

The Sinner Sentenced

by Philip Doddridge

Philip Doddridge's sermon warns sinners of the grave consequences of their actions and the hope for redemption through Christ.

Scripture: Job 42:4, Psalm 9:17, Ezekiel 18:4, Matthew 25:41, Luke 18:13, Acts 17:31, 1 Corinthians 4:3, 2 Corinthians 5:10, Galatians 3:10

Topics: "Judgement Day", "Eternal Damnation"

Description

Philip Doddridge delivers a powerful sermon warning sinners about the impending judgement day, emphasizing the universal curse pronounced by God's law on all transgressors, leading to death and eternal damnation in hell. The sermon vividly describes the solemnity of the judgement process and the specific illustration of the sentence 'Depart, accursed,' highlighting the immediate execution that follows. Sinners are urged to prepare for enduring the terrifying consequences of their actions, with a reflection provided for those struck with the terror of their sentence, prompting a plea for mercy and a desperate search for a way to escape the impending doom.

Transcript

1,2.The sinner called upon to hear his sentence.--3. God's law does now in general pronounce a curse.--4. It pronounces death.--5. And being turned into hell.--6. The judgement day shall come.--7.8. The solemnity of that grand process described according to scriptural representations of it.--9. With a particular illustration of the sentence, "Depart, accursed," &c.--10. The execution wilt certainly and immediately follow.--11. The sinner warned to prepare for enduring it. The reflection of a sinner struck with the terror of his sentence.

1. HEAR, O sinner! and I will speak (Job 42:4.) yet once more, as in the name of God, of God thine Almighty Judge, who, if thou dost not attend to his servants, will, ere long, speak unto thee in a more immediate manner, with an energy and terror which thou shalt not be able to resist. 2. Thou hast been convicted, as in his presence. Thy pleas have been overruled, or rather they have been silenced. It appears before God, it appears to thine own conscience that thou hast nothing more to offer in arrest of judgment; therefore hear thy sentence, and summon up, if thou canst, all the powers of thy soul to bear the execution of it.

"It is," indeed, a very small thing "to be judged of man's judgment;" but "he who now judgeth thee is the Lord." (1 Cor. 4:3,4) Hear, therefore, and tremble, while I tell thee how he will speak to thee; or rather,

while I show thee, from express Scripture, how he doth even now speak, and what is the authentic and recorded sentence of his word, even of his word who hath said, "Heaven and earth shall pass away, but not one tittle of my word shall ever pass away." (Matt. 5:18) 3.

The law of God speaks not to thee alone, O sinner! nor to thee by any particular address; but in a most universal language it speaks to all transgressors, and levels its terrors against all offences, great or small, without any exception. And this is its language: "Cursed is everyone that continueth not in all things which are written in the book of the law to do them." (Gal. 3:10) This is its voice to the whole world; and this it speaks to thee. Its awful contents are thy personal concern, O reader! and thy conscience knows it.

Far from continuing in all things that are written therein to do them, thou canst not but be sensible that "innumerable evils have encompassed thee about." (Psa. 40:12) It is then manifest thou art the man whom it condemns: thou art even now "cursed with a curse," as God emphatically speaks, (Mal 3:9.) with the curse of the Most High God; yea, "all the curses which are written in the book of the law" are pointed against thee. (Deut. 29:20) God may righteously execute any of them upon thee in a moment; and though thou at present feelest none of them, yet, if infinite mercy do not prevent, it is but a little while and they will "come into thy bowels like water," till thou art burst asunder with them, and shall penetrate "like oil into thy bones." (Psa. 109:18) 4.

Thus saith the Lord, "The soul that sinneth, it shall die." (Ezek. 18:4) But thou hast sinned, and therefore thou art under a sentence of death. And, O unhappy creature, of what a death! What will the end of these things be? That the agonies of dissolving nature shall seize thee, and thy soul shall be torn away from thy languishing body, and thou "return to the dust from whence thou wast taken." (Psal. 104:29) This is indeed one awful effect of sin. In these affecting characters has God, through all nations and all ages of men, written the awful register and memorial of his holy abhorrence of it, and righteous displeasure against it.

