

heaven, which would never be taken from them, but afford them a portion to make them happy through the ages of eternity? If you desire honour, there you may have the highest honour, which will last when the world's honours are laid in the dust; if riches, heaven will yield you a treasure; and there are pleasures for evermore. O! be not despisers of the pleasant land, neither judge yourselves unworthy of eternal life; close with Christ, as he is offered to you in the gospel, and you shall inherit all things. Walk in the way of holiness, and it will lead you to the kingdom. Fight against sin and Satan, and you shall receive the crown. Forsake the world, and the doors of heaven will be opened to receive you.

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## PART VI.

### OF HELL.

*Then shall he say also unto them on the left hand, depart from me, ye cursed, into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels.—*  
 MATT. XXV. 41.

WERE there no other place of eternal lodging but heaven, I should here have closed my discourse of man's eternal state; but as in the other world there is a prison for the wicked, as well as a palace for the saints, we must also inquire into that state of everlasting misery; which the worst of men may well bear with, without crying, "Art thou come to torment us before the time?" since there is yet access to flee from the wrath to come; and all that can be said of it comes short of what the damned will feel; for "who knoweth the power of God's anger?"

The last thing which our Lord did, before he left the earth, was, "He lifted up his hands, and blessed his disciples," Luke xxiv. 50, 51. But the last thing he will do, before he leaves the throne, is to curse and condemn his enemies; as we learn from the text, which contains the dreadful sentence, wherein the everlasting misery of the wicked is declared. In which three things may be taken notice of: 1. The quality of the condemned: "ye cursed." The Judge finds the curse of the law upon them as transgressors, and sends them away with it, from his presence, into hell, there to be fully executed upon them. 2. The punishment which they are adjudged

to; and to which they were always bound over by virtue of the curse. And it is twofold, the punishment of loss, in separation from God and Christ, "Depart from me;" and the punishment of sense, in most exquisite and extreme torments, "Depart from me into fire." 3. The aggravations of their torments. 1. They are ready for them, they are not to expect a moment's respite. The fire is prepared and ready to catch hold of those who are thrown into it. 2. They will have the society of devils in their torments being shut up with them in hell. They must depart into the same fire, prepared for Beelzebub the prince of devils, and his angels; namely, other reprobate angels who fell with him, and became devils. It is said to be prepared for them; because they sinned, and were condemned to hell, before man sinned. This speaks further terror to the damned, that they must go into the same torments, and place of torment, with the devil and his angels. They hearkened to his temptations, and they must partake in his torments: his works they would do, and they must receive the wages, which is death. In this life they joined with devils, in enmity against God and Christ, and the way of holiness; and in the other, they must lodge with them. Thus all the goats shall be shut up together; for that name is common to devils and wicked men, in Scripture, Lev. xvii. 7, where the word rendered devils, properly signifies hairy ones, or goats, in the shape of which creatures, devils delighted much to appear to their worshippers. 3. The last aggravation of their torment is the eternal duration thereof; they must depart into everlasting fire. This is what puts the top-stone upon their misery, namely, that it shall never have an end.

DOCTRINE, The wicked shall be shut up under the curse of God, in everlasting misery, with the devils in hell.

After having proved, that there shall be a resurrection of the body, and a general judgment, I think it not needful to insist on proving the truth of future punishment. The same conscience there is in men of a future judgment, bears witness also of the truth of future punishment. (And that the punishment of the damned shall not be annihilation, or a reducing them to nothing, will be clear in the progress of our discourse.) In treating of this awful subject I shall inquire into these four things: 1. The curse under which the damned shall be shut up. II. Their misery under that curse. III. Their society with devils in this miserable state. IV. The eternity of the whole.

I. As to the curse under which the damned shall be shut up in hell; it is the terrible sentence of the law, by which they are bound over to the wrath of God, as transgressors. This curse does not first seize them when standing before the tribunal to receive their

sentence ; but they were born under it, they led their lives under it in this world, they died under it, rose with it out of their graves ; and the Judge finding it upon them, sends them away with it into the pit, where it shall lie on them through all the ages of eternity. By nature all men are under the curse ; but it is removed from the elect, by virtue of their union with Christ. It abides on the rest of sinful mankind, and by it they are devoted to destruction, separated to evil, as one describes the curse, from Deut. xxix. 21, "And the Lord shall separate him unto evil." Thus shall the damned for ever be persons devoted to destruction ; separate and set apart from the rest of mankind, unto evil, as vessels of wrath ; set up as marks for the arrows of divine wrath ; and made the common receptacle and shore of vengeance.

This curse hath its first-fruits on earth, which are a pledge of the whole lump that is to follow. Hence it is, that as temporal and eternal benefits are bound up together, under the same expressions, in the promise to the Lord's people, as Isa. xxxv. 10, "And the ransomed of the Lord shall return, and come to Zion," &c. relating both to return from Babylon, and to the saints' going to their eternal rest in heaven ; even so, temporal and eternal miseries, on the enemies of God, are sometimes included under one and the same expression in the threatening, as Isa. xxx. 33, "For Tophet is ordained of old ; yea, for the king it is prepared ; he hath made it deep and large : the pile hereof is fire and much wood ; the breath of the Lord, like a stream of brimstone, doth kindle it." Which relates both to the temporal and eternal destruction of the Assyrians, who fell by the hand of the angel before Jerusalem. See also Isa. lxvi. 24. What is that judicial blindness to which many are given up, "whom the god of this world hath blinded," 2 Cor. iv. 4, but the first fruits of hell and of the curse ? their sun is going down at noon-day ; their darkness increasing, as if it would not stop till it issue in utter darkness. Many a lash in the dark doth conscience give the wicked, which the world doth not hear of ; and what is that but the never-dying worm already begun to gnaw them ? And there is not one of these but they may call it Joseph, for "the Lord shall add another ;" or rather Gad, for "a troop cometh." These drops of wrath are terrible forebodings of the full shower which is to follow. Sometimes they are given up to their vile affections, that they have no more command over them, Rom. i. 26. So their lusts grow up more and more towards perfection, if I may so speak.

As in heaven grace comes to its perfection, so in hell sin arrives at its highest pitch ; and as sin is thus advancing upon the man, he

is the nearer and liker to hell.—There are three things that have a fearful aspect here. 1. When every thing that might do good to men's souls, is blasted to them; so that their blessings are cursed, Mal. ii. 2; sermons, prayers, admonitions, and reproofs, which are powerful towards others, are quite inefficacious to them. 2. When men go on in sinning still, in the face of plain rebukes from the Lord, in ordinances and providences. God meets them with rods in the way of their sin, as it were striking them back; yet they rush forward. What can be more like hell, where the Lord is always smiting and the damned always sinning against him? 3. When every thing in one's lot is turned into fuel to one's lusts. Thus, adversity and prosperity, poverty and wealth, the want of ordinances and the enjoyment of them, do all but nourish the corruptions of many. Their vicious stomachs corrupt whatever they receive, and all does but increase noxious humours.

But the full harvest follows, in that misery which they shall for ever lie under in hell; that wrath which, by virtue of the curse, shall come upon them to the uttermost; which is the curse fully executed. This black cloud opens upon them, and the terrible thunderbolt strikes them, by that dreadful voice from the throne, "Depart from me, ye cursed," &c. Which will give the whole wicked world a dismal view of what is in the bosom of the curse. It is, 1. A voice of extreme indignation and wrath, a furious rebuke from the Lion of the tribe of Judah. His looks will be most terrible to them; his eyes will cast flames of fire on them; and his words will pierce their hearts, like envenomed arrows. When he will thus speak them out of his presence for ever, and by his word chase them away from before the throne, they will see how keenly wrath burns in his heart against them for their sins. 2. It is a voice of extreme disdain and contempt from the Lord. Time was when they were pitied, admonished to pity themselves, and to be the Lord's; yet they despised him, they would none of him: but now they shall be buried out of his sight, under everlasting contempt. 3. It is a voice of extreme hatred. Hereby the Lord shuts them out of his bowels of love and mercy. "Depart, ye cursed." I cannot endure to look at you; there is not one purpose of good to you in mine heart; nor shall you ever hear one word more of hope from me. 4. It is a voice of eternal rejection from the Lord. He commands them to be gone, and so casts them off for ever. Thus the doors of heaven are shut against them; the gulf is fixed between them and it, and they are driven to the pit.—Now, were they to cry with all possible earnestness, "Lord, Lord, open to us;" they will hear nothing but, "Depart, depart ye cursed." Thus shall the damned be shut up under the curse.

