

The Warning Light

Disclaimer: this is an automatically generated machine transcription - there may be small errors or mistranscriptions. Please refer to the original audio if you are in any doubt.

Date: 12 February 2023

Preacher: Kevin Smith, Senior Pastor

- [0 : 00] Please be seated. Before we be seated, I'd like to honor the reading of the word of the Lord.
- It's okay, dear. Don't worry about it. Father, as we come to your word now, we would be still.
- Be still our hearts so we can hear with our ears and our heart. What your spirit through your word is saying to us. He that hath ears to hear, let him hear.
- Let her hear. And Father, we pray that you would speak. You would do just that. Speak to us from your word. Use your unworthy servant to speak the truth of God.
- It's not a popular truth. Forgive us. Forgive us, Lord. For your word is life.
- [1 : 18] Truth. And truth. Reveals you in all of your glory. And what you would have of us. Reveals your grace in Jesus.
- Shows us him. Oh, Lord. May we hear your word. Use your unworthy servant in Christ's name. Amen. Amen. John chapter 8, beginning at verse 21 to verse 30.
- Jesus, speaking of Jesus. So he said to them again, I am going away and you will seek me and you will die in your sin. Where I am going, you cannot come.
- So the Jews said, will he kill himself since he says where I am going, you cannot come? He said to them, you are from below. I am from above.
- You are of this world. I am not of this world. I told you that you would die in your sins. For unless you believe that I am he, you will die in your sins.
- [2 : 28] So they said to him, who are you? Jesus said to them, just what I've been telling you from the beginning. I have much to say about you and much to judge.
- But he who sent me is true. And I declared to the world what I have heard from him. They did not understand that he was speaking to them about the father.
- So Jesus said to them, when you have lifted up the son of man, then you will know that I am he. And that I do nothing on my own authority, but speak just as the father taught me.
- And who who sent me is with me. He has not left me alone. For always do the things that are pleasing to him. As he was saying these things, many believed in him.
- That is the word of the Lord. You may be seated. Thank you, praise team. Thank you for that. And the singing, everything.
- [3 : 33] Thank you so much. Thank you. Thank you. You know, I hate seeing a warning light on my dashboard. Do you, are you like me?
- Anybody? I mean, I mean, and there are all kinds of warning lights. Oil light. You don't want to see that one. Boy, that's, your oil's that low.
- You know, it just, it means pull into a gas station and get some oil right away. You know, the brake light. The low tire light. I saw that one time and my tire just kept going down, down, down, down, boom.

It was all gone. The gas light. The one that most of us ignore for as long as possible. That usually not a good sign.

You're about to run out of gas. Get in quick. And then, of course, the infamous engine light. If you read the manual, it says, when you see that light, stop driving.

[4 : 34] But we keep driving, you know. We keep driving, hoping it's not that bad. And sometimes it's not that bad. I got to talk to Derek about that. He's worked on my cars enough to know.

But the engine light is really, you don't mess with that one. When we did inspections, we don't do that anymore now, I think. But they wouldn't even check, they wouldn't even inspect your car if the engine light was on.

Because it's that serious. These lights are all warnings of imminent danger to your vehicle and maybe even to your own safety.

And we have warning lights in our society, too. One of them happened a few weeks ago in Memphis when a young African-American man was basically beat to death by African-American police officers.

Many, some people are calling it racism or a personal vendetta. I don't know, which I don't, I tend not to think racism, but I, what I do know, once very clear, is that we, there seems to be still some police officers in our police forces around this country.

[5 : 58] I don't know, but I don't know who's going to be still here. I don't know who's going to be still here. I don't know who's going to be still here. I don't know who you're going to call when someone starts to break in your house.

You can be cynical if you want, but most of our police officers are honorable people. I believe that. I believe that nobody can make sure that they're aggressive So nobody wants to hear me still from public Van Helsing.

It might be little, I think, but I bet you're fringe lawyers in a ■■■■, you know, people. And we don't want people to be arrested So it's Metallica, you know, John, you know, you're not going to be selected for any of those, but you're actually Jeremiah deficiencies of this ■. I know what I mean, and he's even done with Some Bitten According to the Notches ready for the law school district or Law? And he said, no, county defense, you know, the law enforcement's position on that title is, that is not too video on blocking the safari street model purposes.

