procure remission of sin. Hebrews 10:4, "For it is not possible that the blood of bulls and goats should take away sin." But it was through Christ's sacrifice of Himself once for all, and shedding His blood upon the cross, that *remission of sins* and, by consequence, this *deliverance from wrath to come* were purchased. It was not thousands of rams, or ten thousand rivers of oil, or all the treasures of the earth—which could have procured remission of sin, because all this would have been no satisfaction unto God's justice. Only the sufferings of Jesus, who is God-man, has satisfied God's justice. By His death, Christ has paid the full price which was due for sin. Surely, then, His death is of greater value than the riches of ten thousand worlds—were there that many!

3. Here see the excellency of faith! We read in Peter's first epistle of a precious *Christ* (2:7), and of Christ's precious *blood* (1:19), and also of precious *faith* (1:7). Of all other graces, faith is called precious, and it has above other graces a peculiar excellence; not so much in respect to itself—but in regard to, its object, as it gives a saving interest in the precious Christ—and makes application of His precious blood. By this, we come to attain a share in this deliverance by Christ from wrath to come. Christ is most precious as the *Author* of our deliverance; Christ's death is most precious as the *merit* of our deliverance; and faith is most precious as the *instrument* of our deliverance.

4. Here see what a privilege it is to have the gospel preached among us. The gospel is the means to make discovery unto us of Jesus Christ, the only Deliverer from wrath to come; and also the means to work faith in us, which comes by hearing (Romans 10:17). Hereby alone we come to have interest in Jesus Christ and His deliverance. Such as are without the gospel are in darkness and unbelief, and are hastening forward towards the regions of eternal darkness; and they do not know where they are going. It is of more use to have the light of the *gospel*—than to have the light of the *sun*; and the total removal of this light is a greater judgment than any temporal calamity, since it is the only means to prevent *eternal misery*!

Use—*Examination*

Is Jesus the only Deliverer from wrath to come? It concerns all of you, then, to examine yourselves as to whether you have a saving interest in this Jesus, and the deliverance from wrath

which He has purchased, which is through Him *alone* to be obtained. All of you are sinners. You were born in sin, you have lived in sin, and, should you die in sin, as certainly as the guilt of sin lies upon you—so certainly will the wrath of God come upon you! Without a saving interest in Jesus Christ, there can be no escaping for you. You may know whether you have a saving interest in Jesus Christ by your *faith*, by your *life*, by your *love*, by your *likeness*, and by your *obedience*.

1. If you have a saving interest in Jesus Christ, then you have FAITH. I don't mean a mere *historical* faith, only believing the history and report which the gospel gives of Jesus Christ—what He has done and suffered. Nor do I mean a *temporary* faith, which is the fond presumption of some formal hypocrites, whereby they may seem to cleave unto Christ when, indeed, their hearts cleave chiefly to sin; whereby, through misapprehension of gospel privileges, and misapplication of gospel promises—they may attain to some kind of fleshly love and joy, which endures but a while (it usually ends in open apostasy). But if you have a true interest in Christ, you have a true, justifying faith whereby, being first convinced of sin, humbled and emptied of yourselves, resolvedly parting with all your sins as to affection; and sincerely renouncing all your own righteousness as to dependence; you cast yourselves upon Christ, lean and depend upon Him, expecting remission and salvation only through His perfect righteousness, made yours by imputation.

Have you, by faith, *discerned* Christ? Have you, by faith, *applied* Christ? Are you, by faith, *joined* to Christ? Have you been, by faith, cast off your own foundations, and built upon Christ the chief Cornerstone? Have you, by faith, been cut off from your old stock, and engrafted into Christ, the choice Vine? Have you, by faith, been divorced from sin—and married unto Christ, the best Husband? Have you gotten unto and into Christ, by faith? And have you received Him into your hearts by faith? Without this true faith, there can be union to Christ; without union to Christ, there can be no saving interest in Christ; without a saving interest in Christ, there can be no remission of sin, no salvation and deliverance from wrath to come!