USE 1. Let all those who, being yet in their natural state, are under the curse, consider this, and flee to Jesus Christ in time, that they may be delivered from it. How can you sleep in that state, being under the curse! Jesus Christ is now saying unto you, "Come ye cursed, I will take the curse from off you, and give you the blessing." The waters of the sanctuary are now running, to heal the cursed ground; take heed to improve them for that end to your own souls, and fear it as hell, to get no spiritual advantage thereby. Remember that "the miry places," which are neither sea nor dry land, a fit emblem of hypocrites, "and the marshes," that neither breed fishes, nor bear trees, but the waters of the sanctuary leave them, as they find them, in their barrenness, "shall not be healed;" seeing they spurn the only remedy; "they shall be given to salt," left under eternal barrenness, set up for the monuments of the wrath of God, and concluded for ever under the curse, Ezek. xlvii. 11. 2. Let all cursers consider this, whose mouths are filled with cursing themselves and others. He who "clothes himself with cursing," shall find the curse "come into his bowels like water, and oil into his bones," Psalm cix. 18, if repentance prevent it not. He shall get all his imprecations against himself fully answered, in the day wherein he stands before the tribunal of God: and shall find the killing weight of the curse of God, which he now makes light of.

II. I proceed to speak of the misery of the damned, under that curse; a misery which the tongues of men and angels cannot sufficiently express. God always acts like himself: no favours can be compared to his, and his wrath and terrors are without a parallel. As the saints in heaven are advanced to the highest pitch of happiness, so the damned in hell arrive at the height of misery. Two things here I shall soberly inquire into,—the punishment of loss, and the punishment of sense, in hell. But since these also are such things as eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, we must, as geographers do, leave a large void for the unknown land, which the day will discover.

1. The punishment of loss which the damned shall undergo, is separation from the Lord, as we learn from the text, "Depart from me, ye cursed." This will be a stone upon their grave's mouth, as "the talent of lead," Zech. v. 7, 8, that will hold them down for ever. They shall be eternally separated from God and Christ. Christ is the way to the Father: but the way, as to them, shall be everlastingly blocked up, the bridge shall be drawn, and the great gulf fixed; so shall they be shut up in a state of eternal separation from God the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost. They will be locally separated from the man Christ, and shall never come into the seat of the

blessed, where he appears in his glory, but be cast out into utter darkness, Matt. xxii. 13. They cannot indeed be locally separated from God, they cannot be in a place where he is not; since he is, and will be present every where: "If I make my bed in hell," says the psalmist, "behold thou art there," Psalm cxxxix. 8. But they shall be miserable beyond expression, in a relative separation from God. Though he will be present in the very centre of their souls, if I may so express it, while they are wrapped up in fiery flames, in utter darkness; it shall only be to feed them with the vinegar of his wrath, and to punish them with the emanations of his revenging justice: they shall never more taste of his goodness and bounty, nor have the least glimpse of hope from him. They will see his heart to be absolutely alienated from them, and that it cannot be towards them; that they are the party against whom the Lord will have indignation for ever. They shall be deprived of the glorious presence and enjoyment of God: they shall have no part in the beatific vision; nor see any thing in God towards them, but one wave of wrath rolling after another. This will bring upon them overwhelming floods of sorrow for evermore. They shall never taste of the rivers of pleasures which the saints in heaven enjoy; but shall have an everlasting winter, and a perpetual night, because the Sun of righteousness has departed from them, and so they are left in utter darkness. So great as heaven's happiness is, so great will their loss be: for they can have none of it for ever.

This separation of the wicked from God will be, 1. An involuntary separation. Now they depart from him, they will not come to him, though they are called and entreated to come: but then they shall be driven away from him, when they would gladly abide with him. Although the question "What is thy beloved more than another beloved?" is frequent now amongst the despisers of the gospel, there will be no such question among all the damned; for then they will see that man's happiness is only to be found in the enjoyment of God, and that the loss of him is a loss that can never be balanced. 2. It will be a total and utter separation. Though the wicked are, in this life, separated from God, yet there is a kind of intercourse betwixt them: he gives them many good gifts, and they give him, at least, some good words; so that the peace is not altogether hopeless. But then there shall be a total separation, the damned being cast into utter darkness, where there will not be the least gleam of light and favour from the Lord; which will put an end unto all their fair words to him. 3. It shall be a final separation; they will part with him, never more to meet, being shut up under everlasting horror and despair. The match between Jesus

Christ and unbelievers, which has so often been carried forward, and put back again, shall then be broken up for ever; and never shall one message of favour or good-will go betwixt the parties any more.

This punishment of loss, in a total and final separation from God, is a misery beyond what mortals can conceive, and which the dreadful experience of the damned can only sufficiently unfold. But that we may have some conception of the horror of it, let these following things be considered.

(1.) God is the chief good; therefore, to be separated from him, must be the chief evil. Our native country, our relations, and our life, are good; and therefore to be deprived of them we reckon a great evil; and the better any thing is, so much the greater evil is the loss of it. Wherefore, God being the chief good, and no good comparable to him, there can be no loss so great as the loss of God. The full enjoyment of him is the highest pinnacle of happiness the creature is capable of arriving at: to be fully and finally separated from him, must then be the lowest step of misery which the rational creature can be reduced to. To be cast off by men, by good men, is distressing; what must it then be, to be rejected of God, of goodness itself?

(2.) God is the fountain of all goodness, from which all goodness flows unto the creatures, and by which it is continued in them, and to them. Whatever goodness or perfection, natural as well as moral, is in any creature, it is from God, and depends upon him, as the light is from, and depends on, the sun; for every created being, as such, is a dependent one. Wherefore, a total separation from God, wherein all comfortable communication between God and a rational creature is absolutely blocked up, must of necessity bring along with it a total eclipse of all light of comfort and ease whatever. If there is but one window, or open place, in a house, and that be quite shut up, it is evident there can be nothing but darkness in that house. Our Lord tells us, Matt. xix. 17, "There is none good but one, that is, God." Nothing good or comfortable is originally from the creature: whatever good or comfortable thing one finds in one's self, as health of body, peace of mind; whatever sweetness, rest, pleasure, or delight, one finds in other creatures, as in meat, drink, arts and sciences; all these are but some faint rays of Divine perfections, communicated from God unto the creature, and depending on a constant influence from him, for their conservation, which failing, they would immediately be gone; for it is impossible that any created thing can be to us more or better, than what God makes it to be. All the rivulets of comfort we drink of, within

or without ourselves, come from God as their spring-head; the course of which toward us being stopped, of necessity they must all dry up. So that when God goes, all that is good and comfortable goes with him, all ease and quiet of body and mind, Hos. ix. 12, "Wo also to them, when I depart from them." When the wicked are totally and finally separated from him, all that is comfortable in them, or about them, returns to its fountain; as the light goes away with the sun, and darkness succeeds in the room thereof. Thus, in their separation from God, all peace is removed far away from them, and pain in body and anguish of soul, succeed to it: all joy goes, and unmixed sorrow settles in them: all quiet and rest separate from them, and they are filled with horror and rage: hope flies away, and despair seizes them; common operations of the Spirit, which now restrain them, are withdrawn for ever, and sin comes to its utmost height. Thus we have a dismal view of the horrible spectacle of sin and misery, which a creature proves, when totally separated from God, and left to itself; and we may see this separation to be the very hell of hell.

