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VISIONS OF HEAVEN AND HELL

By John Bunyan who when refusing to give up preaching
was arrested and spent twelve years in jail
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PLANNING SUICIDE

When wicked persons have gone on in a life of sin, and find they have reason to fear the just judgment of God for their sins, they begin at first to wish that there was no God to punish them; then by degrees they persuade themselves that there is none, and then they set themselves to study for arguments to back their opinion. It is with one of this sort of men that I had the unhappiness to be acquainted, who would be continually impressing me that there was no God nor devil, heaven nor hell.

It was not without horror and trembling that I first heard this and therefore I usually left him when he began upon these topics; but his speaking of them to me so often at last prevailed with me to consider what grounds he had for what he said. And from this time I found my mind perplexed with so much trouble and darkness that I could hardly bear up under it, for I knew not how to make out to my own satisfaction, these truths which before appeared to me self-evident. I could not think there was no God but with the greatest horror, yet I called in question the truth of His being. I would not have parted with my hope of heaven had I been heir of all the world, yet I questioned whether there was any such place or state. I began to doubt whether there was any hell, and yet at the same time, thought I found the flames of it flashing in my face. Thus was my mind tossed with apparent contradictions, and I found myself confused.

In this perplexed condition I went to my false friend to see what comfort he would give me. He indeed laughed at my fears, pretended to pity my weakness, and seemed to hug himself in the freedom and liberty which he enjoyed. He told me he was never bothered by the frightful anticipations of a future state, or an after-reckoning; that nature was the great mistress of the universe and that therefore he followed her dictates, that all the care he took was to live here and hoped that when his dust should be next impregnated, it would be into some delightful species of beings which would likewise, in a great measure, be owing to the place of his burial.

These talks of his put me to doubting even more. I became so uneasy that my life was a burden to me. I dreaded to be left to the belief of those cursed notions and yet they continually ran in my mind. I wished a thousand times I had never heard them, and yet they were ever before me. Are all my hopes of heaven nothing but a vain dream? Have I served God for nothing? Or rather, have I fancied One when there is no such Being? It is impossible to tell the agonies I felt upon my giving way to such thoughts as these, which still with greater force assaulted me, until at last I was hurried to the utmost pitch of desperation. Why should I linger thus, I thought, between despair and hope? Is it not better, I said to myself, to put a period to this wretched life and to try the truth of things?

Upon this I took a resolution to destroy myself, and in order to do this, went out one morning to a nearby woods, where I intended to act this bloody tragedy. But me thought I heard

The above article was copied from International Bible Association's booklet "Hell Is Real"

a secret whisper saying, “O Epenetus, plunge not thyself in everlasting misery to gratify thy soul’s worst enemy. That fatal stroke thou art about to give, seals up thine own damnation.

For if there be a God, as surely there is, how can you hope for mercy from Him when you wilfully destroy His image?”

Whence this secret whisper came I knew not, but believe it was from God; for I am sure it came with so much power it made me fling away the instrument with which I had intended to do violence to my own life and showed me in a moment the wickedness thereof. The horror of this awful intention set all my joints a-trembling so that I could hardly stand. I could but acknowledge my deliverance to be the work of some invisible and spiritual Power, that came so timely to my rescue, and gratitude obliged me to return thanks to Him.

I kneeled down on the ground and said, “O Thou invisible, eternal Power, which though unseen by men, beholdest all his actions, and who has now withheld me from defacing Thine image, I give Thee humble thanks. Yes, O Thou sovereign BEING of all beings, I give Thee thanks that I am still alive and able to acknowledge there is such a Being. Oh, let the Sun of Glory shine upon me and chase away the blackness of my soul that I may nevermore question Thy Being or omnipotence, which I have this moment so greatly experienced.”

Then, rising from my knees, I went and sat down on a bank, my mind being greatly taken up with the adoring thoughts of that Eternal Goodness that had saved me from the dreadful gulf of everlasting ruin when I was just going to plunge myself into it. And now I could only wonder that I should be such a fool as to call in question the being of the Deity which every creature was witness of, and which a man’s own conscience could not but dictate to Him.

Now while my thoughts were taken up thus as I sat upon the bank, I was suddenly surrounded with a glorious light, the exceeding brightness of this was such as I had never seen anything like it before. This both surprised and amazed me, and while I was wondering whence it came, I saw coming toward me a glorious appearance, like the person of a man, but circled round about with beams of inexpressible light and glory, which streamed from him all the way he came. His countenance was very awful, and yet mixed with such an air of sweetness as rendered it extremely pleasing, and gave me some secret hope that he came not to me as an enemy. And yet I knew not how to

bear his bright appearance; and endeavoring to stand upon my feet I soon found I had no more strength in me, and so fell down flat on my face. By the kind assistance of his arm, I was soon set upon my feet again and new strength was put into me. Then I addressed myself to the bright form before me saying, “O my shining deliverer, who hast strengthened my feeble body and restored me to new life, how shall I acknowledge my thankfulness, and in what manner shall I adore thee?”

To which he replied, both with an air of majesty and mildness, “Pay thy adorations to the Author of thy being, and not to me who am thy fellow-creature. I am sent by Him Whose very being thou has so lately denied, to stop thee from falling into that eternal ruin whereinto thou wert going to throw thyself.”

This touched my heart with such a sense of my own unworthiness that my soul melted within, and I could not forbear crying out, “Oh, how utterly unworthy I am of all this grace and mercy!” These words made me break forth in rapture: Oh, who the depths of this great love can tell, To save a tempted, sinking soul from hell!

Oh, glory, glory to my Saviour’s Name, I’ll now through all eternity proclaim! Who, when I on the brink of ruin lay, Saved me from him who would my soul betray; And now I know, though I no God would own, The Lord is God, yea, He is God alone!

To this the heavenly messenger replied, “The divine Majesty does not consult, in showing mercy, thine unworthiness, but His Own unbounded goodness and vast love. He saw with how much malice the grand enemy of souls desires thy ruin, and let him go on with hopes of overcoming thee, but still upheld thee by His secret power; through which, when Satan thought himself most sure, the snare is broken and thou are escaped.”

BEYOND THE SUN AND STARS

“Well,” said this heavenly visitor with a pleasing countenance, “that you may never doubt any more the reality of eternal things, the end of my coming to you is to convince you of the truth of them; not by faith only but by sight also. For I will show you such things as were never yet beheld by mortal eye; and to that end your eyes shall be strengthened and made fit to behold immaterial objects.”

At these surprising words of the angel, I was much astonished, and doubted how I should be able to bear it. I said to him, “O my lord, who is sufficient to bear such a sight?”

To which he replied, "The joy of the Lord shall be your strength." And when he had said thus, he took hold of me and said, "Fear not; for I am sent to show the things thou hast not seen." And before I was aware I found myself far above the earth, which seemed to me a very small point in comparison with that region of light into which I was translated.

