

**1 Thessalonians 5: 9-11; "God's appointments to Wrath and Salvation",  
Sermon # 24 in the series - "A Persevering Faith", Delivered by Pastor  
Paul Rendall on October 12th, 2008, in the Morning Worship Service.**

It needs to be remembered at the outset of this sermon that the context of these verses is the Second Coming of our Lord Jesus Christ. There are probably still some in the Pre-millennial camp of Eschatology who believe that the wrath of God being referred to in verse 9 is the earthly wrath which God unleashes during that seven year period of time which they call the Great Tribulation. They believe that all true believers who are alive upon the earth will be delivered before this time period begins, by a secret Rapture of the Church. Their being taken away from the earthly judgments of that time period is the thing that seems to be of the greatest importance to them. I, too, believe in the Rapture of the Church. But I believe that the Bible clearly teaches that it will take place on the last day of the World when Christ returns. Every eye will see him and everyone will be raised from the dead. And then will come the judgment of all men. But when verse 9 speaks of wrath it is speaking of something that is far more devastating and awful than any earthly judgment which God may choose to bring upon the nations and peoples of the earth in a coming day. It is speaking of God's appointment to eternal wrath in the lake of fire. And when it speaks of the appointment to salvation, it is speaking of something that is far more comprehensively wonderful than being delivered from the earthly judgments of God which will fall upon men before, or when, Christ returns. These verses are meant to comfort persecuted Christians. Christians who believe that "in the world they would have tribulation." Christians who knew that there was a definite possibility that they might die at the hands of persecutors and some no doubt did. As Paul instructed them that they should, "put on the breastplate of faith and love, and as a helmet the hope of salvation", he sought to remind them of what God had destined them for. He had destined them for salvation through our Lord Jesus Christ. To these persecuted believers this was no doubt a great comfort. To many people today, verse 9 is a scary verse in the way that it plainly reads. They do not like to think about the doctrines of Election and Reprobation and they are quick to dismiss the idea from their minds. However, this is not what we want to do this afternoon. We want to look the truth of these verses square in the face and derive a blessing from them. I would like all of you who are saints to be comforted by these words and all of you who are not sure, to think about what you must do to be saved. These verses are full of comfort, We will look first of all at God's appointments to wrath and to salvation. And then secondly we will look at how Christ's death in relation to both gives the Christian great hope and comfort.

**1st of all - Let's look at God's appointment to wrath and salvation. (Verse 9)**

"For God did not appoint us to wrath, but to obtain salvation through our Lord Jesus Christ." Even though believers are most definitely not appointed to wrath, the implication of this verse is that there are some who God does appoint to wrath. This

is the doctrine of reprobation, the doctrine that is feared and detested by so many. But I think that we do not need to fear this doctrine. We need to try to understand it in terms of other Bible verses which do teach us something about it. If there is a doctrine of Election; God's choice of some to eternal life, then there is also a doctrine of God's not choosing the others. There is a theological term to describe this. It is called preterition. It simply means that God has passed by the ones that he has not chosen. He has every right as God to do this, because as He thought of all the men who He would ever create, from His vantage point in eternity past, before He created the World and man and time; He was able to see that the first man Adam, left to himself, would fall into sin and he would plunge our whole race into sin and misery. The Fall of man was not only foreseen but also ordained by God in order that all things might be summed up in Jesus Christ and so that salvation would not be by man's works, but by grace, men and women being utterly dependent upon God and our Lord Jesus Christ to give it to them. Turn with me to Ephesians Chapter 1, verse 9 and following. "...having made known to us the mystery of his will, according to His good pleasure which He purposed in Himself, that in the dispensation of the fullness of the times He might gather together in one all things in Christ...." The New American Standard says, "He made known to us the mystery of His will, according to His kind intention which He purposed in Him with a view to an administration suitable to the fullness of the times, that is, the summing up of all things in Christ, things in the heavens and things upon the earth." And verse 11 says, "In Him also we have obtained an inheritance, having been predestined according to His purpose who works all things after the counsel of His will...." Man's free will to stand in his original righteousness and keep his original righteousness, could not and did not, stand the test. God ordained that He would be glorified more in man's not being able to do this. In the actual test, in accordance with the one command that He gave Adam and Eve in the garden, he did not stand.

