

The Utter Severity of God's Holy Law

by Rolfe Barnard

The sermon emphasizes the importance of God's law and the consequences of disobeying it, highlighting the need for a return to biblical values and the reality of hell.

Duration: 1:00:03

Scripture: Psalm 11:4-7, Matthew 6:33, John 3:16, Romans 10:14-15, Revelation 15:2-4

Topics: "Gods Justice", "Divine Judgment"

Description

In this sermon, the preacher discusses the severity of God's love and the consequences of sin. He emphasizes that God's love is not just about forgiveness and grace, but also about justice and punishment for sin. The preacher shares a personal story about watching a crucifixion scene with his daughter, which made her cry and understand the severity of God's love. He references Bible verses from the book of Revelation and the book of Psalms to support his message about the severity of God's love and the need to face the question of why Jesus was crucified.

Transcript

I want to think with you together tonight about the utter severity of God's law, the utter severity of God's law. And I want to read four verses of scripture from the 15th chapter of the last book of the Bible to start with and then turn over to the Book of Psalms, verse 1 of Revelation 15. I saw another sign in heaven, greater than marvels, seven angels having the seven last plagues.

For in them is filled up the wrath of God. And I saw, as it were, a sea of grass mingled with fire. And them that had gotten the victory over the beast, and over his enemies, and over his martyrs, and over the number of his names, they got a victory.

They evidently had to get active and become candidates to lay hold on a power that could enable them like no other to ride through the flood. And so all these people who had achieved the victory saw them stand on a sea of grass having the hearts of God. And they seemed to be happy.

They sang the song of Moses, the servant of God, and the song of the Lamb, saying, Great and marvelous are thy works, Lord God Almighty. Just and true are thy ways, thou King of saints. These folks who have come through something to get to the grand reunion where they can sing, having been slain by God's law and healed by God's gospel, they have been through something.

And so they cry out in verse 4, Who shall not fear thee, O Lord? Who shall not fear thee, O Lord? And glorify thy name, for thou only art holy. For all nations shall come and worship before you, for thy judgments are made manifest. Who shall not fear thee, O Lord? Can't imagine anybody that wouldn't be afraid, have a holy reverence for the holy fear of the Lord.

In Psalms 11, Psalms 11, will you turn to it if you will? Psalms 11, Thomas cries out, In the Lord put I my trust. They ask questions. Why do you say to me, flee as a bird to your mountain? Saul was the king.

He was a rascal. David's life was up for grabs. Some of his friends say, You'd better run.

You'd better take wings like a bird and fly to the mountain. For people are after you. Oh, the wicked bend their bows.

They make ready their arrow upon the stranger. They may privately shoot at the upright in heart. Then David says, If the foundations be destroyed, what can the righteous do? If the foundations be destroyed, they were dead sure being destroyed when David cried out his heart in this psalm.

If they completely crumble, if the bottom falls out, what can the righteous do? Then he says, The Lord is in his holy temple. The Lord's throne is in heaven, and he is not in absence, he, God. His eyes behold, his eyelids try the children of men.

The Lord tried the righteous, but the wicked and him that loveth violence, his soul, that's the Lord, hated. And upon the wicked he shall raise snares, fire and brimstone, and a horrible tempest. This shall be the portion of thy cup.

For the righteous Lord loveth righteousness, his countenance doth behold the upright. There are certain foundational stones that are crumbling today, almost disappeared, that have brought us to the hour when time after time I've said, whether rightly or not since I've been here preaching, especially in the morning to these precious young men, that there is no climate in which the Church of Jesus Christ can preach the gospel to all nations. The reason there's no climate is because the foundation of the gospel are well-nigh gone, and it would be impossible to even dare to call oneself a follower of the Lamb, a soldier of the cross, and not be ransacking himself as to what any dare to claim to be righteous because God made us such.

What on earth can we do in our lawless days? What shall the righteous do? All over the country, professing preachers and Christians are cracking up under the strain. I don't do that, do you? In this success-minded generation, we're all being tested today as to whether that which gives us pleasure is a consciousness that we're doing the will of God, or in what people call success. There isn't a true gospel church in America now that isn't being hymned in on every side until, if we do not go deeper in the experience of Almighty God, we're going to be the next candidates to quit or crack up.

