Eternal Punishment

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This time we take up our pen to write on one of the most solemn truths taught in the Word. And we begin by turning to the Lord and earnestly asking that wisdom and grace which we are conscious we sorely need, making regard that we might be preserved from all error in what we shall say, and that nothing may find a place in these pages which shall be displeasing to that Holy One, whose we are, and whom we serve. "O that we may write in the spirit of One who said, 'Who knoweth the power of Thine anger, even according to Thy fear, so is Thy wrath'!" (Psa. 50:11).

"The subject before us is one that needs stressing in these days. The great majority of our pupils are silent upon it, and the fact that it has so little place in modern preaching is one of the signs of the times, and of the falling evidences that the Apostasy must be near at hand. It is a step in the direst possible direction to view prayer in a spirit which would see the object of prayer as being, not the promotion of sexual intercourse, but the sending of those truths which are calculated to bring about revival.

While it is true that all genuine revivals come from God, yet He is not Opposite in the sending of them. We are sure that God never relinquishes His sovereign rights to man, and He does not leave to man to determine what He will send. He also believes that here, as everywhere, there is a direct connection between cause and effect. And a revival is the effect of a previous cause. A revival, like a genuine conversion, is work of God by means of the Word—the Word applied by the Holy Spirit, of course. Therefore, there is something more needed (on our part) than prayer; the Word of God must have a place, a prominent place, the prominent place. Without that there will be no Revival, whatever excitement and activities of the emotions there may be.

The determining concept of the order that is most needed today is a whole proclamation of those truths which are the least acceptable to the flesh. What is needed today is a Scriptural setting forth of the character of God—His unspeakable majesty, His ineffable holiness, His infinite justice, His consuming jealousy. What is needed today is a Scriptural setting forth of the condition of the natural man—his total depravity, his spiritual blindness, his inscrutable hostility to God, the fact that he is "condemned already," and that the wrath of a sin-hating God is even now abiding upon him. What is needed today is a Scriptural setting forth of the alarming danger in which sinners are—"the indestructibly awful doom which awaits them, the fact that if they fellow into a little further their present course they shall most certainly suffer the due reward of their iniquities." What is needed today is a Scriptural setting forth of the nature of that punishment which awaits the lost—"the awfulness of it, the hopelessness of it, the unendurableness of it, the endlessness of it. It is because of these conditions that by pen as well as by voice we are seeking to raise the alarm.

It may be thought that what we have said in the above paragraph stands in need of qualification, and we imagine some of our readers saying, "Such truths as these may be fine in theory but they cannot be carried into practice. How is it possible to make such subjects sound to be pressed upon the Lord's people? But that is exactly what we mean and do say. We must the Epistles, dear friends, and note what place each of these subjects has in them. It is just because these truths have been uttered so much from public ministrations to the saints that we now find so many practicemen, denominational, independent Christians in our assemblies. A clearer vision of the awe-inspiring attributes of God would banish much of our levity, and carelessness. A better understanding of this depravity by nature would humble us, and make us see our deep need of using the appointed means of grace. A facing of the alarming danger of the sinner would cause us to 'contemplate our ways' and make us more
diligent to make our ‘calling and election sure.’ A realization of the unappealable misery which awaits the sinner (and which each of us fully meets) would intimately deepen our gratitude, and bring us to thank God more fervently that we have been excluded as brands from the burning and delivered from the wrath to come, and too; it will make us far more earnest in our prayers as we supplicate God on behalf of the unsaved. Moreover, Scriptural and searching addresses along these lines would, in some cases at least, by hold of those who have a form of godliness but who deny the power thereof. They would have some effect on that sad company of professors who are ‘all-ease in Zion’. They would, if God were depended upon, arouse the indifferent, and cause some who are now careless and unconcerned to cry, ‘What must I do to be saved?’ Remember that the ground must be plowed before it is ready to be sowed, and the truth mentioned above are needed to prepare the way for the Gospel." 

Internal punishment of the wicked there are few. It seems, who realize the vital importance of a ringing testimony to this truth, and fewer still who apprehend the deep seriousness of what is involved in a denial of it. The importance of a clear reference to this doctrine may be seen by noting what a prominent place it holds in the Word; and conversely, the seriousness of denying it is evidenced by the fact that such denial is a rejection of God’s truth. The need of giving this same subject a prominent place in our sermons is apparent, for it is our bounden duty to warn our hearers of their fearful path and bid them flee from the wrath to come. To remain silent is criminally to substitute anything for it to set before the wicked a false hope. The great importance of expounding this doctrine, anew and frequently, also appears in that, excepting the Cross of Christ, nothing else so manifests the horribleness of sin, whereas every modification of external punishment, only serves to minimize the evil of it.

We propose to deal with our present theme under the following divisions. First, we shall enumerate the leading objections brought against the truth of eternal punishment. Second, we shall closely examine passages which treat of the duration of the lost, showing that death awaits the sinner’s doom, that he is condemned to an endless hell, that the punishment awaiting him is intolerable. Third, we shall examine those scriptures which throw light upon the nature of the punishment which awaits the lost. Finally, we shall seek to make a practical application of the whole subject.

I. OBJECTIONS CONSIDERED

In taking up the objections made against the truth of eternal punishment it would be a hopeless task were we to attempt to refute every argument which the siren mind of unbelief under the control of Satan, as it has devised. We shall, however, consider those of greatest weight, and these which have received the widest acceptance among unbelievers. These we shall classify as follows: First, deductions drawn from the Divinity perfections. Second, passages applied by the Unrechiable. Third, passages applied by Unbelievers. Fourth, assertions that punishment is not equal and retaliative but disciplinary and remedial.

1. Deductions Drawn From The Divine Perfections.

(2) God is love. From this Scriptural premise the conclusion is drawn that we shall never cast any of his creatures into endless woe. But we must remember that the Bible also tells us
that “God is light,” and between light and darkness there can be no fellowship. Divine love is not a sentiment—a passive which pervades moral distinctions. God’s love is a holy love, and because it is such it hates all evil, yea, it is written, “They hated all works of iniquity” (Ps. 49:5). Starting as it may sound, it is nevertheless a fact that the Scriptures speak much more frequently of God’s anger and wrath than they do of His love and compassion. Let any one consult Young’s or Strong’s Concordance and they may verify this for themselves. To argue, then, that because God is love, He will not inflict eternal torment on the wicked, is to ignore the fact that God is light, and is to transpose His holiness.

(2) God is merciful. Man may be a sinner, and holiness may require that he should be punished, but it is argued that divine mercy will intervene, and if the punishment be not entirely removed it is imagined that the sentence will be modified and the term of punishment decreased. But mercy is not incompatible with holiness. God is a God of mercy. But if by the mercy of God be meant that He is too tender-hearted to apportion such immensity to His creatures, then we ought as logically reason that seeing God’s mercy, like all His attributes, is infinite, therefore, none of His creatures will be permitted to suffer at all; for this is manifestly erroneous. Facts deny it. We creatures do suffer, oftentimes exceeding, even in this life, Look out on the world to-day and mark the untold misery which abounds on every hand, and then remember that, however myriads at this may be to us, nevertheless, it is all permitted by a merciful God. So, too, read in the Old Testament the accounts of the deluge, the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah by fire and brimstone from heaven, the plagues upon Egypt, the judgments which were visited upon Israel, and then bear in mind that these were not prevented by the mercy of God. To reason, then, that because God is merciful He will not cast into the lake of fire every one whose name is not found written in the book of life, is to fly in the face of all God’s judgments in the past.

