God's Wrath & Our Sin

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Preacher: Jason Webb

[0:00] Let's open to Colossians chapter 3. Colossians 3. It is a very similar word to the passage that we read this morning from Ephesians chapter 5.

! And you'll see that as we read. We're going to read the first 17 verses of Colossians 3. Since then you have been raised with Christ. Set your hearts on things above where Christ is seated at the right hand of God.

Set your minds on things above not on earthly things. For you died and your life is now hidden with Christ in God. When Christ who is your life appears then you will then you also will appear with him in glory.

Put to death therefore whatever belongs to your earthly nature. Sexual immorality, impurity, lust, evil desires and greed which is idolatry.

Because of these the wrath of God is coming. You used to walk in these ways in the life you once lived. But now you must rid yourselves of all such things as these.

[1:15] Anger, rage, malice, slander and filthy language from your lips. Do not lie to each other since you've taken off your old self with its practices.

And have put on the new self which is being renewed in knowledge in the image of its creator. Here there is no Greek or Jew, circumcised or uncircumcised, barbarian, Scythian, slave or free.

But Christ is all and is in all. Therefore as God's chosen people, holy and dearly loved. Clothe yourselves with compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness and patience.

Bear with each other and forgive whatever grievances you may have against one another. Forgive as the Lord forgave you. And over all these virtues put on love which binds them all together in perfect unity.

Let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts. Since as members of one body you were called to peace. And be thankful. Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly as you teach and admonish one another with all wisdom.

[2:29] And as you sing psalms, hymns and spiritual songs with gratitude in your hearts to God. Whatever you do. Whether in word or deed.

Do it all in the name of the Lord Jesus. Giving thanks to God the Father through him. Let's learn more of our God tonight. Pastor Jesus.

Well, you know that sometimes pastors preach the same sermon that they've preached before.

When they go away or travel or things like that. One of my favorite stories from the life of Dr. Martin Lloyd-Jones is this one. One time he preached some sermon at his home church.

And there was a young lady visiting the church that morning. And she liked the sermon very much. And I don't know what the sermon was or anything like that.

[3:27] But sometime later, Dr. Martin Lloyd-Jones, the doctor, visited her home church. And she said, do you remember that sermon that you preached?

I really liked it so much. And it would be really great if you could preach it again. And he didn't say much about it. He thought he knew which sermon she was talking about.

But he wasn't sure. But he got up and he preached. And after he was done, he sat down. And he looked over at that girl and said, was that the one?

And I hope it was. And she said it was. And I like that story a lot. Because he preached that sermon to make that young lady happy.

The doctor was not above taking a request. All great preachers or good preachers are servants.

[4:24] And they have a gift. And they love to see that gift used for the benefit and the blessing of God's people. Well, sometimes preachers do preach the same sermon they've preached before.

One time, Jonathan Edwards was visiting a church in Enfield, Connecticut. And rather than preparing a whole new sermon for this situation, he preached a sermon that he had preached before at his home church.

And it's far and away, far and away the most famous and the most vilified and the most criticized and the most admired sermon that's really ever, ever been preached on American soil.

It's studied in American classrooms all across the country. And it was sinners in the hands of an angry God.

That was not his first time to preach it. And it was a sermon on God's wrath and man's danger. And some people like to imagine that as Edwards was preaching, his spit was flying and his hair was on fire and he was raving.

[5:39] It was some sort of perverse joy as he preached this sermon. And really, nothing could be further from the truth. People that ridiculed the sermon generally are the same kind of people that lived in Isaiah's day that said, Tell us pleasant things.

Tell us pleasant things. Prophesy illusions. Stop confronting us with the Holy One of Israel. Just tell us lies.

You remember that song? I don't know when it is or anything about it, but the chorus says, Tell me lies. Tell me sweet little lies. Well, the first time he preached it, we don't know what happened.

Apparently nothing significant enough to record it because we don't have any idea. But on the second occasion, it was July 8th, 1741. God's spirit came down in a powerful way.

People were moaning and groaning and crying out. I guess my question to you is, do you believe that that kind of thing can still happen?

[6:46] That God can come and people can be powerfully moved? Well, we serve the same God. But we do need to realize it wasn't because Edwards, like I was saying, was preaching with his hair on fire or he was just some sort of animated, very animated preacher.

