

TRUTH ABOUT HELL

If we can understand the language of the Bible, we can easily understand the truth about hell. The reason there is so much misunderstanding about hell is due to the fact that there is a wrong interpretation of what the Bible says. Many are inclined to take a text out of its setting and build a doctrine upon it even though it may contradict what the rest of the Bible says. But, Friends, we must take the whole Bible, comparing verse with verse in order to be sure what the Bible really teaches.

There are no contradictions in the Bible. From Genesis to Revelation the Word of God is in complete harmony. There is nothing wrong with the Bible. If there is anything wrong, it is with us. Some of the popular teachings of our day concerning the punishment of the wicked make the Bible seem contradictory. We are going to find tonight that if we properly understand the language of the Bible, there is no contradiction.

It is a popular theory that the word "hell" means fire. Actually it does not. The word "hell" is used in the Bible fifty-five times. It is mentioned thirty-one times in the Old Testament, and twenty-four times in the New Testament. It is translated in the Old Testament from the Hebrew word SHEOL which means "THE GRAVE," as any Jew will tell you. In the New Testament the word "hell" is translated twelve times from the word "GEHENNA," a Greek word. Eleven times the word "hell" is translated from the word Hades which has the same meaning as Sheol in the Hebrew, and in one case the word is translated from "TARTARUS," which means "DARKNESS."

When Jesus referred to "HELL" He used the word "GEHENNA." Gehenna was a place outside of Jerusalem that was used for a dumping ground. Not only was rubbish dumped on this place, but also the bodies of dead animals; and sometimes the bodies of dead criminals. If they were not consumed by the flame, they were destroyed by the worms. This is the place that Jesus referred to when He said: "Where the worm dieth not, and the fire is not quenched." In other words, Jesus pointed out that the destruction of the wicked would be complete just as the destruction of the bodies that were cast on the heap at Gehenna was complete.

Sometime ago I heard an evangelist speak on the subject of hell, and he almost had his congregation burning in their seats. He kept shrieking at the top of his voice, "There shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth," and trying to paint a picture of the horrible agony that the wicked were suffering right at that time; but this is not consistent with what the Bible teaches. If the wicked were cast into hell fire at death, then Cain would have been burning for some six thousand years already; but actually, dear Friends, the population of hell today is zero. Some believe that people are suffering in hell right now; but Christ and His disciples did not teach this.

We read in II Peter 2:9: "The Lord knoweth

how to deliver the godly out of temptations, and to RESERVE THE UNJUST UNTO THE DAY OF JUDGMENT to be punished." Notice that the wicked are being reserved unto the day of judgment, so how could they be burning now? Oh, yes, there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth; but that is still in the future. Jesus tells us when this punishment will be meted out, and when there will be weeping and wailing.

In Matt. 13:40 Jesus says: "As therefore the tares are gathered and burned in the fire; so shall it be IN THE END OF THIS WORLD." Jesus had just told the disciples the meaning of the parable of the wheat and the tares. He said that the field is the world, the good seed His children, and the tares the children of the wicked one. The devil sows the tares, the harvest is the end of the world, and the reapers are the angels.

Then Jesus says in Matt. 13:41 and 42: "The Son of man shall send forth his angels, and they shall gather out of his kingdom all things that offend, and them which do iniquity; and shall cast them into a furnace of fire: there shall be wailing and gnashing of teeth." Notice, Jesus says that the wicked are going to be cast into the lake of fire "IN THE END OF THIS WORLD."

Later on in His ministry Jesus told the parable of the rich man and Lazarus. Many believe this parable teaches that the wicked go to a place of torment as soon as they die. If this were true, then Jesus contradicts Himself; because He clearly states in literal language that the wicked will be cast into the fire IN THE END OF THE WORLD. Therefore this story of the rich man and Lazarus must be a parable and not a factual, literal illustration.