God. They're good ones. I run into them all the time. Last June, I got COVID. Got it from some of my closest, 2,000 of my closest friends at General Assembly. Leave it to my own denomination to try to kill me. And I remember I came, I didn't know I had COVID and I was, and I had COVID brain. My daughter said I had COVID brain. And I went to hit the security code on my home and I couldn't remember the code. I'm standing there looking at these buttons going, I know it's there somewhere and I'm pushing and nothing, and it's not happening. And for some reason, you know, the security company calls you. Somehow, I missed the call. How did I miss the call? I think I was so panicked, I didn't notice my phone. I don't know. And so I finally, and I can't reach my girls, all four daughters, wife, nobody answering the phone. I mean, really? So finally, I think, well, I got somebody and I punched the code in and I got in the house and I looked out the window and there was a Caucasian police officer walking through my yard.

And in my mind, I have to be honest with you, in my mind, I thought I got to be very careful I could get shot. Because you might not believe I own this house. The alarm did go off after all, right?

[8 : 27] I went outside and I spoke to him. He was a kind, committed servant of this city.

I meet guys like that all the time. I'm glad when I dial 911, these foolish people that say abolish the police, they're crazy. I'm glad when I dial 911, the officer shows up. And most of the time in this city, they're white. And I'm praising God. Good to see you.

Don't let the acts of some, just like the acts of a few black people make some people think all black people are evil. Or the acts of a few white people make all other people think white people are evil.

Don't do the same thing to the police. We say that's wrong. Well, don't do it. That's wrong. It's wrong. It's always wrong. We have to be careful.

The problem is we want justice. That's the issue, isn't it? We want justice. Justice is a good thing.

[9 : 42] Justice is a God thing. We want justice. That's all we want. We want to, are we willing to be treated equally under the law?

And yet there's always some who think they're above the law. And the gospel says, no. No, you're not.

Because when Jesus died, rose again, and ascended back into glory, he set certain things in motion.

The light shined. The light shined. And we saw it. But what happens if the light is rejected? What happens if the light is rejected?

What happens if the light is rejected? We get uncomfortable with this conversation today, even as Christians. We're embarrassed by what Jesus says in this passage.

[10 : 49] Did you catch what he said? Three times? You will die in your sins. We're embarrassed by statements like that.

We don't want to believe in eternal punishment. Or eternal justice. Eternal justice.

Our culture downplays that reality and says, no, God does not exist. Or how can a loving God bring eternal justice, cast people into hell?

How can a loving God do that? How can a loving God do that? Because they don't understand the nature of God. God is love.

But that love is holy. It ain't like yours. God is just as well as love. And that love and that justice is also holy.

[11 : 56] Holy means it's not like us. It's other. It's pure. It's always right. God's love demands God's justice.

And whatever happens on this side of glory, as we pursue, as God's people, we seek to do justice and love mercy and walk humbly with our God.

As we seek to do it, we have to always remember that ultimate justice is coming. And you're not going to see it on this side of glory.

We'll see some. And if revival comes, we'll see more. But God will dispense justice completely, totally, and rightly.

Where we fail, He will not. This too is part of the gospel. The good news.

[13 : 12] The gospel, as someone said, is bad news before it's good news. If you don't believe the bad news, there's no need for the good news. And the good news this morning, the light is still shining.

Amen. What are you going to do about it? Jesus, three times, like I said in this passage, mentions what I call the bad news. You will die in your sins.

You see, the gospel is good news, really good news, only to those who recognize the bad news and how really bad the bad news is. If you were a multi-millionaire, picture this, I do this all the time, by the way.

And you say you're worth \$200 million, and if someone said to you, hey, I got good news. Willie, you \$200 million man, you, I got good news.

We have a million dollars for you. Now, Willie would say, well, that's cool. Another million won't hurt. But I got \$200 million. I mean, he's not going to be going, woo-hoo-hoo, he's got \$200 million.

[14 : 29] Another million won't make a whole lot of difference if you got \$200 million. But it's cool. Now, what if it was art?

And say art was only making \$20,000 a year to support a family, and how do you think art would respond to the news of being given only \$1 million tax-free dollars?

Got him through tax-free because, you know, all of it. Art would be crazy happy, I hope, right? Art, I mean, I'm just assuming this.

I'm making an assumption here, man. He would be crazy happy. A million dollars. He's living on \$20,000, and he's living in poverty, actually. That's poverty. I'm, \$1 million.

His world would be rocked. He would be out of his mind with joy. Oh, my goodness. He would be happy beautifully happy. You see, receiving the gospel of Jesus that he brings forgiveness of your sins, that you are a child of God forever, makes getting \$100 million seem like nothing if you understand it.

[15 : 50] If you really understand the good news, because you understand your spiritual poverty, if you really understand how bad you really are off without Jesus, if you really understand the nature of sin and that your sin is heinous to God, heinous, I mean, it's so unlike his nature that he must eradicate it from the universe.

