



BELIEVERS CHAPEL

6420 Churchill Way | Dallas, Texas | 75230 | t 972.239.5371 | believerschapeldallas.org

The Sermons of S. Lewis Johnson

Matt. 25:41-46

“John Stott, Philip E. Hughes and Flirtation with Annihilationism”

TRANSCRIPT

[Prayer] Father, we thank Thee for the privilege of the study of the Scriptures. We thank Thee for the way in which they unfold for us the eternal plan that Thou hast devised in Thy wisdom and sovereignty for us. We're grateful, Lord, for all that that plan represents, especially for the fact that our Lord Jesus Christ is the one who has accomplished the redemption and now is seated at the right hand of the throne of the Father in heaven, working still in his unfinished work to secure all of the blessings which he has purchased for his saints. We pray that our time of study tonight will be pleasing to Thee. Give wisdom and guidance to each of us. Enable us to understand Thy truth. We pray in Jesus' name. Amen.

[Message] I'll read a brief passage from Matthew chapter 25, verse 41 through verse 45. Our Lord in the Olivet discourse says,

"Then shall he say also unto them on the left hand, Depart from me, ye cursed, into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels: For I was an hungred, and ye gave me no meat: I was thirsty, and ye gave me no drink: I was a stranger, and ye took me not in: naked, and ye clothed me not: sick, and in prison, and ye visited me not. Then shall they also answer him, saying, Lord, when saw we thee an hungred, or athirst, or a stranger, or naked, or sick, or in prison, and did not minister unto thee? Then shall he answer them, saying, Verily I say unto you, Inasmuch as ye did it not to one of the least of these, ye did it not to me. And these shall go away into everlasting punishment: but the righteous into life eternal."

Tonight our subject is "John Stott, Philip Edgecombe Hughes and Flirtation with Annihilationism." Endless punishment, of course, is a perennially troublesome question usually put popularly in this way, "Will a loving God send everyone or anyone to an eternal hell?" It used to be the leading question of a Universalist or the adherence of Annihilationism, and the believers in conditional immortality. Now mainline church adherence asks the question. It's an unpopular question, but is it a true question for us to discuss?

I want to concentrate our attention on Mr. Stott and Dr. Hughes because these two individuals in recent months have gone into print in support of forms of Annihilationism. I'm not really quite sure what view Mr. Stott has, and not really too sure of the view of Philip Hughes because both of them apparently do not make a distinction between conditional immortality and Annihilationism itself, and so I'm going to have to define the issue a little more carefully in a moment. In fact, surprisingly, and this is surprising for me, John Stott when he attempts to define Annihilationism and then

to explain what conditional immortality is, actually reverses his definitions so that he has the wrong definition for each one of them. And I don't know, Mr. Stott's a very learned man, I don't know whether this was done by someone who had the manuscript and reversed things for him and he didn't see it afterwards, or whether it was an oversight, but nevertheless he does not give much attention to conditional immortality.

Let me say a few words about the two men. John R.W. Stott, in case some of you may not be acquainted with him, is the Rector Emeritus of All Souls, Langham Place Anglican Church in the city of London. Probably the most important church in the city, at least it's by far the most important for those who may have conservative theological leanings. He now preaches from time to time in the church but is no longer the regular preacher. He is the President of the London Institute for Contemporary Christianity, the author of over twenty books and is constantly traveling the world in Bible conferences, special conferences, special meetings, a very important and highly respected Christian man.

Philip Edgecombe Hughes has been Professor at Westminster Theological Seminary in Philadelphia for a number of years as a visiting Professor. Being also an Anglican, Professor Hughes was unable to sign the Westminster Confession of Faith, but since he gave general credence to that document, he has been a visiting Professor for probably ten or fifteen years. He lives in the area. He has also worked in an Anglican church in the area, an Episcopalian church in our country. He is also the author of many books, a very scholarly man. His commentaries on books like Hebrews and 1 Corinthians are extremely valuable works and anyone who reads them will profit from them.