This parable of the rich man and Lazarus implies that the righteous go to Abraham's bosom when they die. If we are to take this parable literally, then Abraham would have to have a tremendously large bosom to embrace all of the redeemed who are supposed to go there. If taken literally, this parable makes the Bible seem to be contradictory. But all of Christ's parables were figurative. He used this figurative language to teach the Jews that, though they felt that they were saved and the Gentiles lost, they themselves were in danger of destruction more than the Gentiles.

If it were true that the wicked all go to a place of torment as soon as they die and then are raised at the end of the world to be judged, would this be just? Stop and think for a moment! Would God torment people for hundreds of years—perhaps thousands of years—and then bring them up for a trial or for judgment? What would you think of the judge in this city if he were to put people in prison for years before bringing them to trial? I know that you would think that unjust. You would rebel against a legal system like that. And yet there are those who accuse God of doing this very thing.

The Bible distinctly says that the wicked will be punished in the end of the world. We read in Matt. 25:31, 41: "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 . . . Then shall he say also to them on his left hand, Depart from me, ye cursed, into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels." It is not when the wicked die that they are cast into this fire, but it is when Jesus comes in His glory to punish the wicked that they will be utterly consumed.

The Bible teaches us that there is going to be a separation of the chaff from the wheat. The chaff, or tares, will be burned in the fire, and the wheat, or the redeemed, will receive the invitation in Matt. 25:34 which says: "Then shall the King say unto them on his right hand, Come, ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world." O, to be found on His right hand at the time when Jesus comes to take the righteous with Him to that heavenly home!

There is going to be a fire, all right, but that fire will not burn until Jesus comes to punish the wicked. We read in Rev. 21:8: "But the fearful, and unbelieving, and the abominable, and murderers, and whoremongers, and sorcerers, and idolaters, and all liars, shall have their part in the lake which burneth with fire and brimstone: which is the second death." Do you notice in this text that when the wicked are cast into the lake of fire it is the second death?

Now if these people have not actually died but are living on in a place of torment, how could they experience a second death when they haven't died the first time? Some say that people do not actually die but are immortal—that they either go to heaven or to a place of torment though are actually alive. The Bible in no instance promises immortality in any place or at any time or to anyone except to those who accept Jesus Christ. And they will receive the gift of immortality at His second coming, not when they die.

Did Jesus teach that the wicked go to a place of torment when they pass away? No, a thousand times no. Jesus clearly states in John 5:28 and 29: "Marvel not at this: for the hour is coming in the which all that are in the graves shall hear his voice, and shall come forth; they that have done good, unto the resurrection of life; and they that have done evil, unto the resurrection of damnation." According to this text Jesus says that all, both the good and the evil are in their graves, awaiting His call on the resurrection morning.

Friends, it is impossible for the wicked to be burning in hell fire right now. How do I know? Well, the Bible tells us where the wicked are going to be burned. In II Pet. 3:7 it says: "But the heavens and the earth, which are now, by the same word are kept in store, reserved unto fire against the day of judgment and perdition of ungodly men." Hell fire will be right here.

In Prov. 11:31, it says: "Behold, the righteous shall be RECOMPENSED IN THE EARTH: much more the wicked and the sinner." If hell fire is going to be right here on this earth, it certainly isn't burning now. I am sure you all know that to be a fact. If it were, you wouldn't be seated so comfortably where you are.

We are told in II Pet. 3:10: "But the day of

the Lord will come as a thief in the night; in the which the heavens shall pass away with a great noise, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat, the earth also and the works that are therein shall be burned up." If this earth is going to become a vast lake of fire in the end of the world, and if it is going to be made into a new earth after the fire does its work of cleansing, that is evidence therefore that the fire of hell will burn out some day. Otherwise how can God create a new earth?

II Peter 3:13 says that after the earth has been burned up: "Nevertheless we, according to his promise, look for new heavens and a new earth, wherein dwelleth righteousness. We are told that when this earth is cleansed of all sin even the elements will melt with fervent heat. God has stored up within this earth those combustible materials that will be used to ignite it. Some day this whole world will melt and the heavens will pass away with a great noise. The destruction of this earth will be far more terrible than anything the atomic scientists have dreamed up.

