

# - 1 -

## **From God's Word, the Bible...**

*Do not fear any of those things which you are about to suffer. Indeed, the devil is about to throw some of you into prison, that you may be tested, and you will have tribulation ten days. Be faithful until death, and I will give you the crown of life.*

*Revelation 2:10*



## A Dog and a Clock

Being a lover of dogs, I was moved by these lines I came across from an old issue of a Christian news magazine that I was reading:

*The dog of Angelo del Plato watched intently as his master was lowered into the grave. Eight years later, friends of the family acknowledged that they could not remember a day when that loving dog did not visit his master's gravesite, usually sitting a while on the turf over his master's body.*

Even those who are not dog lovers must admire and commend the faithfulness of that dog to his master. It is a sharp rebuke to many Christians for their lack of faithfulness to their Master!

Yes, all Christians have a Master—the Lord Jesus Christ! Tell me that you do not regard Jesus as your Master, and I will not hesitate to tell you that you are not a Christian! I do

so on no less authority than that of the Apostle Paul: 'If anyone does not love the Lord Jesus Christ, let him be accursed, ... ' (1 Cor. 16:22).

I'm sure that Angelo del Plato did much to win the affection of his dog. He undoubtedly fed him, talked to him, played with him, walked with him, and cared for him when he was sick.

The question I have for my fellow-believers is simply this: Has your Master, the Lord Jesus Christ, done less for you than del Plato did for his dog? Every Christian must immediately utter a resounding "No!" to that question. The Lord Jesus has done infinitely more for us than del Plato did for his dog! The Lord Jesus has rescued us from the wrath of God by receiving that wrath in our stead. He has forgiven us of our sins. He has made us part of the family of God. He has given us countless blessings and benefits to make life more comfortable and pleasant. And He has promised to eventually take us home to Himself to share in His eternal glory. What more could the Lord Jesus do for us?

We should frequently remind ourselves of these words from Jesus: "But why do you call me 'Lord, Lord,' and do not do the things which I say?" (Luke 6:46).

The issue facing each of us is whether we will be as faithful to our Master as del Plato's dog was to him. Or will we commend in a dog that which we refuse to practice ourselves?

My wife and I have moved a lot in our years together. One item always receives special attention when we move. It is our Seth Thomas clock. I awoke a few minutes before four o'clock the other day and heard the steady ticking of that old clock. I listened as it sounded four times. I thought for a while about what I was hearing. That clock is well over a hundred years of age, and it is still faithfully ticking and sounding.

I cannot say how many moves I have left before my final move. But I know I must emulate that clock. I must faithfully tick until my last moving day comes.

I know I cannot do this apart from the gracious help of the Lord. So these days I find myself saying:

*Change and decay all around I see,  
O Thou who changest not, abide with me*

(Henry F. Lyte)

-2-

**From God's Word, the Bible...**

*In the multitude of my anxieties within me,  
Your comforts delight my soul.*

*Psalm 94:19*



## Whenever I am Afraid

In Psalm 56:3, David admits to being afraid. To be afraid is to be “filled with fear or apprehension.” That word “afraid” is all too familiar! We are often filled with fear and apprehension.

Most of our fears have to do with our lives or the lives of those we love either being lessened in quality or coming to an end.

Many things can lessen the quality of our lives or the lives of our loved ones—sickness, financial reversals, family discord, world conditions, and many other things. There is no shortage of things to bring about apprehension!

And the biggest one of all is death itself! How many people have proudly marched through life as if they were in control and as if they were sufficient for everything, only to tremble and cower when they came to death’s door! Haughty and proud in his disdain for Christianity, skeptic David Hume whimpered at death: “I am affrighted and confounded with the forlorn solitude in which I am placed by my phi-

losophy ... I fancy myself in the most deplorable condition imaginable, environed in the deepest darkness."

The David who wrote Psalm 56:3 was the man who stood fearlessly before Goliath. But he was "very much afraid" when he took up his pen to write this psalm. He was in the land of the Philistines, where he did not belong, and it seemed to him that King Achish would soon snuff out his life (see 1 Samuel 21:12). But David collected himself, looked to God, and wrote: "Whenever I am afraid, I will trust in You."

"Whenever" means "at whatever time," or "at any or every time." In Psalm 56:3, it is a beautiful word! At whatever time or at any time David finds himself gripped with fear, he will trust in God. Every time he is afraid, he will trust God. Trusting is always the great antidote for fearing.

Are you, like David and so many others, frightened by the thought of death? Trust in God! He has both made glorious promises regarding death and has shown Himself to be utterly faithful to His promises.