Then I said to my bright conductor, "Oh, let it not offend my lord if I ask a question or two of thee."

To this he answered, "Speak on. It is my work to inform thee of such things which thou shalt inquire of me. For I am a ministering spirit, sent forth to minister to thee and to those that shall be heirs of salvation."

I then said, "I would fain be informed what that dark spot, so far below me, is, which has grown less and less as I have mounted higher and higher, and appears much darker since I have come into this region of light."

"That little spot," answered my conductor, "that now looks so dark and contemptible, is that world of which you were so recently an inhabitant. Here you may see how little all that world appears, for a small part of which, so many do continually labor, and lay out all their strength and time to purchase it.

"Yea, this is that spot of earth, to obtain one small part thereof so many men have run the hazard of losing, nay, have actually lost their precious and immortal souls; so precious that the Prince of Peace has told us that though one man could gain the whole, it could not recompense so great a loss. And the great reason of their folly is, that they do not look to things above. For as you ascended nearer to this region, the world appeared still less and the more contemptible; and it will do the same to all who can, by faith, once get their hearts above it. For could the sons of men below but see the world just as it is, they would not covet it as they now do, but they, alas, are in a state of darkness; and which is worse, they love to walk therein. For though the Prince of Light came down among them and plainly showed them the true Light of Life, yet they go on in darkness and will not bring themselves into the light, because their deeds are evil."

I asked him further, "What were those multitudes of black and horrid forms that hover in the air above the world? Which indeed I would have been much afraid of, but that I saw, as you passed by, they fled; perhaps as not being able to abide the brightness with which you are arrayed."

To this he answered me, "They were the fallen and apostate spirits which for their pride and rebellion were cast down from heaven and wander in the air by the decree of the Almighty, being bound in chains of darkness and kept unto the judgment of the great day. From thence they are permitted to descend into the world, both for the trial of the elect, and for the condemnation of the wicked. And though you now see they have black and horrid forms, yet they were once the sons of Light, and were arrayed in robes of glorious brightness, like what you see me wear, the loss of which, though it was the effect of their own willful sin, fills them with rage and malice against the ever blessed God Whose power and majesty they fear and hate."

"Tell me," I said, "O conductor, have they no hopes of being reconciled to God again, after some term of time, or at least some of them?"

"No, not at all. They are lost forever. They were the first that sinned, and had no tempter; and they were all at once cast down from heaven. Besides, the Son of God, the blessed Messiah by Whom salvation can be had, took not upon Him the angelic nature, but left the apostate angels all to perish, and took upon Himself only the seed of Abraham. And for this reason they have so much malice against the sons of men, whom it is a torment to them to see made heirs of heaven while they are doomed to hell."

By this time we were above the sun whose vast and glorious body, so much greater than the earth, moved round the great expanse wherein it was placed with such a mighty swiftness that to relate it would appear incredible. But my conductor told me this mighty immense hanging globe of fire was one of the great works of God. It always keeps its constant course, and never has the least irregularity in its daily or its annual motion; and so exceeding glorious is its body that had not my eyes been greatly strengthened, I could not have beheld it. Nor were those mighty globes of fire we call the fixed stars, less wonderful; whose vast and extreme heights, so many leagues above the sun, makes them appear like candles in our sight. And yet they hang within their spheres without any support, in a pure sea of ether. Nothing like but His Word that first created them could keep them in their station."

"These words are enough," I said to my conductor, "to convince anyone of the great power of their much more adorable Creator, and of the blackness of that infidelity which can call in question the being of a Deity, who has

given the whole world so many bright evidences of His power, and glory, that if men were not like beasts still looking downwards, they could not help but acknowledge His great power and wisdom.”

“You speak what is true,” replied he. “But you shall see far greater things than these. These are all but the scaffolds and outworks to that glorious building wherein the blessed above inhabit that house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens, a view of which (as far as you are capable to comprehend it) shall now be given you.”

What I had been told by my conductor I found good in a few moments, for I was presently transferred into the glorious mansions of the blessed, and saw such things as it is impossible to represent and heard that ravishing melodious harmony that I can never utter. Well, therefore, might the beloved apostle John tell us in his epistle, “Now are we the sons of God; and it doth not yet appear what we shall be.” Whoever has not seen that glory can speak out very imperfectly of it, and they that have cannot tell the thousandth part of what it is. And therefore the great apostle of the Gentiles, who tells us he had been caught up into paradise, where he had heard unspeakable words which is not possible for a man to utter, gives us no other account of it, but that “Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, nor has it entered into the heart of man to conceive the things that God has laid up for those that love him.” I will give you the best account I can of what I saw and heard of the blessed discourses I had with some of the blessed, as near as I can remember.

CONDUCTED TO HELL

“I have,” said the angel, “a commission to re-conduct you to the world below; not only to the earth from whence I took you, but to the regions of the prince of darkness, that you may there see the reward of sin, and what incensed justice has prepared as the just judgment of their rebellion who would exalt themselves above the throne of the Most High. But do not therefore be afraid, for as I have a commission to take you thither so have I likewise to bring you back again, and leave you in the world from whence I took you.”

To leave Heaven for earth was extremely distasteful and would have rendered me unhappy but that I knew the divine will was such. But to leave Heaven for hell was that which turned my very heart within me. However, when I knew that it was the divine good pleasure that I should be returned from thence to earth

again, and there put off mortality, and then re-conducted up to heaven, I was a little comforted, and found within myself an entire resignation to the will of God. Therefore I said with some assurance to my bright conductor, “That which the blessed God has ordered I shall be always willing to obey, of whose great mercy I have already had so very large experience, that even in hell itself I will not fear, may I but have His presence with me there.”

To this my shining guardian answered me, “Wherever the blessed God grants His presence, there is heaven, and while we are in hell He will be with us.”

Then bowing low before the Almighty’s throne, swifter than thought my guardian angel carried me more than ten thousand leagues below the imperial heavens.

By this time we were come down to the lowest regions of the air where I saw multitudes of horrid forms and dismal dark appearances fly from the shining presence of my bright conductor.

“These sure,” said I, “are some of the vanguard of hell, so black and so affrighting are their forms.”

“These are,” said my conductor, “some of the apostate spirits that wander up and down in the air and on the earth like roaring lions seeking whom they may devour. And though they are led hence you will see them quickly in their own dark territories, for we are now upon the borders of the infernal pit.”

I quickly found the words of my conductor very true; for we were soon surrounded with a darkness much more black than night, which was attended with a stink more suffocating far than that of burning brimstone; my ears were likewise filled with horrid yellings of the damned spirits, that all the most discordant notes on earth were, in comparison of this, melodious music.

“Now,” said my guardian angel, “you are on the verge of hell, but do not fear the power of the destroyer, for my commission from the Imperial Throne secures you from all dangers. Here you may hear from devils and damned souls the cursed causes of their endless ruin. And what you have a mind to ask, inquire, and they shall answer you. The devils cannot hurt you, though they would, for they are bound by Him that has commissioned me, of which themselves are sensible, which makes them rage and fret and roar and bite their hated chains, but all in vain.”

