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THE TRAGEDY OF UNBELIEF
By B. D. Sutton

A Sermon That Was Preached At The
Kansas State Holiness Association
At Wichita, Kansas, Camp Meeting

Pentecostal Publishing Company
Louisville, Kentucky

Printed Book: No Date -- No Copyright

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Digital Edition 09/15/98
By Holiness Data Ministry

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INTRODUCTION

Mark 16:16. "He that believeth not shall be damned."

This is one of the most awful declarations of truth found in all the sacred volume, and
assumes a character of peculiar interest and solemnity when we consider: first, by whom it was
made; second, the circumstances under which it was made. It was not made by an enemy but by a

tender, loving Friend and Savior, and it was made daring His last interview with His disciples. He had died the ignominious death, and now He has risen and is about to ascend into Heaven, then He said, "Go into all the world and preach the Gospel to every creature. He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved, but he that believeth not shall be damned."

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01 -- UNBELIEF POURS CONTEMPT ON THE FATHER'S WISDOM

Unbelief strikes a blow at God the Father, because it pours contempt on His wisdom.

The wisdom of God is manifested in the Heavens. Psalm 19:1, 2.

"The Heavens declare the glory of God; and the firmament sheweth his handiwork. Day unto day uttereth speech, and night unto night sheweth knowledge." In our planetary system, there are eight large worlds. Of this number, this world is among the smallest. Uranus is fifty times larger than the earth. Neptune is sixty, Saturn one thousand, while Jupiter is twelve hundred times larger. If these worlds were rolled into one great globe, Old Father Sun, around which they all revolve, would still be five hundred times larger. In other words, the sun is one million four hundred thousand times larger than this globe upon Which we live. Beside this the mighty telescopes have revealed five hundred million of other stars or suns, some of them one thousand times larger and brighter than the sun. Light which travels at the rate of 185 thousand miles per second, would flash around this world of ours seven times in one second. It would travel from the sun to this earth, a distance of 91 million miles, in eight minutes, and yet it would take it ten thousand years to leap across the Milky Way.

If a star should suddenly begin to shine on the outermost rim of the Milky Way, with sufficient brilliancy to reach the furthestmost star of the other rim, it would take its light, traveling at the rate of one hundred and eighty-five thousand miles per second, ten thousand years to reach that star. Oh! the mysterious and impenetrable wonders of creation. Looking beyond the rim of all that has been discovered, they tell us there is a luminous haze, suggestive of other glories of creation, stretching farther on in the dim distance of space, which mortal man may never hope to explore.

All of these millions of varied, whirling, flaming worlds flung out into space, by the omnipotent hand of an infinite Creator, may be but a drop in the bucket compared with the infinite number of created glories beyond the searching sweep of the mighty telescopes. Yet friends, our God calls them all by name and upholds them by the word of His power. This world is beautiful, but it is a well known fact that it is not to be compared with the marvelous and unapproachable beauty of other worlds. One astronomer speaks of this world of ours, with its golden morning dawns, radiant sunsets, gorgeously hued evening sky, vernal beauty of spring, golden glow of summer, and the fading bloom of autumn, as being mean, dim, and dusky as compared with the indescribable glory of other worlds. Yet my friends, unbelief will come along and pour its contempt on this planetary system and wisdom of our God.

God Almighty stretched out his loving arms to a broken-hearted world and said, "Come unto me, all ye that labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you, and learn of me; for I am meek and lowly in heart: and ye shall find rest to your souls."

It is no wonder that hell went into mourning and devils flit and screamed while heaven went into a religious pandemonium. Angels rejoiced and the saints shouted while God held the throbbing, heart-broken world to His loving breast and said I will give you rest. At the same time unbelief was striking a blow at this undying love of God. Oh, God's LOVE! No angel can sound its depth, no tongue can describe it, no pen can write it. If it could have been described I believe Paul could have done it, but all he could say in describing this wonderful love, was length, height, breadth, and depth. John the beloved, only looked up into the wonderful face of our loving Lord and said, "What love."

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02 -- UNBELIEF POURS CONTEMPT ON THE LOVE OF GOD

Unbelief strikes another blow at God the Father, by pouring contempt on the Love of God.