Being separated from God, they are deprived of all good. The good things which they set their hearts upon in this world, are beyond their reach there. The covetous man cannot enjoy his wealth there, nor the ambitious man his honours, nor the sensual man his pleasures, no, not a drop of water to cool his tongue, Luke xvi. 24, 25. No meat or drink there to strengthen the faint; no sleep to refresh the weary: and no music, or pleasant company, to comfort and cheer up the sorrowful. And as for those good things they despised in the world, they shall never more hear of them, nor see them. No offer of Christ there, no pardon, no peace; no wells of salvation in the pit of destruction. In one word, they shall be deprived of whatever might comfort them, being totally and finally separated from God, the fountain of all goodness and comfort.

(3.) Man naturally desires to be happy, being conscious to himself that he is not self-sufficient: he has ever a desire of something without himself, to make him happy; and the soul being, by its natural make and constitution, capable of enjoying God, and nothing else being commensurable to its desires, it can never have true and solid rest, till it rests in the enjoyment of God. This desire of happiness the rational creature can never lay aside, no, not in hell. Now, while the wicked are on earth, they seek their satisfaction in the creature: and when one fails, they go to another: thus they spend their time in the world, deceiving their own souls with vain hopes. But, in the other world, all comfort in the creatures failing, and the shadows which they are now pursuing vanished in a moment, they

shall be totally and finally separated from God, and see they have thus lost him. So the doors of earth and heaven both are shut against them at once. This will create them unspeakable anguish, while they shall live under an eternal gnawing hunger after happiness, which they certainly know shall never be in the least measure satisfied, all doors being closed on them. Who then can imagine how this separation from God shall cut the damned to the heart? how they will roar and rage under it? and how it will sting and gnaw them through the ages of eternity?

(4.) The damned shall know that some are perfectly happy, in the enjoyment of that God from whom they themselves are separated; and this will aggravate the sense of their loss, that they can never have any share with those happy ones. Being separated from God, they are separated from the society of the glorified saints and angels. They may see Abraham afar off, and Lazarus in his bosom, Luke xvi. 23, but can never come into their company; being, as unclean lepers, thrust out without the camp, and excommunicated from the presence of the Lord, and of all his holy ones. It is the opinion of some, that every person in heaven or hell shall hear and see all that passes in either state. Whatever is to be said of this, we have ground from the word to conclude, that the damned shall have a very exquisite knowledge of the happiness of the saints in heaven; for what else can be meant of the rich man in hell seeing Lazarus in Abraham's bosom? One thing is plain, in this case, that their own torments will give them such notions of the happiness of the saints, as a sick man has of health, or a prisoner has of liberty. And as they cannot fail of reflecting on the happiness of those in heaven, without any hope of attaining to contentment with their own lot, so every thought of that happiness will aggravate their loss. It would be a mighty torment to a hungry man to see others liberally feasting, while he is so chained up, as not to have one crumb to stay his gnawing appetite. To bring music and dancing before a man labouring under extreme pains, would but increase his anguish: how then will the songs of the blessed, in their enjoyment of God, make the damned mourn under their separation from him!

(5.) They will remember that time was when they might have been made partakers of the blessed company of saints, in their enjoyment of God: and this will aggravate their sense of the loss. All may remember, that there was once a possibility of it; that they were once in the world, in some corners of which the way of salvation was laid open to men's view; and may wish they had gone round the world, till they had found it out. Despisers of the gospel will remember, with bitterness, that Jesus Christ, with all his bene-

fits, was offered to them: that they were exhorted, entreated, and pressed to accept, but would not; and that they were warned of the misery they feel, and exhorted to flee from the wrath to come, but they would not hearken. The gospel offer slighted will make a hot hell, and the loss of an offered heaven will be a sinking weight on the spirits of unbelievers in the pit. Some will remember that there was a probability of their being eternally happy; that once they seemed to stand fair for it, and were not far from the kingdom of God; that they had once almost consented to the blessed bargain; the pen was in their hand, as it were, to sign the marriage contract between Christ and their souls; but unhappily they dropped it, and turned back from the Lord to their lusts again. Others will remember, that they thought themselves sure of heaven, but, being blinded with pride and self-conceit, they were above ordinances, and beyond instruction, and would not examine their state, which was their ruin: but then they will in vain wish that they had reputed themselves the worst of the congregation, and curse the fond conceit they had of themselves, and that others had of them too. Thus it will sting the damned, that they might have escaped this loss.

(6.) They will see the loss to be irrecoverable; that they must eternally lie under it, never, never to be repaired. Might the damned, after millions of ages in hell, regain what they have lost, it would be some ground of hope; but the prize is gone, and never can be recovered. There are two things which will pierce them to the heart: 1. That they never knew the worth of it, till it was irrecoverably lost. Should a man give away an earthen pot full of gold for a trifle, not knowing what was in it till it were quite gone from him, and past recovery, how would this foolish action gall him, upon the discovery of the riches in it! Such a one's case may be a faint resemblance of the case of despisers of the gospel, when in hell they lift up their eyes, and behold that to their torment, which they will not see now to their salvation. 2. That they have lost it for dross and dung; sold their part of heaven, and not enriched themselves with the price. They have lost heaven for earthly profits and pleasures, and now both are gone together from them. The drunkard's cups are gone, the covetous man's gain, the voluptuous man's carnal delights, and the sluggard's ease: nothing is left to comfort them now. The happiness they lost remains indeed, but they can have no part in it for ever.

USE. Sinners, be persuaded to come to God through Jesus Christ, uniting with him through the Mediator; that you may be preserved from this fearful separation from him. O be afraid to live in a state of separation from God, lest that which you now make your choice,

become your eternal punishment hereafter. Do not reject communion with God, cast not off the communion of saints; for it will be the misery of the damned to be driven out from that communion. Cease to build up the wall of separation between God and you, by continuing in your sinful courses; repent rather in time, and so pull it down; lest the topstone be laid upon it, and it stand for ever between you and happiness. Tremble at the thought of rejection and separation from God. By whomsoever men are rejected upon earth, they ordinarily find some pity; but, if you be thus separated from God, you will find all doors shut against you. You will find no pity from any in heaven; neither saints nor angels will pity them whom God has utterly cast off; none will pity you in hell, where there is no love, but loathing; all being loathed of God, loathing him, and loathing one another. This is a day of losses and fears. I shew you a loss you would do well to fear in time; be afraid lest you lose God; if you do, eternity will be spent in roaring out lamentations for this loss. O horrid stupidity! Men are in a mighty care and concern to prevent worldly losses; but they are in danger of losing the enjoyment of God for ever and ever; in danger of losing heaven, the communion of the blessed, and all good things for soul and body in another world; yet as careless in that matter as if they were incapable of thought. O compare this day with the day our text aims at. To-day heaven is opened for those who hitherto have rejected Christ; and yet there is room, if they will come: but that day the doors shall be shut. Now Christ is saying unto you, "Come:" then he will say: "Depart;" seeing you would not come when you were invited. Now pity is shewn; the Lord pities you, his servants pity you, and tell you that the pit is before you, and cry to you, that you do yourselves no harm: but then shall you have no pity from God or man.

2. The damned shall be punished in hell with the punishment of sense; they must depart from God into everlasting fire. I am not disposed to dispute what kind of fire it is into which they shall depart, to be tormented for ever, whether a material fire or not: experience will more than satisfy the curiosity of those who are disposed rather to dispute about it, than to seek how to escape it. Neither will I meddle with the question, Where is it? It is enough that the worm that never dieth, and the fire that is never quenched, will be found somewhere by impenitent sinners. But, first, I shall prove that, whatever kind of fire it is, it is more vehement and terrible than any fire we on earth are acquainted with. Secondly, I shall state some of the properties of these fiery torments.

