

Mark 16:16

"He that believeth not, shall be damned."

It is (one sin) that damns the soul. If there were no unbelief, there would be no unsubdued sin, no unanswered prayer, and no persistent darkness. Yet the majority of people (rank unbelief) among the just casual sins, rather than mortal sins. Many cannot claim God's promises because of such self-abasement. One of the master (snares) of the devil is to inspire a mock humility in the place of a true humility.

There are several texts, as well as the one we've decided to use this morning. For example, Hebrews 3:12: "Take heed, brethren, lest there be in any of you an evil heart of unbelief, in departing from the living God." The word "unbelief" carries quite a different sense from disbelief. Disbelief is properly a denial of truth. Belief is the acceptance of truth. The word unbelief, as translated, is often in the original the equivalent of disbelief.

For example 1 Timothy 5:8 says, "He hath denied the faith" and is worse than an infidel." Hath denied the faith and is worse than an unbeliever. That is he is a disbeliever and has practically (said it is not so). And therefore, he is worse than one who does not deny that it is true but fails to make it available to himself.

Had he uttered them when Peter timedly disowned him, or when Judas betrayed him, or when Pilate refused to check his conscience and yield to honest convictions, we might have had reason to believe that these words were the kind he should have used.

But it was a far (different situation) and occasion. He had now (just risen) from the dead; he had disarmed death of his dominion. He had rescued from the grave his prey; the period of his suffering was passed; the powers of darkness were vanished; the keys of death and hell were in his hands. And he had spoiled the power and the principalities of the world. And made a show of them openly upon the cross. He spoke them in an attitude of majesty. He was (giving instruction) to his apostles, what to do as officers in the church and he said, "Go ye into all the world and preach the gospel to every creature."

And then he pronounced the decision which is the fixed destiny of all classes of mankind. He that believeth and is baptized, shall be saved. And he that believeth not shall be damned.

(Who is it that will presume) to say after this that faith is a matter of little consequence? That men may believe this thing or that thing or the other thing?. That men may give themselves to different schemes, wide aprat as they may be, and yet glibly say we're all working for the same place? Who would say that

Three different individuals may be offered a blessing. One does not believe there is anything in it. And that there is any real blessing offered. He is a disbeliever. The second believes that there is a blessing offered, but does not accept it for himself, he is an unbeliever. The third, believes that there is a blessing offered and he is bound to have it. That is a believer.

There are many facts in the Bible which lead us to see that man makes (so little) of the sin and crime of unbelief and yet there is so much in the Bible that tells us that God makes much of it. There is a difference between God's judgement and man's judgment.

The awful and obvious import of unbelief can be found in the passage we have chosen as our text. There are other passages which might easily have been chosen to have presented the terror to unbelievers. It is however, here that the writer credits the language of Jesus Christ, the lamb of God. That lovely one; that gentle one who did not strive nor cry, nor lift up his voice in the streets. Who was meek and lowly in heart and full of grace and truth. He is careful to give emphasis of the terror of his language in this passage. It is vastly beyond what the words themselves convey. Harsh as they may sound in our ears.

When a harsh expression comes from the lips of one who is

fiery or given to temper, we are ordinarily accustomed to listening to such. That he expresses himself with such bluntness and lack of feeling and regard as the matter of course as to the way he might express himself. But when a man of uniformly meek temper and whose general conduct, and language was soft, seems to sidestep it, even to use severe language, it is unusual and we draw the conclusion that Jesus wants to emphasize this subject. Here is a lamb-like gentleness that has been changed. Yet there were occasions upon which the thunders of Sinai seemed to issue with tremendous appeal from his lips. There were sins against which there were sinners against whom he uttered woes sufficient to make the flesh quiver on the bones. The blood curdle in the veins; and the hair to stand erect upon the head.

Jesus said, "Ye serpents, ye generation of vipers, how can ye escape the damnation of hell?" He said on another occasion, "Ye are of your father, the devil, and the lust of your father ye will do." He dealt out to the Pharisees as hypocrites and thus the same Jesus said in our text, "He that believeth not shall be damned."

