

Riches Do Not Profit

Proverbs 11:4

Charlie Brackett

Riches do not profit in the day of wrath,
But righteousness delivers from death.

Such is the reading in Proverbs 11:4. To hear these words is to come face to face with the realization that a day of wrath is coming. The Old Testament often speaks of a day of wrath. It was whenever the Lord promised to bring destruction on one disobedient nation or another. Not long before God raised up the Babylonians to take His people into the seventy years captivity, Zephaniah prophesied of a day of wrath for Judah. Please notice the message of Zephaniah 1:14-18:

Near is the great day of the Lord,
Near and coming very quickly;
Listen, the day of the Lord!
In it the warrior cries out bitterly.

A day of wrath is that day,
A day of trouble and distress,
A day of destruction and desolation,
A day of darkness and gloom,
A day of clouds and thick darkness,

A day of trumpet and battle cry,
Against the fortified cities
And the high corner towers.

And I will bring distress on men,
So that they will walk like the blind,
Because they have sinned against the Lord;
And their blood will be poured out like dust,
And their flesh like dung.

Neither their silver nor their gold
Will be able to deliver them
On the day of the Lord's wrath;
And all the earth will be devoured
In the fire of His jealousy,
For He will make a complete end,
Indeed a terrifying one,
Of all the inhabitants of the earth.

They were God's children but they were sinful and disobedient. Time and again, He called on them to repent, but they stubbornly refused. While He patiently pleaded for them to return to Him, His wrath was kindled against them. Paul pictures it for us in Romans 2:5. "But because of your stubbornness and unrepentant heart you are storing up for yourself wrath in the day of wrath and revelation of the righteous judgment of God." A day of wrath came for them because they would not repent, and a day of wrath awaits us also if we are disobedient.

In the years before Judah was destroyed, the nation enjoyed great prosperity. Judah reveled in alliances with the nations around; she was successful in every worldly way. But, though God warned that their alliances and wealth would not help them, they would not listen. They were smug in their own self-sufficiency --- until the day of wrath. How about us?

My friend, there is only one deliverance on that day. It is being found faithful in Christ and His righteousness.