

The Desert Voice

by Horatius Bonar

The sermon emphasizes the importance of fruitfulness in good and warns of God's judgment on those who are unfruitful.

Topics: "Judgment", "Spiritual Fruitfulness"

Description

Horatius Bonar delivers a powerful sermon titled 'The Desert Voice,' emphasizing the urgent warning of judgment as depicted in Matthew 3:10. He likens Israel and the church to a forest, where the axe of God's judgment lies at the root of unfruitful trees, symbolizing the imminent destruction of those who fail to bear good fruit. Bonar stresses that the axe is a call to repentance, as it signifies God's patience but also His determination to execute judgment against fruitlessness. He warns that mere absence of wickedness is not enough; unfruitfulness in good deeds leads to dire consequences, culminating in eternal separation from God. The sermon serves as a reminder that the current age is one of trial, urging individuals to reflect on their spiritual fruitfulness before the Lord's return.

Transcript

"And now also the axe is laid unto the root of the trees: therefore every tree which bringeth not forth good fruit is hewn down, and cast into the fire."

--Matthew 3:10.

This is the voice of one crying in the wilderness; the voice of a second Elijah; the man of the desert; the burning and shining light; the forerunner of Messiah; the prophet of warning. He spoke to Israel; he speaks to us.

It is the voice of warning; a trumpet voice; prelude to the last trumpet; herald of coming wrath and woe. It spoke first to Israel; it speaks to the church; it speaks to Christendom; it speaks to the world; it speaks to each of us.

I. The axe. This is judgment; destruction. The axe is not for planting, or pruning, or dressing, or propping, or protecting, but for cutting down. It is spoken of as used for trees (Deuteronomy 20:19); for the carved work of the temple (Psalm 64:6); for towers (Ezekiel 26:9); for a whole forest (Jeremiah 66:22, 23); for a battle-axe (Jeremiah 51:20). In all cases for overthrow, utter overthrow. The axe against Israel was the Roman host, and many such axes has God wielded, age after age. Every judgment is an axe; pestilence

is God's axe; famine God's axe; adversity God's axe. At Christ's second coming will be the uplifting of the axe against antichrist, against Christendom, against every false church. There is a great difference between the axe and the pruning knife. Yet some of God's judgments are both in one. An axe to the ungodly; a pruning knife to the saint. It is God's axe, not man's; its edge is sharp; it is heavy; it will do its work well.

II. The forest. He is speaking, not of a tree, but trees; a forest. He is likening Israel to a forest. It may be an olivewood or a palm-wood, the oaks of Bashan or the cedars of Lebanon. Israel is the forest, God's forest, planted by God, on God's own hills and valleys. So also is the church; and each member is a tree in that forest. On that forest God has his eye; from its trees God comes seeking fruit. From the forest of Lebanon trees were once cut down for the temple; but this is for destruction, not for building nor ornament,

III. The warning. The axe lies at the root of these trees. He who placed it there placed it for a warning. He saw his trees not prospering, not growing, not bearing fruit, and He resolved to proceed against them. He cannot tolerate fruitlessness, for which there is no excuse. But He is patient; so He contents himself simply with laying down the axe, leaving it to speak its own lesson, to tell its own tale, a tale of coming judgment, which yet may be averted by fruitfulness. It is laid down and left to lie; not cast down, as if hastily or at random. It is laid down at the root, for it is not against leaves or branches, but against the root that the vengeance is to be directed.

IV. The execution. The axe lies idle for a time, its sharp edge glittering in the sun. But it is to be lifted up. The forest is to be cut down, not stripped as by the hurricane, nor blasted as by lightning, but cut down at the very root; laid upon the ground; no longer its waving branches and leaves making a goodly show, but "cut down," separated from that soil out of which it was extracting no fruitfulness. "Cut it down" is the command! Why does it pretend to be a fruitful tree with its leaves and branches? Cut it down; why does it thus impose upon the eye? why cumbereth it the ground?

V. The doom. Cast into the fire. Not left to wither, but cast out to be consumed. It cumbered the ground when living; it must not do so when dead. Let it be burned! Nothing for it but the fire. Its end is to be burned. And the fire is everlasting; it shall not be quenched; and yet the tree shall never be consumed. Awful doom. Never quenched, never consumed! Its smoke rising up forever and ever. No possibility of restoration! No hope of this tree (as in that of which Job speaks, 14:7); no water to make it bud again. Nothing but the ever-consuming fire.

VI. The cause. Unfruitfulness in good. Not extreme wickedness, but simple unfruitfulness in good! How searching this announcement. O ye that count on heaven because you have done no harm, look here. If you have done no good, borne no good fruit, that is enough! And the sentence is as sweeping as it is searching, for it is "every tree that bringeth not forth good fruit." No exception, no sparing, "They shall not escape."

This, then, is the process that is now going on; this is the nature of the present dispensation. If it were to be depicted by emblem, it would be an axe lying at the root of a tree!

Christ, at his first coming, laid the axe there; at his second coming He will lift it up and smite! The axe was laid down when Israel least thought of such a thing; when they were boasting of privilege, and calling themselves children of Abraham; so it shall be lifted up to smite, when men are saying "peace and safety;" boasting of progress and reform, and deliverance from the bigotry of narrow-minded men.

Now is the age of trial, of probation. Israel's forest was found barren, and was cut down. Now Christendom is on its trial. Shall it be cut down? It has been long spared. Is it fruitful? Thou, O man, art on thy trial! What is to be the issue when the Lord comes?

Source: <https://sermonindex.net/speakers/horatius-bonar/the-desert-voice/>

Grow in Your Walk with Christ

Listen and read messages that will stir your heart for Christ and point you to deeper repentance and devotion.

- 50,000+ Sermons from speakers past and present
- 3,900+ Classic Christian Books freely readable online
- 1,200+ Bible Translations and Commentaries
- Over 450k forum posts — Join our vibrant online Christian forum

www.sermonindex.net