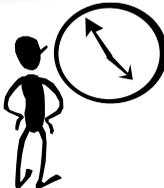


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Time of Assembly



Sunday:

Bible Study 9:00 a.m.
Worship 10:00 a.m.
(Or every other week)

Bible Study 4:00 p.m.
Worship 5:00 p.m.

Wednesday:

Bible Study 7:00 p.m.

When Jesus Became Angry

By Kent Heaton

It is difficult to imagine that Jesus Christ became angry. On at least three occasions the scripture show the frustration of the Lord at those who are hardened of heart; those who cannot see His great mission; and those who intend to usurp the plan God has set forth in His Son. The gospel writer Mark bears record of these three events.

"And He entered the synagogue again, and a man was there who had a withered hand. So they watched Him closely, whether He would heal him on the Sabbath, so that they might accuse Him. And He said to the man who had the withered hand, 'Step forward.' Then He said to them, 'Is it lawful on the Sabbath to do good or to do evil, to save life or to kill?' But they kept silent. And when He had looked around at them with anger, being grieved by the hardness of their hearts, He said to the man, 'Stretch out your hand.' And he stretched it out, and his hand was restored as whole as the other. Then the Pharisees went out and immediately plotted with the Herodians against Him, how they might destroy Him" (Mark 3:1-6). It would seem incredulous that in the face of such a powerful miracle that any would doubt. But the nature of man when he is threatened will bring out a hardened heart of unbelief. What more could Jesus do to prove He was the Son of God? Why do men go out and plot the death of a man who can do powerful miracles (see also John 11, esp. v. 53)?

Jesus was angry because of the sin that overwhelmed man and closed his eyes to His Father. His righteous indignation was fueled by the sad reality of the unwillingness of man to believe in Him. The Pharisees were more concerned about Jesus healing on the Sabbath than to realize they were expecting Jesus to do a miracle - this is the total depravation of man. The invisible attributes of God are clearly seen and there is no excuse for ignorance (Romans 1:20).

"And He began to teach them that the Son of Man must suffer many things, and be rejected by the elders and chief priests and scribes, and be killed, and after three days rise again. He spoke this word openly. Then Peter took Him aside and began to rebuke Him. But when He had turned around and looked at His disciples, He rebuked Peter, saying, 'Get behind Me, Satan! For you are not mindful of the things of God, but the things of men'" (Mark 8:31-33). Who did Peter think he was? Telling the story of His suffering and death would have been dramatic for Jesus. He understood clearly His mission and His work. His heart was in complete obedience to the will of the Father (Hebrews 5:8) and in the garden He struggled with the shadow of His cross (Matthew 26:36-42). Now Peter rebukes Jesus and tries to dissuade the Lord from what lay before Him? Notice that Jesus turns to the rest of the disciples and rebukes Peter.

Do we feel as if God really does not know what He is doing and we must change His will? Many today (like Peter) are willing to rebuke God for His will and create their own system of faith. How angry that must make the Lord when we are mindful of our own wills instead of the will of the Father. There is only one way (John 14:6) and we should never suppose to usurp that way, that truth nor that life. Peter should have accepted the will of the Father whether he understood it or not. Our obedience must follow the pattern of Christ: "Thy will be done."

“The Whole Counsel of God”

By Greg Gwin

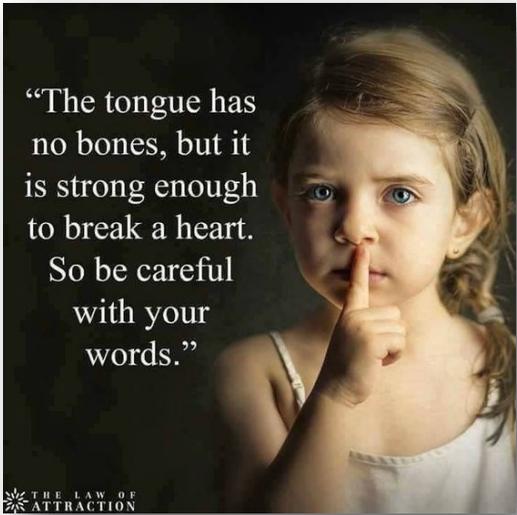
In Paul’s final meeting with the elders at Ephesus, he challenged them, encouraged them, charged them, and warned them. He expressed his own confidence in their knowledge of God’s truth and was certain that they understood the expectations placed upon them. He said: “I testify to you this day that I am innocent of the blood of all men. For I have not shunned to declare to you the whole counsel of God” (Acts 20:26-27).

