

Draw Near to God: The Danger (Part 2)

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You know that last week I started, it's just going to be some sort of short series dealing with the text: "Draw near to God, and He will draw near to you." James 4. You can all turn in your Bibles there. We'll read the first 10 verses of this chapter. James 4. As I pointed out last week, (incomplete thought) I think so often, we have to recognize that when Scripture is speaking to people, it speaks to people where they're at. And it even speaks to people based on what they claim to be. You've heard about "denying the Master that bought them." Or Scripture talks about: "99 that don't need repentance." Well, see, Scripture speaks to us based on what we believe we are, based on where we believe we're at. So oftentimes, we want to try to dissect. We get more concerned about: Is it speaking to a lost person? Is it speaking to a saved person? We want to know exactly. No, it's speaking to us. It speaks to us where we're at. And you know what? You may be lost and this speaks to you. You may be a professing Christian and this may speak to you. That's how Scripture speaks to us. It speaks to us where we're at.

"What causes quarrels, what causes fights among you? Is it not this...?" And we full well know this. We know that the world all around us is full of this, it's full of fights, it's full of quarrels. But you know what, fights and quarrels come into the church as well and it comes into the church for exactly the same reasons. Why? "Your passions are at war within you. You desire and you don't have." That's why there's wrestling and wrangling and tension and contention and quarreling, whatever our spiritual state might be. So, "you murder." You know, what was James talking about here? Everybody going around plunging knives into each other? Maybe. I mean, it does lead to that kind of murder, but we know that unrighteous anger, we know that hatred is also, it's put forth in Scripture as murder. "You covet, you cannot obtain." And covetousness is something we've all had to fight with. This isn't foreign language to us. "...Cannot obtain, so you fight and quarrel. You do not have because you do not ask." We often go here. You don't have because you don't ask God. God is the One who gives. And then you ask, you ask God, you may pray, but you don't receive. Why? Because God doesn't give it because you ask wrongly. See, God is the One who doesn't give when you ask wrongly. It's not people that do that. It's God that does that. People often give to us when we ask wrongly or to consume it on our passions. It's God who withholds when we ask wrongly to spend it on our passions. And even here as Christians there are things that we need to ask for we don't ask for. Even as Christians we can ask for things for all the wrong reasons.

"You adulterous people..." This isn't speaking about sexual immorality. This is obviously speaking about idolatrous people. "Do you not know that friendship with the world..." that's the issue. You see, you're making the world into the idol. That's the adultery here. That's enmity with God. "Therefore whoever wishes to be a friend of the world makes himself an enemy of God. Or do you suppose it is to no purpose that the Scripture says, 'He yearns jealously over the spirit that He has made to dwell in us.'"

Now, I would just say this, that verse right there, theologians pull their hair out. For one, they have no idea where it comes from. And if you look at the different translations, the translators are all over the place. I actually think that the ESV hit the nail on the head right here. Now just think with me. What this is saying is this: God yearns jealously. See, God is a jealous God. That's the kind of thing that we're getting. Adulterous people - God doesn't want to share His bride with somebody else. That's the idea. "God yearns jealously over..." and I think this is right - it's a small 's' - "...the spirit that He has made to dwell in us." In other words, you see what this is saying? God designed us. God put a spirit within us. That spirit has desires. The inner man within us. There's desires and God is very jealous for where those desires go. I believe that that's the picture. And I believe that the ESV probably says this in a way that is most clear and understandable and fits with the context. But "He gives more grace. Therefore it says, 'God opposes the proud but gives grace to the humble.' Submit yourselves therefore to God. Resist the devil and he will flee from you..." Here's our text: "Draw near to God, and He will draw near to you. Cleanse your hands, you sinners. Purify your hearts, you double-minded. Be wretched and mourn and weep. Let your laughter be turned to mourning, your joy to gloom. Humble yourselves before the Lord and He will exalt you."

Now, my sermon title today is this: "Draw Near to God: The Danger." Last week: "Draw Near to God: The Supreme Need." Supreme need - that was last week. The great aim of our salvation, the great need, the great focus of even why we're Christians. We're not here to play church. This salvation that we find in Scripture, it has a purpose. The primary need behind the Gospel message is that sinners are finding a way to approach God. That's the real issue. Our primary need is not to escape hell. Our primary need is not to have our sin forgiven. The primary thing that this book is about is how paradise is restored, how man can get back to God, get back to walking with Him in the cool of the day.

Someone asks what's Christianity? What's the church? It's right here. What's it all about? Many view the church as something you might do on Sunday if you got to bed early enough on Saturday night or how you feel. To some, it's automatic. It's the habit. It's the tradition. Or it's dad's law. Dad makes me come here. To other people, it's a matter of duty. People have this sense - you get people that come in off the streets. They want to take the Lord's Supper. People want to get baptized. Why? Because they believe that somehow it gives them some kind of spiritual credential. And you know, if I don't make it to church, God's going to hold that against me. For some it's a social thing. You know, I kind of like that girl over there. I've got to go to church because that's where my social life takes place.

