

“And it shall come to pass, when the LORD thy God hath brought thee in unto the land wither thou goest to possess it, that thou shalt put the blessing upon mount Gerizim, and the curse upon mount Ebal.” (Deut. 11:29.)

In Palestine there are two mountains, rising on steep and rocky precipices about 800 feet high, on both sides of a narrow valley about 300 yards wide. They are called Ebal and Gerizim. God commanded the children of Israel by Moses when they entered the promised land, that six tribes of them should stand upon Mount Ebal, and the other six tribes on Mount Gerizim, and that the Levites should pronounce the curses and blessings of the law - the tribes on Mount Ebal responding “Amen” to the curses, the tribes on Mount Gerizim responding “Amen” to the blessings. *“Bow ere the awful trumpet sound, And call you to His bar! For Mercy knows the appointed bound, And turns to Vengeance there.”*

This was doubtless the grandest ceremony in the history of the nations. Mount Ebal and Mount Gerizim are on every page of the Bible, and on every field of divine providence, and in the valley between them will sit the throne of the judgment – and to every blessing and every curse, all the people will say “Amen,” and the universe shall acknowledge that eternal punishment is right. The blessed Saviour sat down probably on the eastern horn of the Hattin, a ridge between Tabor and Tiberias, and preached his first sermon. It was a sermon of blessings. *“Blessed are the poor in spirit - Blessed are they that mourn - Blessed are the meek - Blessed are they which do hunger and thirst after righteousness – Blessed are the merciful – Blessed are the pure in heart – Blessed are the peacemakers – Blessed are they which are persecuted for righteousness’ sake”* - a Sermon of Blessings. (Matt. 5:1-12.)

Certainly it would be inconsistent with Christ’s character to curse. Would not the Arminian quote these all the day? To pronounce curses would not suit that kind face and be in harmony with His mission, they say. This was His first sermon; now hear His last - standing in the Temple in the presence of all the people and those who had been taught to regard the Pharisees and scribes as their teachers and patterns of piety. *“Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites - Woe unto you, ye blind guides - ye fools and blind - Woe unto you scribes - Woe unto you, thou blind Pharisee - ye serpents, ye generation of vipers, how can ye escape the damnation of hell?”* (Matt. 23:1-33.)

Curses and blessings go together - Love incarnate can curse a sinner, Love incarnate can damn a sinner, and if Love incarnate can curse and damn a sinner He can do it for all eternity. O Eternity! Let thy ages tramp, thy cycles roll, but thou canst not crumble or scar the walls of Hell, or rust and break its locks or silver the hair of God, who has sworn by His eternal self that the sinner shall die. The pendulum of thy horologe over the gates of woe vibrates through all eons, and says, “forever, and ever” - “forever, and ever” - “forever, and ever” - its sounding bell striking off the centuries, the ages - the cycles. The appalling monotony of its pendulum - going - going - going - repeating still, “forever, and ever” - “forever, and ever” - “forever, and ever” – O Eternity! God has wound up thy clock and it will never run down - and its tickings and beatings are heard by all the lost – “forever, and ever” - “forever, and ever” - “forever, and ever.”

“And there followed another angel, saying, Babylon is fallen, is fallen, that great city, because she made all nations drink of the wine of the wrath of her fornication. And the third angel followed them, saying with a loud voice, If any man worship the beast and his image, and receive his mark in his forehead, or in his hand, The same shall drink of the wine of the wrath of God, which is poured out without mixture into the cup of his indignation; and he shall be tormented with fire and brimstone in the presence of the holy angels, and in the presence of the Lamb: and the smoke of their torment ascendeth up for ever and ever: and they have no rest day nor night, who worship the beast and his image, and whosoever receiveth the mark of his name. Here is the patience of the saints: here are they that keep the commandments of God, and the faith of Jesus.”(Rev. 14:8-12.)