As to the first of these; burning is the most terrible punishment, and brings the most exquisite pain and torment with it. By what

reward could a man be induced to hold only his hand in the flame of a candle but for one hour? All imaginable pleasures on earth will never prevail with the most voluptuous man, to venture to lodge but one half hour in a burning fiery furnace; nor would all the wealth in the world prevail with the most covetous to do it: yet, on much lower terms do most men, in effect, expose themselves to everlasting fire in hell, which is more vehement and terrible than any fire we on earth are acquainted with; as will appear by the following considerations.

(1.) As in heaven, grace being brought to its perfection, profit and pleasure also arrive at their height there; so sin, being come to its height in hell, the evil of punishment also arrives at its perfection there. Wherefore, as the joys of heaven are far greater than any joys which the saints obtain on earth, so the punishments of hell must be greater than any earthly torments whatever; not only in respect of the continuance of them, but also in respect of vehemency and exquisiteness.

(2.) Why are the things of another world represented to us in an earthly dress, in the word, but because the weakness of our capacities in such matters, which the Lord is pleased to condescend unto, requires it; it being always supposed, that the things of the other world are in their kind more perfect than those by which they are represented: when heaven is represented to us under the notion of a city, with gates of pearl, and the street of gold, we expect not to find gold and pearls there, which are so mightily prized on earth, but something more excellent than the finest and most precious things in the world: when, therefore, we hear of hell-fire, it is necessary we understand by it something more vehement, piercing, and tormenting, than any fire ever seen by our eyes. And here it is worth considering, that the torments of hell are held forth under several other notions than that of fire simply: and the reason of it is plain; namely, that hereby what of horror is wanting in one notion of hell, is supplied by another. Why is heaven's happiness represented under the various notions of "a treasure, a paradise, a feast, a rest," &c. but that there is not one of these things sufficient to express it? Even so, hell-torments are represented under the notion of fire, which the damned are cast into. A dreadful representation indeed! yet not sufficient to express the misery of the state of sinners in them. Wherefore, we hear also of "the second death," Rev. xx. 6; for the damned in hell shall be ever dying: of the "wine-press of the wrath of God," chap. xiv. 19, wherein they will be trodden in anger, trampled in the Lord's fury, Isaiah lxiii. 3; pressed, broken, and bruised, without end: "the worm that dieth

not," Mark ix. 44, which shall eternally gnaw them: "a bottomless pit," where they will be ever sinking, Rev. xx. 3. It is not simply called "a fire," but "the lake of fire and brimstone," ver. 10, "a lake of fire burning with brimstone," chap. xix. 20; than which one can imagine nothing more dreadful. Yet, because fire gives light, and light, as Solomon observes, Eccles. xi. 7, is sweet, there is no light there, but darkness, utter darkness, Matt. xxv. 30. For they must have an everlasting night, since nothing can be there which is in any measure comfortable or refreshing.

(3.) Our fire cannot affect a spirit, but by way of sympathy with the body to which it is united: but hell-fire will not only pierce into the bodies, but directly into the souls of the damned: for it is "prepared for the devil and his angels," those wicked spirits, whom no fire on earth can hurt. Job complains heavily, under the chastisements of God's fatherly hand, saying, "The arrows of the Almighty are within me, the poison whereof drinketh up my spirit," Job vi. 4. But how will the spirits of the damned be pierced with the arrows of revenging justice! how will they be drunk up with the poison of the curse of these arrows! how vehement must that fire be which pierces directly into the soul, and makes an everlasting burning in the spirit, the most lively and tender part of a man, wherein wounds or pains are most intolerable!

(4.) The preparation of this fire proves the inexpressible vehemency and dreadfulnes of it. The text calls it, "prepared fire, yea, *the* prepared fire, by way of eminence. As the three children were not cast into ordinary fire, but a fire prepared for a particular purpose which therefore was exceeding hot, the furnace being heated seven times more than ordinary, Dan. iii. 19—22; so the damned shall find in hell a prepared fire, the like to which was never prepared by human art; it is a fire of God's own preparing, the product of infinite wisdom, with a particular purpose, to demonstrate the most strict and severe divine justice against sin; which may sufficiently evidence to us the inconceivably exquisiteness thereof. God always acts in a peculiar way, becoming his infinite greatness, whether for or against the creature: therefore, as the things he has prepared for them that love him, are great and good beyond expression or conception, so one may conclude, that the things he has prepared against those who hate him, are great and terrible beyond what men can either say or think of them. The pile of Tophet is "fire, and much wood;" the coals of that fire are "coals of juniper," a kind of wood which, set on fire, burns most fiercely, Psalm cxx. 4; "and the breath of the Lord, like a stream of brimstone, doth kindle it," Isa. xxx. 33. Fire is more or less violent, according to

the matter of it, and the breath by which it is blown. What heart, then, can fully conceive the horror of coals of juniper, blown up with the breath of the Lord? Nay, God himself will be a consuming fire, Deut. iv. 24, to the damned; intimately present, as a devouring fire, in the souls and bodies. It is a fearful thing to fall into a fire, or to be shut up in a fiery furnace, on earth; but the terror of these vanishes, when we consider, how fearful it is to fall into the hands of the living God, which is the lot of the damned; for "Who shall dwell with devouring fire? Who shall dwell with everlasting burnings?" Isa. xxxiii. 14.

As to the second point proposed, namely, the properties of the fiery torments in hell;

(1.) They will be universal torments, every part of the creature being tormented in that flame. When one is cast into a fiery furnace, the fire makes its way into the very heart, and leaves no member untouched: what part, then, can have ease, when the damned swim in a lake of fire, burning with brimstone? There will their bodies be tormented, and scorched for ever. And as they sinned, so shall they be tormented, in all the parts thereof, that they shall have no sound side to turn them to; for what soundness or ease can be to any part of that body, which being separated from God, and all refreshment from him, is still in the pangs of the second death, ever dying, but never dead? But as the soul was chief in sinning, it will be chief in suffering too, being filled quite full of the wrath of a sin-avenging God. The damned shall be ever under the deepest impressions of God's vindictive justice against them: and this fire will melt their souls within them, like wax. Who knows the power of that wrath which had such an effect on the Mediator standing in the room of sinners, Psalm xxii. 14. "My heart is like wax, it is melted in the midst of my bowels?" Their minds shall be filled with the terrible apprehensions of God's implacable wrath: and whatever they can think upon, past, present, or to come, will aggravate their torment and anguish. Their will shall be crossed in all things for evermore: as their will was ever contrary to the will of God's precepts; so God, in his dealing with them, in the other world, shall have war with their will for ever. What they would have, they shall not in the least obtain: but what they would not, shall be bound upon them without remedy. Hence, no pleasant affection shall ever spring up in their hearts any more: their love of complacency, joy, and delight, in any object whatever, shall be plucked up by the root: and they will be filled with hatred, fury, and rage against God, themselves, and their fellow-

creatures, whether happy in heaven, or miserable in hell, as they themselves are. They will be sunk in sorrow, racked with anxiety, filled with horror, galled to the heart with fretting, and continually darted with despair: which will make them weep, gnash their teeth, and blaspheme for ever. "Bind him hand and foot, and take him away, and cast him into utter darkness; there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth," Matt. xxii. 13. "And there fell upon men a great hail out of heaven, every stone about the weight of a talent: and men blasphemed God because of the hail; for the plague thereof was exceeding great," Rev. xvi. 21. Conscience will be a worm to gnaw and prey upon them; remorse for their sins shall seize them and torment them for ever, and they shall not be able to shake it off, as once they did; for "in hell their worm dieth not," Mark ix. 44, 46. Their memory will serve but to aggravate their torment, and every new reflection will bring another pang of anguish, Luke xvi. 25, "But Abraham said," to the rich man in hell, "Son, remember that thou in thy lifetime receivedst thy good things."

