

The Fearful Destiny!

by James Smith

The sermon emphasizes the importance of examining oneself to ensure that one is truly in the faith and not a hypocrite, and warns of the eternal punishment that awaits those who do not repent.

Scripture: Isaiah 30:33, Isaiah 33:14, Matthew 7:21, Matthew 25:41, Luke 13:3, 2 Corinthians 13:5, 2 Thessalonians 1:7, Hebrews 9:27, 1 Peter 4:17, Revelation 6:15

Topics: "Eternal Judgment", "Repentance"

Description

James Smith preaches a solemn sermon on the threatenings of God, emphasizing the seriousness of sin and the certainty of God's wrath. He warns about the dangers of hypocrisy, highlighting the hypocrites' fear and alarm when faced with God's judgment. Smith delves into the eternal punishment awaiting sinners, describing the torment of everlasting burnings and the dreadful destiny of those who reject salvation. He urges listeners to examine their hearts, repent, and flee from the wrath to come by seeking refuge in the Lord Jesus for eternal salvation.

Transcript

The sinners in Zion are terrified! Terror has surprised the hypocrites! "Who can live with this devouring fire?" they cry. "Who can survive these everlasting burnings?" Isaiah 33:14

The threatenings of God are solemn things. They are called forth by sin. They prove God's justice. They manifest his unutterable abhorrence of all impurity. They are too much overlooked. Many put them away as if they had no reason to fear them. Some ministers never preach on them--and think them too dreadful. But how can we warn sinners to flee from the wrath to come--unless we proclaim that wrath?

The representations of God's wrath are all very sobering; there is no exaggeration, because they are all just. There is an eternal wrath--and many are treasuring up to themselves wrath against the day of wrath and revelation of the righteous judgment of God.

The passage of God's Word we are about to consider is most solemn. It has been realized in part--but will be more fully realized by and by. The day of wrath is coming. The wrath of the Lamb will be dreadful, most dreadful. Look at God's own representation of it: "Then the kings of the earth, the princes, the generals, the rich, the mighty, and every slave and every free man hid in caves and among the rocks of the mountains. They called to the mountains and the rocks, "Fall on us and hide us from the face of him who sits on the throne and from the wrath of the Lamb! For the great day of their wrath has come, and who

can stand?" Revelation 6:15-17

May the Holy Spirit impress these solemn words on every reader's heart, and help our meditations on this most affecting subject. We will consider:

First, Their CHARACTERS. "The sinners in Zion are terrified! Terror has surprised the hypocrites!"

What were they? They are divided into two classes:

SINNERS. Not merely infirm--but wicked. They had wicked hearts. They loved sin. They practiced sin. Perhaps they were not openly profane people--but sin was their element. They enjoyed it. They preferred it to holiness. Had they been only weak--they would have been only objects of pity! But they are wicked--and therefore they are the subjects of blame. Not only so--but the weakness of the sinner is the effect of his wickedness. If he had not been wicked--he would never have been weak. He has no power to keep the law, therefore he is weak; but he has no will, no wish, to keep the law--and this proves him to be wicked.

Every man is a sinner; but some are sinners who profess to be saints, and such are sinners with an emphasis. They are HYPOCRITES! Some never pretend to be saints; but others pretend to be saints--who know they are not. They wear a mask. They act a part--like actors in a play! They deceive the sincere. They impose upon charity.

Of all characters, hypocrites are the worst! The Lord Jesus pronounces more woes against the hypocrites in one chapter--than against the devil all through the New Testament! It is to be feared--that we have many 'masked' men, and many 'masked' women in our churches! Like white-washed sepulchres, they appear beautiful to the eye--but within all is corrupt and vile!

But where are these sinners, these hypocrites? In Zion! Among God's people! Under the preaching of the pure Word. The greatest sinners under heaven--are to be found professing the holiest religion! They are in the church--but they are not of the church. And when judgment begins, as it will, at the house of God--then these pretenders, these sinners, these hypocrites, will be detected and exposed! For the sinners in Zion will be afraid, and terror will surprise the hypocrites. Let us notice,

Secondly, Their ALARM. "Terror has surprised the hypocrites!" They are afraid, and well they may be--for God has threatened. He has threatened all sinners--but especially such sinners as they are. They have trifled with God. They have acted as if they believed that the Lord was altogether such an one as themselves. They heard his warnings--but they heeded them not. They heard his threatenings--but they feared them not. They heard his invitations--but accepted them not. The good news of a free salvation was published among them--but they made light of it, and went one to his farm and another to his business.

