

The Eternal Torment Of The Wicked

Robert Murray M'Cheyne:

THE FIRST THING TO be enquired into in these words is, no are the persons who sing this remarkable song? There are much people in heaven: verse 1, 'I heard a great voice of much people in heaven, saying, Alleluia; salvation and glory, and honour, and power, unto the Lord our God.' They are the same people that are spoken to in the 20th verse of the chapter before: 'Rejoice over her, thou heaven, and ye holy apostles and prophets, for God hath avenged you on her.' Now, it is the same people, who, in the beginning of the 19th chapter, are described as saying, 'Alleluia, salvation, and glory, and honour, and power, unto the Lord our God'. It is 'thou heaven', that is, ye inhabitants of heaven. They are, no doubt, the same people that John had previously seen, 'a great multitude, which no man could number, of all nations, and kindred, and people, and tongues, who stood before the throne, and before the Lamb, clothed with white robes, and palms in their hands' (Revelation 7:9). And they are described in another passage in this same book, as an hundred and forty and four thousand that stand with the Lamb on Mount Zion singing the new song (Revelation 14: 1). They learned it on earth, and now they sing it in heaven; so that, dear brethren, the song we are now about to consider is the song of heaven— the song that all the holy apostles, and prophets, and saints sing.

There is a second thing to be considered, and that is, What is the matter of this song? 'And again they said, Alleluia. And her smoke rose up for ever and ever.' The word 'Alleluia' is composed of two Hebrew words, which signify, 'Praise ye Jehovah'. Now it is often taken to express joy. It is so in the Psalms, so no doubt it is in heaven. 'They have got songs and everlasting joy upon their heads: sorrow and weeping are for ever fled away' (Isaiah 35: 10). It seems as if they would never weary singing it, for, 'again, they said, Alleluia'. It has another meaning, it is that of admiring praise, 'Praise ye the Lord'. It is when a person has got some glorious view of Christ— some new discovery of the character of God. Every new discovery of God's majesty bursting in on the soul, calls forth another song of praise - 'Alleluia, praise ye the Lord.'

There is a third thing to be considered, and that is, What is the occasion of this song of the redeemed? It is because 'her smoke rose up for ever and ever'. Observe, at the 20th verse of the preceding chapter, it is said, 'Rejoice over her, thou heaven, and ye holy apostles and prophets; for God hath avenged you on her.' And accordingly, 'thou heaven', and 'ye holy apostles and prophets', are described as singing 'Alleluia'. And why? Just because Antichrist is overthrown. You will observe, brethren, if you compare the preceding chapter with this when you go home, that it is the destruction of Babylon that they rejoice over. But see how the world mourned for Babylon when she fell. 'The kings and the merchants, and the ship-masters stood afar off, and would not come near for fear of her torment, but cried, alas! alas! that great city of Babylon, that mighty city, for in one hour is this judgment come' (Revelation 18:9- 10). Oh! brethren, observe, when Antichrist is destroyed, then the inhabitants of heaven will begin to sing and clap their hands, 'For true and righteous are his judgments; for he hath judged the great whore, which did corrupt the earth with her fornication, and hath avenged the blood of his servants at her hand' (Revelation 19:2). And when they see her smoke ascend to heaven, they will sing, 'Alleluia, for God hath avenged you on her.'

From this very solemn passage I draw this doctrine: That the eternal torment of the wicked will be matter of eternal song with the redeemed.

I tried to show you last Sabbath that it was perfectly consistent with the character of God to punish sinners in an eternal hell, and now, this evening, I desire to show you, by the teaching of the Holy Spirit— for oh! brethren, it is an awful truth— that the torment of the wicked will be matter of eternal song to the redeemed.

The eternal torment of the wicked will be matter of no grief to the redeemed.

However much the people of God weep over the wicked now, yet it can be shown that in heaven the torment of the wicked will be no matter of grief to the redeemed. This will appear evident if you consider the day of judgment:

When the Son of man shall come in his glory, and all the holy angels with him, then shall he sit upon the throne of his glory; and before him shall be gathered all nations; and he shall separate them one from another, as a shepherd divideth his sheep from the goats And these shall go away into everlasting punishment; but the righteous into life eternal (Matthew 25:31-46).