There, in a sulphurous lake of liquid fire, bound with the adamantine chain of heaven's fixed decree, sat Lucifer upon a burning throne, his horrid eyes sparkling with hellish fury, as full of rage as his strong pains could make him. Those wandering fiends, that as we came from heaven fled before us, had, I perceived, given notice of our coming, which put all hell in an uproar and thus made Lucifer to vent his horrid blasphemies against the blessed God, which he delivered with an air of arrogance and pride.

I was amazed to hear his impious speech, and could not forbear saying to my conductor, "How justly are his blasphemies rewarded!"

"What you have heard from this apostate spirit is both his sin and punishment; for every blasphemy he belches against heaven, makes hell the hotter to him."

TORTURES OF HELL

We then passed on further, among dismal scenes of unmingled sorrow, and saw two wretched souls tormented by a fiend who without ceasing plunged them in liquid fire and burning brimstone, while they at the same time accused and cursed each other.

One of them said to his tormented fellow sufferer, "O cursed be your face, that ever I set eyes upon you! My misery is due to you; I may thank you for this, for it was you who ensnared me thus. It was your covetousness and cheating and your oppression and grinding of the poor that brought me hither. If you had but set me a good example as you did an ill one, I might have been in heaven, and there have been as happy as I am now miserable. But, O wretch that I was! My following your steps has made me in this wretched state and ruined me forever; O that I never had seen your face, or you had never been born to do my soul that wrong that you have done."

The other wretch replied, "And may I not as well blame you? For do you not remember how at such a time and place you did entice me and drew me out and asked me if I would not go along with you, when I was about my other business, about my lawful calling? But you called me away, and therefore are as much in fault as I. Though I was covetous, yet you were proud, and if you learned of me your covetousness, I am sure I learned of you my pride and drunkenness; and though you learned of me to cheat, yet you taught me to lust, to lie, and to scoff at goodness.

"Thus, though I stumbled you in some things, you stumbled me as much in others;

and therefore if you blame me, I can blame you as much. And if I have to answer for some of your most filthy actions, you have still to answer for some of mine. I wish you never had come hither; the very looks of you do wound my soul, by bringing sin afresh into my mind. It was with you, with you it was I sinned. O grief unto my soul! And since I could not shun your company there, O that I could have been without it here!"

From this sad dialogue I soon perceived that those who are companions upon earth in sin shall be so too in hell in punishment. And though on earth they love each other's company, they will not care for it in hell. This, I believe was the true reason why Dives seemed so charitable to his brethren, that they might not come into this place of torment; it was love unto himself and not to them that was his motive; because had they come hither, his torments would have thereby been increased.

But there were yet more tragic scenes of sorrow, for leaving these two cursed wretches, accusing each other for being authors of each other's misery, we passed on further, beholding several woeful spectacles; and among others, one who still had flaming sulphur forced down her throat by a tormenting spirit; which he did with such horrid cruelty and insolence I could not but say to him, "Why should you so delight in the tormenting of that cursed wretch as to be thus perpetually pouring that flaming, infernal liquor down her throat?"

"This is no more but a just retribution," replied the fiend. "This woman in her life time was such a sordid wretch that though she had gold enough, could never be satisfied,

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and therefore now I pour it down her throat. She cared not who she ruined and undid, so she could get their gold. And when she had amassed together a greater treasure than ever she could spend, her love of money would not let her spend so much of it as to supply herself with what the common necessities of life required; for she then went often with an empty stomach, though her bags were full, or else she filled it at another's charge. And as for her apparel, it either never grew old or it was always so supplied with patches that at last it was hard to say which piece was an original. She kept no house because she would not be taxed; nor keep her treasure in her hands for fear she should be robbed; nor let it out on bonds and mortgages for fear of being cheated; although she ever cheated all she could, and was herself so great a cheat she cheated her own body of its food and her own soul of mercy.

“Since gold then was her god on earth, is it not just that she should have her belly full in hell?”

When her tormentor had done speaking, I asked her whether what he said was true or not. To this she answered me, “No, to my grief it is not.” “How! to your grief?” said I.

“Yes, to my grief,” said she. “Because were that which my tormentor tells you true, I should be better satisfied. He tells you that it is gold that he pours down my throat; but he is a lying devil and speaks falsely. Were it but gold I never should complain. But he abuses me, and in the stead of gold he only gives the horrid, stinking sulphur.”

I could not forbear telling my conductor I was amazed to hear a wretch in hell itself so to dote upon her riches and that too, while in the tormentor's hands.

“This may,” said he, “convince you it is sin that is the greatest of all evils; and where love of that prevails -- the love of gold (to which this cursed creature is given up) is a more fatal punishment than that which the apostate spirits here inflict on her.”

We had not come much farther before we saw a wretched soul lie on a bed of burning steel, almost choked with brimstone; who cried out as one under a dreadful anguish, with a note of desperation; which made me desire of my conductor to stay a while that I might listen more attentively to what he said and hereupon I heard him speak as follows:

“Ah, miserable wretch! Undone for ever, for ever! Oh, these killing words for ever! Will not a thousand thousand years suffice to bear that pain which, if I could avoid it, I would

not bear one moment for a thousand thousand worlds? No, no my misery will never have an end; after the thousand thousand years it will be for ever still. Oh, hapless, helpless, hopeless state indeed! It is this forever that is the hell of hell! O cursed wretch!

“Cursed to all eternity! How willfully have I undone myself? Oh, what stupendous folly am I guilty of to choose sin's short and momentary pleasure at the dear price of everlasting pain! How oft have I been told it would be so! How often pressed to leave those paths of sin that would be sure to bring me to the chambers of eternal death! But I, like the deaf adder, lent no ear unto those charmers though they charmed so wisely. They told me often that my short-lived pleasures would quickly issue in eternal pain; and now too sad experience tells me so, it tells me so indeed, but it is too late to help it for my eternal state is fixed for ever.

“Why had reason been given me? Why was I made with an immortal soul, and yet should take so little care of it? Oh, how my own neglect stings me to death, and yet I know I cannot, I must not die! But live a dying life, worse than ten thousand deaths; and yet I might once have helped all this, and would not! Oh, that is the gnawing worm that never dies! I might once have been happy, salvation once was offered me and I refused it.

“Ah, had it been but once, yet to refuse it had been a folly not to be forgiven; but it was offered to me a thousand times, and yet (wretch that I was) I still as often refused it. O cursed sin, that with deluding pleasures bewitches mankind to eternal ruin! God often called, but I as often refused; He stretched out His hands, but I would not mind it. How often have I set at nought His counsel. How often have I refused His reproof! But now the scene is changed, the case is altered; for now He laughs at my calamity, and mocks at the destruction which is come upon me. He would have helped me once, but then I would not, and therefore those eternal miseries I am condemned to undergo are but the just reward of my own doing.” Proverbs 1:26.

