



BELIEVERS CHAPEL

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The Sermons of S. Lewis Johnson

Basic Bible Doctrine, Revelation 14:11, Revelation 20:11-15

"Effects of the Fall, Part IV: God's Wrath"

TRANSCRIPT

[Prayer] Our Father, we thank Thee for the privilege of the study of Thy word again and we ask Thy blessing upon us as we turn to the Scriptures. We pray that Thou would give us guidance and direction and enable us, Lord, to profit from our time together.

We thank Thee for the revelation of truth in Thy word concerning the wrath of God. And we do pray that as we study that we may be impressed with the solemnity of it, as well as with the means of escape, through our Lord Jesus Christ. And this we ask in his name and for his' sake. Amen.

[Message] Now tonight looks like the night at which we have everything going wrong [extended pause] conditioning, not here, but I forgot my notes [Laughter]. So we are [extended pause] that's fine. The subject for tonight is, "The Effects of the Fall" or "The Wrath of God". And we're turning first to Revelation chapter 14 and verse 11 and then Revelation chapter 20, verses 11 through 15 for our Scripture reading. Revelation chapter 14 and verse 11, and the apostle giving the words that were given to him in the revelation of Jesus Christ says, "And the smoke of their torment ascendeth up for ever and

ever: and they have no rest day nor night, who worship the beast and his image, and whosoever receiveth the mark of his name".

The important thing to note here is the opening of that verse, "And the smoke of their torment ascendeth up for ever and ever". And then chapter 20, verse 11 through verse 15 we read,

"And I saw a great white throne, and him that sat on it, from whose face the earth and the heaven fled away; and there was found no place for them. And I saw the dead, small and great, stand before God; and the books were opened: and another book was opened, which is the book of life: and the dead were judged out of those things which were written in the books, according to their works. And the sea gave up the dead that were in it; and death and Hades delivered up the dead that were in them: and they were judged every man according to their works. And death and Hades were cast into the lake of fire. This is the second death. And whosoever was not found written in the book of life was cast into the lake of fire".

Now we have in our recent studies, in considering the effects of the fall in the Garden of Eden, have been trying to point out that there are four of these effects of the fall. There is, as a result of the fall in the Garden of Eden, the inability of man. This is what we looked at last time and we saw that as a result of the fall, man is afflicted with inability. He does not have a free will. He cannot begin a work toward God, but he is dependent entirely upon the work of the Holy Spirit in quickening him. It is the work of the Holy Spirit to make the unwilling, willing. And for that reason, because of man's inability, it is absolutely essential that the Holy Spirit do a work in man.

We also noticed that as a result of the fall in the Garden of Eden, man has been afflicted with a sin nature or a corrupt nature. Now we have called this original sin. Original sin is a term that is used of different things, but we have used it of the corrupt

nature, which we inherit as a result of Adam's fall in the Garden of Eden. All men are afflicted by original sin. All men are born with a corrupt nature. Paul says in Ephesians chapter 2 and verse 3 that we are by nature children of wrath. Just as in Romans chapter 8 and verse 7 and verse 8, speaking of the inability of man he says, "So then they that are in the flesh cannot please God". Just in this way we are born with this corrupt nature and, consequently, we cannot expect to do anything, but ultimately sin.

We also spoke about the imputation of the guilt of Adam's sin and pointed out that everyone born is born under sin as well. That is, the guilt and penalty of Adam's sin is imputed directly to the whole of the race. This we have called immediate imputation in explaining Paul's statement in Romans 5:12, "Wherefore, as by one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin; so death passed upon all men, for all sinned". We understand that to mean that, not simply that they sinned in Adam, as Augustine and some others have said that men sinned, but we rather think that it is much truer to the text of Romans chapter 5 to insist that Adam sinned as our representative.