But what a massive contrast that is to what James is talking about here. "Draw near to God..." That's what this series is about. And I don't want it to just be some speculation, just some kind of words or some nifty doctrine that's in our Bibles. Brethren, I feel like I've failed in this series if when we get done with it, you can't say at least I've been equipped, somehow my mind has been equipped and there's thoughts there now about how to get to God. Because there's a promise here, but it's a conditional promise. We need to be thinking about this. I want in the end of this for you to be able to say I drew near to God and He drew near to me. Because that's what it's all about. I mean, that's the reality behind this. It's experiencing God. It's enjoying God. It's knowing God. It's life lived with God. That's what Christianity's all about. It's about access to God. Have you ever read the book of Hebrews? You read through the book of

Hebrews and notice how many times it says: Draw near. Because that's what it's all about. It's about how to get into the holy of holies; how to come near to the presence of God.

Now, I've entitled this one: The Danger. So what's the danger? Well, I want to deal with two. The second one that I'll get to in hours, the second one is this: It's the danger of thinking that you draw near to God and you don't. And you're not going to realize it until Judgment Day when it's too late. That's a danger. That's a danger because when it says to draw close there are people who think they draw close. We're going to look at that second. The first danger is God Himself.

You know what? When we hear God say, "Draw near to Me," I fear, I suspect that a lot of people don't hesitate at that. A lot of people don't tremble at the thought of that. And I want us to think. The idea of drawing near to God, we need to have a proper perspective. We need to realize exactly what it is that Jesus has made the way for. We need to recognize how important it is that we only try to come close to God by the prescribed means. So, God is the first danger. And I think how little men think of this. Probably in here, we think too little about this. But I know in the world... You know what? Sinful men, they just imagine God is wholly - "wh" - wholly approachable, easily approachable. There's no problem. The world - look, we come out of that stock.

We're not talking about things that we don't understand. We understand this. I remember what it was like when I was lost. It's not only that we think God is easily approachable. We imagine God wringing His hands, wanting us desperately, wanting us to come to Him. In fact, there are preachers that set Him forth that way. He's just wringing His hands. "Oh, I wish they'd come to Me." And you know, you know it, the world views Him as Santa Claus and "the Big Man upstairs." And they paint this picture of a pathetic god. Why? Well, we see it in Romans 1. They want to suppress the knowledge of God. They want to reduce God down. They want to boil Him down. But you know what? The thing is the way to God is barred. Do you recognize this? Most men have no access to God because they will not go to Him the one way God has prescribed and the way is barred to them.

This just shocks people. Right there where we read from - Psalm 22. If you go to Psalm 21 - let's go back there. Psalm 21. I am going to take you to these verses. I am not interested in preaching to you my opinions on this. You need to see this from your own Bibles. Because I don't want anybody thinking: Well, I'm creating this, or this is my image of God. No, that's not what I'm wanting to do today. I want you to see a picture that quite honestly is not often being painted today.

Psalm 21. Notice Psalm 21. You basically have this picture in v. 12. "You will put them to flight." Who? Well, people that devise mischief, people that plan evil, this offspring from among the children of men. "You will put them to flight. You will aim at their faces with Your bows." Now look, you go out in this world and you tell them, do you want an accurate picture? You imagine God over there just kind of impotent and weak and wringing His hands? Just wanting you to come to Him? Do you know this? Do you know when Scripture says that the wrath of God abides upon who? It abides upon those who don't obey the Son. Do you know what the truth is with every non-Christian in this world? God has His bow - have you ever pulled back a bow? Some of you have. A compound with about a 90 or 100 pound draw? I mean, you could barely get it back, but then there's a release. Can you imagine? God has this bow pulled back. He's got

that arrow on there and you hear what it says, it's pointed at their faces. It's pointed at the face and that thing is ready to be wet with your blood. And that is the picture of Scripture. I'm not making that up. And you go out there to the world and you tell them, that's the God of Scripture. He's got that thing drawn back and He is ready to release it. And you know there's nothing between His fingers letting go of that string other than just His ongoing longsuffering and kindness. But oh, it comes to an end. It comes to an end. This is the picture. The God of the Bible is extremely dangerous. This is the God who's telling us: Come close to Me.

And you know what? Man isn't comfortable with this God. No. He's not comfortable. That's why he suppresses. You know what Romans 1:18 says. The wrath of God has been revealed. Why? Because of what? Why has the wrath of God been revealed? Ungodliness and unrighteousness. And what do they do in their unrighteousness? They suppress. You see, in creation, what's known? What's seen in the creation? Invisible attributes and His divine nature. And you know what? Men suppress that because they don't like this God - this God is terrible. This God is powerful. And this God is the God that created me. This is the God that I've got to bow down to. This God has claims on me and I don't like that.