2. If you have a saving interest in Christ, you have LIFE.

1 John 5:12, "He who has the Son has *life*, and he who has not the Son has not life." He who has a saving interest in Christ, the Son of God, has life. He shall have *eternal* life hereafter, and he has *spiritual* life, which is eternal life begun here. These, besides the natural life which they received from the parents in their generation, have a *principle* of spiritual life, which they receive from the Spirit of God in their regeneration. They are the only people who are quickened from their spiritual death. He who does not have the Son—does not have life. Such shall never see life hereafter—but the wrath of God abides on them John 3:36). Plus, they are spiritually dead here, dead in trespasses and sins (Ephesians 2:1).

You may know whether you have a saving interest in Jesus Christ by your spiritual life. I do not say by your constant liveliness, for this may be lacking at some times in true believers—but you may know it by your spiritual life. You were dead—but now you are alive; and you may know your spiritual life by your *spiritual motion from sin and towards God*; by your spiritual *senses* to discern between good and evil; by your spiritual *appetite* after Christ and His righteousness, and communion with God in His ordinances and the like. If these are not symptoms of this spiritual

life in you, it is a sign that Christ is not in you; you have no interest in Him and His deliverance from eternal hell.

3. If you. have a saving interest in Christ, you have LOVE.

You love Christ in **sincerity**. Ephesians 6:24, "Grace be with all those who love our Lord Jesus in sincerity." You love Christ **supremely**. Matthew 10:37, "He who loves father or mother more than Me is not worthy of Me". If any man or woman loves any person or thing in the world more than Jesus Christ, they are unworthy of Him, and have no saving interest in Him or any of His benefits. And therefore a dreadful curse is pronounced upon such as do not love Christ. 1 Corinthians 16:22, "If anyone does not love the Lord, that person is cursed! Come, O Lord!" That is, let him be cursed until the Lord comes; and when the Lord comes the wrath of God will also come upon him!

4. If you have a saving interest in Christ, you have LIKENESS. You are like unto Christ; you have His image upon you. Jesus Christ is formed in you (Galatians 4:19). You are like Christ in your disposition, in humility, meekness, heavenliness, and the like. You are not *perfectly* like Him, yet in *some measure* you are. And you *imitate* Him more and more, and *endeavor* after more conformity to His image. Where *pride* reigns instead of humility; where inordinate *anger* reigns instead of meekness; where *malice* and revenge reign instead of love and forgiveness; where the love of the *world* reigns instead of heavenly mindedness; where evil *lust* reigns instead of mortified affections—such are without likeness to Christ—and without a saving interest in Christ. Those who are *graceless* are also *Christless*, and cannot escape future wrath!

5. If you have a saving interest in Christ, you have OBEDIENCE. Your *faith* shows itself in your works— James 2:18. And your *love* shows itself in your keeping Christ's commands— John 14:21. Such as do not obey Christ's laws—but cast His commandments behind their backs, and will not have this Lord to *rule* over them—have neither faith, nor love, nor life, nor likeness unto Christ; and therefore be sure that they have no interest in Him. *Test* your interest in Christ, the only Deliverer from future wrath—by these *marks* and *evidences*.

Use—*Reproof and Terror*

If upon careful search, you find you are without a saving interest in Christ—allow this word of reproof. Sinners, what do you think? Is there no such thing as wrath to come? Is there no such place as hell, where the damned shall be eternally tormented? What blackmouth is there, who dares to speak against this truth which is so clearly revealed in the Word of God? Surely none but such as are children of the devil! The father of lies will impeach the Word of God with falsehood, and hereby make God a liar, who has foretold this so plainly in Scripture. Only such as are loose in their lives and deficient in their morals, whose interest they think it is to do so—will deny the punishment by eternal fire in hell—so that they might sin with fewer checks and curbs. But when they come to *feel* the heat of this fire, as they will most assuredly be cast into everlasting burnings—then they will be of another mind!