And because Adam sinned and came under guilt and condemnation, we too, for whom he stood, are considered by Scripture to have had imputed to us the sin, guilt, and condemnation of our representative. So we have had sin imputed to us directly, immediately. That is, from Adam to the whole of the race. We have inherited a corrupt nature from Adam and we are all born with this corrupt nature. We sin from the time that we begin to breathe. We also, therefore, are unable to respond to the Lord God apart from the ministry of the Holy Spirit. Now these are three great effects of the fall in the Garden of Eden: imputation of the guilt of sin, original sin, or the inheritance of a corrupt nature, and human inability, or, put in another way, the fact that we no longer have a free will.

Now the fourth of these effects is referred to by the title tonight, "The Wrath of God." Now that raises the question, the wrath of God of eternal punishment. Now the Bible has a great deal to say about eternal punishment. Those of you who happened to

be here Sunday will remember that I made the statement that there is probably not any doctrine in all of the Bible easier to prove than the doctrine of endless punishment or everlasting punishment. But it is, nevertheless, a doctrine that is not believed very universally today among professing Christians.

It is characteristic of almost all of our theological seminaries today except for those in a strongly evangelical tradition to believe in the doctrine of universalism. Universalism is the doctrine that all men shall ultimately be saved. If you were to go to the seminaries of most of our larger religious bodies, you would find that, and the smaller religious bodies as well, you would find that in their theological seminaries, they teach the doctrine of universalism. Not everyone, but it is widely taught today. That is, that everybody is going to be saved, that there is no such thing as the eternal punishment of the finally impenitent individuals. So the question of the wrath of God raises the question of eternal punishment and that is one of the topics that we will be looking at tonight, if I remember all of my notes.

Now, first of all, we want to talk about the punishment for sin and I have divided the punishment for sin into the natural penalties and the positive penalties. The natural penalties of the commission of acts of sin are probably known to us. The fact that an individual commits crime, or let me go back and speak simply of those that are natural, when an individual violates the laws of nature physically, he generally must suffer in his physical being. For example, if a man is a profligate, if he becomes a drunkard, his body suffers. If he engages in sexual activity that is contrary to the will of God, as a general rule, he is subject to the laws of that kind of sexual activity. He will contract certain types of diseases that have to do with that disapproved activity by the word of God. There are natural penalties that are not reversed when a person becomes a believer. If a man has spent his life in drinking alcohol and it has made a tremendous impression upon his body, we all have had experiences with this probably in all of our families. Well, the moment that a person becomes a Christian, his body is not restored to the health that he

would have had, had he not punished it by his activities with alcohol. There are natural penalties that flow out of acts of sin.

Occasionally, in acts of grace on God's part, there are remarkable deliverances that individuals experience, but so far as really being delivered from those natural penalties of his actions, the Bible does not promise that. In Galatians chapter 6 and about verse 7, the apostle says something that pertains to this, "Be not deceived; God is not mocked: for whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap." And so, if he sows to these things that are contrary to the perceptive will of God, he may expect to reap them. If he wastes his money and his possessions, he will expect to be poor and to suffer the consequences thereby. As I mentioned, if he engages in alcohol excessively, he will suffer the penalties in his body. And so, this is a principle found in the word of God, the natural penalties for the punishment of sin.

But, the Bible goes on to say that there are positive penalties beyond that. It has been the contention of many liberal men that the punishment for sin is simply more sin, but the Scriptures do not support that. The Bible supports the idea that not only is a man punished naturally for the ways in which he rebels against the laws of God, but on top of that, there is a just judgment that comes from God in retribution. And so, there are distinct penalties for sin in addition to the natural consequences of sin. It is true that when a man engages in acts of sin, God often, as part of his judgment, determines that that person receive the consequences of his actions. But that is not the just punishment of sin.

We were looking Sunday morning at Romans chapter 1, in which the apostle points out that because of the revelation of the wrath of God in the present day, we may learn that man has turned away from God, and God has executed judgment upon man by giving him up to further impurities, giving him up to a reprobate mind, giving him up to uncleanness. These are judgments, but these are not the only judgments. There are

positive penalties beyond that and the penalty of eternal judgment is set forth in the word of God as one of the positive penalties as a result of the sin of man.

