

The First Message of the Cross

by E.A. Johnston

The first message of the cross is that God will punish sin, and it is a message that is often forgotten in today's watered-down gospel.

Duration: 21:20

Scripture: Proverbs 16:18, Isaiah 6:1-5, Isaiah 13:11, Matthew 6:33, Luke 13:3, Romans 6:23, Galatians 6:7

Topics: "Cross of Christ"

Description

In this sermon, the preacher shares a true story about six young men who openly mocked God. They gathered in a bar and decided to imitate a religious meeting, praying for forgiveness and even singing hymns with blasphemous intent. However, their actions had consequences. Over the course of ten years, tragedy struck each of them in different ways, including violent deaths and accidents resulting in death. The story serves as a warning that God will not be mocked and that sin will be punished. The preacher emphasizes the importance of repentance and the belief that God's judgment is real.

Transcript

Over 40 years ago, I worked in a Bible bookstore, and one of my duties in addition to sweeping the floor was to wait on customers in the front of the shop and sell them Bibles and Gospel tracts. This bookstore had a wide variety of good Gospel tracts, and I read every single one of them. I am still a lover of tracts to this day, and believe in their good to the souls of men.

Well, one particular tract still sticks out in my memory because it was based on a true story, and it involved six young men. I was a young man at the time, so it caught my attention. The theme of the tract was that God is not mocked, and God will punish sin.

I recall that in the story, God punished sin in a very dramatic way. In the incident of six young men who openly mocked God, they mocked God because they did not believe in a God who punishes sin. And today, friends, we live in a society where most folks do not believe that God will punish sin.

Just look at their lives of open rebellion to God, and that they are walking witness to the world that God does not punish sin. For if He did, He would cut them off. And because He doesn't cut them off, they sin openly and defiantly against that God who in their minds does not punish sin.

Even the majority of church members today do not believe in a God who will punish sin. If they did believe God punished sin, they wouldn't live as they do so carelessly in it. Many church members today sin presumptuously because they just don't believe in a God who will punish sin.

Their God just wouldn't act that way. Their God is just a God of love. He would never send anyone to hell.

He is too nice of a God for that. And they are right. I believe they are right.

Their God wouldn't act that way and send anybody to hell. But the God of the Bible would. And He does.

For the God of the Bible punishes sin. Listen to this text from Isaiah 13 11. And I will punish the world for their evil and the wicked for their iniquity.

And I will cause the arrogancy of the proud to cease and will lay low the haughtiness of the terrible. And that friends is the first message of the cross that God will punish sin. Well, allow me to get back to my little story about the gospel track and the six young men who mocked God.

What made that story stay in my mind was that there was an eyewitness to a tragic accident and he recorded the story as told to him by one of the dying men. It had all the hallmarks of a good detective story or mystery movie. And I remember it to this day.

Here now is that story as best as I can recall it. It was an awful train wreck. The train went off the tracks in a bad snowstorm and carnage was everywhere.

Bodies lay out in the snow as they were dragged from the wreckage of that train. Ambulance sirens rang in the distance on their way to that terrible scene. One of the victims lay in the snow bleeding all over.

A Mr. Waters, who also was a passenger on that train, held the head of a dying man in his lap as they awaited medical help. This dying young man related the following story to Mr. Waters. It went like this.

He said that 10 years before he was a traveling salesman and while he was passing through a town he had spent a night of carousing in the bar room of an old hotel. On that evening the conversation among the patrons of that bar turned to the religious awakening that was going on in that town. There had been a touch of revival in some gospel meetings and people were getting saved left and right.

Some men in the town who had been drunkards got saved and quit drinking and much the town was talking about this revival of religion and this traveling salesman was a young man in his late teens and he listened with interest to the story of the revival as he drank his whiskey. Here now are his words as related to Mr. Waters telling about that eventful night in the bar of that hotel. On that particular evening all kinds of wicked jokes were played.

I had made some fast friends in the bar with some other five young men, one of whom was the son of the owner of that hotel. He and the others became my drinking companions that night. We all began to laugh and make fun of the revival.

Someone in the bar asked how the meetings at the church were conducted and what was taking place in them where the revival was. One of my drunken companions volunteered to act out and demonstrate the religious meeting. I'll never forget it.

