

JOHN THREE: SIXTEEN

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CHAPTER NINE -

Should Not Perish

PERISH! That solemn word was spoken by the sweetest-lipped preacher who ever lived. Someone has truly said, "Perish is an awful word in any language." The word "**perish**" does not bring to us a theory, but a serious, solemn fact. Sin separates from GOD now and hereafter. We are living in a day when foolish men deny the reality of sin.

We make light of it - we even enjoy it. But GOD hates it and condemns it. Surely a righteous and holy GOD could do nothing else. Man is lost because of sin. There is a great gulf between sinful man and GOD. Man cannot be united to GOD save in a way that is sufficient and satisfactory to GOD. Man has no ground upon which he can approach GOD. Before a man can be saved, sin must be dealt with effectually. He cannot be saved until his sins are blotted out and his guilt cancelled.

GOD's law is perfect, holy, just, and good. Its penalty is righteous, and must be paid. Judgment must be executed. This must all be taken into account when we think of the salvation of a sinner. It was to this end that GOD gave His Son - gave Him up into the hands of justice to die in behalf of sinful men. Salvation comes only through Him.

"Should Not Perish" Presents the Future

Really, we have a past, present, and future in John 3:16. The past is seen in the word "**gave**"; the present is seen in the word "**believeth**"; but "**perish**" carries us into the future. Neither Heaven nor hell has to do with the present life.

A free-thinker is reported to have said, "I am seventy years of age and have never seen such a place as hell after all that has been said about it." His little grandson, of about seven years of age, who was listening to him all the while said, "Grandpa, have you ever been dead yet?"

Someone says, "All the hell we get we get in this world." This is not true. Such a statement is made only because a man fails to distinguish between the natural and penal consequences of sin.

As an illustration of what we mean by the difference between the two we give the following: A father tells his son not to smoke and declares that disobedience will bring chastisement. The boy disobeys the command of his father. He does smoke and becomes deathly sick as a result. Some might think this sufficient punishment for disobedience, but the sickness is only the natural

consequence of that disobedience. The penal consequence comes when the boy gets his thrashing.

A man sins and the result is a physical corruption, or a blighted mind, or remorse, regret, conscience; and when a man so suffers he says, "This is hell." No, these are just the natural consequences of sin. Hell is to come. Hell is penal.

"It is appointed unto men once to die, but AFTER this the judgment" (Hebrews 9:27). Death and judgment are GOD's appointments for men. In the verse just quoted the emphasis must be placed on the word "**appointed.**" It is a solemn word. It has to do with the utterance in Eden, "**In the day that thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die.**"

Since the day of man's disobedience death has spread its dark pall everywhere, a solemn witness to sin. Men try to put off the day of death. They spend a great deal of time in the laboratory trying to stretch out the brittle thread of life. They put forth their skill and ingenuity in an endeavor to put off the day of death, but all to no avail. It is appointed by GOD. No physician will promise to save from death. No insurance company will insure against death.

"It is appointed unto men once to die" - but that is just part of the solemn truth. Equally appointed and equally certain is "**after this the judgment.**" God "**hath appointed a day, in the which he will judge the world in righteousness**" (Acts 17:31). This day is not a day of chance, it is not a day of choice, it is a day of GOD's appointment. For the living sinner death is reserved; for the dead sinner judgment is reserved.

Some think that death will end all, but death is not the end. Indeed it is just the beginning. Someone has said, "The present time is but the ante-chamber of eternity." Six thousand years ago GOD pronounced the sentence of death upon the human race and countless deaths since that time have witnessed to the eternity of that pronouncement. Judgment is just as certain.

"Should Not Perish" Teaches a Retribution

Future retribution is not a matter of mere human opinion. It is a very clear teaching of Divine revelation.

Someone has well said that a preacher does not create that message: he delivers it. He is not even called on to defend it: only to proclaim it. We know that this teaching is very repugnant to the natural mind, therefore the natural man has, down through the ages, done everything possible to disprove the clear teaching of the Word of GOD on this subject. He has taken the word "**perish**" and tried to force into it the unscriptural meaning of annihilation. That this is not the meaning can be easily proved.

The same Greek word (*apollumi*) is translated in Mark 2:22 "**marred.**" "**And no man putteth new wine into old bottles; else the new wine doth burst the bottles, and the wine is spilled, and the bottles will be marred: but new wine must be put into new bottles.**" In the same illustration, in Luke 5:37 the word is given as "**perish**" - "**the bottles shall perish**"; and again in Matthew 9:17 - "**the bottles perish.**" Of course these were not glass bottles but skin receptacles. Certainly, the bottle that was marred or had perished had not been annihilated, it had not ceased

to exist, but it had been ruined for the purpose for which it was intended. It was no longer serviceable.