And if there is such dreadful wrath coming, such a horrible fire being prepared in *hell* for all *disobedient* people, for all *impenitent* people, for all hypocrites and *unbelievers*, what will you do, sinners! Have you not sinned? Have you not by your sins, deserved hell's burnings? And are you not by your sins, exposed unto the vengeance of eternal fire? Is there any way for you to escape—but by Jesus Christ, the only Deliverer from wrath to come? And do you yet *neglect* Him! Do you *refuse* and *reject* Him! Do you shut the door of your hearts against Him! What! Do you think only of what your bodies shall eat, what you shall drink, and with what you shall be clothed! Do you think only of providing for a short abode in this world—and in the meantime neglect your salvation of your souls—and take no care to prevent your everlasting punishment! Are you not guilty of a greater *affront* and *indignity* against God, when He has made such provision for your salvation as to send His Son into the world for you, and to offer His Son with deliverance to you? Don't you sin against the greatest expression of His love to mankind? Don't you spurn Him, and in effect say, "God might have kept His Son to Himself—for all I care!" Are you not guilty of the greatest *ingratitude* towards the Lord Jesus Christ!

Never was there such a thing heard of since the foundation of the world; never could such a thing have entered into your thoughts or desires as the Lord Jesus has freely, and of His own accord, done for sinners. It is a most stupendous thing which, I think, should fill you with astonishment and admiration: that the Lord of glory should take your flesh, make Himself of no reputation, and humble Himself unto death, even the cursed death of the cross, and all so that He might deliver sinners from the curse of the law, the wrath to come, and the pains of hell forever!

Now, when Christ, by His death, has fully satisfied God's justice for sinners, and purchased eternal life for sinners, and out of wonderful kindness has caused the everlasting gospel and glad tidings of salvation to be made known in this little nook of the earth, and cast your lot in such a spot of ground as the like is not to be found again under the whole scope of heaven for the pure and powerful preaching of the gospel; I say, when Jesus Christ has sent His faithful ministers to you (whom you may find and hear if you will look after them) with this message—to tell you what Christ has done for you, and to make offers of Him with all His benefits to you; when Christ lets you know how *able* and *willing* He is to save you, and knocks at the door of your hearts for entertainment, if though you are such helpless and miserable creatures without Him; that you should, notwithstanding all this, refuse or neglect Christ, prefer some base lust before Him, and serve the devil rather than be saved by Christ—hereby you express great *contempt* of Christ and are guilty of horrid *ingratitude*! Hereby you trample His blood under your feet, and in effect, you say that He might have spared His pains in coming down from heaven, that He might have carried His gospel to any other place—for all you value it or Him!

Thus you deal with Christ and thrust Him away from you, though He comes upon the most welcome errand, and ought to be received with all readiness and thankfulness. And think, sinner, moreover how *injurious* you are hereby unto yourselves, what *folly* and *madness* you are guilty of! Do you know what you are—and where you are headed? If you do—you know that without Christ you are cursed wretches and children of wrath!

Behold this wonder in Christ: everlasting *burnings* have become everlasting *mercies*! And he who will come at the last day as a judge in flaming fire to take vengeance upon you, if you are found without a saving interest in Him—now offers to be your Savior and Advocate to deliver

you from the wrath to come. And is it not the height of folly and sottishness, to slight and refuse such a person, and, by refusing Him, to plunge yourselves into unavoidable ruin and destruction!

When you may have Christ, and with Him all things needful in this world, and that with greater security than by all your inordinate desires and endeavors, and moreover such riches as exceed all earthly treasures, and besides this a crown of glory in heaven; when, notwithstanding this, you choose to neglect Christ—and choose rather the pleasures of sin for a season, the gratifying of some base lusts unto the everlasting damnation of your souls and bodies in hell; to refuse, with Christ, everlasting happiness, and headlong to run yourselves into everlasting burnings—if this is not folly and madness, I don't know what is!

