

BLOCKADES ON THE ROAD TO HELL

"The Lord is not slack concerning His promise, as some men count slackness; but is longsuffering to us-ward, not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance." II Peter 3:9.

God's Word plainly teaches that there is a place of eternal punishment for the impenitent. Some people do not believe that there is a hell. The doctrine of unending torment is repulsive to the unsaved, so some of them reject it because they do not want to believe it. The wish is father to the thought. I make no apology whatever for believing that there is a hell, and for preaching about it. There are fifty-four passages in God's Word where it is positively stated that there is a hell, and as many more, at least, where it is clearly implied. As certainly as there is a heaven, there is a hell.

Nobody ever went to hell because of the wish of God. There never will be a soul in hell because God chose or elected its damnation. God does not will the destruction of any man. He has done and is doing everything possible to keep people from that awful doom that awaits the impenitent soul.

Satan takes delight in capturing souls for eternal ruin. He desires the destruction of every soul. He is the master mind who plans opposition to God and leads men to reject the will and wish of God. Satan is doing everything possible to get people to enter the regions of the eternally lost. And God is making it more difficult for the sinner to reach that place.

Throughout the Bible, beginning the very day that man first sinned until the close of the book of Revelation, the call of God rings out to a lost world as He pleads with men, as He warns, as He calls, and as He invites lost people to repent and believe in order that they may be saved from their sins. From the day that Adam and Eve sinned, God has been seeking those who are lost. It is always God who makes the first move in the salvation of every soul that is ever saved. When Jesus came He announced everywhere. "The Son of man is come to seek and to save that which was lost." Thank God for a loving, compassionate, and seeking Saviour!

In order to keep people from going to hell, God has placed blockades on the road that leads there. The only way a lost sinner can reach the final abode of the wicked is to burrow under God's blockades or to climb over them. If any person in this audience goes to hell, it will not be God's fault. God does not want you to be lost, but He is anxious for you to be saved. He is doing everything possible to bring you to repentance. Of course, He cannot save you if you will not repent. He is doing His best to turn you out of the path of sin and destruction into the path of righteousness, which leads to heaven. God has placed numerous obstacles in the path of sin, which leads to hell. You cannot go on in that way without surmounting one obstacle after another. If you go to hell, it will be in spite of all God has done and can do. Let us, therefore, briefly examine some of these obstacles.

I. The Love of God.

The doctrine that God honestly and earnestly desires the salvation of the sinner is everywhere taught in the Bible, and in the strongest terms. "As I live, saith the Lord, God, I have no pleasure in the death of the wicked; but that the wicked turn from his way and live." Ezekiel 33:11. For this is good and acceptable in the sight of God our Saviour; who will have all men to be saved, and to come to acknowledgment of the truth." II Tim. 2:4. "Not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance." II Peter 3:9. Many other passages might be quoted to show how earnestly God longs for the salvation of the greatest sinner, and that when the sinner perishes, it is not because there is no love for him in the heart of God, not because the blood of Christ has not been shed for him, not because that blood has no power to save him but simply because he persistently refuses to be saved by God's appointed method, namely, through faith in the crucified, buried and risen Saviour, the Lord Jesus Christ. "For God so loved the world that he gave His only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life."

To prove to you that God cares if you go to hell, I have only to remind you that the invitation and plea and call of God to lost souls occurs more than nineteen hundred times in the pages of His blessed Book. That means that, because of His love for lost souls, He does not want any of them to go to hell. Oh, how the heart of the Heavenly Father yearns over lost souls. How He pleads! How He calls! Yes, God cares if souls go to hell.

II. The Word of God.

This Book is of Divine origin. It is accurate in its statements, whether they be historical, scientific or spiritual. It can be relied upon as a safe guide. It is the final authority in all matters pertaining to the welfare of the soul. It is the chart and compass for lost souls. Through its pages God says just what He means and stops there. It is an exact compass and constitutes man's only guide on his earthly pilgrimage, and affords the only light on his eternal residence.

God's Word is His looking glass. It reflects man in his true condition. It brings our spiritual faults, wrinkles and diseases. It reveals man's inability to recover himself by good works, character building, or education. This accurate reflection of man's spiritual nature enrages and infuriates certain types of mind.

An elephant will not drink water from a clear stream. He knows that he is the ugliest animal in all creation. Clear water reflects his countenance to himself. He becomes enraged when he sees himself in the water. With his snout he will muddy the water, before drinking it, in order to keep from looking at himself. Sinners likewise pass by the church and refuse to study the Bible for the simple reason that they do not want to see themselves in God's looking glass.

You cannot get far in sin without finding the Bible in your way. It makes people uneasy in their sins. That is the reason why some hate it; they are determined to go on in their sins, but the Bible stands in their way. How often a person has been turned back from the path of sin by a single verse in the Bible. "Prepare to meet thy God." "The wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord."

