

**John 3: 36; “The Wrath of God Abiding”, Sermon # 25 in the series – “That All May Honor the Son”, Delivered by Pastor Paul Rendall on March 9<sup>th</sup>, 2014, in the Morning Worship Service.**

It is the most important thing which you will ever do in your life; to believe in the Son of God. But what is the difference between saving faith and a faith that will not save? In the case of many people it is that they do not believe in the reality of the wrath of God. They do believe in God in a general sense, and yet they only see Him as a God of love. They do not see Him as a God of Justice and Judgment as the Bible portrays Him. Many believe that God should accept them as they are, in their sins, and according to their own ideas of Him. And if their ideas of Him do not square with what the Bible says about God, then they reject the truth of the word of God by insisting to themselves and declaring to others an opinion which they have formed in their own mind. They believe that their conception of what God is like must be the correct one, for a loving God, they think, would never send anyone to hell. I want to assert to you from this verse that this is a very sad and dangerous view of God. If it is persisted in, the person who believes it will indeed end up in hell. But let us understand that people can change by believing in our Lord Jesus Christ. Their minds and their hearts can change by the mighty grace of our Savior, and the wrath of God can be lifted from them. This morning I would like to open up this subject, about how you can have the wrath of God lifted off of you, by telling you 1<sup>st</sup> of all about the everlasting joy which comes from knowing that Christ is your Savior. 2<sup>nd</sup> – I want to speak to you about great importance of correctly understanding God’s wrath. And 3<sup>rd</sup> – I want to ask you whether you are sure that the wrath of God is not abiding on you? I trust that these truths and their applications will have significance for both Christians and non-Christians alike.

**1<sup>st</sup> of all – Let me tell you about the everlasting joy which comes from knowing that Christ is your Savior.**

“He who believes in the Son has everlasting life.” Now see here the importance of looking carefully at the tense of the verb in the wording of this verse. It is given to us in the present on-going sense; “He who believes in the Son.” (Present tense, active, nominative, singular ) It is true that in other places John speaks of “having believed”, but here he speaks of the one who believes and continues to rest the whole weight of all of their soul’s concerns upon Christ Himself and what He has done for them, not upon what they are doing for Christ. It is not as though what we do for Christ is not important; it is. And it is very essential to determining whether you have a true and saving faith; whether having believed in Christ, that you are engaging in good works. Because faith without works is a dead faith. But in order to come to have real and lasting joy and an assurance of your salvation, you will need to understand that all that you will do in living the Christian life to the glory of God must be done in Christ. It must be done from the vantage point of faith in His blood and righteousness. This is what brings true and lasting happiness; this is what will bring you a sweet and calm assurance of your salvation. You have trusted in Christ’s finished work of righteously fulfilling God’s law; you have been given the Holy Spirit, and because of this you now have a living faith. God has imputed Christ’s righteousness to your legal account. You are now accepted in the Beloved. “He who believes in the Son has everlasting life”; not they might have it someday if they do well enough and persevere in it in their own strength in trying to do God’s will. No, you are justified by Christ’s having had the perfect will to do the will of God. And you are sanctified by Christ’s will, His having the will to be holy in all of His behavior, and to suffer and die for your sins so that you would be seen by God clothed in the righteousness of Christ. The Lord Jesus is the One who has done all of God’s will on your behalf, so that you could be declared righteous in God’s sight by His perfect work.