We know that he, from contemporary accounts, we know that he spoke in a moderate voice, in a natural tone. He didn't have an affected voice. He didn't put on a voice like that.

But on the other hand, it wasn't dull. It wasn't lifeless. It was just sort of a normal speaking voice. But he was no George Whitefield.

Someone jokingly, or maybe not so jokingly, said that George Whitefield can make his hearers cry just from the way he said Mesopotamia. Yeah, I think I can make people cry with how I pronounce words sometimes.

But, well, what was it? It was the Spirit of God, and it was the truth of God, and there is no more serious or sobering topic than the truth that our God is a God of wrath.

[8:02] He's the Holy One of Israel. He's penetratingly sacred, holy.

And he burns with a fiery light. God is light, and in him there is no darkness at all.

The flames of hell are nothing but the flames of his holiness, with sinners in his presence. Someone said, God is the heaven of some men, and he is the hell of others.

That's the same holy God. Our God is a consuming fire. God is a consuming fire. And when he burns in anger and in wrath against sin, he is being nothing less than what he is.

He's being himself. We talked this morning how our identity and our behavior should correspond. Well, God's identity is the Holy One.

[9:16] The consuming fire is why there is a hell. And God is a God of wrath, and that is our great problem.

Your biggest problem is God is holy, and you are not. Our deepest problem is with the kind of person God is and the kind of people that we are.

And so we're really no different than Isaiah. And he was exposed to the Holy One of Israel, and he said, my mouth, I'm a man of unclean lips. And unclean lips means an unclean heart.

And so there he was. I'm unclean from the bottom to the top. And sin is not just what we do. Sin is the very pollution of our nature. Sin is the very pollution of our nature.

We're not sinners because we sin. We sin because what we are is sinners. We're born in iniquity. Sin is the very pollution of our nature.

[10:20] And our God is a consuming fire. Do you see why this is our biggest problem? It's the kind of God that he is and the kind of people that by nature we are.

Our God is a consuming fire. Most of you, I'm sure, haven't heard of Shai Lin.

Some of you maybe have. But he's a 1689 confession Christian pastor and recording studio rapper.

I think Bob and Kathy self mentioned him one time. And he's not afraid to sing the plain truth. And he has a song called a consuming fire.

And he sings this. I'm not going to wrap it. But I'm just going to say this is what he sings. God's wrath is a perfection for which he should be adored.

[11:25] A passion for this message. Yes, it needs to be restored. He has holy reflexes towards the evil he abhors. Cots who don't respect him will receive his lethal sword.

The mass prefers the pleasures that sin easily affords. Our blasphemous affections are the reason we're at war. We should be in awe. His sweetness should keep us floored.

Sin's radical infection is the reason we get bored. Repeatedly we snore. He's frequently ignored.

And it goes on. Well, did you hear the truth in that? Don't get hung up on the fact that it's a wrap and however you feel about that. But his goodness.

His sweetness. Should keep us floored. Humbled. Amazed. At just who he is. And in love. But what do we do in response?

[12:27] We're bored. We snore. He's ignored. And so this great and glorious one. The holy one of Israel. We turn.

And then we turn away from him. And we drink from cisterns that don't have any water. Just have the runoff. And it's not by accident. It's by choice.

We make an exchange. And so God's wrath is our problem. God's justice is our problem. Because he is holy.

And we say, well, I don't like that. I don't want that. I don't love that. I don't care about that. That bores me. God's wrath is our problem. And if and if you take God's wrath out, you lose the gospel.

And that's what you see happening. First things first is you take God's wrath and God's holiness out of the gospel. And then pretty soon you lose the whole purpose for the cross.

[13:27] But in Christ Jesus, God's wrath has been turned away. That's the heart of the gospel. It's this word called propitiation. It's a very important word. Propitiation means a sacrifice that turns away wrath.

A sacrifice to absorb. A sacrifice to absorb, to take wrath. We sing it in the power of the cross. He took the wrath. So he took the wrath.

We remember that every communion. He took the wrath. And so think of what that means.

He took the fire and the terror and the darkness. The overpowering anger of God surrounded him and flooded his soul.

All of our sins were on him laid. And we put our hand upon him and the fire fell. And by his wounds, we are healed.

[14:35] Our healing only goes as far as his wounding. We sang it this morning. We're saved to the uttermost.