(3) God is just. It is often said it would be unjust for God to sentence any of His erring creatures to eternal punishment. But who are we to pass judgment upon the justice of the decisions of the All-Wise? Who are we to say what is consistent or inconsistent with God’s righteousness? Who are we to determine what shall befall the Divine benevolence or equity? Is it so that when did our reason overlook what God has revealed? But it has so enlightened our power of righteous judgment, so defined our understanding, so directed our conscience, so corrected our wills, so corrected our hearts, that we are quite incompetent to decide. We are sometimes so infected and affected by sin that we are altogether incapable of estimating its due merits. Imagine a company of criminals passing judgment on the equity and goodness of the law which had condemned them! The truth of the matter is—and how often is it lost sight of—that God is not to be measured by human standards.

But when we realized that to deny the justice of eternal punishment is also to repudiate the grace of God? It endows mercy with unjust; then exemption from it must be the sinner’s right, and if so, His salvation could never be attributed to grace, which is a meritorious favor! Finally, let us examine the human principles on which we are ground upon, viz.: we are the standard of our conscience, which universally testifies to the fact that punishment, and only punishment, is in that case what we deserve. Moreover, if the sinner has despised and rejected eternal happiness, is there any reason why he should complain against the justice of eternal misery? Finally, if there is an infinite evil in sin, as there is then infinite punishment is its due reward.

(4) God is holy. Because God is infinitely holy, He regards sin with infinite abhorrence. From this scriptural principle it has been erroneously concluded that, therefore, God will
ultimately triumph over evil by hamstringing every last trace of it from the universe, otherwise it is said His moral character is gone. But against this supposition we may reply: God’s goodness did not prevent an existing His universe, and he has permitted it to remain all these thousands of years, therefore a holy God can and does coexist with a world of evil. To this it may be answered: There are good and sufficient reasons why sin should be allowed now. Quite so. Is our supposition: and who knows what those reasons are? Conjecture we may, but who knows? God has not told us in His Word. Whence, then, is the position to say that there may not be eternal reason—necessary—for the continued existence of sin? That God will triumph over evil’s most certainly true. His triumph will be manifested by incorporating every one of His foes in a place where they do no more damage, and where in their tormentors His holy hatred of sin will shine for ever and ever. The Lake of Fire so far from witnessing to Satan’s victory, will be the covering proof of His utter defeat.

2. The Passages Appended To By Universalists.

Universalists may be divided, broadly, into two classes: those who teach the ultimate salvation of every member of Adam’s race, and those who teach the ultimate salvation of all creatures, including the Devil, the fallen angels, and the demons. The class of passages to which both appeals are variously the words “all,” “all men,” “all things,” “the world” are to be found. The simplest way to refute the contentsions of these passages is to show that such terms are restricted, usually modified by what is said in the immediate context.

The issue raised by Universalists narrows itself down to the question of whether “all men” and “all things” are employed, in passages which speak of salvation, in a limited or unlimited sense. Let us, then, point to a number of passages where these general terms occur, but where it is impossible to give them an absolute force or meaning.

“...And as many as were baptized of them in the river of Jordan, confessing their sins” (Mark 1:5). “And as the people were in expectation, and all men move in the hearts of John, whether he was the Christ or no” (Luke 3:15). “And they came unto John, and said unto him, Rabbi. He was with the Baptist’s Jordan. To whom thou bearest witness, behold the same baptizing, and all come to him” (John 1:26). “And early in the morning he came again into the temple, and all the people came unto him, and he sat down, and taught them” (John 8:1). “For thou shalt be His witness unto all men of what thou hast seen and heard” (Acts 22:15). “Ye are our apostle written in our hearts, known and read of all men” (2 Cor. 3:2).

In none of the above passages has “all,” “all men” or “all the people” an unlimited scope. In each of those passages these general terms have only a relative meaning. In Scripture “all” is used in two ways: meaning “all without exception” (occasionally frequently), and “all without exception” (its general signification), that is, all classes and kinds—old and young, men and women, rich and poor, educated and illiterate, and in many instances Jews and Gentiles, men of all stature, very frequently the “all” has reference to all believers, all in Israel, or all in some particular place. By “all men” is meant “all men of all ages, times and places.” What we have just said concerning the relative use and restricted meaning of the terms “all” and “all men” applies with equal force to “all things.” In Scripture this is another expression which often has a very limited meaning. We give a few examples of the “For one believeth that he may eat all things, another, who is weak, eateth not” (Rom. 14:2). “For meat destroy not the work of God” (1 Cor. 10:23). “I am made all things to all men, that I might by all means save some” (1 Cor. 9:22). “All things are lawful for me, but all things are not expedient” (1 Cor. 10:23). “Ye fools, and wise beyond measure in this world, howbeit not in that which is with God” (Eph. 2:7). “I can do all things through Christ” (Phil. 4:13).
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made man upright, but they have sought out many inventions’ (Eccl. 7:29). One of these inventions is the theory that at death the wicked pass into oblivion, and that after their resurrection and judgment at the Great White Throne, they are annihilated in the Lake of Fire. Incredible as this view appears, nevertheless it has had and still has many advocates and adherents, and is even more unholy, because the Word of God is appealed to in support of it. It is because of this that we make a brief notice of it here.

The first class of passages to which they appeal are verses where “death” is mentioned. Death is regarded in the most absolute sense. Death they take to mean the passing from existence into non-existence; an utter extinction of being. Death is applied to the soul as well as the body. ‘Hence, is this the error to be met??’ we answer. By an appeal to God’s Word: The meaning of a word is to be derived not from its derivation, but from its employment by Jehovah himself, not from the definition supplied by a standard English dictionary, nor from its use by others, but from its context, its relations, its usage in the Holy Scriptures. What, then, does death mean as used by the Holy Spirit?

Let us turn then to 1 Cor. 15:36, “Thou fool, that which thou sowest is not quickened except it die.” Here is the Holy Spirit’s illustration and type of the death and resurrection of a believer. Now, does the living germ in the seed soon become extinct before it brings forth fruit? Evidently not. There is a decaying, of course, of its outer shell—and therein lies the analogy with the death of man—but the living germ within does not, otherwise there could be no harvest. Death, then, according to this illustration of the Holy Spirit is not annihilation. The same illustration was used by our Lord. Said He, “Except a corn of wheat fall into the ground and die, it abideth alone, but if it die, it bringeth forth much fruit” (John 12:24). The stalk and ear of corn in harvest time are but the life-germ fully developed. So it is with man. The body dies, the soul lives on. Note how the cross comes out unexpectedly, in the Savior’s words as recorded in Matt. 10:28: “And fear not them which kill the body, but are not able to kill the soul; but after that they have destroyed the body, in whose power is the soul, he for whom it is is able to destroy both soul and body in hell.” The word “destroy” is another word misused and erroneously defined by the Annexialists, a few words must be said upon it. As used in Scripture the word “destroy” “destruction” “perish” etc. never signify cessation of existence. In Matt. 10:28, one of the principle Greek words for “destroyed” is rendered the “lost sheep of the house of Israel.” Three lexicons had not ceased to be, but were away from God. In Mark 2:22 the same word is translated “remained” in connection with “bottles” of which the new wine bural. So, too, the word “perish” never signifies annihilation in Scripture. In 2 Pet. 3:8 we read “The world that then was, being overflowed with water, perished.” The world that perished, whether the reference be to the pre-Adamic earth or the world destroyed by the Flood, was not reduced to nothing. When, then, Scripture speaks of the wicked as perishing and as being destroyed, it is in order to expose the error of those who assert that they have a gospel for those who die unsoiled. That the wicked have “perished” excludes all hope of their subsequent salvation. 1 Tim. 5:6 tells us there is a living death even now—“See that death in the Lord is better than the widow.”

