



Saturday, September 1, 2018

## Is there Immortality in Sin and Suffering? Sermon 2 Part 1

"Ye shall not surely die." Genesis 3:4.

**Our Saviour saith, the old serpent - "the devil, is a liar and the father of it." He commenced his attack on our race by saying they should "not surely die," if they did disobey God. He was successful in that game, and has played the same card, in some form, on men, ever since he first swept Paradise with it. He told Eve that the God of love could not give place to such feelings as to cut them off from life if they did disobey. He has never forgotten his success. True, he has turned his card since, but it is the same card still. It has still inscribed on it - "Ye shall not SURELY DIE." Now he makes use of it to insinuate that God does not love or pity man, seeing He has determined that man shall not DIE, but be kept alive in eternal and indescribable torments, for sins committed on earth, or hereafter to be committed in the theological hell, where it is impossible for the miserable ones to cease from sin!**

**As the doctrine, "Ye shall not surely die," had its origin with the old serpent, I cannot divest myself of the conviction that the notion that wicked men will be kept eternally alive in torments, and never die, had its origin from the same source, as it appears to be a perfect fac-simile; and that it was invented to inspire hard thoughts of God and keep men from turning to Him by repentance and faith, or confidence, and acknowledging their sins against the God of love. And I solemnly believe, this doctrine has kept more away from God, and driven them into infidelity, than any other doctrine that was ever promulgated. I am solemnly convinced that it has done more to destroy men than all other errors put together.**

**For, if some minds have been temporarily affected by it, they are seldom found to be uniform Christians, and hardly pretend to live in obedience to God, unless under some strong excitement; multitudes of others, without any proper reflection upon the claims of God's law, have rejected eternal punishment, because of the nature of that which the "orthodox" say is to be inflicted; whilst others have lived and died in real infidelity, or what has been called so, because they could not believe that a Being whose word declares that He "is love" could inflict such a punishment on even the worst and most bitter of His enemies.**

**But I will not detain you longer with an introduction. I shall attempt to show you, that the death God has threatened, as the wages of sin, is not immortality in misery, but an actual and *total* deprivation**

of life. I say, then, in opposition to the old serpent, if men do not come to Christ, that they may have life, they SHALL surely die - past hope, past recovery.

Let me here briefly recall attention to the question at issue. **It is not whether man *can* be immortal, nor whether the righteous will be immortal, but will the conscious being of the wicked be eternal? Is the punishment of the wicked interminable being in sin and suffering? or an eternal cessation from life?**

**I use the term immortal, in these discourses, in its commonly received meaning, i.e. according to Grimshaw, "exempt from death;" and according to Walker, "never to die - never ending, perpetual."** Strictly speaking, immortality is the development of life through an indestructible organization, so far as it relates to created beings.

In my first sermon I had brought the subject down to the inquiry, **WHAT ARE THE TERMS EMPLOYED TO DENOTE THE PUNISHMENT OF THE WICKED.**

**Are they such as can, by any fair construction of language, be made to mean that the wicked are destined to a state of eternal sin and suffering?** Let us keep in mind, that words are not to be so explained as to mean more than their primary signification, without an obvious necessity; though they may, and often do, signify less.

**The terms employed are:** *Perish*: Utterly perish - Utterly consumed with terrors – *Destroy*: Destroyed - Destroyed forever – *Destruction*: - To be burned - Burned UP with unquenchable fire - Burn them up, that it shall leave them neither root nor branch – *Perdition*: Die - Death - Second Death, etc.

**Let us now begin with the first of these terms, viz: "PERISH."** Grimshaw, in his Etymology, says it signifies "to cease to have existence - to die - to decay."

**Which of these definitions is suited to convey the idea of eternal sin and suffering?** Can that which is never to cease, be said to be decaying? Can that which has interminable life be said "to die?" Can that which is always to continue in being, be said "to cease to have existence?" I need not pursue that inquiry; it is a self-evident truth, that however the term *perish* may be used, in an accommodated sense, to signify something less than actual ceasing to be, it is even then borrowed from its primary signification, and must be restored to it when there is not a known necessity for departing from it. **In the case under consideration, there can be no such necessity, unless it can first be proved that men are immortal.**

**Paul, in 1 Corinthians 15:18, says - "Then, (if Christ be not raised,) "they also that are fallen asleep in Christ are perished."** What! in a state of eternal sin and suffering! The supposition is so absurd that my opponents admit that the term *perish* here means "to cease to be." By what fair interpretation of language can they ever make it mean any thing else, when spoken of the final state of the lost? Though the term is sometimes used to denote something less than an actual ceasing to be, it does not therefore follow that it is used to mean something far greater and more horrible. **To apply this term to an eternal state of sin and misery, is to force a sense upon it which is most unwarrantable and unjustifiable, in my judgment.**

**Let us keep constantly in mind that the whole family of man, by their natural birth, have no access to the tree of life, consequently were perishing, were destitute of immortality.** Now look at the following texts:

"God so loved the world that He gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him, might **not *perish*, but have everlasting life.**" Here everlasting life is the opposite of perishing. I pray, is everlasting sin and misery the opposite of everlasting life? The wicked, upon that view, have as really everlasting life as the righteous, though under different circumstances.

