

The Wrath Of God

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Introduction:

THERE IS A WRATH TO COME.

John the Baptist asked the Pharisees and Sadducees, “O generation of vipers, who hath warned you to flee from THE WRATH TO COME?” (Matthew 3:7). The wrath to come is according to the righteous judgment of God: “But after thy hardness and impenitent heart treasurest up unto thyself *wrath* against *the day of wrath* and revelation of *the* RIGHTEOUS JUDGMENT of *God*” (Romans 2:5). The prophets and apostles anticipate that “day” in the most fearful of terms as the most dreadful of prospects. And one day the cry will be heard, “For *the great day of his wrath* IS COME; and who shall be able to stand?” (Revelation 6:17).

To be saved from the wrath to come is one of the grand benefices of redemption in Christ. “JESUS... *delivered us from the wrath to come*” (1 Thessalonians 1:10). It is expressly through Christ’s death and resurrection that those in Christ should eternally live and not finally die: “For *God hath not appointed us to wrath, but to obtain salvation by our Lord Jesus Christ, Who died for us*, that, whether we wake or sleep, WE SHOULD LIVE together with him” (1 Thessalonians 5:9,10). To the Romans, Paul explains, “being now justified by his blood, we shall be saved from wrath THROUGH HIM. For if, when we were enemies, we were reconciled to God BY THE DEATH OF HIS SON, much more, being reconciled, we shall be saved by his life (Romans 5:9, 10).

God’s purpose and grace “is now made manifest by the appearing of our Saviour Jesus Christ, who hath abolished death, and hath brought LIFE AND IMMORTALITY to light through the gospel” (2 Timothy 1:9, 10).

A TERRIBLE ERROR.

We often hear of “the wrath of God” as decisive evidence of the theory of endless torment: “Yes, God is a God of love,” it is said, “but He is also a God of wrath.” It is then asserted that the Scriptures are abundantly clear concerning the wrath of a holy and just God. This wrath, therefore, the reasoning goes, substantiates the belief that the God who infinitely “so loved” the world (John 3:16; Galatians 2:20) is also the God who will eternally “so torment” the wicked.

I contend that the premise is absolutely correct, but that the conclusion usurped from the premise is a terrible error. That there is a wrath of God- that God has displayed in the past, and will yet demonstrate in the future, His anger toward His enemies in definite punitive measures- is without doubt a truth revealed in Holy Writ. But that this wrath suggests or supports endless torment could not be further from the truth. To the contrary, the wrath of God, as revealed in the Word of God, with its fierce extent and its merciful limit, is one of the most eloquent witnesses to the everlasting destruction, and not the endless torment, of those justly judged worthy of it.

The Fierce Extent of God’s Wrath GOD’S WRATH IS CRUEL.

The extent of God’s wrath is so awful in its operation and so terrible in its completion that it causes the human heart to tremble at its prospect. “Thou, even thou, art to be FEARED: and who may stand in thy sight when once thou art ANGRY?” (Psalm 76:7). God’s wrath is even considered “cruel” in the inspired vocabulary, and His anger is “fierce”: “Behold, the day of the LORD cometh, CRUEL both with wrath and FIERCE anger” (Isaiah 13:9). But what is the result of such cruel wrath? What is the end of such fierce anger? “Cruel both with wrath and fierce anger, to lay the land DESOLATE: and he shall DESTROY the sinners thereof out of it.”

The context also tells us: “Howl ye; for the day of the LORD is at hand; it shall come as a DESTRUCTION from the Almighty. Therefore shall all hands be faint, and every man’s heart shall melt: And they shall be afraid: pangs and sorrows shall take hold of them” (13:6-8). This passage concisely expresses what is consistently revealed in the multitude of other texts about God’s wrath, namely, that the fierce extent of God’s wrath is the utter destruction of those judged worthy of it.

It has been argued that the consistent revelation of this multitude of texts is limited to temporal judgment, and therefore does not bear testimony to the final, eternal judgment. This contention is of no intrinsic merit because it limits temporal displays of God's wrath as having little if any illustrative meaning of either the nature of the wrath of God, or the character of God in wrath. This limitation cannot be justified. At the very least, the "temporal" wrath provides examples that illustrate the wrath to come as it reveals the character of God and the nature of His wrath. It is the same God, and it is His wrath.

But the weakest part of the argument of minimizing these examples as only temporal is the failure to notice the inspired vocabulary! The words chosen to express the extent of God's temporal wrath are the very same words used by the Divine pen to repeatedly describe the final, eternal judgment of the wicked. God's wrath consumes, kills, smites, slays, destroys, and devours the wicked who are cut off and perish and die. God's wrath results in death, destruction, consumption, and desolation. If such expressions of His wrath powerfully picture its temporal nature, then the very same words equally depict its future scope.