The absurdity and unscripturality of Annihilationism is easily exposed. If at death the sinner passed out of existence, why resurrect him in order to annihilate him again? Scripture speaks of the “punishment” and “torment” of the wicked, but any one can see that annihilation is not these. If annihilation were all that awaits the wicked, they would never know that they had received their just deserts and the “due reward” of their impiety? Scripture speaks of degrees of punishment for the lost, but annihilation would make this impossible. Annihilation would level all distinctions and ignore all degrees of guilt. In Isa. 33:14 we are told “Who among us shall dwell with the devouring fire?” Who among us shall dwell with everlasting
4. The Theory That The Punishment Of The Wicked Is Disciplinary And Remedial

There are those who allow that the wicked will be cast into hell, and yet they insist that the punishment is corrective rather than retributive. A sort of Protestant Purgatory is invented, the fires of which are to be purifying rather than penal. Such a conception is grossly dishonoring to God. Some who hold this view make a great pretense of honoring Christ: yet, in reality they greatly dishonor him. If men who died neglecting theSaviour are yet to be saved, if the fires of hell are to do for men what the blood of the Cross failed to do, then why was the Cross necessary? Is the blood of Christ ineffectual? Is redemption.decorators.com; is it not becoming the Lord to the last? Can God do less for them than for us? Can God be so unkind as to give them a chance to escape when there was no chance for us? And, so God could have spared His Son. Again, if God compassionates His enemies and cherishes nothing but gracious designs of infinite pity toward those who have despised and rejected His Son, we may well ask, Then why does He take such dreadful measures with them? If loving discipline be all that they need, cannot Divine wisdom devise some gentler measure than consigning them to the torment of the Lake of Fire for the ages of the ages? This is an unreasonable difficulty in the way of the theory we are now refuting. But once we see that the Lake of Fire is the place of punishment, not discipline, and that it is Divine wrath and not love that casts the repeater into it, then the difficulty entirely disappears.

Utterly inconsistent though it be, there are those who argue that the fires of hell over their disciplinary efficacy to the Suffered of Christ. These enemies of the truth who have been well answered by Sir Robert Anderson. "Such punishment, therefore, must be the penalty due to their sins, else it seems altogether improbable that, if, then, the lost are ultimately to be saved, if the Judge of the world will, in the end, use such methods of punishment. One thing is certain, that is, because Christ has borne that penalty for them. But if sinners can be saved by satisfying Divine justice in enduring the penalty due to sin, Christ need not have died. On the other hand, the redeemed may yet be damned, though entitled to eternal life in Christ, themselves to endure the penalty for sin, the foundations of our faith are destroyed. If it not just, the providential or disciplinary, but the penal consequences of sin, which follows the judgment. We can therefore understand how the sinner may escape his doom through his debt being paid in some other way, or we can say in theory, at all events, that he may be discharged on payment personally of the uttered forfeiting; but that the sinner should be made to pay a portion of his debt, and then released because some one else had paid the whole before he was weighed by punishment at all—this is absolutely inconsistent with both righteousness and grace. (Human Destiny)

Again, it'd be true that the destined in the Lake of Fire are still the objects of Divine benevolence, that as the creatures of his hand, the Lord still works upon them with the most benign regard, and the unsurpassable love is nothing more than a rock in the hand of a wiser and a greater love. The question is, not whether the sinner will eventually escape the Lake of Fire or not, but whether he is to be saved before he is cast into it or not. But, as long as he is in the process of being punished, it is impossible that he can be saved. So uniformly speaks of unbelievers. God has not left us an example of how He regards those who have spurned and persistently defied Him. And again, the Bible never spoken to us the answer fact that God looks upon the wicked as enemies of the earth, as negligible to Him. They are represented as "strypes" (Gal. 1:10), as "wolves" (Matt. 7:12), as "serpents" (Matt. 12:24), as "wolves unto destruction" and "wolves of wrath" (Rom. 16:17, 22), as those who are to be made the Lord's hostility" (1 Cor. 2:8) as "wolves whose fruit unprofitable, without fruit, twice dead, plucked up by the roots" (Jude 12) and therefore He for nothing but the fire, as those who will be "spied out of the Lord's mouth" (Rev. 19:16).
II. THE DESTINY OF THE WICKED

There is deep need for us to approach this solemn subject impartially and dispassionately. Let writer and reader cry earnestly to God that all prejudices and preconceived ideas may be removed from our minds. It will become us to set all at the feet of infallible Wisdom determined to hold fast to our foregone conclusions. Nothing can be more resulting to God than to presume to examine His Word, professing a desire to learn His mind, when we have already settled to
our own satisfaction what it will say. Someone has said that we ought to bring our minds to the Scriptures as blank pages is brought to the printing press, that it may receive into the impress of the type. May such grace be vouchsafed to us that all we may ever present our minds to the way, Spirit's teaching that into the impress may be left which God has designed. May our only desire be to hear "What saith the Lord?"

1. The Certainty Of Their Judgment

It is written: "It is appointed unto men once to die, but after this the judgment" (Heb. 9:27). This is one of the many verses which reveal the errors of the Antinomianists, who make the judgment of the sinner to be: first death, but here death and judgment are clearly distinguished. The next follows the effect: "The fact of a future judgment for sinners is not condemned in the Scriptures. A true understanding of the Scriptures shows us that God has reserved judgment for sinners-they have not escaped condemnation. The Bible says, "The Lord hath prepared a day, and the chidden, the only righteous judge, shall sit in heaven." (Psalm 96:10). The New Testament witnesses to the same truth: "He hath prepared a day, in the which he will judge the world in righteousness by that man whom he hath ordained.' (Acts 17:31). The judgment itself is described in Rev. 20:11-15.

Of the certainty of this coming judgment we are left in no doubt—"The Lord knoweth how to deliver the godly out of temptation, and to reserve the unrighteous unto the day of judgment to be punished": (2 Pet. 2:9.) It will be impossible for the sinner to evade it. Escape there will be none—"How can ye escape the damnation of hell?" (Matt. 23:33). Resurrection, individually or collectively, will be futile—"Though hand join in hand, the wicked shall not be unpunished" (Proverbs 11:21). No confession of his fault shall hinder God from taking vengeance upon him.

2. Death Seals The Sinner's Fate

Scripture teaches plainly that man's opportunity for salvation is limited to the period of his earthly life. If he delayed his fate is sealed irreversibly. There are two passages in the New Testament most generally relied upon by those who affirm that there is for the lost a hope beyond death. These are both found in the 1st epistle of Peter. A brief notice then shall be taken of them.

"For Christ also hath once suffered for sins, the just for the unjust, that he might bring us to God, being put to death in the flesh, but quickened by the Spirit. By which also He went and preached unto the spirits in prison, which sometime were disobedient, when once the long-suffering of God waited in the days of Noah, while the ark was preparing." (1 Pet. 3:18.) But these verses make no reference whatever to any preaching beyond by those who had been dead and were punished in the time of Noah, nor in respect to the unbelievers of our own day. They never were disobedient, nor did they have an Ark. No, but the Ark was building, to those who were disobedient, and because they refused to respond to the preaching they were "shut in prisons." It was not Christ himself who preached; but the Holy Spirit, as is plain from the opening words of v. 19. —"By which also" the "by which" points back to "the Spirit" at the end of v. 18. That the Holy Spirit did address himself to the antediluvians we know from Gen. 6:3—"My Spirit shall not always strive with man." The Spirit through Noah's preaching. That Noah was a "preacher" we learn from 2 Pet. 2:5.
The second passage is found in 1 Pet. 4:6: "For this cause the Gospel preached also to them that are dead, that they might be judged according to men in the flesh, but live according to God in the spirit. Then saith he, The Son of Man hath power on earth to forgive sins."