The views of Mr. Stott I'm going to concentrate on just because it would be confusing to have both of these men, but both of them have recently come out in print affirming a belief, or at least a tentative belief in Annihilationism. The views of Mr. Stott, in whom we will concentrate, are found in the book, *Evangelical Essentials, A Liberal Evangelical Dialogue*. Actually the author is David L. Edwards, the Provost of Southwark Cathedral in London, and Mr. Stott gives lengthy responses chapter by chapter to Mr. Edwards' work. They obviously have planned this volume together. It is published by the InterVarsity Press and has at least the backing of that institution behind it. It's a large book of three hundred fifty-four pages, and you can get it in paperback, and there are some interesting things in it.

Mr. Edwards is a liberal, and Mr. Stott is a conservative, and they discuss a number of things that are particularly of interest, and this is one of the things, and the interesting thing about the book is that John Stott is a man now in his late sixty's in age, but this is the first time that anyone has ever heard him say publically that he had a tentative view in or of Annihilationism. And so Mr. Edwards was able to get him to express himself on this point.

Dr. Hughes also has been a professor at Westminster for many years, has evidently held this view for some time, but this is the first time that he, one year before retirement, has said anything about it publically. So we have instances of men who have evidently held these views for a lengthy period of time but have now gone public with them.

Now I'd like to first of all define just exactly what Universalism and Annihilationism and Conditional Immortality are because I think that might help us to understand what we are talking about.

Now, when we talk about Annihilationism by itself, we simply mean that when a person dies he dies not simply physically or not simply as an unbelieving man, but the end of his existence comes at that point. That is, the death that he dies is an extinction of being, and the individual no longer exists. So, to be annihilated is to die physically and also to die spiritually, and the extinction of a person's being takes place at that time. Frequently individuals who abhor Annihilationism also point out that one is not justified in distinguishing the body from the spirit and that man is a unity of body and spirit. So an individual who believes in Annihilationism believes that you die and that's the end. There is nothing else.

Conditional Immorality is an attempt, and probably now more popular by thinking annihilatationist, to deal with the question of justice because obviously if you say everyone when they die no longer exists, then the question of justice would arise. That is, if some individuals have lived lives that are obviously more heinous, more sinful, more eligible for judgment than others, and if when you die everyone is annihilated and the being is extinct from that point on, then where is the justice in just such a thing as that? Some people ought to experience more punishment than others. So Conditional Immorality is an attempt to provide an answer for that.

Those who believe in Conditional Immorality believe that when a person dies, first I guess I should say that first of all that the soul is not immortal. Only God is immortal. But when a person dies there is a form of judgment that takes place. Those who have believed in Christ have conveyed to them eternal life. That is something God gives them, and if they believe in grace they would say, "God gives them on the ground of grace." But those who have not believed in Christ will be punished, some more, some less. But, ultimately, those who have not believed in Christ after the punishment

has run its course, the punishment determined by God, then they are annihilated, and their being is extinguished. So Conditional Immorality believers also believe in annihilation, but the point of annihilation is different and furthermore there is an attempt to handle the justice question.

Now in the case of Mr. Stott, I'd like to go through some of the things that Mr. Stott sets forth as his views. Now as I mentioned earlier it's doubtful that he makes clear at all, in fact I don't think he makes clear, I think he's confused, about the question of Conditional Immorality. He does refer to it, but that's about it, a reference to it and nothing else. What he is particularly concerned about is simply the fact of annihilation. So, let me then begin with that. There is confusion there. I'm sure that when the reviews of the book come out, those who understand the difference will be quick to pick this up and make points over it.

Mr. Stott begins by saying that he finds eternal punishment intolerable. Now, you have to remember that people who write books and people who are preachers don't always mean everything that they say literally, but that's Mr. Stott's view. He finds eternal punishment intolerable. He doesn't really see how anyone can believe in such a doctrine, but after he finished his whole discussion he says I'd like for you to know that this is a tentative conclusion that I have reached. Now that doesn't really make too much sense, but I think I understand Mr. Stott. He's trying to express the fact that he does find a difficulty with eternal punishment.