When this fire has destroyed all the germs and disease and filth and evil in this old world, God will then recreate the earth into a beautiful paradise. John says in Rev. 21:1: "And I saw a new heaven and a new earth: for the first heaven and the first earth were passed away; and there was no more sea." Peter says there will be a new heaven and a new earth. Everything will be completely renovated by fire, and all sin will be destroyed. Then God will again make it as it was in the Garden of Eden.

When Jesus comes at the close of the millenium and the wicked surround the City of God it says in Rev. 20:9: "And they went up on the breadth of the earth, and compassed the camp of the saints about, and the beloved city: and fire came down from God out of Heaven, and devoured them." This of course means the wicked, who are not with God in the heavenly city, will be devoured.

In Zech. 14:12 we read: "And this shall be the plague wherewith the Lord will smite all the people that have fought against Jerusalem: Their flesh shall consume away while they stand upon their feet, and their eyes shall consume away in their holes, and the tongue shall consume away in their mouth." Dear Friends, the only way we can enjoy the pleasures of eternal life and escape the terrible punishment of the wicked is through faith in Jesus Christ our Saviour.

As we often quote from John 3:16: "For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life." Notice that only those who believe in Jesus, and accept Him fully as their Saviour, will escape the destruction that is coming. Those who do not will perish in the fires of hell.

The Bible teaches that people will be punished according to the deeds that they have done in their bodies. Of course this means that Satan who is the most wicked of all will be punished most of all. According to the popular conception of hell, all people will suffer alike, for the same length of time, or over a never-ending period. Could God be

just and punish all people alike and for the same length of time?

Let us suppose a young woman has a desire to be saved, but has never done anything about it. She thinks she has lots of time; she is not really a wicked woman, but she has never accepted Christ as her personal Saviour. She is just a young woman, about twenty years of age. One day she is in an automobile accident and is killed. Now, according to the popular theory, because she is lost she immediately is plunged into a terrible place of torment to suffer throughout all eternity just the same as the man who is a wicked criminal, perhaps a murderer.

Suppose you had a neighbor who beat his child day after day and you could hear the screams of that child as he cried in agony, what would you think of that neighbor? Wouldn't you think that he deserved to be put in jail? And yet people will accuse God of being even more tyrannical than this, tormenting people throughout all eternity. Robert Ingersol, the noted infidel, who so shocked by the doctrine of hell fire as it is being taught today that he said: "If that is what God is and what He does, then I hate God." I thank God tonight that the doctrine of hell fire is a false conception of a most merciful God.

But someone says, "Doesn't the Bible teach that the wicked are going to be punished with everlasting destruction and everlasting fire? Yes, it does, but, my Friends, that simply means, if we properly understand the language of the Bible, that they will be everlastingly destroyed. In other words, they will be destroyed completely, for all eternity. By the same fire the earth will be cleansed, and then new heavens and a new earth will be made for the saints to enjoy throughout eternity.

The Bible tells us that Sodom and Gomorrha were destroyed with an eternal fire. We read in Jude 7: "Even as Sodom and Gomorrha, and the cities about them in like manner, giving themselves over to fornication, and going after strange flesh, are set forth for an example, suffering the VENGEANCE OF ETERNAL FIRE." Sodom and Gomorrha were destroyed by eternal fire, but they are not burning now. They were completely burned up.

In II Pet. 2:6 we read: "And turning the cities of Sodom and Gomorrha INTO ASHES condemned them with an overthrow, making them an example unto those that after should live ungodly." The destruction of Sodom and Gomorrha by eternal fire, was an example unto those who afterward would live ungodly. The destruction of these cities is a type of the destruction of the world when the wicked are to be completely annihilated by the fires of hell. And when the Bible says that the wicked will suffer everlasting destruction, it simply means that the destruction will be complete.