3. Whāt Awaits The Sinner At Death

We naturally turn for light on this to the teaching of the Lord. For more was said through Him than through any other concerning the future of the sinned. Nor shall we turn in vain to
the record of His words. In Luke 16 we find this drawing made the veil which hides from us what lies beyond death. He tells us of a rich man who died and was buried (v. 23). But he had not ceased to exist. So far from it, the Lord went on to say, "And in hell he lift up his eyes, being in torment." That Christ was here describing the actual experience of this rich man after death there is no good reason to doubt; to say otherwise, is to be guilty of anachronism. By charging the Son of God with using language which He knew would mislead countless numbers of those who later would read the record of His words, no one can come to this passage with an unprejudiced mind and ever suppose that it gave anything else than a plain and simple picture of what befell the wicked after death. It is only those who have previously arrived at the fantastic conclusion that there is no torment in the unending after death, who approach this passage determined to explain away its obvious meaning, who rule out all that is there and read into it what is not there.

When we turn to examine the Hebrew words used in the Old Testament for "sheol" and the Greek word translated "Hades," which is a generic term for the unseen world, into which the souls of all pass at death. No doubt is due to the fact that the same word as well as idiom is represented as entering Sheol at death that caused the translators to render it "grave" in many instances. But the fact that in both the Hebrew and the Greek there is an entirely different word used for "grave" ought to have presented such a vista. The Holy Spirit has carefully preserved the distinction between the two terms throughout. A careful examination of every passage in the Old and New Testaments where these words occur will show that many things are said of the "grave" (heb. "qere"), or "sheol" (v. 15), which could never be said of "Sheol" in "Hades," and many things are said of the latter which are never predicated of the former. For example: both the Hebrew and Greek words for "grave" occur in the plural again and again. Sheol and Hades never do so. The Hebrew and Greek words for "grave" are frequently referred to as the possession of individuals—"My grave" (Gen. 5:5); "grave of Abner" (2 Sam. 3:32); "sheol of the righteous" (Ps. 23:3); "sheol of the wicked" (Ps. 49:15). But the Hebrew word translated "Sheol" is never so used. Only in Zech. 12:7, "sheol" is the word used of the pool of death from which the righteous shall never pass. And in the same context it is applied (Zech. 13:7) to the "grave," where "the bodies of the righteous are laid." In the New Testament, on the other hand, the word translated "Sheol" is never so used. And the body enters "sheol" and "Hades," and never is it said to enter Sheol or Hades. So often has been said to demonstrate that Sheol or Hades is not the grave, we may, therefore, confidently affirm that neither Sheol or Hades should ever be rendered "grave" or "the grave." Hades refers to the same place as Sheol. Their identification is unequivocally established by a comparison of Ps. 16:10 with Acts 2:27. "Thus wilt not leave My soul in Sheol" (Ps. 16:10), is translated "Thus shalt not leave my soul in Hades" (Acts 2:27). But it is important to bear in mind that Sheol or Hades had two compartments, reserved respectively for the saved and the lost. And "sheol" or "Sheol" there is, a "great gulf fixed" (Luke 16:26). The compartment we are now considering is that which receives the souls of the wicked. In this, Christ declares, is a "lake of fire" which torments. This is in perfect harmony with the teaching of the Old Testament concerning Sheol. In Deut. 32:22 we read: "For He is kindness in finite number, and fear toward God is with him." This is the Sheol, the place where the wicked are consigned. In Ezek. 31:18 we read: "As the lake thatFlowing will be from the mountains, and will be gathered in bundles to burn them" (Ezek. 31:18). The explanation of this is found in v. 40-42 of the same chapter: "As therefore the tares are gathered together, and burned in the fire, so shall it be in the end of this age. The Son of Man shall send forth His angels, and they shall gather out of His kingdom all things that offend, and them which do iniquity: And shall cast them into a furnace of fire: there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth." As this bears place at the end of this age and before the judgment begins, the "furnace of fire" must refer to Hades rather than the Lake of Fire.
Returning then to the teaching of Luke 16 the experience of the veiled immediately after death, we read: "And in hell he lift up his eyes being in torments, and seeth Abraham afar off, and the cloven as a witness against the ungodly. He was in torment. So great was he exalted he begged that one might dip the tip of his finger in water and cool my tongue" (Lk 16:23). But such alleviation was denied him. He was told to "remember" how he had lived—a voice of hunger and thirst from the abode of the departed. Such, we are assured, will be the doom of every one that dies in his sins.

4. The Utter Hopelessness Of The Lost.

Thus far we have seen, first, that the judgment of the wicked is certain, second, that death seals the doom; third, that at death the souls of unbelievers go to Hades, into that condition of spiritual darkness and inevitable torture. But the problem we face is where the lost are bound to spend eternity. Here we have to be directed to the Bible. There they remain until the judgment, when they shall be resurrected and brought before the Great White Throne to receive their final sentence. We, therefore, derive a separate section to show that after the wicked are brought out of Hades there is no hope, no hope whatever of other salvation.

The first Scripture we appeal to in proof of this is John 5:28: "All that are in the graves shall hear his voice, and shall come forth, they that have done good, unto the resurrection of life, and they that have done evil, unto the resurrection of damnation." This is the solemn announcement of the Son of God. Let His words be well weighed: Here He tells us briefly, what awaits the sum total of the dead. They are divided into two classes: those that have done good, and they that have done evil. For the one there is the "resurrection of life;" for the other the "resurrection of damnation." For all-whoers there is no resurrection of probation, nor resurrection of salvation, but simply and solely the resurrection of damnation. How this is applied to the individual person we will make clear in the next verse.

In 1 Thess. 4:13 we read: "But I would not have you to be ignorant, brethren, concerning them which are asleep, that ye sorrow not, even as others which have no hope." Here the apostle draws a contrast between the Christian grieving over the death of beloved ones, and the heathen who received the loss of their dear ones. The Christian may sorrow over the departure of a loved relative or friend, but he can also comfort himself with the blessed hope presented to him in the Scriptures, the hope of being reunited at the coming of the Lord. This hope the heathen, and the unsaved in Christendom who mourn the loss of unsaved friends, have not; no, they have "no hope." This is not weakened at all by the fact that in Eph. 2:12-13 we read of those once "without hope," who had nevertheless, been "made alive by the body of Christ." The Epistle to the Ephesians speaks of those alive in the world, and while here there is always a hope they may be saved, though while they remain unsaved they are "without hope." that is, without any scripturally warranted hope. But the Thessalonian passage speaks of those who have passed out of this world unseen, and for them there is no hope. Whatever hope the world may cherish in the day to come, the very moment a loved one is called to heaven, without question of an answer, all hope in the heart ceases for the one of whom we are speaking.

Another Scripture which proves the hopeless state of those who have rejected God's truth is to be found in Heb. 10:29: "For if we sin wilfully after that we have received the knowledge of the truth, there remaineth no more sacrifice for sins. But a certain fearful looking for of judgment and fiery indignation, which shall devour the adversaries. He that despised Moses' law died without mercy under two or three witnesses. Of how much sorer punishment, suppose ye, shall he be thought worthy, who hath trodden under foot the Son of God, and hath counted the blood of the covenant, wherewith he was sanctified an unholy thing, and hath done despite unto the Spirit of grace?" For our present purpose we need not
step to consider of whom this passage is specifically speaking. Suffice it to know that it treats of those who have sinned against the light. For those we are told, "There remaineth no more sacrifice for sin." If there remaineth no more sacrifice for sin, then they must themselves suffer the Divine penalty for sin. What that penalty is in this same passage tells us. It is "fire". (Heb. 10:27) which shall devour them. It is a judgment "without mercy". It is a "punishment" more severe than that which befell them that despised Moses' law. (Heb. 10:27)

"For he shall have judgment without mercy, that hath shewed no mercy: but mercy rejoicing against judgment." (James 2:12) It is true that the apostle is here writing to saints, but in the verse we have just quoted there is a noticeable change in his language, and here he is obviously speaking of the unclean. In the previous verse he had said, "Ye," but now he changes to "he." He that hath shewed no mercy to his brother shall have judgment without mercy. (James 2:12) Here God and this, in spite of the fact that mercy rejoicing against judgment, "without mercy" is also used; but that here the "mercy" is such a "mercy" which looks back to law. (Heb. 10:27) where we read, "It is a people of no understanding, therefore the light of them shall not be upon them, and he that formed them shall show them no favor." (Deut. 32:10) Here we read, "It is a people of no understanding, therefore the light of them shall not be upon them, and he that formed them shall show them no favor." In this, "mercy" is used in its weaker sense, and here we see the snare of the devil. He puts in the word "mercy", but he makes it a word that looks back to law and, by its use, he defies the power and the authority of God in the judgment, saying, "I have mercy on them, but I have mercy in a way that makes it possible for me to rule over them and to dispose of them as I will."