Remember: If the Lord Jesus can damn a sinner, He can do it for all eternity. He who cannot lie wrote the Bible. The Bible, it is said, declares eternal punishment a fact. The Bible, born in the wilderness and rocked by the hand of God – Horeb’s fiery thunders beating its lullabies on the bare and granite crags, and the red lightnings flashing around its cradle – and who was baptized by water and blood, kneeling at the foot of the cross - God’s eternal truth standing sponsor - and who in mature manhood was crowned and commissioned on the cliffs of Patmos, the blue waters of the Grecian sea laving their base, and which rippled in music around the boats and oars of hero and warrior in classic story – comes forth with a casket in its right hand and a quiver in its left. The casket is filled with jewels – bright and sparkling from the mines of Heaven – jewel promises which it empties into the lap of the church; and scatters on our closet floors to shine, glitter, and light up these temples when we pray; and sows along the pathway of the Christian, till the road to Heaven, through the gloom and night of this probation, is shining and paved with gems - the road itself leading to a city whose foundations are precious stones.

Away, you sickly Arminians! While you say God cannot hate, you say He cannot love – and every argument you use against Hell is an argument against heaven. Is eternal punishment a fact, and is it right? God’s justice answers in the affirmative, and the divine mercy says, “Yes.” From all eternity, after all that mercy has done fulfilling the predestinarian thoughts of God’s elect, there is no argument that will prevail against eternal punishment being a fact and it being right. And after all that mercy has done to follow a sinner, and in the magnificent family of God’s attributes, mercy is the sweetest, loveliest, and most beautiful. Her form is perfect symmetry, her eyes a celestial blue, her locks are golden, her face the fairest in Heaven, and a glittering circlet of gold set with sparkling diamonds and intertwined with leaves and flowers of fadeless amaranth, rests upon her white brow. She is the friend of man; and though she leans upon the brawny arm of justice - with a dark brow, flashing eye, and stalwart form - yet she is as strong as he, to complete the metaphor. A glance of her eye has often stayed the hand of justice and her fingers have unstrung his bow - and if an arrow has flown with leaves plucked from the tree of life, she stanches and heals the wound in man the arrow made. But oh! she is oftener cursed by the man than blessed in her mission. And in the moment the sinner passes over the river, holding in one hand a list of her slighted offers and unappreciated blessings, with the other she wields the fiercest whip on the backs of the damned and her voice is loudest and clearest in asserting the rightfulness of eternal punishment. Therefore, we of necessity, repeat the poetic beauty again: *“Bow ere the awful trumpet sound, And call you to His bar! For Mercy knows the appointed bound, And turns to Vengeance there.”* ***“Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest.”*** (Matt. 11:28.) I love you. Amen.

“Think not that I am come to send peace on earth: I came not to send peace, but a sword. For I am come to set a man at variance against his father, and the daughter against her mother, and the daughter in law against her mother in law. And a man’s foes shall be they of his own household.” (Matthew 10:34-36)

Dealing with family and friends who are unbelievers, and are therefore our foes, is a circumstance that is common to all of the servants of the Most High; and how we handle these circumstances is a litmus test – a discernor of the sheep and the goats. Will we cling to those earthly relations, or will we joyfully shed that dead weight, and press into the Kingdom of God.

“He that loveth father or mother more than me is not worthy of me: and he that loveth son or daughter more than me is not worthy of me. And he that taketh not his cross, and followeth after me, is not worthy of me. He that findeth his life shall lose it: and he that loseth his life for my sake shall find it.” (Matthew 10:37-39)

If we put our familial relations above our reasonable service to our Heavenly Father, then we have failed this test! Luke puts this in stronger language for effect:

“If any man come to me, and hate not his father, and mother, and wife, and children, and brethren, and sisters, yea, and his own life also, he cannot be my disciple.” (Luke 14:26)

John Gill says: *“these are to be neglected and forsaken, and turned from with indignation and resentment, when they stand in the way of the honour and interest of Christ, and dissuade from his service: such who would be accounted the disciples of Christ, should be ready to part with their dearest relations and friends, with the greatest enjoyment of life, and with life itself, when Christ calls for it; or otherwise they are not worthy to be called his disciples. ‘What things were gain to me, those I counted loss for Christ, for whom I suffered the loss of all things’ (Phillipians 3:7,8).”*