I could not hear this doleful lamentation without reflecting on the wondrous grace that ever blessed GOD has shown to me; eternal praises to His holy Name! For my heart told me that I had deserved as much as that sad wretch to be the object of eternal wrath; and it is His grace alone that has made us differ! O how unsearchable His counsels be! and who can fathom His divine decree?

After these reflections, I addressed myself to the doleful complainer, and told him I had heard his woeful lamentation, by which I perceived his misery was great, and his loss irreparable; and told him I would willingly be informed of it more particularly, which might possibly be some lessening of his sufferings.

“No, not at all; my pains are such as can admit of no relief, no not for one small moment. But by the question you have asked, I do perceive you are a stranger here; and may you ever be so. Ah! had I but the last hope still remaining, how would I kneel and cry and pray forever to be redeemed from hence! But ah! it is all in vain, I am lost forever. Though that you may beware of coming hither, I will tell you what the damned suffer here.”

A LOST SOUL SPEAKS

“Our miseries in this infernal dungeon are of two sorts: what we have lost, and what we undergo. And these I will name under their several heads. First then for what we have lost.

1. In this sad dark abode of misery and sorrow, we have lost the presence of the ever blessed God. And this is that which makes this dungeon hell. Though we had lost a thousand worlds, it would not be so much as this one loss. Could but the least glimpse of His favor enter here, we might be happy; but we have lost it to our everlasting woe.

2. Here we have likewise lost the company of saints and angels, and in their place have nothing but tormenting devils.

3. Here we have lost heaven too, the seat of blessedness. There is a deep gulf betwixt us and heaven, so that we are shut out from thence forever. Those everlasting gates that let the blessed into happiness are now for ever shut against us here.

4. To make our wretchedness far yet more wretched, we have lost the hope of ever being in a better state, which renders our condition truly hopeless. The most miserable man upon earth still has hope. And therefore, it is a common proverb there that were it not for hope, the heart would break. Well may our hearts break then since we are both without hope and help. This is what we have lost; which, but to think on, is enough to fear and rend and gnaw upon our miserable souls forever. Yet, oh, that this were all! But we have sense of pain as well as loss. And having showed you what we have lost, I am trying to show you what we undergo.

1. And first, we undergo variety of torments: we are tormented here a thousand, nay, ten

thousand different ways. They that are most afflicted upon earth have seldom any more than one malady at a time. But should they have the plague, the gout, the stone, and fever at a time, how miserable would they think themselves? Yet all those are but like the biting of a flea to those intolerable, pungent pains that we endure. Here we have all the loathed variety of hell to grapple with. Here is a fire that is unquenchable to burn us with; a lake of burning brimstone ever choking us; eternal chain to tie us; here is utter darkness to affright us, and a worm of conscience that gnaws upon us everlastingly. And any one of these is worse to bear than all the torments mankind ever felt on earth.

2. But as our torments here are various, so are they universal, too, afflicting each part of the body, tormenting the powers of the soul, which renders what we suffer most unsufferable. In those illnesses you men are seized with on earth, though some parts are afflicted, other parts are free. Although your body may be out of order, your head may yet be well; and though your head be ill, your vitals may be free; or though your vitals be affected, your arms and legs may still be clear. But here it is otherwise: each member of the soul and body is at once tormented.

The eye is here tormented with the sight of the devils who do appear in all the horrid shapes and black appearances that sin can give them. The ear is continually tormented with the loud yellings and continual outcries of the damned. The nostrils smothered with sulphurous flames; the tongue with burning blisters; and the whole body rolled in flames of liquid fire. And all the powers and faculties of our souls are here tormented. The imagination, with the thoughts of the present pain; the memory lost with reflecting on what a heaven we have lost, and of those opportunities we had of being saved. Our minds are here tormented with considering how vainly we have spent our precious time, and how we have abused it. Our understanding is tormented in the thoughts of our past pleasures, present pains, and future sorrows, which are to last for ever. And our consciences are tormented with a continual gnawing worm.

3. Another thing that makes our misery awful is the extremity of our torments. The fire that burns us is so violent that all the water in the sea can never quench it. The pains we suffer here are so extreme that it is impossible they should be known by any one but those that feel them.

4. Another part of our misery is the ceaselessness of our torments. As various, as universal, and as extremely violent as they are, they are continual, too. Nor have we the least rest from them. If there were any relaxation, it might be some allay. But this makes our condition so deplorable that there is no easing of our torments, but what we suffer now we must forever suffer.

5. The society or company we have here is another element in our misery. Tormenting devils and tormented souls are all our company; and dreadful shrieks and howlings, under the fierceness of our pain, and fearful oaths, is all our conversation. And here the torments of our fellow sufferers are so far from lessening our misery that they increase our pain.

6. The place in which we suffer is another thing that increases our sufferings. It is the abstract of all misery, a prison, a dungeon, a bottomless pit, a lake of fire and brimstone, a furnace of fire that burns to eternity, the blackness of darkness for ever; and lastly, hell itself. And such a wretched place as this must needs increase our wretchedness.

7. The cruelty of our tormentors is another thing that adds to our torments. Our tormentors are devils in whom there is no pity; but being tormented themselves, do yet take pleasure in tormenting us.

8. All those particulars that I have reckoned up are very grievous; but that which makes them much more grievous is that they shall ever be so; and all our most intolerable sufferings shall last to all eternity. 'Depart from me, ye cursed, into everlasting fires' is that which is perpetually sounding in my ears. Oh, that I could reverse that fatal sentence! Oh, that there was but a bare possibility of doing it! thus have I showed you the miserable situation we are in, and shall be in forever."

This wretched soul had scarcely made an end of what he was saying before he was afresh tormented by a hellish fury, who bid him cease complaining, for it was in vain. "Besides," said he, "do you know you have deserved it all? How often were you told of this before, but would not then believe it? You laughed at them that told you of a hell; nay you were so presumptuous to dare Almighty justice to destroy you! How often have you called on God to damn you. Do you complain that you are answered according to your wishes? What an unreasonable thing is this that you should call so often for damnation, and yet be so uneasy under it. You know yourself you had salva-

tion offered you, and you refused it; with what face then can you complain of being damned?"

"I have more reason to complain than you, for you have had a long time of repentance given you, but I was turned into hell as soon as I sinned. You had salvation offered you, and pardon and forgiveness often tendered you; but I never had any mercy offered me but was consigned as soon as I had sinned to everlasting punishment. If I had had the offer of salvation I never would have slighted it as you have done. And it had been better for you that you had never had the offer of it either; for then damnation would have been easier to you. Who do you think should pity you that would be damned in spite of heaven itself?"