All who preach the gospel today should strive to accomplish that same task. Faithful preaching is not simply preaching that is free from error. While that is certainly important, more is necessary. The “whole counsel of God” must be proclaimed.

We need more than ‘spiritual pep-talks’ from the pulpit. While it is essential to deal with the positive themes of God’s love, grace, forgiveness, etc., it is also critical that we cover important doctrinal issues that are so often neglected. When brethren are not well grounded in these crucial matters, they are left vulnerable to false teachers “who will secretly bring in destructive heresies” (2 Peter 2:1). Paul warned the Ephesian elders that such false teachers were like “grievous wolves” and that they would “not spare the flock” (Acts 20:29).

Brethren should demand a balance of preaching that stresses indispensable truths of both a positive and negative nature. Let all be encouraged by the affirmative facts of God's love and blessings. But let them also be strengthened against the assaults of the Devil whose "servants masquerade as servants of righteousness" (2 Corinthians 11:15 – NIV).

After a typical sermon ask yourself: Did the lesson do more than merely entertain? Did I learn something? Was I stirred to greater faith and service? Was my understanding of God's Word increased? Am I better prepared to live in the face of the great challenges that surround me? Can I say – as the preacher brings lessons from week to week – that "the whole counsel of God" has been declared?



"The tongue has no bones, but it is strong enough to break a heart. So be careful with your words."

THE LAW OF ATTRACTION

Is Hell a Real Place?

By Jefferson David Tant

In the Bible, Matthew 25 gives us a picture of the Day of Judgment, where the righteous enter into everlasting joy and peace, while the unrighteous enter into hell, an everlasting torment of fire. Some reject this as repulsive, claiming that the unrighteous will simply cease to exist, while others who reject the thought of eternal suffering claim that the unrighteous will be punished with fire, but that fire will consume them, and they will not suffer eternally. They also claim that God is a loving God, and would not inflict such a penalty for the unrighteous.

But if we believe the Bible is true, then we must admit that it describes hell as an eternal place of suffering and pain. Let us consider what God's Word says about life after death for those who did not accept the salvation offered through Christ's death on the cross by obeying his Word.

We know that sin is in the world, and sin is a violation of God's law. *"Everyone who practices sin also practices lawlessness; and sin is lawlessness"* (I John 3:4).

Consider the situation in our nation. Why do we have laws, police, courts, and jails? We have them because they are necessary for us to be secure. Those who commit crimes, who go against our nation's laws, suffer penalties. If our system did not provide a penalty for crimes, can you imagine the chaos and evil we would suffer? We must have laws, and there has to be a penalty.

Likewise, God has laws and penalties for breaking them. Jesus gave the story of the Rich man and Lazarus in Luke 16:22-25: *“Now it came about that the poor man died and he was carried away by the angels to Abraham’s bosom; and the rich man also died and was buried. And in Hades he lifted up his eyes, being in torment, and saw Abraham far away, and Lazarus in his bosom. And he cried out and said, ‘Father Abraham, have mercy on me, and send Lazarus, that he may dip the tip of his finger in water and cool off my tongue; for I am in agony in this flame.’ But Abraham said, ‘Child, remember that during your life you received your good things, and likewise Lazarus bad things; but now he is being comforted here, and you are in agony.’”*

Question: Was Christ telling a fairy tale, or a lie? Who would so contend? This story puts to rest one false teaching about hell, which states that the fire of hell is a one-time event, for you are burned up and cease to exist. But we have the statement in Jude 6-7: *“And angels who did not keep their own domain, but abandoned their proper abode, He has kept in eternal bonds under darkness for the judgment of the great day. Just as Sodom and Gomorrah and the cities around them, since they in the same way as these indulged in gross immorality and went after strange flesh, are exhibited as an example, in undergoing the punishment of eternal fire.”*

What is the fate of those ungodly occupants of Sodom and Gomorrah in the Old Testament? *“The punishment of eternal fire!”* Note also that Jude stated that the angels who sinned in their rebellion against God were kept in eternal bonds and had the punishment of eternal fire.

