

*To whom is the sentence?*

The *context* tells us. They are as "goats," not "sheep;" they were never washed in the Shepherd's blood, or renewed in nature; nor did they follow Him, or know His voice, or submit to His rod. Also, they had been idle and selfish, had done nothing for Christ, because they cared nothing for Him; without love to Him, they lived to please themselves. And further: they fancied they were good, at the least harmless. Blind to their own demerit and danger, they are astonished and indignant to be taxed with neglecting duty. Our *text* says of them, they were "Cursed." It means that the curse under which all men naturally are, by reason of sin, had never been removed from these; they had remained under condemnation; they would not accept the release which He bought, and proffered gratis, who was "made a curse" for His people; and so, in virtue of their own choice, their own unbelief, their infatuated rejection of the Saviour, *that saying* is fulfilled in them:—"If any man love not the Lord Jesus Christ, he shall be Anathema Maranatha"—"Accursed when the Lord comes."

*What will He say unto them?*

"Depart from Me!" (Oh, is that to be thundered in our ears?) To be forbidden to pray, or look toward the holy temple! or approach to Jesus! or think of Him but as angry and inexorable! "Depart from Me!" "Draw not near!" I once said, "Come to Me," and ye would not; I now say, "Depart!" "Depart from Me!" It is a voice of extreme *indignation*—a furious rebuke from the lion of the tribe of Judah, that will chase them out of His presence! "Depart from Me!" It is a voice of *infinite disdain*. No more compassion for them, but withering contempt! "Depart from Me!" It is a voice of *final rejection*—that commands them to be gone, and pursues them to the pit! "Depart from Me!" "Depart!" "Depart from Me!" "away! away from mercy, from quiet, from goodness, from joy! My heart is absolutely alienated from you!" Oh, the regrets! the sinking of soul! the gnashing of teeth at this exclusion! at this infinite loss! Who can endure it? By the terrors of the Lord you are adjured to repent! to turn now!

More: Who are on the left hand then not only must go out from Christ, but "into everlasting fire." "Fire!" Whatever else, it imports this—the anguish of remorse! a wounded spirit! overwhelming shame! bitter self-accusation! with the raging of fierce insatiable passions! And no healing process, but hardening—the ever-sinning necessarily followed by ever-suffering! There will not be the nightly forgetfulness of *sleep*, or the weekly *rest*, or even a short *respite* in stupor! Hope clean gone! no intermission! no other prospect! no end! these gnawings "for ever!" this terror, this torment "everlasting!"

The last clause, "Prepared for the devil and his angels." Dark, doleful word—disclosing the *companionship* of the lost. Not a spark of goodness; not a restraint of ill, there! forced to herd with blasphemers, and the abominable! with Beelzebub, and his legions! The horrors and despair of such society no imagination can exaggerate.

Yet in this closing word is a ray of relief—not to any who prove impenitent, but to us who are still in the land of hope—as helping to vindicate the ways of God to man, and to win man (while yet there is room) to God! For, notable and significant is the different phraseology in our two verses. *Heaven* was "prepared" for those who shall abide there; and for it they are by grace prepared. But it is not said that *hell* was prepared for wicked men; and it is certain that God prepares no man for hell. He fits the vessels of mercy unto glory; but vessels of wrath fit themselves unto destruction—even as the "blessing" is "of the Father," but the curse is self-procured. When these are so "fitted," having refused mercy and strengthened themselves in iniquity, justice must take its course—the period for pity and pardon past. But, as if this fearful issue of their's had been un contemplated and unprovided for, they are banished