And so you know what happens? Man suppresses. And you know what happens when man suppresses? God's wrath gets stirred. And this is just a cycle. Scripture says men suppress, God's wrath is increased. And see men suppress that all the more. It's like they don't want to know that. They don't want to see that. They don't want to hear that. And when you come to Scripture, listen, somebody can say, well, you know, we don't like this Old Testament God. No, no, you come to the New Testament, you've got Ananias and Sapphira. They lied to the Holy Spirit and there's their body one after another they're hauled out and buried in the ground. That author of Hebrews said "our God is a consuming fire." And he said you better be careful because it is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God. You better be careful with this God. This God is saying, "Draw near to Me." But you need to recognize who this God is. This is a very, very dangerous God.

We're sinners. We're sinners. We waltz around like that means nothing. And you know what, even as Christians, we can forget that. You know what happens when you come under the conviction of the Holy Spirit? We know what happens. Jesus said when that Spirit comes, He's going to convict men of sin and of righteousness - a lack of it - and of judgment. And you know, oftentimes when we come, we've come through real conviction, real hard searchings, but you can walk for a season as a Christian, and you can become desensitized. We can forget. We can forget how fearful the God of Scripture is.

Do you recognize? Mankind - we are sinners. We live on borrowed time. For the natural man, this is death row. And hell is real. And its gaping mouth, it looms, and it swallows people. You think about these people dying of this virus. Do you know the vast majority, the vast majority, they are being swallowed by an endless hell. And that is God's hell and God throws them there. God is the one who says to depart. This is God's doing.

Do you know the God of Scripture? He says, "I kill. I make alive." That's the God of Scripture. And He's not embarrassed to say so. People are embarrassed of the God of Scripture. Oh, you get some tsunami or some earthquake or some disaster or some virus, and people always want God to give an account. Or they get cancer: "How could God do that to me?" Listen, I'll tell you this, the God of Scripture, He is not embarrassed to say, yeah, I'm the

One that did that. I create calamity. He says that. He does that. He kills. There in Deuteronomy 32, He says this, it's like He says - you know, man demands that God give an account of Himself, and God says: Would you demand an account from Me? Okay, I'll give you one. "I, even I, am He and there is no God beside Me. I kill, I make alive. I wound, I heal. There is none that can deliver out of My hand."

That's where the New Testament comes along and says it is a fearful thing to fall into the hands this God. This God destroys sinners. And if you fall into that hand, if you're drawn close to this God without the protection that Christ gives, it is so fearful. It is terrifying. For a sinner unprepared to come before the holy God of Scripture, absolutely terrifying.

In Psalm 50 - people don't like to quote this. There's a lot of things in Scripture that make us uncomfortable and you don't often hear preached on. Listen to this, mark this. Psalm 50:22. "Mark this then, you who forget God..." It's basically speaking to the lost, anybody that forgets God. You just turn your back on Him. Ignore Him. Walk around like God has no authority in your life. He's never given you commandments to keep. He says you ignore God, you forget God? He said, mark this - you who do that - "lest I tear you apart," the ESV says. Many of the translations say: "tear you in pieces... and there be none to deliver." See, none can deliver out of His hand. And He's warning you. He's warning you He will tear you to pieces. You don't want to come face-to-face with this God unprepared. See, when He's saying to draw near, brethren, I'll tell you this. This God is in this room. This God is here. This God fills this place. This God knows what goes on in our minds and our thoughts. He is not far as the Apostle said. He's here. This God is here. And there are some of you, the children that we've been praying for, false professors - there are some, that bow is pulled back and that arrow is thirsty for your blood and He's got it aimed at your face. You don't know it because you don't see it. You see the sun shining. The air conditioning's on. You see the brethren around. The lights. You hear my voice. You can breathe. Probably you're going to be given enough time to eat a meal this afternoon. But that doesn't take away the fact. That doesn't diminish it at all. Men are so dazed and they are confused and they are blind to who the God of Scripture is.

Zach showed me - no, Zach told me about something he saw. I don't know if it was on YouTube or where it was, but yeah, brother, you were telling me about the guy that got hit by how many ever million volts of electricity and it just caught him and it fried him.

If you think about the God of Scripture, it's like coming close to 10 million volts of electricity, but He's not electricity. He's not a lifeless, impersonal power. He's far more dangerous than 10 million volts of electricity. You know why? Because it's His wrath that is aimed at the sinner. And He looks at that sinner and He is determined to use His "almightiness" to tear that person apart. Hell is real and hell is for sinners. And we by nature are fallen and broken and we're sinners. And it is the love of God, it is the mercy of God to offer us a way of escape, to offer us a way - but there's only one way. There's only one way to the Father. You better not forget that. One way. And you don't come any other way. And if you don't come by that one way, He is your worst nightmare. He hates evildoers. That's what Scripture says. And we by nature are evildoers. He aims His power at us.