Four arguments are presented by Mr. Stott in order to show that Scripture points to Annihilationism that is that ultimately those who are lost will experience extinction of being. Their being will be extinct. If you're not a believer in Christ, according to this doctrine, when you die and then you are annihilated you will no longer exist in any way.

Being is extinguished. His four arguments are these. First of all, he says the vocabulary of destruction, the biblical term destruction, the vocabulary of destruction, words such as the word, I'll say a couple of Greek words, "apollumi" which means to destroy or perish, for example, in John 3:16 it's translated perish, "For God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten Son that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life." A noun related to it, "apoleia" means destruction, or perdition, found in the New Testament in that sense, and then a third word, "olethros" which also means something like destruction or perdition. Actually it's related to the same root that these other words are built on too. But his four arguments then first of all are on language. The vocabulary of destruction points to, Mr. Stott says, the depravation of both physical and spiritual life, that is, an extinction of being. So in other words, when you read in the New Testament words like perish or destroyed then you should think of extinction of being, not simply loss of spiritual life, but extinction of being.

Now Mr. Stott is a biblical man, and so he turns to passages in the word of God in order to lend support to his theory. For example, in Matthew chapter 10 and verse 28 we read these words, our Lord is speaking and he says, "And fear not them which kill the body, but are not able to kill the soul: but rather fear him which is able to destroy both soul and body in hell," "Him who is able to destroy both soul and body in hell." Now, of course, if you look at that you will see that doesn't necessarily mean that he destroys both soul and body in hell because this text says simply that he is able to do it, but nevertheless Mr. Stott makes quite a bit over that text.

He does not turn to the parallel passage in Luke chapter 12 and verse 5 where our Lord says, "But I will forewarn you whom ye shall fear: Fear him, which after he hath killed hath power to cast into geena; yea, I say unto you, Fear him." So in the parallel

passage a distinction is made. That is, "Fear him, which after he hath killed." Now if "to kill" is extinction of being then there is nothing to cast into hell. So "Fear him, which after he hath killed hath power to cast into hell; yea I say unto you: Fear him."

Another passage to which Mr. Stott refers is a passage in Jude and verse 11. In Jude verse 11, Jude writes these words, "Woe unto them! for they have gone in the way of Cain, and ran greedily after the error of Balaam for reward, and perished in the gainsaying of Core." Now if you turn back to the passage in the Old Testament in which this is described in Numbers chapter 16 and verse 33, this is what we read, "They, and all that appertained," perhaps I should read verse 32,

"And the earth opened her mouth, and swallowed them up, and their houses, and all the men that appertained unto Korah, and all their goods. They, and all that appertained to them, went down alive into the pit, and the earth closed upon them: and they perished from among the congregation."

The implication from the two texts is that they entered into the pit conscious rather than unconscious with extinction of being. There are other passages that one might refer to, but perhaps it's wise to at least make this point that the term "destroy" does not always mean destruction in the sense of extinction of being. For example, the term is found in Matthew chapter 26 and verse 8 in the account in which Mary takes the alabaster box of ointment pours it out upon the head of our Lord as he sat at meet and then we read in the 8th verse of Matthew 26, "But when his disciples saw it, they had indignation, saying, To what purpose is this destruction?" Now that's the same word that Mr. Stott is using in the sense of total destruction, and it's clear that it's not

destruction. It means "waste," and that's the way it's rendered here, "To what purpose is this waste?" So the vocabulary of destruction is not always the kind of vocabulary that would support Annihilationism.