"For our part," Henry Constable writes in his classic apologetic for conditional immortality, "we are persuaded of the perfect propriety of applying the very same terms to judgments inflicted in this world and the next, because those judgments are essentially the same in their character. All through the sacred writings judgments here and hereafter are described by the same expressions. It is for those who suppose these judgments to be essentially different in character to explain how they are properly represented by identity of phrase."*

THE WRATH OF GOD CONSUMES.

"And in the greatness of thine excellency thou hast overthrown them that rose up against thee: thou sent forth thy wrath, which CONSUMED them as stubble" (Exodus 15:7). "Now therefore let me alone, that my wrath may wax hot against them, and that I may CONSUME them" (Exodus 32:10). "CONSUME them in wrath, CONSUME them, that they may not be: and let them know that God rules in Jacob unto the ends of the earth. Selah" (Psalm 59:13). "Therefore have I poured out mine indignation upon them; I have CONSUMED them with the fire of my wrath: their own way have I recompensed upon their heads, said the Lord GOD" (Ezekiel 22:31).

Thus the temporal wrath is described, and even so the final wrath. "And the destruction of the transgressors and of the sinners shall be together, and they that forsake the LORD shall be CONSUMED" (Isaiah 1:28). "For, behold, the day cometh ("the great and dreadful day of the LORD" – v. 5), that shall burn as an oven; and all the proud, yea, and all that do wickedly, shall be stubble: and the day that cometh shall BURN THEM UP, said the LORD of hosts, that it shall leave them neither root nor branch" (Malachi 4:1). "For, behold, the LORD will come with fire, and with his chariots like a whirlwind, to render his anger with fury, and his rebuke with flames of fire. For by fire and by his sword will the LORD plead with all flesh: and the slain of the LORD shall be many. They... shall be CONSUMED together, said the LORD" (Isaiah 66:15-17).

THE WRATH OF GOD KILLS, SMITES, AND SLAYS.

And as we have seen that God's final wrath slays ("the slain of the LORD" above), God's temporal wrath kills, smites and slays. "And my wrath shall wax hot, and I will KILL you with the sword; and your wives shall be widows, and your children fatherless" (Exodus 22:24). "The wrath of the LORD was kindled against the people, and the LORD SMOTE the people with a very great plague... there they BURIED the people that lusted" (Numbers 11:33, 34). "The wrath of God came upon them, and SLEW the fattest of them, and SMOTE down the chosen men of Israel" (Psalm 78:31).

THE WRATH OF GOD DESTROYS.

"Also in Horeb ye provoked the LORD to wrath, so that the LORD was angry with you to have DESTROYED you" (Deuteronomy 9:8). "They have humbled themselves; therefore I will not DESTROY them, but I will grant them some deliverance; and my wrath shall not be poured out" (2 Chronicles 12:7). Had he "poured out" His wrath, they would not have been perpetually tortured, but totally destroyed! "But he, being full of compassion, forgave their iniquity, and DESTROYED them not: yea, many a time turned he his anger away, and did not stir up all his wrath" (Psalms 78:38). Had he stirred up all his wrath, they would not have been continually tormented, but completely destroyed!

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This is the same language of the future judgment: “Do ye not know their tokens, That the wicked is reserved to the DAY OF DESTRUCTION? they shall be brought forth to the DAY OF WRATH” (Job 21:30). Thus “the day of wrath” is the “day of destruction.” “What if God, willing to shew his wrath, and to make his power known, endured with much longsuffering the vessels of wrath fitted to DESTRUCTION:” (Romans 9:22). “Thy wrath is come, and the time of the dead, that they should be judged, and that thou shouldest give reward unto thy servants the prophets, and to the saints, and them that fear thy name, small and great; and shouldest DESTROY them which destroy the earth” (Revelation 11:18). Peter speaks of the prophet of whom Moses foretold, even Christ, and affirms, “that every soul, which will not hear that prophet, shall be DESTROYED from among the people” (Acts 3:22). If this destruction is temporal, when did it happen, or when will it happen? Consider also, “whose end is destruction” (Philippians 3:19), and “broad is the way, that leadeth to destruction” (Matthew 7:13).

THE WRATH OF GOD DEVOURS.

“Thine hand shall find out all thine enemies: thy right hand shall find out those that hate thee. Thou shalt make them as a fiery oven in the time of thine anger: the LORD shall swallow them up in his wrath, and THE FIRE SHALL DEVOUR THEM” (Psalm 21:8, 9). “Swallow up” and “devour” is not the language of endless torment. “The LORD hath accomplished his fury; he hath poured out his fierce anger, and hath kindled a fire in Zion, and IT HATH DEVoured the foundations thereof” (Lamentations 4:11). “Neither their silver nor their gold shall be able to deliver them in the day of the LORD’s wrath; but the whole land shall be DEVoured BY THE FIRE of his jealousy: for he shall make even a speedy riddance of all them that dwell in the land” (Zephaniah 1:18). A speedy riddance by a devouring fire speaks of final destruction, not endless torment.