And thus he sets up for himself a position of authority and power, and he in this way seeks to exalt himself above the power of God. And he that walks in this way is sure to meet with the same results as did the man who said, "I have mercy on them, but I have mercy in a way that makes it possible for me to rule over them and to dispose of them as I will." (Heb. 10:27)

5. The Last Abode Of The Lord.

This is given at least two different names in the New Testament: "Gehenna" and "Lake of Fire." Let us now examine the teaching of Scripture concerning them.

First, "Gehenna" is the Greekized form of the Hebrew for "valley of Hinnom," which was a deep gorge on the east side of Jerusalem. This valley of Hinnom was first used in connection with abominable rites (2 Kings 23:10). Later it became a burial ground (Acts 7:43), and then a place of fire and destruction (Jer. 7:32). It was a place of punishment for the ungodly, both Jews and Gentiles. Here the word "Gehenna" is used to describe the final state of the wicked, both in the Old Testament (Jer. 19:11) and the New Testament (Matt. 25:41). In the New Testament, "Gehenna" is often used as a symbol for the ultimate judgment and eternal damnation.

Second, the valley of Hinnom foreshadowed the great judgment-sepulchre of the universe—hell, just as other places and persons in the Old Testament Scriptures symbolized other states more near to, for example, the "Land of Nothingness" in Ezek. 31:18. Just as what is there said of this king has in view one more sinister than he, so what is said of the valley of Hinnom has in view something more sinister than what is here spoken of it. This is the Lake of Fire.
Hinnom symbolized that which was far more awful. We can no more look to Gehenna to the valley outside of Jerusalem than we can read of "the king of Tyre" as a mere name of the past.

Third, the valley of Hinnom, or God used as an emblem of Hell, and stamped with the hallmark of His authority, the wider and more solemn scope of the word. It should be carefully noted that when speaking of Gehenna He never referred to the more literal valley outside of Jerusalem, but employed it to designate the place of eternal torment.

Fourth, Gehenna. In its New Testament usage, refers to a place. "And if thy hand offend thee, pluck it out, and cast it from thee: for it is profitable for thee that one of thy members should perish, and not that thy whole body should be cast into Gehenna." (Matt. 5:29. See also Matt. 18:9.)

Fifth, the fire of Gehenna is eternal. "And if thy hand offend thee, cut it off; it is better for thee to enter into life maimed, than having two hands to go into Gehenna, into the fire that never shall be quenched: where their worm doth not die, and the fire is not quenched." (Mark 9:43, 44.)

Sixth, Gehenna is the place in which both soul and body are destroyed. "And fear not them which kill the body, but are not able to kill the soul: but rather fear Him which is able to destroy both soul and body in hell." (Matt. 10:28.) This passage is read important, for more than any other it enables us to get the real scope of the term. The fact that the "soul" as well as the body is destroyed here, is proof positive that our Lord was not referring to the valley of Hinnom. So, too, the fact that the "body" is destroyed there, makes it certain that "Gehenna" is not another name for "Hades." In pondering this solemn verse we should note the fact that it does not make the distinction, as Hades does, between the body and soul at the time of death. This may be deduced from his statement that the soul of the righteous will go to 'abode in the Abraham's bosom'; incidentally showing that the soul will not be restored to a body, but will continue as a spirit or soul. (Luke 16:22.) This fact that Christ did not here expressly say that God would destroy both soul and body in hell, but merely said, "Fear Him which is able to", is another of a simple and conclusive reply. Surely it is apparent on the surface that Christ is here predicting of God a power which none can deny, but which, notwithstanding, he will never waste. The words are not simply affirming the omnipotence of God, but offering a solemn threat which will yet be executed. That such was His meaning is established beyond the shadow of doubt when we compare Matt. 10:28 with the parallel passage in Luke 12:28. "But I will forewarn you whom ye shall fear: fear Him, which after he hath killed hath power to cast into hell; yea, I say unto you, fear Him." This threat we know will be fulfilled.

Seventh, Gehenna is identical with the Lake of Fire. There are four things which indicate this, and when together they constitute a cumulative but clear proof. First, the fact that in Gehenna God "destroyeth both soul and body." (Matt. 10:28.) This shows the wicked who are there destroyed have already received their resurrection bodies. Second, the fact that the fire is not "put out" shows that Gehenna is not distinguished from Hades as in the first name. Third, in Isa. 33:12 we learn that "torments" is ordered by the "king," as is the "king" of Gehenna, as may be seen by a reference to Jer. 7:31-32. In Rev. 19:20 we see that the beast and the Antichrist together with the false prophet will be cast alive into the lake of fire burning with brimstone. Thus by comparing has 30:33 with Rev. 19:20 we learn that "Gehenna" and "the Lake of Fire" are one and the same. Finally, notice the absence of "Gehenna" in Rev. 19:14. "And death and Hades were cast into the lake of fire;" the meaning of the first is the people whom death and Hades had destroyed—
We shall now offer a few remarks upon the Lake of Fire and brimstone. The following analyses indicate the teaching of Scripture concerning it.

First, it is the place which finally receives the Beast and the False Prophet. Rev. 19:20.

Second, it is the place which finally receives the Devil. Rev. 20:10.

Third, it is the place which finally receives all whose names are not found written in the book of life. Rev. 20:15 and 20:19.

Fourth, it is a place of torment. Rev. 20:10.

Fifth, it is a place whose torment is ceaseless and interminable, "day and night for ever and ever." Rev. 20:10 and if, 14:11.

Sixth, it is also termed "The Second Death." Rev. 20:14; 21:9, etc.

Seventh, it has "no power" on the people of God. Rev. 20:6 and if 2:11.

Eighth, it is a place of "everlasting destruction," "eternal punishment." Matt. 25:41. "eternal consumption." "eternal fire." "eternal punishment." Matt. 25:41. "eternal fire." And in 2 Thess. 1:9 of "everlasting destruction," we are aware that the enemies of God's wrath have sought to connect with this word rendered everlasting and eternal. But their efforts have been entirely futile. The impossibility of rendering the Greek word by any other English equivalents appears from the following evidence:

The Greek word is "aonian" as its meaning and scope has been definitely defined for us by the Holy Spirit in at least two passages. "While we look not at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen; for the things which are seen are temporal; but the things which are not seen are eternal." (2 Cor. 4:18). Here a contrast is drawn between things.
‘seen’ and things ‘not seen,’ between things ‘temporal’ and things ‘eternal.’” Now it is obvious that if the things ‘temporal’ should last forever, there would be no difference between them and the things ‘eternal.’ It is equally obvious that if the things ‘eternal’ are merely ‘age-lasting,’ then they cannot be properly contrasted with things that are temporal and things eternal in this sense as in a great as the difference between the things ‘seen’ and the things ‘not seen.’

The second example, which is of the same character as the one furnished in 2 Cor. 4:18, is equally conclusive. In Phil. 1:15 we read, “For perhaps he is therefore departed for a season, that thou shouldest see his face.” Here the Greek “forever” is absent. The apostle is beseeching Timothy to receive Onesimus, who had left his master, and whom Paul had sent back to him. When the apostle says, “receive him forever,” he could hardly mean in the sense of forever banish him, never visit him, never again send him away. Again it is here contrasted with the temporal, “For perhaps he is therefore departed for a season, that thou shouldest see his face.”