But someone asks, "What about the Scripture which says that the wicked are going to be burned in an unquenchable fire?" Yes, Jesus spoke about this unquenchable fire in referring to Gehenna, the Jewish dumping ground. (Mark 9:44-48). Truly, the wicked will be destroyed with an unquenchable fire. This simply means that they cannot put it out.

If you were on fire would you quench it if you could? Of course you would. But the wicked are going to burn in an unquenchable fire; it cannot be put out, but it will finally burn out.

Suppose your barn were to catch on fire, the fire department came, and the chief said to you: "I am sorry, but the fire is unquenchable." Would you believe that the fire was going to burn for all eternity? Or would you understand him to mean that the fire couldn't be put out, that it would finally burn itself out? If the Bible stated that the wicked were going to SUFFER EVERLASTING DESTRUCTION, that would be a continuous process; but DESTRUCTION is complete. The wages of sin is death, the destruction of the wicked is death—eternal, everlasting death. Since the wages of sin is death, how could the wicked continue to live and burn forever?

The Lord predicted that Jerusalem would burn with an unquenchable fire. We read in Jer. 17:27: "But if ye will not hearken unto me to hallow the sabbath day, and not to bear a burden, even entering in at the gates of Jerusalem on the sabbath day; then will I kindle a fire in the gates thereof, and it shall devour the palaces of Jerusalem, and it SHALL NOT BE QUENCHED." This prophecy of the destruction of Jerusalem was fulfilled in A.D. 70. The city was burned with an unquenchable fire. But let me ask you, is Jerusalem burning now? No. You can plainly see that when we let the Bible explain itself there is no contradiction. But when one or two texts are taken out of their setting, we run into serious difficulty.

There are some heartless individuals who teach that the righteous are actually going to enjoy watching the wicked suffer their punishment. In the book, *The Works of Samuel Hopkins, D.D.*, p. 537, it says: "The smoke of their torment shall ascend up in the sight of the blessed forever . . . This display of the divine character and glory will be in favor of the redeemed, and most entertaining, and gives the highest pleasure to those who love God, and raises their happiness to ineffable heights." Isn't that the same as accusing God of being ruthless, a cruel God, a God who delights to make people suffer? O, my Friends, the Bible does not teach this; but it teaches us that our God is a God of love.

Samuel Hopkins continues: "Should this eternal punishment and this fire be extinguished, it would in a great measure, obscure the light of heaven, and put an end to a great part of happiness and glory of the blessed." Think of it, here it is taught that the blessed, or redeemed, would not be happy if they could not watch this terrible spectacle of torment. Dear Friends, it will be hard to watch the wicked destroyed, and it will be very hard for God to punish the wicked.

We are told in II Pet. 3:9 that: "The Lord is not slack concerning his promise, as some men count slackness; but is longsuffering to us-ward, not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance. The reason the Lord has postponed this terrible event so long is that He is so longsuffering, not willing that a single one of us should perish.

We are told by the prophet in Isa. 28:21 that

when God punishes the wicked it will be a strange act for God. "For the Lord shall rise up . . . that he may do his work, HIS STRANGE WORK; and bring to pass his act, HIS STRANGE ACT." It is a sin for us to accuse God of things that are not so. Those who would make God to be a cruel, ruthless, destroyer and tormentor are making more infidels than they can convert by preaching such a gospel. Let us remember that God is not willing that any should perish.

One preacher has said that the wicked would be packed into hell like brick in a brick kiln so they would not be able to move their arms or feet or hands. Then God would blow air in, making the flames bright and furious. The wicked would be in terrible agony, shrieking, and moaning; and it would go on like this for billions and billions and billions and billions of years. But, Friends, it is not going to be this way.

The wicked are going to be everlastingly destroyed, as we read in II Thess. 1:8, 9: "In flaming fire taking vengeance on them that know not God, and that obey not the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ; who shall be punished with EVERLASTING DESTRUCTION from the presence of the Lord, and from the glory of his power." The righteous have everlasting life promised to them as their reward; but the wicked have everlasting destruction, or death, as their punishment. Their destruction will be complete.

