

universal restoration, for there is a "great gulf fixed," so that "they cannot pass that would come from thence." By the conduct of the shepherd with the sheep and goats, Christ describes the Day of Judgment and its solemn transactions. "He (the Great Shepherd) shall set the sheep on His right hand and the goats on the left." "Then shall He also say unto them on the left hand, depart from me ye cursed, into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels." Then, contrasting the state of the righteous and the wicked, both as to nature and duration, Christ adds—"These shall go away into everlasting punishment; but the righteous into life eternal." Similar is the teaching of the parable of the ten virgins, of the tares of the field, of the talents, and of the marriage feast, with the guest without the wedding garment.

But in the discourses of our Lord Jesus Christ there is one that stands out with special prominence, as it contains the oft-repeated and most awful declaration of future torment. Likening the lusts of the heart to the members of the body, Christ exhorts their excision rather than that eternal death follow—better the amputation of the limb that is mortifying than the loss of the life, and so, better the surrender of the gratification of carnal affection than the loss of body and soul for ever. In the course of six verses there are as many references to the future state of the wicked as one of suffering and one of endless duration. In three of the verses there are severally the phrases—"to go into hell, into the fire that never shall be quenched;" "to be cast into hell, into the fire that never shall be quenched;" "to be cast into hell-fire." And the other three verses contain the words thrice repeated—"Where their worm dieth not, and the fire is not quenched." If universal salvation, or annihilation, or restoration be the future of the human race, if any state short of that of endless woe be the future condition of the wicked, can these words of Christ be explained on any other supposition than that He who spake them was either deceived or a deceiver?

The same word that is used to point out the duration of Jehovah Himself, of His being, of His reign, and of His blessedness; of Christ in His Eternal Godhead, and in His Mediatorial character; and of the happiness of the saints hereafter—the same word is used to set forth the duration of the punishment of the wicked. So that if God be everlasting, and Christ the King everlasting, and the life of believers everlasting, the punishment of the wicked must likewise be everlasting.

Let not the pulpit be silent on this doctrine, under a supposition that its promulgation will keep sinners away from Christ and harden them in sin. If so, would Christ, who needed not to be told what was in man, have given the doctrine such prominence in His preaching? Is it not the duty of the under shepherd to follow in the footsteps of the Great Shepherd, the fallible preacher to imitate the example of the Infallible. Beware of Jonah's sin, and "preach the preaching that I bid thee." And is it not a fact that the truest revivals have been brought about by the plain preaching of this doctrine? Did not Edwards, and Wesley, and Whitefield dwell with particular emphasis on the terrors of the Lord? And have not multitudes been awakened to a sense of sin by hearing faithful preaching on "the wrath to come." In his "Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire," Gibbon assigns as one of the reasons of the rapid diffusion of Christianity, the belief of eternal punishment.

Not to leave men in despair did Christ proclaim this doctrine, but to warn them against, and to win them from, the error of their ways. Blessed be God there is One who delivereth from the wrath to come; One who lifts out of the pit of corruption, and exalts the sinner to inherit a throne of glory. To those that are "condemned already" there is offered a righteousness, untainted, sufficient, everlasting. The broad offer of the Gospel is—"Whosoever will, let him take of the water of life freely." And while, on the one hand, everlasting punishment cannot be regarded as too great a retribution to those that "trample under foot the Son of God; on the other, everlasting felicity will be the future portion of those who put their trust in Him. "There is now no condemnation to them that are in Christ Jesus." "He that believeth shall be saved, he that believeth not shall be damned." "Lord, I believe, help Thou mine unbelief."