1 Corinthians 16:22 (A. M.) 55550

Christian Truth: Volume 4, Maranatha Anathema (16:22)

1 Cor. 16:22

It is difficult to speak or write without deep feeling when dwelling on that awful word, and with so many on every side who are utterly careless as to its dread reality. "If any man love not the Lord Jesus Christ, let him be Anathema, Maranatha"—accursed of the Lord at His coming. But is this, some may ask, its plain and true meaning? Most assuredly it is. Nothing could be plainer, more definite, or absolute. The curse of God is the eternal doom of all who love not the Savior of mankind—His wellbeloved Son. "If any man" is surely most comprehensive; any man, no matter who he is, what he is, where he is, how he reasons, what excuses he may offer: the Word of God is positive, it has gone forth from His throne, it is unalterable, it is fixed as the foundation of that throne, changeless as His own being—"If any man love not the Lord Jesus Christ, let him be Anathema, Maranatha"—anathematized when the Lord shall come.

Do you think, dear reader, this judgment severe? It may appear so at first sight, or to a thoughtless reader; but a moment's reflection will convince you that it is not only just but necessary in the righteous government of God. He loves His Son, knows what He has done and suffered for mankind, and fairly estimates His claims on their grateful love. All this He has revealed to us; we know His mind. And how sweetly He has pressed His love upon us! with every blessing that love can give, and the bearer to us of all these blessings is the Son of His own bosom whom He spared not, "but delivered Him up for us all." But surely, if any are careless about all these things, and despise the bearer of Heaven's richest favors, what will the throne of judgment say? Is there no crime in despising both the love and the authority of God? in disregarding His demands for the honor of His Son? Are His rights not to be vindicated, or the claims of His Son maintained? Rest assured that so just, so holy, so righteous, will the judgment of God be, that the vast universe will resound with a solemn Amen as the curse of God is pronounced on those who have hated, in place of having loved, the Lord Jesus. Heaven will willingly own it; the

faithful on earth will re-echo heaven's universal Amen; the condemned must own it, and hell too must groan out reluctantly its Amen, and acknowledge that God is holy, and just, and good, and that the man who is accursed has only lost what he despised, and is now in the place which he chose for himself.

To love the Lord is to believe in Him; and the more we meditate on His love to us, and what He has gone through for us, the more will our faith expand and rise into the most admiring, adoring, grateful love. But we must know Him to believe in Him, and know Him in the fullest expression of His love to us. Blessed Lord! He invites us to come to Him, to be drawn to Him by the attractions of His cross and the glory of His Person. "And I, if I be lifted up from the earth, will draw all men unto Me. This He said, signifying what death He should die." John 12:32, 33. Never was God's love to a sinner, and God's hatred of his sin, so far manifested as in the cross of His dear Son; and never did His love to the lost and helpless soul shine so brightly. Here we do well to pause for a moment and dwell on this wonderful sight, this two-

fold aspect of the cross. When or how could God's hatred of sin be so manifested as when He judged it in the Person of His own beloved Son? The thought is overwhelming! But it must forever justify God in punishing sin in the person of the impenitent sinner himself. The cross will stand forever as the declaration of God's righteousness in the judgment of sin, and in pardoning the chief of sinners who believes in Jesus.

But sin must be put away according to the claims of God's glory, that His love may flow forth freely, and the full blessing come to us. Without the shedding of blood is no remission. Jesus, the sinless One, in the greatness of His love, bore the judgment due to sin. He was nailed to the accursed tree, that the anathemas of God might never fall on us and sink our souls in hell forever. In love He endured the cross, and there was nothing that His love did not willingly endure that God might be glorified and the sinner saved. But who can speak of judgment of God against sin! The waves and billows of divine wrath rolled over His sinless, spotless soul; His brow was wreathed with a crown of thorns, emblem of the curse of sin; He was forsaken of God; He tasted the bitterness of death. God hid His face from Him, when bearing our sin; but at length the cup was drained, and the shout of victory was heard, "It is finished." All was now done; every claim of Heaven and every need of the sinner, fully met; sin and guilt were put away, the Word of God maintained inviolate, and His name glorified.

His love is the same—the same yesterday, today, and forever. He waits to be gracious now, He loves to bless now, He delights to save now, He rejoices over every returning sinner now, He is ready to receive every repenting, returning prodigal now.

What is so fitted to melt the sinner's heart, to win his confidence, as a Savior's love! What must the end be of those who despise this love! The anathemas of indignant justice will far exceed in their terrible thunders the most vivid description of either preacher or writer. And the sinner shall also find in that awful day of retribution that this sore judgment is not for his common sins merely, but for the great, the aggravated sin, of rejecting a Savior's love. "If any man love not the Lord Jesus Christ, let him be Anathema, Maranatha," are the just and unalterable words of Heaven.

Pharaoh hardened his heart against the judgment of God, but what must be the guilt of him who hardens his heart against the love of Jesus!