

## WHERE THEIR WORM DIETH NOT<sup>1</sup>

Mark 9:44.

Where their worm dieth not, and the fire is not quenched.

Christ, in the foregoing verse, counsels his disciples that if their right hand offend them, they should cut it off. By “offending” here is meant a causing them to stumble, if it be that which they find ensnares them and leads them into sin, and exposes them to God’s wrath. By the “right hand,” “right foot” and “right eye” here is meant anything that is very dear to a man. If it be sin, or if it be found an unavoidable occasion of sin, they must wholly separate themselves from it. And this counsel Christ enforces, by telling them that it is most for their own interest: for it is better for them “to enter into life maimed, than having two hands to go into hell” [v. 43].

And then a reason of it is given: because in hell “their worm dieth not, and the fire is not quenched.” The same is repeated in the 46th and 48th verses, wherein reference seems to be had to that place in the Old Testament, Is. 66:24, “And they shall go forth, and look upon the carcasses of the men that have transgressed against me: for their worm shall not die, neither shall their fire be quenched; and they shall be an abhorring to all flesh.”

Allusion is probably had in the expression to these two things, viz.:

1. To the custom of burning dead bodies. That was the way amongst the heathen nations round about Canaan of disposing of dead bodies, to burn ’em. Therefore the Prophet says, they shall “look upon their carcasses,” and “their fire shall not be quenched”; that is, their dead bodies shall not burn a little while and then be consumed to ashes, and so the fire go out, or is quenched, when once it has done its work; but the fire shall always continue burning, and the carcasses shall always remain unconsumed but still burning.

And in that expression of their worm’s not dying there is evidently an allusion to this: viz., a dead carcass’ lying upon the face of the earth unburied, till it breeds worms. The worms, they will continue till they have eat up the putrefying flesh, and then they will die. But it shall not be so here; the worm shall be always gnawing, and yet the body shall remain undevoured, so that they shall be their everlasting food.

### DOCTRINE.

*That the torments of hell will be eternal.*

The doctrine of eternal punishments is that that lies very much in the way of carnal men’s quietly enjoying themselves, and peaceably gratifying their lusts and enjoying their pleasures. Therefore, there are many ways that have been invented by such to get rid of the encumbrance of it. Some endeavor to make themselves easy by calling in question the being of a hell, or any future state, and in this they take various methods: some make a doubt of the being of a God; others, that pretend to acknowledge a God, deny revelation, or the holy Scriptures, which so plainly reveals a

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<sup>1</sup> Edwards, Jonathan. “Where Their Worm Dieth Not.” *Jonathan Edwards Sermons*. Edited by Wilson H. Kinnach. New Haven, CT: The Jonathan Edwards Center at Yale University, 1730.

future state to us; and then they suppose the matter of it be left only to the light of nature, to be left very much in doubt, and so they will believe what they please about [it].

Others, that own a hell, flatter themselves that the torments of it are not so great as is pretended.

But there is nothing that is said about hell torments, that is so frightful, and that so damps the pleasures of the ungodly, as the eternity of them. If they were represented as never so great, and though they continued a long time, yet it would be a mighty comforting, encouraging thing to 'em under the thoughts and fears of ['em], to think that there would be an end to 'em. Though it would be very hard to bear while it lasts, yet 'twould be a great support to think that the time was coming, when there would be no more of 'em. If it were thus, they could be more careless about the matter, and could go on in their sinful pursuits with less disturbance. But this eternity of torment is a thing that, when they seriously think of [it], they can't get over, nor can they find any comforting consideration belonging to the matter. Therefore, some have denied that hell torments are eternal. Eternity is the sting of the doctrine of hell torments, whereby chiefly it is that it stings the consciences of wicked men; and there is no other way to avoid the smart of it, but to deny it.

