

Before we come to our text—let me begin with a short review of what we've already seen—I suggested some weeks ago that we could divide these 7 verses into three sections—[1] a preface (vv1-3a), wherein David describes the human (v1) and divine author (vv2-3a), of his prophecy, [2] the prophecy proper (vv3b-4), wherein David describes the coming righteous King and the effects of His kingdom as He brings both Sun and Rain within our hearts, and [3] a reflection (vv5-7), wherein David applies his prophecy to himself (v5), and the wicked (vv6-7)...

Matthew Poole—"Having in the foregoing verses described the nature, and felicity, and stability of that kingdom which God himself had by a sure and everlasting covenant settled upon him and his seed; and especially, upon the Messiah, who was to be one of his posterity; he now describes the quality, the naughty nature, the hazardous and miserable condition, of all the enemies of this holy and blessed kingdom, whom he justly calls *sons of Belial*, because they rebelled against God's appointment, and against that king whom God had set over them..."

I. Their Description

II. Their Destruction

I. Their Description

1. V6—"But the sons of rebellion shall all be as thorns thrust away"—this verse is a contrast with what precedes...
2. In v5—David described the grounds of his salvation and desire—"He has made with me an everlasting covenant, ordered in all things and secure..."
3. This eternal covenant was the grounds of—"all my salvation and all my desire; will He not make it increase..."
4. The Hebrew word rendered "increase" (NKJV), "grow" (KJV), and "prosper" (ESV)—literally means—"to sprout..."
5. The imagery continues that begun in v4—the kingdom of God—would produce eternal effects within his soul...
6. The promises made to David within this eternal covenant—would continue to bring forth fruit within his heart...
7. In contrast to this—"the sons of rebellion shall all be as thorns thrust away"—instead of prospering they shall be burned up...
8. Now—David describes them both by name and imagery—he calls them "sons of rebellion" and describes them as "thorns"...
9. The Hebrew word rendered "rebellion" (NKJV)—is literally "Belial"—which literally means—worthless or wicked...
10. The grammarians are divided on what this word actually means—it either "without rule" or "without worth"...
11. Who "Belial" was is unknown to us—the OT first uses the word in Deut.13:13—to refer to wicked or worthless men...
12. 1Sam.2:12—"Now the sons of Eli were worthless men [lit. sons of Belial]; they did not know the LORD..."
13. The NT uses it as a name for Satan, 2Cor.6:15—"And what accord has Christ with Belial? Or what part has a believer with an unbeliever..."
14. Thus—David here uses this phrase—"sons of Belial"—in a figurative manner—to describe wicked and godless men...
15. In fact—I suggest that David's description is basically threefold—[1] rebellious, [2] worthless, [3] dangerous...
16. [1] Rebellious—they are—"sons of rebellious"—they are unruly, disobedient, disloyal, defiant—they are rebels...