Hebrews 10, verse 5 says: “Therefore, when He came into the world, He said: ‘Sacrifice and offering You did not desire, but a body You have prepared for Me.’ “In burnt offerings and sacrifices for sin You had no pleasure.” “Then I said, ‘Behold I have come—In the volume of the book it is written of Me—To do your will, O God.’ “Previously saying, ‘Sacrifice and offering, burnt offerings, and offerings for sin You did not desire, nor had pleasure in them’ (which are offered according to the law), then He said, ‘Behold I have come to do Your will, O God.’ “He takes away the first that He may establish the second.” “By that will we have been sanctified (you have been set apart for both a definitive and a progressive work of the Holy Spirit in your heart which will lead you on to holiness) through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once for all.” Listen to John Calvin’s comments on this verse: “This (verse 36 of John 3) was added, not only to inform us that we ought to ask all good things from Christ, but likewise to make us acquainted with the manner in which they are enjoyed.” “He shows that enjoyment consists in faith; and not without reason, since by means of it we possess Christ, who brings along with him both righteousness and life, which is the fruit of righteousness.” “When faith in Christ is declared to be the cause of life, we learn from it that life is to be found in Christ alone, and that in no other way do we become partakers of it than by the grace of Christ himself.” “But all are not agreed as to the way in which the life of Christ comes to us.” “Some understand it thus: “as by believing we receive the Spirit, who regenerates us in order to justification, by that very regeneration we obtain salvation.” “For my own part, though I acknowledge it to be true, that we are renewed by faith, so that the Spirit of Christ governs us, yet I say that we ought first to take into consideration the free forgiveness of sins, through which we are accepted by God.” “Again, I say that on this all our confidence of salvation is founded, and in this it consists; because justification before God cannot be reckoned to us in any other way than when he does not impute to us our sins.”

He is saying that our first true assurance of salvation will be found by the continued on-going exercise of faith in what Jesus Christ has done for us, from first to last. We go from faith to faith in discovering more and more of how Christ becomes our helper in every aspect of our obedience unto God. This on-going trust in Christ which will surely bring to us have the assurance of our faith, will also, by the Spirit’s working and power, lead us on to discover that, by keeping Christ’s commandments, we shall surely come to have the assurance of hope as we learn to exercise faith and love in Christ. This is the great difference between the person who merely says that they believe in Jesus and the person who by faith in Jesus really begins to engage themselves in the holy duties of their heart religion which will lead them on to maturity and usefulness in Christ’s service. Our Confession in Chapter 18 paragraph 1 says: ‘Although temporary believers and other unregenerate men, may vainly deceive themselves with false hopes and carnal presumptions of being in the favor of God and in a state of salvation, which hope of their shall perish; yet such as truly believe in the Lord Jesus, and love Him in sincerity, endeavoring to walk in all good conscience before Him, may in this life be certainly assured that they are in the state of grace, and may rejoice in the hope of the glory of God, which hope shall never make them ashamed.’

Listen to Richard Baxter in his book, “The Saints Everlasting Rest” – “Another very great and common cause of the want of comfort is, when grace is not kept in constant and lively exercise.” “The way of painful duty, is the way of fullest comfort.” “Peace and comfort are Christ’s great encouragements to faithfulness and obedience: and therefore, though our obedience does not merit them, yet they usually rise and fall with our diligence in duty.” “As prayer must have faith and fervency to procure its success, besides the blood and intercession of Christ, so must all other parts of our obedience.” “If you grow seldom, and customary, and cold in duty, especially in your secret prayers to God, and yet your find no abatement in your joys, I cannot but fear but that your joys are either carnal or diabolical.” “Besides, grace is never

apparent and sensible to the soul, but while it is in action; therefore want of action must cause want of assurance.” “And the action of the soul upon such excellent objects naturally bringeth consolation with it.” “The very act of loving God in Christ is inexpressibly sweet.” –The soul that is best furnished with grace, when it is not in action, is like a lute well stringed and tuned, which while it lies still makes no more music than a common piece of wood; but when it is handled by a skilful musician, the melody is delightful.” “Some degree of comfort follows every good action, as heat accompanies fire, and as beams and influence issue from the sun.” A man that is cold should labour till heat be excited; so he that wants assurance, must not stand still, but exercise his graces, till his doubts vanish.”(End of Quote)

Now, this is what I am saying brings everlasting joy and true happiness in this life; it is trusting and believing in Jesus in everything that you do. Others around you will begin to see the strength of your faith and the steadfastness of your hope, and your love for God and for them. Listen to the Apostle Paul in 2<sup>nd</sup> Corinthians 2: 14 – “Now thanks be to God who always leads us in triumph in Christ, and through us diffuses the fragrance of His knowledge in every place.” “For we are to God the fragrance of Christ among those who are being saved, and among those who are perishing.” “To the one we are the aroma of death leading to death, and to the other the aroma of life leading to life.” “And who is sufficient for these things?” “For we are not, as so many, peddling the word of God; but as of sincerity, but as from God, we speak in the sight of God in Christ.” “Do we begin to commend ourselves?” “Or do we need, as some others, epistles of commendation to you or letters of commendation from you?” “You are our epistle written in our hearts, known and read by all men; clearly you are an epistle of Christ, ministered by us, written not with ink but by the Spirit of the living God, not on tablets of stone but on tablets of flesh, that is, of the heart.” And we have such trust through Christ toward God.” “Not that we are sufficient of ourselves to think anything as being from ourselves, but our sufficiency is from God.”

