



Saturday, September 8, 2018

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

Review of the Introduction of 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!**

Review of the Last Paragraphs of Part 1:

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."

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?

But as much stress is laid on the text under consideration, and on others where our Lord speaks of "hell fire" - *-puros gehenna-* - the fire of hell - we shall examine the subject more fully. Especially as by our Lord's using the expression "where their worm dieth not, and the fire is not quenched," it is concluded that he teaches the immortality of all men, and the endless torment of the wicked. But, before we settle down on such a conclusion, it is better to examine the premises. I am disposed to think the conclusion is purely assumed. **Let it be remembered the word in question "never occurs in the Septuagint Greek, nor in any classic author in the world."** So says Dr. George Campbell, one of the most learned divines of the orthodox school of the last century. **I remark, that it was never used by our Lord nor his apostles, when addressing Gentiles, whether by word or epistle.** This fact speaks in thunder tones, as to its Jewish origin, and hence we are to look alone to Jews for an explanation of the term and its use.

The word is derived from "*Ge*," which signifies a "*valley*," and "*Hinnom*," a man's name. "*The Valley of Hinnom*," south of Jerusalem, "*once celebrated for the horrid worship of Moloch, and afterwards polluted with every species of filth, as well as the carcasses of animals, and dead bodies of malefactors, to consume which, in order to avert the pestilence which such a mass of corruption would occasion, constant fires were kept burning.*" - Greek Lexicon

In the time of our Lord's personal ministry, a portion of the Jews used the phrase figuratively to denote the punishment of the wicked. As our Saviour adopted a figure of their own and used it only with Jews, it must be evident that he used it in harmony with facts. **Now what were the facts in the case? They are these -** Whatever was cast into the fire of gehenna, was cast there to be destroyed. If any flesh should fall outside of the fire, the worms devoured it, so that nothing there escaped utter destruction. No Jew was so stupid as ever to have conceived the thought that anything was thrown there to be preserved. The only idea that could have attached itself to this form of expression must have been that of a total and utter consumption, or destruction, without remedy, recovery, or escape. A Jew could understand it in no other sense; in any other sense the figure would have been both without meaning and without force.

This being the case, it is one of the strongest expressions in the Bible to disprove the common theory of the eternal preservation of the wicked in sin and suffering. The impenitent and incorrigible sinner, like the filth about Jerusalem, and the dead bodies of animals and men, if not utterly consumed and destroyed, would keep alive the plague in the universe; hence, they shall be "cast into the fire of Gehenna - hell fire;" or be utterly and totally destroyed, therefore "fear Him who is able to destroy both soul and body in Gehenna - hell." Matthew 10:28. Just so certain as the filth about Jerusalem, and dead carcasses were utterly consumed in the burning fire of the Valley of Hinnom, so certainly will God destroy both soul and body – that is, the entire being of the incorrigible sinner, so that the universe shall be clear of these plague spots; then shall be fulfilled that which is written Revelation 5:13, "And every creature which is in heaven, and on the earth, and such as are in the sea, and all that are in them,

heard I saying, Blessing, and honor, and glory, and power, be unto him that sitteth upon the throne, and unto the Lamb for ever and ever."

Not a creature shall be left in conscious existence but what shall join in ascriptions of praise to God and the Lamb. Glorious time - happy hour. May you and I be of that happy number. If we would be, let us seek holiness of heart and life. In Christ alone is life; know him - love him - obey him, and then we shall join the blessed company John heard praising in the strains just described, which may the Lord grant us through Jesus Christ our Saviour.

The advocates of the common theory of endless sin and misery bring forward our Lord's words -

"These shall go away into everlasting punishment, but the righteous into life eternal." Matthew 25:46.

This text is supposed by many to sustain the theory of the immortality of the human soul, and the endless misery of the wicked.

It is said - "If the everlasting *misery* of the wicked may come to an end, so may the everlasting *bliss* of the righteous, as the self same word is employed to express the *duration* of the *misery* of the one class as the *happiness* of the other."

I answer - The text saith not a word of the happiness of the one nor of the misery of the other. But if it did, it would avail nothing to the advocate of the common theory, unless he could prove the two classes equally undying, and immortal.

The term *aionion* - translated *eternal* and *everlasting*, in this text - does not, of itself, prove either the righteous or wicked would have a perpetual and unending existence, because it does not necessarily mean without end. This can easily be shown by its use, and the use of its corresponding word - *oulom* - in Hebrew; which latter word occurs, in some of its forms, more than three hundred times in the Old Testament, and in a large majority of cases will be found to express a period, longer or shorter, that will have an end. Thus the Aaronical ministry is called an *everlasting* priesthood;" the hills are called "everlasting hills."

Those who think, because the same term expressing duration is applied to both classes, in the text under consideration, it is made certain that the wicked will exist as long as the righteous may be taught that they reason both inconclusively and dangerously. Take the following text, "The *everlasting* God." Isaiah 40:25; and compare it with Habakkuk 3:6, "The *everlasting* mountains." **Shall the mountains continue as long as God? How will the advocates of unending misery evade the conclusion on their premises, that the mountains will continue as long as God? Will they say, "We know the mountains will melt in the final conflagration?" True; and we know the wicked will be "burned up, and be left neither root nor branch," because, "Thus saith the Lord of Hosts;" Malachi 4:1. But the Bible declares that God is "the King *immortal*:" not subject to be dissolved: while the everlasting mountains will be scattered and melted.**

What is the argument, then, that the righteous are to continue in life while the wicked perish from life?

It is not alone in the expression everlasting or eternal, in the text; but in the fact that other texts assure us the righteous "put on immortality, incorruption," at the resurrection; 1 Corinthians 15 and, saith Jesus, "**Neither can they die any more:**" Luke 20. Thus their perpetuity in life is settled by language that can have no other sense than that of unending life and being: while no such language occurs in relation to the wicked. On the contrary, they are to be "consumed, devoured, burned up, be destroyed, utterly destroyed, soul and body," etc. Such expressions, in the absence of any text affirming the immortality of wicked men, must settle the question, if testimony can settle any point.

The stumbling stone of our opposers is, in their assumption that protracted *pain* and *punishment* are necessarily identical. But this assumption is false in fact. What is the highest crime known in human law? It is murder. What is the punishment for that crime? Is it the most protracted pain? Or, is it the *deprivation of life*? It is the latter: and that is called the "*capital* punishment;" not because the criminal endures more pain, or as much as he might by some other; but because he is cut off from life.

If it be attempted to evade this point by saying - "The criminal feels horribly, while awaiting the day of execution," - I ask, if his feelings are any part of the *penalty* of the law? Certainly not. They may be a *consequence* of the crime; but the law does not say he shall feel bad, but that *he shall die*. But, say the advocates of the common idea of *pain*, as essential to punishment, "there is the dreadful hereafter to the criminal." I reply, whatever may be hereafter to him, that is no part of the *penalty of the law under which he dies*. So the Judge understands it, who pronounces the death sentence; for he concludes by saying, "May God have mercy on your soul:" i.e.,

"May you not be hurt hereafter." Thus, turn which way our opposers may, they meet a two edged sword that hews in pieces their notion of protracted pain and punishment being necessarily identical.

In the text under consideration, the Saviour expresses the idea of punishment, without any necessary idea of protracted pain. The word here translated punishment is *kolasin*: and it is never used, on any other occasion, in any of our Lord's discourses, as recorded in the Bible. When he speaks of torment, as he often does in the Gospels and in Revelation, he most uniformly uses the word *basanois*, but never, *kolasin*. *Kolasin* properly expresses punishment; and, strictly, the *kind of punishment*; as one meaning of the term is "*cut off*." The righteous enter into *life eternal*: the wicked are eternally *cut off* from life.