I remember as a new believer, brethren, I was ignorant. I was a nominal Catholic. I had not read the Bible. Oh, there were a few times when I was lost I kind of looked in there at Revelation and whoa! That's crazy. But I didn't know the Bible. When I got saved, I had such a

hunger for Scripture and I began to read. And I started in Genesis. I had never read this before. And I began to move through Scripture. I began to move through Scripture. And I began to experience something I had never experienced before. I began to experience a trembling inside myself that was coming from reading the Scriptures and seeing who God is. And I know R.C. Sproul went and wrote a book on the holiness of God and he brought these things out. Years ago, I read that book. But I'll tell you, before I ever came across that book, the very things that he describes in that book, I came across firsthand just reading the Old Testament and they terrified me. I saw that there was a terribleness about God.

Brethren, have you ever seen the pictures of Noah's ark? Have you ever seen the traditional pictures, the typical picture? You just go online or you look at the kid's books? What is it? For one, it's an ark that's about this big and it shows Noah and he's got typically a staff and a grey beard and he's smiling with a couple giraffes next to him. Can you imagine what it would have been like to be on that ark and to realize God just killed every... can you imagine? Eight people - 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8. Sorry, all the rest of you are out. I mean, can you imagine if the 8 of us looked at each other and yesterday God killed every - I mean, here, there, all the way around this earth. We looked at each other. It's like wow, He just killed everyone. Yeah, they like to create their little kid's books. Noah's ark - ha ha, you know, it's this funny thing. You've got hippos on there. He killed everyone. God killed them.

You don't need to make any excuses for Him. He did it and He says He did it. He's not embarrassed to say that He did it. He says, "I will blot out man whom I have created." He created us. We belong to Him. We need to get that straight in the beginning. I'm going to blot them out "from the face of the land." And people say, well, my "god" wouldn't do that.

There's somebody in my family that said well, if God is like that, you can have your God. I told one person in my family, I said you know grandpa's in hell. They were just shocked! They were appalled! Appalled that my grandfather would be in hell! But my grandfather - he was a wicked man. God killed the occupants of Sodom and Gomorrah.

And lest you write this off to another time, you need to hear very carefully - just listen to this. This is Peter - New Testament. "God did not spare angels when they sinned." Nope. They were gone. There's no hope. And many of them are chained in darkness already. He did that. He "cast them into hell and committed them to chains of gloomy darkness to be kept until the judgment. He did not spare the ancient world but preserved Noah, a herald of righteousness with 7 others. He brought a flood upon the world of the ungodly. It was He, the cities of Sodom and Gomorrah He turned to ashes. He condemned them to extinction."

Now you better hear this. "...Making them an example of what is going to happen to the ungodly." These walls don't protect you. This church does not give you access to God. And your parents don't and Christian families don't. You don't have access except one way. And I'll tell you this, what God is saying is you see what I did to the whole world? Minus 8 souls? You see what I did to Sodom and Gomorrah? You see what I did to those angels? He says that's an example of what I'm going to do to you. If you end up coming before Me on the day of your death or on the day of Christ's coming and you haven't come to Me the one way I gave you to come, My bow is drawn. It is at your face. And you better believe it. My patience is going to run out. And if you're ungodly when you meet Me, you are in serious trouble because I will tear you

to pieces. You say, "that's not my god!" Well, then your god is not the God of Scripture. This God is dangerous. We need to recognize that. We need to have our eyes open to that.

For man to draw near to God, you have to recognize the massive contrast. Here we are. We're sinners. I mean, we're evil. And God is holy. And you even take somebody like Moses and it's like Moses, you better stop in your tracks and you better get those shoes off your feet.

You know what? Man is bold from a distance. That's what happens. It's kind of like Job. Job's a righteous man, but he got pretty bold from a distance. Oh, you know, if I could have a hearing before God... Well, I'll tell you what, when the Lord answered Job out of that whirlwind, He said this, "Who is this that darkens counsel by words without knowledge? Dress for action like a man. I will question you. You make it known to Me, where were you when I laid the foundation of the earth? Tell Me if you have understanding." The Lord said to Job, "Shall a faultfinder contend with the Almighty? He who argues with God, let him answer it." You see what happens? There's something about God, it's like a storm. Do you ever get a real violent storm and it's like something in you wants to go hide, but something is drawn to it. It's like lightning. You want to see it, but you don't want to get too close to it. Have you ever had lightning close? Do you ever see the storm coming and the lightning's flashing on the horizon? We typically don't go away. We want to watch it. Wow! But you know when it's real close and it's striking real close? Bang! This is how it is with God. It's almost like there's something captivating. There's something awe-inspiring, attractive about it, but there's something in it that makes us want to run.

You know what? You want to watch people in Scripture when they come into the presence of this God, it just shatters them. It's devastating. They're undone by it. I mean, here you have God. Job, tell Me. Where were you when I did this and when I did this and when I did this? Job finally answers. "Behold, I am of small account. I lay my hand on my mouth." God says to him, "Will you even put Me in the wrong? Will you condemn Me that you may be in the right? Have you an arm like God? Can you thunder with a voice like His? Adorn yourself with majesty and dignity. Clothe yourself with glory and splendor. Pour out the overflowings of your anger and look on everyone who is proud and abase him. Look on everyone who is proud and bring him low, and tread down the wicked where they stand." That's what He's going to do. Tread them down where they stand. Job just says I despise myself. I repent in dust and ashes.