(2.) The torments in hell are manifold. Put the case that a man were, at one and the same time, under the violence of the gout, gravel, and whatever diseases and pains have ever met together in one body; the torment of such a one would be but light in comparison of the torments of the damned. For, as in hell there is an absence of all that is good and desirable, so there is the confluence of all evils there; since all the effects of sin and of the curse take their place in it, after the last judgment, Rev. xx. 14, "And death and hell were cast into the lake of fire." There they will find a prison they can never escape out of; a lake of fire, where they will be ever swimming and burning; a pit, whereof they will never find a bottom. The worm that dieth not, shall feed on them, as on bodies which are interred: the fire that is not quenched, shall devour them, as dead bodies which are burned. Their eyes shall be kept in blackness of darkness, without the least comfortable gleam of light; their ears filled with frightful yellings of the infernal crew. They shall taste nothing but the sharpness of God's wrath, the dregs of the cup of his fury. The stench of the burning lake of brimstone will be the smell there; and they shall feel extreme pains for evermore.

(3.) They will be most exquisite and vehement torments, causing "weeping, wailing, and gnashing of teeth," Matt. xiii. 42, and xxii. 13. They are represented to us under the notion of pangs in travail, which are very sharp and exquisite. So says the rich man in hell, Luke xvi. 24, "I am tormented," to wit, as one in the pangs of child-bearing, "in this flame." Ah! dreadful pangs! horrible

travail, in which both soul and body are in pangs together! helpless travail, hopeless and endless! The word used for hell, Matt. v. 22, and in divers other places of the New Testament, properly denotes the valley of Hinnom; the name being taken from the valley of the children of Hinnom, in which was Tophet, 2 Kings xxiii. 10, where idolaters offered their children to Moloch. This is said to have been a great brazen idol, with arms like a man's: which being heated by fire within it, the child was set in the burning arms of the idol, and, that the parent might not hear the shrieks of the child burning to death, they beat drums in the time of the horrible sacrifice; whence the place had the name of Tophet. Thus the exquisiteness of the torments in hell are pointed out to us. Some have endured grievous tortures on earth with surprising obstinacy and undaunted courage: but men's courage will fail them there, when they find themselves fallen into the hands of the living God; and no escape to be expected for ever. It is true, there will be degrees of torments in hell; "It shall be more tolerable for Tyre and Sidon, than for Chorazin and Bethsaida," Matt. xi. 21, 22. But the least load of wrath there, will be unsupportable; for how can the heart of the creature endure, or his hands be strong, when God himself is a consuming fire to him? When the tares are bound in bundles for the fire, there will be bundles of covetous persons, of drunkards, profane swearers, unclean persons, formal hypocrites, unbelievers, and despisers of the gospel, and the like: the several bundles being cast into hell-fire, some will burn more vehemently than others, according as their sins have been more heinous than those of others: a fiercer flame shall seize the bundle of the profane, than the bundle of un sanctified moralists; the furnace will be hotter to those who have sinned against light, than to those who lived in darkness; Luke xii. 47, 48, "That servant which knew his Lord's will, and prepared not himself, neither did according to his will, shall be beaten with many stripes. But he that knew not, and did commit things worthy of stripes, shall be beaten with few stripes." But the sentence common to them all, Matt. xiii. 30, "Bind them in bundles to burn them," speaks the great vehemency and exquisiteness of the lowest degree of torment in hell.

(4.) They will be uninterrupted; there is no intermission there; no ease, no, not for a moment. They "shall be tormented day and night for ever and ever," Rev. xx. 10. Few are so tossed in this world, but sometimes they get rest; but the damned shall get none; they took their rest in the time appointed of God for their labour. Storms are rarely seen, without some space between showers; but there is no intermission in the storm that falls on the wicked in

hell. There, deep will be calling unto deep, and the waves of wrath continually rolling over them. There, the heavens will be always black to them, and they shall have a perpetual night, but no rest, Rev. xiv. 11, "They have no rest day nor night."

(5.) They will be unpitied. The punishments inflicted on the greatest malefactors on earth, draw forth some compassion from the spectators; but the damned shall have none to pity them. God will not pity them, but laugh at their calamity, Prov. i. 26. The blessed company in heaven shall rejoice in the execution of God's righteous judgment, and sing while the smoke riseth up for ever and ever, Rev. xix. 3, "And again they said, Hallelujah; and her smoke rose up for ever and ever." No compassion can be expected from the devil and his angels, who delight in the ruin of the children of men, and are and will be for ever void of pity. Neither will one pity another there, where every one is weeping and gnashing his teeth, under his own insupportable anguish and pain. There, natural affection will be extinguished; parents will not love their children, nor children their parents; the mother will not pity the daughter in these flames, nor will the daughter pity the mother: the son will shew no regard to his father there, nor the servant to his master, where every one will be groaning under his own torment.

(6.) To complete their misery, their torments shall be eternal, Rev. xiv. 11, "And the smoke of their torments ascendeth up for ever and ever." Ah! what a frightful case is this, to be tormented in the whole body and soul, and that not with one kind of torment, but many; all of these most exquisite, and all this without any intermission, and without pity from any! What heart can conceive those things without horror? Nevertheless, if this most miserable case were at length to have an end, that would afford some comfort; but the torments of the damned will have no end; of which more afterwards.

USE. Learn from this, 1. The evil of sin. It is a stream that will carry down the sinner, till he be swallowed up in the ocean of wrath. The pleasures of sin are bought too dear, at the rate of everlasting burnings. What availed the rich man's purple clothing and sumptuous fare, when in hell he was encircled by purple flames, and could not have a drop of water to cool his tongue? Alas! that men should indulge themselves in sin which will be such bitterness in the end! that they should drink so greedily of the poisonous cup, and hug that serpent in their bosom, that will sting them to the heart. 2. What a God he is with whom we have to do? What hatred he bears to sin, and how severely he punishes it! Know the Lord to be most just, as well as most merciful, and think not that he is

such a one as you are; away with the fatal mistake ere it be too late, Psalm. l. 21, 22, "Thou thoughtest that I was altogether such an one as thyself; but I will reprove thee, and set them in order before thine eyes. Now consider this, ye that forget God, lest I tear you in pieces, and there be none to deliver." The fire prepared for the devil and his angels, as dark as it is, will discover God to be a severe revenger of sin. 3. The absolute necessity of fleeing to the Lord Jesus Christ by faith; the same necessity of repentance, and holiness of heart and life. The avenger of blood is pursuing thee, O sinner; haste and escape to the city of refuge. Wash now in the fountain of the Mediator's blood, that you may not perish in the lake of fire. Open thy heart to him, lest the pit close its mouth on thee. Leave thy sins, else they will ruin thee; kill them, else they will be thy death for ever.

Let not the terror of hell-fire put thee upon hardening thy heart more, as it may do, if thou entertain that wicked thought, "There is no hope," Jer. ii. 25, which, perhaps, is more common among the hearers of the gospel, than many are aware of. But there is hope for the worst of sinners, who will come unto Jesus Christ. If there are no good qualifications in thee, as certainly there can be none in a natural man, none in any man, but what are received from Christ, know, that he has not suspended thy welcome on any good qualifications: do thou take him and his salvation freely offered unto all to whom the gospel comes. "Whosoever will, let him take of the water of life freely," Rev. xxii. 17. "Him that cometh to me, I will in nowise cast out," John vi. 37. It is true, thou art a sinful creature, and canst not repent; thou art unholy, and canst not make thyself holy: nay, thou hast attempted to repent, to forsake sin, and to be holy, but still failed of repentance, reformation, and holiness; and therefore, "Thou saidst, There is no hope. No, for I have loved strangers, and after them will I go." Truly no wonder that the success has not answered thy expectation, since thou hast always begun thy work amiss. But do thou first of all honour God, by believing the testimony he has given of his Son, namely, that eternal life is in him: and honour the Son of God, by believing in him, that is, embracing and falling in with the free offer of Christ, and of his salvation from sin and from wrath, made to thee in the gospel; trusting in him confidently for righteousness to thy justification, and also for sanctification; seeing "of God he is made unto us" both "righteousness and sanctification," 1 Cor. i. 30. Then, if thou hast as much credit to give to the word of God, as thou wouldst allow to the word of an honest man, offering thee a gift, and saying, Take it, and it is thine; thou mayst believe, that God is thy God,

Christ is thine, his salvation is thine, thy sins are pardoned, thou hast strength in him for repentance and for holiness; for all these are made over to thee in the free offer of the gospel. Believing on the Son of God, thou art justified, the curse is removed. And while it lies upon thee, how is it possible thou shouldst bring forth the fruits of holiness? But, the curse removed, that death which seized on thee with the first Adam, according to the threatening, Gen. ii. 17, is taken away. In consequence of which, thou shalt find the bands of wickedness, now holding thee fast in impenitence, broken asunder, as the bands of that death; so as thou wilt be able to repent indeed, from the heart: thou shalt find the spirit of life returned to thy soul, on whose departure that death ensued, so as thenceforth thou shalt be enabled to live unto righteousness. No man's case is so bad, but it may be mended this way, in time, to be perfectly right in eternity: and no man's case is so good, but, another way being taken, it will be ruined for time and eternity too.