This made the wretch cry out, "Oh, do not thus continue to torment me. I know that my destruction is of myself. Oh, that I could forget it! The thought of that is here my greatest plague. I would be damned, and therefore justly am so."

Then turning to the fiend that tortured him he said, "But it was through thy temptations, cursed devil. It was thou that tempted me to all the sins I have been guilty of, and dost thou now upbraid me? You say you never had a Saviour offered you; but you should call to mind you never had a tempter either, as I have had continually of thee."

To this the devil scornfully replied, "I own it was my business to decoy you hither! and you have often been told so by your preachers. They told you plainly enough we sought your ruin, and went about continually like roaring lions, seeking whom we could devour; and I was oft afraid you would believe them, as several did, to our great disappointment. But you were willing to do what we would have you, and since you have done our work, it is but reasonable that we should pay you wages." And then the fiend tormented him afresh, which caused him to roar out so horribly I could no longer stay to hear him.

"How dismal," said I then to my conductor, "is the condition of these damned souls. They are the devil's slaves while upon the earth, and he upbraids and then torments them for it when they come to hell."

"Their malice against all the race of Adam," said my conductor, "is exceeding great. And because many souls are ignorant of their devices, they easily prevail upon them to their eternal ruin. And how they treat them here, for listening to their temptations, you have seen already and will see more of it quickly."

Passing a little further we saw a multitude of damned souls together, gnashing their teeth with extreme rage and pain, while the tormenting fiends with hellish fury poured liquid fire and brimstone continually upon them. They, in the meantime, cursing God themselves, and those about them, in blaspheming after a tremendous manner. I could not forbear asking of one fiend that so tormented them who they were that he used so cruelly?

Said he, "They are those that very well deserve it. These are those cursed wretches that would teach others the right road to heaven, while yet themselves were so in love with hell that they came hither. These are those souls that have been the great factors of hell upon the earth, and therefore do deserve a particular regard in hell. We use our utmost diligence to give every one their utmost share of torments, but will be sure to take care these shall not want; for these have not only their own sins to answer for, but all those, too, whom they have led astray both by their doctrine and example."

"Since they have been such great factors for hell, as you say, methinks gratitude should oblige you to use them a little more kindly."

To this the impudent fiend answered me in a scoffing manner: "They that expect gratitude among devils will find themselves mistaken. Gratitude is a virtue, but we hate all virtue and profess an immortal enmity against it. Besides, we hate all mankind, and were it in our power not one of them should be happy. It is true we do not tell them so upon earth because there it is our business to flatter and delude them. But when we have them here where they are fast enough (for from hell there is no redemption), we soon convince them of their folly in believing us."

From the discourse I had heard of this and other of the devils, I could not but reflect that it is infinite and unspeakable grace by which any poor sinners are brought to heaven, considering how many snares and baits are laid by the enemy of souls to entrap them by the way; and therefore it is a work well worthy of the blessed Son of God to save His people from their sins, and to deliver them from the wrath to come. But it is an unaccountable folly and madness in men to refuse the offers of His grace, and to close in with the destroyer.

Going on a little farther, I heard a wretch complaining in a heartbreaking strain against those men that had betrayed him hither.

"I was told," said he, "by those that I depended on and thought could have informed

me right, that if I said but 'Lord, have mercy on me,' when I came to die it would be enough to save me. But oh, wretchedly I find myself mistaken, to my eternal sorrow! Alas, I called for mercy on my deathbed, but found it was too late. This cursed devil here that told me just before that I was safe enough, then told me it was too late and hell must be my portion."

"You see I told you true at last," said the devil, "and then you would not believe me. A very pretty business is it not, think you? You spend your days in the pursuit of sin, and wallow in your filthiness, and you would go to heaven when you die! Would any but a madman think that would ever do? No! he that in good earnest does intend to go to heaven when he dies must walk in the ways of holiness and virtue while he lives.

"You say some of your lewd companions told you that saying 'Lord, have mercy on me' when you came to die would be enough. A very fine excuse! You might have known, if you'd given yourself but leisure to have read the Bible that 'Without holiness there is none shall see the Lord.' Therefore this is the sum of the matter. You were willing to live in your sins as long as you could; you did not leave them at last because you did not like them, but because you could follow them no longer. And this you know to be true.

"And could you have the impudence to think to go to heaven with the love of sin in your heart? No, no, no such matter. You have been warned often enough that you should take heed of being deceived, for God would not be mocked, but such as you sowed you should also reap. So that you have no reason to complain of any thing but your own folly, which you now see too late."

"This lecture of the devil was a very cutting one to the poor tormented wretch," said my conductor, "and contains the true case of many now on earth as well as those in hell. But oh, what a far different judgment do they make in this sad state from what they did on earth."

"The reason for this is," replied my guardian angel, "that they will not allow themselves to think what the effect of sin will be, nor what an evil it is, while upon the earth. It is an inconsideration that is the ruin of so many thousands, who think not what they are doing, nor where they are going until it is too late to help it."

AN ATHEIST IN HELL

We had not gone much farther on before we heard another tormenting himself and increas-

ing his own misery by thinking of the happiness of blessed souls.

We were diverted from giving any further ear unto these stinging self-reflections of this poor lost creature by seeing a vast number of tormenting fiends lashing incessantly a numerous company of wretched souls with knotted whips of ever-burning steel while they roared out with cries so very piercing and so lamentable I thought it might have melted even cruelty itself into some pity, which made me say to one of the tormentors, "Oh, stay your hand, and do not use such cruelty as this is to them who are your fellow creatures, and whom perhaps you have yourselves betrayed to all this misery."

"No," answered the tormentor very smoothly, "Though we are bad enough, no devil ever was as bad as they, nor guilty of such crimes as they have been. For we all know there is a God, although we hate Him! but these are such as never could be brought to own (till they came hither) that there was such a Being."

"Then these," said I, "are atheists. A wretched sort of men indeed, and who once wanted to ruin me, had not eternal grace prevented it."

I had no sooner spoken, when one of the tormented wretches cried out with a sad mournful accent, "Sure, I should know that voice. It must be Epenetus."

I was amazed to hear my name mentioned by one of the infernal crew; and therefore being desirous to know what it was, I answered, "Yes, I am Epenetus. But who are you, in that sad lost condition, that knows me?"

To this the lost unknown replied, "I was once well-acquainted with you upon earth and had almost persuaded you to be of my opinion. I am the author of that celebrated book so well-known by the title of *Leviathan*."

"What! the great Hobbes?" I said. "Are you come hither? Your voice is so much changed I did not know it."

"Alas," replied he, "I am that unhappy man indeed. But am so far from being great that I am one of the most wretched persons in all these sooty territories. Nor is it any wonder that my voice is changed; for I am now changed in my principles, though changed too late to do me any good. For now I know there is a God. But oh! I wish that there were not, for I am sure He will have no mercy on me. Nor is there any reason that He should. I do confess I was His foe on earth, but now He is mine in hell. It is that wretched confidence I had in my own wisdom that has thus betrayed me."

"Your case is miserable, and yet you needs must own you suffer justly. For how industrious were you to persuade others, and so involve them in the same damnation. None has more reason to know this than I, who had almost been taken in the snare and perished forever."

"It is that," said he, "That stings me to the heart to think how many perish by my means. I was afraid when first I heard your voice that you had likewise been consigned to punishment. Not that I can wish any person happy, for it is my plague to think that any are so while I am miserable; but because every soul that is brought hither through my seduction while I was on earth, doubles my pain in hell."

"But tell me, for I fain would be informed and you can do it. Did you indeed believe when upon earth, there was no God? Could you imagine that the world could make itself? And that the creatures were the causes of their own production? Had you no secret whispers in your soul that told you it was another made you and not you yourself? And had you never any doubts about this matter?"

"I have often heard it said that though there are many who profess there is no God, there is not one that thinks so; and it would be strange there should, because there is none but carry in their bosom a witness for that God whom they deny."

"Now you can tell whether it is so or no, for you have now no reason to conceal your sentiments."

"Nor will I, Epenetus," answered he. "Although the thoughts thereof sting me afresh, I did at first believe there was a God, but falling afterwards to vicious courses, which rendered me open to His wrath, I had some secret wishes there was none. For it is impossible to think there is a God, and not withal to think Him just and righteous, and consequently that He is obliged to punish the transgressors of His law. And being I was conscious of myself as obnoxious to His justice, it made me hate Him, and wish that there was no such Being. But still pursuing the same vicious courses, and finding justice did not overtake me, I then began to hope there was no God; and from these hopes began to frame in my own breast ideas suitable to what I hoped. And having thus in my own thoughts framed a new system of the world's origin, excluding thence the being of a Deity, I found myself so fond of these new notions that I at last prevailed upon myself to give them credit, and then endeavoured to fasten the belief of them on others. But before I came to such a height as this, I do

acknowledge that I found several checks in my own conscience for what I did, and all along was now and then troubled with some strange uneasy thoughts, as if I should not find all right at last; which I endeavored to put off, as much as in me lay. And now I find those checking thoughts that might have been of service to me then are here the things that most of all torment me.

“And I must own the love of sin hardened my heart against the Maker, and made me hate Him first, and then deny His being. Sin, that I hugged so close within my bosom, has been the cursed cause of all this woe, the serpent that has stung my soul to death. For now I find, in spite of my vain philosophy, there is a God. I find, too, now that God will not be mocked, although it was my daily practice in the world to mock at heaven and ridicule whatever things are sacred, which were the means I used to spread abroad my cursed notions, which I always found very successful. For those I could but get to ridicule oracles I always looked upon to be in a fair way to become my disciples. But now the thoughts thereof are more tormenting to me than all the torments I sustain by whips of burning steel.”

FIRE AND DARKNESS

“I would ask another question. I heard yourself and others cry out of burning steel and fire and flames; and yet I cannot discern it. Where there is fire there must be some degree of light; and yet from what appears to me you are still in utter darkness.”

“O that I could but say I felt no fire! How easy would my torments be to that which I now find them! But alas, the fire that we endure ten thousand times exceeds all culinary fire in fierceness; and is of quite a different nature from it. There is no light at all attends it, as goes upon such fire as burns upon earth. But notwithstanding all the fire in hell, we are in utter darkness.

“But then the fire you burn on earth is of a preying and devouring nature; for whatsoever it takes hold of it consumes to ashes; and when it meets with no more fuel it goes out. But here it is not so. For though it burns with that tremendous fierceness, which none but those that feel it know, yet does it not consume, nor ever will. We shall ever be burning, yet not burned. It is a tormenting, but not a consuming fire. Here the fire seizes upon our souls and puts them into pain so tormenting as cannot be expressed. It was my ignorance of this, when upon earth that made me ridicule the notion of immaterial substances being burned by fire;

which here, to my own cost, I find too true. And then another difference betwixt the fire that burns us here and that which burns on the earth is this, that you can kindle that whenever you please and quench it when you will. But here it is otherwise; this fire is like to a stream of brimstone and it burns for ever. And this is what I have to answer to the last sad question that you asked me.”

“Sad indeed,” said I. “See what Almighty Power can inflict on those that violate His righteous law.” I was making some further observations on what I heard, when the relentless fiend who was before tormenting them, thus interrupted me.

“You see by him what sort of men they were when in the world; and do you not think that they deserve the punishment they undergo?”

To which I answered. “Doubtless it is the just reward of sin which now they suffer, and which hereafter you shall suffer too; for you, as well as they, have sinned against the ever blessed God, and for your sin shall suffer the just vengeance of eternal fire. Nor is it in the least any excuse to say you never doubted the being of a God; for though you knew there was a God, yet you rebelled against Him, and therefore shall be justly punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord and from the glory of His power.”

To this the fiend replied, “It is true we know we shall be punished as thou hast said. But if it be a reason why mankind should have pity showed them, because they fell through the temptations of the devil, it is the same case with me and all the rest of the inferior spirits for we are tempted by the Bright Sun of the Morning to take part with him. And therefore, though this aggravates the crime of Lucifer, it should extenuate that of inferior spirits.”

To this my bright conductor, who had not spoken to them since my coming thither, thus replied with a stern angry countenance:

“O thou apostate, wicked, lying spirit! Canst thou affirm those things and see me here? Dost thou not know it was thy proud heart made thee take part with Lucifer against the blessed God who had created thee a glorious creature? But priding of thyself in thy own beauty thou wouldst have been above thy blessed Creator, and so wert ready to take part with Lucifer, and justly art with him cast down to hell; and thy former comeliness and beauty changed to that horrid monstrous form in which thou now appearest, as the just punishment of thy rebellious pride.”

To this the apostate spirit only said, "Why dost thou thus invade our territories, and come here to torment us before our time?" And when he had said this, slunk away, as if he durst not stay to have an answer.

"I have observed," said I, "that all of them complain most of the torment that arises from their own sense of guilt, which justifies the justice of the punishment. This gloomy prison is the best glass to behold sin in its most proper colors; for were there not the greatest malignity in sin, it would not be rewarded with so extreme a punishment."

"Your inference is very natural. But there is yet a better glass than this to see the just demerits due to sin; and that is by contemplation to behold the blessed Son of God upon the cross. There we may see the dire effects of sin. There we may see its true malignity. For all the sufferings of the damned here are but the sufferings of creatures still; but on the cross you see a suffering God."

"Surely," said I, "justice and mercy did never so triumph and kiss each other as in that fatal hour. For justice here was fully satisfied in the just punishment of sin; and mercy triumphed and was pleased because hereby salvation for poor sinners was affected."

"And oh, eternal praises to His holy Name for ever, that His grace has made me willing to accept this salvation, and thereby to become an heir of glory; for I remember some of those lost wretches here have in their bitter lamentations urged that when salvation has been offered them, they refused it. It was therefore grace alone that helped me to accept it."

My shining guardian told me hereupon that he must now conduct me to the earth again, and leave me there to wait with faith and patience till my expected happy change should come. "Come then," said he, "and let us leave these realms of woe and horror to the possession of their black inhabitants."

And in a very little space of time I found myself on earth again, and in that very place where I designed to have committed that black sin of being my own murderer, overcome by the temptations of the devil, who had persuaded me there was no God. But what was it was that I came thither, I am not at all able to determine. As soon as I was by the bank that I before had sat on, the bright appearance by whom I had been all along conducted, said to me, "Now, Epenetus, you know where you are, and I must stay no longer with you now. I have another ministration to attend. Praise Him that

sits upon the throne forever, who has all power in heaven, earth, and hell, for all the wonders of His love and grace, that He has shown you in so short a space."

As I was going to reply to him, my bright conductor disappeared, and I was left alone. And having for some time considered the amazing visions I had seen, and the wondrous things that I had heard, I scarce believed I was again on earth, nor did I know what time it was I had been absent. I kneeled down and prayed that I might never lose a lovely sense of all those wondrous things that had been shown me, and then rose up again, blessing and praising God for all His goodness.

Being returned unto my house, my family was much surprised to see my countenance strangely changed and looked upon me as if they scarce had known me. I asked them what the meaning was of their unusual admiration. They answered that it was the change in my face that caused it. "In what respect," said I, "is it that I am altered so?"

They told me, "Yesterday your looks were so extremely clouded and cast down you seemed the very image of despair; but now your face appears abundantly more beautiful and carries all the marks of perfect joy and satisfaction in it."

"If you had seen," said I, "what I have seen today, you would not wonder at the change you see." Then going into my closet I took my pen and ink and there wrote down what I had heard and seen, declaring the whole vision from first to last. All which I hope may have the same effect on those that read them as they had on me in writing them.

"And it came to pass, that the beggar died, and was carried by the angels into Abraham's bosom: the rich man also died, and was buried; And in hell he lift up his eyes, being in torments, and seeth Abraham afar off, and Lazarus in his bosom. And he cried and said, Father Abraham, have mercy on me, and send Lazarus, that he may dip the tip of his finger in water, and cool my tongue; for I am tormented in this flame." (Luke 16:22-24)

Hell Is Real!

Jack M. Skinner

On April 27, 1969, a Sunday evening, I was driving my wife, Margaret, to her church to be baptized. We had been married three years with no children and I was living in sin while she was seeking God. I did not want any part of religion because I had been told several times that I was a Christian by at least three churches in the past. I was not changed but followed their instruction to be saved. I saw no reality in church and was living in the world with its fleshly pleasures. Our marriage was degrading and I did not care.

I was the district technician for a telecommunication company and installed and maintained two way radio equipment including police, county sheriff, highway patrol, and secret service units. I thought I was a success.

On this Sunday night in April I was being kind to my wife and told her I would attend her baptismal. I always drove a company van equipped with a test bench, electronic equipment, and several two way radios which connected me to all the law establishments in the city, county, and state. As I pulled up to the church and parked I received a call from the local police department stating that their base station was inoperative due to some interference not allowing them to communicate with any mobile units. I let my wife out and drove to the police station. After surmising the problem I requested a portable hand held radio and an officer to accompany me. I drove around the city until the noise became extreme and we parked in front of a store front with apartments above. We located the cause coming from a window display which was custom made by the owner.

I drove back to church and entered sitting on the back row by myself. The pastor had called all the ones to be baptized to a room at the rear of the church for instruction while the church was singing choruses. There was no one speaking, no sermons did I hear, only singing choruses. I just sat there alone: I thought.

Suddenly I heard a voice from the left of me that said "Jack, this is your last opportunity to repent or go to hell!" As I turned to see who was speaking I saw a vision of people screaming in torment in a lake of fire.

I immediately arose and ran to the front of the church wanting to be saved. God was the preacher that night in April. I quit my job, we sold everything we owned including our wedding rings and departed to attend a Bible School.

I am not sure how many reading this issue have been told by humans that you are saved but you have never had a salvation experience with God Himself and had a changed lifestyle leading you into a life in Christ. A human cannot save a soul from going to hell. Man only leads a lost soul to the One who can and will forgive any and all sin!

"If you had seen," said I, "what I have seen in 1969, you would not wonder at the change you see." Yes, Hell is Real!!

What MUST I DO To Be Saved?

Jack M. Skinner

What must a human do to find real truth? Is there more than one way to eternal life? Do I really need to be "saved"?

Mankind's History

Sin entered the human race when Adam and Eve mistrusted God and disobeyed Him. Once they disobeyed God, Adam and Eve lost their perfect fellowship and companionship with God and became slaves to sin and Satan (formerly Lucifer), who was now God's enemy. It is difficult for us now to imagine the devastation which came into this perfectly created world after sin entered into it. The Bible says: "...By one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin; and so death passed upon all men, for that all have sinned." (Romans 5:12). If you want to be delivered from the penalty of sin, you MUST BE SAVED.

A prison keeper asked this question of Paul and Silas, who were in his care. "Sirs, what must I do to be saved?" He did not run to the nearest Jewish temple and ask the priest to get his answer. Nor did he return home to search family tradition nor did he seek out the successful, the wealthy or the well-to-do of his community. He sought for the answer from two strangers whom he was to keep in his custody or lose his life. This great question could only be answered by someone who had demonstrated real peace with his Creator.

An earthquake had brought the prison keeper to the brink of ending his life and entering eternity. (This event is recorded in the Bible, Acts chapter 16.) With his prisoners loose and free to escape, the jailer had suddenly seen his position as a failure without hope. He thought he had nothing to live for.

But the two strangers cried from the opened prison cells: "*Do thyself no harm: for we are all here.*" These prisoners were offering the warden hope, which neither the wealthy, the educated, the religious, nor his ancestors could

give. This jailer was face to face with representatives of the Saviour of the world. They cared more for his welfare than for their own. They did not wish to take advantage of him or leave him in despair; but rather, in the midst of their own danger and discomfort, made themselves available to meet his needs. It was at this point in his life that the jailer cried out to them: "Sirs, what must I do to be saved?"

This man realized he needed to do something. He recognized that if he remained as he was, he would be lost. All a human has to do to be lost for eternity is to do nothing! Just never do the right thing about your future state and you will go to a place prepared for those who have rejected God and His salvation. Just keep making excuses, ignoring the calls of God, listening to the lies of men--and, friend, you will go to hell! The jailer realized that he must do something different in order to be saved, so he asked someone who had the answer, even though they had been occupying one of his prison cells and had been bound in stocks.