We're saved to the uttermost because he was condemned to the uttermost. He experienced the wrath of God to the uttermost.

And so by his wounds, we are healed. And so God's rightful and good and holy and pure and just and fair anger is appeased. And so there's now no condemnation for those of us who are in Christ Jesus.

And doesn't it make you love him? If your heart is dull, bring it to the cross. If your heart is cold and you need revive, bring it to the cross and look at and imagine and see and read and experience in some way what he endured for you.

Doesn't it make you adore him? Doesn't it make you say, I will serve the Lord with reverence and awe? There is forgiveness with him that he might be feared.

[15:47] Well, our God is a consuming fire. And so that's our great problem. And it's our great hope. We saw this last week. What do we do when we see sin in high places? And maybe that sermon didn't quite resonate with you as much as some of the other ones.

And might I just say it's because maybe we haven't experienced so much of that. But there are brothers and sisters that have. There are people that have. And there's a time coming when we too will experience it.

And then we will be just like that persistent widow praying for God to give us justice. It's our great hope because God is opposed to sin wherever he finds it.

And in whatever situation, in whatever context, he finds it. And so if it's in the Kremlin, if it's in the White House, if it's in Congress or the Supreme Court or or in boardrooms or in Wall Street, that these great powers that seem so unstoppable.

Unstoppable. These companies and these people that are making so much money. It seems so unstoppable. Well, just my word is don't be fooled.

[16:59] God is not an idle spectator looking in on this and doesn't care and has no sort of reaction towards it. God sees the idolatry and the violence and he is against it.

He abhors it. Listen to what he says in Malachi. I hate divorce, says the Lord God. Now, look around in our culture. People just get divorced for any and every reason.

And God is saying, I hate that. And wouldn't it be nice if the Christian church had some sort of different percentages than the outside world? But sadly, in many cases, it doesn't.

God says, I hate divorce. The Lord God of Israel says, I hate a man's covering himself with violence as well as with his garments. When people put on violence as right along with their clothes, God hates it.

And you could read Malachi chapter two and three. This is why it's important to get into those minor prophets, those books that maybe you don't always go to because there's good stuff there. God says to his people, you weary me.

[18:05] Can you imagine God saying that to us? You weary me. And Israel said, well, why? Why do we weary you? You say all who do evil are good in the eyes of the Lord and he is pleased with them.

Or where is the God of justice? But the Lord says, not at all. It's not that just because it's going on that I am OK with it or that I'm pleased with it.

The Lord says, not at all. I am going to send my messenger before you and he's going to come as a refiner's fire. He's going to come among you and he's going to burn the dross away.

And then the Lord addresses the adulterers and perjurers, you who defraud laborers of their wages, who oppress widows and the fatherless and deprive aliens of justice.

God says, watch out. I'm coming in judgment and I will come as prosecutor and I will come as witness and I will come as judge and I will come as executioner.

[19:11] God is saying, don't be fooled. I will take evil in hand. Evil in high places. I will destroy. And that's our that's our great hope.

We want to see righteousness flourish. We want to see peace reign. And that will happen when God takes wickedness in hand. Isaiah are Psalm 46.

He breaks the bow. He shatters the spear. He burns the shields with fire. Be still and know that I am God. I will be exalted among the nations.

I will be exalted in the earth. He won't bring peace through compromise.

He'll bring peace through wrath. God's wrath will bring us the righteousness that we are looking for.

[20:14] He'll bring justice to an unjust world. And that's our great hope. Now, that's a really long introduction. That's what we saw last week. And today we want to look again at another way that God's wrath helps us.

It's meant to be for our good and learning about it is good for us. And it's that God's wrath helps us to fight against sin.

It helps us to fight against sin. Now, you see that in Colossians chapter 3. And look at verse 5. The Apostle Paul says, Put to death, therefore, whatever belongs to your earthly nature or whatever is earthly in you.

That's what it's saying. Whatever is earthly in you. Sexual immorality, impurity, lust, evil desires and greed, which is idolatry. Because of these, the wrath of God is coming.

As Pastor John said, there's a very similar passage in Ephesians chapter 5. It says, you need to get rid of these sins.

[21:25] Because of these, the wrath of God is coming upon the disobedient. And so what is our duty in this passage?