17. This of course—harkens back to v3b and the fact that—the coming Messiah is described as a just and God-fearing ruler...
18. The people described by David—are rebels—they refuse to bow the knee and submit to the just rule of Christ...
19. Ps.2:1-3—"Why do the nations rage, and the people plot a vain thing? 2 The kings of the earth set themselves, and the rulers take counsel together, against the LORD and against His Anointed, *saying*, 3 'Let us break their bonds in pieces and cast away their cords from us...'"
20. I agree with the best of commentators—who understand these words as describing both the Jews and Gentiles...
21. The "nations" refer to the Gentiles, and "the people" refer to the Jews—the "kings and rulers" refer to the Gentile and Jewish leaders...
22. Acts 4:27-28—"For truly against Your holy Servant Jesus, whom You anointed, both Herod and Pontius Pilate, with the Gentiles and the people of Israel, were gathered together 28 to do whatever Your hand and Your purpose determined before to be done..."
23. In other words—what we find in Ps.2:1-2—is a prophecy of those people who would collectively murder God's Son...
24. That is—Gentiles and Jews—leaders and common people—all collaborated—to put the Lord's Anointed to death...
25. Even though these various groups have little in common—they all agree in this—they all hate God and Christ...
26. V3—"Let us break their bonds in pieces and cast away their cords from us"—that is—their rightful rule and reign...
27. The sons of Belial view God's rightful reign over them as a bondage—they desire to be freed from that rule...
28. But oh brethren—surely this is nonsense in every way—for Christ's yoke is easy and His burden is light (Matt.11:30)...
29. [2] Worthless—this as I've said—is the literally meaning of this Hebrew word, thus the NAS—"but the worthless"...
30. This is also suggested in the imagery of "thorns"—thorns are useless—they have no meaning, purpose, or reason...
31. The point here is simple—fallen and foolish man—fails to comply with God's original purpose and design in creation...
32. That is—to the degree that fallen man refuses to trust, love, obey, and glory God—he remains useless or worthless...
33. Rom.3:10-12—"As it is written: There is none righteous, no, not one; there is none who understands; there is none who seeks after God. They have all turned aside; they have together become unprofitable; there is none who does good, no, not one [Lk.17:10]..."
34. The phrase I'm here after is—"they have together become unprofitable [worthless, useless]"—that is—fallen man...
35. Fallen man together—that is—the whole of mankind without exception—"have together become unprofitable..."
36. That is—he has become like thorns—he no longer serves the end of His creation—to love and glorify God...
37. Shorter Catechism—"What is the chief end of man? Man's chief end is to glorify God, and to enjoy him forever..."
38. Thus—the wicked or unconverted—are called—"the sons of Belial"—because they are together—worthless...
39. [3] Dangerous, v6b—"because they cannot be taken with hands. But the man who touches them must be armed with iron and the shaft of our spear..."
40. That is—those who touch thorns—don't touch them with their hands—but with the tip of an iron tool or spear...
41. In other words—they are dangerous—they bring harm, hurt, injury, or damage—they are potentially hazardous...

42. Thorns and thistles—have been introduced into the world through the fall—they are not original to God's creation...
43. Throughout the Scripture—thorns and thistles are used symbolically—to represent the effects of the fall and sin...
44. Now—simply put—native and fallen man is not only harmful to himself—but he is a potential danger to others...
45. Ezek.2:6—"And you, son of man, do not be afraid of them nor be afraid of their words, though briers and thorns *are* with you and you dwell among scorpions; do not be afraid of their words or dismayed by their looks, though they *are* a rebellious house..."
46. Ezekiel was commissioned to preach to a rebellious nation—he was responsible to speak to them God's word...
47. The disobedient and dangerous character of the people—would have likely, tempted the prophet to be fearful...
48. Notice—how they are described—"though briers and thorns are with you and you dwell among scorpions..."
49. These wicked people were likened to briers, thorns and scorpions—because they too, were potentially harmful...
50. But—although the people were evil, wicked, and potentially dangerous—Ezekiel was not to fear but trust God...
51. Rom.3:13-18—"Their throat *is* an open tomb; with their tongues they have practiced deceit; the poison of asps *is* under their lips; 14 whose mouth *is* full of cursing and bitterness 15 Their feet *are* swift to shed blood; 16 destruction and misery *are* in their ways; 17 and the way of peace they have not known. 18 There is no fear of God before their eyes..."

II. Their Destruction

1. Their destruction is described in two ways [1] v6—"as thorns thrust away" and [2] v7—"they shall be utterly burned with fire..."
2. [1] They shall be thrust away, v6—"as thorns thrust away"—the Hebrew word rendered "thrust" literally means—"to flee or depart..."
3. It's here used of thorns thrown away as useless and worthless—first cut down with a knife and thrust away...
4. Now—the NT especially—uses this imagery of thrusting or casting away—with regards to the nature of hell...
5. There is a true sense in which—the essence of hell is—separation from God—that is—from His gracious presence...
6. All men, even the unconverted, presently live in a world—where the general love and mercy of God is known...
7. Simply put—God is good and kind to evil and ungrateful men—He causes His sun and rain to fall upon them...
8. Hell—is a place—where this general or common love is unknown—man is separated from God's goodness...
9. John Gill—"They will be thrust away out of time into eternity, suddenly, hastily, in a moment, and in wrath. A tempest shall bear them away; the storm and tempest of divine wrath; for it is God that thrusts them away. He drives the wicked man into darkness, and chases him out of this world. A son of Belial is driven away in his wickedness; while the righteous has hope in his death. And he will be thrust away in the great day, from the presence of the Lord, as Adam, when he apostatized, was driven out of Eden's garden; and as Cain, when he had been guilty of that shocking sin of murder, was driven from the presence of God; so wicked men will be driven from his presence..."
10. Matt.7:23—"And then I will declare to them, I never knew you; depart from Me, you who practice lawlessness..."
11. Notice hell is here described in terms of "departing"—"depart from Me"—depart from Me the source of all good...