We must consider not only the language but the circumstances in which our Saviour uttered these awful words. Had he uttered them when the Roman soldiers were putting the spikes in his hands, we might have thought that they were practical.

his duties, and his sins comes from such.

But as every man must have something which is called his religion to give ease to his conscience or credit to his character, a corrupt heart will lead him to take a loose view of things. He will take the most favorable system that is most favorable to his own sins and which will give him as much ease as ever in the careless habits and his criminal course and his worldly mind and his love for pleasure. It will render him very sincere to believe that because he is at ease in Zion. And the system that embraces that and leaves him as he is without altering his conscience is the most likely course to follow.

However, we are to say search me o God and know my heart. try me and know my faults. And see if there be any wicked way in me and lead me in the way of everlasting. Should we believe a lie? There were men, because they loved not the truth, that took pleasure in unrighteousness. The really sincere inquirer after the gospel is directed to be willing to do the will of God as far as he knows it and that will every one who has the Bible in his hands follow it and he will never be bewildered. If we must do this to be saved, we must act up to the life we have already. We must in our practice, follow the commands of God in relation to him other than ourselves as we search the scriptures. Then we cannot be far from the kingdom of heaven.

yet all of us shall be saved alike? That good works will save us? With any kind of faith or with no faith at all? He that believeth not, says the son of God, shall be damned.

I. The Nature and Character of Unbelief

First, Jesus comanded the disciples to preach the gospel. The gospel is that which man is to believe in and is demanded of man. And the unbelief of which seals his condemnation. The simple meaning of the word "gospel" is good tidings or good news. But this meaning of itself does not at all remove the difficulties. For a dozen schemes of salvation may be presented to the mind of an inquirer. But it may not contain the good tidings.

Second, there are many religions. Which shall I believe? What shall I put my faith in? Would be the next question we might ask. I do not know what is this gospel which I am to believe in or suffer condemnation. I am hailed from a variety of different quarters - (lo, look here or lo there.) Now you must grope your way through as well as you can and with all the help you can get for there is not infallable guide on earth.

You need not go to the Pope of Rome for he is neither commissioned nor qualified to shed one ray of light on the subject beyond what may be obtained on the spot on which you sit or stand.

You need not go to some Ecclesiastical bishop or archbishop in any other country or even to ministries of Jesus Christ. For they are all in the same predicament. As to infallibility. You may get their opinion, you may hear their remarks, you may weight their reasons; but you must at last judge for yourself what the gospel is.

What then must you do? How are you going to determine what this controversy? Men who have time to devote and talent to employ may profitably turn their attention to this. But you say I do not have time. For me it would be an impossibility. I have not the time, I must work, I must get my bread; I do not have the talent to understand this, I do not have the education. If I know my own heart, I do sincerely desire to know it in order that I may do my heavenly master's will. If this is your situation, and this your character; Jesus has given some directions that you can possibly follow and get help.

First of all, search the scriptures. For in them ye think ye have life, eternal life and they are they which testify of me. Christ does not direct you to go to the Pope of Rome. He does not direct you to do to the decrees of councils. Nor to volumes of controversy. No, but he says search the scriptures.

You reply, but I do. Every day you read more or less in the Bible. Perhaps a chapter in the morning, at noon, or at

night and on the Lord's Day.

But mark the force of the expression - Search the Scriptures. How strong it is. The translators even diluted it some. They made it a little feeble. They couldn't help it perhaps because there was the original word meant energetic. It could not be expressed by a single English word, but it means something like dig the scriptures. Like a man who is working in the mines and examining with his eyes for special precious metals. Now this is a different process entirely from just a casual looking through the Bible. Or a skimming the surface. It is one that penetrates and works through the substance. Who tries to go through it thoroughly so that he might know exactly and at once where to look for all the information on any one topic that will satisfy and that will bless his heart. Everyone who wishes to know the gospel is to be employed in searching the scriptures.

Second, there must be a willingness to know. If any man will do the will of God, he shall know of the doctrine whether it be of God or whether I speak of myself.