But, alas! all this solemn pomp and horror of dying is but the opening of the dreadful scene. It is a rough kind of stroke, by which the fetters are knocked off when the criminal is led out to torture and execution. 5. Thus saith the Lord, "The wicked shall be turned into hell, even all the nations that forget God." (Psal. 9:17) Though there be whole nations of them, their multitudes and their power shall be no defence to them. They shall be driven into hell together--into that flaming prison which divine vengeance hath prepared--into "Tophet, which is ordained of old, even for royal sinners" as well as for others; so little can any human distinction protect!

"He hath made it deep and large: the pile thereof is fire and much wood; the breath of the Lord, like a stream of brimstone, shall kindle it;" (Isa. 30:33) and the flaming torrent shall flow in upon it so fast, that it shall be turned into a sea of liquid fire; or, as the Scripture also expresses it, "a lake burning with fire and brimstone" for ever. (Rev. 21:8) "This is the second death," and the death to which thou, O sinner! by the word of God art doomed; 6. And shall this sentence stand upon record in vain!

Shall the law speak it, and the Gospel speak it? and shall it never be pronounced more audibly? and will God never require and execute the punishment? He will O sinner! require it; and he will execute it, though he may seem for a while to delay. For well dost thou know that "he hath appointed a day in which he will judge the" whole "world in righteousness, by that Man whom he hath ordained, of which he hath given assurance in having raised him from the dead." (Acts 17:31) And when God judgeth the world, O reader! whoever thou art, he will judge thee.

And while I remind thee of it, I would also remember that he will judge me. And "knowing the terror of the Lord," (2 Cor 5:11) that I may "deliver my own soul," (Ezek. 33:9) I would, with all plainness and sincerity, labor to deliver thine. 7. I therefore repeat the solemn warning: Then, O sinner! shalt "stand before the judgment-seat of Christ." (2 Cor. 5:10) Thou shalt see that pompous appearance, the description of which is grown so familiar to thee that the repetition of it makes no impression on thy mind.

But surely, stupid as thou now art, the shrill trumpet of the archangel shall shake thy very soul: and if nothing else can awaken and alarm thee, the convulsions and flames of a dissolving world shall do it. 8. Dost thou really think that the intent of Christ's final appearance is only to recover his people from the grave, and to raise them to glory and happiness? Whatever assurance thou hast that there shall be "a resurrection of the just," thou hast the same that there shall also be "a resurrection of the unjust;" (Acts, 24:15) that "he shall separate" the rising dead "one from another, as a shepherd divideth the sheep from the goats," (Matt. 25:32) with equal certainty, and with infinitely greater ease.

Or can you imagine that he will only make an example of some flagrant and notorious sinners, when it is said that "all the dead," both "small and great," shall "stand before God;" (Rev. 20:12) and that even "he who knew not his Master's will," and consequently seems of all others to have had the fairest excuse for his omission to obey it, yet even "he," for that very omission, "shall be beaten," though "with fewer stripes?" (Luke 12:48) Or can you think that a sentence, to be delivered with so much pomp and majesty, a sentence by which the righteous judgment of God is to be revealed, and to have its most conspicuous and final triumph, will be inconsiderable, or the punishment to which it shall consign the sinner be slight or tolerable?