What has God promised about this matter of death? He has promised His people will not face it alone, that He Himself will meet them in the "valley of the shadow" and will shepherd them safely through (Ps. 23:4). He has promised that at the very moment of death, the souls of His people will go immediately into His presence (2 Cor. 5:6-8). And He has promised that the bodies of all those who belong to Him will finally be raised from their graves, re-joined to their souls, and will forever be with Him in eternal glory (1 Thess. 4:13-18).

What promises! But please note that these are promises God has given only to His people! Not all are His people. Those who are not in a right relationship with Him have His promise that they will face Him in judgment and will be driven forever from His presence (2 Thess. 1:8-10). That will

cause any thinking person to really be afraid! (Luke 12:4-5).

Are you afraid of that immensely sobering time when you will have to stand before God in judgment? God has given a promise for you to trust. He has promised that He will forgive all those who trust completely in His Son, Jesus Christ, and in what He did on the cross for sinners like you and me (John 3:16,36; 5:24; 6:47; 1 John 5:11-12).

Those who believe in Jesus can rejoice in these words from the Apostle Paul: "There is therefore now no condemnation to those who are in Christ Jesus..." (Rom. 8:1).

Afraid? Don't be! Trust God's promise to save sinners and then trust His promises to take care of His people. Make it your policy to say to God: "Whenever I am afraid, I will trust in You."



# - 3 -

## From God's Word, the Bible...

*And if you call on the Father, who without partiality judges according to each one's work, conduct yourselves throughout the time of your stay here in fear; knowing that you were not redeemed with corruptible things, like silver or gold, from your aimless conduct received by tradition from your fathers, but with the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot. He indeed was foreordained before the foundation of the world, but was manifest in these last times for you.*

1 Peter 1:17-20



**“He, to Rescue Me  
from danger,  
Interposed His  
Precious Blood”**

*Jesus sought me when a stranger,  
Wandering from the fold of God;  
He, to rescue me from danger,  
Interposed His precious blood; ...*  
(Come, Thou Fount of Every Blessing,  
Robert Robinson, 1758)

**T**hese words take us to the heart of Christ’s saving work on behalf of His people. It was a matter of Jesus interposing His blood! That act of interposition makes His blood

precious to every believer.

More about that in a moment! First, let's think about that word "danger." Frightening word! When we hear the word "danger," we tend to think of the people and the things that threaten our wellbeing and happiness in this world. There is no shortage of them.

There is, however, another type of danger which is much worse than any posed by this temporal realm. It is the danger of experiencing the wrath of God in eternity. People these days like to play down that danger, but no fair reading of the Bible will allow us to do so. All are agreed that the Old Testament contains a heavy emphasis on the matter, but we must not think that the teaching of God's wrath is confined there. The same teaching is evenly distributed throughout the New Testament. It is in the gospels (Matt. 3:12; 7:13-14; 22:13-14; 23:33; 25:30,41,46; Mark 9:42-29; Luke 16:19-31; John 3:36), in the epistles of Paul (Rom. 1:18-19; 2:5; 3:5; 4:15; 12:19; Eph. 2:3; 5:6), and in the other epistles as well (Heb. 10:27; 12:25-29; James 5:9; 1 Peter 4:17-18; 2 Peter 2:4-9).

It is the dominant theme of the book of Revelation (Rev. 6:16-17; 11:18; 14:10,19; 15:1,7; 16:1,19; 19:15; 20:11-15; 21:8; 22:11,15).

And for those who blissfully say: "Just give me the loving God of John 3:16," the wrath of God is powerfully present in the word "perish" which is mentioned in that very verse.

We will never understand Christianity until we realize that it is all about rescuing people from this danger! Jesus came to this world for the express purpose of dealing with that danger.

God is holy. He cannot merely ignore our sins as if they never happened. He has to pronounce a sentence on them and also has to carry out that sentence. What is His sentence on our sins? It is His wrath, which is eternal separation from

Himself in hell.

The glory of Christianity is that Jesus on the cross took the wrath that we deserve for our sins. There He “interposed” or inserted His blood between the wrath of God and guilty sinners. The word “blood” means that He poured out His life in death. To say He interposed His blood is to say He interposed Himself. On the cross He took the position between the wrath of God and guilty sinners. The wrath fell on Him, and there is now no wrath left for all who repent of their sins and trust in Him. John 3:36 puts it perfectly: “He who believes in the Son has everlasting life; and he who does not believe the Son shall not see life, but the wrath of God abides on him.”