12. Depart from Me, your only hope of salvation—depart from Me, the sum of all moral beauty and excellence...
13. 2Thess.1:9—"These shall be punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord and from the glory of His power..."
14. [2] They shall be utterly burned, v7—"they shall be utterly burned with fire"—that is—completely burned...
15. Thorns are not only "thrust away" but they are "utterly burned"—they are burned or consumed in the flames...
16. This of course is descriptive of hell—which is repeatedly described, especially in the NT, as a fiery furnace...
17. Matt.13:41-42—"The Son of Man will send out His angels, and they will gather out of His kingdom all things that offend, and those who practice lawlessness, 42 and will cast them into the furnace of fire. There will be wailing and gnashing of teeth..."
18. Notice our Savior here speaks of hell as being—"cast into the furnace of fire"—they are thrust out and utterly burned...
19. Now—historically Christians have not agreed with the nature of this fire—whether it's literal or figurative...
20. But brethren—it makes little difference—for whether its literal or figurative fire—it's real and literal punishment...
21. Matt.22:13—"then the king said to the servants, Bind him hand and foot, take him away, and cast him into outer darkness; there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth..."
22. This verse is the application of the parable of the wedding feast—a man entered the feast without a garment...
23. That is—he was a professing Christian who was never justified, and thus lacked the righteousness of Christ...
24. [a] Thrust away—"take him away, and cast him into outer darkness"—that is—cast him out of the marriage feast...
25. This is no small part of hell—cast out of the marriage feast—thrust away from all hope or possibility of salvation...
26. The concept of darkness denotes misery, hopeless, and distance—from the light of God's love, mercy and grace...
27. [b] Utterly burned—"there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth"—this phrase refers to endurance of pain...
28. Matt.13:42—"cast them into the furnace of fire. There will be wailing and gnashing of teeth"—deep anguish...

III. Observations

A. The REALITY of wrath

1. Here—I simply want to underscore the obvious—there is a future day when the wicked will be eternally punished...
2. I am absolutely convinced—that we fail to think of the future punishment awaiting the impenitent—enough...
3. Here is David's final prophecy—His last words as God's voice—and what do they contain—but a description of hell...
4. Of all the things David prophesied and foretold—his very last words—are a warning about the reality of hell...
5. Now—before I go any further—I suggest from this fact—that contemplation of hell—is beneficial and necessary...
6. That is—no sooner did David find comfort in future SALVATION—he then thought about future DAMNATION...
7. To ponder the reality of future damnation—should produce drive us closer to Christ, and fill us without holy fear...