What does the Apostle Paul tell us that we need to be doing? Well, we need to be putting to death whatever belongs to your earthly nature.

Whatever is earthly or sinful or fallen in you. That's what Paul is talking about. Whatever part of you that's still not heavenly. That's still not Christ-like.

Whatever is in you that will ultimately and finally be destroyed when Christ comes. You need to be putting that to death right now. And he says, put it to death.

And he doesn't put an age limit on that. So have you been in the faith for years and years? You have to put to death your sin.

[22:23] It's as serious as it was when you first began. Have you advanced so far in your faith? Well, you still need to be putting to death your sin.

It doesn't matter how long you've been a Christian. It doesn't matter your role in the church or your place in the church. We need to be putting to death our sin.

And notice that it's the things that are inside of us. It's not just mere outward action, what Paul talks about. It's easy to read these things as sexual immorality, impurity, lust.

Well, it's easy to get on and thinking, well, that's just my behavior. But actually what Paul is really referring to are these heart-level sins. Sexual immorality doesn't start on the outside with some sort of act.

It starts on the inside with a heart motive and impurity and lust and evil desires and greed. Those are heart-level sins. And he's saying put to death whatever is earthly in you. It's in you.

[23:29] It's a part of you. It's a part of your makeup. And so what Paul is saying is you need to take violent action against yourself. Violent action against what has fallen inside of you.

And so Jesus' words, if your right eye causes you to sin, gouge it out. If your right hand causes you to sin, cut it off. Violent action against yourself. Now, you've heard of people cutting themselves and hurting themselves and harming themselves.

And ultimately and maybe finally in killing themselves. And where you see that kind of thing, there's always an extreme emotion behind it. People don't cut themselves or hurt themselves out of some sort of boredom.

There's always hurts. There's always pain. There's always fear. There's always this extreme emotion behind it. But in a way, violent action against yourself is exactly what Paul is saying.

And so where do you get the will to do that? Where do you get the desire to do that? Where do you get the will to gouge out an eye or to cut off a hand?

[24:49] That really is the question. It's one thing to know I should do this, but I really need to know why. I need those desires for it.

Now, Paul in this passage already has given us the real, the primary reasons for doing it. The primary reasons are. Of why we should be doing it, and it's your life is in Christ.

And even more than that, you, you, your life is Christ. Christ is your life. And you're going to appear with him in glory for you died and now you are hidden.

Your life is hidden with Christ in God. Now, those things are really what you are. We were talking this morning about our identity being so important.

Well, this is where you see this coming in. These things are what Christ is really who you are. You're those things that are earthly in you are not you any more.

[25:50] In the ultimate and the final sense. And let me say that again. These things. This is so important. These things, sexual immorality, impurity, lust, evil desires, greed, idolatry, or any other sin.

Are not who you really are ultimately and finally. They're not your truest self, so to speak. Christ is your life. And so those things no longer belong.

And when Christ comes back and he returns, you will appear with him in glory. He is glorious now. And you are going to be glorious then.

You're going to appear with him in glory. So right now you're in the cocoon. And when Christ comes back, the cocoon is going to break open and the butterfly will appear and you will be that butterfly for the whole world to see.

That's who you really are. That's where you are going. And then that's why Paul says, so therefore. Put to death. What is earthly in you? They are contradictory.

[27:04] They're contrary to your life. They're not a part of what you're going to be. So get rid of them. Destroy them. And it's that fierce hope and that fierce faith that gives you the will to put these things to death.

It's not despair. It's not hopelessness. It's not resignation. It's this fierce hope that no Christ is risen and I am going to be raised as well.

He is glorified. I will be glorified. Those things are not a part of who I am anymore and so I've got to get rid of them. It's that fierce hope of what Jesus has done, is doing, and will do that gives us the desire to gouge out right eyes and cut off right hands.

Now that's the primary reason. But Paul doesn't stop there. He gives another reason to put to death sin. And it's because of these the wrath of God is coming.

It's because of these sins. What is bringing the wrath of God? It's just these sins. So just think about that.

[28:15] What is bringing the wrath of God? It's just these things. These sins are what is calling for his wrath. These sins are what are whistling for God's wrath to come to us.

And Paul says we need to be serious about that or we need to think about that. God is serious about sin and we need to be as serious. And so God has recruited us to his side and he's against our sin and he has anger and wrath for our sin.