God has given many proofs of His love to the world, but the greatest was when He gave His Son. St. John 3:16: "God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life."

God's love was so great for poor old lost humanity that He did not people the world until He had food for them to eat, or water for them to drink, the sun to give them heat and light by day, and the sad silvery moon to give the traveler light by night.

God's love infinite, eternal, and unchangeable, goes deeper than the sea is deep, broader than the world is broad, and goes from hill to hill, land to land, and from sea to sea. God's marvelous, infinite, matchless love freely bestowed on all who will believe; bless His matchless name. The sun may burn into a cinder but God's love will remain the same. The stars may fall from their sockets, the moon grow old and hoary, but God's love stands undaunted and unchanged. His love is from everlasting to everlasting. Glory be to the Father, glory be to the Son, and glory be to the Holy Ghost. Yet friends, unbelief has preached a god of hate and told how God had drowned the world and opened the earth and swallowed up folk until the belching bones of generations seemed to witness against Him, and it looked like hope was gone. Yet the devil had unbounded ingress and regress to the world while God Almighty had only spoken a few times in dreams or through angels. For four hundred years Heaven had been sealed entirely. Opposition had rallied all along down the line to meet the aggressor upon death's empire. All this educated prejudice, inspired hate, and deferred hope against the love of God was intensely interesting.

"The love of God is greater far,
Than tongue or pen can ever tell;
It goes beyond the highest star,
And reaches to the lowest hell.

The guilty pair, bowed down with care,
God gave His Son to win:
His erring child He reconciled,
And pardoned from his sin.

Could we with ink the ocean fill,
And were the skies of parchment made:
Were every stalk on earth a quill,
And every man a scribe by trade;

To write the love of God above,
Would drain the ocean dry;
Nor could the scroll contain the whole
Though stretched from sky to sky.

O love of God, how rich and pure,
How measureless and strong
It shall forever endure,
The saints, and angels song."

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03 -- UNBELIEF POURS CONTEMPT ON THE CHARACTER OF THE SON

Unbelief strikes a blow at God the Son by pouring contempt upon His Character.

Glorious as God the Father is, there is a new loveliness thrown around the second per. son in the trinity that only belongs to Christ. Angels with heaven's radiant light and beauty addressed thus, "Fear not, behold I bring you good tidings of great joy for unto you in the house of David is born a child and he shall save His people from their sins." No wonder the angels sang glory to God in the highest, and on earth, peace and good will to men. Oh, this wonderful Christ, this God-man is composite, that is to say, He is made up of two elements, yet different in their nature, body and soul, matter and spirit. He was not God and man, but God-man; a hyphen never meant so much as it does right here. There is one word that I think will express what I mean, and that word is, The-an-thro-pos, which means God-man. He was first God then man. Being God he could and did take on the humanity. Being God-man qualifies Christ to be Mediator, or our intercessor, or Attorney.

Being human He knows how to sympathize with us in all our troubles and sorrows. Being God he knows what is just and right for us. Oh, this wonderful name (Jesus). His name dispels all guilt and fear no other name but Jesus. Oh, how my soul delights to hear the charming name of Jesus.

Since you first read the history of the struggle which culminated in the independence of the American colonies and republic, the name of Washington thrills you through and through. When you come to that name Jesus it causes every cord in the Christian heart to vibrate with joy

unspeakable and full of glory. That name means more in America than Washington, or Lincoln. It means more in England than Queen Victoria or King Edward or Lloyd George. It means more in the north than Grant, and more in the south than Lee or Jackson, more in Kentucky than Henry Clay. Jesus Christ is the very heart of our Bible. Take Christ Almighty out of the Book and it would fall to pieces. He is the Shilo in Genesis, I am in Exodus, and the star and scepter in Numbers, and the Rock of Deuteronomy in Joshua. He is the captain of the Lord's host, and the Redeemer in Job. He is David's Lord and Shepherd in Isaiah. He is the wonderful counselor in Revelation. He is the alpha and omega and the bright and morning star. He will be the great center around which all other splendors and glories will revolve. Angels, arch-seraphim and cherubim, as well as all the great, glorified company of saints and all other holy intelligences will come falling at his feet, crowning him Lord of all.