Therefore, we shall now endeavor to clear up this Doctrine by showing,

I. What is meant by eternity.

II. That hell torments are eternal.

III. For what reasons and ends they will be eternal.

As to the

I. [First] thing, viz., What is meant by eternity. The thing is what we cannot comprehend nor perfectly understand, for this plain reason: because that that is infinite, cannot be perfectly comprehended by that which is finite. Our method of conceiving of infinite things is very imperfect, and if we attempt to run forth in our thoughts, and so to comprehend it, we are presently lost and confounded, and find ourselves as far from a comprehension as we were at first. It is no positive idea that we have of eternity, which God alone, who is an infinite mind, hath. God has a positive, comprehensive view of eternity, and of all things that shall be during the whole of it, because his understanding is infinite. But our idea of it is only negative: our way is to run out a great length in our minds, and when we have done and gone as far as our minds can go, thence to deny any end. And so all the explication that we can give to eternity, is that

*It is that duration that has no end.*

But yet the word "eternity" is understood in several senses. Sometimes, that duration that is without beginning, that we conceive of as past, we call eternity. We run back in our minds thousands and millions of ages, and easily perceive that, let us go back never so far, we come no nearer to the first beginning of eternal existence.

Sometimes we understand by it duration without terms, both what is past and what is to come. Thus when we say God is an eternal being, we mean that [he] was from everlasting and will be to everlasting; he is without beginning, and without end.

And sometimes [we understand eternity] only for what is to come, or a duration that is without end, whereby the word "end" is not understood in its most comprehensive sense for terms, whether of beginning or end, but that term that is after the duration. In this sense, the existence of all reasonable, understanding, created spirits is eternal. And 'tis in this sense that we mean, when we say the torments of hell are eternal. And because it is such as that we cannot comprehend or define, it mayn't be amiss, in order to our help in conceiving of it, to mention some of the properties of it. Those properties that I shall mention, though they may help our conceptions so as to subserve to our practice, yet they are so far from giving us a comprehensive understanding of it, that they'll

only show us our ignorance, and make us to see that the nature of it is mysterious and incomprehensible. The particulars that I shall mention will be but so many paradoxes.

*First.* It cannot be divided into integral parts. The greatest finite duration may be divided into integral parts; it may be divided into halves and quarters, into tenth parts, etc. But there is no such thing as half of an eternity, or a tenth or a thousandth part. Eternity cannot justly be conceived of as being made up of halves, or quarters, etc.

Our immortal souls, that are to remain to all eternity, the time will never come when it can be said of 'em that they have remained, or that they have passed through a quarter of their duration. The time will never come when it can be said concerning the wicked in hell, that a tenth part, or a thousandth, or a millionth part of their continuance in hell [has passed].

We can as soon by reckoning or multiplying come to the end of eternity, and reckon up the whole of it, as we can come to the thousandth part, because indeed, there is no such [thing] neither as an end nor a thousandth part of eternity.

*Second.* An eternal duration can't be set out or distinguished by certain periods. A man's life may be set out by certain periods: there is his childhood, his youth, his middle age and his old age. The continuance of the world may be set out by certain periods: it can be measured by revolutions of the sun and stars, by generations and by ages. There is the first age and the last age, the first century, the second century, and then will be the last century. It may hereafter be told how many ages and how many years the world has stood, and in what age or century it was destroyed.

But there is no such thing with respect to eternity, or the duration of men in another world. There is no youth or middle age or old age there; we can never measure it out by years, or by centuries, or by thousands of years. There are none can tell how many thousand years the immortal souls of men will last; nor, indeed, is there any such thing as any particular number of thousand years, and no more, in eternity.

*Third.* A great while, or a long period of time, bears no greater proportion to eternity, than a little while. A thousand years or a thousand ages bears no greater proportion to eternity, than a minute; or, which is the same thing, a thousand ages is as much less than eternity as a minute is. A minute comes as near to an equality to it, or you may take as many thousand ages out of eternity, out of that whole, as you can minutes.

He that has lived but one day, his age is as near an eternity as he that has lived the longest life. If a man, by the utmost skill in arithmetic, reckon up a great number of ages, and should rise by multiplication to never so prodigious numbers, should make as great leaps as he could and should rise as fast as he could, and should spend all his lifetime in multiplying, the product of all would be no nearer equal to eternity, than one minute. And therefore, those that understand most, are as far from a comprehensive knowledge—as angels.