And so what he's saying is let that same wrath that is in Christ Jesus be in you and let that wrath be directed, that anger be directed to destroy.

What is earthly in us. And so. You know, we think about how do you how do I imitate the love of God or the patience of God or other attributes?

Well, we can imitate the wrath of God now. Now. By destroying the parts of us that are rotten. And earthly.

[29:24] And under judgment. The whole sinful earth will be burned up. And so we can start that fire right now in my soul as I burn the sin away as I put it to death.

And so how does the wrath of God help us to kill sin? Well, it makes us take sin seriously. So think about what your sin is going to look like.

What's how what are you going to be feeling towards sin on the day of judgment? People take sin lightly now. We take it too lightly.

But because of these things, the wrath of God is coming. And so what will sin look like on the day of the Lord? Will we joke then? Will we make excuses then?

Will we smile then? So in your mind, go forward to that day. And as you see sin bringing down the wrath of God.

[30:30] So put yourself in. Now it's Sodom and Gomorrah. So now it's the whole earth. The wrath of God coming down. And what would you do? You would run away from every sin.

You would flee from it. Wrath is falling on sin. So get me as far away as possible. Get rid of it. So Paul wrote to Timothy.

Timothy. And young men, young women. Flee youthful lusts. There are evil desires that wage war against your soul.

Fight against them. You don't dance. You don't dally. You flee. But you do more than that. You murder them. It is a life and death struggle. Do you believe that?

That you will either kill your sin. Or your sin will kill you. One of the, I don't know what the word for it is.

[31:30] It's the most crazy Old Testament passages I find. Is there was a time when Joab's men fought hand to hand against Abner's men.

And, and they said this. Let some of the young men. Would you want to be a young man on that day? Let some of the young men get up and fight hand to hand in front of us. All right.

Let them do it. And there were 12 men on each side. And they grabbed each other by the head. And they stabbed a dagger into their opponent's side. And they fell down into the dirt.

It's so personal. It's so life and death. It's either him or me. So be killing sin. Or sin will be killing you.

Because of these, the wrath of God is coming. Because of these, the wrath of God is coming. And so knowing the terror of the Lord, we should do everything we can to kill the sin that is in our lives.

[32:32] Because God hates sin. And so would I harbor in my heart evil against the Lord? Would I harbor in my heart a felon against God's justice?

Would I really do that? Protect it. And guard it. Would I harbor my eyes or my heart or my hands or my body or something in me that God hates, that God abhors?

We talked about cherishing sin a few weeks ago. That's what cherishing sin is. When God has declared war on that sin. And I'm saying, no, I'm not ready to fight it yet.

I want to just protect it. So God abhors sexual immorality, impurity, evil desires and greed. And he hates it. And he goes on. Get rid of all those things.

This anger and rage and malice and slander and filthy language from your lips. Lying and all the rest. Well, knowing God's wrath should make it easier for me to say it's time for you to die.

[33:41] Because I'm afraid of the Lord. I'm afraid of his wrath. I don't want his wrath falling on me. So I will kill that sin. And. And more than that, how does the wrath of God help us?

It's as if God is saying to us, will you really act like my enemies? To not be killing sin is to be acting like God's enemies. That's what God's enemies do.

And so will you really join yourself with them in Ephesians in the in the parallel passage? It says the wrath of God is coming upon the disobedient. Are you going to join yourself to the disobedient?

These are my people. They have my priorities. Well, you don't. You say I don't hang out with the wicked. Well, you join the company of the wicked when you let the same sins rule in your heart.

You're acting like them. So a Christian. Adulterer, a Christian liar, a Christian cheater, a Christian greedy person.

[34:46] Are you any different? Don't you fear the wrath of God? God's wrath is going to come upon all of the goats. Will you leave the sheep pen and join yourself with the goats and that herd?

That's what Paul is saying. Because of these, the wrath of God is coming. Are you really going to be joining them? And if God's wrath is coming, then I'll have nothing to do with the misdeeds and the sins of the disobedient.

If they insist on running headlong into hell, it doesn't mean that I have to. Or I should. The wrath of God is something to flee from.

You don't flee at a slow speed and you don't flee half-hearted. You flee with all of your heart as fast as you can. And so the wrath of God, how does it help us to fight sin? Well, it gives us clarity. It gives us vision.