The plain reason why many of the systems calling themselves by the common name of Christians are yet so different from each other as two different substances is their neglect in this direction. It needs but a glance of the eye to discern that these differences as to views about man's nature;

For four times in that Psalm they provoke the most high. Three times they tempted him, once they grieved him, oppressed him. They believed not God. They trusted not in his salvation. He repeated it to them.

Feenelon used to say in matters of morals, force is a mistake. Force can never persuade. The only thing that force can do is to compel and to make hypocrites.

We limit ourselves; we limit God and Jesus could not mighty works in Nazareth where he brought up because of their unbelief. Until you can get out of your way, the mountain of unbelief in your own soul, you cannot remove the mountain of unbelief in others, who reject your master. You have got to get the unbelief out before Christ can do mighty works in your soul.

Fourth what kind of disbelief or unbelief is fatal? And what kind is Jesus condemning here?

First, depravity. This is the first doctrine of man's ruin of himself and must be necessary to man's salvation.

Disbelief of this truth must involve the individual in condemnation. He will never make the application for the only remedy - the blood of Jesus Christ which cleanses us from all sin - if he disbelieves this fact.

They that are whole, says Christ, need not a physician; but they that sick. I came not to call the righteous but sinners to repentance. And when we are required as sinners to

Third, ask God. If you are in doubt about the direction of your belief, if any man lack wisdom, let him ask of God who giveth liberally and upbraideth not. And it shall be given unto him. A person may examine the scriptures himself. He may fail to find the light unto his feet and a lamp unto his path. He may still be at a point of embarrassment. This he must confess, he must be honest. Let him ask of God in everything by prayer and supplication. Let him make his request known unto God. The secret of the Lord is with them that fear Him. These are the assurances but for fulfillment, the voice of prayer must ascend. The heart of anxiety must inquire, For all these things God will be inquired of. We cannot hope to gain the knowledge of the truth of scriptures, soul-satisfying knowledge, by neglecting this important prescription. The spirit takes of the things that are Christ's and reveals them to the soul. There must be believing, humble prayer. If you being evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your father which is heaven, give the holy spirit to them that ask him. Searching the scriptures, then doing the will of God and asking wisdom from above by prayer, are three of the most important directions to be observed by those who would know the gospel. Unless he that believeth not will be damned. This would be a general guide.

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We might look in the Bible and see some of the contrasts and the truths about what unbelief wrought in the lives of people. For example in Exodus 17 the people were coming out of Egypt; they had arrived in the wilderness of sin, a typical place to exhibit their unbelief, they had pitched in Rephedim, there was no water to drink, they began to complain, and murmur and find fault. Now the Lord supplied the water, but this was a place that was called Massah which means provocation. Better still (exasperation) because the children of Israel and because they (tempted) the Lord. What was the temptation? The temptation was that God should forsake his people. What was the provocation? It was that God should destroy his people. The unbelief tempted God on the one side entirely to withdraw from his people and on the other side, destroy them. What a terrific sin and crime unbelief is. When it tempts God and provokes God to that extreme.

This was a crime. The crime of unbelief. They were saying, is the Lord dead or is he living? Is the Lord among us or is he not? He promised to go with us. Is he true or is he a changable God?

The provocation was the want of water. And they had already experience miracles with water at the Red Sea and at Marah. They could not drink it.

In Numbers 14 at Kadesh-Barnea, on the borderline of the

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Promised Land, they were not at the starting point now they were rather at their goal. And if they had been believing they might have entered at once and received their possessions. But there because of unbelief, on the part of the majority who reported they were rebels and had to go back into the wilderness. And God said you have tempted me ten times. The folly of unbelief. The ten times was not just simply a number but it was the tenth occasion that they had provoked God. First, at the Red Sea by fearing the foe. Second, at Marah as to the bitter water. Third, in the wilderness of sin as to food. Fourth, as to the gathering of manna on the Sabbath which was forbidden, because they did not believe in the province of God. Fifth, at Rephidim in their complaint of the lack of water. Sixth, at Sinai in setting up a calf as a visible object of worship. Seventh, in the cursing by the son of Shelomith recorded in Lev. 24. Eighth, in their lusting for flesh, at Kibroth-Hattaavah, the graves of lust. Ninth, in the report of Aaron and Miriam against Moses. And tenth in the panic at Kadesh-Barnea.