You can't contrive or cause greater harm and injury to yourselves; for I am persuaded that such as go to hell out of England, (where they have or might have such plentiful means of grace,) of all others will have the lowest and hottest place in hell! Oh, how it will sting and gnaw, rack and torture you forever—to remember what seasons and opportunities, what calls and invitations you had; but by your neglect of getting a saving interest in the Lord Jesus, the only Deliverer from wrath to come, you have brought ruin upon yourselves! Think, sinners, how *unavoidable* the wrath to come is, without a saving interest in Christ! And think, oh, think—how *intolerable* this wrath will be, when it has come! "Who can dwell with devouring fire!" Think of the *extremity* of pain and anguish, which is prepared for you! Think of the *eternity* of hell's torments—that when you have been there as many millions of years as there are grains of sand in the ocean—that your torment will be but *beginning*! Never, never, never—will it have any ending!

I think this should terrify all Christless sinners who are *already condemned* to this place of torment. John 3:18, "He who believes not, is condemned *already*." And you do not know how soon *execution* may follow the *sentence*. If you die this night out of Christ, the wrath of God will seize upon you immediately, and you will be irrecoverably miserable, and that to all eternity!

Use—Comfort

This comfort is for all those who, upon trial, find well-grounded evidence of their saving interest in this Jesus, the only Deliverer from wrath to come. You are the only people in the world who are in a safe condition (Romans 8:33-34). Who shall lay anything to your charge? If God does not charge you with guilt—who else can charge you? Through Christ, God justifies you. He pardons all your sins—as if they had never been committed, and accepts you as perfectly righteous through the perfect righteousness of Christ, which has been made yours by faith. Who is it, who can condemn you? The *law* may condemn you, *conscience* may condemn you; but since Christ died for you, and in His death was condemned and suffered in your place—you are freed from the condemnation of God—and the eternal damnation of hell.

Now, being out of all danger of future wrath, you may the better bear any affliction which in this world may be your portion. You may now comfortably wait for the coming of Christ from heaven, whom God has raised from the dead, even this Jesus who has delivered you from wrath to come, and who will bring for you, and give to you, everlasting glory and happiness at the day

of His second coming!

Use—*Exhortation*

Let this *exhort* such as are without a saving interest in Christ, the Deliverer from wrath to come. Oh, be persuaded, without any further delay, to flee from this wrath of God, which pursues you and will overtake you before long! This is done by fleeing unto, and getting a saving interest in, this Jesus, who alone can deliver you. Oh, that I might be instrumental in bringing some of you to close with Jesus Christ! Sinners! Will you be persuaded at length to accept Christ? You *may* have Him, and you *must* have Him; otherwise you are cursed, you are lost, and you cannot escape eternal death and wrath. If you would be delivered from wrath to come by Jesus Christ, take these few directions:

1. Labor for a thorough sense of your absolute need of Christ, and that not only by reason of your guilt of sin and danger of hell—but also that there is no salvation or deliverance attainable by any other way, but by Jesus Christ. Do not think that your repentance and reformation, though these are necessary, and without which there can be no salvation for you, can save you without Christ. If you should attain these, and rest in these, you will as certainly go to hell as the most wicked transgressor. You cannot be saved by any of your own righteousness, because your righteousness is imperfect, and therefore cannot satisfy God's justice for your sins, and therefore cannot deliver you from wrath to come. Should you weep for your sins until your eyes were cried out; and sigh and grieve for sin until your hearts were broken; should you wear your knees to the bone with kneeling, and wear your tongues to the roots with praying; and consume your flesh to nothing with fasting; should you be as just, temperate, charitable, and as strictly religious as anyone breathing, yes, as holy as any angel in heaven—all this would not wipe away the guilt of your sin or deliver you out of the hands of God's justice, which must be satisfied.

One has said very well that if any would be saved by their own righteousness, they must first go to hell, and there continue in torments to eternity; and if that could be supposed which cannot be supposed to be done—because there is no ending of those torments which are eternal, and therefore there is no possibility of getting loose from them—yet, supposing that anyone could do this—they must come back and fulfill the law in every tittle! Both of these being impossible for you who are guilty of sin, you have absolute need of Christ's perfect righteousness in order to be delivered from wrath to come.