III. The damned shall have the society of devils in their miserable state in hell: for they must depart into "fire prepared for the devil and his angels." O horrible company! O frightful association! who would choose to dwell in a palace, haunted with devils? To be confined to the most pleasant spot of earth, with the devil and his infernal furies, would be a most terrible confinement. How would men's hearts fail them, and their hair stand up, finding themselves environed with the hellish crew! But, ah! how much more terrible must it be, to be cast with the devils into one fire, locked up with them in one dungeon, shut up with them in one pit! To be closed up in a den of roaring lions, girded about with serpents, surrounded with venomous asps, and to have the heart eaten out by vipers, altogether and at once, is a comparison too low, to shew the misery of the damned, shut up in hell with the devil and his angels. They go about now as roaring lions, seeking whom they may devour: but then they shall be confined in their den with their prey. They shall be filled with the wrath of God, and receive the full torment, Matt. viii. 29, which they tremble in expectation of, James ii. 19, being cast into the fire prepared for them. How will these lions roar and tear! how will these serpents hiss! these dragons cast out fire! what horrible anguish will seize the damned, finding themselves in the lake of fire, with the devil, who deceived them; drawn thither with the silken cords of temptation, by these wicked spirits; and bound with them in everlasting chains under darkness! Rev. xx. 10, "And the devil that deceived them, was cast into the lake of fire and brimstone, where the beast and the false prophet are, and shall be tormented day and night for ever and ever."

O! that men would consider this in time, renounce the devil and his lusts, and join themselves to the Lord in faith and holiness. Why should men choose such company in this world, and delight in such society, as they would not desire to associate with in the other world? Those who like not the company of the saints on earth, will get none of it in eternity; but, as godless company is their delight now, they will afterwards get enough of it; when they have eternity to pass in the roaring and blaspheming society of devils and reprobates in hell.—Let those who use to invoke the devil to take them, soberly consider, that the company so often invited, will be terrible at last, when come.

IV. And, Lastly, Let us consider the eternity of the whole, the everlasting continuance of the miserable state of the damned in hell.

1. If I could, I would shew what eternity is; I mean, the creature's eternity. But who can measure the waters of the ocean; or who can tell you the days, years, and ages of eternity, which are infinitely more than the drops of the ocean? None can comprehend eternity, but the eternal God. Eternity is an ocean, whereof we shall never see the shore; it is a deep, where we can find no bottom; a labyrinth, from whence we cannot extricate ourselves, and where we shall ever lose the door. There are two things we may say of it. 1. It has a beginning. God's eternity has no beginning, but the creature's has. Once there was no lake of fire; and those who have been there for some hundreds of years, were once in time, as we now are. But, 2. It shall never have an end. The first who entered into the eternity of wo, is as far from the end of it, as the last who shall go thither will be at his entry. They who have launched out furthest into that ocean, are as far from land, as they were the first moment they went into it: and, thousands of ages after this, they will be as far from it as ever. Wherefore eternity, which is before us, is a duration that has a beginning, but no end. It is a beginning without a middle, a beginning without an end. After millions of years passed in it, still it is a beginning. God's wrath, in hell, will ever be the wrath to come.—But there is no middle in eternity. When millions of ages are past in eternity, what is past bears no proportion to what is to come: no, not so much as one drop of water, falling from the tip of one's finger, bears to all the waters of the ocean. There is no end of it: while God is, it shall be. It is an entry without an end to it; a continual succession of ages; a glass always running, which shall never run out.

Observe the continual succession of hours, days, months, and years, how one still follows upon another; and think of eternity,

wherein there is a continual succession without end. When you go out at night, and behold the stars of heaven, how they cannot be numbered for multitude, think of the ages of eternity; consider also, there is a certain definite number of stars, but no number of the ages of eternity. When you see water running, think how vain a thing it would be to sit down by it, and wait till it should run out, that you may pass over; observe how new water still succeeds to that which passes by you: and therein you have an image of eternity, which is a river that never dries up. They who wear rings have an image of eternity on their fingers; and they who handle the wheel have an emblem of eternity before them: for to which part soever of the ring or wheel we look, one will still see another part beyond it; and on whatever moment of eternity you meditate, there is still another beyond it. When you are abroad in the fields, and behold the blades of grass on the earth, which no man can reckon; think with yourselves, that, were as many thousands of years to come, as there are blades of grass on the ground, even those would have an end at length; but eternity will have none. When you look to a mountain, imagine in your hearts, how long would it be, ere that mountain should be removed, by a little bird coming but once every thousand years, and carrying away but one grain of the dust thereof at once: the mountain would at length be removed that way, and brought to an end; but eternity will never end. Suppose this with respect to all the mountains of the earth; nay, with respect to the whole globe itself: the grains of dust of which the whole of it is made up, are not infinite; and therefore the last grain would, at length, come to be carried away, as above: yet eternity would be, in effect, but beginning.

These are some rude draughts of eternity: and now add misery and wo to this eternity, what tongue can express it? what heart can conceive it? in what balance can that misery and that wo be weighed?

2. Let us take a view of what is eternal, in the state of the damned in hell. Whatever is included in the fearful torments of their state, is everlasting: therefore, all the doleful ingredients of their miserable state will be everlasting; they will never end. The text expressly declares the fire, into which they must depart, to be everlasting fire. And our Lord elsewhere tells us, that in hell, the fire never shall be quenched, Mark ix. 43; with an eye to the valley of Hinnom, in which, besides the before-mentioned fire, for burning the children to Molech, there was also another fire burning continually, to consume the dead carcasses and filth of Jerusalem: so the Scripture, representing hell-fire by the fire of that val-

ley, speaks it not only to be most exquisite, but also everlasting. Seeing, then, the damned must depart, as cursed ones, into everlasting fire, it is evident that—

(1.) The damned themselves shall be eternal; they will have a being for ever, and will never be substantially destroyed or annihilated. To what end is the fire eternal, if those who are cast into it be not eternally in it? It is plain, the everlasting continuance of the fire is an aggravation of the misery of the damned. But, surely, if they be annihilated, or substantially destroyed, it would be all one to them, whether the fire be everlasting or not. Nay, but they depart into everlasting fire, to be everlastingly punished in it. *Matt. xxv. 46*, “These shall go away into everlasting punishment.” Thus the execution of the sentence is a certain discovery of the meaning of it. The worm, that dieth not, must have a subject to live in: they, who shall have no rest, day nor night, *Rev. xiv. 11*, but shall be “tormented day and night for ever and ever,” *chap. xx. 10*, will certainly have a being for ever and ever, and not be brought into a state of eternal rest in annihilation. Destroyed indeed they shall be: but their destruction will be an everlasting destruction, *2 Thess. i. 9*; a destruction of their well-being, but not of their being. What is destroyed, is not therefore annihilated: “Art thou come to destroy us?” said the devil unto Jesus Christ, *Luke iv. 34*. The devils are afraid of torment, not of annihilation,” *Matth. viii. 29*, “Art thou come hither to torment us before the time?” The state of the damned is indeed a state of death; but such a death it is, as is opposite only to a happy life; as is clear from other notions of their state, which necessarily include eternal existence,—of which before. As they who are dead in sin, are dead to God and holiness, yet live to sin; so dying in hell they live, but separated from God, and his favour, in which is life, *Psalms xxx. 5*. They shall ever be under the pangs of death; ever dying, but never dead, or absolutely void of life. How desirable would such a death be to them! but it will flee from them for ever. Could each one kill another there, or could they, with their own hands, tear themselves into lifeless pieces, their misery would quickly be at an end: but there they must live, who chose death, and refused life; for there death lives, and the end ever begins.