For the great foundational, bottom troves of God's truth are crumbling on every side. The utter totality of the catastrophe that took place in the Garden of Eden that plunged the human race into utter ruin is now something to be argued about, not faced. If there has been one thing taught and preached for the last 60 years in so-called Christian America, it is the innate goodness of man, and the latent ability of man to lift himself by his own bootstraps and bring the new Jerusalem to the earth.

We have completely, in our day, seen a generation come upon the scene that has absolutely forgotten, if it ever believed it at all, that men were desperately ruined, and that men are in a desperate shape. Then the strictness of God's holy law, so utterly straight that it demands absolute perfection inwardly as well as

outwardly, has long since gone by the board. I'm not much of a Roman Catholic.

I think the old timers went over a million miles from the truth when they identified the Pope with Antichrist. I believe with all my heart, whether I'm right or not, that America is now footing the financial deal to get Roman Catholicism back to power. I've neither been shot or cursed, nor have I exercised a mind about Communism, for I know that the mother and father of Communism is perverted religion headed up in Rome.

But as an illustration of how far we've come from the truth of the strictness of Almighty God's law, I call your attention to the fact that the Roman Church is now in the beginning of one of the most tremendous assaults upon her authority that she's ever experienced. This rebellion against the Pope is about the matter of birth control. And the old folks, exactly biblical folks, and if you told me ten years ago that Roman Catholic priests and bishops and archbishops and the laity all over the world would give up enough audacity to challenge the Pope on anything, I'd have said you were crazy.

And I'm not fighting the battles of the Pope, but I'm saying the Bible has its own Bible birth control. And the old Pope, long time in the history of Roman Catholicism, is standing for a Christ Holy God whose law is perfectly strict. And if you don't think society and religion are in rebellion against the strictness of God's law, this is what's happening in the old church that we thought nobody ever questioned her authority.

This generation has long since decided that God Almighty's law is too strict and we will just not pay any attention to the strictness of God's law. The strictness of God's law. We've come a long way and I'm not preaching religious phariseeism, but I think we've made so much progress that we're about to be so all-powerful-minded today.

My mother's father was a Baptist preacher. He wouldn't let them play croquet on the Lord's Day. They say he's a crank! There ain't no danger of us being cranks, I'll tell you that.

No sin. We have just absolutely rebelled against the utter strictness of that friend of sinners, the Holy Lord God, purpose of which is to bring to us a knowledge of how we actually look in the eyes of a Christ Holy God, and how desperately we need a substitute. And then the utter, the awesome severity of God's law.

The awe of the severity of Almighty God's law. Let the Old Testament, just speak in Old Testament language, you're in this psalm of how severe, how severe the penalty of all without sanction is no good. I read in the paper today, they've put off the trial now of the accused assassin of Martin Luther King the next March.

How are they able to do that? If it wasn't a little while longer, you and me would have drawn a petition to get him off. I'm in favor of doing away with the death penalty, aren't you? But God isn't. I'm in favor of pardoning lawbreakers where the man may need a God-given, aren't you? We do it all the time.

God deliver us from a God that penalty is that he has certain men and women with, if they, they can transgress his holy law, is to set them up in hell away from his presence throughout the long reaches of eternity. What an awful God that is, but that's the God of the Bible. We are sold.

The awful severity of God's law. Look what it says. You know what it says? This is in the language of energy, "Fire and brimstone and a horrible, tempestuous spirit shall be the portion of their cup." That's awful language, isn't it? The severity of God's law.

Why do we apologize now for warning men of hellfire and tread softly about it, afraid somebody will accuse us of trying to stir people into the kingdom of God? I'll tell you why. We've gone soft and lost the awesome truth of the Bible, of the utter severity of Almighty God. How come we feel called to make excuses and apologize for the awful holiness of God? No wonder there's no climate where anybody's interested in whether Jesus did anything on the cross that do anybody any good.

Since we've thrown God's holy law out the window and become interpreters of it ourselves, and take what is nice and smooth and explain away the sharp-edged, sharp-honed, utter severity of a man falling into the hands of a living God. The utter severity of God's law. Ladies and gentlemen, if you can be happy-go-lucky, everybody has to say, amen, and you've been called upon to spend your days in a generation that can be absolutely honestly described by one characteristic lawlessness.

If you can be happy-go-lucky now and believe in the utter severity of God's law at the same time, I wish you'd show me how to do it. One of the most awesome things I've ever tried to preach and succeeded very well is to live believing in the absolute severity of God's wrath against those who break his law. It's an awful thing to believe men are going to hell, that there are no bridges between hell and heaven, that death is the doorway to eternal torment or eternal bliss, and that the reason that soul would call God is holy and his law as to its penalty is utterly severe.

I wish I knew how for myself and the people I minister to, to drive the giggles and the cackles out of what passes for salvation today, to drive this nice little believism or whatever it is we've got that has left us with such a lack of reverence for God and humble thanksgiving. If we have a reason to hope that the pangs of hell will never seize our soul. Let me bring you forth proof from the word of God that proves the utter severity of God's law.

If God doesn't utterly severely punish every transgression against him as expressed in his law, then the foundations of our social order cannot stand. This psalm came from the lips of this man on the day when the moral, religious, and every other kind of foundation of Israel was crumbling, when they had a king that had no principle, for the name of Saul. The situation was so desperate that the friends of David advised him to flee, to get out of those who were hunting him to take his life.

This psalm was penned in such an atmosphere that the cry of this psalm is, let the foundations be destroyed. What can the righteous do? Run and hide? This wasn't just Philip the Baptist's scripture. It was a point of question, and they needed an answer for it.

There was a man in Houston the next few days. I read his book some time ago. He used to be at the Foley store for a little while the next day, so autographing his book.

The book is the reluctant prophet. In the book is his prophecy of the death of the President John Kennedy. In the book is his prophecy of the death of Senator Kennedy.

In the book is his prophecy that we will be in the Vietnam War for the next 15 years. Today's news looks like he's going to be 50. He's a resident of New York City, and he says he's moving his family.

He says that in 25 years the New York City will sink under water. You believe all these things? I'm just calling your attention to one thing the man said. He had asked what he thought the next four years would bring to America, to the next President, and he said it would be worse and worse.

It goes on record that President-elect, he didn't know his name at the time, will not live through his four years. But he said the next 25 years, such destruction as we do not dream will be worsted on America. I just call your attention to this man's prophecy to relieve you of your giggle for five minutes.

Hell on earth is going to pop in this country. Fine. From the top of the government to the bottom, the foundation has gone, has gone.

This is God's will. I think I said in this paper to say it again, there's a whole lot of theology in biology. God's way is the only way that'll work in God's will, and maybe on this.

And this generation came, came right through the storm that's ahead of us. We may never have another fish to feed. They're getting all of this scarce now.

One thing you people, if you have any reason to hope you're a child of God, you may hope that you will be able to get victory over the beast and his image and his authority and his mark, and have a hard place in your hands so you can sing the song of roses and the lamb. But hell will fix him to pop, folks. Don't need no theology for that.

That's just biology. This world just won't work when you do away with God's foundation alone. It just won't work.

Bottom's falling out, the top's caving in. All hell is already popping. It's going to get worse.

Why? You broke God's holy foundation alone. Nobody's going to get hurt but you. But David said, if the foundation be destroyed, what can the righteous do? Just one thing, look to the Lord in this whole world, people.

Look to the Lord who knows what's going on. Look to the Lord whose eyelids try. He tried the eyelids of men and had eyes before what's going on.

Oh, when the town folks to me in Winston-Salem, North Carolina, got an old railroad station or something, and he was operating it without a license, and the deputy sheriff came down the corner. Do you know what his plea was? His plea was he didn't like the law that said he couldn't operate a ham on whatever it is without a license. And the judge said the law wasn't up for our approval, but it's up for our obedience.

It's up for our obedience. Oh, our social order cannot stand if God Almighty doesn't bring these severe judgments and sanctions of law on this generation. He'll have to apologize to the folks in Sodom and Gomorrah for wiping them off of the face of the earth.

Another proof of the utter severity of God's holy law, look around you, is found in this principle. I suppose John Owen stated it better than anybody else. He said, Do not expect anything in life to come, the principle of which is unknown in this life.