Six of us young men knelt on the floor and began to mock God. We prayed for the forgiveness of our sins and even tried to imitate tears of repentance. We put on a good show that night even closing it out with a hymn rock of ages.

Oh the blasphemy that went on from our lips that night and when we were done singing we looked around and the bar was empty. The other patrons were so shocked by our awful blasphemy they'd gotten up and left. Well we six young men mocked God because we didn't believe God would punish us for sin.

The dying man continued his story. What I'm about to tell you is no fiction no sir. It happened within the last 10 years.

There were six of us participating in that mockery and before the end of the first year the son of the hotel owner suffered a fall. In that fall a blood vessel burst in his brain and he never again regained consciousness. He died.

Someone might think that this is not unusual but notice it was a violent death. Two years later the young man who started the demon demonstration was with a hunting party in the country and during the night he got up to get a drink of water. In the dark he missed his way and fell down the steps.

He broke his neck and died two days later. The third to go was Tom. He was the one who sang the loudest when we sang that hymn and mocked God and dared God to do anything about it.

He fell down his own cellar steps and died. When I heard of his death I became nervous and wondered if my two other drinking companions had met a similar fate. News was getting out about these untimely deaths.

One of the men became fearful and went out west hoping to avoid a tragedy in the same town that took the other lives. He became a railway guard usually a safe occupation but I read a newspaper account of his tragic death. He'd been caught between the bumpers of two coaches and was crushed to death.

Last year I met my only surviving companion one evening. He too met a sudden death falling from the door of a saloon onto the concrete street. His head struck a rock and pierced his temple and he died there in the gutter.

Since that time I have waited for my own end as it is now before me and it's obvious to me that God is a God who will punish sin. With that last sentence the dying man breathed his last. Mr. Waters is still haunted today by that man's dying words.

God is a God who will punish sin. Well friends that tragic story always stuck with me and it's unsettling to me now as I recount it to you but it is a testimony to the fact that the God of the Bible will punish sin. People in our day live in open rebellion against the Holy God because they do not believe God will punish sin.

There is a verse of scripture which alludes to this very thing. It's found in the book of Ecclesiastes in chapter 8 and verse 11. Because sentence against an evil work is not executed speedily therefore the heart of the sons of men is fully set in them to do evil and that is true friends.

Both outside the church and in it people today just don't believe in a God who will punish sin. If they did they wouldn't live as they do and sin with such impunity against a holy God and the first message of the

cross in the gospel is that God must punish sin. God is holy and he hates sin.

My Bible states God is angry with the wicked every day. The fact that God punishes sin is found throughout our Bibles. Look at the biblical record found in Genesis wherein is evidence that God punishes sin and God saw that the wickedness of man was great in the earth and that every imagination of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually and it repented the Lord that he had made man on the earth and it grieved him at his heart and the Lord said I will destroy man whom I have created from the face of the earth and God hated sin so much that he killed all but eight people in the days of Noah because the God of the Bible must punish sin because man's awful sins are hideous in the eyes of a holy God.

We see again in the book of Genesis how God will punish sin because the cry of Sodom and Gomorrah is great and because their sin is very grievous then the Lord rained upon Sodom and upon Gomorrah brimstone and fire from the Lord out of heaven and he overthrew those cities and all the inhabitants of the cities and that which grew upon the ground.

It is crystal clear folks that God will indeed punish sin but many today believe that God has changed his stripes that he has chilled out towards sin that he is just a God of love now and he wouldn't send anybody to a terrible place called hell so we have removed hell out of our preaching today and we don't call the lost sinners but the unchurched and we have modified our language and toned down our view of God and placed him on our level and our God just wouldn't act that way and send people to hell but listen friends the God of the Bible will but folks just don't believe that today and the trouble with our sin-soaked society is that people sleep well at night because they don't believe God will punish sin they will clench their fists and shake them in the very face of God as those six

young men in that story did because folks today just don't believe in a God who will punish sin and a lot of church members don't believe in a God who will punish sin they don't let their profession of faith interfere with their daily living they have their theology all worked out to where they can live in sin and still sleep well at night because their God does not punish sin even when you witness to people today and you talk about Jesus dying on the cross they're not interested because they don't believe God will punish sin and no one will be interested in what Christ did on the cross until you believe that God will punish sin we have forgotten what the message of the gospel is in your day and mine in our generation we are fed a diluted gospel message of the cross that speaks only about