The second argument that Mr. Stott uses is an argument from imagery, the imagery of hell, and specifically the image of fire and the image of--well I think that's the main one that he uses, the image of fire but there are perhaps some other images too. The one I have in my text here is simply fire. I did not put the other, but the imagery of hell especially that of fire is that of destruction. In other words, what we are to think about when we read in the New Testament of fire in connection with loss of spiritual relationship to the Lord we are to think of destruction.

In Matthew 3 and verse 12 when John the Baptist is speaking we read that he said, "Whose fan (speaking of the Lord) is in his hand, and he will thoroughly purge his floor, and gather his wheat into the garner; but he will burn up the chaff with unquenchable fire." So, unquenchable fire is the language of destruction. The figure, the imagery is the imagery of fire and the imagery of fire in this instance is destruction.

In Mark chapter 9 and verse 48, another of the important passages when we talk about questions like this, eternal punishment, our Lord says, "And if thine eye offend thee, pluck it out: it is better for thee to enter into the kingdom of God with one eye, than having two eyes to be cast into hell fire: Where their worm dieth not, and the fire is not quenched." That, to Mr. Stott, is again the language of destruction. It is not the language of conscious continual punishment, but rather the language of destruction. Mark 9:48 specifically, he states, means that the fire is not quenched until the work of destruction is done, but when the work of destruction is done then the fire stops. Of course that's not stated that's his interpretation of the point.

Matthew 25 and verse 46, one of the texts that I read in the Scripture reading is the one in which we read, "And these shall go away into everlasting punishment, but the righteous into life eternal." Mr. Stott strangely here, he could have made his points, I think, a whole lot better, but rather he simply says at this point that Matthew 25:46 contains no definition of either life or punishment, and so, we therefore may pass on from this text to something else because there's no definition of life or punishment.

But I ask you if you're reading the New Testament and you've read it very much at all and you read, "These shall go away into everlasting punishment, but the righteous into life eternal," would you not think that life eternal, or eternal life, would mean life continuing in the presence of God in conscious enjoyment of God? Would you not think that's what eternal life means? I think most at least of the simple Christians who have been taught the word of God would think that that was very plain. Eternal life, that's life in the presence of God. It continues. It's eternal, and it's life in the enjoyment of the presence of God. As a matter of fact John the Apostle says, "This is life eternal that they might know Thee the only true God and Jesus Christ whom Thou hast sent," so the knowledge of God, the continual knowledge of God and life in the presence of God with that knowledge, the whole of the New Testament stands behind that simple definition of what eternal life is.

Well now if that's the definition of eternal life, would you not think then that eternal or everlasting punishment is easily understood? It is continual life, not in the presence of God, enjoying God, but rather life that continues in the agony of separation from God and deprived of the presence of God. That would seem to me very plain deduction to make from this text. Mr. Stott says it contains no definition of either life or punishment, and for that reason he feels free to move on.

He refers also to the passage which probably some of you have thought about, the passage in Luke chapter 16 where our Lord tells the story of Lazarus and the rich man. Now, he's unsure about whether this is a parable or not, and that's perfectly normal because biblical interpreters are generally unsure of the significance of this incident. In the light of the fact that our Lord never tells a parable and gives a personal name to anyone in it, and in the light of several other things, it's more likely that this is not a parable, but is something a bit different. But my point doesn't depend on that, so he refers to verse 23 and 24 where the rich man we read,

"In hell he lift up his eyes, being in pain, and seeth Abraham afar off, and Lazarus in his bosom. And he cried and said, Father Abraham, have mercy on me, and send Lazarus, that he may dip the tip of his finger in water, and cool my tongue; for I am tormented in this flame."