Is this not also the language used in the intimation of future retribution in Zephaniah 3:8? “Therefore wait ye upon me, said the LORD, until the day that I rise up to the prey: for my determination is to gather the nations, that I may assemble the kingdoms, to pour upon them mine indignation, even all my fierce anger: for all the earth shall be DEVoured WITH THE FIRE of my jealousy.” Is not this “the day approaching (Hebrews 10:25)? “For if we sin wilfully after that we have received the knowledge of the truth, there remaineth no more sacrifice for sins, But a certain fearful looking for of judgment and fiery indignation, which shall DEVOUR the adversaries” (Hebrews 10:26, 27). The point should be obvious: God’s judgment and fiery indignation devours!

THE WRATH OF GOD CUTS OFF.

“Thy fierce wrath goes over me; thy terrors have CUT ME OFF” (Psalm 88:16). “He hath CUT OFF in his fierce anger all the horn of Israel: he hath drawn back his right hand from before the enemy, and he burned against Jacob like a flaming fire, which devours round about” (Lamentations 2:3).

And surely this is the anticipation of Psalm 37: “For evildoers shall be CUT OFF: but those that wait upon the LORD, they shall inherit the earth. For yet a little while, and the wicked shall not be: yea, thou shalt diligently consider his place, and it shall not be... The LORD shall laugh him: for he sees that his day is coming... The LORD knows the days of the upright: and their inheritance shall be forever. They shall not be ashamed in the evil time: and in the days of famine they shall be satisfied. But the wicked shall perish, and the enemies of the LORD shall be as the fat of lambs: they shall consume; into smoke shall they consume away... For such as be blessed of him shall inherit the earth; and they that be cursed of him shall be CUT OFF... For the LORD loves judgment, and forsakes not his saints; they are preserved forever: but the seed of the wicked shall be CUT OFF. The righteous shall inherit the land, and dwell therein forever. Wait on the LORD, and keep his way, and he shall exalt thee to inherit the land: when the wicked are CUT OFF, thou shalt see it. I have seen the wicked in great power, and spreading himself like a green bay tree. Yet he passed away, and, lo, he was not: yea, I sought him, but he could not be found. Mark the perfect man, and behold the upright: for the end of that man is peace. But the transgressors shall be destroyed together: the end of the wicked shall be CUT OFF.”

A temporal meaning is certainly to be understood in “the days of famine,” and a case could be made that the primary meaning of this precious Psalm is temporal in nature. But it is hard to imagine that its wording only speaks of then and there. Did the wicked

consume into smoke then and there? Did the righteous see the wicked get cut off then and there? Did the meek inherit the earth then and there? And notice the continual contrasts:

Evildoers- *cut off*

Those who wait on the Lord- *inherit the earth*

The wicked- *they shall not be*

The upright- *inheritance shall be forever*

They that be cursed- *cut off*

Such as be blessed- *inherit the earth*

The wicked- *shall perish, consume away* His saints- *preserved forever*

Seed of the wicked- *cut off*

The righteous- *dwell in the land forever*

And the final contrast powerfully reiterates the contrast of the whole: The perfect man- *the END of that man is peace*

The transgressors- *destroyed; the END of the wicked shall be cut off.*

What does it mean therefore to be “cut off”? It is paralleled and interwoven with shall not be, perish, consume away, and be destroyed. And to be “cut off” is an “end,” not a beginning! And to be “cut off” is contrasted with inherit the earth, inheritance shall be forever, preserved forever, dwell in the land forever, and the end is peace.

PERISH AND DIE.

God’s wrath causes His enemies to perish and die. “Take heed to yourselves, that your heart be not deceived, and ye turn aside, and serve other gods, and worship them; And then the LORD’s wrath be kindled against you, and he shut up the heaven, that there be no rain, and that the land yield not her fruit; and lest ye PERISH quickly from off the good land which the LORD giveth you” (Deuteronomy 11:16, 17). “Serve the LORD with fear, and rejoice with trembling. Kiss the Son, lest he be angry, and ye PERISH from the way, when his wrath is kindled but a little” (Psalm 2:11, 12). Perishing from God’s wrath is reiterated through the Psalms: “they shall fall and PERISH at thy presence” (9:3); “let the wicked PERISH at the presence of God” (68:2); “For, lo, they that are far from thee shall PERISH: thou hast destroyed all them that go a whoring from thee” (73:27); “they PERISH at the rebuke of thy countenance” (80:16); “For, lo, thine enemies, O LORD, for, lo, thine enemies shall PERISH” (92:9). And the parallel of the day of wrath with death is compelling: “Riches profit not in the day of wrath: but righteousness delivereth from DEATH” (Proverbs 11:4- Cf. “the day of wrath” paralleled with “the day of destruction” in Job 21:30).