But how could Jesus in the space of the six hours He was on the cross (from 9:00 in the morning until 3:00 in the afternoon) receive an eternity’s worth of the wrath of God for all sinners who believe in Him? The answer lies in the special nature of Jesus. He was no ordinary man. He was the God-man, fully God, fully man at one and the same time. As God, He was an infinite person, and as an infinite person, He could receive in a finite amount of time an infinite measure of wrath. In other words, Jesus as an infinite person could receive in a finite amount of time what we as finite people would receive in an infinite amount of time.

When we truly understand what Jesus did on the cross for sinners, we gladly respond to Robert Robinson’s phrase “precious blood” with a hearty “Yes!”

# -4-

## From God's Word, the Bible...

*"Do you see this woman? I entered your house; you gave Me no water for My feet, but she has washed My feet with her tears and wiped them with the hair of her head. You gave Me no kiss, but this woman has not ceased to kiss My feet since the time I came in. You did not anoint My head with oil, but this woman has anointed My feet with fragrant oil. Therefore I say to you, her sins, which are many, are forgiven, for she loved much. But to whom little is forgiven, the same loves little."*

*Then He said to her, "Your sins are forgiven."*

*And those who sat at the table with Him began to say to themselves, "Who is this who even forgives sins?"*

*Then He said to the woman, "Your faith has saved you. Go in peace."*

*Read the whole passage in Luke 7:36-50*



## **Tell Me What You Think You Owe ...**

**T**ell me what you think you owe the Lord, and I will tell you how much you feel like serving Him. If you think you owe a great deal, you will gladly serve and worship Him. If you think you owe very little, you will not be much interested in service or worship.

The truth of the matter is every Christian owes the Lord the same amount. He has done no less for one than He has for others. We all come into this world in a very sad and sorrowful condition. We come in with a sinful nature that causes us to be alienated or separated from God.

The piercing question is this: How can sinful human beings ever hope to enjoy fellowship with the perfectly holy God? To put it another way, how can guilty sinners ever

stand acceptably in the presence of the holy God?

The answer is that sin must be taken out of the way, and there is only one way that sin can be removed from between God and us. Its penalty has to be paid! What is the penalty for sin? It is eternal separation from God or the eternal wrath of God!

There are only two ways for the penalty for our sins to be paid: we either have to pay it ourselves, which means we must be separated from God and heaven forever, or someone has to pay it on our behalf. In order for someone else to pay the penalty for our sins, such a person must, of course, be free from sin. We see the logic of this. If someone has sins of his own, he would have to pay the penalty for those and could not, therefore, pay the penalty for anyone else.

Jesus is the only person who ever lived without sin (John 1:14; 1 Peter 1:19; 1 John 3:5). Because He had no sins of His own, He could pay for the sins of others.

This is what His death on the cross is all about. There He received the wrath of God in the place of sinners. Because He was God in human flesh, He could receive in a finite length of time an infinite measure of wrath. This is the reason He cried out from the cross: "My God, My God, why have You forsaken Me?" (Matt. 27:46).

The cost of sin is God-forsakenness in hell, and, on that cross, Jesus endured God-forsakenness for sinners. All who realize the depth and guilt of their sins and entrust themselves fully to Jesus in the work He did on the cross are released from the sentence of God's wrath (John 3:16,36; Rom. 5:8-9; 1 Thess. 1:10; 1 Peter 2:24).

What do Christians owe the Lord? A debt that can never be paid! We have been delivered from the wrath of God and given eternal life through Christ. In referring to a debt we owe, I am not suggesting that we must work for our salvation. Not for a moment! The Apostle Paul says: "For by grace

you have been saved through faith, and that not of yourselves; it is the gift of God, not of works, lest anyone should boast" (Eph. 2:8-9).

We do not work *for* our salvation but *from* our salvation. Because we have been saved by the redeeming death of the Lord Jesus, we work to show our love and gratitude to Him.

It is not easy to show gratitude to the Lord by worshiping and serving Him. There are always a thousand things to occupy us. Some people excuse themselves from worship and service because they feel that they don't have the time. Other people do so because they have been offended or hurt. Yet others do so because they don't agree with the direction the church is going.

The answer to each of these excuses is the same: What do you owe? If you say that you owe nothing less than deliverance from the wrath of God to Christ, you must surely go on to say that He is worthy of your time and energy and that no hurt or disagreement is great enough to offset the debt.

What I have been saying is pointedly expressed in these words from Isaac Watts:

*When I survey the wondrous cross  
On which the Prince of Glory died,  
My richest gain I count but loss,  
And pour contempt on all my pride.*

*Forbid it, Lord, that I should boast,  
Save in the death of Christ my God;  
All the vain things that charm me most –  
I sacrifice them to His blood.*

*Were the whole realm of nature mine,  
That were a present far too small:  
Love so amazing, so divine,  
Demands my soul, my life, my all.*