It is this which damns and sinks many thousands in hell—looking and seeking to be saved by a righteousness of their own. I know that most are damned for their unrighteousness, and go to hell in the broader way of gross impiety and wickedness; yet if that is the broader way and has its ten thousands, this too is broad and has its thousands. Besides the more sober among the heathens, who believed in a future state of happiness and looked to arrive at it by moral righteousness; besides the papists, who assert justification by their works, and that we are no otherwise justified than as we are made internally righteous, and this expressing itself in acts of obedience; besides Socinians and other sects, together with the Quakers, who plainly affirm that we must be saved by a righteousness within, which the Quakers call "Christ within" all of whom fundamentally err

in their judgments concerning the righteousness which alone can save--besides these, it is natural to all to seek salvation this way.

All are born under a covenant of works; they are under the law and not under grace, and when any think how they shall be saved, they immediately set to work and seek a righteousness of their own. They seek to fulfill the law themselves, and hope that if they repent and lead a new life, though they have sinned—that God will be merciful, and will pardon and save them.

It is an ordinary thing that, even where the light of truth most clearly shines and the gospel is most powerfully preached, when any are convinced of sin by the beams of this light, and awakened out of their security by some powerful sermon which reveals their danger of eternal ruin as the just desert of sin, they will cry out with the Philippian jailer, "What shall we do to be saved?" And however they are directed, as he was, to *believe*—yet most rest in *doing*, not believing.

They fall immediately upon confession of sin and sorrowing for it; they fall upon reforming. They will not be drunk or swear, nor commit adultery or break the Sabbath, nor defraud in their dealings. They now begin to hear the Word, to pray with their families and in secret, to keep days of fasting, and conform unto all these external acts of devotion. And if they can attain to some kind of flashy affection, they think all is well. If they find their hearts dull, cold, and hard, they may also be troubled for it—not upon a right gospel account—but because they feel they lack such a righteousness to present God with as they desire, or through some secret fear that their righteousness will not hold water. But all this while these people seek after salvation through a self-righteousness, and Christ is left out. His righteousness is either unknown or utterly disregarded and neglected by them. And thus many go to hell in a way of duty! Their *duties* are the occasion of their *damnation*, through their resting in them.

It may seem strange that any should have hopes of salvation by imperfect service—but this, I suppose, may come to pass either because they don't mind the imperfections of their services (for lack of understanding the law in its spirituality, and examining themselves by it), or through misapprehensions that God's mercy revealed in His Word will pardon them. They do not consider that all His special mercy in pardoning and saving, is through Christ; nor do they consider that God is infinitely *just* and *righteous*, as well as *merciful*, and that there is no room for the exercise of mercy towards sinners until justice is satisfied; they do not consider that God's justice requires a perfect righteousness, otherwise there cannot be a perfect justification; they do not consider that there must be full satisfaction of God's justice for the breach of God's law, otherwise there can be no clear remission, and that there must be perfect righteousness made out some way, or else we cannot be accepted by God as righteous.

Since, therefore, this satisfaction of God's justice cannot be made by ourselves, because, being finite, we cannot make an infinite compensation which infinite justice requires; and since perfect righteousness, which must include both original and actual, cannot be in us who are guilty both of original and actual sin; and since *the least sin renders forever a personal perfect righteousness impossible*; and since the law curses everyone who does not continue in all things which are written in the book of the law to do them; therefore, as many as are of the law, who seek justification by the way of works or the righteousness of the law, are under the curse (Galatians 3:10). It is clear that whoever expects to be saved from wrath to come, cannot do so by their own

righteousness—but by another's righteousness, namely the righteousness of Christ. If you would attain a saving interest in Christ, you must be sensible of your need of Him and His righteousness upon this account.