The sin of Adam and Eve was not of God's creation. God willed and ordained the circumstances, and the test, and the outcome, without in the least causing man to sin. It was man's disobedience that brought sin into the world; not God. (Romans 5: 17 and 19) And so when God thought of saving any person; as He contemplated in eternity past what should and would transpire in the history of man, He thought of the whole race of mankind as being under His wrath because of Adam's sin, and because of the sins that each man would commit. He saw all men as lost and Himself as the only one who could save them. He purposed to do this by Electing a certain and definite number of persons to eternal life through His Son Jesus Christ. The Election was out of the mass of those under His wrath. You can see this if you turn with me over to Ephesians 2. "And you were dead in your trespasses and sins, in which you formerly walked according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air, of the spirit that is now working in the sons of disobedience." "Among them we too all formerly lived in the lusts of our flesh, indulging the desires of the flesh and of the mind, and were by nature children of wrath even as the rest." This is how God conceived of all of humanity in the mass,

before time began. He thought of them in light of the fall, which He infallibly saw would take place and so, knowing this, when he chose the elect, He saw them as He saw the others; they were children of wrath. Indeed, He continues to see them this way when they are born and as they live their lives for their sinful thoughts and conceptions and pleasures before conversion. They are children of wrath. With the Elect, however, He has this secret purpose of choice in Election. He will bring them out from under His wrath through the grace of Jesus Christ. He does this from nothing but free, distinguishing, love and mercy which He appoints them to. And with those who are reprobate, His secret purpose from all eternity is to pass them by. They are not chosen to eternal life. His appointment of them to wrath is to leave them under His wrath based upon His purpose in regard to them; to demonstrate His justice.

Turn with me to Romans Chapter 9 and we will look at some examples of those appointed to wrath and those appointed to salvation. Here in Chapter 9, Paul tells us of his great desire for the salvation of his kinsmen according to the flesh, the Israelites, who had been given so many outward spiritual privileges and blessings, but still so many of them were not saved. After saying that it was not as though the word of God had failed, (verse 6), he shows that part of the reason was because of God's purpose in Election and reprobation. From the standpoint of election, in verse 8 he says, "It is not the children of the flesh who are children of God, but the children of promise are regarded as descendants." And then he also mentions Rebekah having the twins, Jacob and Esau. Verse 11 states, "For though the twins were not yet born, and had not done anything good or bad, in order that God's purpose according to His choice might stand, not because of works, but because of Him who calls, it was said to her, 'The older will serve the younger'" "Just as it is written, Jacob I loved, but Esau I hated." "What shall we say then?" "There is no injustice with God, is there?" "May it never be!" "For He says to Moses, 'I will have mercy on whom I have mercy, and I will have compassion on whom I have compassion.'" "So then it does not depend on the man who wills or the man who runs, but on God who has mercy." "For the Scripture says to Pharaoh, 'For this very purpose I raised you up, to demonstrate My power in you, and that My name might be proclaimed throughout the whole earth.'" "Therefore He has mercy on whom He wills, and whom He wills He hardens." In other words, He appoints them to wrath. He appoints them to wrath, long before in eternity, according to His secret counsel and purpose not to show that person saving mercy. Those persons, thus appointed, freely confirm their sinnership and they fulfill the fact that they are deserving of the sentence of damnation at the last judgment. John 3: 19 says, And this is the condemnation, that the light has come into the world, and men loved darkness rather than light, because their deeds were evil." They did not want Christ or salvation through him. They would rather have their sin. In this case, here in Romans 9, two people are mentioned as being appointed to wrath. One is Esau in verse 13. God's purpose was the "hatred" of Esau in the sense that He did not Elect him, and He did not let him inherit the birthright or the blessing even though he was

the first-born in the family. It was the usual custom for the first-born, the older, to inherit these blessings both temporal and spiritual. It was God's purpose in Election that Esau not inherit. The second person mentioned is Pharaoh. God raised him up in order to "demonstrate His power in him, that He was stronger in His purposes than Pharaoh was in his, and that He would prevail over him. Pharaoh freely lived the life that he wanted to live as an oppressor of God's people and one who opposed God. And yet in God's decrees, God raised him up to show His power over him. Indeed God proves this to every man, and proves His justice is right and true. He will be vindicated in the Day that He judges.

Then in verse 18, Paul says, "So then He has mercy on whom He desires, and He hardens whom He desires." "You will say to me then, 'Why does He still find fault?' "For who resists His will?" If it were a matter of power, it is obvious that God is the greater? Why doesn't God simply overcome every man with grace instead of judgment? That is the question that is being asked. And Paul answers it by saying, "On the contrary, who are you, O man, who answers back to God?" "The thing molded will not say to the molder, 'Why did you make me like this, will it?' In other words God's purposes in creating each man are way above our puny understanding. Therefore we should not judge God when we understand that He will not save every man. "Or does not the potter have a right over the clay, to make from the same lump one vessel for honorable use, and another for common use?" The New King James says, "one vessel for honor and another for dishonor?" "What if God, although willing to demonstrate His wrath and to make His power known, endured with much patience vessels of wrath prepared for destruction?" "And He did so in order that He might make known the riches of His glory upon vessels of mercy, which He prepared beforehand for glory..." Now notice, brethren, that both the vessels of wrath and the vessels of mercy were prepared beforehand. This shows that there is an appointment to wrath from before the foundation of the world that will not be changed. Much earthly good may be shown such vessels, by God who is essentially good in His being. He causes His sun to shine on the just and the unjust. He is kind to even ungrateful and evil men. But He does not always save them. In the outworking of their lives this is seen to be so, and the Scriptures verify it. God is demonstrating His wrath. He is displaying His justice in passing them by, and hardening their hearts. He endures them with much patience. They stumble over the idea that they must have God's mercy in order to be saved. They think that their good works will be enough. But look over at 1 Peter 2: 7 with me. Here Peter tells us of the value of Christ to believers, but not to those who disbelieve. "Therefore, to you who believe, He is precious; but to those who are disobedient, 'the stone which the builders rejected has become the chief cornerstone,' and 'a stone of stumbling and a rock of offense.'" Then comes this amazing comment by Peter: "They stumble, being disobedient to the word, to which they were appointed." "But you are a chosen generation...." But let us consider that if you believe in Jesus Christ for your salvation; if you can say that Christ is precious to you, and your heart has been regenerated taking away the love