Let me ask you now, whether this is your heart and your experience? You have come to realize the sufficiency of Christ to care for all of your spiritual needs. And you have come to see your own insufficiency to be able to minister to God and to others around you apart from the grace of Christ. “How blessed is he whose transgression is forgiven, whose sin is covered.” “Blessed is the man to whom the Lord does not impute iniquity, and in whose spirit there is no deceit.” (Psalm 32: 1 and 2) Realize, dear believer in Christ, that the Holy Spirit is with you; He is working in your life, and He is leading you in triumph by the life of Christ being given to you day by day in the form of grace to your needy heart. You will come to realize that it is grace upon grace. Your boast will not be in yourself and your own great abilities. Your boast will be in the Lord and you are trusting Him to continue to forgive all of your sins, and to give you grace sufficient for every day and every situation in your day. This reality of Christ’s grace and His power brings you great joy. You remember the words of the Lord Jesus – “As the Father loved Me, I also have loved you; abide in My love.” “If you keep My commandments, you will abide in My love, just as I have kept My father’s commandments and abide in His love.” “These things I have spoken to you, that My joy may remain in you, and your joy may be full.”

### **2nd – I want to speak to you about great importance of correctly understanding God’s wrath.**

“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.” Now the wording here is very interesting. John the Baptist is not simply saying that eventually when a person dies, if they have not believed in Jesus that they will go to hell; although that is true. He is saying that the person who has not yet believed in Jesus, is even now under the wrath of God. He is saying that if a person has not believed in Jesus Christ the wrath of God, which He has been under since his birth, remains upon him all through his life until He believes in Jesus. God’s wrath was most

certainly there upon him, as a spiritual reality, before his conversion. A person may not be aware of this at all, because of God's great goodness and kindness in common grace to so many people. God is good and kind, "even to unthankful and evil men". (Luke 6: 35) He is longsuffering and patience, "not desirous that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance". (2<sup>nd</sup> Peter 3: 9) This truth that the wrath of God abides on all unbelievers is something which is very important for everyone to understand, Christian and non-Christian alike, and so I would like to open it up by looking at other verses which comment upon this truth. So turn with me over to Ephesians Chapter 2, verse 1. "And you He made alive, who were dead in trespasses and sins, in which you once walked according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air, the spirit who now works in the sons of disobedience, among whom also we all once conducted ourselves in the lusts of the flesh, fulfilling the desires of the mind, and were by nature children of wrath, just as the rest." Notice the description which Paul gives here of what all Christians were like before they came to Christ; those who had not believed in the Son. It says that they were children of wrath, even as the rest of mankind; those who are outside of Christ, because they had not believed in Him. In other words, all of mankind are under the wrath of God because of their sin, from the moment that they are born until they come to Jesus Christ, if they do. I think that this is a truth which many people have not reckoned with. It is true that all mankind are loved in the general sense of God's giving them the gospel, as is so clearly said in John 3: 16. But as individuals, as long as they do not believe in Christ, they are under God's righteous wrath and indignation because of Adam's sin in the beginning, and because unbelievers confirm their having inherited a sinful nature from Adam, each and every day, by their own sins which they commit. In Psalm 58, verse 3, David says of sinners, "The wicked are estranged from the womb; they go astray as soon as they are born, speaking lies." And Psalm 2, verse 11, it says: "Serve the Lord with fear, and rejoice with trembling." "Kiss the Son, lest He be angry, and you perish in the way, when His wrath is kindled but a little." "Blessed are all those who put their trust in Him." And Psalm 7, verse 11 says: "God is a just judge, and God is angry with the wicked every day." "If he does not turn back, He will sharpen His sword; He bends His bow and makes it ready." "He also prepares for Himself instruments of death; He makes His arrows into fiery shafts."