Perish and death are probably the two words most associated with the end of the wicked, and certainly the two most contrasted with the expectation of the saved. “That whosoever believeth in him should not PERISH, but have ETERNAL LIFE. 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” (John 3:15, 16). “My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me: And I give unto them ETERNAL LIFE; and they shall never PERISH, neither shall any man pluck them out of my hand” (John 10:27, 28). “For the wages of sin is DEATH; but the gift of God is ETERNAL LIFE through Jesus Christ our Lord” (Romans 6:23).

CONTRASTS OF LIFE AND PERISH.

To underscore the consistent meaning of perish in Scripture as synonymous with death and opposite of life, consider the definitive contrasts of “meat which PERISHETH” and “meat which endureth unto EVERLASTING LIFE” (John 6:27); PERISH and REMAINEST (Hebrews 1:11); and PERISH and ENDURE (Psalm 102:26). And perish is paralleled with die (Numbers 17:12- “Behold, we DIE, we PERISH, we all PERISH;” Psalm 41:5; 49:10), with ABIDETH NOT (Psalm 49:12), and DESTROYED (Deuteronomy 28:20; 2 Peter 2:12).

The final perishing is the second death. “This is the second DEATH. And whosoever was not found written in the book of life was cast into the lake of fire” (Revelation 20:14, 15). There are those who “shall have their part in the lake which burneth with fire and

brimstone: which is the second DEATH” (21:8), but “Blessed and holy is he that hath part in the first resurrection: on such the second DEATH hath no power” (20:6). We easily comprehend the first death. The final death is not something altogether different in character from the first- it is the second death. We understand that “it is appointed unto men once to die, but after this the judgment” (Hebrews 9:27). It is at the final judgment that Scripture persistently tells us that the wicked will be destroyed, the chaff will burn up, the stubble will be consumed, etc. The result is a second, eternal death. That is the language of the wrath of the past, and it is the language of the wrath to come!

In summary of the extent of God’s wrath, the abundant testimony of Scripture is that God’s wrath completely consumes and finally destroys the wicked so that they are cut off, cast out, perish and die. Myriad examples of God’s temporal wrath illustrate the nature of the coming final wrath, and are indicative of the character of God in wrath. The inspired vocabulary uses the same precise wording for the temporal wrath of then and there, and for the wrath to come.

The Merciful Limit of God’s Wrath

WHAT SCRIPTURE DOESN’T SAY.

The discerning reader will surely hear the silence of the Scriptures in relation to God’s wrath and be instructed by what God’s Word doesn’t say. While it says much of death and destruction, it says nothing of perpetual torment. Could we not conclude that God’s wrath does not endlessly torment! The language of Scripture is of finality, of a miserable end, but nonetheless an end to misery, not endless misery. It speaks of endless life to the righteous, but an end of life to the wicked.

But in all fairness, perhaps those who support the theory of endless torment will object to this argument from silence. Perhaps they will say that we dare not base a conclusion on what Scripture does not say, and just because Scripture does not say that God’s wrath perpetually tormented anyone (or even tormented for any extended length of time) we cannot dogmatically conclude that His wrath to come can not or will not endlessly torment. For myself, silence makes a convincing case, but I care little for just making a case.

WHAT SCRIPTURE DOES SAY.

Conditional immortality given to those in Christ, and final destruction of the wicked, is without question (in my sincere understanding) the plain, unadorned meaning of Scripture (whether anyone else believes it or not). It is certainly what it says, and there are no compelling reasons to the contrary to believe it’s not what it means. So my goal is to help people see what I honestly believe is there to be seen- not to see it my way, but to see it the way it is. Belief or disbelief does not affect reality, only our recognition of it. From where you sit, dear reader, you may not see what I see, but that doesn’t mean it’s not there to be seen. Perhaps the difficulty is with where you sit.

So if my argument from silence (of what is not said) concerning the fierce extent of God’s wrath (that it does not say that God’s wrath endlessly torments) does not get you up out of your seat to enable you to see what I’m saying, then it is my hope that what Scripture does say in a very loud and clear way of the merciful limit of God’s wrath, will move you to such a vantage point that the glorious vista of this Biblical truth will be clearly seen.

I WILL NOT CONTEND FOREVER.