There would have been little reason to apprehend that, even if we had been left barely to our own conjectures what that sentence should be. But this is far from being the case: our Lord Jesus Christ, in his infinite condescension and compassion, has been pleased to give us a copy of the sentence, and no doubt a most exact copy; and the words which contain it are worthy of being inscribed on every heart. "The King," amidst all the splendor and dignity in which he shall then appear, "shall say unto those on his right hand, Come, ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world!" (Matt. 25:34) And "where the word of a king is, there is power" indeed. (Eccles. 8:4) And these words have a power which may justly animate the heart of the humble Christian under the most overwhelming sorrow, and may fill him "with joy unspeakable and full of glory." (1 Pet. 1:8) To be pronounced the blessed of the Lord! to be called to a kingdom! to the immediate, the everlasting inheritance of it; and of such a kingdom! so well prepared, so glorious, so complete, so exquisitely fitted for the delight and entertainment of such creatures, so formed and so renewed that it shall appear worthy the eternal counsels of God to have contrived it, worthy his eternal love to have prepared it, and to have delighted himself with the views of bestowing it upon his people: behold a blessed hope indeed! a lively, glorious hope, to which we are "begotten again by the resurrection of Christ from the dead," (1 Pet. 1:3) and formed by the sanctifying influence of the Spirit of God upon our minds.

But it is a hope from which thou, O sinner! art at present excluded; and methinks that it might be grievous to reflect, "These gracious words shall Christ speak to some, to multitudes--but not to me; on me there is no blessedness pronounced; for me there is no kingdom prepared." But is that all? Alas! sinner, our Lord hath given thee a dreadful counterpart to this. He has told us what he will say to thee, if thou continuest what thou art--to thee, and all the nations of the impenitent and unbelieving world, be they ever so numerous, be the rank of particular criminals ever so great.

He shall say to the "kings of the earth" who have been rebels against him, to "the great and rich men, and the chief captains and the mighty men," as well as to "every bondman and every freeman" or inferior rank, (Rev. 9:15) "Depart front me, ye cursed, into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels." (Matt. 25:41) Oh! pause upon these weighty words, that thou mayest enter into something of the importance of them 9. He will say, "Depart:" you shall be driven from his presence with disgrace and infamy: "from him," the source of life and blessedness, in a nearness to whom all the inhabitants of heaven continually rejoice; you shall "depart," accursed: you have broken God's law, and its curse falls upon you; and you are and shall be under that curse, that abiding curse; from that day forward you shall be regarded by God and all his creatures as an accursed and abominable thing, as the most detestable and the most miserable part of the creation.

You shall go "into fire;" and, oh! consider into what fire! Is it merely into one fierce blaze which shall consume you in a moment, though with exquisite pain? That were terrible. But, oh! such terrors are not to be named with these. Thine, sinner, "is everlasting fire." It is that which our Lord hath in such awful terms described as prevailing there, "where their worm dieth not, and the fire is not quenched;" and again, in wonderful compassion, a third time, "where their worm dieth not, and the fire is not quenched," (Mark 9:44, 46, 48) Nor was it originally prepared or principally intended for you: it was "prepared for the devil and his angels;" for those first grand rebels who were, immediately upon their fall, doomed to it: and since you have taken part with them in their apostacy, you must sink with them into that flaming ruin, and sink so much the deeper, as you have despised the Savior, who was never offered to them.

These must be your companions and your tormentors, with whom you must dwell forever. And is it I that say this? or says not the law and the Gospel the same? Does not the Lord Jesus Christ expressly say, who is the "faithful and true witness," (Rev. 3:14) even he who himself is to pronounce the sentence? 10. And when it is thus pronounced, and pronounced by him, shall it not also be executed? Who could imagine the contrary? Who could imagine there should be all this pompous declaration to fill the mind only with vain terror, and that this sentence should vanish into smoke?

You may easily apprehend that this would be a greater reproach to the Divine administration than if sentence were never to be passed. And therefore we might easily have inferred the execution of it, from the process of the preceding judgment. But lest the treacherous heart of a sinner should deceive him with so vain a hope, the assurance of that execution is immediately added in very memorable terms. It shall be done: it shall immediately be done. Then on that very day, while the sound of it is yet in their ears, "the wicked shall go away into everlasting punishment;" (Matt. 25:46) and thou, O reader! whoever thou art, being found in their number, shalt go away with them; shalt be driven on among all these wretched multitudes and plunged with them into eternal ruin.