“And he said unto another, Follow me. But he said, Lord, suffer me first to go and bury my father. Jesus said unto him, Let the dead bury their dead: [that is the let the spiritually dead bury the physically dead] but go thou and preach the kingdom of God. And another also said, Lord, I will follow thee; but let me first go bid them farewell, which are at home at my house. And Jesus said unto him, No man, having put his hand to the plough, and looking back, is fit for the kingdom of God.” (Luke 9:59-62)

On their face, these seem to be trivial matters, and reasonable requests, but the Lord’s response shows them to be weighty matters. We must have a proper, godly mindset about all such things: it might only take a few hours for this man to bury his ungodly father, but the great danger here is the spiritual entanglement in this man’s heart. See it clearly, beloved! There is only Jacob and Esau – every person is one or the other. There is no third category, and any attempt to blur that line, keeping one foot in the Esau camp treads upon the prerogative of our Sovereign Creator to have mercy upon whom He will, and puts the soul in great peril! Beloved, we are instructed to exercise godliness; that is, to have a mature outlook toward our God, putting off our fleshly thinking, and viewing all things through the lens of our Father’s revealed will as set out in these blessed Scriptures, and ratified in our hearts by the Holy Spirit.

We must put away our temporal, worldly view of things, and frame all matters with an eternal perspective. To that end, let us consider these remarkable words of our blessed Lord:

“While he yet talked to the people, behold, his mother and his brethren stood without, desiring to speak with him. Then one said unto him, Behold, thy mother and thy brethren stand without, desiring to speak with thee. But he answered and said unto him that told him, Who is my mother? and who are my brethren? And he stretched forth his hand toward his disciples, and said, Behold my mother and my brethren! For whosoever shall do the will of my Father which is in heaven, the same is my brother, and sister, and mother.” (Matthew 12:46-50)

Out of our Saviour’s mouth, we now have a rock solid definition of who our family is – ***“whosoever shall do the will of my Father!”*** If the Almighty has granted you like, saving, precious faith, then I joyfully call you brother, and sister, and gladly forsake all others! To those who would make the argument that we are commanded to Honour our Father and Mother, I say this: ***“Children, obey your parents in the Lord: for this is right.” (Ephesians 6:1)*** Honour and obey your parents ***“IN THE LORD”!*** If your parents interfere with your ability to serve God in this Earth, particularly by holding up a false doctrine, such as “God loves everyone”, then their instruction is not “in the Lord” - how can you then walk hand in hand with them?

“Be ye not unequally yoked together with unbelievers: for what fellowship hath righteousness with unrighteousness? and what communion hath light with darkness? And what concord hath Christ with Belial? or what part hath he that believeth with an infidel? (2 Corinthians 6:14,15)

Thomas Brooks speaks to this matter in his book “Precious Remedies Against Satan’s Devices” *“[The company of wicked men is] very infectious and dangerous. Ah, how many have lost their names, and lost their estates, and strength, and God, and Heaven, and souls – by society with wicked men! As you shun a stinking carcass, as the mariner shuns sands and rocks, and shoals; as you shun those you have the plague-sores running upon them, so should you shun the society of wicked men. As weeds endanger the corn, as bad infections endanger the body ... so does wicked company the soul (Proverbs 13:20). [Do not look upon wicked men as they describe themselves, but always look upon them] under those names and notions by which the Scriptures describe them. The Scriptures call them lions for their fierceness, and bears for their cruelty, and dragons for their hideousness, and dogs for their filthiness, and wolves for their subtleness. The Scriptures style them scorpions, vipers, thorns, briars, thistles, brambles, stubble, dirt, chaff, dust, dross, smoke, scum. [Considering such monsters in proper light], should render their company a burden and not a delight.”*

I will leave you with this: ***“And he said unto them, Verily I say unto you, There is no man that hath left house, or parents, or brethren, or wife, or children, for the kingdom of God’s sake, Who shall not receive manifold more in this present time, and in the world to come life everlasting.” (Luke 18:29-30)***

Each of us has forsaken human relations for the kingdom of God’s sake – we have counted the cost, and found it altogether acceptable. Look around you, my beloved brothers and sisters, and consider how our merciful Father has given us manifold more in this present time, and consider our inheritance that we will shortly possess. Let us therefore be exceeding thankful and joyful, and have fervent Charity! I love you. Amen.