It is this same word which is translated "**lost**" in John 17:12, "**None of them is lost, but the son of perdition.**" The word does not mean annihilation in this case any more than in the case of the bottle. This is one of the strongest words in Scripture to express the final and irretrievable doom of the sinner.

In John 18:14 the same word is translated "**die.**"

"**Now Caiaphas was he, which gave counsel to the Jews, that it was expedient that one man should die for the people.**" Certainly that does not mean that this man was to be annihilated. It did mean that he was to lose his earthly existence. JESUS CHRIST was the Man Who died. He did not cease to exist.

Derived from the word "*apollumi*" is the word "*opoleia*" which has practically the same meaning. It is translated "**perdition,**" "**destruction,**" "**waste,**" "**perish.**" By the word "**destruction,**" annihilation is not meant. A destroyed thing - is simply a ruined thing. If you crush your watch under your foot you have destroyed it, but you certainly have not annihilated it.

The word "**waste**" is found in Matthew 26:8. The woman came and poured ointment on the Lord's head and the disciples said, "**To what purpose is this waste?**" That is, why this perdition, or destruction? But this precious ointment poured on the head of the Master was not destroyed, nor did it perish in the sense of ceasing to exist. It could no longer be used as ointment.

The same is true concerning the word "**perdition,**" which is just another translation of the above Greek word. In Revelation 17:8 and 11 - it is announced that the Beast is to go into perdition. In Revelation 19:20 the Beast is taken and cast into a lake of fire burning with brimstone. Undoubtedly this fulfills the prediction concerning perdition. In Revelation 20:10 Satan will be cast into this lake of fire. More than a thousand years had passed since the Beast was cast into that place, but he'll still be there. He has not been annihilated. Destruction, or perdition, in meaning coincides with the second death. There is no question about this since the second death is synonymous with the lake of fire (Revelation 20:14-15). Destruction, perdition, lake of fire, second death all mean the same thing. This is the final doom of lost sinners.

The sinner who is destroyed or who goes into perdition is not annihilated, nor does he cease to be. He is cast into the lake of fire.

That the expression "**second death**" does not refer to annihilation is very evident from the fact that the word "**death**" never carries such a meaning. A true definition of a word holds good wherever it is found.

The idea of death as annihilation breaks down everywhere and is, therefore, no definition. "**She that liveth in pleasure shall be annihilated while she liveth**" certainly is not the meaning of I Timothy 5:6. CHRIST said, "**My soul is exceeding sorrowful, even unto death**" (Matthew 26:38). Substitute annihilation. Take Romans 6:2, "**dead to sin,**" and substitute annihilation. Take Ephesians 2:1, "**dead in trespasses and sins,**" and substitute annihilation. Take I John

3:14, "**we have passed from death unto life**," and substitute annihilation. Such substitution would be proper if death meant annihilation, but it does not. I Corinthians 15:3 says, "**Christ died**." Was He annihilated? Was any part of Him annihilated? - His humanity, for instance? Absolutely not, for "**this same Jesus**" shall come again.

The fact is that death means separation. *Physical death is the separation of the spirit from the body. Spiritual death is the separation of the spirit from GOD. Eternal death is the eternal separation of the whole man, spirit, soul, and body, from GOD.*

We must never forget that everlasting punishment is entered into by resurrected beings. "**Marvel not at this: for the hour is coming, in the which all that are in the graves shall hear His voice, and shall come forth; they that have done good, unto the resurrection of life; and they that have done evil, unto the resurrection of damnation**" (John 5:28-29).

If death means extinction of being, would GOD be so foolish as to raise the dead for the purpose of annihilation? Spurgeon once said, "If hell is nothing else, it is this - eternal separation from GOD."

Any man who uses I Corinthians 15:22, "**For as in Adam all die, even so in Christ shall all be made alive**," to teach restitution is either ignorant or practicing willful deception. I Corinthians 15 is a message on resurrection, and this verse has to do with that very thing - not restitution. The effect of Adam's transgression was universal. It brought death to the whole race. The effect of CHRIST's resurrection is universal. It means the resurrection of the whole human race. Study the "**as**" and "**so**" of this verse and be convinced.

We know that the wicked will be raised for judgment, but so far as that is concerned, the suffering of the wicked does not depend upon their being in the body. The rich man in Hell was not in his body, yet he said to Abraham, "**I am tormented in this flame**" (Luke 16:24).