*Fourth.* It cannot be made less by subtraction, nor greater by addition. If we take away from eternity a thousand years or ages, the remainder is not the less for it; and if we add as much at the beginning, it don't make it the greater. Thus the eternity of those that went to hell in the time of the flood, is no greater than the eternity of wicked men that die nowadays; although they began to exist so long before, eternity is not the less for beginning late, nor the greater for beginning early. And so when the wicked have suffered long, they won't live the less. And therefore,

*Fifth.* It will forever be but beginning, and that, because all time that is or can be past, let it be never so much, has no proportion to what remains. It is but as a point. The wicked, after they have suffered many millions of ages, they will still be as it were in the first point, but only setting out in torment. That will be no comfort to 'em, that so much is past and gone: for they'll have never

the less yet to bear; they will be but beginning. There never will a time come, but that if you compare that which is past with that which is to come, it will be but a point, as nothing at all.

II. The torments of hell are eternal. They shall remain forever. There will be in strictness no end to their continuance, either by the alteration of the state of the sinner from a suffering and tormented state to another, or by the sinners and sufferers ceasing to be.

Those that die in sin, all of them must remain in a tormented state and condition throughout all that endless duration that we have now been speaking of. They shall never see any end to their torments; yea, the time will never come when it can be said they have continued suffering a millionth part of the time that they must continue suffering.

The continuance of their torments cannot be measured out by revolutions of the sun and planets, or by centuries or the ages of worlds. They shall continue suffering when this world shall be overthrown. They shall continue suffering and [being] tormented when the sun shall grow old and dull, and cease to shine. When the planets shall cease their revolutions, and fixed stars shall be moved out of their places that they have held so many ages, and the heavens and the whole visible world shall decay with age and come to ruin, then the torments of ungodly men will be but beginning; what will be past of their sufferings, will be but a point to what remains.

They must remain in torment through millions of such ages as shall be equal to the age of the sun, moon and stars, and after all, it will still be all one, no nearer to the end of their torment. The past part of their torment will [be] as disproportionate to the remainder as the first minute.

This doctrine is indeed awful and dreadful; it is dreadful to think of it. But yet 'tis what God, the eternal God who made us and who has us, soul and body, in his hands, has abundantly declared unto us. So that, so sure as God is true, there will absolutely be no end to the misery of hell, either by the sufferers' ceasing to be, or by their states being changed.

*First.* Ungodly men will never cease to be. There have been some that by "eternal death," or being eternally destroyed in Scripture, pretend that nothing else is meant but only an eternal annihilation or abolition of the being of ungodly men. Which is, first, most contrary to the plain and very frequent declarations of God. Our text is a direct proof of the contrary. As I said before, by the worm's not dying, and fire's not being quenched, allusion is had to a dead corpse's being eaten of worms, and then dying there when their food fails; and to the manner of burning dead bodies till they were consumed to ashes, and then putting the fire out. But here it is said that the worm shall not die, nor the fire be quenched; which denotes the continuance of the food to the worm and the fire, contrary to what it is in dead bodies. The soul will continue suffering those torments, and the worm shall not die, because the existence of that that it feeds upon ceases [not], as it is in bodies. The fire shall continue burning, but it shall not be quenched, as it is when a dead body is burnt: when the body is consumed, the fire is quenched. But the fire of hell never shall be quenched, because the soul shall never be consumed; it shall always be burning, but never shall be burnt up: this is doubtless the meaning of the text.

It is not God's design to teach us that if we continue in sin, we shall be turned to nothing, but that we shall be forever and ever tormented. Therefore, Christ said concerning Judas, that it had been better that he never had been born, Matt. 26:24. And we are told concerning the rich man that "in hell he lift up his eyes, being in torments, and saw Abraham afar off, and Lazarus in his bosom" [Luke 16:23]. And we are told that they will weep and wail and gnash their teeth; Christ often tells us so. They shall be in fire; they shall be forever suffering the wrath of God, that is often compared to fire, to fire and brimstone. It would be at all proper to represent a state of annihilation to a dwelling in a furnace of fire.

God's wrath will be actually put forth and pouring out upon ungodly men forever. If they were only turned to nothing, there would be one exertion of wrath, and then there would be no more, because the object of it would cease: but "they shall dwell in everlasting burnings" [Is. 33:14].

'Tis expressly said they shall "be tormented day and night forever and ever," Rev. 20:10; and the smoke of their torment is said to rise up forever, Rev. 14:11.

Therefore the sinners in Zion say, "Who among us shall dwell with everlasting burnings?" Is. 33:14. If they were only to be turned to nothing, why should they say so? They did not mean, "Who can dwell with annihilation?" for there is no dwelling in that case.

Wicked men shall suffer a like punishment with the devils, shall be turned into the fire prepared for the devil and his angels. But the punishment of the devils is not annihilation: for they still have an existence, as is plain by the Scripture.

The wicked, they shall suffer different degrees of torment, which can't be in annihilation. Thus Christ says, "It shall be more tolerable for the land of Sodom and Gomorrah" and "for Tyre and Sidon in the day of judgment, than for thee" [Matt. 10:15, 11:22]. And he teaches us in that, Matt. 5:21, "and he that is angry with his brother," that the torment will be proportionable to men's sins. All sin brings guilt and contracts a debt; therefore, those that sin more owe a greater debt, but all must pay the uttermost farthing.

Christ, when he suffered in our stead, he did not suffer annihilation for a while, but he suffered pain and torment.

The spirits of ungodly men before the resurrection are not in a state of annihilation, but in a state of misery. They are "spirits in prison," as the Apostle says of them that were drowned in the flood, 1 Pet. 3:19.

And after the end of the world, they will be so far from being in a state of annihilation, that their bodies as well as souls will exist and remain forever in a state of torment.

Gladly would the wicked in hell embrace annihilation, if they could but obtain it. But their state will be infinitely worse than that: they "shall seek death, and shall not find it; they shall desire to die, and death shall flee from them" [Rev. 9:6]. Therefore the ungodly, when Christ comes, they shall creep into holes and dens in the mountains, "and say to the mountains and rocks, Fall on us, and hide us from the face of him that sitteth on the throne, and from the wrath of the Lamb," preferring death and annihilation to the wrath of the Lamb, Rev. 6:16.

Men have sometimes in this world suffered so greatly, that they have rather chosen death and annihilation than such a state: and it was so with Job, a good man. But if a good man may in this world suffer so much, doubtless the wicked in another world will suffer much more: for if such things are done "in the green tree, what shall be done in the dry?" [Luke 23:31]; and if judgment "begin at the house of God, what will the end of them be that obey not the gospel of God?" [1 Pet. 4:17]; and if the righteous are scarcely saved, "where will the ungodly and the sinner appear?" [1 Pet. 4:18].

*Second.* 'Tis very unreasonable to suppose that when God threatens eternal death, that he means merely annihilation. If the Scriptures had not been so particular and abundant in this matter, yet if God threatened eternal death, we might reasonably conclude that he meant some sensible sort of death, and not a mere non-existence: that is, that the wicked shall die eternally, some such way that they shall know of it; they shall be sensible of their own calamity under that death: for God will repay the wicked to his face. When God's threatenings are executed, he shall know, and be sensible of it. Ungodly men shall be sensible all the time, through the whole eternity, that their eternal death is to continue. They shall find God's word true, which they never will, if they are

turned to nothing. Eternal death without death is some evil that the subject of [it] may be sensible of.

The threatening of eternal death carries in it an eternal state of doleful darkness and gloomy, horrible, desperate misery and dolors, answerable to those awful and horrid aspects and appearances which attend the death of the body.

*Third.* There never will be an end to their torment, by any change or alteration in this state. Their state will never be changed for the better; this we may be as sure of, as we are of the truth and veracity of God. Here, I shall show, first, that God's threatenings and declarations in his holy Word do speak of sufferings that are properly endless; and second, that 'tis inconsistent with God's veracity not to fulfill what he has declared in this matter.

1. 'Tis a proper eternity, or really endless duration, that is signified by God's denunciations. Some have said only a long time was signified. Concerning the punishment of ungodly men, we in no place find any exception or limitation, but we have it signified to us in various ways, and by various expressions, that the punishment will be properly everlasting.

We are told in the text that the worm shall not die, and the fire never be quenched. The fires of hell are said to be "everlasting burnings" and "everlasting burnings," over and over, and "everlasting destruction from the presence [of the Lord]," 2 Thess. 1:9]. And [in] 2 Pet. 2:17, it is said of the wicked, that for them is reserved the blackness of darkness forever.