It's so horrible that it took the death of the eternal Son of God becoming flesh and dying, tortured, death on a cross in shame and nakedness, tortured in order for you to be forgiven.

That's how horrible sin is. And you see, I don't think sometimes we understand that. I say that because we're not excited about the good news. When you are swamped with that reality, you present your body a living sacrifice.

When I'm swamped, when I have those moments of sanity and recognize the depth of my sin, but oh, the grand canyon of my forgiveness, the grand canyon of the love of God, in spite of my cruelty, in spite of my dissing God, in spite of my dissing people, when I recognize that majesty of God for me, oh my goodness, I'm overwhelmed.

It's like, yes Lord, it's like the Isaiah moment, right? You remember the Isaiah moment? He saw the Lord in Isaiah 6, he saw the Lord in all of his matches, holiness and glory as much as he could see without being destroyed.

[17 : 36] And the angels, and his sin is atoned for and he finds out his sin is atoned for because he thought he was going to die. He says, woe is me, I'm a man of unclean lips, I live among a people of unclean lips and I have seen the king.

He thought he was dead, he recognized lips meant his heart. What we say with our mouths is a reflection of our heart. Hello people. And he's like, ah, and then God forgives him of his sin and what happens?

Remember what happens next? God looks around heaven as if he's talking to himself. Who shall we send? Hmm, who will go for us and that will speak for us, be a prophet to the people?

Who will go? Who will go? It's like he's speaking around heaven looking at the angels and they're going, you know, and what happens? Because he had been saturated with the grace of God, because he recognized that his sin had been atoned for, that he had been doomed, he was spiritually impoverished, no hope of standing before God in righteousness.

He recognized, oh, I've been forgiven and he jumps up out of his seat and he's waving at God, here I am, send me, I'll go, I'm your boy, I got you, whatever you need, Lord, I got it.

[19 : 02] That's what's happening there. That's what happens when you recognize the depravity of your life, but more where sin did abound, grace did much more abound, much more.

Notice that, much more. Romans 5, in the Romans 4, actually, much more abound. Grace is greater than sin. Amen. But you gotta know the bad news to appreciate rightly the good news.

I think we deny too much of the bad news to really appreciate the good news. We don't even want to talk about it.

Do you know that Jesus, the grace, the love, the mercy, and the glory of God, that Jesus, said more about eternal punishment, hell, than any other biblical writer.

He spent chapters on it. Go back and read Matthew 24 and 25. Jesus talked more about it than any other writer in Scripture. What does that teach you?

[20 : 33] He's talking about it right here in our passage. What does that teach you? What does that say? that the gospel is bad news before it's good news. And the good news is really good because the bad news is really bad.

It is not a contradiction of God's love and grace to talk about eternal punishment. It's not a contradiction at all.

It's just that we don't understand the bad news. Jesus is speaking of people who are in deep spiritual poverty in this passage who reject the wealth of the Almighty.

Deep poverty but reject the wealth. Three times he says they will die in their sins. Verse 21 and verse 24. Remember when I say when God repeats himself we better pay attention?

Yeah. Pay attention. To die in your sins is obvious is it not to us who have been around the Bible enough?

[21 : 43] To die in your sins is to die with the weight of your sins on your soul. It is to die in an unforgiving state. It is to stand before the living God with your sins unatoned for unforgiven uncleansed and to do that is eternal death.

We speak of hell. We speak of the lake of fire. You do understand that hell is what we seem to see is hell is kind of the temporary place because hell itself will be thrown into the lake of fire.

The eternal state. After we die the Bible says in Hebrews 9 27 that justice is appointed for man to die once after that comes judgment.

Those who die in an unrepentant state their souls remember their bodies go into the ground their souls experience what the Bible terms as hell. It is a place of punishment.

It's pictured as fire even the lake of fire at the end the ultimate final state fire. It doesn't mean literal fire. What Jesus is telling us is that eternal damnation is so horrible.

[22 : 55] It's like you were on fire. Your body was on fire forever. It's like that. Hell once again is that place where our disembodied spirits experience torment.

The lake of fire comes after the resurrection which means our soul and our bodies have been joined together and then we experience what the Bible calls the lake of fire if we have not surrendered to Jesus in this life.

That's eternal. separation from God yes separation from the grace and kindness and hope that God gives separated forever.

There's no worse fate. There's some things worse than dying. This is it. punishment. But when we think of hell we often only think of punishment.

We think that's the place. But you also need to think like I said before justice. In hell the holy justice and glory of God is being revealed.

