



The Burning Bush—Online article archive

The tragedy that follows failure to stop at God's red light!



The substance of a sermon preached in Kilskeery Free Presbyterian Church on Lord's Day evening, October 10th, 1999, by the minister, Rev. Ivan Foster.

Once again, an event in this world has reminded us vividly of a most important gospel truth. The Paddington rail crash in London, with its numerous deaths and injuries, provides us with a solemn illustration of the risks many run day by day.

In an interim report on the cause of the crash, it is indicated that one of the factors in the accident was the failure of the train driver to stop at a light signal showing red. This light was a warning of danger ahead. That failure, that decision to run the risk of meeting another train, reminds us powerfully of how some of you are living in defiance of God's danger signals in the gospel. You may gasp in horror at the risk taken by the train driver, but you run infinitely far greater risks every day of your life. Let me explain.

I. THE GOSPEL CALLS UPON YOU TO HALT AS THERE IS DANGER AHEAD ON THE ROAD YOU ARE TRAVELLING

1. You are on a collision course with the judgment of God. How few sinners realise this! Saul of Tarsus was defying Christ when he defied the gospel. He thought that he was doing God service by persecuting to death the believers in the first generation of this gospel era. He would have been astounded by any assertion that he was defying God. It took Christ's personal intervention in his life to convince him of his sin and error. We read of that event in Acts, chapter 9 and verse 4. *And he fell to the earth, and heard a voice saying unto him, Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou me?* He questioned the One Who spoke. *Who art thou, Lord?* What an answer he received! *I am Jesus whom thou persecutest: it is hard for thee to kick against the pricks*, Acts 9:5. Saul, later to be known as Paul, neither knew who it was he was opposing nor the wicked and self-destructive nature of his opposition. Oh how blind is sinful man! Beware of the danger ahead, dear reader.

2. It is a course that can end only in your damnation. It is universally believed by men that God and His laws may be defied with impunity. No payment, no retribution. We may *eat, drink and be merry* and die like dogs and cease to be, without sequel. That philosophy is a devil-inspired delusion. Heed God's Word. *Rejoice, O young man, in thy youth; and let thy heart cheer thee in the days of thy youth, and walk in the ways of thine heart, and in the sight of thine eyes: but know thou, that for all these things God will bring thee into judgment*, Ecclesiastes 11:9. Do you hope to overcome God? Do you believe that you can thwart His eternal purpose in judgment? Can you defy His power? Paul asked a question of some who were in danger of believing that they could ignore the holy commands of God without consequence. *Do we provoke the Lord to jealousy? are we stronger than he?* 1 Cor 10:22. It is with God and His holy judgment that you are on a collision course.



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3. In mercy to your soul He has issued the gospel warning. Here is an expression of God's mind on the matter of the sinner's self-destruction. *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: turn ye, turn ye from your evil ways; for why will ye die, O house of Israel?* Ezekiel 33:11. The message of God is intended to turn sinners from the danger ahead to the safety that is found in Christ. The Saviour, speaking to those who were discussing a tragedy of like proportions to the Paddington crash, had this to say: *Except ye repent, ye shall all likewise perish*, Luke 13:3. The warning of God is simply this. The sinner will perish in his sins and suffer the everlasting consequences of his rebellion against God, except there is a repenting of his sin and a turning in faith to Christ for mercy and forgiveness.

II. SO MANY SINNERS LIVE AND DIE IN DEFIANCE OF THIS WARNING

1. Unbelief is the author of their defiance. They do not believe God. Railways signals may malfunction and give a false warning of danger, but not God! The train driver may reason, "This light gave a false warning last week and the chances are that this is another false one. I will continue on, since most likely there is no danger." God's warnings are true and will be seen to be such. His threats are not empty and baseless. When He told Adam, *But of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, thou shalt not eat of it: for in the day that thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die*, Genesis 2:17, Adam and his descendants found out that His warning was true. *But it shall come to pass, if thou wilt not hearken unto the voice of the LORD thy God, to observe to do all his commandments and his statutes which I command thee this day; that all these curses shall come upon thee, and overtake thee*, Deuteronomy 28:15.