Now turn over with me to Romans Chapter 2, verse 4. Here the Apostle Paul says: "Or do you despise the riches of His goodness, forbearance, and longsuffering, not knowing that the goodness of God leads you to repentance?" "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, who will render to every man according to his deeds: eternal life to those who by patient continuance in doing good seek for glory, honor, and immortality; but to those who are self-seeking and do not obey the truth, but obey unrighteousness—indignation and wrath, tribulation and anguish, on every soul of man who does evil, of the Jew first and also of the Greek, but glory, honor, and peace to everyone who works what is good, to the Jew first and also to the Greek." "For there is no partiality with God." Now, I hope that you can see that God's anger is not like man's in certain very important ways. God is not given to outbursts of anger, and the reason for this is that He is without sin in His anger. He is perfect in His judgments concerning you and your thoughts and actions. His anger is on a slow steady burn and it will not be kindled until He decides that the time is right, whether it is in His temporal, earthly judgments that He brings upon men or societies; or when He will begin to eternally display His wrath against all sin and sinners at the Day of Judgment.

God's wrath, you see, is upon all persons outside of Jesus Christ, even now, because they are still in Adam. Being in Adam and not in Christ, their spiritual father is the devil, and the deeds of their father they will do. God renders to each man in Adam, according to their deeds. He will also at the Day of Judgment reward all Christians according to their deeds. But they shall not be

condemned, neither experience the least touch of the wrath of God, because of Christ's suffering in their place. But when you are in Adam and outside of Christ, you are storing up wrath by every sinful thought and every sinful deed that you do. And as you live your life in Adam, wrath is being stored up with God based upon the reality of whether you are continuing in your sin or whether you will repent of it; and in the case of our verse, whether you will believe in Christ or not believe in Him. Nothing and no one can satisfy that burning wrath of God against sinners and their sins except our Lord Jesus Christ, who has satisfied God's justice at the cross. When you are trusting in the Lord Jesus Christ, God's wrath is turned away from you; it is lifted up off of you, because for you and all who will believe in Him, the Lord Jesus bore the punishment of God's wrath, which was due to you. It says in Romans 3: 23 – "For all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, being justified freely by His grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus, whom God set forth as a propitiation by His blood, through faith, to demonstrate His righteousness... that He might be just and the justifier of the one who has faith in Jesus." This is why, "He who believes in the Son has everlasting life." It is because Christ Jesus has born the wrath of all of God's elect people. He has suffered under the wrath of God when He was crucified. God poured out His wrath on Jesus, and He suffered there for you, if you will believe in Him. When by faith you look to Him as your substitute, being punished in your place, the great transaction takes place. You believe in your heart, not only that Jesus died, but that He rose again on your behalf, and God's righteousness is charged to your account and imputed to your person. The wrath of God no longer rests upon you, and you are actually declared righteous in the sight of God for Jesus' sake, once and forever.

**3<sup>rd</sup> – In closing this message, I simply want to ask you whether you are sure that the wrath of God is not abiding on you?**

For you must deal with this issue of whether Christ is yours before you die and are launched out into eternity. If you are still under the wrath of God when you die, your state will be eternally fixed. You will forever lie down in torments and never find relief. And all this because you would not consider your state now. Your sins truly deserve an eternal punishment, for you have sinned against an eternally wise and holy God who created you for Himself. He expected you to live for Him, but you would not have it. You only wanted to live for yourself. You have been storing up wrath for the Day of wrath. But even now, you will find mercy if you will believe that Jesus is the righteous one; that He is the Holy One, and that He is the Just One. The Lord Jesus has paid all the punishment due to your sins if you will only trust in Him now. "Though your sins be as scarlet, He will wash them white as snow." "Though they be red like crimson, they shall be as wool." Don't leave here today until you have laid your sins on Jesus the spotless Lamb of God. You will never regret fleeing from the wrath to come. And what is even better, is that by faith, the Son of God shall enter your heart. He shall set up His residence in your soul by the presence of His Holy Spirit. And He will bring you His life and His joy forever. And you shall have a New Heart and a New Life; Christ's life that will bless you forevermore.