I'd like for you to turn back with me to Genesis chapter 3, and let me just remind you at this point, I think I had this in my notes at this point, remind you of what we read here in Genesis chapter 3, following the coming down of the Lord God into the Garden of Eden. Genesis chapter 3 and verse 14, we read,

"And the LORD God said unto the serpent, Because thou hast done this, thou art cursed above all cattle, and above every beast of the field; upon thy belly shalt thou go, and dust shalt thou eat all the days of thy life: (And now that is the judgment upon Satan or the serpent. And then speaking of Satan and the woman, he says,) and I will put enmity between thee and the woman, between thy seed and her seed; he shall bruise thy head, and thou shalt bruise his heel. (Now I said woman, the woman's judgment follows specifically here in verse 16,) Unto the woman he said, I will greatly multiply thy sorrow and thy conception; in sorrow shalt thou bring forth children; and thy desire shall be to thy husband, and he shall rule over thee. (Now to Adam, the man, he gives the final judgment in the verses 17, 18, and 19.) And unto Adam he said, 'Because thou hast hearkened unto the voice of thy wife, and hast eaten of the tree, of which I commanded thee, saying, 'Thou shalt not eat of it: cursed is the ground for thy sake; in sorrow shalt thou eat of it all the days of thy life; Thorns also and thistles shall it bring forth to thee; and thou shalt eat the herb of the field; In the sweat of thy face shalt thou eat bread, till thou return unto the ground; for out of it wast thou taken: for dust thou art, and unto dust shalt thou return".

Now notice the last statement, "unto dust thou shalt return". Now if you'll turn back to chapter 2 and verse 17, the Lord God had said to Adam, "But of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, thou shalt not eat of it: for in the day that thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die". Now the judgment for sin set forth here as a positive penalty. That is, beyond the natural consequences of sin, the positive penalty is that Adam and, as

history later bears out, Adam and all of his descendants die. "The day thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die". In the words of chapter 3 it is, "For dust thou art and unto dust shalt thou return." Now it is very plain from this that the one penalty that God gave as a result of Adam's sin in the Garden of Eden, specifically here, is the penalty of death.

Now it's often been said that in dealing with Adam and Eve that God spoke of three penalties. That is, he spoke of spiritual death, he spoke of physical death, and he spoke of eternal death. And I don't want to argue this point too much because I don't think it's all that important, but I do think that it is truer to the text of Scripture to say that there is one penalty with a threefold aspect. That one penalty is the penalty of death. It does include spiritual death, for God said in chapter 2, verse 17, "In the day thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die".

Now, of course, Adam and Eve did not die physically and they did not die eternally at the moment that they partook of the fruit of that tree, but they did die. And so, consequently, in the light of the teachings of the Scripture we affirm that they died spiritually. That is, there was a breaking of the relationship between Adam and the Lord God. The relationship that existed in the Garden of Eden before the fall is severed and Adam and Eve and God are out of fellowship with one another.

Now it is also true that they died, as a result of that penalty, physically. For Adam and Eve did die, "Unto dust thou shalt return". So that physical death is the natural consequence of that spiritual death. The Bible also points out that if there is no turning from sin, and the penalty of sin, and no deliverance, then the spiritual death which issues in physical death, will then become eternal spiritual death. As we read in Revelation chapter 20 in verses 11 through 15, "That is the second death, the lake of fire". But death is the penalty. Spiritual death, prolonged becomes physical death, prolonged beyond this existence, becomes eternal death.

The remedy for spiritual death is spiritual life, belief in the Lord Jesus Christ. The remedy for physical death has not been experienced by any of us in this room. The

remedy for physical death is the resurrection. That is what we await when the Lord Jesus comes again. There is, of course, no remedy for eternal death, for there is no opportunity to turn to the Lord God after one has passed out of this human existence. So the positive penalties for sin are set forth in Scripture as ultimately eternal judgment.