8. It should excite within us a deepened sense of gratitude—which should translate in diligence to obey His law...
9. Furthermore—contemplation of future wrath—ought to excite within us—an intensified concern for the lost...
10. But—here I don't want to focus upon the benefits of pondering coming wrath—but the hindrances to that pondering...
11. Thus—here I want to digress for a few minutes—and answer the question—why is this subject so often neglected...
12. [a] Unbelief—that is—we simply fail to believe the Bible for what it says—we entertain a measure of atheism...
13. Now—obviously brethren—a Christian is no atheist in the full sense—they believe what the Bible teaches...
14. But—and I want you to listen carefully—remaining degrees of unbelief are not inconsistent with a state of grace...
15. Or, put another way—true Christians struggle with unbelief—just as they struggle with various remaining sins...
16. [b] Discomfort—here I refer to another form of unbelief—not of Scripture—but of our own present condition...
17. That is—one common reason why we fail to think about hell—is because we retain lingering fears of hell...
18. We don't disbelieve the facts about hell—as much as—disbelieve the fact that we are delivered and safe from hell...
19. But my Christian friend—this is one reason to contemplate hell—to more tightly cling to the Savior of hell...
20. Do not ignore your lingering fears and doubts—but instead face them head on—face them openly and honestly...
21. Ask yourself this question—am I trusting in the person and work of Christ—am I safe within the Ark of His love...
22. Think for a minute of Noah and his family—as each one of them witnessed the wrath of God upon their contemporaries...
23. As they looked out the window and watched the multitudes being swallowed up in God's wrath and judgment...
24. Don't you think this made them more thankful for the ark—they no doubt distrusted themselves and trusted God...
25. So too—as you look through the window of this text—and behold the sons of Belial being drowned with fire...
26. Trust more tightly to Christ—distrust yourself and any supposed self merit—and cling to the sheer promise of God...
27. [c] Worldliness—here I fear dear brethren—is a common cause why so many Christians neglect this sober subject...
28. Simply put—we are so entrenched in the things of this world—that we have little concern about what's to come...
29. Now this includes even good and lawful things—things that we are actually commanded to be concerned with...
30. But either way—what I hear mean by worldliness is—we're simply too concerned with the things of this life...
31. When our hearts are dulled because of worldliness—we will be unconcerned and unwilling to ponder this subject...

B. The REASONS for wrath

1. Here—I want to clarify that the wrath the wicked will experience—is in every way—warranted, justified, and right...

2. This primarily stems from two great reasons—Christ is righteous and man by nature, is an unrighteous rebel...
3. [1] Christ is a righteous King—the holiness and righteousness of God is confirmed on every page of Scripture...
4. [2] Man is an unrighteous rebel—man by nature despises Christ and His law—he's a rebel within His kingdom...
5. Now—some weeks ago I reminded you of the distinction between—Christ's kingdom of power and grace...
6. Christ's kingdom of power—included all men converted or not—all men without exception are within this kingdom...
7. Matt.13:41-42—"The Son of Man will send out His angels, and they will gather out of His kingdom all things that offend, and those who practice lawlessness, 42 and will cast them into the furnace of fire. There will be wailing and gnashing of teeth..."

C. The REFUGE from wrath

1. Here—I want to spend our remaining time—speaking about the only God-given refuge from this coming wrath...
2. Now—I find it very interesting—that the very same King whose wrath may be soon kindled—is also our refuge...
3. Ps.2:12—"Kiss the Son, lest He be angry, and you perish *in* the way, when His wrath is kindled but a little. Blessed *are* all those who put their trust in Him..."
4. How is Christ—our righteous and God-fearing King—a refuge from the coming wrath—simple—He bears that wrath...
5. That is—Christ is our refuge from the wrath to come—because He bore that wrath as He suffered on the cross...
6. Now—I mentioned this morning—that Christ's spiritual agonies were twofold—pain of loss and pain of sense...
7. That is—He endured the pain of loss in that—He was abandoned by God—He was deprived of His felt love...
8. He endured the pain of sense in that—He positively felt within His human soul—the punishment due our sins...
9. [1] He endured the pain of loss—or, He was thrust away—that is—He was abandoned by His Holy Father...
10. Ps.22:1—"My God, My God, why have You forsaken Me? *Why are You so far from helping Me, and from the words of My groaning...*"
11. Christ was in a sense—"thrust away" from His Father—He was denied the sense of His presence and love...
12. [2] He endured the pain of sense—or, He was utterly burned—that is—He endured the wrath of His Holy Father...
13. Ps.22:14-15—"I am poured out like water, and all My bones are out of joint; My heart is like wax; it has melted within Me. 15 My strength is dried up like a potsherd, and My tongue clings to My jaws; You have brought Me to the dust of death..."
14. The imagery in v15—is that of the OC sacrifices—that after being cut into pieces—were burned upon the altar...
15. What if one of those sacrifices, were able to communicate while on the altar—something of the pain they felt...
16. Well—dear brethren—we don't need to ask such a question—for these are the words of THE sacrificial Lamb...