III. The Lives of Christians.

Think of the earnest prayers of Christian fathers and mothers for the salvation of their children. Oh, the influence of those godly parents as they have lived before their children and witnessed to them! How faithfully many of them have taught the plan of salvation to their children, and yet some of them are still unsaved! So many kind words have been spoken and numerous kind deeds have been done with an earnest hope that the lost might be saved.

How many have been turned from Satan to Christ, and sin to salvation, as a result of the scriptural sermons which they have heard! Every sermon is a warning to the impenitent. It is a signal of danger. It is a call to an acceptance of Christ. It is a call to safety and satisfaction. It is a blockade to eternal woe. Ignore the call of God through gospel sermons and you will not have anyone to blame in eternity but yourself for your lost condition. Sometimes the sermon does its work years afterward.

IV. The Wooing of the Holy Spirit.

In the infinite mercy, grace, wisdom and plan of God, the Holy Spirit came into the world to convict the world of sin, of righteousness, and of judgment. In order for the Holy Spirit to do His indispensable work of convicting lost souls, in order for Him to woo and to draw these lost souls to God, He must have a channel through which He can work. And that channel is the redeemed of God. Jesus said, "No man can come unto Me, except the Father which hath sent Me draw him." That drawing power is the Holy Spirit. You have felt His drawing power. He also gave you a longing for something better. As you sit and listen to this message, you may be saying to yourself, "I wonder if I had better not become a Christian now?" What is prompting you to think thus? It is the Holy Spirit blockading the road to hell for you. Yield to His wooing and accept Christ as your Saviour.

V. The Cross of Christ.

This cross closed the dispensation of law, and opened the period of grace. Under the law, man was required by ceremonail observances to be righteous. Under grace, we witness God extending through the cross righteousness to unrighteous men, the atonement covering the guilt an unrighteousness of sinning man.

One cannot get far down the path of sin until he sees looming up before him the cross of Christ. On that Christ there hangs a Man, the Son of Man, the Son of God. There you see Him hanging with nails in His hands and His feet, and a voice says, "It was for you. I bore this for you. I died for you."

If you will read the words which fell from His lips, you can never doubt how Jesus cares about sinners going to hell. So much does He care that He left Heaven's glory, emptied Himself and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross. Yes, He went all the way to Calvary and there shed the last drop of His blood; there made His soul an offering for sin, that many might be saved. If you go to hell, you will go over the greatest love this world has ever known; you will go in spite of the greatest effort that has ever been made in this universe, relative to anything God had to do. And, besides, if you go to hell, you will go to a place where you are not wanted. If those who have gone to hell could speak, they would say,

"Preacher, tell them not to come to this terrible place!" The only being in the universe that wants you to go to hell is the devil. And if you go to hell, it will be because you listened to him. But it will be over the cross of Christ.

Let me close this message with this story. A godly old man had a worthless son. The boy was unscrupulous. He was more anxious to make money than he was for honor or anything else. He decided to go into that infamous business in which money is to be made, but which no self-respecting man, much less a Christian, will engage, the liquor business. Any man who is willing to coin money out of the liquor business will coin money out of the tears of broken-hearted wives, out of the groans and sighs of drunkards children, out of the hearts' blood of their fellow-men, for the liquor traffic is sending thousands to premature graves annually. This godless traffic is causing more sorrow more ruined homes, and more wretchedness than almost everything else. And every one who has stock in the business, or words in the industry, or handles it in any way is a party to the crime, and is guilty before and accountable to God for his or her sin.

And so, this young man told his father that he was going to open a saloon. The old father remonstrated with the son, saying, "My boy, you bear an honored name which has never been disgraced before. Don't disgrace it by putting it up over a saloon. And besides, son, it isn't right to coin money out of the weakness of others." But the son was so bent on money-making that he would not listen to his father.

On the morning when he opened the saloon, the father stood outside on the street, and every man that approached the door was met by him and told of the miseries that come from strong drink, warned of the consequences of entering such a place as that, and, one after another, they turned away. The son looked out of the window to see why he was not getting some customers. He saw his father turning the customers away.

Flying into a rage, the son rushed out and ordered his father to go home because he was ruining his business. The father said, "I can't help it, son. I won't have our name dishonored by this business, and if you are determined to go on with it, I will stand here and warn every man that comes to your door that liquor will wreck his life." Finally the son lost his temper, and struck his old father. Without any anger, the father said, "My boy, you can strike me if you will; you can kill me if you will; but no man will enter your saloon unless he goes over my dead body." Friends, here me now! Nobody listening to me will go to hell unless he does so over the dead body of Jesus Christ on the cross. You can never get there without trampling under foot the form of Him Who was crucified on the cross of Calvary for you. Don't surmount this great obstacle, but accept Christ and be saved now. You cannot afford to live a Christless life, die a Christless death, be wrapped in a Christless shroud, be placed in a Christless casket, be buried in a Christless grave and spend a Christless eternity in hell. Our Lord is "not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance."