



*Deut. 2:24-37*

*Flee to Christ from the Wrath to Come!*

24 " ' Rise, take your journey, and cross over the River Arnon. Look, I have given into your hand Sihon the Amorite, king of Heshbon, and his land. Begin to possess it, and engage him in battle.

25 'This day I will begin to put the dread and fear of you upon the nations under the whole heaven, who shall hear the report of you, and shall tremble and be in anguish because of you.'

26 " And I sent messengers from the Wilderness of Kedemoth to Sihon king of Heshbon, with words of peace, saying,

27 'Let me pass through your land; I will keep strictly to the road, and I will turn neither to the right nor to the left.

28 'You shall sell me food for money, that I may eat, and give me water for money, that I may drink; only let me pass through on foot,

29 'just as the descendants of Esau who dwell in Seir and the Moabites who dwell in Ar did for me, until I cross the Jordan to the land which the LORD our God is giving us.'

30 "But Sihon king of Heshbon would not let us pass through, for the LORD your God hardened his spirit and made his heart obstinate, that He might deliver him into your hand, as it is this day.

31 "And the LORD said to me, 'See, I have begun to give Sihon and his land over to you. Begin to possess it, that you may inherit his land.'

32 "Then Sihon and all his people came out against us to fight at Jahaz.

33 "And the LORD our God delivered him over to us; so we defeated him, his sons, and all his people.

34 "We took all his cities at that time, and we utterly destroyed the men, women, and little ones of every city; we left none remaining.

35 "We took only the livestock as plunder for ourselves, with the spoil of the cities which we took.

36 "From Aroer, which is on the bank of the River Arnon, and from the city that is in the ravine, as far as Gilead, there was not one city too strong for us; the LORD our God delivered all to us.

37 "Only you did not go near the land of the people of Ammon -- anywhere along the River Jabbok, or to the cities of the mountains, or wherever the LORD our God had forbidden us.

Today I want to talk about an uncomfortable subject, something that not only our society doesn't like to talk about, but something that has even become something of a taboo subject in the church. I want to talk to you about final judgment and Hell.

We like to talk about heaven, I personally love to talk about heaven, I love to think about it, and what it will be like. I look forward to it with eager anticipation. But the bible doesn't only talk about heaven as a final destination for the departed, does it? It also talks about hell. Now personally, I don't like to contemplate or talk about hell, but the fact is my Lord and Savior Jesus speaks of hell and warns of hell, more often than he speaks of heaven. And he uses shocking imagery when he does so. It is in every sense the polar opposite of heaven. He says it will be a place of everlasting punishment, a place where the worm does not die and the fire is not quenched, a place of outer darkness and weeping and gnashing of teeth. It is a place where no one should want to go and yet it is the end of the broad path that most people are traveling on. Some in fact are not just walking towards it, they are sprinting towards it, and as they do so they have nothing but contempt for offers of mercy, and nothing but scorn

for warnings of what is to come. You've probably met people like that, you may even be related to them, or you may well be one of those people yourself. I am not so naïve as to think that merely because I'm preaching in a church that there are not some here who have no interest in the offer of the gospel.

Sihon and the Amorites were a people who had for generations been traveling on the broad road that leads to destruction and getting progressively worse and worse. But the Lord had not immediately judged them for their prodigious sins, because He is as Exodus 34:6 puts it *merciful and gracious, longsuffering, and abounding in goodness and truth*. He extended to them a time of grace, a long time of grace as a matter of fact he had told Abraham that he would wait for hundred of years:

***Gen. 15:13 Then He said to Abram: "Know certainly that your descendants will be strangers in a land that is not theirs, and will serve them, and they will afflict them four hundred years.***

***14 "And also the nation whom they serve I will judge; afterward they shall come out with great possessions.***

***15 "Now as for you, you shall go to your fathers in peace; you shall be buried at a good old age.***

***16 "But in the fourth generation they shall return here, for the iniquity of the Amorites is not yet complete."***

As God promised for 400 years Abraham's descendents were afflicted under bondage in Egypt, they were delivered when God judged that nation, but God they would only enter into the promised land after hundreds of years have passed. Why can't they just go in now, in Abram's generation? Why did they have to labor in Egypt for so long, why did he delay?... because the iniquity of the Amorites is not yet complete

God was waiting for them to repent, giving them time, he will not judge them until their sins, so to speak, reach the high water mark. He waited until they had stored up the full measure of wrath. God's mercy is so great he is willing to wait hundreds of years and even put the final deliverance of his people on Hold.

Now during that time sadly the Amorites did not use that time at all well, they made certain in fact that when the judgment of God fell upon them that no one could say that it was anything but righteous. We get upset by the utter destruction of that people spoken of in verse 34, because they were a people who had become *cherem* that is devoted to destruction, but we forget three things. First that God was mightily patient, longsuffering, and that during the time of his forbearance, they gave themselves over to every abomination under the Sun. Not only did they fail to serve and glorify the Lord as their creator, they worshipped and served false Gods. The Lord warns his people again and again, you have to guard your hearts because you are entering into a land where the current inhabitants practice all sorts of abominations. He lists just a few of them off in Leviticus 18, I'll just list a few of those: Idolatry, Adultery, Homosexuality, Bestiality, the Sacrifice of their children by burning them alive, Ritual Prostitution, and the list goes on and on, he speaks of them as defiling the land, and that the land will vomit them forth.