"For we," saith an apostle, "are unto God a sweet savor of Christ in them that are saved, and in them that perish. To the one we are the savor of death unto death, and to the other of life unto life."

Here *perishing* and *life* are put in opposition, and the term *perish* is explained by the apostle himself, to mean *death*, and not life in misery.

I need not quote all the passage where this term is employed to express the final doom of the wicked, in which it is evident we are to receive it in its primary meaning, and no other. Before I leave this term, however, I must call your attention to one fact, and that is - in the Acts of the Apostles, the very place where we should expect to find, if any where in the Bible, the doctrine of eternal torments, because the apostles were addressing sinners, there is not a particle of evidence to support the common theory. On the contrary, the views I maintain are most clearly set forth by Paul, in the 13th chapter, in a discourse to the "blaspheming" Jews, telling them that they judged themselves "unworthy of everlasting life," and saying - "Behold, ye despisers, and wonder, and perish." **What an excellent occasion had the apostle to have aroused the Jews by the common theory, had he believed it.**

Look at that chapter, and you will see, if there ever was a time in which the apostle was called to deal plainly, it was then. I ask if any preacher in these days, who believes in the immortality of all men, in preaching to such hardened sinners as the apostle addressed, contents himself with such language as the apostles here used? **No. They first describe the misery of the sinner in hell, and then, with the strongest figures they can produce, go on to give an idea of its duration, which, after all, they cannot find language to describe.** The apostle did no such thing. *There is not a particle of evidence of it in all his preaching and writings.*

## "DIE" AND "DEATH."

These terms primarily signify, "To perish - to come to nothing - the extinction of life." Hence, when these terms are applied to man, in regard to the final result of a course of sin, we ought to have good evidence that they are *not* to be understood in their *primary* meaning, before we depart from that interpretation; especially, before we fix upon them a sense so contrary to their proper signification as that of endless sin and suffering.

The apostle, in Romans 1:32, speaking of certain wicked characters, says - "Who, knowing the judgment of God, that they that commit such things are worthy of death," etc. In the 2nd chapter, 5th verse and onwards, he speaks "of the righteous judgment of God," when "wrath" will be visited on the wicked; and the death spoken of is expressly called "perish"ing, as the result of the "indignation and wrath" with which the wicked will be visited "in the day when God shall judge the secrets of men by

Jesus Christ." **Death, then, as the apostle explains it, when applied to the punishment of wicked men, is to perish.**

**"The soul that sinneth it shall die," refers to its final doom.** This will appear if we consider, men will die, i.e., leave this world, or state of being, whether they sin or not. Nor can it refer to a violent leaving this world, as some suppose, for all sinners do not die a violent death. I conclude, then, that it relates to the sinner's final doom.

**"As I live, saith the Lord God, I have no pleasure in the death of the wicked, but that the wicked, turn from his way and live; turn ye, turn ye, for why will ye die?"** *evidently looks to the same result, the final destiny of the wicked.* Life and death are put in opposition: not life and conscious being in misery, but life and death, without any qualifying terms to lead any one to suspect that they are to be understood any other way than in their most obvious sense; and I cannot but think, if you were to put the Bible into the hands of a person who had never heard a word of explanation, he would so understand it.

Lest I should, in the present discourse, take up too much time in the examination of these terms, I will pass over the remainder of them for the present.

**Having, as I judge, established the point that the wicked have not immortality, I might leave it to the believer in the opposite theory to prove his position from the Bible,** and pursue the subject no further. I shall not, however, shrink from meeting the supposed objections to my view.

## OBJECTIONS EXAMINED

**The objections do not arise from any positive proof in the Bible that the wicked are immortal, but from circumstantial evidence, drawn from expressions used in reference to the punishment of the impenitent.** The first objection I shall notice is founded on the language of our Lord, "Their worm dieth not, and the fire is not quenched." **It is said this proves the soul immortal.** I remark -

**First.** Whatever this punishment is, it is put in opposition to "life." "If thy hand" or "foot offend thee, cut it off; it is better for thee to enter halt" or "maimed into life, than having two hands" or "feet," etc., "where the worm dieth not and the fire is not quenched." **Who does not see that here is the opposite of life, and therefore is death, or utter extinction of being without possibility of escape?** In a parallel passage, our Saviour saith, "If thy right eye" or "hand offend thee, 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 hell."