Some claim that such punishment is contrary to the nature of a loving God. But consider that God is also a “just” God as well as loving. If there was no real punishment for evil deeds, then anyone could just “live it up” and enjoy the pleasures sin gives to the fullest, and then they cease to exist at death. So, what’s the harm? But if God is a just God, then justice not only rewards the good but punishes the evil.

The word “eternal” which describes the word “fire” in Jude 7 is from the Greek *“aionios* -- perpetual (also used of past time, or past and future as well):--eternal, forever, everlasting, world (began).” (Strong’s Greek Dictionary) This is the exact same word that Christ used more than once concerning the reward of the righteous. On the night Christ was betrayed, he prayed to the father. Included in his prayer are the following words:

“These things Jesus spoke; and lifting up His eyes to heaven, He said, “Father, the hour has come; glorify Thy Son, that the Son may glorify Thee, even as Thou gavest Him authority over all mankind, that to all whom Thou hast given Him, He may give eternal life. And this is eternal life, that they may know Thee, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom Thou hast sent” (John 17:1-3). The word “eternal” in that prayer is the exact same word that Jude used describing hell.

In one of his exhortations, Christ said: *“And if your hand causes you to stumble,*

cut it off; it is better for you to enter life crippled, than having your two hands, to go into hell, into the unquenchable fire, where their worm does not die, and the fire is not quenched" (Mark 9:43-44). Obviously, Christ is not telling us to mutilate our body, but this is hyperbole, which is an exaggerated statement or claim not meant to be taken literally, but the strong language is used to make a point. In other words, we are encouraged to do all within our power to avoid spending eternity burning in anguish in hell.

Hell is described as a place of darkness, as there is no light there. *"God is light"* (I John 1:5) and hell is dark, as it is far removed from God's light and His love.

Now, my question is for you, dear reader. Are you on the narrow road or the broad pathway? *"Enter through the narrow gate; for the gate is wide and the way is broad that leads to destruction, and there are many who enter through it. For the gate is small, and the way is narrow that leads to life, and few are those who find it"* (Matthew 7:13-14).

If you have not entered the narrow gate, Christ has given clear instructions through the teaching of the Bible. In some of his last words to his apostles, *"He said to them, 'Go into all the world and preach the gospel to all creation. He who has believed and has been baptized shall be saved; but he who has disbelieved shall be condemned'"* (Mark 16:15-16).

Many denominations do not teach that baptism is necessary for salvation, and some do not practice baptism in any form. And there are those that practice baptism by sprinkling or pouring water, but these practices did not come into use until hundreds of years after the church was established, and the Bible was written in the first century. The word "baptize" in Biblical Greek means "to dip, plunge or immerse." All Greek scholars agree with that. Paul refers to this in his letter to the Romans: "Therefore we have been buried with Him through baptism into death, in order that as Christ was raised from the dead through the glory of the Father, so we too might walk in newness of life." (Romans 6:4). Should we follow man's creeds or the Bible?

So, what is your eternity? Our God of love has given each one a choice. If you have not entered the "narrow gate," by being baptized into Christ, why not now? If you have done this but have turned aside, Christ, with open arms, waits for your return. Don't risk eternal hell by delaying. There are two things we do not know — our day of death, or the day Christ returns. God pleads with us — *"Today if you hear his voice, do not harden your hearts"* (Hebrews 4:7). Don't risk an eternity in hell by delaying.

Worry is a total waste of time. It doesn't change anything. All it does is steal your joy and keep you very busy doing nothing.