What if God Himself tells us that His wrath has a merciful limit? He has: “For I WILL NOT CONTEND FOREVER, NEITHER WILL I BE ALWAYS WROTH: for the spirit should fail before me, and the souls which I have made” (Isaiah 57:16). “Go and proclaim these words toward the north, and say, Return, thou backsliding Israel, said the LORD; and I will not cause mine anger to fall upon you: for I am merciful, said the LORD, and I WILL NOT KEEP ANGER FOREVER” (Jeremiah 3:12). Could there be a more reliable testimony? “I will not contend forever, neither will I be always wroth. I will not keep anger forever.” And though God will not keep anger forever, Scripture repeatedly tells us that “His MERCY ENDURETH FOREVER” (over 40 times).

HE RETAINETH NOT HIS ANGER FOREVER.

David, a man after God's own heart, reveals God's heart with this testimony: "The LORD is merciful and gracious, slow to anger, and plenteous in mercy. HE WILL NOT ALWAYS CHIDE: NEITHER WILL HE KEEP HIS ANGER FOREVER" (Psalm 103:8, 9). Micah, that woe-bearing prophet of judgment, ends his inspired utterances with this wonderful witness to the merciful character of our incomparable God: "Who is a God like unto thee, that pardons iniquity, and passes by the transgression of the remnant of his heritage? HE RETAINETH NOT HIS ANGER FOREVER, because he delights in mercy" (Micah 7:18).

HE DOTHT NOT AFFLICT WILLINGLY.

And consider these lovely lyrics from Jeremiah's Lamentations (3:31-36): "For the LORD WILL NOT CAST OFF FOREVER: But though he cause grief, yet will he have compassion according to the multitude of his mercies. For HE DOTHT NOT AFFLICT WILLINGLY nor grieve the children of men. To crush under his feet all the prisoners of the earth. To turn aside the right of a man before the face of the most High, To subvert a man in his cause, the LORD approves not."

Do not you who have the love of God spread abroad in your hearts respond to these testimonies with a knowing "Amen!" HE WILL NOT ALWAYS CHIDE: NEITHER WILL HE KEEP HIS ANGER FOREVER. HE RETAINETH NOT HIS ANGER FOREVER. HE WILL NOT CAST OFF FOREVER. HE DOTHT NOT AFFLICT WILLINGLY. God's final wrath may not be a temporal wrath, but it is a temporary wrath!

Yes, our God is holy, but His holiness compels His mercy to limit His wrath: "Sing unto the LORD, O ye saints of his, and give thanks at the remembrance of HIS HOLINESS. For HIS ANGER ENDURETH...(would those who hold to eternal torture wish to end the verse here as proof that God's holiness demands endless torment? But we read on and learn the wonderful reason to sing:) "For HIS ANGER ENDURETH BUT A MOMENT" (Psalm 30:4, 5). "His holiness" is hinged ("for") to the merciful limitation of his anger, which "endureth but a moment." His "anger endureth but a moment," but His "mercy endureth forever." (Read [The Myth of Holy Wrath](#))

Let me repeat: Yes, our God is holy, but His holiness does not induce His wrath to continue unabated through the unfathomable reaches of eternity, but His holiness compels His mercy to limit His wrath: "Therefore thus said the Lord GOD; Now will I bring again the captivity of Jacob, and HAVE MERCY upon the whole house of Israel, and will BE JEALOUS FOR MY HOLY NAME" (Ezekiel 39:25). Our Great God's jealousy for His holy name provokes... His anger? No, His mercy! "I WILL NOT EXECUTE THE FIERCENESS OF MINE ANGER, I will not return to destroy Ephraim: FOR I AM GOD, AND NOT MAN; THE HOLY ONE in the midst of thee (Hosea 11:9). Why would God not execute the fierceness of His anger? Because He is holy! Enough of the slanderous charge that imputes endless wrath to Divine holiness! It is in THE HOLY OF HOLIES that we find THE MERCY SEAT! And when we pray to our God, we should lift "up HOLY HANDS, WITHOUT WRATH" (1 Timothy 2:8), which is apt for Christ, our high priest who "ever liveth to make intercession" for us is "HOLY, HARMLESS" (Hebrews 7:25, 26).

GOD IS NOT A GOD OF WRATH.

Perhaps here would be a good place to challenge some general assumptions that have been repeated so oft that many have believed their truth to be unquestionable. First, that "God is a God of wrath." God is NOT "a God of wrath." There is a wrath of God, but God is not a God OF wrath. My meaning is that though God can get angry, anger is not the essence of His character. There is a difference between an act and an attribute. There is a difference between what God does, and what He is. "God is merciful." "God is just." "God is good." Is it ever said, "God is wrath"? It does say that "God is angry," yes, but it continues "with..."- this is what God does as an act, not what God is as an attribute. It never says, "God is anger." John tells us "God is love," but no inspired writer ever dares to impugn God's character with the assertion that "God is wrath." Wrath may be a part of the Divine weather, and a final storm of it is to come, but wrath is not the Divine climate.