God is faithful and true to his Word. He was in earnest when he spoke. He meant every word he said. His threatenings were registered in heaven. He is bound by every perfection of his nature--to make them good. He cannot deny himself. He is unchangeable in his nature. He is without variableness or the shadow of turning. Those very attributes of God which secure the everlasting salvation of the believer--render the damnation of every impenitent sinner absolutely certain! He is of one mind, and none can turn him! What he was when he said, "The wicked shall be turned into hell, and all the nations that forget God," that he is now, and that he will be for ever.

God especially hates deception! He would have us be...

either one thing--OR the other;

either hot--or cold;

either saint--or sinner;

either walking in holiness--or following the world.

But to be in the church--AND yet of the world; to pretend to be a Christian--and yet live in sin; to turn His holy religion--into a 'mask' to answer a selfish purpose--is especially hateful in His sight!

These sinners, these hypocrites, have their fears awakened, sometimes by judgments, sometimes by death, and sometimes by the prospect of having shortly to stand before God in judgment. Secure professor, something will be sure to occur, by and bye, to alarm your conscience, awaken your fears, and fill you with alarm.

The hypocrites are represented as terrified, suddenly surprised. "Terror has surprised the hypocrites!" They are once bold and fearless, being filled with pride and self-confidence. They presumed on God's mercy, or appropriated to themselves unjustly the promises and immunities that belong to the Lord's people. But thus says the Lord, "Woe to the obstinate children--to those heap sin upon sin!" "When they say, Peace and safety--then sudden destruction comes upon them, as travail upon a woman with child, and they shall not escape!" This leads us,

Thirdly, to the CAUSE of their alarm. God comes to punish them! He comes--to make good his threatenings. His servant poses them with the most solemn questions. Placing himself among them he asks, "Who can live with this devouring fire? Who can survive this all-consuming fire?"

Observe the NATURE of the sinners' punishment. FIRE! Devouring fire! This most painful, powerful, and penetrating element is employed in God's Word to represent the instrument of torture by which the sinner will be punished forever!

The rich man died, and was buried--and in hell he lifted up his eyes, being in torment, and cried, "I am tormented in this flame!"

"This will happen when the Lord Jesus is revealed from heaven in blazing fire with his powerful angels. He will punish those who do not know God and do not obey the gospel of our Lord Jesus. They will be punished with everlasting destruction and shut out from the presence of the Lord and from the majesty of his power!" 2 Thessalonians 1:7-9

Sinner--see your doom! Hypocrite--see your portion! FIRE! Consuming fire! All its scorching, burning, suffocating, tormenting power--will be felt by you!

"The place of burning has long been ready! The pyre is piled high with wood. The breath of the Lord, like fire from a volcano--will set it ablaze!" Isaiah 30:33

Mark its duration. "Who can survive these everlasting burnings!" There, the worm never dies--and the fire is never quenched. The wicked are driven away in their wickedness! These shall go into everlasting punishment! The smoke of their torment ascends up forever and ever!

The punishment of the careless sinner and daring hypocrite bears the stamp of eternity upon it. ETERNITY extinguishes hope, generates despair, and adds a tenfold emphasis to the dreadful doom!

"What!" exclaims the lost soul, as it weeps, wails, and gnashes its teeth, "Is this torment to last forever? Is there to be no abatement, no alleviation, no termination of this tremendous agony? Will God inflict such intense agony--forever?"

"Yes, yes! Forever!" is the reply. Well may Almighty God ask the question, "Can your heart endure, or can your hands be strong--in the days that I shall deal with you? I the Lord has spoken it--and I will do it!"

Sinners in hell will, with the damned demons, suffer the vengeance of eternal fire! Oh, dreadful doom!

Look at their DESTINY--to dwell with devouring fire, with everlasting burnings. Hell is the sinner's home--his everlasting residence--his eternal portion--his changeless doom!

Let us, then, look at the questions seriously, and apply them to our ourselves. Were there ever questions more solemn? Could there be questions more alarming? Yet these solemn and alarming questions are necessary.

Who among US who are in Zion--who sit under the faithful preaching of God's Word, who have a place among the saints--who among US will dwell with devouring fire, with everlasting burnings?