[24 : 05] Romans 9 what if this is Paul saying this is Paul what if statement he's musing with us helping us think. what if God designed to show his wrath and to make known his power wrath and power has endured with much patience vessels of wrath prepared for destruction in order to make known the riches of his glory for vessels of mercy which he has prepared beforehand for glory.

Who are they? Even us whom he has called not from the Jews only but also from the Gentiles. God's wrath he's speaking of here is his holy hatred of evil of sin.

It is the anger of the great judge against those who break the law and now he must bring his justice to bear. Family you would not appreciate a judge a human judge who never punished wickedness who never punished lawbreakers.

You would hate him or her and drive them out of office with all your might. We would say they were unjust paid off in the pocket of the man or the woman.

That's what we would say about them. So why do you think somehow the judge of all the earth is somehow less righteous? You know when people when judges and human judges are seeking to get to the bottom of something they have to sit there and listen to both sides argue their case they're looking for information witnesses you know the weapon whatever motive all that stuff they're gathering all this information and still it's not perfect.

[25 : 55] Still they can get it wrong. Aren't you glad that God doesn't? He actually knows because he knows everyone's hearts.

He knows he is the great judge as Abraham said shall not the judge of all the earth do right and the answer is of course his judgment is totally just.

But notice in this passage God tells them Jesus tells them what is he doing? Warning them.

The warning light is flashing. Jesus tells them that you will die in your sins if you don't believe I am he. You will die in your sins.

Why does he do it? So they might repent. So they might wake up and behold who he is.

[27 : 00] So that they might come before him and bow and acknowledge him as the eternal son of God who alone can take away their sins. Isn't it beautiful that Jesus tells us this?

Jesus is the fire and brimstone preacher. The the and the best. Because when he preaches fire and brimstone he always has grace in the other hand.

He preaches fire and brimstone so that people might repent and turn to him. But he is also preaching to people he knows who will reject him.

He pleads with them to turn. But he knows who will reject him and who will not. He's leaving he says.

He's leaving and he must be sought. 21-24 he must be sought. He's telling you will seek me and you won't find me.

[28 : 06] You gotta seek me before it's too late. There is a time appointed unto all of us to live and to die. In between that is the time of seeking. He's returning to the glory of his father.

And he makes it clear that the people he's talking to they're not destined for that place. That's why they won't be able to find him he says. In Jewish thought and then they get actually insulting.

Will he kill himself? You do know that in Jewish culture suicide was like one of the most horrible sins. It was a sign of being accursed. They're making sport of him. They're insulting him.

The very people that's insulting him he's telling them and warning them of their predicament. it. And people have been rejecting Jesus ever since.

Anything supernatural. There was something called the quest for the historical Jesus and these theologians decided that everything in the Bible that was supernatural had to go. The gospels were not clear records of Jesus had to go.

[29 : 16] And it's infected many of our main line seminaries this kind of thinking and teaching. The supernatural isn't possible so therefore Jesus and they take away everything supernatural and what we're left with is a Jesus who looks just like you or me in a sense but at the same time unlucky enough to get himself killed.

A Jesus who said good things but is not divine. A Jesus who did good things but is not the power of God. That's the Jesus that we're left with. And these are the scholars that get interviewed every year and write these wonderful little magazines you'll see in the market in your bookstore Jesus on the cover European version of Jesus on the cover and read the articles these guys are the ones writing them.

They don't believe. We've been looking for Jesus ever since and Jesus says I'm right here open the pages of scripture. He's come to save.

But if we reject salvation what's left? remember when the levee broke in New Orleans and the flooding Katrina came through Hurricane Katrina came through and there were people who were actually stranded and I remember there was one account of a man who was basically you know people were climbing up on their roofs and you know waiting for help hoping for help.

They were stranded. But there were some who refused to leave. They refused to leave and they died. What happens when you reject salvation? What happens when you reject help?

[30 : 55] What happens when you reject God? A study was shown that Christians don't believe in eternal judgment anymore.

Not many as you would think. Lifeway Research did a study survey on evangelical beliefs. It was done last year. Legal near ministries sponsored it.

They asked this question. Hell is a place where certain people will be punished forever. 20% somewhat agree. 20% somewhat. 8% somewhat disagree. 21% strongly disagree.

12% not sure. Only 39% of evangelical Christians strongly agreed. Only 39%. Christians don't believe in the judgment.

agree. 10% not sure. Only 45% strongly agreed. 45%. Christians don't believe in the judgment in this country.

[32 : 15] We don't want to talk about it because we think it's antithetical to grace. grace. And we are so blind because it's not. It's essential to grace. It's essential.