Yea, 'tis said that they shall be tormented "forever and ever." Rev. 14:10–11, "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"; and 20:10, "and shall be tormented day and night forever and ever." What expressions are they by which the Scripture signifies a proper eternity, if not by those? Or what expressions would be devised more strongly to signify it, than such a repetition, "forever and ever"? The same expression as is used to signify the eternity of God himself. Rev. 4:9, "to him who sat on the throne, who liveth forever and ever"; and so in the 10th verse, and 5:14 and 10:6 and 15:7. So that doubtless the Scripture would teach us that the torments of the wicked shall endure as long as God endures.

We are expressly told that the things of the unseen are eternal. 2 Cor. 4:18, "while we look not at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen: for the things which are seen are temporal; but the things which are not seen are eternal." They are called "eternal" in contradistinction to the things that have an end, or are temporal; which would not be, if they were indeed temporal.

2. We may be sure that God will fulfill what he has declared and threatened, as he is true. His truth obliges him to do it. God has declared to us, and assured us abundantly, that the wicked shall go away into everlasting punishment, that they shall receive "everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord, and from the glory of his power." There can be nothing more full, more positive and absolute than the threatenings of eternal misery to the ungodly. And it would be very blasphemous to suppose that God should so often and absolutely declare this to be his design, to punish wicked men eternally, if it were not really his design. His declarations then would be contrary to what he knows to be the truth: for he knows all things that are future.

And to say it may be that God has a secret design of setting the damned at liberty after a while, and that he only threatens them with eternal destruction only to scare them and to deter them from sin, but that he looks upon himself at liberty to do as he pleases, to put on and to their torment after a while, and secretly intends to do it, is as good as to say that there is no dependence upon God's

Word in such matters, and that it is impossible for God, by anything that he can say, to assure mankind of any future evil that he intends to bring upon them, because God is at liberty whether to fulfill what he says or no.

If it be here said that we have instances of God's not fulfilling his threatenings—as his threatening to Adam, and in him to mankind, that they should surely die if they eat the forbidden fruit—I answer, It is not true that God did not fulfill that threatening: he fulfilled it, and will fulfill it, every jot and tittle.

When God said, "Thou shalt surely die" [Gen. 2:17], if we respect spiritual death, it was fulfilled in Adam's person on the day that he eat: God immediately took away his image, his Holy Spirit and original righteousness, which was the highest and best life of our first parents, and they were immediately in the doleful state of spiritual death.

If we respect temporal death, that was also fulfilled: he brought death upon himself and all his posterity by it, and he virtually received that death. On that very day that he did eat, his body was brought into a corruptible, mortal and dying condition; and so it continued till it was dissolved. The stroke was struck then.

If we look at eternal death, and indeed, all that death that was comprehended in the threatening, it was, properly speaking, fulfilled in Christ. When God said to Adam, "If thou eatest, thou shalt die," he spoke not only to him and of him personally; but the words respected mankind, Adam and his race, and doubtless was so understood by him. His offspring were to be looked upon as sinning in him, and so should die with [him]. But the words do as justly allow of an imputation of death or of sin or dying in a surety, as sinning in one. Therefore, the threatening is fulfilled in the death of Christ, the surety. "Heaven and earth [shall] pass away, [but my words shall not pass away," Matt. 24:35].

And another objection may be from God's threatening to Nineveh: he threatened that in forty days Nineveh should be destroyed, which yet [he] did not fulfill.

I answer, The threatening could justly be looked upon no otherwise than as conditional. It was of the nature of a warning, and not of an absolute denunciation. Why was Jonah sent to the Ninevites, but only to give 'em warning, that they might have opportunity to repent and reform, and avert the approaching destruction? God had no other design and end in sending the Prophet to them, but that they might be warned and tried by him, as God warned the Israelites, and warned Judah and Jerusalem before their destruction. Therefore the prophets, together with their prophecies of approaching destruction, join earnest exhortations to reform and repent, that it might be averted. No more could justly be understood to be certainly threatened, than only that Nineveh should be destroyed in forty days, continuing as it was: for it was for their wickedness that destruction was threatened, and so the Ninevites took it. And therefore, when the cause is removed, the effect ceases. It was contrary to God's known manner to threaten punishment and destruction for sin here in this world absolutely, so that it should be understood that it shall come upon them unavoidably, let 'em reform and repent, and do what they will. Agreeable to Jer. 18:7–8, "At what instant I shall speak concerning a nation, and concerning a kingdom, to pluck up, and to pull down, and to destroy it; if that nation, against whom I have pronounced, turn from their evil, I will repent of the evil that I thought to do unto them." So that all threatenings of this nature had a condition implied in them, according to God's known and declared manner. And the Ninevites did not take it as an absolute denunciation or sentence: if they had, they would have despaired of any benefit by fasting and reformation.