But we have an inspired Commentator on this declaration of our Lord; i.e., Paul, the apostle. Whatever scene is described Matthew 25, and whatever time is spoken of, the same, in both respects, Paul speaks of 2 Thessalonians 1. They are both laid in one scene. Compare them together. "When the Son of Man shall come in his glory and all the holy angels with him." Matthew 25:31. "When the Lord Jesus shall be revealed from heaven with his mighty angels." 2 Thessalonians 1:7. Is here any mistake? Is not the scene the same in both texts? Is it possible to separate them? Again, "These shall go away into everlasting punishment." Matthew 25:46. "**Who shall be punished with everlasting destruction.**" 2 Thessalonians 1:9.

Here is no room to doubt but what Paul is speaking of the same punishment as Jesus; and the apostle declares the punishment is "*destruction*" not *preservation* under any circumstances; and the apostle tells us this destruction is "*from the presence of the Lord, and from the glory of his power.*" This last expression may have the sense of "out of his presence," but I am inclined to believe it has reference to the consuming fire that sometimes came out from the presence of the Lord, under the law given by Moses. As for example, in Leviticus 10:1,2. - "Nadab and Abihu, sons of Aaron, took either of them his

censor, and put fire therein, and put incense thereon, and offered strange fire before the Lord, which he commanded them not: and there went out fire from the Lord, and devoured them, and they died before the Lord." Or, take the case of those who, in the rebellion of Korah (Numbers 16:25,) had taken their censors to appear before the Lord, **"And there came out a fire from the Lord, and consumed the two hundred and fifty men that offered incense."** Here was no preservation, but a being consumed, devoured; so that they "died." **To this, most likely, Paul refers.** The presence of Christ in his glory, with his only angels, will so overpower and fill with terror the wicked, who behold him, that they will die - be destroyed - by the sight. If Daniel, Daniel 10th, and John, the beloved disciple, Revelation 1, both "fell as dead" at the sight of the glory manifested to them, and recovered not till a hand was laid on them, with a voice saying, fear not, how then shall Christ's enemies live when he shall appear in glory? They cannot: they have cultivated such a disregard for Christ, and contempt of him, in his absence, that when he appears in his glory his presence will fill them with such fear as to destroy them forever. No hand is to be laid on them, nor voice heard, to soothe their fears; and they are "utterly consumed with terror." Their punishment is "death - the wages of sin:" and it is irrevocable - it is eternal. Thus Paul gives us a sure interpretation of Jesus' words, and enables us to speak with certainty as to the kind of punishment that is to be the portion of wicked men.

How death, from which there is no recovery, can be an eternal punishment, we will further illustrate. The highest punishment known in the law of God or man is *loss of life*, or death. The privation of life may be attended with pain or it may not. *If it is, it is not the punishment, it is merely an accident attending the punishment.* This truth is self-evident to the reflecting mind; because, however much the murderer might suffer in dying, that would not meet the claim of the law, or answer its penalty, unless his life is extinguished: he must "be hung by the neck until he is dead," saith the law.

If this man, when dead, could be restored to life in one year after, with the right to live, his punishment would be of only *one year's* duration. If a thousand years after, then it would have been of a thousand years duration: not of *pain*, but *loss of life*. **If he is never to be restored, but to remain eternally dead, then *how long* is his punishment? Is it not *eternal*, in the strictest sense? It is an eternal deprivation of life.** Such is the Bible teaching on the punishment of wicked men. And if we would live eternally we must come to Christ for that life. **God has given to us eternal life, but that life is in His Son, and not in ourselves:** See 1 John 5:11,12. It is the life-giving Spirit of God, bestowed on those, and those only, who come to Christ for it. This is that Spirit which raised up Christ from the dead, and by which, only, can any man be quickened to *immortality* and *incorruptibility*, Romans 8:11, with 1 Corinthians 15:45,54; without it men perish - are destroyed - die, and "shall be no more." *Psalm 104:35. "Be as though they had not been," Obadiah 16: "for the wages of sin is death;" Romans 6:23; and, "all the wicked will God destroy;" Psalms 145:20; yea, "They shall be as the fat of lambs; they shall consume; into smoke shall they consume away."* *Psalms 37:20.*

