

Glad Tidings

“And we bring you good tidings of the promise made unto the fathers...” (Acts 13:32)

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Let Sinners Be Consumed

(Jerry Fite)

How is this statement consistent with the popular sentiment: *“We hate the sin, but love the sinner.”*? Desiring that the sinner be consumed does not sound like love for the sinner, does it? Yet, in the same context of praising Jehovah we read from the same pen, *“Let sinners be consumed out of the earth, and let the wicked be no more...”* (Psalm 104:35).

The word “consumed” may convey to many the desire that death, maybe by fire, destroy the sinner from the face of the earth. But the Hebrew word in this text points to a “complete” or “full end” of something, not the desire of a violent and unmerciful death for the sinner. For example, God is determined to disperse His people into foreign lands to *“...consume thy filthiness out of thee. And thou shalt be profaned in thyself, in the sight of the nations; and thou shalt know that I am Jehovah”* (Ezekiel 22:15-16). As God through punishment and shame wants “filthiness” to come to a “complete end” among his people, the psalmist desires that “wickedness” defining the “sinner” come to a “full end” upon the earth.

It is not a matter of personal vengeance upon the sinner, but a desire that sin against God be eliminated from the earth. Such a thought issues from a heart focused upon the loving and mighty deeds of God which He has manifested upon the earth.

The writer of Psalm 104 begins his praise of Jehovah for God’s “greatness” (Psalm 104:1). God is greater than the elements of the created universe, and His providence blesses all creatures upon the earth, including man. Light is like a garment that God clothes himself with, and the heavens are a curtain that He stretches out (Psalm 104:2). The speed of light and the vastness of the heavens are still mind boggling to man, but are a garment and a curtain in the hand of God!

God is not just greater and above nature, His laws provide for food and drink for man and animals. *“He causeth the grass to grow for the cattle, and herb for the service of man...the young lions roar after their prey, and seek their food from God”* (Psalm 104: 14, 21). Yes, man will bring forth the food from the earth and use wine, oil and bread to sustain his strength and bring joy to the heart; not only in the day time

will this process take place, but also at night will the lion seek his prey; but behind the seeking, producing and sustenance of man and beast is God and His providential care!

God’s manifold wisdom is seen upon the earth. *“There go the ships; there is the Leviathan, whom thou hast formed to play therein”* (Psalm 104:26). The vast waters are a playground for such creatures as the crocodile, and a highway for commerce among men. With the Psalmist we exclaim, *“O Jehovah, how manifold are thy works! In wisdom hast thou made them all: the earth is full of thy riches”* (Psalm 104:24).

God is essential for life to exist. *“Thou hidest thy face, they are troubled; thou takest away their breath, they die, and return to their dust. Thou sendest forth thy spirit, they are created and thou renewest the face of the ground”* (Psalm 104:29-30).

After exalting our great God with the Psalmist, it is right to concur with the inspired writer, (“let sinners be consumed...”) or, let the transgressing of God’s law, which blesses man and nature, come to a complete end!