And in verse 28 we read, "For I have five brethren; that he may testify unto them, lest they also come into this place of torment." Now this is a clear instance of life beyond the grave in which individuals are conscious, and they are in torment. Now if Mr. Stott had been careful in the beginning to say, "I believe in Conditional Immortality" and had defined it properly, I would have to say, "Well this is harmonious with your view," but since he doesn't tell us he believes in Conditional Immortality and actually doesn't define it properly, then I don't want to give him the benefit of something that he doesn't claim for himself. But for you people here in the audience, I want you to understand that if he had said, "I believe in Conditional Immortality," it would be possible for him to say with justification at this point what he does say. And that is that this is a

reference to life in the intermediate state because Conditional Immorality justifies a period of time, an intermediate state, in which individuals are punished for their sins to the degree in which they've sinned and that then is followed by annihilation. So he could have answered that properly. He did not do it. I think in a sense that confirms the fact that he wrote hurriedly without doing the kind of study that he usually does in his books.

In Revelation chapter 14 and verse 10 there is a reference to smoke and I'm sure you're probably familiar with the passage, and Mr. Stott makes reference to this. Chapter 14 and verse 10 we read,

"The same shall drink of the wine of the wrath of God, which is poured out without mixture into the cup of his indignation; and he shall be tormented with fire and brimstone in the presence of the holy angels, and in the presence of the Lamb: And the smoke of their torment ascendeth up forever 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."

Mr. Stott says with reference to this that this smoke is forever but the torment is not forever. In other words, the smoke is an eternal reminder of what happened, but the smoke is not of continual torment.

In Revelation chapter 20 and verse 10 we read, "And the devil that deceived them was cast into the lake of fire and brimstone, where the beast and the false prophet are, and shall be tormented day and night forever and ever." Now here, of course, the statement, "Shall be tormented day and night forever and ever," this is a reference to

the devil, the beast, and the false prophet. That would seem to win the case. There is the conscious eternal punishment of persons in Scripture. And so therefore eternal punishment would be justified at least in this instance. Well, Mr. Stott has a happy answer for that. I think his, if I may put it in a kindly way, his amillennialism and his tendency to spiritualization appears at this point because he says, "The beast, the false prophet and the devil are not individual people, but symbols of the world in its varied hostility to God. So you cannot use that text because they are symbols.

The third argument that Mr. Stott uses is the biblical vision of justice. He says, "There is a serious disproportion between sins committed in time and torment experienced throughout eternity." I can understand that. One may say, "Look individuals commit their sins in time. A man who lives a life as a sinner, let's say he lives seventy years, seventy years of sin, but on the basis of the fact that he died without Christ, he is therefore sentenced to eternity in torment. There is a serious disproportion there if we speak of this simply in a temporal fashion. There's no doubt about it, but now he admits that if the lost are forever impenitent then there maybe some justification for this, and do you know in Scripture of anyone who has died and repented afterwards?

Well there isn't any such illustration, and Satan is still around and he doesn't seem to have repented. Do you think? No, and if we therefore suppose that men who die have their persons fixed in their unbelief then this is very understandable, and in fact in one of the parables, that very parable that we read, or that story I should say that we read about the rich man and Lazarus, that very story tells us about an abyss, or a what's the term biblically, the gulf fixed. I don't guess you'll forget that, but I'm glad I finally found out what he was talking about. It's not your fault. He knows it's not his fault.

It's my fault. But anyway, I think you can see from that the fact that there is this great gulf fixed indicated that there is a fixing suggested in Scripture of persons characters after they have died.

Furthermore, and a further answer one might give to Mr. Stott, I think he knows this perfectly well, that when a person sins and sins against God an infinite being, then his sin takes on an infinite character. We know this in our own life. If you sin against me, well you might incur my anger, my wrath, my displeasure, but so what? But if you sin against the Mayor, and some of you probably have over recent months, that may be a little more heinous or a little worse, but if you were to sin against the President, if you were to fire a gun at him, then your crime would be much greater. In other words, the severity of the crime is determined by the dignity of the individual. Now we're dealing with the Lord God, and consequently, the sin of an individual though it may be only for a moment or two if it's against God, is far worse than years and years and years of sins against the rest of us who are only people. So I must say the biblical vision of justice as presented by Mr. Stott does not really strike home to me.