Eternal or everlasting is the one and unvaried meaning of axès in the New Testament. The same word translated “eternal destruction,” “everlasting punishment,” “eternal fire” is rendered “everlasting life” in John 3:16, “The everlasting God” in Rom. 16:26, “eternal salvation” in Heb. 9:11. The eternal glory in 1 Pet. 5:10. His argument needs to be made to prove that in these passages it is impossible to fairly substitute any other alternative for everlasting and eternal. And it is thus with the other class of passages. The “everlasting life” will synchronize with the existence of “the everlasting God.” The “everlasting punishment” of the lost will continue as long as the “everlasting life” of believers. The “eternal damnation” of wicked will no more have an end than will the “eternal salvation” of the redeemed. The “everlasting destruction” of unbelievers will prove as inseparable as the “everlasting glory” of God. To deny the former is to deny the latter. To affirm the everlastingness of God is to prove the eternality of the story of His interests.

7. The Futility of Their State.

The doers of those who shall be cast into the Lake of Fire is irrevocable and final. Many independent considerations prove this. Forgiveness of sins is limited to life on this earth. Once the sinner passes out of this world there remains no more sacrifice for sins. The fact that at death the soul of the sinner goes at once into the “presence of God” (Matt. 17:22) softens to the body of his future state. The fact that later, his resurrection is one “of damnation” (John 5:29) excludes all possibility of a lost-hour repentance. The fact that he is cast soul and body into a lake of fire argues that then he receives his final portion. The fact that the Lake of Fire is described as the “Second Death” denotes the hopelessness of his situation. Just as the first death cuts him off forever from this world, so the second death cuts him off forever from God.

In Phil. 3 the apostle Paul speaks of the enemies of the Cross of Christ, and moved by the Holy Spirit he tells us that they “end in destruction” (v. 19). Sinners and those unregenerate in their nature are eternally eternally conscious of the “Cross of Christ” or “destruction.” The Greek word here translated “end” is “telos.” It is found in the following passages: “Of his kingdom there shall be no end” (Luke 1:33); “Christ is the end of the law for righteousness to every one that believeth” (Rom. 10:4); “having neither beginning nor end of life” (Heb. 7:3); “He, the beginning and the End, the first and the Last” (Rev. 22:13).

As we have already seen, the twelfth chapter of Revelation describes the final judgment of the wicked before the Great White Throne, after which they are cast into the Lake of Fire. The chapters which follow—the last two in the Bible—may be read carefully and searched;
III. THE NATURE OF PUNISHMENT AWAITING THE LOST.

1. The Portion Of The Wicked Immediately After Death.

We turn first to the teaching of our Lord found in Luke 16. Here, we learn the following facts: First, that in hades the lost are in full possession of all their faculties and sensibilities. They see, for the rich man saw Abraham afar off, and Lazarus in his bosom (v. 23). They feel, for he saw his torment (v. 24). They cry for mercy, for he asked--albeit to vain--for a drop of water to cool his tongue (v. 24). They are in possession of memory, for the rich man was told to "remember" what he had received during his lifetime on earth (v. 25). It is impossible for them to join the redeemed there is "a great gulf fixed" between them (v. 26).

Unceasing woe is all this. Not only will the lost be tormented in flames, but their anguish will be immeasurably increased by a sight of the redeemed being "comforted." Then shall they see the happy portion of the Beatific Vision which they despised, preferring as they did the pleasures of sin for a season. And how the retort of "remember" will further augment their sufferings. With what unutterable sorrow will they recall the opportunities wasted, the opportunities squandered; the opportunities which, with the light of the Holy Spirit, they had before them. And all this will be vividly set before them in the proclamations of God’s Gospel equipped. And then to know there is no ray of escape, no means of relief, no hope of a foreright. Then he will be unbearable, that awful portion beying endurance. The God of God has faithfully forewarned that there shall be wailing and gnashing of teeth (Matt. 13:42). It is very significant that Christ referred to this just seven lines--denoting the completeness of their misery and anguish; see Matt. 8:12; 13:42-50; 22:13, 24,51; 25:30; Luke 13:28.

2. The Final Portion Of The Wicked

(1) This is spoken of as being "punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord" (2 Thess. 1:9). None but one who really knows God can begin to estimate what it will mean to be eternally banished from the Lord. Forever separated from the Fountain of all goodness; forever to enjoy the light of God’s countenance; never to bask in the sunshine of His presence. This, this is the most awful of all. 2 Thess. 1:9 furnishes clear intimation that this is the awful destruction.

(2) The final portion of the wicked is spoken of as "eternal destruction" (Matt. 25:46). In 1 John 5:17 the same Greek word is rendered "torment." "This term announces the satisfying of God’s justice. In the punishing of the wicked God indicates His outraged
(3) The final portion of the sick is spoken of as a "tormenting." This is proven by the fact that the everlasting fire into which the wicked depart is "prepared for the Devil and his angels." (Matt. 25:41) which emphasizes the awfulness of this punishment, rather than specifies who are going to endure. This verse sets forth the severity of the punishment of the lost. If the everlast fire be "prepared for the Devil and his angels," then how intolerable it will be to the inhabitants of it which all ungodly men will be cast into the same as that to which Gods anathema will suffer. (Matt. 25:41) in their place must be.

(4) The everlast fire, prepared for the Devil and his angels, produces the most awful effects. It is not to be regarded as a mere moral or spiritual torment, but one that is "evermore and night and night ever and ever." No doubt this torment will be both internal and external, mental and physical. The word occurs for the first time in the New Testament in Matt. 5:22, "Lest, my servant be at home sick of the palsy, previously tormenteth." The same word occurs again in Rev. 9:5 where we read of internal torments issuing from the pit, and which are given power to torment men, the nature of which is explained as "the torment of a scorching fire, when it strikes the men." So intense will be the suffering caused therefore "men shall die of death and shall not find it, and they shall desire to die, and death shall flee from them" (Rev. 9:5). This torment then cannot mean less than the most overwhelming pain which we are now capable of conceiving. How much the pains of Hell will exceed the pains of earth we know not.

(5) The final portion of the sick is spoken of an "suffering the vengeance of eternal fire." (Luke 12:49) But many say this is merely a figurative expression. We ask, how do they know? What a man means by the term "fire" he is better able to explain on the subject. "Fire" in the Bible means "fire," "fire of God" and is used of the fire of God when it is used figuratively we speak of God as "the devouring fire." But in this case, He says "fire." "Fire in the fire" is the sharp edge of His Word. "Was the Deluge figurative?" I ask. "Fire and brimstone" which descended from heaven and destroyed Sodom and Gomorrah? Were the plagues upon Egypt a fire? Is it a fire of fire which shall yet burn this earth, and cause the whole elements to "melt with fervent heat?" No! in each of these cases we are obliged to take the words of Scripture in their literal signification. Let those who dare affirm that Hell-fire is a non-literal answer to God. We are not their judge, but we refuse to accept their tumbling down of these solemn words. Literal fire in Hell prevents no difficulty at all to the writer. The lost will have literal bodies when they are cast into Hell. The "angels" also have bodies; and for all we know to the contrary, the Devil has too.