Now that brings us to the purpose of the punishment for sin. There have been different explanations that have been given of the purpose of God's punishment of sin. It has been said that one of the reasons for the giving of punishment is that the sinner may be reformed. And, of course, when the sinner has become reformed, then there would be no further need for the punishment. That's a rather interesting doctrine. It, of course, is not taught in the word of God. Punishment should be reforming and the fear of punishment should be reforming. It's very true, I think, to say that the fear of punishment and the fear of judgment, is a fear that produces a change in a person's life, generally speaking. That is, it is an aid to reform.

But if it were really true that punishment is designed simply to reform the sinner, some interesting consequences that flow out of that doctrine. Suppose a person has already been reformed? Then there is no such thing as punishment for him. Or let's take an individual like Satan of whom the Scriptures certainly seem to say that there is no hope for him and yet he is bearing punishment. He is bearing punishment as the result of his sin, but if punishment is designed to reform the sinner, then we would have to have a doctrine of the reformation of Satan. But the Bible speaks just the opposite. The Bible sets forth Satan as incorrigibly evil and ultimately to be consigned to eternal judgment. So for that reason, it is a theory, while very interesting, and while there are some things that might be said for it, particularly for softheaded people, it is not a biblical doctrine at all, that punishment is designed to reform the sinner.

It has also been said that punishment is designed to deter men from sin. I really kind of confused these a moment ago, but that's because I didn't have my notes and was not as perspicuous as I usually am when I have my notes. So if punishment, again, is

designed to deter men from sin, then those who have been brought into the place where they are not in a place of sin before God, punishment does not seem to have any force for them.

The Bible teaches, I think very plainly, that punishment is designed to vindicate the divine justice. That is, men are punished, not simply in order to reform the sinner or have certain affects upon sinners, not simply to cause them to fear and turn to the Lord God for salvation; those are some of the affects of biblical punishment. Deter men from sin to some extent, yes, but the ultimate purpose of punishment is to vindicate the justice or the divine justice of heaven. And in this way, it is demonstrated that God is just and that his universe is an orderly universe. The Bible, it would seem, seems to support that from beginning to end. God is presented as a holy God. He is presented also as a God who cannot look upon evil. He does not except sin. He does not except sinners.

Let me ask you to turn with me to the Book of the Psalms, the 5th chapter. In the 5th chapter and the 5th verse, the Psalmist writes, "The foolish shall not stand in Thy sight: Thou hatest all workers of iniquity". Now notice that statement, "Thou hatest all workers of iniquity". When God punishes men, it is ultimately in vindication of his righteous judgment. Now this demonstrates that his law is a law to which he holds for which he demands satisfaction. Throughout the history of the human race, he is demonstrated to be righteous. He is demonstrated to be holy and that, of course, if for the ultimate good of men.

The greatest manifestation of the justice of God and the greatest manifestation of the law of God is, of course, found in the cross of Jesus Christ. It was there that God, in the upholding of his righteousness and his just laws, punished our Lord Jesus Christ for the sins of sinners. We pointed that out just recently in our studies. That is the greatest manifestation of the justice of God. It was necessary that that take place before any individual could possibly be saved. So he vindicated his righteousness, he vindicated his justice.

At the same time, he also exercised his love and his mercy, for it is he who provided the vindication of his justice and his judgment. The cross tells us that sin is going to be punished. And not only that, that sin is to be punished eternally. When the Lord Jesus cried out, "My God, my God, why hast Thou forsaken me?" he spoke about separation from God. Paul talks about everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord God. The punishment for sin is everlasting separation from God.

Now Jesus did not bear everlasting punishment from the Lord God, but for a brief time because in his case, his punishment was of an infinite quality because he was an infinite being. And so, he was able to suffer an equivalent of infinite or eternal separation from the Lord God for all for whom he died. That was because of the quality of the person that is an infinite satisfaction for sin, sufficient for the sins of all human beings. That is the final evidence of the fact that God does uphold his laws. All of his laws shall be exercised and carried out righteously. He will not bend his justice at all. Now at the same time, the cross is the manifestation of the love and mercy of God because, as I said a moment ago, it is he who supplies that which vindicates his righteousness and judgment, the Lord Jesus Christ.