And finally, the fourth of his particular arguments is the texts that are used as the basis for Universalism, now Universalism is the doctrine that everybody is ultimately going to be saved; it's very popular today, very popular in our theological seminaries, very popular in our churches, particularly many of the main line churches. It's very popular among the theologians of Europe, the United States and even now the second and third worlds because they have imbibed the same form of teaching. But these texts that are supposedly supportive of Universalism, the salvation of all men ultimately, Mr. Stott says, are hard to reconcile with God's final victory over evil. What he is saying is,

the texts that Universalists use do suggest God's ultimate victory over evil, but if you have eternal punishment, does that not suggest that evil is not finally overcome.

Now he goes out of his way to say he doesn't believe in Universalism. I'm very glad that he did that because one might accuse him of that if he simply said that the texts that seem to support Universalism are texts that appear to indicate that God does control affairs ultimately, whereas eternal punishment seems to be contrary to that. He points to passages like John chapter 12 and verse 32 where the Lord Jesus says, "And I, if I be lifted up from the earth, will draw all men unto me." Now if you understand, "All men" in the sense of every single individual, everybody without exception, then you would have a bit of a problem, but that's probably not the meaning of that text. He means, "All men" not everybody without exception, but everyone without distinction. Jews and Gentiles is what our Lord means as the context makes very plain in that chapter.

In Ephesians chapter 1 and verse 10 we read something that Mr. Stott refers to that might suggest the same type of thing. The apostle writes, "That in the dispensation of the fullness of times he might gather together in one all things in Christ, both which are in heaven, and which are on earth; even in him," and so does not that suggest that God's sovereignty and the purpose of the creation is accomplished ultimately by God and how can that be harmonized with eternal punishment in hell fire, or a passage like 1 Corinthians chapter 15 and verse 28. There are one or two other passages, Philippians 2:10 and 11 might be mentioned, but 1 Corinthians chapter 15 and verse 28 is a passage to which Mr. Stott deals, and in this passage we read these words,

"For he hath put all things under his feet. But when he saith all things are put under him, it is manifest that he is excepted, which did put all things under him. And when all things shall be subdued unto him, then shall the Son also himself be subject unto him that put all things under him, that God may be all in all."

How can he be everything to everybody? That's Mr. Stott's rendering of this. I could find only one of the translations that I have in my library that render that expression, usually rendered that God may be all in all, that God may be everything to everybody, but at any rate, how can God be everything to everybody, how can you reconcile that with God's final victory over evil? How can he be that if rebellion still exists in his universe, or if he has contrived his supremacy by using omnipotence to annihilate the disobedient, then how can you justify that?

Well in the first place we're in no position "a priori" that is, without any kind of thing other than we are just going to deduce this. We are in no position to say how God's sovereignty is to be satisfied. Holiness and wisdom elude us who are sinners, and so we're not able to answer questions like that in the ultimate sense. But if God has determined that there should be eternal existence under conscious punishment as an eternal lesson, then of course there is no problem. For those who perceive a conflict with God's love, that's the common thing that the average man in the street says, "How can you have eternal punishment from a loving God?" Well I want to ask you this question. "Is love a sufficient summary of the nature of God? Well of course it's not. The Bible is full of other aspects of our Lord's nature. He is holy. He is wise. He is merciful. He is good and many other of the attributes make up the being of God, and

consequently, is love a sufficient summary of the nature of God must be answered by an emphatic "No, it's not sufficient summary of God."

There are three great and terrible expressions, eternal destruction, 2 Thessalonians chapter 1 and verse 9, "From the presence of the Lord," "Eternal destruction from the presence of the Lord," that of course suggests separation. Eternal punishment, we saw that in Matthew 25:46. Eternal punishment, that is, punishment that apparently is eternal and eternal fire, so, eternal destruction 2 Thessalonians 1:9, eternal punishment Matthew 29:46, eternal fire, Matthew 25:41, these three great expressions combine to speak of the everlasting consciousness of loss outside of Christ.