2. Many appear to have defied God and fared alright. This is what bothered and frustrated Asaph and caused him to write as he did in Psalm 73:3-12. He felt that his pursuit of holiness and obedience to God had been a useless exercise, since he would have fared as well in his sin. That is how he judged things, as he looked at the apparent prosperity of the wicked. But then God showed him beyond that which the natural eye could see. *When I thought to know this, it was too painful for me; until I went into the sanctuary of God; then understood I their end. Surely thou didst set them in slippery places: thou castedst them down into destruction*, Psalm 73:16-18. The explanation of man's foolish defiance of God is set forth in the book of Ecclesiastes. *Because sentence against an evil work is not executed speedily, therefore the heart of the sons of men is fully set in them to do evil*, Ecclesiastes 8:11.

3. Sinners forget that most men encounter this fateful collision with God in eternity. Some have been judged by God before the eyes of men. The case of Korah, Dathan and Abiram involved men who defied God in the days of Moses. Such was their defiance that God deemed it wise and just to judge them before the eyes of the nation of Israel. The gathered people watched the collision between these evil men and the justice of God! *And Moses said, Hereby ye shall know that the LORD hath sent me to do all these works; for I have not done them of mine own mind. If these men die the common death of all men, or if they be visited after the visitation of all men; then the LORD hath not sent me. But if the LORD make a new thing, and the earth open her mouth, and swallow them up, with all that appertain unto them, and they go down quick into the pit; then ye shall un-*



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*derstand that these men have provoked the LORD. And it came to pass, as he had made an end of speaking all these words, that the ground clave asunder that was under them: and the earth opened her mouth, and swallowed them up, and their houses, and all the men that appertained unto Korah, and all their goods. They, and all that appertained to them, went down alive into the pit, and the earth closed upon them: and they perished from among the congregation , Numbers 16:28-33. It is, as Paul indicates, in eternity, that most defiers of God and rejecters of His warnings encounter their fate. *And as it is appointed unto men once to die, but after this the judgment , Hebrews 9:27.**

III. THE CONSEQUENCES OF A COLLISION WITH GOD'S JUDGMENT ARE MOST TERRIBLE

And thinkest thou this, O man, . . . that thou shalt escape the judgment of God? Or despisest thou the riches of his goodness and forbearance and longsuffering; not knowing that the goodness of God leadeth thee to repentance? But after thy hardness and impenitent heart treasurest up unto thyself wrath against the day of wrath and revelation of the righteous judgment of God; Who will render to every man according to his deeds: to them who by patient continuance in well doing seek for glory and honour and immortality, eternal life: but unto them that are contentious, and do not obey the truth, but obey unrighteousness, indignation and wrath, tribulation and anguish, upon every soul of man that doeth evil , Romans 2:3-9.

Upon death, the sinner is visited with his sins. *Then shall the dust return to the earth as it was: and the spirit shall return unto God who gave it , Ecclesiastes 12:7.* Upon dying, the sinner is confronted with the judgment of God and consigned to hell with its fiery punishments, there to await final sentencing and the torments of the lake of fire, Revelation 20:14-15; 21:8. In hell, the sinner will dwell in the dreadful anticipation of the full wrath of God that is yet to come for him. Following the resurrection of the unsaved at the end of the millennial reign of Christ and their trial before the Great White Throne, the sinner is then visited with the full measure of God's wrath.

IV. THE GOSPEL POINTS THE WAY TO THE TRACK THAT LEADS TO SAFETY

There is a place of safety, a haven of rest in which the soul is reconciled to God and finds peace with Him through the atoning blood of Christ. Instead of the defiance of God and a rushing upon His wrath that characterised his life, the converted sinner is melted and made submissive and obedient to God. His feet are turned into the path of holiness and away from rebellion. He is placed on Christ the Way and is now travelling toward a joyous welcome in the Father's house and the everlasting bliss of heaven. Being *justified by faith* , he has *peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ*, Romans 5:1. Being *in Christ Jesus* there is *now no condemnation* awaiting him in eternity, Romans 8:1.

Heed the danger signal today! Cease from your defiance and surrender to God. Turn at the gospel's call and follow the track that leads to salvation.