Isaiah 7:9 says "If ye will not believe, surely ye shall not be established." Believe and ye shall be established. Surely if ye will not believe, neither blessing shall be received, is what God is saying to his people.

In Psalm 78, the great truth of unbelief is revealed.

represented as a biting on the unbeliever.

Second, future tense. There is the continuing of this state of heart which is already found in a man today which will continue. He that is unjust, let him be unjust still. He that is filthy, let him be filthy still. Nea, at first it would appear that there would be no penalty for him, on earth. But the unchanged sinner is often wretched, even in the midst of his carnal pursuits. They rather amuse him but they do not really satisfy him. They may serve him; they may welcome him; he may reflect upon them, but the condemned individual in a future state will have no alleviation of this character. He will be carrying all of his unholy dispositions and passions into the eternal world. These passions, instead of finding other materials on which to work, will perform the torture operation on him. The things that he has sought to gratify himself with. Solomon said the spirit of a man must sustain his infirmity. But a wounded spirit, who can bear. How intolerable in the world to come must be the anguish of the spirit which from the very nature of the case of circumstances has been wounded by disbelief.

Son, remember is the language Abraham used in speaking to the rich man who lifted up his eyes in forment. In the future state the condemned sinner could loose his memory. He would get rid of many of his things that brought anguish to him.

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accept the salvation offered in the gospel, more it is necessary to be believed in relation to our own condition. That we are sinners. The doctrine of the Bible is the human nature is entirely depraved. This is expressed in the strongest language in the scriptures.

All thy righteousness is but as filthy rags. There is none that doeth good, no not one. You hath he quickened says Paul who are dead in trespasses and sins. I know that in me that is in my flesh, my carnal nature dwelleth no good thing. The carnal mind is innity against God. It is not subject to the law of God. Neither indeed can be. So then they that are in the flesh can not please God. When we were without strength Christ died for the ungodly. God be merciful unto me a sinner. Who can bring an clean thing out of an unclean? All such mercies of scripture implies the total destruction and goodness in a man's heart. And unless we have a conviction and a belief that we are entirely departed from God, we never can give Jesus Christ the belief that he demands. And which is necessary.

Second, regeneration. This is the second belief that will be fatal. To remove from our heart anything that is divine. And to say that regeneration is not necessary. If a man be in Christ, he is a new creature. He is a new creation.

For example, Nicodemus "Except a man be born again he can not see the kingdom of God". If it was only a partial disorder

which sin introduced into our nature, it might be remedied. In this case, outward reformation might suffice and inward renovation be unnecessary.

But if the whole head is sick, if the whole heart is faint, if the heart is deceitful above all things and desperately wicked, then the change which has to pass upon it must be inward and it must be radical, it must be entire, it must be renewed in spirit and in mind. It must be the putting off of the old man which is corrupt according to the deceitful lusts and to put on the new man. If this is disbelief then it proves to be fatal.

Third, the works of Christ. If we disbelieve the works of Jesus Christ and trust in him alone for everlasting salvation, then it is fatal. We must correct this view. In all of his work and his office, he was yielded. Everything must be renounced and all dependence put in him. The blood, the death, the atonement, the righteousness of Christ. What things were gained to me, says Paul, those I count loss for Christ. Ye, doubtless and I count all things but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Jesus Christ my Lord.

Paul's former gains were reckoned as naught, he says. For he had lived as the strictest Pharisee. But all of these gains he renounced as loss for Christ. God forbide that I

foundations can no man lay than that which is laid in Christ Jesus. There is no other name given in heaven among men whereby we can be saved. No man cometh unto the father but by me. Except ye eat the flesh and blood, drink the blood of the son of man, ye have no life in you.

Thus we see with an entire unreserved, and unqualified reliance on Christ. If that is disbelief then it is truly fatal for us. He gave himself a ransom for us.

II. What does this condemnation cover? In our text?

First, present tense. The unbeliever is already subjected to condemnation. The alienation of the heart from God is hell itself. Unbelievers are already condemned and the only difference between their present and future condemnation is that the one is reversible and the other is irreversible.