Oh friends! as great as heaven will be with its jeweled walls, its streets of gold, its eternal sun-kissed hills, its deathless atmosphere, as great as these are they will not compare with the joy of seeing Jesus.

Should we get there and view its unspeakable beauties, look upon its burnished throne, and view rank after rank of shining beings, if there were no Christ there, we would sad, lonely, disappointed forever. Thank God He will be there to give life, beauty, and glory to all of these other attractions. "My eyes shall behold Him, I shall hear His voice and look upon His blessed face.

Yet unbelief pours its contempt upon this blessed, infinite, eternal, unchangeable, and Almighty Savior, Jesus Christ. He can and does save the worst of sinners. I have seen drunkards come to the altars drunk and staggering, pray through and leave the altar with their minds cleared and their souls beautifully saved by power divine.

Will you step out tonight, men and women, with your broken heart, throw yourself at the feet of Jesus Christ, look to Him and let Him in. In a meeting some years ago, an actress was smitten with old-fashioned conviction. She literally staggered her way to an altar of prayer, with sobs and tears. She prayed for pardon. Instantly light broke in on her soul, she sprang to her feet with an upturned face, and lifted her rich cultured voice in song.

"Oh, Hallelujah, yes 'tis heaven,
'Tis heaven to know my sins forgiven;
On land or sea, what matters where?
Where Jesus is 'tis heaven there."

Come repenting of your sins, and believing in Christ. Come trusting in the blood of Calvary's bleeding Lamb, and you can be saved.

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04 -- UNBELIEF POURS CONTEMPT ON GOD'S HOLINESS

Unbelief Strikes Another Blow at God the Father by Pouring Contempt on His Holiness.

"Holiness becomes thine house, O Lord, forever." (Psa. 93:5). The one great design of our holy religion is to make men holy. We have a holy Bible, written by holy men who were inspired by the Holy Ghost. It points out a holy way to a holy Heaven, where we are to meet a holy God, and to dwell amid holy associations, and engage in holy services forever more. We are called not unto uncleanness, but unto holiness. (1 Thess. 4:7).

We are to put on the new man, which after God, is created in righteousness and true holiness. Being made free from sin, and become servants to God ye have your fruit unto holiness and the end everlasting life.

The chastisements of life are sent that we might be made partakers of His holiness. We are commanded to be holy in all manner of living, and to follow holiness without which no man shall see the Lord. Thus we see that the design of our Lord's atoning work, the chastisements of life, the invitations, the promises, the commands of God, as set forth in the Scripture, all point to the holiness of God's people. It is an evident fact that this subject is one of immense importance. If the design of the life, teachings, sufferings and death of Jesus was to make men holy: if we are divinely admonished to be holy in all manner of living: if God has called us unto holiness, if without holiness no man shall see the Lord; and if the great definite mission of the Church of the Nazarene is to spread Scriptural holiness over the land, surely, surely it demands our careful and prayerful attention, and we should never, never rest until it is made clear, and plain, and strong to our understanding, crystallized in our experience, and manifested in our hearts and lives.

Almost all really born again Christians have in their minds an ideal Christian experience, which is far superior to that which they enjoy. Under some deeply spiritual preaching, or maybe listening to some clear, ringing testimony of some one who had drunk deeply at the fountain, or during some special devotional exercises, there has come to that one the spiritual vision of such holy heights, of such raptured depths, of such holy love and experience, of such calm and abiding peace, that a great hunger has taken possession of the soul. No word but holiness can be sufficiently comprehensive to define such an ideal experience.

The longing, hungry soul aspires after it, but there is a shrinking back from it, as though it were too sacred to become the possession of a poor hungry human heart. And yet we know that it alone can satisfy the longings of our spirit, yet we fail to grasp it.

Now then, the Holy Spirit is the sole author of all religious experience: in conviction, through all the stages of conversion, sanctification, spiritual growth, maturity, until the soul is presented faultless before the presence of His glory with exceeding joy. Wherever the Spirit is unobstructed in His work in the heart, He will reveal the latent depravity, and will beget such longings for its removal that the soul will cry out to be freed. Even those who oppose the doctrine of an instantaneous removal of inbred sin as a second work of grace acknowledge that in the heart of the regenerated there is something that gives inward distress, that beclouds the spiritual vision, that weakens the faith, begets doubt, that dampens the fervor of our zeal, and sadly interferes with our religious joy. There is a longing still unsatisfied, a vacancy still unfilled. The Holy Spirit reveals the lack, begets the longing, and somehow imparts an assurance that God has made

provision to satisfy these holy aspirations. If there be clear, Scriptural teaching, the soul soon finds its satisfying portion and an unspeakable joy.