of sinning; then you can also be assured that God has not appointed you to wrath, but for the obtaining of salvation.

It is interesting that in Romans Chapter 11, if you turn over there to verses 6 and 7 you have a good example of God's appointments to both salvation and wrath. Speaking of the Election of grace of some among the nation and people of Israel, Paul says, "And if by grace, then it is no longer of works; otherwise grace is no longer grace." "But it is of works, it is no longer grace; otherwise work is no longer work." "What then?" "Israel has not obtained what it seeks; but the elect have obtained it, and the rest were blinded (or hardened)." "God has given them a spirit of stupor, eyes that they should not see and ears that they should not hear, to this very day." "And David says: 'Let their table become a snare and a trap, a stumbling block and a recompense to them.' "Let their eyes be darkened, so that they do not see, and bow down their back always." But God even had a purpose in this that was greater than themselves. "I say then, have they stumbled that they should fall?" (That is that God should forever cease to have dealings with any of physical Israel, and not save any among them) "Certainly not!" "But through their fall, to provoke them to jealousy, salvation has come to the Gentiles." "Now if their fall is riches for the world, and their failure riches for the Gentiles, how much more their fullness! (That is, when God stretches forth His hand to save them in their national conversion.) Verse 33 says, "Oh the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God!" "How unsearchable are His judgments and His ways past finding out!" The Gentiles "obtained" salvation while the Jews are still in "a partial hardening." Did Jacob, their first forefather, deserve to be chosen and elected while Esau was passed by and reprobated? No, they both deserved to be condemned forever in the lake of fire. Have you come to see that this is what you deserve as a sinner in the sight of an infinitely holy God? Jacob came to see this because of God's grace. He said in prayer to God, in Genesis 32: 10, when he afraid and distressed about his brother Esau coming to meet him, because he thought Esau would kill him for stealing the birthright and the blessing, "I am unworthy of the least of your mercies and all the truth which You have shown Your servant." Is this you, my friend, this afternoon? I pray that each of us who are believers would have this kind of attitude as we live our Christian life, because we recognize the reality of God's having chose us in Christ; that would be humbled by it to see how much sovereign control God does exercise over our lives. May we not think that He does not!

**Then 2ndly - In closing, we want to look at how Christ's death in relation to both gives the Christian great hope and comfort.**

"The Lord Jesus Christ died for us, that whether we wake or sleep, we should live together with Him." "Therefore comfort each other and edify one another, just as you are doing." Whether we "wake"; that is, whether we are alive here upon this earth, living out the days which God has given to us, which are all numbered before there was even one of them; or whether we "sleep", having died and gone to be with the Lord; we should understand that we "live together with Him." He died for all believers and therefore He is vitally united to them all in His resurrection life, which

He gives to each one. The comfort of all this is that we can never be separated from Him either in life or death. His life sustains our soul all through this life after we have been joined to Him in conversion. His life sustains our soul until the resurrection, as our souls are close by His side as He sits on His throne guiding and governing the affairs of this fallen world to their mighty climax where He will judge this world and then recreate it to be righteous. It will be far better to die and to depart and be with Christ. It will be a fuller manifestation of His presence to our souls than we have ever experienced here. But how much greater value yet will it be for the believer to "live together with Him" on the Day of the Resurrection of all the believing dead, when we shall see Him with new physical eyes, face to face; when we see that we have a glorious new body and a glorious new life which will never cease and never end, and everything of the former life has passed away! It is with these kind of thoughts that we ought to comfort and encourage one another as we live our Christian life. Do you do this? Do you comfort and encourage others with the thought that Jesus is always there, always with the ones whom you are trying to minister to in His name, because His life is in their life if they are trusting in Him? This is what the Jews will sing about in the day that they obtain the salvation that they are appointed to in the day of their national conversion. Isaiah 26: 1 says, "In that day this song will be sung in the land of Judah: We have a strong city; God will appoint salvation for walls and bulwarks." "Open the gates that the righteous nation which keeps the truth may enter in." "You will keep him in perfect peace whose mind is stayed on You, because he trusts in You." "Trust in the Lord forever, for in YAH, the Lord, is everlasting strength."