Let me quote that again. Do not expect anything in the life to come, the principle of which is unknown in this life. You don't get to the place you run hot after holiness down here, and you don't expect you'll get a chance to run hot after holiness up yonder.

You don't get to the place down here you can meditate on his holy law day and night and day. Feed your soul and use it as God intends it, as the standard for sanctification, and hold on to it! You don't expect you'll have a chance in the next life. Something will get started in this life, it won't start in the next.

And whatever gets started in this life will continue in the next. Heaven is just an extension of life down here, and hell is just an extension of life down here. And praise the Lord! Glory up yonder is just the creation of the grace of God here.

But God pities hell as but the culmination of the destruction of sin in this life. And those sin victims are falling on every life's highway now! Why do the leaders of our entertainment world commit suicide and live on dope and everything else? I'll tell you why! They've tasted everything until nothing satisfies, and they're already in the anteroom of hell! And that's a pretty good picture of God by the mark. It doesn't tell me that he believes all the hell we'd ever get down here on this earth.

Plenty of folks getting plenty of hell right now, brother, and got a little bit more severe punishment for folks younger than me, kind of thing, than a lot of folks are going through now. It's going to be something. Don't tell me, brother.

Why? Because God's law is utterly severe! You can't live a last life down here and not feel the awful lash of the severity of God's hatred of sin in this life. It'll catch up with you. It'll catch up with you.

It dead sure will. There's a third proof of the utter severity of God's law that's prominent in the Bible, and that's the horrors of hell. What is hell? It's just the exercise of a holy God prosecuting the wages of sin.

They go together. If God is thrice holy, hell is going to be thrice hot. If God has a holy hatred for a sin, a sin of rebellion against the moral governorship of God expressed in his law, then hell will be awful.

If you want to know what a fearful thing it is to fall into the hands of a living God whose law you despise, trample on and smear that. Listen to one in the clutches of God's holy law, never a cry from his lips until the realization of the fact that he was God's child and given birth to the dogs that God Almighty called them, will violation against his holy law in the person of Jesus Christ. If you want to know how terribly severe the law of God is, tried for once to do what I've wanted to do for thirty-odd years, never succeeded, you go into some of the awesomeness and the terrible feeling that feels like a man who has often cried when rejected by heaven, despised by men.

He hung between heaven and earth, and the law of God caught up with him and began to lash him with God's holy hatred and vengeance against sin. Try to hear him cry, my God, my God, why hast thou forsaken? Will the answer come back? Thou art whole. You'll feel as if you start your battle, Jesus went to hell.

I must not let God act ill in places in hell. That's what hell is, in the clutches of God's law. That's the cry that every human being will cry, forsaken.

Sometimes I think I'll jump out of my skin. You folks know anyway. Get somebody to stand still long enough now for us to plead with them, to beg them, don't go on, don't go on, come to the judgment.

I have to try to deal with God's holy law in this place. No good, no good. It'll render you to pieces.

It's tearing up society now, trying to ignore God's holy law. It'll take you and tear you to pieces, because the law of God's got to be dealt with. You can't evade it forever.

It's going to catch up with you sometime. You know what hell is? It's in that cry, my God. I can't even say it.

My God, why hast thou forsaken me? I say hell. Hell is a proof of the utter severity of God's holy law. Come on, come on, tell me why Jesus Christ was stretched out on that awful cross.

Tell me why he had to endure nakedness, people making fun of him. Tell me why the best, purest man that ever lived, he was more than that, but he was that. Why they stretched him out on a tree and did him to death.

Don't spend your life down here on this earth and never face that question. Tell me why. Tell me why.

Face it until you can come up with an answer that satisfies you, but for God's sake, face it. Come up with an answer that he was just a good man ahead of his time, and he's a martyr to his concept. I think that winds up in you, but at least that's an answer.

For God's sake, face it. Tell me why. Let's get away with hypocrisy and religious cat and get down to business.

Tell me why. Let's get away with all this worship and Jesus business and salvation and heaven and hell and the whole outfit, if that's the answer. Let's join in the Lord.