We read in Mal. 4:1: "For behold, the day cometh, that shall burn as an oven; and all the proud, yea, and all that do wickedly, shall be stubble; and the day that cometh shall burn them up, saith the Lord of hosts, that it shall leave them neither root nor branch." Malachi goes on to say that the wicked shall be ashes under the soles of our feet. One man who believes in the doctrine of eternal torment was asked to explain this text. "O," he said, "the ashes will suffer as we walk on them." Now isn't that putting a meaning into the Bible that is not there?

There are some who say that perhaps just the body will be burned up in hell, and that the souls will continue on in torment; but Jesus taught that both the soul and the body will be burned up in hell fire. We read in Matt. 10:28: "And fear not them which kill the body, but are not able to kill the soul: but rather fear him which is able to destroy both soul and body in hell." God will cast the wicked into hell, body and soul. In spite of all the Bible says about the annihilation of the wicked, and the earth being made new, how can so many still cling to this doctrine of eternal torment that has come to us from the Dark Ages, from the pagans.

In Rev. 14:10 and 11 it says: "And he shall be tormented with fire and brimstone in the presence of the holy angels and in the presence of the Lamb: And the smoke of their torment ascendeth up forever and ever: and they have no rest day nor night, who worship the beast and his image, and whosoever receiveth the mark of his name." If you will read this entire story you will find the worshipers of the beast and his image have no rest day nor night because they suffer the wrath of God,

which is the seven plagues, lasting for at least a year.

"The smoke of their torment ascending up forever and ever" is easily explained by the Bible itself, and we should always let the Bible explain itself. How long is forever, according to the Bible? Actually the word "forever" in the Bible is translated from a Greek word which means an age, or as long as a person or thing lasts. In other words, the wicked are going to burn as long as they last, which will be forever, so far as they are concerned. Yes, my Friends, I believe in hell fire; in fact I believe in the very hottest kind of hell, so hot that the wicked are going to be burned up.

Now let me illustrate how the smoke will ascend up forever and ever. Suppose I have a man cut out of a catalogue, a paper man, and I take a match and set fire to him. You see the smoke ascend up and that smoke continues to ascend up and up and up forever and ever. There is no end to God's universe, for it is literally true that the smoke of their torment will ascend up forever. But it does not say that these people will burn forever.

Did you know that when Jonah described his experience of being swallowed by a whale he stated that he was down at the bottom of the sea forever, whereas he was actually there only three days? But when he felt that huge stomach trying to digest him with all those gastric juices working on him, it seemed like forever to him. In reality when the Bible says forever, it means as long as you last, or as long as your experience that you are having lasts.

For instance, in Ex. 21:5 and 6 we read: "And if the servant shall plainly say, I love my master, my wife and my children; I will not go out free: Then his master shall bring him unto the judges . . . unto the door post; and his master shall bore his ear through with an aul; and he shall serve him FOREVER." Of course you can see that these servants or slaves of the Jews who decided to serve their masters forever could only serve them as long as they lived. When the Bible says that the wicked will burn "FOREVER," it means as long as they last.

The Bible clearly teaches that only those who accept Jesus will have eternal life, but the wicked will perish in the end. Ps. 37:10 reads: "For yet a little while, and the wicked shall not be: yea, thou shalt diligently consider his place, and it shall not be." Where will they be? The Revelator says that fire will devour them. They will be ashes under our feet. God's way is best. There wouldn't be any point in God's preserving the wicked throughout all eternity.

This burning hell, devouring the wicked is further described in Ps. 37:20: "But the wicked shall perish and the enemies of the Lord shall be as the fat of lambs: they shall consume; INTO SMOKE SHALL THEY CONSUME AWAY." Notice here that the wicked are going to be consumed. Have you ever burned fat? You know how it burns with great fury until it is completely gone. So the wicked will perish.