I. What is Holiness.

(1) It is not absolute holiness. This belongs to the infinitely holy God.

(2) It is not angelic holiness. The holy angels have maintained inviolate the trust reposed in them. Their obedience has always been perfect, their holiness unsoiled.

(3) It is not a holiness that will result in a perfect life in the estimation of men, for God said to Abraham, "Walk before me and be thou perfect." Had He said walk before men, and be perfect, He would have required the impossible. But He said walk before me. God said that Job was a perfect man. Satan dissented from the divine declaration, and Job's friends joined with Satan in impugning the motives of this man of God.

(4) It will not exempt us from temptation. Perfectly holy angels in heaven were tempted, and fell. Adam, blessed with angelic purity, was tempted and went down with an awful crash. The dear Son of God was tempted in all points like as we are and the temptations continued to the last hour of His life. Men have strong temptations sometimes in their regenerated life, but we know little of direct conflict with Satan until after we are sanctified. Satan knows that one holy man will do more damage to his kingdom than a score of ordinary Christians. Hence all of his power is exercised to effect the overthrow of the holy man. Mr. Wesley says: "It is the doctrine that the devil peculiarly hates, and he is all the time stirring up his own children, and some of God's weak children, against it."

What is Holiness? It is the holiness of a fallen but redeemed human being, and can be enjoyed and lived by one who is subject to human infirmities and surrounded by all the circumstances incident to human life. It implies a heart thoroughly cleansed from all sin, both inherited and acquired, and filled with the Spirit of perfect love. Again, Mr. Wesley says, "It is loving God with all your heart, mind, soul and strength." This implies that no wrong temper, not contrary to love remains in the soul; and that all the thoughts, words, and actions are governed by pure love. The eye is single, and the whole body is full of light.

I need no commentaries to explain to me these words, "We which have believed do enter into rest." There is rest, sweet rest, abiding rest, from worry; the past is under the blood. At the present, I am free from all danger while resting under His wings. For the future of life I lean upon His promise. My God shall supply all your need. As for death, my Elder Brother, my unfailing Friend, holds the key in his hand and He will open the door and let me in at the very best time. As for the judgment, Jesus Christ will be upon the throne. There is therefore now no condemnation to them that are in Christ Jesus. Oh, beloved, what meaning is now discovered in these words, The Water that I shall give him shall become in him a well of water springing up unto everlasting life. Not a suction-pump but an artesian well which is perpetually flowing.

Holiness is a pure heart. And as a man thinketh in his heart so is he. So the natural outcome is a pure life. Who can paint the beauties of holiness? We love purity. At whatever cost, we must

have pure air and pure water. And Holiness means nothing less than pure thoughts, pure intentions, pure motives, pure words, pure actions, and a pure life. It is the purity of high heaven brought down to this old earth, and deposited for awhile in a human heart, to be exhibited in a pure life. And yet unbelief strikes a blow at this beautiful, beautiful doctrine of Holiness of heart. Oh, who can object to it. Oh friends, these truths have been drawn from the Word of God and have been hammered on the anvil of personal experience. I know whereof I speak.

For years after my marvelous conversion I plodded on my weary way, in common with many other Christians of my acquaintance, with commingling of light and darkness, faith and doubt, joy and sorrow, victory and defeat, success and failure in my Christian life. But since that day that blessed day, now for more than twenty-five years ago, when the Holy Ghost came in and whispered to me that He had come in to abide, salvation has been a luxury to me. I have gone up and down this nation from Maine to California, and from the Dakotas to the Carolinas singing His praise and preaching His truths, calling sinners to repentance and the believers to Holiness. And it grows brighter and sweeter and better day by day and I am full of hope and expectation that this streak of holy sunshine will issue into the blaze of eternal day. Do you want this blessing? If so, come while we sing. Sing on.

Your Brother in Holy Love,
B. D. Sutton

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THE END