Second, that there is "eternal wrath." There is NO such thing as "ETERNAL WRATH," at least not intrinsically. There is a wrath that is not temporal in the sense that it is final; it is ultimate; - it is to come at the end of time and commencement of eternity. But there is no wrath that endures eternally, that continues unabated without end. "The LORD is good; HIS MERCY IS

EVERLASTING” (Psalm 100:5), and “EVERLASTING TO EVERLASTING” (103:17), but as we have just learned, his wrath and anger have a merciful limit- He will not keep His anger forever! “In A LITTLE WRATH I hid my face from thee FOR A MOMENT; but WITH EVERLASTING KINDNESS WILL I HAVE MERCY on thee, said the LORD thy Redeemer” (Isaiah 54:8). There is also an “EVERLASTING LOVE” (Jeremiah 31:3), but there is no “everlasting wrath.”

Many have considered John 3:36, “but the wrath of God abideth on him” to be proof of endless torment. But the context gives two details that destroy the theory. “He that believeth not the Son” is he on whom the wrath of God abideth. This abiding wrath is on the unbeliever now. Is the unbeliever enduring fiery torments now? And the contrast of “He that believeth on the Son hath everlasting life: and he that believeth not the Son shall not see life” also indicates that abiding wrath does not anticipate endless life in torment, but rather an end of life in destruction. And furthermore, it does not say that the wrath of God abideth on him without end, i.e., will always abide on him. A present abideth does not demand a perpetual abiding.

A SPEEDY RIDDANCE.

Zephaniah tells us that the fierce extent of God’s wrath is so awful that the wicked will not be “delivered,” but will be “devoured”- but that the merciful limit of God’s wrath is such that “he shall make even a SPEEDY RIDDANCE” (Zephaniah 1:18 cited above). The fierce extent of God’s wrath is so terrible that Sodom and Gomorrah suffered “the vengeance of ETERNAL FIRE” (Jude v. 7) and became “a perpetual desolation” (Zephaniah 2:9)- but the merciful limit of God’s wrath is such that those cities of the plain were “overthrown as in a MOMENT” (Lamentations 4:6) and were turned “to ASHES” (2 Peter 2:6). How else may we make sense of “FEW stripes” (Luke 12:48), and “more TOLERABLE” (Luke 10:13, 14)? Try to reconcile few and tolerable with endless and torment and you make a mockery of language and a caricature of justice. It is not less stripes, but few, and it is not more horrible, but more tolerable. The sadistic speculation of hotter flames or lower temperatures, and yet endless duration nonetheless, is ridiculous beyond comprehension.

IN A DAY, AND IN AN HOUR.

The fierce extent of God’s wrath ends in the result of “everlasting DESTRUCTION”-the merciful limit of God’s wrath forbids that the process of destroying continues without end, but rather limits it to “THAT DAY” (2 Thessalonians 1:7-10). The fierce extent of God’s wrath is so horrifying that the day that cometh “shall BURN AS AN OVEN, and all the proud, yea, all that do wickedly, shall be stubble”- but the merciful limit of God’s wrath is such that “the day that cometh shall BURN THEM UP” and “they shall be ASHES” (Malachi 4:1-3). The fierce extent of God’s wrath is so terrifying that the smoke of Babylon’s destruction “rose up forever and ever”- but the merciful limit of God’s wrath is such that “in ONE HOUR is thy judgment come,” and “in ONE HOUR so great riches is come to nought,” and “in ONE HOUR is she made desolate” (Revelation 18:10, 17, 19).

Conclusion:

The fierce extent of God’s wrath is so petrifying that “whosoever was not found written in the book of life was CAST INTO THE LAKE OF FIRE”- but the merciful limit of God’s wrath is that “THIS IS THE SECOND DEATH.” I could go on and on with these parallels, but may this last one suffice to settle the matter. The fierce extent of God’s wrath is that THE WICKED PERISH- but the merciful limit of God’s wrath is that THE WICKED PERISH.

And that is exactly why God’s wrath gives eloquent expression to the truth that the wicked are not endlessly tormented, but rather completely destroyed- that the chaff does not burn on, it burns up; the ungodly do not eternally boil in the lake of fire, they finally die the second death; those who know not God do not suffer everlasting destroying, but everlasting destruction; those cast out do not endure the process of everlasting torment, but experience the result of everlasting punishment.