Will Satan, the chief of sinners, be completely destroyed? In Eze. 28:16-19 we are told: "I will

destroy thee, O covering cherub, from the midst of the stones of fire . . . Therefore will I bring forth a fire from the midst of thee, **IT SHALL DEVOUR THEE**, and I WILL BRING THEE TO **ASHES** upon the earth . . . and **NEVER SHALT THOU BE ANY MORE**." God is going to destroy Satan completely. God certainly would not destroy Satan, let him off without eternal torment, and then punish the rest of the wicked throughout the ceaseless ages of eternity. If anybody deserves to be burned for billions and billions and billions of years, it is Satan.

The Lord tells us in Nahum 1:9, that sin will never again enter this universe: "What do ye imagine against the Lord? he will make an utter end: affliction shall not rise up the second time." The wicked are to be completely destroyed, devoured, consumed away, and sin and sinners will not rise up again. **INIQUITY "SHALL NOT RISE UP THE SECOND TIME."** Although Satan will suffer more and burn longer than anyone else, God says he too will eventually be destroyed.

In Eze. 18:4 God says: "**THE SOUL THAT SINNETH, IT SHALL DIE.**" The Bible refers to the annihilation of the wicked twenty times to every one text that has been produced to try to prove that their suffering will go on during eternity. When we properly understand the texts that **SEEMINGLY** teach eternal torment we can readily see, as we have considered them tonight, that it is not a contradictory Book but clearly teaches that the wicked will be everlastingly destroyed.

The Bible says:

Eze. 18:4 ". . . the soul that sinneth, it **SHALL DIE.**"

Rom. 6:23 ". . . the wages of sin is **DEATH . . .**"

Rev. 20:14 ". . . This is the **SECOND DEATH.**"

Ps. 145:20 ". . . the wicked is reserved to . . . **DESTRUCTION.**"

"Shall die," "death," "second death," "destruction," can anything be plainer than these texts?

The Bible also says:

Ps. 37:20 ". . . the wicked shall **PERISH . . .**"

Mal. 4:1 ". . . the day that cometh shall **BURN THEM UP . . .**"

Ps. 37:10 ". . . the wicked **SHALL NOT BE . . .**"

Ps. 37:38 ". . . the wicked **SHALL BE CUT OFF.**"

Ps. 37:20 ". . . into smoke shall they **CONSUME AWAY.**"

There is certainly nothing in these texts that infers that the wicked will suffer everlasting torment.

Here are more references concerning the fate of the wicked:

Ps. 21:9 ". . . the fire shall **DEVOUR** them."

Ps. 62:3 ". . . ye shall **BE SLAIN**, all of you:

Ps. 37:9 ". . . evil doers shall be **CUT OFF . . .**"

Obad. 16 ". . . they shall be **AS THOUGH** they **HAD NOT BEEN.**"

I Sam. 2:9 ". . . the wicked shall be **SILENT IN DARKNESS . . .**"

Let us not ignore so many texts that tell us God will completely destroy those who do not serve Him.

Again we read in the Scriptures:

Ps. 104:35 ". . . let the wicked **BE NO MORE . . .**"

Ps. 69:28 ". . . be **BLOTTED OUT** of the book . . ."

II Pet. 3:7 ". . . reserved unto **FIRE . . .** and **PERDITION . . .**"

Matt. 21:44 ". . . it will **GRIND HIM TO POWDER.**"

Matt. 3:10 ". . . **HEWN DOWN**, and cast into the fire."

Let us not build a doctrine upon one or two texts and ignore so many that fully clarify God's plan for the final destruction of sin.

There are still more texts, for God does not leave us ignorant of our fate, if we neglect to follow Him all the way;

Gal. 6:8 ". . . shall . . . reap corruption . . ."

