

## **God's Mercy and Judgement and 9/11**

'A woman went to a photographer to get her picture taken. She insisted that this portrait do her justice. The photographer studied his subject for a few moments and said, "May I suggest, madam, that what you need is not justice, but mercy?"'

Yes, indeed! Perfect illustration here that justice and mercy are two sides of the same coin! Father God is just this way, except in His case, His mercy is the far bigger "side". Truly His mercy is unfathomable. The ultimate and manifestation-to-end-all-manifestations of His divine mercy is the incomprehensible, inconceivable, impossible, and unprecedented sacrifice of Himself in Christ Jesus on Calvary's cross, with the subsequent incredible, unbelievable, and unthinkable resurrection, not just to renewed physical life, but to Heavenly Eternal Life.

The unending but forever-inadequate superlatives we use attempting to describe our precious Lord Jesus' acts in the Garden of Gethsemane and at Calvary stand as stark contrast and witness to the equally incomprehensible hideousness, horror and repugnance of our sin! We American Christians perhaps most of all, but to some extent most believers worldwide, have forgotten just how villainous each and every sin is. We live on this side of God's grace in Christ Jesus, where everything, once confessed

and repented of, is forgiven and equally inconceivably wiped clean. As we hear every Sunday morning proclaimed in the absolution of sin. But just how meaningful are those words to our ears every week? Are we truly sorry for our sins? Might we even consider that we haven't sinned the preceding week? If we're honest with ourselves, maybe we entertain a self-understanding on par with the self-righteous Pharisee in Luke 18 who went up to the Temple, stood conspicuously by himself, and loudly prayed, with upraised hands, "I thank You, God, that I am not like other people—cheaters, sinners, adulterers. I'm certainly not like that tax collector!" Do we ever think like that? Why, we're not adulterers. We're not drag queens. We don't go around lying to people, or cheating, or embezzling funds or stuff from our workplaces. So, therefore, we're okay with God. We're doing okay. We think!

The truth is, if we genuinely put ourselves up against Lord Jesus' standard of what constitutes true obedience to our Creator Father's commandments, we'll know deep down that we fall vastly far from them. Lord Jesus gave us parable after parable, example after example, of this. Because He knew just how hard it'd be for us to remember this incontrovertible fact! He told us in Matthew 18:8-9: "So if your hand or foot causes you to sin, cut it off and throw it away. It's better to enter eternal life with only one hand or one foot than to be thrown into eternal fire with both of your hands and feet. And if your eye causes you to sin, gouge it out and throw it away. It's better to enter eternal life with only one

eye than to have two eyes and be thrown into the fire of hell". Sin, of any kind, is no laughing matter. If we consciously neglect to confess and repent of even one sin, we are guilty of breaking the entire Law of God! It's an all or nothing proposition, folks! All in with the Lord, or not at all. If we reject Him, well, we'll slide down a fiery shoot into an everlasting blazing hellfire.

America's most famous sermon ever is the Rev. Dr. Jonathan Edwards' message read in his quiet style to his church in Northampton, Massachusetts, and then again on July 8, 1741 in Enfield, Connecticut. Holy Spirit was so present as he preached that people moaned, gripping tightly onto the pews inside, with those listening outside, grabbing hold of tree trunks and walls, to keep themselves from falling into hell's clutches. For it's only because of God's *grace* obtained through Christ Jesus' sacrifice that we all have not already fallen down, down and down to our eternal, unending deaths in everlasting darkness. Rev. Edwards' sermon ignited America's First Great Awakening, and ultimately resulted in our independence from Great Britain and the establishment of a true republican form of government with a constitution that has outlived all others in the world.