Comfortable professors--will you? You take things easy now. You pretty much study your own comfort now. There you are on Sunday, in your accustomed seat in the house of God. There you are all the week in your business. You are not in troubles as other men, neither are you plagued as other men. But are you safe for heaven? Are your evidences Scriptural? Have you made your calling and your election sure? Is there no ground for doubt, or cause for fear? Perhaps there is, if you would only carefully examine yourself--whether you are truly in the faith.

Will you dwell with devouring fire, with everlasting burnings? It is possible that you may! It is very probably that you will! But what if you should? The bare supposition is dreadful.

What! Will you go through the house of God--to the flames of hell!

Well, many do! There are no comfortable professors in hell! But there are many in hell now--who were easy go-and-come professors on earth.

Deceitful professor, you know that you wear a cloak, a mask. You practice deception in your business, and justify it. You deceive your brethren, by pretending to be what you know you are not. Will YOU dwell with devouring fire, with everlasting burnings? Yes, there is no doubt about it--unless God unmasks you, and grants you repentance unto life.

You may hold your head high now--you may talk of election--but there is no proof that anyone ever elected you--but yourself!

And you may talk of "once saved--always saved"--yet you have never passed the strait gate, or entered on the narrow way!

Trifler--will YOU have to suffer this dreadful doom? Yes, and unless you repent--you will surely perish! You now make light of the gospel feast, you neglect the great salvation, you despise your own soul--and for

you, in your present state, there is no hope! The King will say of you, "Bind him hand and foot, and cast him into outer darkness--there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth!"

My dear young friends, is it possible that such should be YOUR portion? It is!

There are multitudes of young people in hell!

If anyone dies unpardoned, unsanctified, unregenerated--he cannot be saved! Think, my young friend--what if you should be doomed to dwell with devouring fire! What if you should have to dwell with everlasting burnings?

If you do--it will be entirely your own fault! You will never be able to blame it on anything other than yourself. Through eternity, you will be obliged to take all the blame. You would not take warning. You would not come to Jesus. You would not be advised to flee from the wrath to come. But you choose eternal damnation--in the error of your ways.

Just for one moment--suppose yourself in hell. All hope is gone! Your immortal soul floating on floods of liquid brimstone. You are tossed with tempests--and not comforted. You are taunted by devils--and damned souls. You are tortured beyond the powers of description. This impression is burnt into your soul: "This is forever! This is the wages of my sin! This is the due desert of my deeds! I preferred THIS--to heaven! I am here by my own fault. I can blame no one but myself. My doom is irrevocably sealed!"

How will you endure it? How, how, how will you be able to bear the bitter, bitter reflection--that when eternal life and eternal death were set before you--that you chose to be eternally damned?

My dear aged reader, is there any possibility of your dwelling with devouring fire, with everlasting burnings? Is your soul safe? Are you quite sure it is? Is there no ground for doubt? Your sands will soon be run out--your days will soon be numbered! You will soon be carried by the angels to eternal paradise--or be thrown into hell, where you will lift up your eyes in torment!

God will not be moved by your gray hairs--or pay respect to your wrinkled brow! All will depend on this: Are you truly in Christ? Have you truly been born again? If after a long life spent in the land of hope, if after so many warnings, so many opportunities, so many convictions, so many impressions, so many purposes of amendment--if you should be doomed to dwell with devouring fire, with everlasting burnings--it will be most fearful!

There are multitudes of old people in hell!

Many an old man has gone to hell--with...

the Bible in his hand,

the gospel sounding in his ears,

and a false hope in his heart!

Many an old woman has gone to hell...

who talked about religion,

who was regular in the house of prayer,

and who at times appeared very devout!

Let us not, then, put the question hastily away from us. Let us not be too secure. But let us closely, carefully, and thoroughly examine ourselves; remembering that unless Christ is truly in us--we are reprobates!

Reader, we warn you in love! We try to alarm you--that we may prevent the possibility of your meeting such a dreadful fate!

Oh, flee, flee, flee from the wrath to come!

Flee, flee, flee to the Lord Jesus! He can save you--and he alone can. He is willing to save you, if you are willing to be saved by him. Hasten! Escape to Jesus--for you are in danger until you have come to Christ, until you have received Christ, until you have cast your guilty soul entirely on Christ!

Remember, oh, remember, that the great end of life is to secure your eternal salvation! Do not lose, therefore, life's great end!

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surprised the hypocrites!

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Isaiah 33:14

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