Ps. 50:22 ". . . lest I **TEAR YOU IN PIECES . . .**"

Prov. 2:22 ". . . transgression shall **BE ROOTED OUT . . .**"

Jer. 10:24 ". . . lest thou bring me to **NOTHING.**"

Isa. 41:12 ". . . shall be . . . as a **THING OF NOUGHT.**"

Even if the wicked are not going to burn for billions of years, we would not really look forward to their fate. God is just and merciful, and is doing only what He must do to preserve the happiness of the righteous and the whole universe.

The Bible is very elaborate in describing the combustible materials that the wicked will be likened to when they are burned in the fire. The Bible says they will be like chaff, like stubble, like thorns, like the fat of lambs, like grass that is blasted and dry, like corn, like trees without fruit, twice dead, like tares, and like hay. These are the most combustible materials that you can possibly find. The wicked are going to burn in a furious fire; in fact, the whole world will be ablaze when God purifies the earth.

After the fire has burned out, the Bible says in Isa. 47:14: "Behold, they shall be as stubble; the fire shall burn them; they shall not deliver themselves from the power of the flame: there shall **NOT BE A COAL TO WARM AT**, nor fire to sit before." Just think, not even one hot coal to warm our hands by. Everything that pertains to sin will be completely obliterated. The earth was once destroyed by a flood. When it is destroyed again, it will be by fire, and the wicked will be consumed in the flames. Their burning will be forever, so far as they are concerned.

God says in Rev. 21:4: "And 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." If millions of people were suffering pain in a place of torment, how could it be true that there will be no more pain? Pain and suffering will surely be ended when God sets up His kingdom. There will be nothing to remind us of sin.

There will be nothing left to remind us of sin, except the scars in the hands, feet, and side of Jesus; but we will always love those scars. They will be the symbols or the evidences of what Jesus did to save us from everlasting destruction. The world will be all made over new, no more tears,

nor sorrow, nor suffering. But, Friends, if we had loved ones burning in a horrible place of torment, and we could hear the shrieks and howls, would we be at peace and happy?

L. H. Lehmann has said: "Purgatory as a Christian doctrine takes away the fullness of Christ's love for His church, and is a denial of the completeness and sufficiency of His sacrifice and mediatorial work." "Converted Catholic," Nov. 1946, p. 282. Christ's sacrifice, His death on the cross is our only hope of salvation. Eternal life is through Jesus Christ, our precious Lord. May we not sin against our Saviour by spurning His love.

Jesus said it would be better for us to lose the right hand, or right eye, or right foot than to be cast into the fires of hell. Even animals know the law of self preservation. If one is caught in a trap he will chew off his foot or leg, if need be, in order to escape. We should choose rather to lose a limb than to sin against God and be lost for eternity. It will be hard for God to punish the wicked. It will be His strange act, for God loves each one of us so much that He was willing to give His only Son to come to this earth and die for us.

The story is told of an executioner in a state penitentiary who operated the lever that sent the electric power into the electric chair for the execu-

tions. One night as the executioner went to strap a man in the chair he recognized him as a boyhood chum. Trembling all over, he told Frank how terribly upset he felt to have to execute him; but the man said, "It's all right, John, do your duty. I am guilty of murder, and I have been justly condemned." The executioner went back to the lever, watching the clock until the moment arrived for the execution. Great beads of perspiration stood on his brow. He cried out, "God bless you, Frank," and pulled the switch, falling unconscious to the floor.

O, Friends, God does not delight in the destruction of the wicked. That is not the kind of God we serve. He is pleading with each one tonight to choose the way of life. It will be hard for the Lord to destroy the wicked, and I am sure that He will do it as quickly as He can. But, dear Friends, you and I do not have to suffer the fate of the wicked. The way of salvation is so plain, and so clear, and so merciful. The fires of hell will be for the devil and his angels. The others who suffer the same fate will do so at their own choosing. Settle it now, dear ones, that you will serve Christ with all your heart. How many of you tonight want the Saviour to help you, comfort, strengthen, and keep you? Will you raise your hands? (Close service with prayer.)