Now, brethren, no reflecting mind can consider this remarkable passage, who will be witness to the condemnation of the wicked without seeing the truth of what I have been saying. There can be no doubt but that ministers and people will stand together, and be witnesses to one another's acquittal or condemnation - that parents shall stand and be witnesses to the acquittal or condemnation of their children -that children shall stand and be witnesses to the acquittal or condemnation of their parents - that husbands shall stand and be

witnesses to the acquittal or condemnation of their wives, and that wives shall stand and be witnesses to the acquittal or condemnation of their husbands. Then, dear brethren, it follows immediately from this, that it will be no grief to the righteous to see the wicked condemned. Their tears will be over, their sorrows will be past, and yet they will see them condemned, they will hear their agonizing cry— they will see their sad countenances, and yet they will not shed a tear.

The same thing is evident if you will consider the expression in the Bible that hell is to be within sight of heaven. And, as this idea may be new to some of you, I crave your attention, while I try to prove it. Turn to Luke 13:28:

There shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth, when ye shall see Abraham, and Isaac, and Jacob, and all the prophets in the kingdom of heaven, and you yourself thrust out.
Then look at Luke 16:22:

The rich man also died, and was buried; and in hell he lifted up his eyes, being in torments, and seeth Abraham afar off, and Lazarus in his bosom.
And then look at Isaiah 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 unto all flesh. There you are told quite plainly, 'They shall go forth and look upon the carcasses of the men that have transgressed against God, whose worm shall not die, neither shall their fire be quenched'.

Look also at Revelation 14: 10:

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 Lamb. Now, in this passage, it is quite plain, although we cannot tell how it is, that hell will be within sight of heaven, they will be tormented with fire and brimstone, in the presence of the holy angels and in the presence of the Lamb. But, brethren, you know quite well that if the eternal misery of the damned was to be an occasion of sorrow to the redeemed, it would not be; for we are told, in one of the Psalms, 'In thy presence is fulness of joy, and at thy right hand are pleasures for evermore' (Psalm 16:11).

And we are told in Revelation 21:4 that 'God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes; and there shall be no more death, neither sorrow nor crying, neither shall there be any more pain; for the former things are passed away'. You will observe' brethren, that there is to be no more pain, neither sorrow, nor crying, and yet they are to be within sight of the lost. Oh! brethren, how does this express the doctrine I stated, that the condemnation of the wicked will be matter of no grief to the redeemed. Yea, we shall give our vote that you be condemned; and not only so, but when you are condemned and cast into the lake of fire, we shall give our amen to it. Brethren, the redeemed will have no manner of grief at all for your torment.

The torment of the wicked will be matter of joy to the redeemed. It will not only be no grief, but will be matter of praise. We will sing, 'Hallelujah' when the smoke of their torment as ascends up for ever and ever. Now, simply to prove this, turn with me to Exodus 14:30, 31:

Thus the Lord saved Israel that day out of the hands of the Egyptians; and Israel saw the Egyptians dead upon the sea shore. And Israel saw that great work which the Lord did upon the Egyptians; and the people feared the Lord, and believed the Lord, and his servant Moses.

Then sang Moses and the children of Israel this song unto the Lord, and spake, saying, I will sing unto the Lord, for he hath triumphed gloriously; the horse and his rider hath he thrown into the sea (Exodus 15: 1). Brethren, this is a very full passage, and it has a deeper meaning than you would think. When Israel stood upon the shore, and saw the dead bodies of the Egyptians washed upon it, they burst forth in a song of praise to God. And in like manner, when the redeemed will stand upon the sea of glass, they will sing the same song— the song of Moses, the servant of God, and of the Lamb. And what occasioned the song of Moses? It was because the Egyptians were drowned in the Red Sea. So, in like manner, it will be with the redeemed when they see the wicked cast upon the shores of the burning lake. They will sing the song of Moses the servant of God, and the song of the Lamb (Revelation 15:3).

See also Psalm 91:7, 8:

A thousand shall fall at thy side, and ten thousand at thy right hand; but it shall not come nigh thee; only with thine eyes shalt thou behold and see the reward of the wicked.

Here it is as plain as words can make it: 'Only with thine eyes shalt thou behold, and see the reward of the wicked'. See Revelation 16:4:

And the third angel poured out his vial upon the rivers and fountains of waters; and they became blood. And I heard the angel of waters say, Thou art righteous, O Lord, which art, and was, and shall be, because thou hast judged thus.

Here you will observe that the holy angels praise God for pouring out his vial upon the wicked. The same thing is taught in the 18th chapter, 20th verse: 'Rejoice over her, thou heaven, and ye holy apostles and prophets; for God hath avenged you on her.' Compare this with the text: 'And again they said Alleluia, and her smoke rose up for ever and ever.' My dear brethren, from all these passages it is put beyond a doubt, that the condemnation of the wicked will be matter of joy to the redeemed, and not only at the first, but throughout eternity; for, 'Again, they said Alleluia, and her smoke rose up for ever and ever'.