Now that brings us to the proof of eternal punishment, and I'd like to, because I'm not certain of the division that I had in one or two of my points, it's a little askew there, isn't it? Let me point to a few reasons of a natural character why we may believe there is such a thing as eternal punishment. There are some natural reasons why one looking at the universe might conclude that there is such a thing as eternal punishment. There are people who like to say, "If you look at the creation around you, you see a good, and loving, and merciful God. You see a god who is a God of beauty and surely no one would dispute that". The beauty of God's natural creation is outstanding, particularly if man has not had an opportunity to disturb it. And so, it is true that we see certain things in nature that indicate that God is a god of beauty, a god of order. But I think if you will

think for a moment about nature, you will probably conclude that there are, if anything, more evidences in the natural creation that God is a god of justice and judgment.

Just take, for example, some of the things that we have seen in the United States recently. Take the volcanoes of Mount St. Helen's. Now that is part of God's natural creation, volcanoes. Incidentally, for a long time, there were some men who believed that volcanoes were the only evidence in God's creation that there was such a thing as eternal punishment. And certain liberals even set forth in volumes on the subject that this was the only answer that orthodox people had, the only support that they had for eternal punishment.

But, if you will think of lightning and thunder, the hurricanes and the tornadoes and the various other types of natural disasters, I think that you will agree that so far as the creation itself is concerned, there are flashes and crashes that indicate that our God is a god of judgment as well as a god of mercy. When the Apostle Paul said, "Behold the goodness and the severity of God", one could use those terms in referring to the natural creation because while they're evidences of the goodness of God in the things that he provides for his creation, the rain, the sun, and various other types of physical blessings, there are also many evidences of the severity of God. So he is both good and he is both a god of fire, a god of consuming fire and one may, therefore, see the goodness and the severity of God. So there are natural reasons why one may reason that there must be such a thing as eternal punishment.

In fact, some have said in connection with this, that when one looks at the creation, he sees manifold reasons for believing in eternal punishment. There are some rational reasons as well and these are rather hazy in my mind because I should have brought my notes, but being old and decrepit and forgetful, I forgot. In connection with the rational reasons for the eternal punishment of men, some of the things that have been suggested are things like these. In our human life, we all sense that even though we have laws that are designed to right the wrongs in human government, nevertheless, there is,

even after the execution of human law, the conviction that righteousness and justice has not been done. There is the sense of there must be something beyond this life in which the wrongs done to men may be righted. Someone has said, "There may be a heaven. There must be a hell". And when we think of the great wrongs that have been committed by human beings, there is something that does rise up within the nature of a man that suggests that there must be some form of righting of wrongs beyond this present life. And, consequently, this rationally is a reason why we should expect eternal judgment.

I'd like to spend the remainder of our time on some of the scriptural reasons for eternal judgment. And I'd like to refer, first of all, to some of the objections that have been given, but first, let's turn to a passage in Matthew chapter 25 and verse 46; Matthew chapter 25 and verse 46. Now in this passage, the Lord Jesus is speaking in the Olivet Discourse and in verse 46 we read, "And these shall go away unto everlasting punishment: but the righteous into life eternal".

Now I want you to notice the words "everlasting punishment" and "life eternal". We don't have any doubt about the length of the eternal life. It is eternal life. But, the same adjective that is translated eternal is used and translated everlasting in the Authorized Version so that, as long as life is, punishment is. Now this is a text that points out very clearly that if there is such a thing as eternal life, and we are assuming that we grant that there is such a thing as eternal life, then there is such a thing as eternal punishment.

Now the Lord Jesus has made a statement in Matthew chapter 26 and verse 24 that I'd like to have you turn to also; Matthew chapter 26 and verse 24. Here he is speaking in the last passover account of Judas and he says in verse 24, "The Son of man goeth as it is written of him: but woe unto that man by whom the Son of man is betrayed! It had been good for that man if he had not been born". Now let's think for a moment about the doctrine of universalism. The doctrine of universalism says that when a person leaves this

life never having believed in the Lord Jesus Christ, he still is ultimately to be saved. The details may be hazy, but he is still ultimately to be saved.