And you full well know what happened on that day when Isaiah came into the presence of the Lord. "In the year that King Uzziah died, I saw also the Lord high and lifted up." And there were the seraphim, but it wasn't the seraphim. They had six wings and with two they covered their eyes and with two they did fly. With two, they covered their feet. But it wasn't that. They shouted, "Holy, holy, holy is the Lord God. The whole earth is full of His glory." He beheld the Lord. And he said, "I'm undone." "I'm a man of unclean lips. I dwell in the midst of a people with unclean lips."

How little men think like this! They just see God: small, insignificant. But let us come face-to-face. And you know what happens to those, brethren, you know about this. You know these accounts. If you've read your Bible beginning to end, you know this. You know Moses, Aaron. Two of Aaron's sons. What do they do? They try to get a little bit creative with the fire that they put in their censers as they were carrying out the worship of God. And you know what happens? God reacted swiftly and violently and He killed them on the spot. You say, oh, Aaron's

trying to serve the Lord. His sons are trying to serve the Lord. They had the duties in there. Did God come along and thank them? He didn't come along and thank them. He killed them.

It's kind of like that with Uzzah. He's another one that typically comes to our mind. Uzzah was not of the priesthood. He was not a Kohathite who alone were supposed to carry the poles that were supposed to carry the ark that was never to be put in a cart and was never to be exposed uncovered. Ahio and Uzzah were the sons of Abinadab. Abinadab was the guy who took the ark in when it was returned from the Philistines. You remember that whole deal. Their god Dagon fell down, head came off, hands came off. And they had to get rid of it. Those people were being killed, destroyed by this god. They had to get rid of that ark. It ended up at Abinadab's. So now David wants to bring this thing up to Jerusalem. And you know what happened. Ox stumble, cart kind of whatever happens to it. Uzzah simply put out his hand to steady the ark. We all would have looked at that and said, well, God ought to thank him. God killed him on the spot. We don't like that. The fact is Aaron's sons are incinerated on the spot. And you know what God said? God said, Moses, you better tell Aaron, don't let your hair down. Don't tear your garments. If they do, they're dead men. Whoa... If you ever hear R.C. Sproul preach on this, he said you better believe Aaron held his peace. His sons are dead. They're incinerated. You better hold your peace because your sons dishonored the Lord.

And see, God makes no qualms about this. You dishonor Me, I may kill you on the spot. That's the God of Scripture. And you know, when God killed Uzzah, David - you know what happens? What happens is we get appalled at a God like this. And yet, this is the way God is. Even David - David, a man after God's own heart, do you know how he responded? Scripture says this, "David was angry..." that's the first thing, "...because the Lord had broken out against Uzzah. That place is called Perez-uzzah to this day." And, "David was afraid of the Lord." You better believe it. It angered him and terrified him. The anger? Not justified. The terror? Yes, that's justified. But you know when he had to park, what was it, at Obed-edom's house? He had to park the ark right there. He realized, wait, we can't bring this thing in. But you know, if you look at the record, when he came back and began to bring it, now they were doing it right - not in a cart. They had the Kohathites and they had the poles. Even though David's initial reaction may have been one of anger, he recognized God had been dishonored. They did what God said not to do. This is the holy God of Scripture. And He says I have a right to do what I want to do, not what men command Me to do.

Now listen, the real issue we need to contend with is not why God punishes sinners for their sin, but it ought to amaze us that God would even say to sinners there is a way back to Me. That's what ought to amaze us. The truth is we are so used - you know what it says there in Ecclesiastes. It says man sins and his sins are not immediately dealt with and so what does it do? It just makes him all the more bold to keep on sinning. You see what happens is we sin. You get criminals in this world, they do horrific things. And yet, the truth is, we're all criminals and all of our sin deserves damnation. We deserve to be damned by God and punished by God. That's who we are. That's what we've done. That's by nature our makeup. We belong to Adam's race. And you know what the truth is? We come into this world and even as little children we begin to sin, but judgment doesn't strike us immediately. And it's massive grace. It's massive kindness. But because it happens, you know what happens. We begin to take it for granted. You take it for

granted. Mercy's taken for granted. God's longsuffering - taken for granted. God's grace - taken for granted. That's what happens. And it no longer amazes us. It no longer startles us.

You know what amazes us? You know what startles us is Uzzuh. What? I mean the guy was just simply trying to help You, God, and You killed him! That amazes us. Even stopping and thinking about mankind. Only 8 people. You see, we get amazed. We get startled. We get offended and outraged and upset when God's wrath breaks forth because we've so grown to expect... it's like God's grace? We yawn. The cross? We take it for granted. Of course, we expect that God should redeem man. I mean, no one hesitates when God says draw near. This is the issue. We ought to hesitate. I mean, there's something so terrifying about God that the idea of drawing near Him ought to cause us... I'm not saying you should hesitate if you know the truth as to why you ought to boldly approach. But I'm just saying there's a lot of people in this world, they don't approach the only one way. They don't gain access the only one way. And they just imagine they can just fly into His presence. You get lost people praying all the time. Yeah, yeah, yeah... we expect God to be good. We expect God to be kind. We expect it. We imagine approaching God to be the easiest thing under the sun. The cross doesn't surprise us. We expect that too. We're not surprised that God redeems man. We aren't surprised God loves man. We're not surprised that God calls us to come near. What amazes us is when we hear about: what? He tears people apart? I mean, do you know how offended people get at the idea that God sent Israel into the Promised Land to basically commit genocide and wipe out man, woman, and child. Wipe them out. People are appalled at that.