Finally even as God's judgment is approaching, in the advance of His people towards the promised land, they are yet given a last chance to avoid destruction in this world. Moses sends messengers with words of peace to Sihon, he even tells them they may enrich themselves by selling food and water to the vast multitude of Israel, they are offered blessings. But they bat them aside as well, and initiate the war. They refuse the grace of God for the final time, their hearts are hardened, and that is inevitably the

case with all to whom God's offers of peace come unless He himself changes their heart. They literally sprint the last few yards into the pit.

God's people on the other hand, had obeyed his instructions not to initiate war with any of the nations on the east side of the Jordan not dedicated to destruction, and now he blesses their obedience and there is a less there for us, as Matthew Henry puts it: ***"If we forbear what God forbids, we shall receive what he promises, and shall be no losers at last by our obedience, though it may seem for the present to be to our loss. Wrong not others, and God shall right thee."***

They inherit the land of Arnon, and they plunder the possessions of the Amorites because God has delivered the Amorites into their hand, there is not one city that can resist the people of Israel. The Amorites had a time of grace given to them, they abused it, and it closed and words cannot describe the terror of the righteous judgment the fell upon them first in this world, and then the next.

But what of you, brothers and sisters? You too are living in the age of grace, in this time God is gracious and longsuffering towards you. He had come near to you and pled with you again and again:

***2 Cor. 5:20 Now then, we are ambassadors for Christ, as though God were pleading through us: we implore you on Christ's behalf, be reconciled to God.***

***21 For He made Him who knew no sin to be sin for us, that we might become the righteousness of God in Him.***

***2 Corinthians 6:1 We then, as workers together with Him also plead with you not to receive the grace of God in vain.***

***2 For He says: "In an acceptable time I have heard you, And in the day of salvation I have helped you." Behold, now is the accepted time; behold, now is the day of salvation.***

***Acts 16:31 "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and you will be saved, you and your household."***

Have you responded to that message or do you scorn it, do you think, tomorrow I'll repent. But the age of grace comes to an end. The offer of mercy will expire. And it may be, that tomorrow will be the end of that offer. Perhaps you do not yet feel the peril of your situation?

***"The God that holds you over the pit of hell, much as one holds a spider, or some loathsome insect over the fire, abhors you, and is dreadfully provoked: his wrath towards you burns like fire; he looks upon you as worthy of nothing else, but to be cast into the fire; he is of purer eyes than to bear to have you in his sight; you are ten thousand times more abominable in his eyes, than the most hateful venomous serpent is in ours. You have offended him infinitely more than ever a stubborn rebel did his prince; and yet it is nothing but his hand that holds you from falling into the fire every moment. It is to be ascribed to nothing else, that you did not go to hell the last night; that you was suffered to awake again in this world, after you closed your eyes to sleep. And there is no other reason to be given, why you have not dropped into hell since you arose in the morning, but that God's hand has held you up. There is no other reason to be given why you have not gone to hell, since you have sat here in the house of God, provoking his pure eyes by your sinful wicked manner of attending his solemn worship. Yea, there is nothing else that is to be given as a reason why you do not this very moment drop down into hell.***

***O sinner! Consider the fearful danger you are in: it is a great furnace of wrath, a wide and bottomless pit, full of the fire of wrath, that you are held over in the hand of that God, whose wrath***

*is provoked and incensed as much against you, as against many of the damned in hell. You hang by a slender thread, with the flames of divine wrath flashing about it, and ready every moment to singe it, and burn it asunder; and you have no interest in any Mediator, and nothing to lay hold of to save yourself, nothing to keep off the flames of wrath, nothing of your own, nothing that you ever have done, nothing that you can do, to induce God to spare you one moment.” – Jonathan Edwards*

*Romans 2:5 But in accordance with your hardness and your impenitent heart you are treasuring up for yourself wrath in the day of wrath and revelation of the righteous judgment of God,*

*6 who "will render to each one according to his deeds":*

*7 eternal life to those who by patient continuance in doing good seek for glory, honor, and immortality;*

*8 but to those who are self-seeking and do not obey the truth, but obey unrighteousness -- indignation and wrath,*

*9 tribulation and anguish, on every soul of man who does evil, of the Jew first and also of the Greek;*

*10 but glory, honor, and peace to everyone who works what is good, to the Jew first and also to the Greek.*

*11 For there is no partiality with God.*

*12 For as many as have sinned without law will also perish without law, and as many as have sinned in the law will be judged by the law*

I have warned you to flee to Christ from the wrath to come, and to do so today, and I hope as I have done so you will understand that I do so out of love and a desire for the eternal well-being of your souls. I hope you won't hesitate to do the same for the people you know and love. A man once asked his neighbor why his church got rid of their old pastor and got a new one and he said, the old pastor kept telling us we were going to Hell. The man asked, what does the new one say, he says were going to Hell as well. So whats the difference asked the neighbor. Well the old pastor seemed to be glad about that, the new one seems to be broken hearted about it.