

# Everlasting Punishment.

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YES, everlasting punishment is indeed "an awful affair," and many are trying to disbelieve it. But does that alter the fact? When Noah preached the coming flood of universal destruction, some one might have said, "What an awful affair!" but who believed him? But did that alter the fact? And when God announced the destruction of Sodom, that was an awful affair. Lot himself scarcely believed it. But it came.

A guilty murderer is taken: he is guilty; he is condemned to death. He may think of the last hour, the ghastly preparations, the last walk to the scaffold, and . . . "Stop!" he may say, "that is an awful affair! Oh," he may say, "I won't believe it. The *government* is too kind to allow me to come to that." But every moment brings him nearer to that dread reality.

But you may say, "Think how many learned men are denying eternal punishment, and maintain that the soul is not immortal." Were there

not many mighty men, men of renown, all of whom rejected the preaching of Noah, or the warning of God ? (Gen. vi. 4.) Have you weighed the alternative ? If you say that the soul of man is not immortal,—that is, the man ceases to exist at death ; then you must give up the whole Word of God as false, and thus be left in outer darkness even now. You must take your place with the Agnostics and Darwinians. You say, “Surely this cannot be true.” Let us see. If man was not created with an immortal soul,—that is, to exist forever, what was he ? Simply a slightly superior beast : here a little while, and then off the scene. Now there is no sin in a beast : there is no conscience of sin in a mere animal. There is no responsibility toward God in an animal. There would be no need for or sense in an atonement. An animal has no nature, no capacity, to know God or the things of God.

But in contrast with the formation of all mere cattle, beasts, birds, or fishes, we read, “God created man in His own image ; in the image of God created He him ; male and female created He them.” “And the Lord God formed man of the dust of the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life ; and man became a living soul.” Here was a totally different creature from the beasts and cattle of the field. Here was a living soul, capable of conversing with God, and was placed both as head of creation and under responsibility. And mark, whilst a beast could not be so placed, man was so placed as a living soul, and one sin has involved the whole race in ruin and misery. And what we read in the Word of God we find around us to-day. There is the same distinction between man and the animals around as there was when he came out of the hands of God. Not

another creature is there on earth to which you can communicate the idea of God or a future existence. Take away man's immortality, reduce him to a mere beast, though a superior beast, and then we must allow you to overthrow everything revealed in the Word of God.

The man, as to his bodily existence, is mortal—liable to death like the beasts, is clearly revealed: but that is not our question. And that the Old Testament is chiefly occupied with the body and the things of the body, we do not dispute for a moment. That the word "soul" is used to denote man in the body, or *persons*, as we say, is frequently the case,—as, "The soul that sinneth, it shall die." The person under the government of God would be put to death. The context will make this plain.

But now we have the complete revelation of God in the New Testament. What is the certain teaching of the complete Word of God? Is there such a thought as that at death man, like the beast, ceases to exist? Far from it! Is there, then, distinct teaching that as to the wicked, rejectors of the gospel, they do not cease to exist at death? Could anything be more certain than the following: "And as it is appointed unto men once to die, but after this the judgment"? (Heb. ix. 27.) Can there be judgment after ceasing to exist? If man ceases to exist, there is nothing to judge. You may say, "They will be raised again to be judged." True, they will; the Word says so. (Rev. xx. 11–15.) And they are cast into the lake of fire; and they "shall have their part in the lake which burneth with fire and brimstone: which is the second death." Now that torment is declared to be "forever and ever: and they have no rest day nor night." (See Rev. xiv. 10, 11.) Now honestly, is

this ceasing to exist at death ? Infidels may teach so, but not the Word of God. And that Word never contradicts itself.

Does the Lord Jesus teach that going into hell fire is ceasing to exist ? No ; over and over again He declares it is a fire that never shall be quenched. (Read Mark ix. 43-48.)

Did he teach that Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob ceased to exist ? No. "For He is not a God of the dead, but of the living ; for *all* live unto Him." (Luke xx. 38.) It may be objected that they were saved men, and therefore existed after death. Now as to this, the Lord makes no difference whatever : He teaches that both the saved and lost live after death as to the soul, and that they are equally conscious as if they were alive in the body.

The rich man died ; and in hell did he cease to exist ? Not a bit more than Abraham. He lifted up his eyes, being *in torments*. Did he cease to exist ? Oh, hear his dreadful cry for a drop of water to cool his tongue. Oh, reader, will this ever be your case ? You say, "That is only a figure." But a figure of what ? If death is ceasing to exist, then it was a figure for the very purpose of deception. Yes ; if you embrace this doctrine of demons—that death is ceasing to exist, you make the holy Son of God a deceiver. The rich man no more ceases to exist than Lazarus the saved beggar. The one was comforted and the other tormented. Say that you deny the Scripture, then we understand you ; but do not pretend to be a Christian and all the while teach doctrines that would make Christ a deceiver.

He is the truth, and could only teach the truth. In the plainest possible language He tells us, "And these shall go away into everlasting punishment

[or torment], but the righteous into life everlasting." (Matt. xxv. 46.) He uses the same word to denote the everlasting existence of both. Many may not be aware how Satan is leading them on into this debasing error that man is not an immortal soul and will not exist forever and ever; but it is a direct attack on Christ, as a deceiver, and an attempt to overthrow all Scripture. Prove it false in one part and all true faith is destroyed in every other part. It must lead practically to infidelity on every subject. Already its dire effects are seen. The progress of darkness and lawlessness has set in and advances with rapid strides.

No one can deny that wherever this doctrine of non-eternity of torment has got a footing, reasoning and doubt on all Scripture truths are following. Let us pause. Abundance of scripture might be brought to show that death is not ceasing to exist. How could the soul of the dead child have returned into it if it had ceased to exist? yet it was dead and was restored to life. (2 Kings iv. 32-36.) And so of the son of the widow of Nain. (Luke vii.) There was a dead man; yet at the word of Jesus the dead arose, sat up, and began to speak. No, beloved reader; if we give up the immortality of the soul, we give up everything, and reduce man to a mere beast. There is no real sin, and no need of true expiation, if man, before the new birth, is a mere intelligent beast—has the soul of a beast or mere animal, and when he dies he ceases to exist. Is it not astonishing that man can shut his eyes to the Scriptures as the revelation of God and become so dark?

Oh, young men, shun these damning doctrines with horror. Crafty men will pervert the Scriptures to deceive you. You may secretly wish it to be so, that you may indulge in sin and see no judg-

ment before you; but remember these solemn words: "It is appointed unto men once to die, but *after this* the judgment." "Know thou that for all these things God will bring thee into judgment." "So, then, every one of us shall give account of himself to God." "For we must all appear [or be made manifest] before the judgment-seat of Christ; that every one may receive the things done in his body according to that he hath done, whether it be good or bad. Knowing, therefore, the terror of the Lord, we persuade men." "And I saw the dead, small and great, stand before God; and the books were opened, . . . and they were judged every man according to his works." "But the fearful, and unbelieving, and the abominable, and murderers, and whoremongers, and sorcerers [now called Spiritualists], and idolaters, and all liars, shall have their part in the lake which burneth with fire and brimstone; which is the second death."

All this would be utterly false if the wicked ceased to exist at death. We cease to exist here in this state as to the body; but if the soul ceases to exist, what is there to be judged? Be warned in time. Let God be true though every man be a liar. We repeat, if you give up the immortality of the soul, you give up the whole Bible. If we own the mortality of the body and the immortality of the soul, and the future resurrection and judgment of rejecters of the glad tidings of God, then all is clear. You and I must be manifested before the judgment-seat of Christ, either justified from all things through the death and resurrection of the very One before whom we are manifested; or we must be judged for our sins; and if thus judged, be cast into the lake of fire—into torment that never ends.

Oh, think of the terror of that day! Think of the wrath of God—forever and ever! And think of God now, with arms of mercy ready to receive and pardon the vilest that comes to Him, that believes Him! Surely God has shown His estimate of sin by the death of Christ, His only begotten Son. Yes, God so loved. Will you reject His pardon freely proclaimed through Jesus?

C. S.