God’s Word clearly and conclusively says, in the wording of the wrath of God and of the wrath to come, in the language of the nature of the wrath of God and the character of God in wrath, that the wicked perish. The righteous Judge will ultimately and completely destroy the wicked. The fierce extent of His wrath will go that far; the merciful limit of His wrath will go no farther.

Great and marvellous are thy works,
Lord God Almighty;
just and true are thy ways.
REVELATION 15:3

A NOTE ON WHY THIS ARTICLE WAS WRITTEN.

A friend of mine read "Peculiar Brother Bird" and raised several significant objections to the thrust of the poem, foremost of which was the contention that I had overlooked or minimized "the wrath of God." Genuine in my desire to consider any observation, and generally thorough in my research to see "whether those things are so," I set out to face the subject head-on. This article is the result, further confirming the comprehensive coherency of Scripture on the subject of the final judgment of unbelievers.

A bird's eye view [below] of the way psukee is translated in four versions shows that it is a living being, not an immortal no substance something. The translators wanted to put their immortal soul in the Bible, but they had a problem for if they had uniformly translated psukee into "soul," in some passages their immortal soul would have been subject to death and in other passages it would be dead.

1) King James (2) New Revised Standard (3) American Standard (4) New International

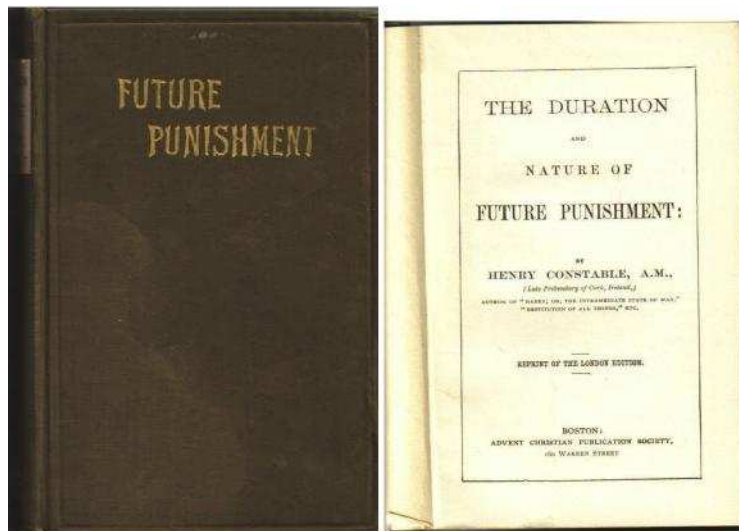
Bible Text	KJV	RSV	ASB	NIV
1. Matthew 2:20	Life	Life	Life	Life
2. Matthew 6:25	Life	Life	Life	Life
3. Matthew 6:25	Life	Life	Life	Life
4. Matthew 10:28	Soul	Soul	Soul	Soul
5. Matthew 10:28	Soul	Soul	Soul	Soul
6. Matthew 10:39	Life	Life	Life	Life
7. Matthew 10:39	Life	Life	Life	Life
8. Matthew 11:29	Souls	Souls	Souls	Souls
9. Matthew 12:18	Soul	Soul	Soul	Souls
10. Matthew 16:25	Life	Life	Life	Life
11. Matthew 16:25	Life	Life	Life	Life
12. Matthew 16:26	Soul	Life	Life	Soul
13. Matthew 16:26	Soul	Life	Life	Soul
14. Matthew 20:28	Life	Life	Life	Life
15. Matthew 22:37	Soul	Soul	Soul	Soul
16. Matthew 26:38	Soul	I	Soul	Soul
17. Mark 3:4	Life	Life	Life	Life
18. Mark 8:35	Life	Life	Life	Life
19. Mark 8:35	Life	Life	Life	Life
20. Mark 8:36	Soul	Life	Life	Soul
21. Mark 8:37	Soul	Life	Life	Soul
22. Mark 10:45	Life	Life	Life	Life
23. Mark 12:30	Soul	Soul	Soul	Soul
24. Mark 12:33	Soul	Heart	Heart	Heart
25. Mark 14:34	Soul	I	Soul	Soul
26. Luke 1:46	Soul	Soul	Soul	Soul
27. Luke 2:35	Soul	Soul	Soul	Soul
28. Luke 6:9	Life	Life	Life	Life
29. Luke 9:24	Life	Life	Life	Life
30. Luke 9:24	Life	Life	Life	Life
31. Luke 9:56	Lives			Life
32. Luke 10:27	Soul	Soul	Soul	Soul
33. Luke 12:19	Soul	Soul	Soul	Myself
34. Luke 12:19	Soul	Soul	Soul	Life