We've been reading of the ministry of the great prophet Elisha. It's been truly "remarkable". Especially so when one realizes the times in which he lived. God's judgement and mercy are on full display. Distressing and crystal clear is the deplorable state of both Israel and Judah. Both had fallen into such depravi-

ty that God's judgement was inevitable. Otherwise God could be accused of renegeing on His covenant! But still, God interspersed His judgements with unimaginable, and totally undeserved, respites of mercy. God's love and compassion always have the last word over His judgement. But when people refuse to respond and return to Him, final judgement must eventually come.

And so it has been with America. Anyone who disputes America's special "chosen" nature need look only at our place names. There are no less than 26 Salems, short for Jerusalem, in the United States, and 4 Jerusalems. There are 9 Bethanys, 13 Bethels, 9 Bethlehems, etc. There are over 200 places in America named after Biblical places, not including the plethora of other names that reference Biblical concepts. Why would that be? Could it be that America was founded on the Word of God?

America has fallen greatly from its founding! Judgement is inevitable. How it will play out in the days ahead we can not say with certainty. But it will come. But a great revival, a great re-awakening will also come. And it will be truly glorious! And however bleak and distressing the upcoming judgement will be, the revival will be greater still. For God is not through with us yet! And He has promised that He will make a clear, unmistakable difference between His people and everybody else who rejects Lord Jesus. On September 11, 2001, 22 years ago, God lifted His hand of blessing and protection and allowed four commercial airplanes filled with passengers to be hijacked by Islamic terrorists,

with devastating results. America's symbol of economic power, the Twin Towers in New York City, were both struck and collapsed. The symbol of America's military might, the Pentagon in Arlington, Virginia, across the Potomac River from Washington, District of Columbia, was struck with far less severity and loss of life.

The fourth plane was destined for either the Capitol or the White House, the symbols of political power, but something "strange" happened with United flight 93. Delayed 42 minutes by runway congestion at Newark, New Jersey, the hijackers also inexplicably delayed their takeover by another 46 minutes. These delays gave time for the passengers to learn by airphone and cell phone calls of the other attacks. When their own flight was commandeered, several passengers surreptitiously planned to retake control of the aircraft. Making their final assault on the cockpit, Todd Beamer, led the passengers in the Lord's Prayer, and the Twenty-Third Psalm. It's unknown what transpired inside the plane, but outside it nosedived at a 40° angle on its side, almost upside down, into a field in southwestern Pennsylvania, Somerset County, near a tiny borough called Shanksville. As Messianic Rabbi Jonathan Cahn noted, in the Passover Seder meal, a lamb's shank bone is eaten. Which symbolizes the lambs that were sacrificed to take away sin in the Temple worship services. It therefore, symbolizes the Lamb of God and His sacrifice for our sin. So it was no accident that the final hijacked plane went down just over a mile and a half from this borough. Much debris and

remains ended up falling in Shanksville.

This *United*, “United”, flight 93 never reached the terrorists’ intended destination of the White House or the Capitol. This was God’s expression of mercy. Though the plane went down with all aboard, God showed that the judgement on America was then over. For now. He did not allow the terrorists to do any more. He stayed them with His hand. The passengers lost their lives, but their sacrifice was duly noted in Heaven and those who were in Christ, hopefully all of them by the end of their harrowing flight, are now resting in the arms of their Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.

In 9/11’s aftermath, Americans all-too-briefly united. Lord Jesus’ call to unity under God went unheeded after a few weeks by most. In a few months, the shock had largely worn off except in New York. Many people refocussed on God, but none as had done when those heard Rev. Edwards’ sermon some 260 years prior. 9/11 was a judgement wakeup call from God. Few listened. In the 22 years since, we’re far worse and more depraved than ever. God is going to have to send more judgements to wake people up. So what are God’s people, us, to do? First of all, pray. Pray to God for His mercy, and for His will to be done. Make sure that we’re right ourselves with the Lord. Second of all, warn people. Show them that they have to get right with God, or else suffer the consequences. And third, love and praise God in worship with all our hearts and lives. For He is all love and mercy, and the only One worthy of our whole hearts and lives!

