

Survivor Strategy: Where are you safest?

What would you think if you invented something, made something brand new totally from scratch, only to discover it developed a mind of its own and defied you! That's what happened at the dawn of time when God created mankind. You know the story: God created Adam and Eve and placed them in a garden where they enjoyed every good thing a man and woman could want. Sweet!

God is absolutely holy and nothing unholy can stand in His presence. So as long as Adam and Eve did not eat the forbidden fruit, enjoying God and His company was a natural delight. When they ate the forbidden fruit, everything changed: Something dark gained a foothold in their souls. Adam and Eve wanted to hide from God and instinctively knew that their unholiness separated them from God.

They were the first of our kind to experience this sickening sensation, but every son of Adam and daughter of Eve knows the feeling. We do something wrong and we experience guilt. We know we are doing what God despises. We KNOW that we deserve God's judgment.

We are not mistaken! The Bible is clear that sin leads to judgment: *"Sexual immorality, impurity, passion, evil desire, and covetousness, which is idolatry - On account of these the wrath of God is coming"* (Colossians 3:5-6). A day is coming. It hasn't yet arrived, but it surely will! The wrath of God will fall like a consuming fire and every son of Adam and daughter of Eve stands in its path.

But this hasn't happened yet. Why? The answer lies in something God Himself reveals about Himself: *"Have I any pleasure in the death of the wicked," declares the Lord GOD, "and not rather that he should turn from his way and live?"* (Ezekiel 18:23-24). Although we all deserve God's wrath, God prefers something else for us.

"The Sin Problem" is not like going to the moon or smashing an atom. Meeting those challenges took tremendous amounts of time, money, and human effort, to be sure, but these problems were within man's power to solve. The sin problem is something else. Even with all the time and money in the world, and all the human effort men might muster, the sin problem will still glare back at us, menacing and undiminished.

There is only one solution for this problem: If a sinless man volunteers to stand in the sinner's place and receive the full brunt of God's wrath as deserved by the sinner, then the sinner can be freed from God's wrath! Did you notice the key characteristic of this volunteer? He must be sinless!

There is only one Son of Adam qualified to pull this off, Jesus. And the Bible tells us that the only one suited to fulfill the mission actually volunteered for it: *For I delivered to you as of first importance what I also received: that Christ died for our sins in accordance with the Scriptures, that he was buried, that he was raised on the third day in accordance with the Scriptures* (1 Corinthians 15:3-4). Jesus died for sinners. Better yet, He succeeded! The fact that Jesus arose from the grave demonstrates that He successfully satisfied God's wrath and defeated death.

It is hard to imagine what transpired on the cross when God's wrath reserved for sinners fell on His own Son. Although Jesus was silent while being tortured and ridiculed on the way to the cross, He only cried

out in anguish of soul when God's wrath actually fell. As the cross was shrouded in darkness, He shouted, "My God, My God, Why have You forsaken me?" (Mark 15:34). The searing heat of God's judgment of the sins of all men was concentrated and focused on God's Son in a moment in time. Although the ground around the cross was stained red, we can also imagine a black circle of scorched earth where the wrath of God fell.

In a firestorm, everything in the path of the fire is consumed. There is only one safe place, the scorched earth where the flames have already passed. It is the same with God's wrath. It will someday fall and consume sinners. But there is one safe place for sinners, the blackened circle where fire has already fallen.

Here is the most amazing truth! There is no admission price to step into the blackened circle!! God offers entrance to all who desire it. The only price of admission is an admission that you have nothing by which to purchase your access. Being able to stand in the blackened circle is a gift!

God says in the Bible, "For the wages of sin is death, but the free gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord" (Romans 6:23). One man elects to receive what he deserves: He will reap death. Another man abandons the notion that he can earn God's favor and instead chooses to receive salvation as a gift. This man receives all the benefit of what Jesus purchased on his behalf, eternal life in God's presence.

So all men face a simple but profound choice: (1) Try to earn God's favor or (2) despair of earning it and receive it as a free gift. If you want to do the latter, it is easy to do. God is here with you right now and you can talk to Him. He will hear you! And you can tell Him something like this:

"God, I know you created me and I am accountable to You. But I am a sinner who has defied You and disappointed You. I deserve your wrath, but I also believe that Jesus volunteered to die in my place. When He did so on the cross, He paid for all my sins and experienced the wrath that I deserve. I am choosing to stand right now at the foot of the cross where your wrath already fell and am receiving salvation in Jesus as your free gift to me. I am profoundly grateful for what you have done and am choosing to live, from this day forward, in a way that declares my unending gratitude. Thank you for your gift of salvation in Jesus – Amen!"