The Wrath Of God

Bible Text	KJV	RSV	ASB	NIV
35. Luke 12:20	Soul	Life	Soul	Life
36. Luke 12:22	Life	Life	Life	Life
37. Luke 12:23	Life	Life	Life	Life
38. Luke 14:26	Life	Life	Life	Life
39. Luke 17:33	Life	Life	Life	Life
40. Luke 21:19	Soul	Souls	Souls	Yourselves
41. John 10:11	Life	Life	Life	Life
42. John 10:15	Life	Life	Life	Life
43. John 10:17	Life	Life	Life	Life
44. John 10:24	Us	Us	Us	Us
45. John 12:25	Life	Life	Life	Life
46. John 12"25	Life	Life.	Life	Life
47. John 12:27	Soul	Soul	Soul	Heart
48. John 13:37	Life	Life	Life	Life
49. John 13:38	Life	Life	Life	Life
50. John 15:13	Life	Life	Life	Life
51. Acts 2:27	Soul	Soul	Soul	Me
52. Acts 2:31	Soul	Flesh	Flesh	Body
53. Acts 2:41	Souls	Persons	Souls	
54. Acts 2:43	Soul	Everyone	Soul	Everyone
55. Acts 3:23	Soul	Everyone	Soul	Anyone
56. Acts 4:32	Soul	Soul	Soul	Mind
57. Acts 7:14	Souls	All	Souls	All
58. Acts 14:2	Minds	Minds	Souls	Minds
59. Acts 14:22	Souls	Souls	Souls	Disciples
60. Acts 15:24	Souls	Minds	Souls	Minds
61. Acts 15:26	Lives	Lives	Lives	Lives
62. Acts 20:10	Life	Life	Life	Alive
63. Acts 20:24	Life	Life	Life	Life
64. Acts 27:10	Lives	Lives	Lives	Lives
65. Acts 27:22	Life	Life	Life	You
66. Acts 27:37	Souls	Persons	Souls	Us
67. Romans 2:9	Soul	Everyone	Soul	Being
68. Romans 11:3	Life	Life	Life	Me

The Wrath Of God

Bible Text	KJV	RSV	ASB	NIV
69. Romans 13:1	Soul	Persons	Soul	Everyone
70. Romans 16:4	Life	Life	Life	Lives
71. 1 Cor. 15:45	Soul	Being	Soul	Being
72. 2 Cor. 1:23	Soul	ME	Soul	.
73. 2 Cor. 12:15	You	You	Souls	You
74. Ephesians 6:6	Heart	Heart	Heart	Heart
75. Philippians 1:27	Mind	Mind	Soul	MEN
76. Philippians 2:30	Life	Life.	Life	Life
77. Colossians 3:23	Heartily	Yourselves	Heartily	Heart
78. 1 Thess 2:8	Souls	Selves	Souls	Lives
79. 1 Thess. 5:23 ,	Soul	Soul	Soul	Soul
80. Hebrews 4 12	Soul	Soul	Soul	Soul
81. Hebrews 6:19	Soul	Soul	Soul	Soul
82. Hebrews 10:38	Soul	Soul	Soul	I
83. Hebrews 10:39	Soul	Saved	Soul	Saved
84. Hebrews 12:3	Minds	Heart	Souls	Heart
85. Hebrews 13:17	Souls	Souls	Souls	You
86. James 1:21	Souls	Souls	Souls	You
87. James 5:20	Soul	Soul	Soul	HIM
88. 1 Peter 1:9	Souls	Souls	Souls	Souls
89. 1 Peter 1:22	Souls	Souls	Souls	Yourselves
90. 1 Peter 2:11	Soul	Soul	Soul	Soul
91. 1 Peter 2:25	Souls	Souls	Souls	Souls
92. 1 Peter 3:20	Souls	Persons	Souls	People
93. 1 Peter 4:19	Souls	Themselves	Souls	Themselves
94. 2 Peter 2:8	Soul	Soul	Soul	Soul
95. 2 Peter 2:14	Souls	Souls	Souls	Unstable
96. 1 John 3:16	Life	Life	Life	Life
97. 1 John 3:16	Lives	Lives	Lives	Lives
98. 3 John 2	Soul	Soul	Soul	Soul
99. Revelation 6:9	Souls	Souls	Souls	Souls
100. Revelation 8:9	Life	Creatures	Life	Creatures
101. Revelation 12:11	Lives	Life	Life	Life
102. Revelation 16:3	Soul	Thing	Soul	Thing
103. Revelation 18:13	Souls	Human Lives	Souls	Souls
104. Revelation 18:14	Soul	Soul	Soul	You
105. Revelation 20:4	Souls	Souls	Souls	Souls



Henry Constable's Classic
The Nature and Duration of Future Punishment

Sodom and Gomorrah was 'overthrown as in a moment" (Lamentations 4:6).



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