

The Misery of Those Who Lose the Saints' Rest

by Richard Baxter

The sermon emphasizes the consequences of an unsaved state, the loss of God's presence, and the torment of remembrance, calling listeners to repentance and commit to Christ.

Scripture: Job 21:14, Matthew 5:8, Matthew 11:30, John 3:3, Romans 1:28, Hebrews 11:38, Hebrews 12:14, Revelation 3:20

Topics: "Eternal Judgment", "Repentance"

Description

Richard Baxter delivers a powerful sermon warning about the consequences of rejecting Christ and living in sin, emphasizing the eternal separation from God and the everlasting torment in hell for those who do not repent. He draws parallels from the story of Ehud and Eglon to illustrate the urgency of delivering God's message to turn hearts towards salvation. Baxter highlights the importance of accepting Christ and the necessity of holiness to see the Lord, urging listeners to heed the call before it's too late.

Transcript

If you, reader, are a stranger to Christ and to the holy nature and life of His people, and if you live and die in this condition, let me tell you that you will never partake of the joys of heaven or have the least taste of the saints' everlasting rest.

I must repeat the sinister words of Judges 8:20, "I have a message to you from God." Do you recall the spine-tingling episode, how the left-handed Ehud brought a present to the enemy king Eglon? Ehud hid a double-edged dagger under his coat. It was not on the usual thigh because Ehud was left-handed. Consequently it was not detected by the guards. The king was sitting in splendor in his summer parlor. "And Ehud said, I have a message from God unto you. And he arose out of his seat. And Ehud put forth his left hand, and took the dagger from his right thigh, and thrust it into his belly" (Judg. 3:20-21). Like Ehud to Eglon, I must say to you, "I have a message to you from God."

As the Scriptures describe the Word of God as a double-edged sword, so I must draw that sword on you, and say that, as the Word of God is true, you will never see the face of God in peace. You will see Him as judge but not as justifier. This sentence I am commanded to pass upon you; take it as you will, and escape it if you can! I know that your humble and sincere acceptance of Christ would provide your escape. He would then acknowledge you to be one of His people and give you a part of the inheritance. If this could be the happy success of my message, I would bless the day that God made me so privileged a messenger. But if you end your days in your unsaved state, as sure as the heavens are over your head and the earth

beneath your feet, you shall be shut out of the heavenly rest.

You may object, and say, "When did God show you the book of life, or tell you who shall be saved, and who shut out?" I answer, I do not name you, nor any other. I only conclude that this is the case of the unsaved in general, and of you, if you are one. I do not attempt to predict who will repent or who will not. I would rather persuade you to listen in time, BEFORE the door is shut against you, than to tell you there is no hope of your repenting. But, if the description of the people of God in the previous chapter does not agree with the condition of your soul, isn't it a real question as to whether you will ever be saved? Do I need to ascend up into heaven to know that without "holiness, no man shall see the Lord" (Heb. 12:14); or that only "the pure in heart, shall see God" (Matt. 5:8); or that "except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God"? (John 3:3). Do I need to go up to heaven to ask Christ what He came down to earth to tell us, and sent His Spirit to tell us through His apostles? How can you escape if you neglect Christ and salvation? (Heb. 2:3).

The bodies of the wicked will be raised more spiritual than they were upon earth. That will make them capable of greater suffering. They would be glad if every member were a dead member, that it might not feel the punishment inflicted on it. What is worse, they lack that moral perfection which the blessed enjoy--that cheerful readiness to do the will of God. Instead of this, they have a perverseness of will, a hatred of good. They have the same love of evil and violent emotions that they had on earth. They have the same dispositions and would commit the same sins if they could, but they lack the opportunity.

They will have no communion with God. "As they did not like to retain God in their knowledge" (Rom. 1:28), but said to him, "Depart from us, for we desire not the knowledge of your ways" (Job 21:14), so God will refuse to keep them in His household. Worldlings can now say, "God is our Father as well as yours." But when Christ separates His followers from His foes, what will become of their presumptuous claims? They will find that God is not their Father, because they would not be His people. As they would not consent that God, by His Spirit, should dwell in them, so they shall not dwell with God. Only those who walked with God here shall live and be happy with Him in heaven.

As the enjoyment of God is the heaven of the saints, so the loss of God is the hell of the ungodly.

They also lose all love of God. They lose the inconceivable pleasure of loving Him. Your hearts, sinners, were not warmed by God's love. You never wanted to enjoy Him. You found no delight in speaking or hearing of Him. You would rather have stayed on earth, if you had known how.

They are deprived of the happy company of angels and perfected saints. Now, you are shut out of that company from which you first shut out yourselves. You did not like God's people. Their holy conversation troubled your consciences. It bothered you to hear them pray or sing praises. Is it any wonder if you be separated from them hereafter? The day is coming when they will trouble you no more. Between them and you will be a great gulf. Even in this life, while the saints had their personal imperfections, the Holy Spirit testified that they were men "of whom the world was not worthy" (Heb. 11:38). Much more unworthy will the world be of their fellowship in heaven.