I'm telling you, the first moments of hell have to be so appalling. And I just mean from people who are so used to receiving the kindness and longsuffering of God. They've experienced so much of it that the first moments in hell have to be absolutely shocking to people. They're just appalled at this. How could this be? What we have forgotten is that the least sin which we're all guilty of, it absolutely strips away altogether any right that you have or that I have to mercy. We forfeited every right by our sin. Look, we deserve one thing and it's not to be here right now. And it's not to hear these truths we're hearing. We deserve one thing and we deserved it long ago and God has not given us what we deserve. But I'll tell you, you know this, you know how many people are dying today. They are being cast into that hell and God is casting them there and they are waking up to the rudest awakening. They have taken this for granted for so long and finally God says your time has run out. Give an account. What account can we give if we had Christ set before us and we did not seek to enter into His presence that way? We deserve one thing. We deserve to be slaughtered before His face.

That is graphic imagery. I know it. But you listen to this. This is New Testament. "As for those enemies of Mine who did not want Me to reign over them..." That's the issue. See, that's what Christianity has to do. "Why do you call Me 'Lord, Lord,' and do not do the things I say?" You know what Jesus says? Anybody who didn't want Me to reign over them - remember, there's a wise man, there's a foolish man. Wise man builds his house on a rock. Wise man hears what Jesus says and does it. He obeys. Obedience. The foolish man - he hears and doesn't do. And his house is coming down. And here's a picture of it coming down. Luke 19:27, "As for those enemies of Mine who did not want Me to reign over them, bring them here and slaughter them before Me." Really? That's in the New Testament? Jesus telling His servants to bring those who didn't submit and slaughter them before... slaughter? What an ugly word!

You know, you go back into the Old Testament, what you realize is when God showed up there on Sinai it was so terrifying, the people said: Moses, you've got to speak to us. We cannot endure this. Whatever was happening was so terrifying they said, look, if we stay here, we're going to die. And you know what God said? That's right.

Or Manoah. You think about Manoah and his wife. When that angel lifted up, they said: We've seen God. We're going to die. Manoah said that and his wife said, well, maybe that's not the case.

But do you want to know about drawing near to God? Under the Old Testament dispensation you had that tent over there. You know, that tabernacle. The tent of meeting. That was a terrifying place. Why? Because you went in there and you had the holy place. And you went even further in behind the veil and you had the holy of holies. And you know what they were told? They were told: Aaron, you better have bells on your hem. If you don't, you die. You better have washed yourself with water. If you don't, you die. You better have that lamp lit just right, the show bread just right, the incense just right. You better have the right offering. You better have the blood in the right places. If you don't, you die. You better come at the prescribed time or you die. You better not leave too soon or you die. You better be a descendent of Aaron. You better be the right person or you die. That's the picture. God's presence was in there. The wings of the cherub over the mercy seat.

You say, wow, this doesn't sound a whole lot like mercy. But I'll tell you this, as terrifying as that picture was, as cautiously as they had to walk, do you know the one hope in all of it? We heard about shadows. The one thing it said, even though it was once a year, even though the man had to be of the right descent, even though he had to wear the right clothing and have the right sacrifices, you know what it said? Even once a year a sinner made of the same stuff as us got all the way to the mercy seat. It was giving us an indication that the way back to God was being made open. Oh, very narrow! And it still is. You better go by God's prescribed way or you will die. That is the issue.

Jeremiah 30:21 in the ESV says, "Who would dare of himself to approach Me declares the Lord?" Brethren, listen. It was dangerous to the uttermost to get near to God, but I want you to consider this verse the next time you read it. This comes from Hebrews 10. "Therefore brothers, since we have confidence to enter the holy places..." But here it is. There's confidence "by the blood of Jesus, by the new and living way that He opened for us through the curtain, that is, through His flesh. Since we have a Great High Priest over the house of God, let us (here it is) draw near with a true heart in full assurance of faith." I hope when you read verses like that in the future you realize the significance.

Now, very quickly, I don't have near as much to say on this point. The second danger is this. The second danger is that we attempt to draw near, but never get there and not know it. Now listen to me. You know Jesus tells a story. Here's a story. You've got a Pharisee and you've got a tax collector. And you know what happens? The Pharisee is praying. God, I thank You that I'm not like that guy. And I do this and I do that and I do the other. And you've got the tax collector and he wouldn't even look up. God, be merciful to me, a sinner. Now look, if you went to that Pharisee and you asked him, are you drawing near to God? He'd say are you kidding me? I'm a Pharisee. If anybody gets close to God, it's me. And look at my life, I'm a twice-a-week faster. I'm a financial tither. Of course, I draw near to God. And you know what?