Now, I'd like to take the remaining time and say a bit about Conditional Immortality because obviously if a person cannot make it with Annihilationism, the next thing that he will want to do is to make it with Conditional Immortality which includes Annihilationism. So I want to give you the evidence that is contrary to Conditional Immortality. Remember it means that when a person dies, if he is a believer in Christ, he has eternal life conveyed to him on the grounds of grace through his faith, but for those who are unbelievers there is a period of time in which they suffer punishment which is measured by the kind of life that they have lived and then all unbelievers are annihilated. Their being is extinguished.

First of all the Jews did not accept this view, and our Lord made no effort to distinguish his view from theirs. If there was a difference you would expect our Lord to make that very plain. He's the one person in the New Testament who uses the term geena, or hell, except for one instance. James in his book uses the one other instance of that word. I think our Lord uses it in double figures. I've forgotten exactly what it

was, twelve or thirteen times, but never does he indicate any belief in Conditional Immorality.

In the second place all Christian churches have taught eternal conscious punishment and therefore, in Hodges words, it's an almost invincible presumption that the Christian church down through the years, having taught eternal punishment, that that is that which the Scriptures teach, that which the Holy Spirit has taught the Christian church. There are some rare exceptions to this, but basically that has been the view point of the Christian church.

In the third place if the eternal conscious punishment of the lost is not the biblical teaching and is worthy of the kind of denunciation given by men who hold to Conditional Immorality and they do denounce eternal punishment, like Mr. Stott his criticism is mild. He says, "I find it intolerable." That's mild. Others are far more severe in attacking eternal conscious punishment. If it's really worthy of that earnest denunciation that the Restorationists or the Annihilationists give it, then the fact that our Lord and the apostles did not clearly denounce such teaching ought to convince men that it's likely to be the truth.

In the fourth place, the extinction of consciousness is not of the nature of punishment. Matthew said, "Eternal punishment," but if a person is extinct, extinguished, as far as his being is concerned, there is no punishment. The essence of punishment is suffering and suffering must be conscious suffering.

In the fifth place, according to this theory animals are punished, for at death the animal incurs an everlasting loss. If the substance of punishment is in the result, that is, the death not in it's being felt or experienced, then the animal is punished too when the animal dies.

Sixth place, you may not find that argument real strong but think about it for a moment and you'll see that in principle it's valid. In answer to pure annihilation, it might be pointed out that the extinction of being admits of no degrees of punishment. That is if you don't hold a Conditional Immorality you would have a problem, all are punished alike. But this contradicts the passages of the New Testament that say that eternal punishment is in differing degrees. Now the passages that teach that are Luke chapter 12 verse 47 and 48, and I think Romans 2:12 implies it as well. Conditional Immorality escapes that particular problem.

In the seventh place, does not this view suggest or imply that the continuance of consciousness is eternal life, but is mere consciousness happiness. In other words, if eternal punishment is simply extinction of being then presence of being isn't that eternal life then according to this view? But we know that mere consciousness is not happiness. Judas was conscious when he hanged himself, but he was anything but happy.

In the eighth place, the spiritually dead are described in Scripture as conscious. Take Genesis chapter 2, verse 7 where the Lord says, "Adam in the day that you eat of the fruit of that tree you shall surely die." He didn't say tomorrow or the next day or when you die, but in the day that you eat you will die. Now, was Adam not conscious after he had eaten of the fruit of the tree? Well of course he was conscious.

So the spiritually dead, but he was spiritually dead, and as I look out over this audience at one time all of you were spiritually dead. But you are conscious, at least most of you, [Laughter] I don't say anything about one or two friends of mine. They at times are somewhere else, and of course I am too. Please be quiet Martha. [Laughter] So the spiritually dead are described in Scripture as conscious. Ephesians chapter 2 speaks of those who are dead in trespasses and sins, but they are very conscious. Paul

says the same thing in 1 Timothy chapter 5, verse 6, and he repeats it in Colossians 2. Spiritual death is the same as the second death, and the second death, we are told in Revelation, hurts, "Shall not be hurt of the second death." So, second death is a conscious, experienced kind of thing.