I'd like to suggest to you that if a person is ultimately going to enter into the presence of the Lord and if he's going to live in the presence of the Lord for eternity then a period of time is of no consequence, no matter how long that period of time is, in the light of eternity. But Jesus has said, "The Son of man goeth as it is written of him: but woe to that man by whom the Son of man is betrayed! It had been good for that man if he had not been born." Now that could never have been said if there is no such thing as eternal punishment. You see, the Lord Jesus Christ said, "It would have been good for that man if he had not been born".

Now if it were true that Judas was ultimately to be saved, no matter how long we may say that Judas is punished for his sin, if he's ultimately to be saved, and if he's to live eternally thereafter, then that ultimate is at ultimate time in which he is out of the state of salvation is a finite period of time whereas from the time of his everlasting life that is an infinite period of time. And if it is infinite that a person is to live in the presence of the Lord Jesus and everybody is, then all finite time becomes just a point, becomes insignificant. Therefore, Jesus could never say to anyone, "It has been good for that man if he had not been born".

You see, if you believe in universalism, then you believe that Judas shall be saved and, therefore, you could not say of his, "It would have been good for him if he had not been born". It would have been good for him if he had been born even though he betrayed the Lord Jesus Christ because he's going to have eternal life and live forever in the presence of the Lord. It's clear that the Lord Jesus did not believe in the doctrine of some of the cults that one is to have salvation forever, and also the doctrine of the professors in our theological schools now, who teach that universalism, is biblical doctrine.

Occasionally, however, you will have individuals come and they will say, "But, Dr. Johnson, do you realize that the adjective that is used in Matthew chapter 25, verse 46 and translated 'everlasting' is derived from a word that means 'age'?" Now this is not doing too well here. This is the Greek word which means "age". We will transliterate it for you, *aion*. It is occasionally said, and particularly by people like Jehovah's Witnesses, that this expression "everlasting" since it comes from the adjective built on this which would be, I'm writing Greek, *aionios*, it is built on the word "age", this word means "age: and so, therefore, when we read here, "and these shall go away into everlasting punishment" it means simply age long punishment. "And the righteous into life", that is age long since "Aion" means age. And they hope by this particular type of treatment of the text to prove that when we get into the life that is beyond this life, our status is such that while we may live for an age in a certain state, ultimately you are going to either have another decision to make, which will determine your eternal destiny or your extinction or something like that. In other words, the biblical doctrine of everlasting punishment is not true because the word everlasting means only age long.

Well now, the first thing I would say to this is, "It's obvious that you have not bothered to study the Greek language very deeply". For the word "age long" is a word that, while its root is "age long" and this noun while its root is "age", is the only way the Greeks have for speaking of that which is everlasting or eternal. I used to see that when I was taking classical Greek before I was saved. We always translated it "forever" because that is what the Greeks understood by that term. But they have also forgotten that this particular word is derived from two other Greek words. This *aion* is derived from "ah" like this, plus "ah-a". Or rather, I should have said this from "aha". Now "ah-a" is the Greek adverb that means "always". And so, this word is derived from another word that means "always". So that the objection raised against this particular statement, "Everlasting punishment, that's only age long", is not true. This is the way that the Greeks expressed

the fact that life or death or whatever it may be is eternal. Our time is up. We're going to have to stop. Let's close with a word of prayer.

[Prayer] Father, we are grateful to Thee for the privilege and opportunity of considering the question of eternal punishment. We realize how important it is. We remember the Scriptures say, "It is appointed unto men once to die and after this the judgment". And we do pray, Lord, that Thou wilt enable us to be faithful to that which the Scriptures teach. We realize that it's not very pleasant, not very agreeable, but our responsibility is to be faithful to the word of God. And the Bible we believe does teach eternal life and eternal...

[RECORDING ENDS ABRUPTLY]