a offered Christ but there is no use to offer a remedy to people who don't need a remedy you see friends it's no use today to preach the second message of the cross the forgiveness of sins through Christ's blood this generation doesn't need its sins forgiven in their eyes they are nice little people who aren't as bad as the murderer in prison after all they never killed anybody they are all right compared to other folks they don't need their sins forgiven they don't think there is any need but we still go on and offer the second message of the cross Christ and his forgiveness of sins but listen friends this generation of hell-bound sinners needs to hear the first message of that bloody cross and that message is God will punish sin every time they nailed those nails into the flesh of the

son of God every stroke of the hammer said God will punish sin God will punish sin God will punish sin but in our day of weak evangelism we beg people to come to Jesus when they don't feel like they need them a man won't go to the doctor unless he discovers he is deathly ill when a man is sick to the point of death and the doctor has a remedy that will cure him that man will give that doctor every cent he has to get well and live but he doesn't need a cure if he doesn't think he's sick are you with me listen to this story there

was an Englishman who loved to hear good preaching he often traveled to Scotland to hear the great preaching of that country one day he went to a in Scotland and heard the minister tell about the majesty of God and his holiness he spoke from Isaiah chapter 6 where

the prophet Isaiah sees God on an exalted throne and this Scottish minister said in the year that King Uzziah died I saw also the Lord sitting upon the throne high and lifted up and his train filled the temple above it stood the seraphims each one had six wings with twain he covered his face and with twain he covered his feet and with twain he did fly and one cried unto another and said holy holy holy is the Lord of hosts the whole earth is full of his glory and the pulse of the door moved at the voice of him that cried and the house was filled with smoke then said I woe is me for I am undone because I am a man of unclean lips and that Englishman left that church with his mind set on the holiness and majesty of God and the next day he listened to another minister preach and this man

preached on the deceitfulness of the human heart from the book of Jeremiah and as he listened to this minister he saw his own wicked heart he saw what a vile sinner he was before a holy God and he was undone like Isaiah he saw his lost condition before that just and holy God and as he left the church he wandered over the hills of Scotland and he wondered if that holy God would have mercy on such a vile wretch as he and then later in the week he went to hear another Scottish preacher and this man preached on the lovingness of Christ and his preeminence out of the book of Hebrews this Englishman saw Christ the Redeemer and that he had died for him and he came to that bloody cross and knelt there and found Christ that day he came to realize that once a person is awakened to his vile

condition before a just and holy God then he realized he's lost and in need of a savior and then and only then will he seek that remedy for sin in the person of Jesus Christ he saw that Christ is truly lovely to the person who has seen their need of a Redeemer and that's the very thing friends that both John Wesley and George Whitfield preached they both preached the law before grace they brought sinners to Mount Sinai before they took them to Mount Zion but we don't do that that way today we just take everybody to Mount Sinai and ask them to accept Jesus as their savior and few today feel their need of such a savior for sin because they just don't believe that God will punish sin but if we today would hold sinners up to the utter severity of God's holy law and show them that God requires

perfection from all men and they are sinners and not perfect and when they are held up against that holy law of God it will kill them because they are big sinners and they will fail that test and be sent to hell then and only then friends after a man gets lost and shut up to God can we then introduce the second message of the cross Jesus the sacrifice for sin listen to me dear ones if you do not hear anything else I say today remember this God will punish sin that's the first message of the cross and after somebody believes that you can come in with the second message of the cross that substitute who hangs there in my stead Christ is God's sacrifice and my substitute we must get back to preaching the in its purity and in its proper order we must preach the full counsel of God when we

preach the gospel message of the cross and that first message of the cross is God must punish sin the second message of that bloody cross is that substitute who hangs there in my stead Christ is God's sacrifice and my substitute you know I needed a substitute friends and so do you how awful it is to be condemned by almighty God to be guilty at that judgment bar God and be handed a sense that lasts for all eternity but I rest in my substitute the Lord Jesus Christ who shed his blood and died for me he shed his blood and died because God must punish sin and that's the first message of the cross we need to get back to it friends we need to start preaching it again so sinners will see their need of a savior oh friends

let's get back to preaching the gospel in its purity and proper order all
for God's glory

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