2. Labor for a thorough acquaintance with the nature, intention, and efficacy of the righteousness of Christ. The apostle said of the Jews, in Romans 10:2-4, "I bear them record that they have a zeal of God—but not according to knowledge. For they, being ignorant of God's righteousness, and going about to establish their own righteousness, have not submitted themselves to the righteousness of God. For Christ is the end of the law for righteousness, unto everyone that believes." And as it was with the Jews of old, so it is with many nominal Christians now, who may be led only by a blind zeal to work out their own salvation in a way of doing. This is through their ignorance of the righteousness of Christ, called here in Romans "the righteousness of God," either because it is the only righteousness which God will *accept*, or because it is the righteousness which God has *provided* for men, which sense it must have. Romans 3:21-22: "But now the righteousness of God without the law is manifest, even the righteousness of God, which is by faith in Jesus Christ." This is the righteousness which God accepts and has appointed for our justification.

Or else it is called the righteousness of God because it is the righteousness of Christ, who is God-man, no other righteousness than of such a person being sufficient for man in his fallen state. Through the ignorance of this righteousness of Christ, many Christians seeking after righteousness, go about to establish their own righteousness (that is, a personal righteousness), endeavor the gaining of heaven in a way of *doing*, and do not submit themselves to the righteousness of God. It is through pride (so natural to everyone) that they are loath to be indebted wholly unto another. They would have something of their own to commend them to God; and therefore they do not submit unto the righteousness of Christ, which God has provided for them.

Therefore you must labor to be clear in your understanding of what this righteousness of Christ is. There are two things required of and absolutely necessary to fallen man. The first is satisfaction unto God's justice for his sins. Without this there can be no escape from eternal death and misery, because guilt obliges unto punishment, and this cannot be removed until God's justice is satisfied. The other is perfect, actual obedience to God's law. Without this there can be no attaining eternal life and glory. The first covenant of works, given to man in his fallen state, would still be in force: "Do this and live," and "the soul that sins shall die." Now man, being finite, cannot satisfy God's justice for his sins. And, being a sinner, he cannot yield perfect, actual obedience to God's law. But the Lord Jesus Christ has done both for man.

By His suffering and death upon the cross, Christ made satisfaction of God's justice, being made a curse for us (Galatians 3:13). And undergoing equivalent punishment, punishment unto the damned's torments, and being God-man, though only the human nature suffered, yet the divine nature in the same person put an infinite value upon the sufferings of the human nature, and so became a sufficient satisfaction of God's infinite justice. And hereby He has purchased redemption of sins and deliverance from wrath to come.

Christ has yielded a perfect, actual obedience unto the law. He has fulfilled all righteousness so that, not having a perfect righteousness of our own, His might be made ours, and we might attain

life thereby. This *passive* and *active* obedience, is the righteousness of Christ, which you should labor to understand. Also understand that Christ did not have this righteousness for Himself. He had no sin of His own for which to suffer; but it was in our place—and as our Surety. This righteousness was intended for us, and, being the righteousness of such a person, is highly efficacious to attain that for which it was designed, as will appear by the covenant.

3. Labor for a thorough understanding of the covenant, both the covenant which God made with Christ on behalf of man—and the covenant which God has made with man through Christ.

Acquaint yourselves with the covenant God made with Christ on behalf of man. Whatever worth and value there was in the righteousness of Christ, yet God might have required a personal righteousness and satisfaction, and Christ's righteousness might have stood us in no stead. But God eternally covenanted and agreed with Christ that if He would take human nature, and work out a righteousness for fallen man, it would be accepted; that if He would take to Himself the body of a man that God would prepare for Him, and make His soul an offering for sin, that is, suffer what His justice required for the sins of man—He would see His seed and justify many (Isaiah 53:10-11). It is through this covenant with Christ that Christ's righteousness is accepted on behalf of sinners, God having agreed before that it should so be.