All sentimental arguments about a Father not punishing his children forever measure God by human sinful men's thoughts. He is not measured by us. He has given us in the word of God a revelation of himself, and we are responsible to follow what Scripture says, even if we cannot, or even if we do not, understand. We follow what Scripture says, and we trust the Holy Spirit to guide us into truth.

I'd like to close the section with just a word from a well known theologian, and I think it underlines some of the things above. He writes, "Nor does the quibble avail, that the phrase, 'everlasting destruction,' or such-like, implies annihilation. If this consisted in reducing the sinner forever to nothing, it would be instant destruction, not everlasting. How can punishment continue, when the subject of it has ceased to exist?"

I appreciate very much Mr. Stott. I've learned a lot from him. I've used a lot of his material in the study of various parts of the New Testament. If you went back and you listened to my expositions of the Book of Galatians, for example, probably could find some points where I either cited Mr. Stott, or my thoughts represented things that came from him. Recently we went through 1 John in thirty or so studies here in Believers Chapel and again if you went back and listened carefully with Mr. Stott's book on 1 John by your side, you would know that I have learned some things from John Stott in 1 John. They're not the only books that I've read of his. I've read many of his books. I greatly appreciate him.

I am very happy for one thing. He has said he tentatively holds this view, but he says he's going to hold it until the view is proved wrong. Well I hope that someone will prove it wrong for him, and he'll abandon the view. I will of course recognize him as a Christian man. He is a Christian man, an outstanding Christian man with great influence in the world, but nevertheless all of us and surely including me can be wrong on some important things in the word of God, and this is very important in my opinion because I think really it touches the question of the preaching of the gospel.

Let me read you something, and also theology. Let me read you something it just occurred to me. I have this with me. Let me read you something written by a 19th century theologian having reference to Universalism but nevertheless in the light of endless punishment. He says, "The dogmatic bearings of Universalism are not to be overlooked. The rejection of the doctrine of Endless Punishment," this, of course is true of Universalists; it's true of annihilationists; it's true of Conditional Immortality believers, they all unite in denying endless punishment. "The rejection of the doctrine of Endless Punishment cuts the ground from under the gospel. Salvation supposes a prior damnation. He who denies that he deserves eternal death cannot be saved from it so long as he persists in his denial. If his denial is the truth, he needs no salvation. If his denial is an error, the error prevents penitence for sin, and this prevents pardon." You can see if a person doesn't believe in eternal punishment then of course he will not repent for his sin against God, his eternally guilty sin, and therefore if he does not repent, he will not receive pardon. "No error, consequently, is more fatal than that of Universalism," he said. "It blots out the attribute of retributive justice; transmutes sin into misfortune, instead of guilt;" and we mean eternal guilt, "It turns all suffering into chastisement; converts the peculiar work of Christ," that's the work of satisfaction, the

saving work of Christ in providing the satisfaction for sin, "Into moral influence; and makes it a debt due to man, instead of an unmerited boon from God. No tenant is more radical and revolutionizing, in its influence upon the Christian system. The attempt to retain the evangelical theology in connection with it is futile."

Now some of that does not apply to Conditional Immorality, but a good bit of it does. So this is a rather serious thing. If a person doesn't believe in endless punishment, the zeal with which he preaches the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ will inevitably be affected by it. Our time is up. If you have question, I hope you'll come up and ask me about it, but we need to close on time. Next week if everything goes as I hope it does, I want to speak on the subject of psychology and the sufficiency of Scripture, and again I want you to understand I'm not posing as a psychologist. I'm not. I'm looking at that from the standpoint of Scripture, and what I believe is not necessarily handed down from above. I hope it's not handed up from below, but at any rate, we will I think maybe have a good time thinking about it..

[RECORDING ENDS ABRUPTLY]