

TEACHING GOAL

To give meaning to the phrase “the miseries of this life and the pains of hell forever.”

DOCTRINAL STANDARDS

- Q. What is the misery of the estate into which man fell?
- A. All mankind by their fall lost communion with God, are under His wrath and curse, and so made liable to all the miseries in this life, to death itself and to the pains of hell forever.
- S.C. 19; L.C. 27-29; W.C. of F. VI; Savoy 6; Young 31-33

SCRIPTURAL BASIS

Study Passage: Matthew 25:31-46

Support Passages: Deuteronomy 28; Lamentations

BIBLE STORY

Luke 16:19-31; The rich man and Lazarus.

MEMORY ASSIGNMENT

Jeremiah 17:9-10

9 "The heart *is* deceitful above all *things*, And desperately wicked; Who can know it? 10 I, the LORD, search the heart, *I* test the mind, Even to give every man according to his ways, According to the fruit of his doings.

APPLICATION

Every one receives from God the punishment that is deserved and creates for oneself a miserable and painful existence, but God is merciful and will pardon the iniquity of those who call upon Him for salvation.

SUMMARY

In previous lessons we have discussed the subject of death and pain as the result of Adam's first sin and in this lesson we will consider the last of the topics associated with the fall of mankind namely, the wrath of God or punishment. One of the punishments consists of human misery. This is not biological pain which, as we have discussed, is necessary for the proper functioning of the body. Rather, this is human misery, baseness or utter depravity. For example, Paul writes, "they became futile in their speculations, and their foolish heart was darkened - God gave them over to degrading passions - to a depraved mind" (Romans 1). And again, "being darkened in their understanding, excluded from the life of God, - and they having become callous, have given themselves over to sensuality, for the practice of every kind of impurity with greediness" (Galatians 4). It is evident from this nature of man, from this kind of psychology, that human misery necessarily issues. The cries of anguish ring out in the night from broken homes, sickness, death, drunkenness, poverty because man sins. Misery comes even to homes where there is adequate money and luxuries for the same reasons and more beside but all relating to sinfulness. Upon observing this some may be led to say "this is hell on earth." It is hellish all right but not hell!

The Bible story in today's lesson describes the intermediate state of the damned. The rich man is described as being in Hades "in agony in this flame" while Lazarus was far away in the bosom of Abraham. Now the rich man's body was buried (Luke 16:22) therefore only his soul was in the flames of hell. He did not have to wait for the day of judgement to receive his punishment, for his judgement in part occurred when he died. In like manner, Lazarus did not have to sleep in his grave until the great judgement day but went immediately to be with the Lord. The Seventh Day Adventist and the Jehovah's Witness are in grave error therefore when they among many other cults and liberals deny the continued existence of the wicked thus rendering a place of eternal punishment unnecessary. There can be no doubt whatever that the Bible teaches the continued existence of the wicked after death, in places such as Luke 16:19ff, Matthew 25, 18:9, 13:24, and Revelation 20:14-15.

In several other places the Bible refers to hell as Tophet (spittle) where the worshippers of Molech would burn their children alive by passing them through fire. The Bible also uses phrases like "furnace of fire", "lake of fire" and "prison" to speak of hell. Thus does Scripture constantly treat hell as a place. Lest we think that this language is symbolic or figurative, consider the Lord's own statement in Mark 9:43, "and if your hand causes you to stumble, cut it off; for it is better for you to enter life crippled, than having your two hands to go into hell" (Gehenna - the lake of fire), "into the unquenchable fire" and He continues by quoting Isaiah 66:24. Moreover in hell there will be pangs of conscience, weeping, anguish, despair, and gnashing of teeth forever. If you have taken the time to read to this point I want you to stop and consider this last statement. If you really understand the force of it you will not be so careless with the training of your children, or so ashamed of the gospel of Christ. You will not

squander your time on the sewage of Hollywood nor fill your mind with such naughtiness. If you realize the certainty of hell you will not be negligent about your relationship to the Church, nor will you rebel when it comes to involvement in its program.

Give heed to the words of Joseph Alleine who writes, "The furnace of eternal vengeance is heated for you. Hell and destruction open their mouths upon you; they gape for you; they groan for you (Isaiah 5:14), waiting as it were with a greedy eye as you stand on the brink. If the wrath of men be 'as the roaring of a lion' (Proverbs 19:12), 'more heavy than the sand' (Proverbs 27:3), what is the wrath of the infinite God? If the burning furnace heated in Nebuchadnezzar's fiery rage, when he commanded it to be made seven times hotter, was so fierce as to burn up even those that drew near to throw the three children in, how hot is that burning of the Almighty's fury! Surely this is seventy times seven more fierce. What do you think, O man, of being a faggot in hell to all eternity? 'Can thine heart endure, or can thine hands be strong in the days that I shall deal with thee?' (Ezekiel 22:14). Can you abide the everlasting burnings?"¹

Fly to the cross, you who fear hell, for the blood of Christ is your only hope to stay the hand of God against you. Where is apathy in the face of hell, or coldness toward God and His Church? Where is shame of Christ? Have you no burden for the lost? Then perhaps you have not yet considered the "eternal fire that has been prepared for the devil and his angels."

¹ Joseph Alleine, *Alarm to the Unconverted*, London, The Banner of Truth Trust, 1967, p 93.