And Jesus spoke about it and we don't. What's happening? What's happening? I'm scared.

Have we lost the fear of the Lord? 2 Corinthians 5 11 Paul says therefore knowing the fear of the Lord we persuade people. Therefore knowing the fear of the Lord we persuade people.

We persuade others. you see when you recognize the glory and the majesty and the holiness and the grace love and judgment of God you want to persuade people.

If you if you if we lose the reality of eternal judgment we're not going to witness very much.

[33 : 31] unless of course we don't care. And that's a whole nother problem. My pastor said the day Dr.

Boyce said the day of God's grace would not last forever. Jesus is the only one qualified because he's from above he's the only one qualified to judge because he's from above we're from below we can't we can't and we can't change the message.

We're not qualified to do that either. Jesus must be embraced for who he truly is. when he says in verse 24 unless you believe that I am he you will die in your sins literally there's no he.

He says unless you believe that I am you will die in your sins. Unless you believe I believe in reference to the burning bush scholars go back and forth.

I believe there's another I am statement where he says basically I am the God of the burning bush unless you believe in who I am who I've been telling you all this time I've been demonstrating that I am the son of God the miracles I've done the preaching I've done the healings all of these things the walking on water all of these things control of nature control of spiritual forces of darkness demons casting them out he was demonstrating and showing all of us who he is and to reject that there's no hope.

[35 : 08] Like that's why at the end of that sermon it says many believed in him they got it they didn't say I didn't really hear any gospel no good news in that statement yeah he got they found it it was there he told them he was warning them they put their faith in him because they were recognizing who he is who he is a couple more just thinking through applications of this passage to think through to die in your sins is to face the justice of God amen it's to get what you've earned because the wages of sin is death eternal death separation from God the gospel is our only hope for it says that God paid the price of his own justice to save all those who trust in Jesus do you get it he paid the price of his own justice wow and now we can be agents of grace and justice is that you are you an agent of grace and justice or a fairness are you someone who seeks to treat everybody rightly and well that's what justice involves in the church and outside the church are you an agent of justice do you do you really see what the bad news is and does that make the good news even more beautiful to your own soul more beautiful than you can imagine well what about this are you willing to tell people about Jesus does this shouldn't this spur us to preach the gospel to as many as we can the bible says it is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living

God knowing the fear of the Lord we persuade people Jesus is coming again and the Westminster confession says the end of God's appointing this day is for the manifestation of the glory of his mercy in the eternal salvation of the elect and of his justice in the damnation of the reprobate who are wicked and disobedient glory God will be glorified in saving his people and he will be glorified in condemning those who reject his son to eternal damnation he will be glorified in both both his justice and his grace because that's who he is will you preach the gospel will you share that good news with your children certainly with those outside your home as the

Lord gives you opportunity look at the people around you and recognize it is true that without Jesus they have no hope and it's worse than they think it's worse than they think we don't rejoice in their future it should break our hearts the last thing I want you to remember is this in your pursuit of justice including racial justice which is dear and near to my heart certainly and to this church's ministry we have to trust that the justice we cannot achieve God will achieve the results brothers and sisters are not in our hands and see that's what happens sometimes we get so caught up in pursuing justice even racial justice that we forget that the ultimate standard of justice and bringer of justice is not us we can have an influence we are to be sought in light but we will not achieve ultimate justice doesn't mean we don't push but we have to push knowing that vengeance is the

Lord's he will repay when we forget these truths we burn ourselves out we become cynical we become angry and we get sidetracked and forget the gospel because that is ultimately what will transform people from being unjust it is the good news coming upon them helping them see you are a sinner in need of saving and God is the only one who can save you in Jesus we've got to remember this even as we are engaging our culture around these issues of justice I've seen too many people get off track of loss I've seen too many friends end up denying the gospel because they were pursuing some segment of justice and it got too big too important and they forgot who the ultimate just one is we should labor for economic justice and racial justice and educational justice in this city yes we should in your spheres of influence push infect with the goodness of Jesus speak don't be silent when it's right in front of your face speak but recognize only Jesus can change hearts and if you speak be ready to give the real power legislation will have its place amen to good laws amen to good bills amen yes yes good systems amen but without the gospel going in through your life and your lips we'll always fail because people just like you are sinners but you've been forgiven you've been cleansed you've been washed well you're not destined to die in your sins because you've met Jesus so you've got good news to share let's share it let's share it because you know the fear of the

Lord you persuade people father help us help us we we sometimes forget that only be only because there's bad news do we have good news and that good news is better oh so much better help us Lord saturate us with the truth open loosen our lips in our lives for Jesus sake amen