(2.) The curse shall lie upon them eternally, as the everlasting chain, to hold them in the everlasting fire; a chain that shall never be loosed, being fixed for ever about them, by the dreadful sentence of the eternal judgment. This chain, which spurns the united force of devils held fast by it, is too strong to be broken by men, who

being solemnly anathematized, and devoted to destruction, can never be recovered to any other use.

(3.) Their punishment shall be eternal; Matt. xxv. 46, "These shall go away into everlasting punishment." They will be for ever separated from God and Christ, and from the society of the holy angels and saints; between whom and them an impassable gulf will be fixed, Luke xvi. 26, "Between us and you," says Abraham, in the parable, to the rich man in hell, "there is a great gulf fixed: so that they which would pass from hence to you, cannot; neither can they pass to us, that would come from thence." They shall for ever have the horrible society of the devil and his angels. There will be no change of company for ever in that region of darkness. Their torment in the fire will be everlasting: they must live for ever in it. Several authors, both ancient and modern, tell us of earth-flax, or salamander's hairs, that cloth made of it, being cast into the fire, is so far from being burnt or consumed, that it is only made clean thereby, as other things are by washing. But however that is, it is certain the damned shall be tormented for ever and ever in hell-fire, and not substantially destroyed, Rev. xx. 10. And indeed nothing is annihilated by fire, but only dissolved. Of what nature soever hell-fire is, no question, the same God, who kept the bodies of the three children from burning in Nebuchadnezzar's fiery furnace, can also keep the bodies of the damned from any such dissolution by hell-fire, as may infer privation of life.

(4.) Their knowledge and sense of their misery shall be eternal, and they shall assuredly know that it will be eternal. How desirable would it be to them, to have their senses for ever locked up, and to lose the consciousness of their own misery! as one may rationally suppose it to fare at length with some, in the punishment of death inflicted on them on earth, and as it is with some mad people; but that agrees not with the notion of torment for ever and ever, nor the worm that dieth not. Nay, they will ever have a lively feeling of their misery, and strongest impressions of the wrath of God against them. And that dreadful intimation of the eternity of their punishment, made to them by their Judge, in their sentence, will fix such impressions of the eternity of their miserable state upon their minds, as they will never be able to lay aside; but will continue with them evermore, to complete their misery. This will fill them with everlasting despair; a most tormenting passion, which will continually rend their hearts, as it were, in a thousand pieces. To see floods of wrath ever coming, and never to cease; to be ever in torment, and to know that there shall never, never be a release, will be the topstone put on the misery of the

damned. If "hope deferred maketh the heart sick," Prov. xiii. 12, how killing will be hope rooted up, slain outright, and buried for ever out of the creature's sight! This will fill them with hatred and rage against God, their known irreconcilable enemy; and under it, they will roar for ever, like wild bulls in a net, and fill the pit with blasphemies evermore.

I might here shew the reasonableness of the eternity of the punishment of the damned: but, having already spoken of it, in vindicating the justice of God, in his subjecting men, in their natural state, to eternal wrath, I only remind you of three things: 1. The infinite dignity of the party offended by sin, requires an infinite punishment to be inflicted for the vindication of his honour; since the demerit of sin rises according to the dignity and excellence of the person against whom it is committed. The party offended is the great God, the chief good; the offender a vile worm; in respect of perfection, infinitely distant from God, to whom he is indebted for all that he ever had, implying any good or perfection whatever. This then requires an infinite punishment to be inflicted on the sinner; which since it cannot in him be infinite in value, must needs be infinite in duration, that is to say, eternal. Sin is a kind of infinite evil, as it wrongs an infinite God; and the guilt and defilement thereof is never taken away, but endures for ever, unless the Lord himself in mercy remove it. God, who is offended, is eternal; his being never comes to an end: the sinful soul is immortal, and the man shall live for ever: the sinner being without strength, Rom. v. 6, to expiate his guilt, can never put away the offence; therefore it ever remains, unless the Lord put it away himself, as in the elect, by his Son's blood. Wherefore the party offended, the offender, and the offence, ever remaining, the punishment cannot but be eternal. 2. The sinner would have continued the course of his provocations against God for ever without end, if God had not put a check to it by death. As long as they were capable of acting against him in this world, they did it: and therefore justly will he act against them, while he is; that is, for ever. God, who judges of the will, intents, and inclinations of the heart, may justly do against sinners, in punishing, as they would have done against him in sinning. 3. Though I put not the stress of the matter here, yet it is just and reasonable that the damned suffer eternally, since they will sin eternally in hell, gnashing their teeth, Matt. viii. 12, under their pain in rage, envy, and grudge; compare Acts vii. 54; Psal. cxii. 10; Luke xiii. 28; and blaspheming God there, Rev. xvi. 21, while they are "driven away in their wickedness," Prov. xiv. 32. That the wicked be punished for their wickedness, is just, and it is no ways

inconsistent with justice, that the being of the creature be continued for ever: wherefore, it is just, that the damned, continuing wicked eternally, do suffer eternally for their wickedness. The misery, under which they sin, can neither free them from the debt of obedience, nor excuse their sinning, and make it blameless. The creature, as a creature, is bound unto obedience to his Creator; and no punishment inflicted on him can free him from it, any more than the malefactor's prison, irons, whipping, and the like, set him at liberty again, to commit the crimes for which he is imprisoned or whipped. Neither can the torments of the damned excuse, or make blameless, their horrible sinning under them, any more than exquisite pains, inflicted upon men on earth, can excuse their murmuring, fretting, and blaspheming against God under them. It is not the wrath of God, but their own wicked nature, that is the true cause of their sinning under it; for the holy Jesus bore the wrath of God, without so much as one unbecoming thought of God, and far less any one unbecoming word.

USE I. Here is a measuring reed: O that men would apply it. 1. Apply it to your own time in this world, and you will find your time to be very short. A prospect of much time to come proves the ruin of many souls. Men will be reckoning their time by years, like that rich man, Luke xii. 19, 20, when, it may be, there are not many hours of it to run. But reckon as you will, laying your time to the measuring reed of eternity, you will see your age is as nothing. What a small and inconsiderable point is sixty, eighty, or a hundred years, in respect of eternity! Compared with eternity, there is a greater disproportion, than between a hair's breadth and the circumference of the whole earth. Why do we then sleep in such a short day, while we are in danger of losing rest through the long night of eternity? 2. Apply it to your endeavours for salvation, and they will be found very scanty. When men are pressed to diligence in their salvation work, they are ready to say, "To what purpose is this waste?" Alas! if it were to be judged by our diligence, what it is that we have in view; as to the most part of us, no man could thereby conjecture that we have eternity in view. If we duly considered eternity, we could not but conclude, that, to leave no appointed means of God unessayed, till we get our salvation secured—to refuse rest or comfort in any thing, till we are sheltered under the wings of the Mediator—to pursue our great interest with the utmost vigour—to cut off lusts dear as right hands and right eyes—to set our faces resolutely against all difficulties—and fight our way through all opposition made by the devil, the world, and the flesh—are, all of them together, little enough for eternity.