But the threatenings of eternal wrath are positive and absolute. There is nothing in the Word of God that we can gather any condition from; the opportunity of escaping is only in this world, the only state of trial where we have any offers of mercy, or there is any place for repentance.

We not only have the declarations of eternal punishment by way of threatening, but we have in the Word of God descriptions given of the manner of the fulfillment of it. We have a particular account of it, how the sentence shall be passed at the day of judgment, and shall accordingly be executed: they “shall go away into everlasting punishment” [Matt. 25:46].

And therefore, except God’s Word passes away and falls to the ground, we may be assured that the torments of hell will be eternal.

We are come now, in the

III. [Third place,] to inquire why the torments that wicked men shall suffer in another world will be eternal. Here we shall, first, show what is more immediately the reason of it; second, shall endeavor to show what good ends are obtained by it.

*First.* That which is the immediate reason why the misery of ungodly men in another world will be eternal, is because they deserve it. The punishment’s being eternal, is infinite; there is no end to it; they will always be suffering, and never will have suffered enough, because what is infinite can never be exhausted. And the reason is, because they deserve an infinite punishment. ’Tis meet that sin should be punished with as great a punishment as it deserves; ’tis the governing justice of God, to render to every one according to his deserts. He therein gives every one his own.

Now that the demerit of sin is infinite, is evident by that, [that] it is a violation of infinite obligations. So great as our obligation to our duty is, so great is the evil of sin, which is a violation of those obligations; because therein lies the evil of sin, that it is a violation of obligation.

Now our obligations to God to love and obey him, are infinite: for so great as God’s worthiness of love and obedience is, so great is our obligation to it; but he is infinitely worthy of it, because he is infinitely great, excellent and glorious. Surely, so much the greater and glorious and excellent be a person that we are concerned in and are dependent on, so much the more worthy he is of esteem, honor and love.

But God is infinitely glorious, and he hath made us, and hath made us for himself, and we are dependent upon him wholly for being and well-being. Sin has in it infinite evil, as it is enmity and opposition and contrariety to infinite good, to infinite glory, majesty and grace. ’Tis infinite evil to despise infinite majesty and to hate infinite loveliness.

*Second.* As to the good ends hereby obtained:

1. Hereby, God vindicates his injured majesty. Wherein sinners cast contempt upon it and trample it in the dust, God vindicates and honors it, and makes his majesty appear as it is indeed, infinite, by showing that it is infinitely dreadful to contemn or affront it.

2. God glorifies his justice. The glory of God is the greatest good; ’tis that which is the chief end of the creation; ’tis a thing of far greater importance than anything else. But this is one way wherein God will glorify himself, viz., in the eternal destruction of [the] ungodly: he’ll glorify his justice; he therein will appear as a just governor of the world. God’s vindictive justice will appear strict, exact, awful and terrible, and therefore glorious.

3. God hereby indirectly glorifies his grace in the vessels of mercy. The saints in heaven, they will behold the torments of the damned. “The smoke of their torment ascendeth up forever and ever: and they have no rest day nor night” [Rev. 14:11]. Is. 66:24, “And they shall go forth, and look upon the carcasses of the men that have transgressed against me: for their worm shall not die, neither shall their fire be quenched.” And [in the] 14th [chapter of] Revelations, at the 10th verse,



it is said, they “shall be tormented in the presence of the holy angels, and in the presence of the Lamb.” So they shall be in the presence of the glorified saints.

