

10. The punishment of the wicked is as certain as the preservation and happiness of the righteous. "He will gather the wheat into his garner, but he will burn up the chaff with unquenchable fire." Though judgment is not instantly executed upon the evil doer, it is no less certain. For "one day is with the Lord as a thousand years and a thousand years as one day." The justice of God requires it, and his faithfulness has assured us that it will take place, Math. xxv 46; 2nd Thes. i. 6—9. It is necessary for the vindication of his moral government. It often happens in the present life that the wicked enjoy more prosperity and happiness than the godly. But though they flourish and prosper for a while, and enjoy all the blessings of the world in abundance; yet the day comes which shall burn as an oven upon them. Then the reproaches and aspersions cast upon Christ, his interest and his people, will be fully wiped away. He has given commandment to his servants to say to the righteous it shall be well with him, and at the same time to say to the wicked it shall be ill with him for he shall receive the reward of his doings.—This is worth the attention of gospel hearers. Is the punishment of the wicked certain? will he indeed burn up the chaff? Then let those who trample upon his law remember that though punishment is not speedily executed upon an evil work, it is no less certain; for God himself shall come to judgment, a fire shall waste before him and burn up his enemies, and a furious tempest shall compass him about which shall fall with pain upon the head of the wicked. Remember that when the wheat is gathered into the garner, the chaff is committed to the fire.

11. The destruction of the enemies of God is without remedy.—"He will burn up the chaff with unquenchable fire." Though hand join in hand the wicked shall not be unpunished. They are often so strong and powerful in this world as to elude the stroke of justice, and prevent its being executed upon their evil deeds by fellow-men, but they cannot escape the righteous judgment of God. When his hand takes hold of vengeance, then all hands shall wax feeble, the strong shall be as tow, and all their device to save themselves will be of no avail. Their work will be as a spark, and they shall burn together and none shall quench them. He will burn up the chaff with unquenchable fire. The language is highly figurative, and points out the irretrievable ruin of the wicked. The tender parent will not be able to prevent the destruction of his only child; and the efforts of the dutiful child to save his parents will be equally vain. The affectionate husband cannot prevail in behalf of the friend of his bosom. The current of justice cannot be stopped; for judgment will run like a stream, and righteousness like a flowing brook. As none can prevent their destruction, so shall it never come to an end; it is here represented as *unquenchable fire*. "Their worm dieth not, and their fire is not quenched."

Hence three things deserve our attention. 1. The eternity of the duration of the punishment of God's enemies; 2. The anguish and pain which they feel; and 3. The unspeakable loss which they sustain. Let the voluptuary then think at what expence he is purchasing a short and momentary pleasure, and let the wicked forsake his way and sin no more.