But the question is often asked, How can the bodies of the lost be tormented eternally by literal fire? Should not the fire utterly consume them? Even though we were unable to form an answer to this question, we should still believe that Scripture meant what it said. But we are satisfied that God's Word answers the question. In Ec. 2:1 we read of the truth of the heavens and the earth, and that the same is true of all their inhabitants. Their destruction is a mere delusion. Hebrews being cast into the fiery furnace of Babylon, yet were they not consumed! Why was this not literal? Because, in some way unknown to us, God preserved the truth, and the bodies of the three Hebrews. Is God then, unwilling to preserve the bodies of the damned from being consumed? Surely not. But we are not left even to this unpersuadable inference. In Matt. 47:40 we are told, "It is better for thee to enter into the kingdom of God with one eye, than having two eyes to be cast into had fire where their worm never dies, and the fire is not quenched. For every one shall be salted with fire." The expression "salted with fire" confirms what we have said above. Salt is a preservative, hence, when we are told that 'every one'
who is cast into Gehenna shall be "saddled with fire" we learn that the very fire itself as far from consuming shall prepare, if it be asked. How can this be? We answer. Because that fire is "prepared" by God (Matt. 25:41).

(5) The final portion of the wicked is described as an association with the abode of the vile. "But the fearful, and unbelieving, and the abominable, and murderers, and sorcerers, and idolaters, and all liars, shall have their part in the lake which burneth with fire and brimstone" (Rev. 21:8). O dear reader, weigh well this solemn language. You may be a person of culture and refinement; judged by moral standards you may be exemplary and upright; you may pride yourself on your honesty and truthfulness; you may be very particular in your choice of friends and very cautious to avoid the company of the profligate and vicious, you may even be religious, and look down in scorn and pity upon the transgressors of God's commandments. Yet, if you persist in doing so, and live in the ends of the earth, and in the uttermost parts thereof, and have become abominable and unbelieving, and the abominable, and murderers, and sorcerers, and idolaters, and all liars, you shall have your part in the lake which burneth with fire and brimstone. Think of what it will mean to spend eternity in the Prison-house of the universe with Cain, and Pharaoh, and Judah! Think of what it will mean to be shut up with the vile Gehenna! Think of being associated forever with every blasphemer who has ever lived!

(6) The final portion of the wicked is described as "the sorrowfulness of darkness forever." (Verse 19). Unbelievers will have their sorrowful intermediate torment. No means of escape. No possibility of a reprieve. No hope of deliverance. Not one will be found who is able to behold them and intercede with God for them. They had the offer of a Mediator often made them in this world but no such offer will be made them in the Lake of Fire. There is no peace, with my God, to the sinner. There will be no resting-place in Hell; no secret corner where he may hide and remain safe from God's vengeance. There will be no change or variation of their lot. Day and night, forever and ever, they shall be punished. With no prospect of any improvement they will sink down into black despair.

(7) The final portion of the wicked will be under the creative power of the devil—"And whatsoever shall fall in this dust shall be burned: but on whatsoever it shall fall, it shall not" (Rev. 21:44). There are many who now say, if at all and if I find myself in Hell, I will bear it as well as I can, as by strength of will and firmness of mind they shall. In measure at least, be able to support themselves. But alas! Their resolutions will count for nothing. It is common with men in this world to shun calamities, but if they find this is impossible, they sell themselves to bear it; they fortify their spirits and resolve to support themselves under it as well as they can. They muster up all their courage and resolution in the determination to keep their hearts from sinking, but it will be utterly vain for servers to do this in the Lake of Fire! What would it help a worm which was about to be crushed by some great weight to seek to prevent itself from being crushed? Much less will a poor damned soul be able to support itself under the weight of the wrath of Almighty God. No matter how much the sinner may now harden himself, in order to endure the pains of Hell, the first moment he shall feel the flames, his heart will melt like wax before the flames—Can this heart endure, or can these hands be strong, in the days that I shall deal with thee? I the Lord have spoken it, and will do it" (Ezek. 22:14).
If such then be the case with impatient sinners, that they can neither escape their punishment, nor deliver themselves from it, nor bear up under it, what will become of them? I answer in the words of another:

"They will wholly sink into eternal death. There will be that sinking of heart, of which we now cannot conceive. We see how it is with the body when in extreme pain. The nature of the body will support itself for a considerable time under very great pain, so as to keep from wholly sinking. There will be great struggles, lamentable groans and panting, and it may be convulsions. These are the struggleings of nature to support itself under the extremely, the pain is, as it were, a great thickness in nature to yield to it. It cannot bear wholly to sink. But yet sometimes pain of body is so very extreme and anguish, that the nature of the body cannot support itself under it; however soft it may be to sink, yet it cannot bear the pain; there are a few struggles, and throes, and panting, and it may be a shriek or two, and the nature of the body wholly sinks. So it will be with the soul in hell. It will have no strength or power to deliver itself, and its torment and horror will be so great, so mighty, so vastly apprehended to be so, that having no strength in the least to support itself, although it is infinitely contrary to the nature and inclination of the soul utterly to sink, yet it will sink. It will utterly and truly sink, without the least degree of remaining comfort, or strength, or courage, or hope. And though it will never be extinguished, its being and persistance will never be abolished; yet such will be the infinite depth of gloominess that it will sink into, that it will be in a state of death, eternal death.

"The nature of man desires happiness; it is the nature of the soul to crave and thirst after well-being; and if it be under misery, it equally parts after relief; and the greater the misery is, the more easily doth a struggle for relief. But all such be eth abstinence, all strength overcome, all support utterly gone; then it sinks into the darkness of death. We can conceive but little of our own misery under such circumstances, and it is this that will render it so bottomless. If we could but imagine your conception, imagine yourself to be cast into a fiery oven, all of a glowing heat, or into the midst of a burning briar-heap, or of a great furnace, where your pain would be as much greater than that occasioned by accidentally touching a coal of fire, as the hell is greater. Imagine also that your body were to lie there for a quarter of an hour, all of this, as full often and without as a bright coal of fire, all the while full of quick sensorium, what horror would you feel at the entrance of such a furnace? And how long would that quarter of an hour seem to you if I'd were to be measured by a glass, how long would the glass seem to be running? And after you had endured it for one minute, how overwhelming would it be to you to think that you had yet to endure the other fifteen.

"But what would be the effect on your soul, if you knew you must be there enduring that torment to the full for forty-four hours? And how much greater would be the effect, if you knew you must endure it for a whole year, and how vastly greater still, if you knew you must endure it for a thousand years? O then, how would your heart sink, if you thought, if you knew, that you must bear it forever and ever? That there would be no end! That after millions of ages of ages it should continue, and so be forever. And this is the horror that shall never be eradicated. But your torment in hell will be innumerable times greater than this illustration represents. How then will the heart of a pure creature sink under it? How utterly insensible and incomprehensible must the settling of the soul be in such a case."  

Jonathan Edwards

Such, in brief, is the portion awaiting the soul: eternal separation from the Front of all goodness, everlasting punishment: torment of soul and body; endless existence in the Lake of Fire, in association with the ideal of the evil: every ray of hope excluded; utterly crushed and overwhelmed by the wrath of an avenging God. And let us remember in terrors Word
These solemn statements are found! They are found in the Word of Him who is faithful— and therefore he was written in plain and precise language so that none need be deceived. They are found in the Word of Him who cannot lie— and therefore He has not employed the language of exaggeration. They are found in the Word of Him who says what He means and means what He says, and therefore the orator, for one, does nothing else than receive them at their face value. We turn now to—

IV. THE APPLICATION OF THE SUBJECT

1. In what has been before us we have come NOW the Character and Throne of God will be vindicated. What can be too severe a judgment upon those who have despised so great a being as the Judge? If the fault is guilty of treason against an earthly government deserves to lose his life, what punishment can be great enough for one who has preferred the Son of God death? It is not the mere death of a man that God will exact as a punishment, it is the death of his soul. The infinite value of the Son of God makes the death of a soul cheap as life. The无限价值 of the Son of God makes the death of a soul cheap as life. What a charming mercy inflates many! God has commanded the sinner to repent. He has counseled him with remedies of peace. He has blundered his every need, and he has presented before him the Son of His love— His precious treasure— and yet many persist in their sin. He has the means of appealing against the sentence of thye Judge of all the earth. Seeing that he not only tendered mercy toward him, but also bore with him in so much patience when he might justly have written him down upon the first crime he ever committed and removed him to Hell upon the first refusal of his professed grace.