Jesus said one of those two guys went home justified and one did not, and this guy right here did not go home [justified.] You know what that tells us? It tells us that the guy that thought he was approaching God was not getting anywhere near God.

And you know what? That described Pharisees for real. And we have a lot of Pharisees. This describes some people in here. Because you could say it. Just like it says in Matthew 7. We prophesied in Your name, we cast out demons in Your name, we did many mighty works in Your name, Lord. "Lord, Lord! We were there!" You ate in our streets. And He's going to say, "I never knew you." And you're going to wake up, and you'll say, "Lord, Lord, Lord, we sang the songs!" Those songs were glorious today! I love singing here. You'll say, "We sang the songs! We heard Brother Tim preach! We heard Brother Craig preach! We heard it." And you're going to find out you never... you never had access. And what He says is this: "I never knew you." You never came into intimacy with Me. I never knew you. You never were close to Me. Now, since you wanted to stay away, okay, you go far away. Depart from Me.

Look, this is the danger. This is the danger. You go back to the Proverb and it says this, it says that the sacrifice of the wicked is an abomination to the Lord. Now you think about that. For one, men don't think they're wicked. See, we read that. Oh, the sacrifice of the wicked is an abomination to the Lord. Yeah, yeah, yeah, we got that down. You know the only problem is nobody who reads that ever thinks it applies to themselves. Nobody does. We read that and you always think of someone else. Why? Because unless you're that rare character that is just at the point of coming under conviction of God - true conviction - where God has unclothed you and shown you who you really are and your righteousnesses are all filthy rags and that you are destitute and broken and diseased and truly a spiritual leper and you've got these running sores of the soul... you see yourself! I'm undone. Yeah, people like that, they can read this and say, wow, that describes me. But most men?

No, a true Christian isn't a wicked person like this. And the problem is that the people out here, the vast majority, and many who are deceived in the church, they don't think they're wicked. So you know the problem is nobody thinks they're wicked. And here's the thing, because people don't think they're wicked, they go and they make an offering to God, they make their sacrifice and you know what they think? Not recognizing they're wicked, they think that actually they're the last people who would be wicked because they made their sacrifice. And yet, the sacrifice... you drop money in the box. You came and you helped out with the ministry. Now look, I hope every single person that's dropped money in that box and that helped in that ministry are genuine. I hope that. But you know what? You can make these sacrifices and you can begin to think that everything is okay. And yet, the more sacrifice you make, it's not acceptable. It's not one of these fruits that's going to be brought out on judgment day and you're going to hear: Well done, good and faithful servant. It's going to be: your righteousnesses were filthy rags. And you know what, your sacrifice was an abomination to Me. Why? It always goes back to this one thing. Because people try to approach Him the wrong way. And you know what the Pharisee was doing. He was not approaching God broken, shattered, and resting on the merits of another. He was going in his own merits. You see, you go trusting the sacrifice, but you've got to trust THE sacrifice - not the ones you do, the one that Christ did.

The danger? We do things we believe take us near, but all it does is infuriate God all the more. Brethren, listen to this. Listen. This God - this God I've been describing... You see the

Lamb of God. What do we think about when we think about the Lamb of God? The Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world. But you know when you go to read in Revelation, it talks about the wrath of the Lamb. Have you ever read that? You should read that. You say what? Lambs aren't supposed to be wrathful. No, but the One of Scripture is. Eventually, He comes in wrath. Listen, I'm often moved by this passage. "Behold, He is coming with the clouds and every eye will see Him, even those who pierced Him, and all tribes of the earth will wail on account of Him, even so, Amen."

You know what? If everybody in the United States who says they're a Christian really were Christians when Christ came, then our country would not be characterized by a wail. It would be characterized by a shout of praise, rejoicing, hallelujah. But you know what it says? It says you want to sum up the whole picture of what this earth is going to look like when Christ comes? The vast majority, the way to characterize it as the whole is going to be a wail. Why? Because this God I've been describing with that [bow and arrow], He is going to come and He is going to point it at the face of people. And you know what? People are appalled. Again, people are so used to mercy and so used to compassion, so used to God's longsuffering and His kindness that what is this? Wait, wait, wait! This is not convenient. The pandemic was just getting over. I was just looking to go back to work. Do you realize how this is going to disrupt everybody's lives when Christ comes? It's like it's over. And the majority of you are wailing why? Because you're going to be objects of His wrath and they shout for the mountains to fall upon them because they're looking for a place to hide because this is absolutely horrific. Oh! But God is love! Yeah, God is love and that's why He gave mankind a way of escape, but the vast majority of mankind has refused that.