The Scriptures do not speak of the parable of the rich man and Lazarus. Men do, some because they deny future punishment, some because they believe in annihilation, some because they believe in soul sleep.

Any man who holds such theory must make this Scripture parabolic in order to uphold the theory. JESUS CHRIST did not say this was a parable. He never gave the slightest indication that this was to be taken in any but a literal sense; neither does the HOLY SPIRIT in inspiring the writer of Luke indicate that this was a parable; neither does He in any other portion of Scripture give such indication. When the Word of GOD does not state, nor even in the slightest way indicate, that the speech of our Lord was a parable, is not man taking much authority unto himself when he declares it to be so? The fact is, the Lord just once drew aside the curtain between this world and the next and gave just one glimpse into the condition of a lost man between death and resurrection.

In Matthew 3:12 and Luke 3:17 we have the expression "**unquenchable fire**." Dr. Bullinger says that fire "**unquenchable**" means that which cannot be put out, not necessarily that which will never go out. He says that fire is unquenchable as long - as there is anything to be consumed, but that as soon as everything consumable is gone the fire goes out. He is here teaching the

annihilation of the wicked, of course.

The Scriptures teach that man is spirit, as indestructible as GOD Himself. That meant that man is ever-existing. That means that the fire is never extinguished.

"He that believeth not the Son shall not see life; but the wrath of God abideth on him" (John 3:36). Two things are said here, the one positive and the other negative. The word **"abideth"** certainly gives the idea of permanence. Vincent says, "The present tense. As the believer hath life, so the unbeliever hath wrath abiding on him. He lives continually in an economy which is alienated from GOD, and which, in itself, must be habitually the subject of GOD's displeasure and indignation." Since the expression **"abideth"** is an eternal present tense, how can there be any hope of restitution? Since the expression **"abideth"** is an eternal present tense, how can the sinner be annihilated? Wrath cannot abide on one who does not exist, therefore the sinner must be eternally existent.

On the other hand, **"shall not see life"** means that life shall never be possessed, or as Westcott says, "Not even see so as to be able to conceive of, much less enjoy life." The sinner will be eternally existent, but will be eternally separated from Him in Whom alone is life.

In Mark 9:43-48 our Lord warned twice of the **"fire that never shall be quenched"** and thrice of the place **"where their worm dieth not, and the fire is not quenched."** Men may talk about future probation, or annihilation, or final restoration, but this one word of the Lord is fatal to all such fancies. There is no "eon" to argue about here. Our Lord does not use the words "for ever" here. Twice He uses the simple word NEVER. Three times He uses the simple word NOT. Every one can understand such words, and that is perhaps the reason the Lord used them. The fire will NEVER be quenched. It will NOT be quenched.

When our Lord said **"their worm dieth not,"** He certainly meant endless torment. If not, then you have the strange fact that there is a literal worm in hell that will never die. Surely something in that fire will never die, and it must be either a "worm" or the conscious torment of the lost. In this connection, we call attention to the book of Jude, where Jude declares that the people of Sodom were still suffering the vengeance of eternal fire.

Note that he does not say that the fire which destroyed the city of Sodom was eternal fire. He declares it was an "example." Nor does he say that the Sodomites suffered eternal fire.

He used the present tense. He said they were still suffering eternal fire in his day, but that was two thousand years after the destruction of the city. So the people of Sodom were not annihilated by the eternal fire, even after they had endured it for two thousand years.

In Mark 3:29, we have the expression **"eternal damnation."** Certainly, eternal sin merits eternal retribution. *The Dawn* quotes *the Christian World* as follows: "No sane man will ever again believe in eternal punishment as C. H. Spurgeon believed in it." D. M. Panton goes on to add: "The levity of such a statement is a nightmare. Eternal punishment is for eternal sin, and no conceivable way out of the deadlock exists. Approve the sin, and remit the penalty; ignore the sin, and remit the penalty; deny the sin, and remit the penalty; admit the sin, and yet remit the penalty :-all these are ways out of the deadlock, but all are impossible to a righteous GOD.

Calvary is the proof of what men would do with GOD if only they could lay hands on Him; and London, with Dartmoor and Bedlam let loose upon it in rape and murder and arson, would be a paradise compared to Heaven with Hell emptied into it. Only when sin carries no guilt, and wickedness no doom, will their consequences cease; and no error is more cruel than the veilings of Hell."

No earnest reader of the Word of GOD can deny that it warns men to flee from the wrath to come. Any man who denies the wrath of GOD denies the Word of GOD, and that is just their attitude. Theodore Parker was a Universalist, but when asked what he believed the Scripture taught as to the duration of hell, he said: "As a Greek scholar and not as a theologian, I will say there is no doubt that JESUS CHRIST taught the endlessness of outer darkness; but I do not accept the doctrine on His authority."