He says Christ that believeth not is condemned already because he hath not believed on the name of the only begotten son of God. But notwithstanding his present condemnation there is room for him to be saved. He must repent, he must believe, he must turn.

The other is there is therefore now no condemnation in them which are in Christ Jesus. But if he die an unbeliever his doom is sealed, he fate is fixed, his sin is unpardoned. I am he; ye shall die in your sins. The wrath of God is

But there is the impossibility of it. That we read here in this scripture.

Thus he has made three things void. First of all, he makes void the word of God. It were as well that God had not spoken to him and emphasized a promise and given universal terms. If you do not believe his promise, it is just plain. What will be the result?

Second, you have made void the sacrifice of Jesus Christ. God gave his Son a sacrifice in the world. He gave all he had. He gave at infinite cost. ~~XXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXX~~ It is for you that God has given Christ and yet you cast it aside as nothing. There is the guilt of unbelief if we do not see that thus it crucifies the son of God afresh. You crucify him for nothing and put him to open shame without any reward for his suffering. Instead of the sprinkling of the blood on the doorpost and above your head for protection, you are not trampling it underfoot.

Third, you have made void the spirit of God. God said to Adam this do and thou shalt live. And Adam passed up that law. God therefore, gave a new area through the spirit of his grace and he put his son on the cross. Ye have only to believe in him and your sins shall not be mentioned to you. As Hebrews 6:6 says, "Seeing they crucified to themselves the

Somebody else will say I believe all this and I intend very soon to pay attention to this subject. Which such belief urges. Would you not place aside your intentions and come to action? Not tomorrow, but today. You have no promise of tomorrow, but you have a precious promise for today. For now is the accepted time. Now is the day of salvation. Today if you will hear his voice, harden not your heart.

What are you going to do with your unbelief? Here is the grace of God available. There is but one thing to do in your unbelief. Forever abandon it. He who has made a promise can keep his promise. To do that is faith.

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Son of God afresh, and put him to an open shame." And in comans 3:25 he puts our sins aside. God passes your sins by. Puts them behind his back and turns them away through his atonement.

Unbelief not only crucifies the son of God afresh, and puts him to open shame and tramples his blood underfoot but it makes the dispensation of the grace of God by the Holy Spirit void. This do and thou shalt live says God. This believe and thou shalt live. Goes for nothing because of your unbelief. But it is an awful fact that men consider unbelief just a trifling sin against God while it is the one damning sin.

Thus we are better able to understand Rev. 21:8. We find in that catalogue of sin and crime against God unbelief put along side of the other sin and iniquity. "But the fearful, and unbelieving." Observe and do not forget it. Do you think that unbelief is just a trifle? Here is a terrible indictment an argument. Unbelief limits God's power, limits the power of man, paralyzes his testimony, makes void the voice of God and you have no power to give it back, in belief.

There must be a positive external nature, the final condemnation of hell will consist of. We have not the means of accurate ascertaining. But is horrible in nature. We have but an image the worm that never dies, the fire that is

never quenched. Prepared for the devil and his angels, the blackness of darkness forever. It is everlasting punishment outer darkness where is weeping and wailing and gnashing of teeth. Everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord and from the glory of his power. We cannot convey an adequate idea of what it is to be damned. We cannot excite enough interest today to be satisfied in calling men to escape. The indignation and wrath, the tribulation and anguish are certainly here in this condemnation through unbelief.

III. What Shall we Do? What Shall We Resolve?

I have already done that which is required, you say, I have believed in the Son of God. If you have, then you are happy indeed in your condition. And you are sustained in it.

But I have one question for you. Is there any evidence in your life that you have believed? By their fruits ye shall know them and remember Jesus said not every one that saith unto me, Lord, Lord shall enter into the kingdom of heaven. But he that doeth the will of the father which is in heaven.

And you say I have no belief in these statements and they are just fables. We have then nothing more to say to you. The day of death, the day of judgment will decide the point. But remember if you should be mistaken and yet never discover your mistake til then, you will find no more sacrifice for sin.