Some of you young people, you've refused it. Your parents have pleaded with you. You know that the mothers go back and pray after the preaching. You know that on Wednesday's the parents are pleading with the Lord on your behalf. And you just harden your heart and you think ah, this is never going to catch up with me. Death is coming and the Second Coming is coming. You are not going to get away from this. And if that takes you, these people are wailing, why? Because it's absolutely over with. Man has gotten away with his sin for so long and suddenly there He is and He is going to be... you know how Bunyan portrayed that in his Pilgrim's Progress? You had the guy that had the dream and there was Christ. And he said I couldn't get away from His eyes. You can't get away from His eyes. It's like everywhere I went, He was looking at me. He had those eyes and they were on me and they knew everything I'd done. I was in trouble. I couldn't get away. There was no place to hide. You want the mountains and the rocks to fall upon you. Now the Lamb of God, He comes and He's pouring forth the wrath of God.

Christ - you know, the world loves to look at Him, long haired, effeminate, harmless, or dead on a crucifix on the wall, or we love the baby in the manger. He's no longer the baby in the manger and He is going to come and He is going to pour out the wrath of God and He is going to take those who did not submit to Him and He is going to slaughter them before His face. And hell is forever. And you are going to be punished forever where worm dies not, where that flame is not quenched. This is no joke. This is no fairy tale. We are dealing with the God of Scripture - not the god of our own imagination. We want to suppress this. We don't want to think this is true.

Men don't want to admit this. But you know this comes from the Bible. You know I'm not making this up. You know this is real. Our God is dangerous.

But listen, there's no more violent expression of God's wrath in all of Scripture than what we find at the cross. And if you want to be appalled and you want to be staggered, there was an innocent Man! There is a place where a man could say that's not fair. Men love to say that. This isn't fair. This isn't right. I got cancer? This isn't fair. No, if you want to be appalled, if you want to look at some place where you ought to be staggered by the fact that it seems like some injustice happened? There was an innocent man and God in fierce and terrible in His wrath and poured it out on Christ. But actually justice was being upheld because it wasn't being done for Him. It was being done for others that it might open this way. The only truly innocent Man. There He was. You think about this: "By a new and living way, He opened for us through the curtain, that is through His flesh..." It says, "Let us draw near."

You know, Christians are the only people on the face of this earth that have access. We're the only ones. We're the only ones that have any hope, any assurance. Children, what do you think? Do you think that simply being in a Christian family, that's going to give you access? There's only one way. There's only one. Men are fools. They think God is easily approachable. We imagine ourselves presentable. We imagine God just passing over sins and He just winks at things. Look, don't wait! Young people, don't wait until that day when you're forced to come face-to-face with your Judge and to have Him look at you with those terrible eyes. There's no longer going to be love for sinners. You let that day come and you're not ready to approach God and to live with Him forever by the access that He alone has provided through that cross, through His Son Jesus Christ... you just put it off, and I'll tell you that day will be so terrible for you and it will be terrible forevermore. And when you've been there in that lake of fire for 10,000 ages, you've only just begun because sin against God is a terrible crime. God is just. Remember, God's bow is pulled at your face right now. But there's One who has stepped between and actually took the arrow. That's your only hope.

And you consider this, "We do not have a high priest who is unable to sympathize with our weaknesses, but one who in every respect has been tempted as we are, yet without sin. Let us then with confidence..." The KJV says "boldly... draw near to the throne of grace." You see, the beauty is that as Christians, we should hesitate, because we should stop and think about the God that we're coming to. But once the truths of the Gospel lay hold of you and you recognize what God has done, oh, you are free to boldly go in there. Boldly go to the mercy seat where men dare not go in the past. The access is there. You can run in there!

But remember, God is still the same. But if you come to recognize all of this - how dangerous He is, just who the God of Scripture is, then you'll recognize for Him to say: I am not going to spare My own Son. I'm going to offer Him up so that you might come to Me. What a glorious good news that is! Because when the angels sinned, that was it. How wretched you will be if God gave you a way, He set the door there - but there's only one door. But you said, no, I think I'm going to play in the world. I'll go through the door one day. But just not today. You play with your soul like that... I don't think anybody in hell thought they were going to die that day. They had a plan for how they wouldn't end up there. It always catches you unawares. It always catches you before you think.

Father, I pray that the seriousness of this approaching You would permeate the people. I pray this in the name of He who is the way, the truth, the life. No one can come unto the Father except through Him. For through Him we both have access in one Spirit to the Father. We can boldly approach. He's made a way into the holy place. Lord, I pray that there would be none here so foolish as to wake up only to be told to depart. Lord...

I would just say to any of you, you young people, just ask the Lord. Look, nobody gets saved without calling upon the Lord. Ask Him. Ask Him to forgive your sins. Approach Him that way, like the tax collector. Like you recognize I'm a sinner. I don't deserve to be able to approach You. But I know what You've done at the cross. For Christ's sake, please, forgive my sins. I want to be able to come that way. Nobody ever gets saved unless you call on the Lord. Talk to the Lord. Ask Him to forgive you. Ask Him to save you. How many Christians can say God saved them when they simply said little prayers like, "Lord, help me." "Lord, save me." Amen.