All who teach Universalism, annihilation or any other theory are in the same boat. They set themselves up as higher authorities than the SON of GOD.

Our Lord warned all those who reject Him. **"I go my way, and ye shall seek me, and shall die in your sins: whither I go ye, CANNOT come"** (John 8:21-24). Again He said, **"Ye shall die in your sins."** How solemn is that death knell - CANNOT COME. There is no "maybe" in "cannot."

"Depart from Me, ye cursed, into everlasting fire prepared for the devil and his angels" are the words of "Gentle Jesus, meek and mild." That is why they make us tremble. That is why His sternness is so terrible. GOD's wrath is the inevitable reaction of His righteousness and holiness against all sin and guilt. It is not the reaction of angry, cruel, blood-thirsty passion. The skeptic who denies the wrath of GOD by drawing such a picture merely invents a GOD of his own. GOD is love and He shows that love not by taking an unsaved man into Heaven, but by giving His Son that the sinner might be saved. On the basis of that Gift, He invites **"whosoever"** to believe. As we have said before, the only thing that stands between a sinner and GOD is his own self-will, therefore if a man is eternally lost he is an eternal suicide.

"Should Not Perish" Declares an Alternative

It is possible to perish. Our Lord said so. That word on His lips is not a light word. It's as deep as eternity. BUT - **"God is not willing that any should perish."** There is hope. What if there were no hope? What if men had to perish? What if there were no alternative? Where would we be then? But there is hope. That hope is set forth in these words, **"should NOT perish."** Thank GOD for that NOT.

"God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in Him should NOT perish." Walter Wilson wrote:

- "Millions are spent on paint to keep wood from perishing.
- Millions are spent on medicine to keep the body from perishing.
- Millions are spent on sprays and chemicals to keep the plants from perishing.
- Millions are spent on locks to keep our valuables from perishing.
- Millions are spent on life insurance to keep families from perishing.

- Millions are spent on monuments to prevent the memory from perishing.
- Millions are spent on dams, revetments and sea walls to prevent the land from perishing.
- Millions are spent on caskets and containers to prevent the corpses from perishing.
- Millions are spent on life boats and life preservers to keep the passengers from perishing.
- Millions are spent on weather proofing to prevent merchandise from perishing.

But GOD gave JESUS CHRIST to keep you from perishing."

"**Should NOT perish.**" That is very emphatic, very clear, very certain. It is beyond dispute. It cannot be contested. There is no question about it. NOT is an infallible, irrefutable, undeniable word. It leaves no shadow of a doubt. The one who believes in the Lord JESUS shall NOT perish. NOT-ever. That one is saved and safe for time and eternity. NOT! Two interpretations are impossible.

- The men of the old world perished, but Noah was saved.
- The people of Sodom perished, but Lot was saved.
- The first-born of Egypt perished, but Israel was saved.
- The citizens of Jericho perished, but Rahab was saved.
- The rejecter of CHRIST will perish, but whosoever believeth in Him shall NOT.

They will not perish like the rich man, but will depart to be with the Lord like Paul. An English paper some time ago carried the illustration with which we close.

A young minister was confronted - as the congregation expected - with an able young skeptic, Burt Olney. At the close of the first service Olney said, "You did well, but you know, I don't believe in the infallibility of the Bible."

"**It is appointed unto men once to die, but after this the judgment,**" was the young man's calm assertion.

"I can prove to you there is no such thing as a judgment after death," declared the skeptic.

"But men do die," the young pastor declared, for "**it is appointed unto men once to die, but after this the judgment.**"

"But that's no argument," the skeptic protested, "let's get down to business and discuss this matter in regular argument form."

The pastor shook his head. "I am here to preach the Word of GOD, and not to argue over it."

Olney, annoyed, turned away with the remark, "I don't believe you know enough about the Bible to argue about it."

"Perhaps you are right," was the calm rejoinder,

"but please remember this - **'it is appointed unto men once to die, but after this the judgment.'**"

The very tree-toads Olney heard on the way home sang the verse, and the stream he crossed, and the frogs seem to croak, "Judg-ment, judg-ment, judg-ment."

The next morning he called at the parsonage. "I've come to see you about that verse of Scripture you gave me last night," he said. "I've spent a terrible night with those words burning their way into me. I can't get rid of them. Tell me what I must do to be saved. I've got to get rid of this torture."

When he left, he was a child of GOD through faith in the finished work of CHRIST. He shall NOT perish!

~ end of chapter 9 ~