Let's fall down and worship him. For he's either the biggest madman that ever walked the face of the earth, And yet, for he is the Lord of Glory, God manifests in this place. Bring in Dionysus to satisfy the awful vengeance and hatred of Almighty God against Caesar or somebody.

And then on to God, if you come to that conclusion, get out on your hands and knees and start crawling. Till he embraces you with everlasting power and you find rest and safety in him. You must attain salvation from Satan.

You need to get desperate about it. And that salvation from Satan comes only through you and your back one who hung on that cross and now sits on that throne. The only thing that will keep you out of hell is what Jesus did on that cross.

The only thing that will give you life eternal is power from him who sits on that throne. You need to get desperate about it, desperate about it. Anything except sitting on the fence.

Anything except make believe. Get desperate. My young girl, my daughter, was 30 years old yesterday, Armistice Day.

When she was a little fella, the old folks came to spend Christmas with us. And as Christmas Day was right over, I had a movie and picture projector, and we all sat down on the floor of the front room of our house. I put up a screen and we showed a very poor but the best picture I've seen on the crucifixion.

I know it was very poor. My girl, she had to help me with a machine, you know. In fact, it got running.

She sat in my lap as I stayed near the machine to watch it and work it. And that scene began to unfold. I know no mouth can talk about it, no picture could portray the awfulness of what took place there.

But as that crucifixion scene rolled out on that screen, my girl began to cry. That's why she quit crying. She began to sob.

While it was going on, she put her arms around Daddy's neck. I don't know how much she understood, but she asked a very tremendous question. Daddy, why did they treat Jesus so mean? That's a good question.

I tried to tell her about that most wonderful thing between the heavens. I'm sure that anybody ever believes it or not. Wonderful that God turned his blessed son, his darling, over to wicked men.

And that men knew what they were doing and they had malice in it. And that men killed Jesus. But that there's something else going on there.

That God bruised his son. And I tried to tell my girl, I believe the Spirit of God made it real good. That the reason Jesus went through the agony of being utterly despised by men and utterly forsaken by God was as he was there in my stead.

Folks, God got all his eggs in that basket. That don't break your heart. You just have to go ahead.

I can't answer your question. It's awfully difficult. I just tell you that he was desperate.

Kneel there before him hanging on a cross. Stay there and look to him on the throne, the same one. See the merits of what he did for you there and look up to him and say, Life, life, life for Jesus.

A father took his 13-year-old boy to see that wonderful portrait of the crucifixion. It is blessed. They stood there and looked at that terrible, mangrove face.

And the little 13-year-old boy looked up at daddy and said, Daddy, if God had been there, that wouldn't have happened. And the daddy said, No, son, God was there. That's why it happened.

It was there that God was reconciling a world that couldn't save. Thank God. That's the reason.

We just sing over and over again. Sing it with me again now. I hear the Savior speak.

Thy strength in me is full. I love the hopeless, watch and pray. I know He, I know Jesus.

Oh, oh, to Him I owe. Let's stand together while we sing a little piece. See, Lord.

See it? One of the best friends I had when I was a chaplain in the Second World War was an Orthodox Jewish chaplain. He carried the New Testament with him in his pocket and read from the words that Jesus every day of his life. He said he was well and I convinced that Jesus was as great a teacher as Moses.

And he said to me, Brother Chaplain, if I could believe that Jesus, that Jew, was born in a little town called Bethlehem, we don't need a Bible to tell us that, that's just so is it. Lived in Nazareth, don't have to have the Bible to tell us that. Crucified on Golgotha, don't have to have a Bible to tell us that.

History books record that. He said if I could believe that Jesus was the Son of God, I'd fall in love and worship Him and love Him and serve Him till the day I die. Wouldn't you? If we could believe that that one hanging on a tree was God manifest in the flesh, we'd worship Him and love Him and serve Him till the day we die.

I will sing that verse again. Somebody that needs to be desperate right now, would you fall at his feet tonight? Throw away your little answers and your doubts and just catch yourself at his feet. Be like the old gentleman, throw up your hands and say, Comrade.

I surrender. You did what you did for me and who the Bible says you are and I believe it. You can have me locked, stuck in there.

You have all my love, all my service, my worship. God grant somebody can do that tonight. Let's sing that verse.

Come on, sing it.

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