Acquaint yourselves with the covenant which God has made with man through Christ, where upon the account of Christ God has promised remission of sins and eternal life. Hebrews 10:16-17: "This is My covenant that I will make with them, says the Lord: I will put My laws into their hearts, and their sins and iniquities I will remember no more."

1 John 2:25: "This is the promise which He has promised, even eternal life." If ever you are saved from eternal wrath and attain eternal life, it must be by virtue of this new covenant of grace, wherein God engages to give what His Son has purchased.

Labor to be acquainted with the nature and use of *faith*, which is the tenor of the covenant of grace. The tenor of the covenant of works was, "*Do* this and live." The tenor of, or that which is required to have a saving interest in, the covenant of grace is "*Believe* and live." Faith joins the soul unto Christ, the Mediator of this covenant, and gives an actual interest in Him and His purchase, as well as whatever is promised through Him in the covenant. Faith is the soul resting alone on Christ, and applying the promises of pardon and life unto the soul. Faith lays hold of Christ's righteousness outside us, whereby it is imputed to us or accounted as ours by God, as if it had been our own personal righteousness. If ever you would be justified, that is, have your sins pardoned and your persons accepted as perfectly righteous in the sight of God—it must be by faith. You must renounce your own righteousness as imperfect and insufficient, apprehending and applying, resting and trusting in Christ's perfect righteousness.

4. Apply yourselves unto God in prayer, that He, having given His Son for you, would also give Him to you, and that He would give you faith to receive and apply Him. Beg this again and again, with confession of your sins and the sense of your need of Christ; never stop asking until you obtain. Also attend upon the Word where it is preached most purely and powerfully for the working of faith, which comes by hearing (Romans 10:17). And then, in the strength of the Lord,

put forth your hand to lay hold of Christ, and labor to cast yourselves upon Him, resigning withal yourselves up to Him not only to be *saved*—but also to be *taught* and *ruled* by Him.

OBJECTION. I know someone will object, "If we seek thus to be delivered from wrath to come by Jesus Christ, and by faith in His righteousness outside us, and not by internal righteousness or that of works—this will open a door to licentiousness."

ANSWER. This is an old objection against the doctrine of justification by faith, even in the days of the Apostles, when the doctrine was first preached. But, as then, so also now, this doctrine does not give any liberty to sin; for however we cannot be saved by inherent righteousness and any of our good works—yet we cannot be saved without them. There must be regeneration and sanctification, a new heart and a new life; otherwise there can be no admission into heaven and no escaping the damnation of hell.

Yes, further, we say that the same faith which is an instrument of justification, is also a part of sanctification, being a heart-purifying grace (Acts 15:9). As faith is a hand to lay hold of Christ's righteousness, so it is a hand to receive supplies of grace from Christ to quicken us unto newness of life. Yes, I may say, there can be no real, inherent righteousness without a saving interest by faith in Christ's imputed righteousness. There may be a righteousness of some kind like it—but not of the right kind, not a righteousness which springs from the true principle of faith, and therefore it cannot be a righteousness that is pleasing to God; for "without faith it is impossible to please God" (Hebrews 11:6).

So if you would have inherent righteousness, and walk so as to please God, you must believe on the Lord Jesus, and fetch grace from Him in whom all the fullness of Deity dwells (Colossians 1:19). If you would have lust mortified, the world crucified, and overcome the devil, who endeavors by his temptations to draw you unto sin, you must draw virtue and strength to do it by faith. In a word, if you would deny ungodliness and worldly lusts, and live soberly, righteously, and godly in this present evil world, you must do it by faith. But how to attain the principle and practice of godliness, I will address in the last part of this book.

Had I room, I might speak much by way of exhortation to such as have attained a saving interest in Christ and the deliverance purchased by Him. In a word, learn to admire free grace, to be very thankful and watchful, to endeavor to bring others to Christ, to adorn your profession, to be blameless and pure, children of God who are faultless in a crooked and perverted generation, among whom you shine like stars in the world—so that you may shine like stars, yes, like suns in the kingdom of your Father forever!

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