It gives us clarity of what's what and who's who and what's really important. We've been looking at, we've looked at Psalm 73 and Asaph and his situation, how he envied the wicked.

[35:57] And we've all been there. That's why Psalm 73 is so relatable. We immediately enter into it. We understand what Asaph is going through.

And it's death, as we saw last week, that puts our minds straight. But it's also God's wrath. And so where does God put the wicked? In Psalm 73, Asaph saw where God has placed the wicked.

He says, you have placed them on slippery ground. Deuteronomy 32, 35 says, In due time, their foot will slip. So, yes, they're rich and healthy.

Yes, life is going their way. But do you really want to trade places with them? Do you really envy what they have? Because maybe you're only envying a little bit of what they have.

Because actually what they have is a lot more than that. Would you really want to trade places with them? Well, okay, here you go. Trade places with them. And where are you now?

[37:06] Well, you're on slippery ground. You're on ice. And now it's not a matter of if you will fall. It's a matter of when you will fall.

Because in due time, your foot will slip. That was actually Edwards' text for sinners in the hands of an angry God. And so do you want to be like them?

Well, you want their life. Well, here you are. You're on slippery ground. And you're going to fall. You're going to fall. Well, you want their life.

Well, here you are. You're not on slippery ground anymore. Now you're on a rotten covering. I want you to picture a tarp. Paper thin.

Eaten up. Full of holes. There's already flashes of light coming up from underneath it. And it's a rotten, rotten covering.

[38:05] And it's covering hell. And you're walking over hell. And that's what you need to know. The tarp will break at any time. And you will fall.

And Jonathan Edwards said, The only thing that's holding you up is the hand of God. And you deserve it to break. That's what's so frightening about it.

God doesn't make any promises that you'll make it across. He actually promises that it will break. And you deserve it to break. And so now, do you envy them?

Now do you envy them? Now do their sins seem small? And we would say, Give me poverty. Give me sickness.

But oh, thank God I'm not on that rotten tarp. Walking over hell now. Thank God I cried out. And he saved me. And he put me on solid rock.

[39:08] On the solid rock of Christ Jesus. And so, there's good rock underneath my feet. There's good ground underneath my feet.

And it's all because of him. And I'm held up now, not just by the mere patience of God, but the love of God and the faithfulness of God and the power of God. And now, all of God's good attributes are holding me up and keeping me safe to the end.

And so, there's good rock underneath my feet. And it's all Jesus. And so, with Asaph, we say, so is for me.

It's good for me to be near the Lord. It's good for me to be near the Lord. This is all I need. This is all I want. To be near the Lord. I don't want anything to come between me and him. Between his heart and my heart.

I don't want any sin to come in. And so, I'm going to be killing sin. And I'm going to cling to Christ. I don't want anything coming between him and me in this life or in the next life.

[40:07] So, I will cling to Christ. You can imagine someone who nearly fell into the Grand Canyon. And how they would hold the solid rock once they got pulled back up.

Brothers and sisters, we all nearly fell into the Grand Canyon. And Jesus took us by the hand. And he rescued us. So, let's cling to Christ. And if the wrath of God makes me cling tightly to Christ.

And to kill sin. Well, then it's good for me to think about. It's good for me to know. It's good for me to meditate upon it. And if that's what the wrath of God does.

That really is for my good. So, don't shy from these passages. Read them. Bring Jesus into them. And embrace all that your God is.

All that he is for you. Let's pray. Jesus, it's only when we see hell opened up.

[41:14] It's only when the judgment happens that we'll really truly understand how much we owe. But thank you for these passages and these meditations that help us to begin to understand what we owe to you.

And if we understand that more, we will sing. Have thine own way. With more of a heart.

And more of a resolution. Because we are redeemed. We've been bought. And so we're not ourselves. We don't belong to ourselves. We belong to you.

And we've been rescued. From the worst fate of all. So help us to be thankful. Help us to know what it is to fear the Lord and to fear his wrath and yet trust his.

Trust your heart. Help us to know how to balance those things and understand both of them. Lord, there are some people here who aren't ready.

[42:22] We're still walking on that tarp. Awake them to their danger and give them a voice and a heart that would cry out to you.

And save them. Pray this in Jesus name. Amen. Amen.