The reason why the redeemed will rejoice at the condemnation of the wicked. And I would show you first what it is not, and then what it is.

It is not because they love to see human pain. I showed you last Sabbath, that God has no pleasure in the pain of his creatures; yea, he has no pleasure even in the pain of a worm. And so it is with the redeemed. It is not because of the pain the wicked are enduring that the redeemed rejoice. You remember when Paul stood bound before Agrippa, he said, 'I would to God that not only thou, but also all that hear me this day, were both almost, and altogether, such as I am, except these bonds' (Acts 26:29). I would not reckon that man my friend, who would take pleasure in the pain of a worm. Then this is not the reason why the redeemed will rejoice at the condemnation of the wicked.

It is not because they will see the destruction of their enemies. It is not because they will then see vengeance executed on their enemies. This is a devilish feeling; this is not the reason. The character of the redeemed is that they forgive their enemies. You remember the parable that our Lord told about the man who owed his master an hundred talents, and when he was unable to pay, frankly forgave him all. This is not the reason, then, why we will rejoice when we see the torment of the damned.

What is the reason, then, why the redeemed rejoice at the condemnation of the wicked? And, in one, word, it is because the redeemed will have no mind but God's. They will have no joy but what the Lord has. I showed you last Sabbath that God must rain snares, fire, and brimstone, upon the wicked; not because he loves pain, but because 'The righteous Lord loveth righteousness' (Psalm 11:7). Now, the redeemed will be of the same mind with God when they get to heaven. And God must change his nature before he can quench the fire of hell. So must it be with the redeemed — they enter into God's mind. O brethren, it is a solemn truth, and I know hardly how to speak of it; but as sure as there is a God in heaven, and as sure as there is a hell for the wicked, so surely will the redeemed rejoice over the eternal damnation of the wicked. And this is the reason: we will enter into the same mind with God. 'True and righteous are his judgments.' And when we see their torment we will rejoice and sing, Hallelujah.

From this awful subject I would have you to learn a little improvement.

Learn, how little comfort you will have in hell. O brethren, you will have little pity shown you in hell: Satan cannot pity you, your companions in hell will not pity you, you will only torment one another — there will be none in hell to pity you. But oh! more than this, there will be none in heaven to pity you. God will not pity; his righteous nature demands that he rain snares, fire and brimstone upon you. If he would cease to do this he would cease to be a righteous God. Now, he would far rather that you would all come to Christ and be saved; but if you go to hell he will have no pity on you.

Christ will have no pity on you. He knocked at your door, but you would not open. He stood till his head was filled with dew, and his locks with the drops of the night. Yet, brethren, it is true, he will pity you no more. He will 'laugh at your calamities and mock when your fear cometh' (Proverbs 1: 26).

Oh! brethren, not only will God and Christ have no pity, but your redeemed brothers and sisters will have no pity. Now they weep over you; but when that day comes, they will pity you no more. Not a tear will be shed; but on the contrary they will sing, 'Alleluia', for the smoke of your torment will ascend for ever and ever. Oh! brethren, this is no fancy, you will see it, and some of you will feel it too. Oh, consider! Some of you have godly parents, a godly father or mother; consider what it will be when their loved voice which you have so often heard at evening tide, address the throne of grace on your behalf — when that very voice shall say, 'Alleluia' —

The Eternal Torment Of The Wicked

when the smoke of your torments will ascend up for ever and ever. Consider you that have sat under a godly ministry, that very minister will give the word that you should be condemned. Oh! the very voice you have heard in this place, beseeching you, and if spared will beseech you in accents of love to my dying breath — that very voice will sing, 'Alleluia', when the smoke of your torments shall ascend up for ever and ever.

Consider, I beseech you, what a precious time you have got. It is the duty of all God's children to seek your conversion; nay, God himself beseeches you to be reconciled. Jesus, who died for sinners, is waiting to wash you in his blood. The Holy Spirit is waiting to lead you to Jesus, and to sanctify you. The angels are waiting to rejoice over you, and ministers are beseeching you. Oh! what a time is this: this is the day of grace. But in a little while the redeemed will let go your hand; in a little while God will give over calling upon you to repent. Soon Jesus will laugh at your calamity; soon the Spirit will cease to strive with you, and angels will let go their hold of you. Oh! brethren, do think then — 'Come now and let us reason together, saith the Lord' (Isaiah 1: 18). Oh! consider; for, if you do not, we shall sing 'Alleluia', when we see the smoke of your torment rise up for ever and ever.

May the Lord bless his own Word. Amen.
Sabbath Afternoon — 11th December, 1842