The wide gates of hell shall be open to receive thee: they shall be shut upon thee for ever, to enclose thee, and be fast barred by the Almighty hand of divine justice, to prevent all hope, all possibility of escape for ever. 11. And now "prepare" thyself "to meet the Lord thy God." (Amos 4:12) Summon up all the resolution of thy mind to endure such a sentence such an execution as this: for "he will not meet thee as a man;" (Isa. 47:36) whose heart may sometimes fail him when about to exert a needful act of severity, so that compassion may prevail against reason and justice.

No, he will meet thee as a God, whose schemes and purposes are all immovable as iris throne. I therefore testify to thee in his name this day, that if God be true, he will thus speak; and that if he be able, he will thus act. And on supposition of thy continuance in thine impenitence and unbelief, thou art brought into

this miserable case, that if God be not either false or weak, thou art undone, thou art eternally undone.

The Reflection of a Sinner struck with the Terror of his Sentence.

"Wretch that I am, What shall I do, or whither shall I flee? `I am weighed in the balance, and found wanting.' (Dan. 5:27) This is indeed my doom; the doom I am to expect from the mouth of Christ himself, from the mouth of him that died for the redemption and salvation of men. Dreadful sentence! and so much the more dreadful when considered in that view! To what shall I look to save me from it? To whom shall I call? Shall I say to the rocks, fall upon me, and to the hills, cover me? (Luke 23:30) What should I gain by that?

Were I indeed overwhelmed with rocks and mountains, they could not conceal me from the notice of his eye; and his hand could reach me with as much ease there as any where else. "Wretch indeed that I am! O that I had never been born! O that I had never known the dignity and prerogative of the rational nature? Fatal prerogative indeed, that renders me obnoxious to condemnation and wrath! O that I had never been instructed in the will of God at all rather than that, being thus instructed, I should have disregarded and transgressed it!

Would to God I had been allied to the meanest of the human race, to them that come nearest to the state of the brutes, rather than that I should have had my lot in cultivated Life, amidst so many of the improvements of reason, and (dreadful reflection!) amidst so many of the advantages of religion too and thus to have perverted all to my own destruction! O that God would take away this rational soul! but, alas! it will live for ever, will live to feel the agonies of eternal death.

Why have I seen the beauties and glories of a world like this, to exchange it for that flaming prison! Why have I tasted so many of my Creator's bounties, to wring out at last the dregs of his wrath! Why have I known the delights of social life and friendly converse, to exchange them for the horrid company of devils and damned spirits in hell! Oh! `who can dwell with them in devouring flames? who can lie down' with them `in everlasting, everlasting, everlasting burnings?' (Isa. 33:14) "But whom have I to blame in all this but my-self?

What have I to accuse but my own stupid incorrigible folly? On what is all this terrible ruin to be charged, but on this one fatal, cursed cause that having broken God's law. I rejected his Gospel too; "Yet stay, O my soul, in the midst of all these doleful foreboding complaints. Can I say that I have finally rejected the Gospel? Am I not to this day under the sound of it? The sentence is not yet gone forth against me in so determinate a manner as to be utterly irreversible.

Through all this gloomy prospect one ray of hope breaks in, and it is possible I may yet be delivered. "Reviving thought! Rejoice in it, O my soul! though it be with trembling, and turn immediately to that God, who, though provoked by ten thousand offences, has not yet 'sworn in his wrath that thou shalt never be permitted to hold further intercourse with him., or to `enter into his rest' (Psal. 95 11) "I do then, O blessed Lord! prostrate myself in the dust before thee, I own I am a condemned and miserable creature.

But my language is that of the humble publican, `God be merciful to me a sinner!' (Luke 18:13) Some general and confused apprehensions I have of a way by which I may possibly escape. O God, whatever that way is, show it me, I beseech thee! Point it out so plainly that I may not be able to mistake it! And. oh! reconcile my heart to it, be it ever so humbling, be it ever so painful! "Surely, Lord, I have much to learn; but be thou my teacher! Stay for a little moment thine uplifted hand, and in thine infinite compassion delay

the stroke till I inquire a little farther how I may finally avoid it!"

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