And they thereby shall be made the more sensible how great their salvation is, when they shall see how great misery it is that God has saved them from, and how great a difference he has made between their state and the state of others, that were no more sinful by nature than they. It will give them more of a sense of the wonderfulness of God’s grace to them; every time they look upon the damned, it will excite in them a lively and admiring sense of the grace of God, in making them so to differ. This is what the Apostle informs us is one end of the damnation of ungodly men. Rom. 9:22–23, “What if God, willing to show his wrath, endured with much longsuffering the vessels of wrath fitted to destruction: and that he might make known the riches of his grace on the vessels of mercy.” It will double the ardor of their love.

4. And lastly, the sight of hell torments will exalt the happiness of the saints forever. It will not only make them more sensible of the greatness and trueness of the grace of God in their happiness, but it will really make their happiness the greater, as it will make them more sensible of their own happiness. It will give them a sweeter relish of it; it will make them prize it the more, when they see others that were of the same nature and rank, under the same circumstances, under such misery, and they so distinguished; it will make them sensible how happy they be. A sense of the opposite misery, greatly increases the relish of any joy or pleasure.

The sight of the wonderful power, the great and dreadful majesty, and awful justice and holiness of God manifested in the eternal punishment of ungodly men, will make them prize his favor and love exceedingly the more. So they will be so much the happier in the enjoyment of it.

#### APPLICATION.

[Use] I [of] *Information*. Hence learn how strange the folly and madness of the greater part of men is, that for the sake of present, momentary gratifications, run the venture of enduring all those torments that are eternal. They prefer a small pleasure or wealth, or a little earthly honor or greatness for a moment, to a probability of escaping this punishment. How mad are they that are thus careless of their souls. For if it be true that the torments of hell are eternal, “What will it profit a man, if he gain the whole world, and lose his own soul? or what shall a man give in exchange for his soul?” [Matt. 16:26]. What is there here in this world but what is a trifle, lighter than vanity, in comparison of these eternal things?

How mad are men that so often hear of these things, and that pretend to believe ’em, and can live but a little while, a few years, and don’t pretend to expect to live here longer than others of their species ordinarily do; and yet are careless about what becomes of themselves in another world, where there is no change.

And when they hear that, if they go on in sin, they shall be eternally miserable, they are not frightened by it. They hear it with as much carelessness and coldness, as if they were no way concerned in the matter, when they don’t know but that it may be their case that they may be suffering those torments before a week [comes] to an end.; nor it would be no strange thing, no other than a common thing, if it should be so.

How can men be so careless of such a matter as their own eternal and desperate destruction and torment? What a strange stupor and senselessness is it that possesses the hearts of men.

How common a thing is it to see men that are told from sabbath to sabbath of eternal misery, and that are as mortal as other men, that seem to be so careless about that, [that] they don’t seem to be at all restrained by it from whatever their soul hasteth after. It is not their care to escape eternal misery, half so much as it is how they may get money and land, and be considerable in the

world, and how they shall gratify their senses. Their thoughts are a great deal more exercised about this, and much more of their care and concern is about this. Eternal misery, though they be many days exposed to it, is a thing neglected; 'tis but now and then thought on, and then with a great deal of stupidity, and not with concernedness enough to stir them up to do anything considerable in order to escape it.

They ben't made sensible that it is worth their while to take any considerable pains in order to it. And if they do take pains for a little while, they soon leave off, and something else takes up their thoughts and concern.

Thus you'll see it amongst young and old. Multitudes of those that are in youth live a careless life, and take little care about their salvation. And so you'll see it amongst many middle-aged persons. And so it is still with many when advanced in years, and they certainly draw near to the grave.

And yet those same persons will seem to acknowledge that the greater part of men go to hell and suffer eternal misery, and that, through their carelessness about it: but yet they'll do the same.

How strange is it, that men can enjoy themselves and be at rest when they are thus hanging over eternal burnings, when they have no lease of their lives. They know not how soon the thread they hang by will snap, nor do they pretend to know; and if it snaps, they are gone, they are lost forever, and there is no remedy: and yet they don't trouble themselves much about it. Nor will they hearken to those that cry to them, and entreat them to take care of themselves and labor to get out of that dangerous condition: they ben't willing to take so much pains; they choose not to be diverted from amusing themselves with those toys and vanities which they have in hand. Thus, well might the Wise Man say, as in Eccles. 9:3, "the heart of the sons of men is full of evil, madness is in their heart while they live, and afterward they go to the dead."