* Editor's Note: Jesus is the Resurrection and the life. If you want to live forever and have abundant life you must get it from Jesus. **"Jesus said unto her, I am the resurrection, and the life: he that believeth in me, though he were dead, yet shall he live:"** John 11:25 KJV. Do you believe this? **Why would Jesus need to resurrect the dead and give them eternal life if they already had it?** If the dead do not have to believe in Jesus to have eternal life, that would make what Jesus said here a lie. **Jesus said that believing in Him was a requirement for eternal life.** We think this is quite clear. He that believeth in Jesus, shall live, really live forever, not the unrepentant sinner! The unrepentant sinner will not have life abundantly either, these gifts are only given to those who believe in Jesus, not to the wicked, which are those with unbelief.

John 3:16-17. Those who do not believe are the wicked. And the wicked will most certainly not live forever, but will perish after they have received all of the punishment for their wicked deeds and faithless life that they deserve. **Unbelief in what?** Unbelief in the word of God. They do not believe the clearest, plainest testimony of the Bible. Therefore brethren let us not be like them in departing from the faith in the Living God, and be shut out of the eternal bliss of Heaven because of unbelief. Hebrews 3:12.

Another text, on which much reliance is placed, to support the common theory, is Jude 7th. "Sodom and Gomorrah and the cities about them, in like manner giving themselves over to fornication, and going after strange flesh, are set forth for an example, *suffering the vengeance of eternal fire.*" **Let us compare Scripture with Scripture.** Peter, in his second epistle, gives us an account of this same matter. - He says, **"If God spared not the angels that sinned, but cast them down to hell - to be reserved unto the judgment; and spared not the old world, but saved Noah - a preacher of righteousness, bringing in the flood upon the ungodly; and turning the cities of Sodom and Gomorrah into ashes, condemned them with an overthrow, making them an example to those who after should LIVE ungodly,"** etc.

Thus Peter throws light on Jude. Both together show most clearly what displeasures God has manifested against sinners. It is concerning what has been done in *this* world, **we are here told, that God has made an example to those who should *after* live ungodly.**

Those judgments inflicted on the old world, Sodom and Gomorrah, are a standing, and perpetual, or "eternal" admonition, warning, or "example" to all men to the end of the world, that *live* ungodly.

Those judgments prove the utter destruction of the wicked, when God shall visit them for their iniquities. For, if Sodom and Gomorrah are an *"example,"* as Peter expressly affirms - then the wicked are to be *"turned to ashes:"* hence, are consumed, perish from being, and are no longer living conscious beings. Such, I am satisfied, is the scripture doctrine of the punishment of the wicked.

CONCLUDING REMARKS

In my own mind the conclusion is irresistible, that the final doom of all the impenitent and unbelieving, is that they shall utterly perish - shall be "destroyed forever" - their "end" is to be "burned up, root and branch," with "fire unquenchable" - they shall not have everlasting life, or being, but be "punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord," **the universe of God will be purified not only from sin, but sinners - and "the works of the devil" will be destroyed, exterminated;** but "blessed and holy is he who hath part in the first resurrection; on such the second death hath no power." Then there will be a "new heaven and a new earth, for the first heaven and the first earth are passed away." **"And God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes, and there shall be no more death, neither sorrow nor crying; neither shall there be any more pain; for the former things have passed away."**

The day when these tremendous scenes will transpire, I conceive, "is nigh, even at the doors." Yes, the time is at hand, when the wrath of God will be revealed from heaven - a day, described by the apostle, of "indignation and wrath; tribulation and anguish upon every soul of man that doeth evil." Then they that

have "sinned without law shall also perish without law;" and a not less fearful doom awaits those that have sinned in the light of the law and gospel both.

That awful day will soon overtake us; and who may abide the day of his coming? Behold, that day "shall burn as an oven; and all the proud, and all that do wickedly will be stubble;" as incapable of resisting the judgment that shall come upon them, as stubble is to resist the devouring flame.

Let us be wise now, therefore, and prepare to meet God. "Kiss the Son, lest he be angry, and ye perish from the way when his wrath is kindled but a little." "But blessed are all they that put their trust in him."

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"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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