



BELIEVERS CHAPEL

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Sermons of S. Lewis Johnson

Systematic Theology

“Effects of the Fall, part IV, *or* the Wrath of God Upon Sinful Man”

TRANSCRIPT

[Prayer] Father, we thank Thee again for the word of God and for the light that it provides us upon our lives and upon our pathway. We thank Thee for the truths of Scripture that pertain to the doctrine of man and the doctrine of sin. And we thank Thee, Lord, that through these truths we are able to understand ourselves better. And we pray, again, that we may tonight, as we study the Scriptures, be enlightened and be edified in the truth. And may the things that we learn profit us, to the end that others, too, may be blessed through the truth and through us. We commit this hour to Thee now, and pray Thy blessing upon it.

In Jesus' name. Amen.

[Message] Tonight, our subject is “The Effects of the Fall, or the Wrath of God Upon Sinful Man.” And, first, as we have been doing customarily, a word of introduction.

The sin of Adam, we said in our last study two weeks ago, had three great effects upon man; but I did not say only three great effects. But, it does have only four great effects upon man. And, first of all, remember, Adam's first sin's guilt was imputed to the race, and we studied the doctrine of imputation and saw how Adam's sins guilt has

become ours. The Apostle Paul, in Romans chapter 5, verse 12 through verse 21, sets forth the teaching concerning that.

Then we said, secondly, that Adam’s posterity inherited a corrupted nature from him; and that that corrupted nature is called by theologians in the narrow sense, original sin. And as a result of this, men are in original sin -- or under original sin. And when we look at original sin in its pervasive sense, we can say that men are totally depraved. This does not mean, as we’ve been trying to point out, that man is as bad as he can be or that he has committed every sin that he could commit. But, rather, that all of man is touched by sin: his will, his emotions, his mind. All parts of man are touched by sin.

And, then thirdly, we said that as a result of Adam’s sin, Adam’s posterity has since been unable to perform spiritual good. And this is the thing that we talked about last time, man’s inability. And we pointed out that that inability pertained to his will. So that, while we may say scripturally, man is a free agent, we cannot say that man has a free will. His will is enslaved to sin. The decisions of his will are the products of his sinful nature. And, consequently, since his nature is sinful, his decisions are sinful. He has a bias toward evil. But he is a free agent, in the sense that his actions are not actions that are forced upon him. He takes delight in his bias toward evil. He makes his decisions, and he loves the decisions that he makes. And so he is a free agent, but he does not have a free will.

Tonight, we are going to look at the fourth of the great effects which have come to us as a result of Adam’s sin. Adam’s posterity is now subject to eternal punishment, or death, in its most permanent sense.

Now, I think the passage in the Bible, which most solemnly presents this is the passage in Revelation chapter 20, verse 11 through verse 15, and this is probably just as good a place to read it as any other time, so, let’s turn to Revelation chapter 20, verse 11 through verse 15. Now, John writes:

“Then I saw a great white throne and Him who sat upon it, from whose presence earth and heaven fled away, and no place was found for them. And I saw the dead, the great and the small, standing before the throne, and books were opened; and another book was opened, which is the book of life; and the dead were judged from the things which were written in the books, according to their deeds. And the sea gave up the dead which were in it, and death and Hades gave up the dead which were in them; and they were judged, every one of them according to their deeds. Then death and Hades were thrown into the lake of fire. This is the second death, the lake of fire. And if anyone's name was not found written in the book of life, he was thrown into the lake of fire.”

Eternal punishment raises the perennially troublesome question; will a loving God send anyone to Hell? This is, usually, the leading question of a universalist, or an annihilationist. In their texts, are texts such as 1 Corinthians chapter 15 in verse 22, where we read: “In Adam all die, but in Christ all shall be made alive.” And they like to stress the “all.” Not necessarily the “in Christ.”

It’s a strange thing and I’ve commented on this before, a strange thing that the universalist denomination, before it merged with the Unitarian Church, had such a small membership in the light of the fact that it had such good doctrine. You would think that a denomination with such good doctrine as that -- everybody was going to be saved ultimately -- would have had a large membership. But, before they united with the relatively small Unitarian denomination, there were only 73,000 members in the universalist denomination.

So even they could not convince the unsaved of the truthfulness of their doctrine. Someone has said, “Nobody is quite a universalist in moments of indignation.” And, perhaps, there is something of that basic unbelief in that doctrine in human nature, so that when it is preached, while it sounds very good, something within us tells us it is probably not true.

“The Wrath of God Upon Sinful Man” by S. Lewis Johnson
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Mr. Mueller, who has written one of the greatest books on sin, a Lutheran, has said, “No one is sure of applause than the man who discovers some new method of evading justice under the pretext of humanity.”

Well, that may be true so far as getting applause is concerned, but you don’t get too many members in the church or denomination, it seems. So while men may clap and applaud, even then, deep down within they sense that the doctrine that everybody is going to be saved is probably not true.

There is no question but that eternal punishment is an unpopular subject. And, that is why you do not hear many preachers preaching on eternal punishment.

Twenty years ago, in *Time* magazine, I clipped out a letter to the editor written by the religious editor of the *Los Angeles Times*. In the *Christian Century*, there had been a comment to the effect that now preachers were preaching on judgment a great deal more than they used to; and, particularly, sin. In the *Time* report, which had referred to the *Christian Century* magazine, probably the leading professing Christian periodical, it had been said that, The pulpit today speaks from Roman 7:19: “For the good that I would I do not: but the evil which I would not, that I do,” a great deal more today than they ever used to.

And the editor of the *Los Angeles Times* wrote *Time* magazine and he said, “We publish the extracts of two local sermons each week as part of our religious coverage. In the period of a year, I have run across only one minister preaching man’s innate sinfulness. On the other hand, at least 7 of 10 sermons published contain some form of the message, ‘For God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten son.’

Now that, I think, is an interesting fact. It is true. Men do not like to preach on eternal punishment because it’s not very popular. I guess they also feel that Sunday is the kind of day that you don’t want to disturb people too much. After all, if you get up in the pulpit on a day of rest and ask them to do some mental labor, you are presuming on them to start with, and so, most congregations are bored to death if the sermon is more

than twenty minutes in length. So, all that the average preacher does is to get together two or three bright things -- a bouquet or two of rhetorical flowers plus a sprinkling of antidotes of a rather pathetic cast -- and he puts them together and calls that a sermon.

Now, I’m not suggesting that it is the people’s fault. I think it is, of course, the fault of the people as well as the preacher. They both are very happy with that kind of preaching. But, nevertheless, it is in the Bible. And, if we do not wrestle with what the Scriptures say, well then, we are not going to come to truth. So that’s what we want to do tonight. We want to take a look at what the Bible has to say about eternal punishment. And so Roman 1 in our outline, the punishment for sin. And capital A, the natural penalties.

A common distinction applied to punishments for sin is that between natural and positive penalties. The natural penalties of sin are those necessary consequences of sin. That is, they are the things that occur as a consequence of the act of sin, and we cannot escape them. Man is not saved from them by repentance and forgiveness.

The fact that we engage in sin means that we are going to suffer certain natural penalties. Let me illustrate: The man who is lazy and slothful will soon come to poverty if he lives long enough. The drunkard brings ruin upon himself and upon his family if he persists in his alcoholism, unless, perchance, he has inherited a few million dollars from his father or grandfather. In that case, he might manage to live out his life without having done more than waste the family fortune or a great deal of it. The man who engages in sexual sin contracts some loathsome and incurable disease, often. The criminal is burdened with the shame of his acts, and even when he gets out of prison he finds it very difficult to escape the fact of his past.

These are just natural penalties of sin. They are part of God’s laws. They are just as much the law of God’s activities with men as the law of gravity. But there are not only natural penalties for sin, but there are also positive penalties. And, these are punishments in the legal sense of the word. They presuppose a lawgiver. They presuppose a lawgiver

who has laid down law regarding certain specific things. They are not the consequences of sin committed, they are the judgments that God has set forth in his word and which he lays upon men when they disobey his word.

Now, the positive punishments we have already talked about and so I only mention them to you in this context. First of all, there is spiritual death. Remember, Adam was told, “In the day thou eatest thereof, thou shalt surely die.”

Now, that did not come to Adam that spiritual death, simply, because he ate of the fruit of the tree which was in the midst of the garden. That was a positive judgment, which God pronounced upon him, because he disobeyed God’s word. That was not a natural consequence of the fruit of the tree in the midst of the garden. It was a positive penalty.

Then, also, remember, as a result of his spiritual death, physical death was also given to him as a penalty. And God said to him, “Dust thou art; unto dust thou shalt return.” So, physical death is a positive penalty. That is why the writer of the Epistle of the Hebrews says, “It is appointed unto men once to die and after this the judgment.” That is not a natural penalty; that is a positive penalty which has come as a result of sin.

Now, we may think it’s natural because everybody experiences it, but it is something that God has appointed for every man.

And, finally, there is eternal death; that which we read of in Revelation chapter 20, or the second death. That, of course, is the extension of spiritual death into eternity beyond the present day of probation and, from which, there is no recourse. That is not something natural; that is something positive.

Well, let’s move now, secondly, to the purpose of this punishment. The term punishment is derived from the Latin word *poenae*, which we’ve referred to several times. It means punishment or pain. And punishment is the pain or loss inflicted by the lawgiver in vindication of his justice.

Now, God does not do this merely as a matter of vengeance. He is a vengeful God. He says, “Vengeance belongeth unto me, saith the Lord.” But he does not execute his punishment merely for the sake of vengeance. He does not take any personal delight in the pain that he passes out to those who are -- have offended his law.

Why does God punish? Capital A, Does he punish to reform the sinner?

It is commonly thought that God’s punishments are designed to reform the sinner. The idea that God only inflicts pain to reform the sinner obliterates the distinction between punishment and chastisement. In the Christian family, God’s chastisements are designed to reform the Christian. But his punishments are not designed to reform the sinner. We must distinguish between chastisement and punishment. Every Christian is subject to chastisement; just as every child ought to be subject to chastisement. And so God chastises his children. And those chastisements are designed to bring us into fellowship with him. They are designed to deepen our experience of the life of God. They are correctional. That is, they are corrective. They are designed to bring us back when we have strayed. But punishment is something else.

If reformation should follow from the punishment of God, it is because of some gracious operation of God in addition to his punishments, for his punishments are designed for something else. If this theory were true -- that is, that God punishes to reform the sinner -- then a sinner, already reformed, could no longer be punished. Nor could someone, beyond the possibility of reformation be punished, so that there could be no punishment for Satan if this were really true.

The death penalty would have to be abolished. And, eternal punishment would be senseless if God’s punishments are designed to reform the sinner. They are not designed to reform the sinner.

Secondly, are they designed to deter men from sin? Now, this end is often secured by punishment. The fact that we know there is such a thing as eternal punishment may be used of God to deter us from sin. But this is an incidental result of divine punishment.

It is not designed to deter men from sin. Now, remember, we’re talking about punishment, not chastisement.

A punishment, in order to be justifiable, has to be, first of all, just. It will not have a deterring effect if it is not just under any circumstances. But really, if this theory were true, that God has instituted punishment to deter men from sin, then a criminal might be set free at once if it were not for the fact that his punishment might have some good effect on the rest of the people.

In other words, the punishment would have no particular effect on him; but it might affect others. And so, why not just go ahead and set him free? Well, we would say others might be helped by seeing his punishment.

Well, how can we explain how it invariably causes a sinner to look back and confess his past sins when a man comes to realize his sin? By this view, you see, punishment is not grounded in the past but its holy prospective. It is designed to deter men from sin in the future. But when a man, after he has come under the judgments of God, comes to himself and sees himself as he is; he doesn’t talk about the future, he talks about the past. And, he goes back, and he confesses his sin. Take David. After David’s great sin, he does not talk about the future. He talks about the past. He looks in the past and he says, “I have sinned against the Lord.”

So the idea that God has punished men to deter others from sin is not a biblical idea. The reason God institutes punishment is to vindicate the divine justice. The lawgiver is just. And he has set forth his law. He requires sin to be punished because of its inherent demerit. Sin is evil. It is an offence against God. It is a crime and it must be paid for. It is the necessary reaction of a Holy God to the offence of human sin. That is why punishment takes place. So we must think about deterring from sin or reforming the sinner. These are not biblical ideas at all.

Now, let’s move on to the proof of eternal punishment. Men usually object to the idea of eternal punishment by reasoning something like this. They will say, “Can you

think of a father punishing his children? Why, even a human father would not think of punishing his children. He does not like to punish his children. He loves his children. He does not like to punish them. Now, can you magnify that and think about God, and can you think of God punishing his own children in that way?”

And, immediately, you are sympathetic with those who object to the doctrine of eternal punishment because, surely, God is not going to be more inhumane than men. And, if men don’t like to punish their own children, how much more God his children?

Robert Ingersol said, “Can you worship a God who would drown the whole world?” Well, he said, he would much rather worship a God of stone than a God that would do that.

Now, I imagine that in Noah’s day, when Noah announced the coming of the flood, that the clergymen and the universalists and the Unitarians and the professors of theology who denied punishment, if there were such at that time and so far as I can tell, there were scoffers from the teaching of the Bible, they may have stood up on their little pulpits while Noah was standing on the deck of his ark, and they may have said, “Men are God’s children. He will not drown his offspring. There will be no flood.”

But there was a flood. And, God did bring that judgment upon men. And if you want to put it that way, he drowned the whole world. Well, that’s precisely what he did. And it’s because of the wickedness and the evil of the hearts of the men of Noah’s day. Read Genesis chapter 6. It was a punishment.

Now, when we look at eternal punishment from the standpoint of the Bible, it is plain, it seems to me, that nature, reason, and the word of God concur in eternal punishment. Now, I said, when we look at the Bible. Let’s just think about nature. Does nature support hell?

Capital A, the natural reasons. Let’s just think of a few avenues of thought. I have not sought to give all of the evidence from nature for hell. Well, let’s think for just a moment about the testimony of the physical universe. It was Paul who said, as he dealt

with the dealings of God with the nations in Romans chapter 11, the nation Israel and the Gentiles: “Behold the goodness and the severity of God.”

Well, let me assure you that the universe is crowded full of jagged points of orthodoxy. The universe exhibits the love and goodness of God. If you were a natural theologian and sought to prove the goodness of God, you would think it would be relatively easy, wouldn’t you? So you would talk about the beautiful flowers that are in the world. You might even talk about the beautiful roses that are down in Tyler.

Just think, anybody responsible for those beautiful roses, surely, is good. But then look at those roses a few days after they have passed their peak and begin to see them fade and decay. Look at the beautiful sky above us, the beautiful blue sky that we have in Texas, sometimes. But, it’s not just a few hours later that we see forked lightning through the sky. We may even see a ball of fire that strikes some individual and soon there is destruction and death.

We may look up at the birds in the sky and say, isn’t it wonderful that God has given us all of these little creatures and, what a lovely thing to hear them sing in the morning when you’re awake and when they’re not disturbing you, of course. But isn’t it a wonderful thing to hear those beautiful birds singing and then, all of a sudden, there is a hawk flashes down from the sky and a poor little sparrow, that seemed to be the evidence of the goodness of God, is now bloody because the hawk has the sparrow.

Look at the beautiful mountains. Well, we can’t see them around here. But look at the beautiful mountains in Colorado that I was looking at last week? All of that lovely beauty with the snow up on top of them? And we say, my, what a wonderful thing is God’s creation, the heavens declare the glory of God. The firmament showeth his handiwork. The mountains show his greatness and his goodness. But out of that mountain will come a volcano. And out of the volcano will come the lava that will destroy thousands of people.

We look at the sea. Nothing is more beautiful than the sea, in my opinion, at certain times. Having grown up by the seashore, I appreciate the sea. It’s one of the few things that I miss in Texas. And it’s lovely. But nevertheless, the sea can be a very destructive thing. The tidal waves are responsible, again, for the death of thousands. So when we look at God’s physical universe, there is that two-fold testimony. Not only is God love, but he is also consuming fire, the text of Scripture says. “Behold therefore the goodness and the severity of God.”

I heard once of someone who said -- In fact, it may well have been Ingersoll, I’ve forgotten who it was, but anyway, this man claimed that we would never have understood anything about hell were it not for the fact that there were volcanoes. And volcanoes gave man the idea of hell. And, when he saw those volcanoes and the fires coming out of them, then he thought of hell. And so, our idea of the doctrine of hell is to be traced to a volcano. Well, if that were really true, if it were true that our idea of hell is to be traced to a volcano, then we shouldn’t argue against the God of the Bible. We should, rather, look at nature itself and say that it is nature that is responsible for this false doctrine and not God.

We know, however, that the volcanoes really are revelatory of the nature of God. If we look up at the stars and we see the twinkling stars and marvel at their beauty. And we think for a moment, that star is nothing more than a ball of fire out in the universe, then we realize that even in those beautiful twinklings of the stars there is evidence of the fire of God.

When we look at the sun and the moon and realize that in the sun we have nothing but storms of fire -- literally, storms of fire -- and all of these things, the stars and the sun suggest to us the eternal conflagration of the Lake of Fire. All of these are God’s ways of testifying to us that he is not only a God of love, but he is a consuming fire.

So the testimony of the physical universe is to the goodness and severity of God, not simply goodness, not simply severity, but the goodness and the severity of God.

Second, the testimony of history. Someone has said, history is his story if we can rise high enough to observe and to interpret. Well, if you will study history you will discover that that not only shows that God is a God of love, but he is also a consuming fire. In history, we discover that God has also been responsible for many wonderful things for men. He has given us science, to take one illustration. And, we are indeed grateful for science. My goodness, we could never see the Cowboy’s game on the day that they play were it not for the fact that we have a TV set. And all of the other benefits that come to us as a result of science, we’re thankful for them; and we thank God for them.

We also thank God for the men whom he has sent who have been blessings to the human race. In America, we thank God for Washington. We thank God for Lincoln -- some do, at least. Southerners have difficulty, but even we, by the grace of God, can thank God for Lincoln. And we thank God for Robert E. Lee, and other great men like that.

But, on the other hand, God is a consuming fire, and so, when we think about a Washington or a Lincoln or a Lee, while we recognize their failures, we are thankful for them. But then, on the other hand, we look at the history of the human race, and it is a history of wars, destructive wars, terrible wars, vile wars. We see, of course, a history of plagues. And then, when we think of individuals, we think of a Hitler, a Stalin, a Mao, and others.

When you study history, if you are willing to keep your eyes open, you are not convinced that God is a good god at all. There are evidences that God is a God of love, and there are evidences that God is a consuming fire. As Paul says, “Behold therefore the goodness and the severity of God.”

Dr. Edward Beecher was once reflecting on these things and suddenly, as he reflected upon them in the light of history, he got up from his desk and he impatiently

walked back and forth across his room saying, “What if, after all, God is not good?” And I think a person might wrestle with that question if he looked at human history.

Third, the testimony of the human mind. There are many things in our minds that suggest that God is good. Think of childish laughter. Childish joy. Holy memories. Lovely music that we enjoy. Lovely thoughts that we may think. The many privileges that concern our mind that are edifying, that are wonderful. Rapturous imagination.

All of this suggests the goodness of God. But, on the other hand, think of the things that suggest the severity of God: guilty conscience, anguish, remorse, bereavement, the thoughts of the mind that suggest suffering.

The last words of Hannah Moore, as she died, were, “Joy.” The last words of Sir James MacIntosh were, “Happy.” Baxter, the great preacher, said as he was dying, “I am almost well.” That’s one side.

But, on the other side, Sir Thomas Scott said, “I am doomed to perdition by the judgments of Almighty God.” And then, Talleyrand , Bishop turned politician, when he died, he said, “I am suffering the pangs of the damned.” And so, the testimony of the human mind is to the goodness and the severity of God.

Let’s think of the ration reasons, for a moment. Now, let’s remember reason is limited. Reason is fallen.

Let’s remember that we shall never think any rational thought with assurance that we are thinking after God, unless we have received the enlightenment of the Holy Spirit. For, our mind is touched by sin also. So, even our little syllogisms we must doubt unless God enlightens us. But he is able to enlighten us, and that is why we can think rationally, even though we are in sin. We can only think rationally as we subject ourselves to the teaching of the Holy Spirit.

Now, also, remember that revelation concerns things that are beyond human reasoning. There are certain things that we can know by human reasoning enlightened by the Holy Spirit; but then there are some things that we can only know if God reveals

them to us. That is why you can never argue, rationally, anyone into the Christian faith, because, ultimately, the Christian faith depends upon a revelation from God. And we don’t have the facilities for understanding that which is beyond the scientific method.

If anyone should ever say to you, Christianity does not agree with the scientific method and, therefore, I do not accept Christianity, well, just remember that the scientific method does not apply to Christianity. The scientific method applies when we have things that can be inductively studied. But, in the case of God, we have someone who cannot be put into our test tubes. And, therefore, if we are to know anything about him, it must be by his revelation of himself to us. So don’t let any scientist bother you. He doesn’t know anything about God. He cannot know anything about God by the things with which he concerns himself.

Well, I think that these rational reasons are fatal blows to universalists. It is the opinion of most universalists, that God could not ever consign anyone to an eternal separation from God. But, if a universalist would acknowledge the existence of sin as a result of God’s permission, he has already lost his case, because if God is to forcibly restrain from sin in the future, why did he not do it before the Garden of Eden?

In other words, if, in the future, God is going to deliver men from all of the restraints of sin and save everybody, then, what in the world is the point of the divine program of redemption? There is no answer. But, anyway, we want to talk about these rational reasons. And, first of all, hell is rational because of God’s holiness.

Remember, in Isaiah chapter 6, verse 3, the text that we have looked at more than once. Isaiah heard the Seraphim saying, “Holy, holy, holy.” Now, he could have just said it once. And I’m not suggesting he said it three times because there are three persons in the trinity. That may well be. But I am suggesting that the reason that the Holy Spirit stressed the holiness of God is because it is so difficult for men to grasp the fact that God is totally different from you and me. He is holy, holy, holy. It’s as if God tried to stress that fact.

Now, if God did not punish sin, what, in effect, he would be doing by permitting sin to exist and to not be paid for, what he would be really doing would be strengthening the hands of evil. A temporary Hell deters no one.

And so the idea of God’s holiness demands that he react in judgment against that which is contradictory to his holiness. If it were true that a man could commit sin and escape the judgment of God, then the psalmist is right, all the foundations of the earth are out of course. And there is no point in responding to the revelation of God.

I think it was a Scot one time who said, “What’s the good of being good, if no one is going to be punished in the end?” Now, that may be a selfish way of looking at it, but he had penetrated the rationality behind the denial of eternal punishment.

Second, Hell is rational because it is a necessary motive to obedience. Now, you’ll have a lot of people that will say, “Oh, no, I think people ought to obey God because they love him, not because they fear him.” I do, too.

Then people will say, “I think they ought -- men ought to obey God just because he is God rather than because they are afraid he’s going to hurl some thunderbolt of judgment at them.” I do, too. But men are not angels. They are men. And the Bible makes it plain that fear is one of the legitimate motives. In fact, Jude is told to save some, “By fear, snatching them out of the fire.” And so the fact that there is a hell is a legitimate motive. So it’s rational.

Why did Noah build his ark? Why, Hebrews, chapter 11, verse 7, says, Noah, moved by what? Love? Obedience? I’m sure he was moved by obedience. He did what the Lord said to do, Genesis says. But Hebrews says he was moved by fear, and I think I can empathize with Noah.

When he heard that there was going to be an opening up of the fountains of the great deep and the whole earth is going to come under water, well, I want to tell you, that would produce some of the fear of God in my soul, too. And he was moved with fear. Right for right’s sake, is good; but men are not angels, I repeat.

Third, Hell is rational because of the endlessness of guilt. When a crime is committed, it’s absurd to ask, for how long is a person guilty? Let’s just suppose that you have stolen money from the bank. Well, if you have stolen money from the bank, your trial comes up, and you are pronounced guilty by the jury; then the judge or the jury will assess the punishment, and they will say, guilty for two years or guilty for ten years. But that’s human judgment.

When you think of sin against God, and you have sinned against God, for how long are you guilty? For ten days? For two years? For ten years? Just think, with God, there is no such thing as the passing of time as we know time. I have offended a Holy God. Twenty years from now nothing has been done about my sin. How do I stand before God? Do you think that he has forgotten because it’s a long time ago?

My dear friend, you are just as guilty twenty years from now as you are at the present moment – you are just as guilty two hundred years from now as you are at the present moment. Guilt before God is endless. To say, guilty for ten days is hibernian; it’s not divine.

Have you noticed that there is no repentance in Hell? Have you noticed that even though men come under the judgments of God, they do not change? After ten years, or twenty years, they feel the same way about it. Passing through the door of death is no reform agency. We’re still the same old people that we were. And so guilt is endless. Punishment is therefore endless because guilt is endless.

And, fourth, Hell is rational because sin is an infinite evil. It’s committed against an infinite person. If a little puppy were to come into this room, and I were to reach down and take the puppy and strike a match and burn off some of the hair and skin of the dog, well, you might say, “That’s the meanest thing I’ve ever seen a preacher do in my life.” And you might say, “Well, I don’t like Dr. Johnson. Somebody ought to do something about him.”

Well, I would be bad to torture a beast. But if I were to take a little child and were to do the same kind of thing, you would say I was a great deal more guilty, wouldn’t you? Suppose I should take your little grandchild and strike a match and burn off some of the hair of that cute little girl and burn her skin. Why, you’d say, “That’s terrible! That’s a crime! Call the police!”

But if I were to do that to President Nixon, I wouldn’t get very far, would I? You see, the object of my crime, the value of the object of my crime has a bearing on the degree of my crime. And sin against an infinite God is an infinite evil.

Someone has said, “If there is no Hell, we’d be compelled to invent one if we were to think about sin against God.”

Robert Browning said, “There may be a Heaven; there must be a Hell.” He recognized the rational necessity of a Hell.

Now, let’s come to the scriptural reasons, finally. And, first of all, I want to say a few words about... [Well, I guess I’d better put the right outline on the board, hadn’t I?]

I want to say a word, first of all, about the significance of the noun *aion*, A-I-O-N, which means, age, and the adjective *aionios*, which means age-long or eternal. These two words age, or age-long or eternal are words that are used in connection with eternity and, thus, used in connection with eternal life, as well as eternal punishment.

Now, let’s turn to a few passages, and I want you to notice that this word “eternal” is contrasted, first of all, with that which is temporal, in 2 Corinthians 4:18, 2 Corinthians chapter 4, verse 18. Paul writes:

“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; [That is, they pertain to time.] but the things which are not seen are eternal.”

Now, the thing that I want you to notice here is this word “eternal” which is the word that is used to describe punishment is contrasted with that which is temporal. So the fact that it is contrasted with that which is temporal and that it is used of punishment indicates that it does refer to eternal punishment. Now, let’s look at a passage in which this becomes clear -- clearer. Matthew chapter 25 in verse 46. I hope you are reading your Bibles. I’m all the way through to the Gospel of Matthew now on my second time through in 1972. The reason I notice that is because I’ve got this part tied up where I am. Matthew chapter 13. Now, let me see if I can read this without taking my pages apart. Verse 46,

“And these shall go away into everlasting punishment, but the righteous into life eternal.”

I want you to notice that that adjective, eternal, *aiionios*, is used for eternal life. But the adjective is also used for eternal punishment. And so, here, eternal punishment is compared with endless life. So, if the life that we receive when we believe in the Lord, Jesus Christ, is endless life, the text suggests strongly that the punishment that we undergo is endless punishment.

Let’s turn over to John chapter 10 in verse 28. John chapter 10, verse 28. John 10:28 says:

“And I give eternal life to them,”

Now, here is life for the age. Eternal. That’s how the Greeks said eternal, for the age. *Kai aiionios* For the age. That’s that way they expressed eternal life. And he says, “I give eternal life to them.”

And, if you were to say, “Oh, but Dr. Johnson, perhaps since it says life for the age, that doesn’t mean eternal, only for an age; then after the age is over something is going to happen.”

Well, did you notice the next clause? “I give unto them life for the age; and they shall never perish.” Now, “never” is a word of endlessness. Everybody understands that, don’t you? Even you understand that, don’t you? “I give unto them eternal life; and they shall never perish.”

Now, eternal by that text, means endless. So, when we read in Matthew chapter 25 in verse 46, about endless punishment we mean, eternal punishment. We must, in the light of Matthew 25:46, either admit the endless misery of hell or give up the endless happiness of heaven. There is no alternative. Either there is no eternal life or there is no eternal punishment. Why then there no eternal punishment?

Now, occasionally you’ll run across people who will say, “Well, that word ‘age’ is a word that means age, Dr. Johnson. *Aion*.”

Now, *aion* means age. And so, age means a limited amount of time. Frequently, you have Jehovah’s Witnesses will say something like this. Or, even Seventh Day Adventists, people who deny eternal punishment. And they will base it on this word which means age.

Now, you can tell some of them are so hard-headed that you can tell them until you are blue in the face that the way to express “eternal” and “eternity” in Greek is to use the adjective *aiionios*. It means eternal. You can look through all the Greek literature and find illustration after illustration of it. Or, if you want to say forever, *ais kia aiona*; literally, “unto the age” but that’s the way they said eternity. And you can say until you are blue in the face but they say, “But the lexicon says it means age.” “But the lexicon says it means age.”

Now, I like to ask such people, for they usually don’t know much Greek. It’s obvious they couldn’t know much Greek, if they keep talking like that because that’s just total ignorance.

What is *aion* made up of? Well, I don’t expect you to know this? I’m telling you something. *Aion* is made up of *ai* plus *on*. That doesn’t enlighten you much either, does it? Until I tell you that this *ai* means “always” in Greek. And *on* is the present participle of the verb *aime*, which means “being.”

Always being means what? Come on, even you know what always being means? Eternal. If something is “always being,” it means eternal. So, *aion*, the word for age, comes from two Greek words that mean “always being.” So let’s have no more arguments over whether *aion*, age, means eternity or not. It does. No question about it.

So then, here we have words used in connection with punishment in Matthew chapter 25, verse 46, that mean eternal. And it says:

“And these shall go away into eternal punishment: but these [the righteous] into eternal life.”

Now, what does that teach? Well, it teaches eternal punishment.

Now, some statements indirectly demand it. The finality of the future state is unequivocally stated, but these are indirect statements. Take Luke chapter 16 in verse 26. Our Lord is telling a little story. There is a debate among New Testament scholars about whether this is really a parable or not. If it is a parable, it’s the only time that our Lord ever used the name of a person in one of the parables. So let’s not say it’s a parable. Let’s just say it’s something, a little transcript from real life, which our Lord knew something about. So, Luke chapter 16 in verse 26, we read,

“And besides all this, between us and you there is a great chasm fixed.”

“A great chasm fixed.” Now, fixed is a word of permanence. In other words, there is an eternal separation between the righteous and the unrighteous.

Turn over to John chapter 8, verse 21. John chapter 8, verse 21. Then He said again to them,

"I go away, and you will seek Me, and shall die in your sin; where I am going, you cannot come."

You cannot come! He does not say, you cannot now, but later on you will. But, “Where I am going, you cannot come.” Cannot come.

Now, I think one of the most terrible verses in the Bible is this third one. Matthew chapter 26 in verse 24. It’s so terrible that I put it in red ink up there, to let you know that there’s a little bit of the smell of fire about it. Matthew 26 verse 24 -- Now, this is a text that has to do with Judas. Now, I want you to think about it for just a moment and what this really means. Matthew chapter 26 in verse 24. Jesus is talking.

"The Son of Man is to go, just as it is written of Him; but woe to that man through whom the Son of Man is betrayed! It would have been good for that man if he had not been born."

“It would have been good for that man if he had not been born.” Now, I want to ask you a little question. If Judas is to ultimately enter into heaven into the presence of God and enjoy -- no matter if it’s one million years from now -- if he is to enter into the presence of God and enjoy the bliss of Heaven, could Jesus have said, “It would have been good for that man if he had not been born.”?

No, he could not say that because if a man is going to reach heaven, and enjoy the presence of the Lord for all eternity, then all of the years that are spent in reaching heaven become, in the light of eternity, nothing more than a zero.

"Who counts the billows if the shore is won?" someone has said. Who cares about the struggles to get ashore if you finally arrive?

So Jesus could never have said of Judas, "It would have been good for that man if he had not been born" if Judas is going to be in heaven. He's not going to be in heaven. He's going to be in hell, and he's awaiting the Lake of Fire at the present time; just as surely as you are sitting in this audience today. Just as sure as Bob Nixon is right here on the second pew, Judas is being held for the Lake of Fire.

And, Jesus' words are true. It is good if Judas had never been born.

Now, third, the statements directly demanding this. Let's just read a few. First, Paul. All of you who like Paul, I'll read you one from Paul. 2 Thessalonians chapter 1 in verse 9. Paul says:

"And these will pay the penalty of eternal destruction, away from the presence of the Lord and from the glory of His power,"

"Eternal destruction, away from the presence of the Lord." Now, that does not mean annihilation as these other texts show; but, rather, it means eternal separation from God.

Revelation chapter 14, verse 11, a book that is the revelation of Jesus, but given to John. Here is the Apostle of Love. He'll say some sweet things, I know. Verse 11:

"And the smoke of their torment goes up forever and ever; they have no rest day and night, those who worship the beast and his image, and whoever receives the mark of his name."

Everlasting punishment.

Now, let’s turn back to Matthew chapter 10, verse 28, because some of you are saying, “Well, those were the apostles and they could be mistaken.” No, I don’t think any of you are. I don’t think we have any goats in this auditorium. We have sheep. But, nevertheless, we always like to hear all the testimony that we have in the New Testament, so let’s turn to Matthew chapter 10, verse 28, and see what our Lord says, the meek and gentle Jesus. Matthew chapter 10, verse 28:

"Do not fear those who kill the body but are unable to kill the soul; but rather fear Him who is able to destroy both soul and body in hell." In Gehenna...

Well, that says there is a hell, but what about eternal punishment? Matthew chapter 18 in verse 8. Our Lord says:

"If your hand or your foot causes you to stumble, cut it off and throw it from you; it is better for you to enter life crippled or lame, than to have two hands or two feet and be cast into the eternal fire."

The “eternal fire.”

Now, we’ve already read Matthew chapter 25, verse 46, so let’s read Mark chapter 9, verse 43 and verse 48. Mark 9:43 and 48. I did not put those texts up there, but you can put them in your notes if you like. Mark 9, verse 43:

"If your hand causes you to stumble, cut it off; it is better for you to enter life crippled, than, having your two hands, to go into hell, into the unquenchable fire,"

Verse 48:

“Where THE WORM DOES NOT DIE, AND THE FIRE IS NOT
QUENCHED.”

Did you know that every time the word for hell, Gehenna --, every time the word for Gehenna is found in the New Testament, except one case, James 3:6, it is found on the lips of our Lord. He’s the one who’s responsible for the doctrine of hell. He has given us more information about eternal punishment than anyone else.

And Peable put it this way, “The Fount of Love His servants sends to tell Love's deeds; Himself reveals the sinner's hell.” So, we can sum it up. Punishment is certain; and it is eternal. “Behold the goodness and the severity of God.”

The uneasiness of the lost when they are dying confirms this. John Donne once said, “Death is a bloody conflict” -- Now, he was a saved man -- “And no victory at last, a tempestuous sea, and no harbor at last, a slippery height. And no footing; a desperate fall and no bottom.” “Death,” Aristotle confessed, “is a dreadful thing, for it is the end.” Thomas Hobbes complained, “I’m about to take my last voyage; a great leap in the dark.” And, Rousseau, the responsible soul for the French Revolution, a blot on human character, bluntly affirmed, “He who pretends to face death without fear is a liar.” “No rational man,” Dr. Samuel Johnson insisted, “can die without uneasy apprehension.”

Last spring, we were talking about the justice of God, I reminded you of a little incident that happened in the life of Boswell and Dr. Johnson; and he was very much disturbed at a point in his life, and it was evident that he was disturbed over eternal things and Boswell said to him, “Remember the mercy of your Savior.”

And he said, “I remember that my savior said that he was going to place some on his right hand and some on his left hand.” That is what he is going to do. And those who enter into punishment enter into eternal punishment. That is one of the things that

has been set and appointed for us as a result of Adam’s sin. The only escape is the blood of Jesus Christ.

Let’s bow in prayer.

[Prayer] Father, we are grateful to Thee for the warnings and the admonitions of holy Scripture. The punishments of God are deep and severe. O God, speak deeply to us through them.

For Jesus’ sake. Amen.