The understanding of the ungodly will be cleared to know the worth of that which they have lost. Now they do not care about losing God, for they do not know His excellence. They now think that their honors, pleasures, wealth, health, and life are worth more than the things of the heavenly world. But when these things have been left behind, they will experience that which before they only read and heard. They would not believe that they could drown until they were in the sea. They would not believe that fire burns until

they were cast into it. When they experience it, then they will easily believe. All that error of mind will be removed by experience. Poor souls! They would be comparatively happy, if their understandings were completely taken from them. If they knew no more in hell than they did on earth, their loss would be less troublesome. How happy they would be if they did not know there was such a place as heaven. Now, when their knowledge would help to prevent such future misery, they will not know, nor will they read or study that they might know. Therefore, when their knowledge will but add to their misery, they shall know, whether they want to or not.

When they suddenly find themselves in the land of darkness, shut out of the presence of God forever, then they will roar out these forced confessions, "O my misery! O my folly! O my inconceivable, irrecoverable loss!"

A hard heart now makes heaven and hell seem but trifles. But when these dead souls are revived, how violently will they blame themselves. How happy they would be then if they could sleep out their execution as they did the sermons that warned them of it! But their stupidity is gone.

Now they have no time to consider their eternal destiny; but then they shall have nothing else to do. It will torment them to think of the greatness of the glory they have lost. It will pain them to think of the possibility they once had of obtaining it. They will remember, "Time was when I had the same opportunity of entering the kingdom as others. If I had believed in Christ, I might now have had possession of the inheritance." It will wound them to think; "I had the help of the Holy Spirit and was almost resolved to follow Christ and forsake the world. I was almost persuaded to be a real Christian. How my heart was moved when a faithful minister pressed home the truth! O how close I was to heaven! I almost had it, and yet I have lost it!"

It will add to their calamity to remember how often they were persuaded to receive Christ. "With what love and compassion did the minister beseech me and yet I just made fun of him. How often he opened to me my very heart, and yet I was unwilling to know the worst about myself. Christ stood knocking one Sunday after another, crying to me, 'Open your heart to your Savior, and I will come in and have fellowship with you, and you with me' (Revelation 3:20). Why do you delay?"

It will also be cutting to remember on what easy terms they could have escaped their misery. "The yoke was easy and the burden light" which Christ would have put upon them (Matt. 11:30). It was but to repent and cordially accept Him for their Savior. "Ah," thinks the poor tormented wretch, "how justly do I suffer all this, who would not do so little to avoid it! Where was my mind when I neglected that gracious offer? What if Christ had asked me to do something difficult? Would I not have done it? How much more, when He only said, 'Believe and be saved. Seek my face, and your soul shall live.' O gracious offer! O easy terms! O cursed wretch, that would not be persuaded to accept them!"

Their misery will also be increased to remember for what they sold their eternal welfare. When they compare the value of the pleasures of sin with the value of the eternal felicity, their thoughts will tear their hearts. They will exclaim, "Did I sell my soul for such a cheap price? Did I part with my God for a little dirt, and sell my Savior, as Judas did, for a little silver? What a mad exchange I made. What if I had gained the whole world, and lost my soul? It was but a small part of the world for which I gave up heaven."

It will add yet more to their torment, when they consider that they paid so much for their own destruction. O the labor it costs sinners to be damned! Sobriety, with health and comfort, they could have enjoyed at a cheaper rate; yet they chose drunkenness, poverty, shame, and sickness. Contentment they might have had, yet they chose covetousness and ambition with the accompanying worries and fears. "If I had done

as much for heaven as I did for hell, I surely would have obtained it. Had I loved Christ as strongly as I did my pleasures and popularity and profit, how happy I would have been then and now! How justly do I suffer hell for buying it so expensively rather than to have heaven which was purchased by Christ and offered so freely to me."

O that God would persuade you, reader, to consider these thoughts now, rather than waiting until they torment you in hell.

Why do multitudes fail to repent when they could be forgiven? It is because they think they are forgiven already. If you could ask thousands in hell what madness brought them there, most would answer, "We thought we were sure of being saved. We thought we were Christians already." Reader, I must in faithfulness warn you of this delusion. It is Satan's strategy to lead people blindfolded into hell. Never was a thief more careful lest he awaken the people whose home he is burglarizing, than Satan is not to awaken a sinner.

Why do you tremble at the signs of almighty power and wrath--when lightning flashes and thunder crashes, or at the power of tornadoes and earthquakes? Why are you frightened by dread diseases? Why are you concerned with such small sufferings which strike you here--a toothache, an illness, or a falling into disgrace? All these together would be a happy condition compared with what is suffered in hell.

And now, reader, I ask your decision. What use will you make of all this? Will you throw away this book and say it is only about hell and damnation? Would you rather that we didn't tell you these things? Should we keep secret that which God has commanded us to make known? This kind of writing is not popular, but consider whether these things be true. If not, I would certainly agree with you that we should not frighten people without a cause. But if these warnings are the Word of God, then how foolish we would be to ignore them!

If you could not escape hell, it would be useless to tell you about it; but as long as you are alive there is hope. I don't think you need any more words. Right now you can make the decision to commit yourself completely to Christ. Let it be done immediately, that I may see your face in rest among the saints. May the Lord persuade you to make this covenant with God without further delay.

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