USE II. Here is a balance of the sanctuary, by which we may understand the lightness of what is falsely thought weighty; and the weight of some things, by many reckoned to be very light.

1. Some things seem very weighty, which, weighed in this balance, will be found very light. (1.) Weigh the world, and all that is in it, the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life, and the whole will be found light in the balance of eternity. Weigh herein all worldly profits, gains, and advantages; and you will quickly see, that a thousand worlds will not be adequate to the cost of the eternity of wo. "For what is a man profited, if he shall gain the whole world, and lose his own soul?" Matt. xvi. 26. Weigh the pleasures of sin, which are but for a season, with the fire that is everlasting, and you shew yourselves to be fools and madmen, to run the hazard of the one for the other. (2.) Weigh your afflictions in this balance, and you will find the heaviest of them very light, in respect of the weight of eternal anguish. Impatience under affliction, especially when worldly troubles so imbitter men's spirits, that they cannot relish the glad tidings of the gospel, speaks great regardlessness of eternity. As a small and inconsiderable loss will be very little at heart with him who sees himself in danger of losing his whole estate; so troubles in the world will appear but light to him who has a lively view of eternity. Such a one will stoop and take up his cross, whatever it be, thinking it enough to escape eternal wrath. (3.) Weigh the most difficult and uneasy duties of religion here, and you will no more reckon the yoke of Christ insupportable. Repentance, and bitter mourning for sin, on earth, are very light in comparison of eternal weeping, wailing, and gnashing of teeth in hell. To wrestle with God in prayer, weeping and making supplication for the blessing in time, is far easier than to lie under the curse through all eternity. Mortification of the most beloved lust is a light thing in comparison with the second death in hell. (4.) Weigh your convictions in this balance. O! how heavy do those lie upon many, till they get them shaken off! They are not disposed to continue with them, but strive to get clear of them, as of a mighty burden. But the worm of an ill conscience will neither die nor sleep in hell, though we may now lull it asleep for a time. And certainly it is easier to entertain the sharpest convictions in this life, so that they lead us to Christ, than to have them fixed for ever in the conscience, and to be in hell totally and finally separated from him.

2. But, on the other hand, (1.) Weigh sin in this balance; and, though now it seems but a light thing to you, you will find it a weight sufficient to turn up an eternal weight of wrath upon you.

Even idle words, vain thoughts, and unprofitable actions, weighed in this balance, and considered as following the sinner into eternity, will each of them be heavier than the sand of the sea; time idly spent, will make a weary eternity. Now is your seed-time: thoughts, words, and actions, are the seed sown; eternity is the harvest. Though the seed now lies under the clod, disregarded by most men, even the least grain shall spring up at length; and the fruit will be according to the seed, Gal. vi. 3. "For he that soweth to his flesh, shall of the flesh reap corruption, that is, destruction; but he that soweth to the Spirit, shall of the Spirit reap life everlasting." —(2.) Weigh in this balance your time and opportunities of grace and salvation, and you will find them very weighty. Precious time and seasons of grace, Sabbaths, communions, prayers, sermons, and the like, are by many, now-a-days, made light of; but the day is coming when one of these will be reckoned more valuable than a thousand worlds, by those who now have the least value for them. When they are gone for ever, and the loss cannot be retrieved, those will see the worth of them, who will not now see it.

USE III. and last. Be warned and stirred up to flee from the wrath to come. Mind eternity, and closely ply the work of your salvation. What are you doing, while you are not so doing? Is heaven a fable, or hell a false alarm? Must we live eternally, and shall we be at no more pains to escape everlasting misery? Will faint wishes take the kingdom of heaven by force? And will such drowsy endeavours, as most men satisfy themselves with, be accounted fleeing from the wrath to come? You who have already fled to Christ, up, and be doing: You who have begun the work, go on, and loiter not, but "work out your salvation with fear and trembling," Phil. ii. 12. "Fear him which is able to destroy both soul and body in hell," Matt. x. 28. Remember you are not yet ascended into heaven; you are but in your middle state. The everlasting arms have drawn you out of the gulf of wrath you were plunged into, in your natural state; they are still underneath you, that you can never fall down into it again: nevertheless, you have not yet got up to the top of the rock: the deep below you is frightful; look at it, and hasten your ascent. You who are yet in your natural state, lift up your eyes and take a view of the eternal state. Arise, ye profane persons, ye ignorant ones, ye formal hypocrites, strangers to the power of godliness, flee from the wrath to come. Let not the young venture to delay a moment longer, nor the old put off this work any more: "To-day, if you will hear his voice, harden not your hearts;" lest he swear in his wrath, that you shall never enter into his rest. It is no time to linger in a state of sin, as in Sodom

when fire and brimstone are coming down on it from the Lord. Take warning in time. They who are in hell, are not troubled with such warnings; but are enraged against themselves, because they slighted the warning when they had it.

Consider, I pray you, 1. How uneasy it is to lie one whole night on a soft bed in perfect health, when we fain would have sleep, but cannot get it, sleep being departed from us. How often should we in that case, wish for rest! how full of tossings to and fro! But ah! how dreadful must it be to lie in sorrow, wrapped up in scorching flames through eternity, in that place where they have no rest day nor night!—2. How terrible would it be, to live under violent pains of the cholic or gravel, for forty or sixty years together, without any intermission! Yet that is but a very small thing compared with eternal separation from God, the worm that never dieth, and the fire that is never quenched.—3. Eternity is an awful thought; O long, long, endless eternity! But will not every moment, in eternity of wo, seem a month, and every hour a year, in that most wretched and desperate condition? Hence, ever and ever, as it were, a double eternity. The sick man in the night, tossing to and fro on his bed, says it will never be day; complains, that his pain ever continues, never, never abates. Are these petty time-eternities, which men form to themselves, in their own imaginations, so very grievous? Alas! then, how grievous, how utterly insupportable, must a real eternity of wo, and all manner of miseries, be!—4. There will be space enough there to reflect on all the ills of our heart and life, which we cannot get time to think of now; and to see that all that was said of the impenitent sinner's hazard, was true, and that the half was not told. There will be space enough in eternity to carry on delayed repentance, to rue one's follies when it is too late; and in a state past remedy, to speak forth these fruitless wishes, "O that I had never been born! that the womb had been my grave, and I had never seen the sun! O that I had taken warning in time, and fled from this wrath, while the door of mercy was standing open to me! O that I had never heard the gospel, that I had lived in some corner of the world, where a Saviour, and the great salvation, were not once named!" But all in vain. What is done cannot be undone; the opportunity is lost, and can never be retrieved; time is gone, and can never be recalled. Wherefore, improve time, while you have it, and do not wilfully ruin yourself, by stopping your ear to the gospel call.

And now, if you would be saved from the wrath to come, and never go into this place of torment, take no rest in your natural state; believe the sinfulness and misery of it, and labour to get out

of it quickly, fleeing unto Jesus Christ by faith. Sin in you is the seed of hell: and, if the guilt and reigning power of it be not removed in time, they will bring you to the second death in eternity. There is no way to get them removed, but by receiving Christ, as he is offered in the gospel, for justification and sanctification: and he is now offered to you with all his salvation, Rev. xxii. 12, 17, "And behold, I come quickly, and my reward is with me, to give to every man according as his work shall be. And the Spirit and the bride say, Come; and let him that heareth say, Come; and let him that is athirst, come.—And whosoever will, let him take of the water of life freely. Jesus Christ is the Mediator of peace, and the fountain of holiness: he it is who delivereth us from the wrath to come. "There is no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit," Rom. viii. 1. And the terrors of hell, as well as the joys of heaven, are set before you, to stir you up to a cordial receiving of him, with all his salvation; and to incline you unto the way of faith and holiness, in which alone you can escape the everlasting fire. May the Lord himself make them effectual to that end!

Thus far of man's eternal state; which, because it is eternal, admits no succeeding one for ever.