And how much wiser are those few that make it their main business to lay a foundation for eternity, to secure their salvation.

*Use II of Exhortation*, to exhort sinners seasonably to take care to escape those eternal torments. If they are eternal, one would think that should be enough to awaken your concern and excite your diligence. If the punishment be eternal, it is infinite, as we said before; and therefore, no other evil, no death, no temporary torment that ever you heard of or that you can imagine, is anything in comparison with it, but is as much less, and less considerable, not only as a grain of sand is less than the whole universe, but as it [is] less than the boundless space that encompasses it. Therefore, here,

*First.* Be entreated to consider attentively how great and awful a thing eternity is. Though you can't comprehend it anything the more for considering, yet you may be made more sensible by it, that it is not a thing to be disregarded.

Do but consider what it is to suffer extreme torment forever and ever, day and night, from one day to another, from one year to another, from one age to another, from one thousand of ages to another, and so adding age to age and thousands to thousands in pain, in wailing and lamenting, groaning and shrieking and gnashing of teeth, with your soul full of dreadful grief and amazement, with your body and every member full of racking torture, without any possibility of getting ease, without any possibility of moving God to pity by your cries, without any possibility of hiding yourself from him, without any possibility [of] diverting your thoughts from your pain, without any possibility of turning to nothing, without any possibility of obtaining any manner of mitigation or help or change for the better any way.

*Second.* Do but consider how dreadful despair will be in such torment. How dismal will it be when you under those racking torments, to know assuredly that you never, never shall be delivered

from them; to have no hope, when you shall wish that you might but be turned into nothing, but shall have no hope of it; when you shall wish that you might be turned into a toad or a serpent, but shall have no hope of it; when you would rejoice if you might but have any help after you have endured those torments millions of ages, but shall have no hope of it.

And when, after you have worn out the age of the sun, moon and stars in your dolorous groans and lamentations, without rest day or night, or one minute's ease, yet [you] shall have no hope of ever being delivered. And when, after you have worn out a thousand more such ages, yet shall have no hope, but shall know that you are not one whit the nearer the end of your torments: but still there are the same groans, the same shrieks, the same doleful cries incessantly made by you, and the smoke of your torment still rising. Your soul, which has been agitated with God's wrath all this while, yet exists to bear more wrath; your body, which has been burning and roasting all this while in those glowing flames, yet is not consumed, but remains to roast through eternity: still that is not at all shortened by what is past.

You may, by considering, make yourself more sensible than ordinarily you be, but it is a little you can conceive what it is to have no hope in such torments.

How sinking would it be to you to endure such pains as you have felt in this world without any hope, and know that you never should be delivered from it, nor have one minute's rest. You scarcely can now conceive how doleful that would be: how much more, to endure the mighty weight of the wrath of God without hope.

The more the damned in hell think of the eternity of their torments, the more amazing will it appear to them: and alas! they are not able to help thinking of it. They will not be able to keep it out of their minds; their tortures won't divert them from it, but will fix their attention to it. O! how dreadful will eternity appear to them, after they have been thinking on't for ages together, and have had so long an experience of their torments.

If it were possible for the damned in hell to have a comprehensive knowledge of eternity, their sorrow and grief would be infinite in degree. The comprehensive view of so much sorrow that they must go through, would cause infinite grief for the present. And though they will not have a comprehensive knowledge of it, yet they will doubtless have a vastly more lively and strong apprehension of it than we can have in this world. Their torments will give them an impression of it. A man in his present state, without any enlargement of his capacity, would have vastly a more lively impression of eternity than he has if he were only under some pretty sharp pain of some member of his body, and at the same time were assured that he must endure that pain forever. His pain would give him a greater sense of eternity than other men have.

How much more will those excruciating torments that the damned will suffer. And besides, their capacity will probably be enlarged, their understandings quicker and stronger in a future [world]. And God can give them as great a sense and as strong an impression of eternity as he pleases, to increase their grief and horror.

Be entreated, ye that are in a Christless state and condition, and are going in the way to hell, that are daily exposed to damnation, to consider these things. If you don't, it will surely be but a little while before you shall experience them, and then you'll know how dreadful 'tis to despair in hell: and it may be before this year, or this month, or this week is at an end, before another sabbath, or ever you have opportunity to hear another sermon.