

Templates of Truth with Rick Smith
Audio Script – October 30, 2009

Do you live your life without much thought about how God sees your activities and behaviors; or, do you hold a respect for God's expectations of your life and a fear for His reaction if you fail to uphold them? In today's Templates of Truth, we meet a Psalmist who is drinking from the cup of God's wrath.

Two modern thoughts dominate many people's perspective about God. One is that He doesn't really exist but people need a "pie in the sky" to help them through the struggles of life, so they develop a faith in a divine figure they can believe in. Another perspective is that God is indeed real, and He is the divine epitome of all that is good, healthy and prosperous. In this view, God is very compassionate, loving, merciful and forgiving; and He will never ever do anything bad to anyone under any circumstances. In fact, many believe God would never send anyone to hell. He is too loving and kind for that kind of mean aggression. Many people believe that hardships in life and the suffering we often endure is either self-imposed or just the natural consequences of life. God has nothing to do with it.

The writer of Psalm 102 used twenty-one different phrases to express what he was feeling at the time. They include: *day of my distress* (102:2); *loudness of my groaning* (102:5); *I wither away* (102:11); and *doomed to death* (102:20). He described how his emotional state affected his physical state: *I forget to eat* (102:4); *I lie awake* (102:7); *I have mingled my drink with weeping* (102:9); and *my bones have been scorched* (102:3). He used other words to describe his demise including destitute, prisoner, lonely, and smitten. Why was this writer feeling all of this turmoil in his life? The answer he gives may be surprising to many: *Because of (God's) indignation and (God's) wrath; for (God) hast lifted me up and cast me away* (102:10). You see, the occasion for this Psalm was toward the end of the Babylonian exile of God's people – an expressed judgment against them for their continuous idolatry and rebellion against God.

People today don't like to entertain this side of God's character. It shatters their pre-conceived notions about a "good" and "gracious" God. But when we don't allow our understanding of God to embrace a side of Him that is expressive of wrath, anger and judgment, we diminish the holy, righteous and just character of God. Once we accept this reality about God, it should become a deterrent to our propensity for sinful, rebellious behavior.

The world loves to capitalize on the moral, ethical and spiritual failures of Christians. They like to use it to justify their insistence that Christianity is not real and God makes no difference in the lives of those who profess faith and belief in Him. This Psalmist noted that same tendency in his day: *My enemies have reproached me all day long; those who deride me have used my name as a curse* (102:8). The fact is: failure in the lives of Christians and God's response to that failure provides evidence that He is real in their lives. The writer of Hebrews affirmed: *For those whom the Lord loves He disciplines, and He scourges every son He receives* (Hebrews 12:6). The application of God's punishment and discipline to a wayward believer is an expression of His love and desire for faithful and obedient children, reflective of any good parent today.

Godly people can indeed make ungodly choices. In His lovingkindness, God may extend patience and compassion toward us in an effort to compel us to confession and repentance. But, God's patience is not without limit. Eventually, He must respond to our persistent disregard for His expectations on our life. When His wrath and judgment are poured forth, we will find our own lives being vividly described in the phrases of this Psalm. It is no picnic in the park! The writer of Hebrews declared: *All discipline for the moment seems not to be joyful, but sorrowful* (Hebrews 12:11). That is necessary in order to deter sinful behavior and motivate us into more holy living. While the world wants to view our guilt, shame, humiliation and ruin as the "gotcha" proof that Christianity is not real; it is actually the very proof that we belong to God. The absence of God's punitive response is the real indication that a person is not a true child of His.

The Bible teaches that God's application of divine judgment and discipline can take on various forms and expressions: financial & economic loss; deterioration of health, sickness & disease; loss of success, social status & career; and criminal ramifications. Isn't it time we consider these experiences as possibly coming from a divine source for a divine purpose, rather than just the way life goes sometimes? We will never develop a healthy fear of God until we do.

That's today's Templates of Truth. This is your Bible teacher, Rick Smith, reminding you to attend church this Sunday for Bible study and worship, pray for one another, and always strive to abide. Until next time, have a blessed and glorious day in Christ Jesus.