**Here the "worm that dieth not, and the fire" that "is not quenched," we see, is another form of expression for perishing.**

**Again, I remark, this expression of our Lord is a quotation from Isaiah 66:24, and is applied to the "carcasses" of men, which I presume my opponents will not pretend were immortal.** But if the language in one place proves immortality, why not in the other? **Then we shall have immortal carcasses as well as immortal souls.** But the prophecy is describing evidently the kind of doom inflicted by the Eastern nations on the vilest offenders, who were not only slain, but their bodies deprived of the rights of burial, and either burned to ashes (which among them was regarded as a great indignity,) or left to

molder above ground and be devoured by worms. **If the fire were quenched, they would not be utterly consumed, but something would remain - there would not be an entire destruction.** It is manifest to every mind, if a fire is quenched or put out, the work of utter destruction is arrested, and something is left of the object upon which the fire kindled. The same may be said, if the worm die the carcass will not be consumed; but as the fire is not to be quenched, nor the worm die, therefore, they shall be utterly consumed, perish, cease to be found in the universe of God. *The objector says, the idea of an unquenchable fire is, that it is never to go out.* To show the fallacy of this, I will suppose my house is on fire. **When my neighbors arrive to my help, I say, effort is useless - the fire is unquenchable.** Pray, what do I mean? **That the fire will burn eternally?** Any school-boy knows I mean simply the house will be totally consumed. "Yes," says the objector, "that is true when the expression is applied to that which is consumable, but man has a soul that cannot be consumed." To this, I reply, That is the very point to be proved. The objector says he has, and I affirm he has not.

**If it is still maintained that "unquenchable fire" means "never to go out,"** I refer those persons to an examination of a few passages of God's word on that question. 2 Chronicles 34:25, "Because they have forsaken me, and burned incense unto other gods, therefore my wrath shall be poured out upon this place, and shall not be quenched." Isaiah 34:9,10, "**And the land of Idumea shall become burning pitch. It shall not be quenched night nor day; the smoke thereof shall go up for ever.**" Jeremiah 7:20, "Behold, mine anger and my fury shall be poured out upon this place, upon man, and upon beast, and upon the trees of the field, and upon the fruit of the ground, and it shall burn, and shall not be quenched." Also Jeremiah 17:27, \* "**Then will I kindle a fire in the gates thereof, and it shall devour the palaces of Jerusalem, and shall not be quenched.**" Once more. See Ezekiel 20:47,48, "Say to the forests of the South, Hear the word of the Lord. Thus saith the Lord God, Behold I will kindle a fire in thee, and it shall devour every green tree in thee, and every dry tree; the flaming flame shall not be quenched; and all flesh shall see that I, the Lord, have kindled it; **it SHALL NOT BE QUENCHED.**"

\* Editor's Note: **Did the destruction of Jerusalem prophesied by Jeremiah take place? Yes.** It happened when the Babylonians came and destroyed Jerusalem, not long after he prophesied it. Jeremiah told King Zedekiah: "'But if you will not go out to the officers of the king of Babylon, then this city will be given over to the hand of the Chaldeans; and they will burn it with fire, and you yourself will not escape from their hand.'" Jeremiah 38:18 NASB. **Read now the account in 2 Chronicles to prove to you that the Babylonians did indeed burn Jerusalem with fire:** *Speaking now of the King of the Chaldees and what they did to Jerusalem it says: "And they burnt the house of God, and brake down the wall of Jerusalem, and burnt all the palaces thereof with fire, and destroyed all the goodly vessels thereof. And them that had escaped from the sword carried he away to Babylon; where they were servants to him and his sons until the reign of the kingdom of Persia: **To fulfil the word of the LORD by the mouth of Jeremiah, until the land had enjoyed her sabbaths:** for as long as she lay desolate she kept sabbath, to fulfil threescore and ten years."* 2 Chronicles 36:19-21 KJV. So God fulfilled His word and destroyed Jerusalem and burned it with the fire 'that shall not be quenched', as it said in Jeremiah 17:27 above. **Then why isn't Jerusalem still burning to this day?** You have probably seen numerous news casts of Jerusalem, and maybe the area where the former temple was, that is now an Islamic Mosque. **Have you seen pictures of this so called "eternal fire" still burning? No! That is silly you may say.** Then why do people say that when the Bible says someone is to perish, or to be burned up with unquenchable fire, or that the fire shall not be quenched, or talk about the eternal fire that it always means 'to burn forever'? **This view is inconsistent with the other passages in the Bible that employ this same or similar expression, and it can be proven beyond a shadow of a doubt that some of these places are still not burning in our day!**

**Now, I wish to know if any man in his senses will pretend that all these fires that shall not be quenched are, "never to go out," in the strict sense of the term *eternal*?** Does not any one see that so

long as the things upon which the fire kindles are not proved to be immortal, the most extreme sense that can be fixed upon is, that there will be a total and irrecoverable destruction of them?

**To be continued...**

**This Sermon 2 Taken From: P. 46-64 of:**

**"Six Sermons on the Inquiry Is There Immortality in Sin and Suffering?"**

**"ALSO, A SERMON ON CHRIST THE LIFE-GIVER: OR, THE FAITH OF THE GOSPEL."**

BY GEORGE STORRS, OFFICE OF THE BIBLE EXAMINER, 1855

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