That God shall punish every rebel against himself is required by the very perfections of His High sovereignty. It is but meet that he should display His governmental supremacy. The creature has dared to assert his independence: the subject has risen in arms against his king. Therefore, the right of God’s throne must be vindicated— I know that the Lord is greater than the king. The rebel against the king must be punished. When Pilate dared to put himself against Jehovah, God manifested His authority by destroying him at the Red Sea. Another king his hands into a hand to make him know that the king is high even in the king of men. So, when the folly of this world is wound up, God will make a full and final manifestation of His sovereign majesty. Though he non evident (not known) with much long-suffering, the voices of wrath filled to destruction. It is that, in the coming Day. He may “show his wrath and make his power known” (Rom. 9:22).

2. What has been before us serves to expose the folly and madness of the greater part of mankind, in that for the sake of present momentary gratification, they renounce the serious risk of enduring all these external torments. They prefer a small pleasure, or a little earthly, or a little earthly honor and fame (which lasts but for a season?) to an escape from the Lake of Fire. If it be true that the torments of hell are everlasting, what will it profit a man if he gains the whole world and loses his own soul? How mad are men who hear and read of these things and pretend to believe them, who are alive but a little while, a few short years at most, and yet lecture them on eternity! How can they bear the idea of torment after death? The only change nor end! How are they who hear them that they go on in sin, they shall be eternally miserable, and yet not moved, but hear it with as much indifference as if they were not concerned in the matter at all? And yet for all they know to the contrary, they may be in fiery torments before another week is at an end!
How sad to note that this uncomely is shared by the great majority of our fellowmen. Age makes little difference. The young are occupied with pleasures, the middle-aged with worldly advancement, the aged with their ailments or lack of them, with the first is the lust of the flesh, with the second it is the lust of the eyes, with the third it is the pride of life, which banishes from their minds all serious thoughts of the life to come. “The heart of the sons of men is full of evil; and madness is in their heart while they live, and after that they go to the dead” (Eccl. 9:3). O the binding power of sin! O the decreasiveness of riches! O the perplexity of the human heart! Nothing reveals these things as the incredible sight of men and women enjoying themselves and being at rest, while they are suspended over the eternal burning by the thrald of mortality, which may be snapped at any moment.

(3) What has been before us ought to make every unsaved reader to tremble as he scans these pages. There are so manyCXnstitutions, but tread needlessly, as countless thousands have already discovered to their bitter cool. They may not seem real to you now, but in a short time at most—should you continue to reject Christ and God—they will be your portion. You, too, shall lift up your eyes in Hell, and behold the saints in Heaven. You, too, shall cry a drop of water to alleviate your heartful agony, but it will be in vain. You, too, shall cry for mercy, but then it will be too late. O unsaved reader, we pray you not to throw this waste and waste to devour the subject from your thoughts. That is how thousands before you have acted, and the very memories of their folly only accentuates their misery. Far better had you then been made wretched now than ever you should eat and drink and grow your teeth forever. Far better that you have your present false peace broken, than that you should be a stranger to real peace for all eternity.

“Except ye repent, ye shall all likewise perish.” Whenever you are, whether young or old, whether rich or poor, whether religious or irreligious. If you are a Christian, then this warning should be in your heart, and if you are not a Christian, this, and the next, should be in your heart. For when the Judge cometh, how little will you now hang, and aside which you are ready to step this very moment, it will be too late for you to utter yourself with hopes that you shall avoid it; or say in your heart, Perhaps it may not be perhaps things have been represented worse than they really are. These things are according to the word of Truth, and if you will not be astonished by that word when presented to you by men in the name of God, then God Himself will yet undertake to prove to you that these things are so.

There is no stranger that God should deal so severely with you, or that the wrath you shall suffer shall be so great. For great as it is, it is no greater than the mercy which you now despise. The love of God, His marvellous grace in sending His own Son to die for sinners, is every soul as great and wonderful as this insuperable wrath. You have refused to accept Christ as the Saviour from the wrath to come, you have despised God’s dying love, why then should you not suffer wrath as great as that grace and love which you have rejected? Does it still seem incredible that God should so harden his heart against a poor sinner as to bear down upon him with the entire power and merciless wrath? Then pause and ask. Is it any different from the case of you or me? How many of the followers of the Son of his love? O dear friends, face this question of Christ Himself. “How can ye escape the damnation of hell?” (Matt. 13:49). There is only one way of escape, and that is in flee to the Saviour. If you would not fall into the hands of the living God, then cast yourself into the arms of the Christ who died—knew the God, and me be saved, and ye perish from the way, when. His wrath is kindled but a little. Blessed are all they that put their trust in Him” (Psa. 2:12).

(4) What has been before us ought to make every professing Christian diligently examine himself. Watch carefully the tremendously serious issues which turn on whether or not you...
there are many who now wear the guise of saints, who appear like saints, and their state, both in their own eyes and that of their neighbors is satisfactory. And yet they have on only sheep's clothing, of heart they are wolves, but no dagger can detect the Judge of all. His eyes are as a flame of fire; they search the hearts and the reins of the thoughts, and no darkness, no hiding from the face of God. The eyes of the Lord traverse all things. For thus saith the Lord, the Lord of Hosts, Behold, I will send out a fire from before Myself, and it shall devour the forests and shall destroy the vines, and shall kindle a tempest, and it shall burn the stones of thine altars. In that day, saith the Lord, every one that isConsumer of souls. Remember that the devil is the great Consumer of souls. Remember that "there is a way the wicked right upon a man, but the end thereof are the ways of death" (Prov. 14:12). Remember it is written that "many shall say unto Me in that day, Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in Thy name? and in Thy name have cast out devils? and in Thy name done many wonderful works?" And then He will answer them, "I never knew you, dep. from Me, ye that work iniquity" (Matt. 7:22, 23).

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Spirit of that One who wept over Jerusalem. It is true you have no power of your own to save a soul from death: but are you faithfully going out that Word which is the instrument which God uses to bring souls from death unto life? Are you supplicating God as you ought and depending on Him to bless your efforts to point the lost to the Lamb of God? Are you as fervent as you should be in your cries to God on behalf of the lost? Alas, may you not join the sinner as he hangs the head in shame? Is there not reason for each of us to ask God to give us a clearer vision of that indestructibly awful portion which awaits every Christ rejector, and to enable us to act in the power of such a vision.

(7) What has been before us will yet be the occasion of profoundest praise to God. Whatever difficulties the eternal punishment of the wicked may present to us now—and it is true general that it is difficult for our reason to grasp it, and that consequently, for us to understand it—yet we have reason to believe that it is just, and that it will be the occasion of the highest praise to God. It will be the occasion of the highest praise to God, for he is the Judge of the whole world. Whatever may be the form of eternal punishment it really deserves—yet in the Day to come it will be far otherwise. When we behold God's righteous dealings with his enemies, when we hear the enemies being given according to their work, when we see him justly and thoroughly they deserve merciless wrath, and stand by as they are cast into the Lake of Fire, so far from shrinking back in honor our hearts will give vent to glad and praise. Just as of old the overthrow of God's enemies at the Red Sea caused His people to shout in sweet and song, so in the coming Day we shall be moved to rejoicing when we witness the final display of God's holiness and justice in the overthrow and punishment of all who have defied Him. Remember that in the destruction of the wicked God will be glorified—and this is which will be the occasion of the rejoicing of His people. Not only will God be "clear" when he judges (Psa. 11:4), but His perfections will be magnified in the sentences pronounced.