The established religious leaders were against this doctrine of free pardon to all, and the ruling empire was unconcerned about anyone's eternal fate or their questions about such matters. Paul and Silas, the prisoners, would never have been asked this question from the jailer if they had not demonstrated by their lives that they had a powerful word of reconciliation from God above to needy people below. They themselves had been redeemed, and now they offered to him the word of reconciliation from God.

The answer to the jailer's question was so simple and yet so profound. He reached out to grasp this truth as a drowning person should grasp for any help offered him. "And they said, Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved, and thy house." Friend, the gift of salvation can be received that simply! Jesus is waiting for you to acknowledge your need of a Saviour and He will not turn you away. He will change your life, your circumstances, your family, and your future as He did for this jailer and his household.

My friend, if you have realized that you are not saved, or if you doubt your salvation and sense that you are not ready to meet God, then pray and believe God right now! Just pray like this:

FATHER GOD, I confess that I'm a sinner. I do not deserve to go to Heaven, but I believe that you sent your Son, the LORD JESUS CHRIST, to die on the cross for my sin. I trust Him and Him alone to forgive my sin, to be-

come my Saviour and Lord, and to take me to heaven when I die. Thank you for saving me. In Jesus' name! Amen!

Now seek out someone who has a genuine experience and who knows God personally as Paul and Silas did. You may not find one in the pulpit, but God will put someone in your path if you cry out to Him and refuse to accept an imposter. Read the passages listed below. When you really do meet Jesus, the Saviour of your soul, and repent, you will never be able to forget that experience and you will never question again, "What must I do to be saved?"

John 3:3: "*Jesus answered and said unto him, Verily, verily, I say unto thee, Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God.*"

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.*"

Romans 3:23: "*For all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God.*"

Romans 6:23: "*For the wages of sin is death; but the gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord.*"

Romans 10:9: "*That if thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus, and shalt believe in thine heart that God hath raised him from the dead, thou shalt be saved.*"

Revelation 20:15: "*And whosoever was not found written in the book of life was cast into the lake of fire.*"

What Must I Do To STAY Saved?

Once saved, always saved? Once sanctified, always sanctified? Once baptized in the Holy Ghost, always baptized in the Holy Ghost? The doctrine of unconditional eternal security claims that once a person has been saved, and therefore has become a born-again child of God, he can never lose that status.

Is there anything that a human can acquire in life that he cannot lose? Is there anything that a human can acquire in life that he might not lose? There is a great difference between these two questions, although they seem very similar. Can a man lose his wealth, his health, his friends, his family? What is there that is tangible in a man's existence upon this earth that he cannot lose?

Can he lose an arm, a leg, an eye, an ear, a kidney, a lung? Can he lose his sight, his hearing, his ability to maneuver or work? Can he lose his youth? Can he lose his life? What is there that a man cannot lose?

Can a man secure a place to store his wealth so that he cannot lose it? Can he secure a medical facility or doctor to preserve his health so that he will be assured of not losing any part of his body and will live forever and not die? Can he join an organization or club that will guarantee his social status no matter what he does? Can he and his property be secured against any damage whatsoever from weather, war, or neglect (rust, deterioration, etc.)? Though all his possessions were his to begin with, can man be sure none of them will ever be taken away from him before he leaves this world?

What about a man's soul? Once he is saved, can he be sure he will make it all the way to heaven? Could he ever lose his soul? What must man do to stay saved?

The Bible tells us how to re-establish our broken relationship with God which was lost by Adam and Eve. *"For as in Adam all die, even so in Christ shall all be made alive."*

(I Corinthians 15:22) This work of grace is called being SAVED or BORN AGAIN, and our relationship with God is restored through faith in the Lord Jesus Christ and Him alone.

After we are reconciled to God through Jesus (God's gift offered to ALL mankind not just to a select few), we are obligated to maintain this new life in order to secure heaven as our home. If we do not maintain this new position until the end of life's journey, then hell will be our eternal abode. This is why we are admonished to *"work out your own salvation with fear and trembling. For it is God which worketh in you both to will and to do of his good pleasure."* (Phil. 2:12,13)

In the book of Titus in the New Testament, God reveals to mankind that His grace not only saves a person from sin at conversion, but also becomes an instructor to lead the new convert toward holy living and away from unrighteous living. *"For the grace of God that bringeth salvation hath appeared to all men, Teaching us that, denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly, in this present world; Looking for that blessed hope, and the glorious appearing of the great God and our Saviour Jesus Christ; Who gave himself for us, that he might redeem us from all iniquity, and purify unto himself a peculiar people, zealous of good works. These things speak, and exhort, and rebuke with all authority."* (Titus 2:11-15)

Being saved (through faith in the shed blood atonement which Jesus made at Calvary) constitutes a new birth and a new beginning. This

new beginning is maintained by the Grace Teacher (Holy Ghost) who leads the yielded person towards a lifestyle pleasing to God. To stay saved is to continue to accept God's grace and to abide continually in Him. One may fail and falter; one may digress; one may turn back; one may deny Him (as Peter did, see Luke 22:60), but this Grace Teacher always provides the call and provision for repentance and forgiveness. (Peter heard the cock crow and he repented!) Grace not only gives a new beginning but will maintain those who accept His guidance. *"Nevertheless I [Jesus] tell you the truth; It is expedient for you that I go away: for if I go not away, the Comforter will not come unto you; but if I depart, I will send him unto you. And when he is come, he will reprove the world of sin, and of righteousness, and of judgment."* (John 16:7-8)

"Lead me in thy truth, and teach me: for thou art the God of my salvation; on thee do I wait all the day." (Psalms 25:5)

"Howbeit when he, the Spirit of truth, is come, he will guide you into all truth: for he shall not speak of himself; but whatsoever he shall hear, that shall he speak: and he will shew you things to come." (John 16:13)

What MUST you do to be saved? What MUST you do to stay saved? Do something! Do the right thing! Seek Him until you find Him and then follow Him, and not another. Say "YES" to God and "NO" to sin!

"I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service. And be not conformed to this world: but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect, will of God." (Romans 12:1,2)

Read God's Word, the Bible; talk to God in prayer; fellowship with other Christians who show by their lives that they believe and obey the Lord Jesus Christ. *"He that overcometh, the same shall be clothed in white raiment; and I will not blot out his name out of the book of life, but I will confess his name before my Father, and before his angels."* (Revelation 3:5)

"And there shall in no wise enter into it any thing that defileth, neither whatsoever worketh abomination, or maketh a lie: but they which are written in the Lamb's book of life." (Revelation 21:27)

Personal note from Brother Jack M Skinner

I want to take this opportunity to thank all for their support, both financially and prayerfully, towards International Bible Association and Miracles & Missions Digest in the years I have been associated with these ministries. I have attempted to produce what will assist a human to be prepared for that Great Judgment Day. I have avoided to please people but sought to obey the Word of God. I am confident that I have made some enemies and I am confident that I have made mistakes. For those mistakes I ask for forgiveness and assure each soul that I attempted not to offend by personal opinions but also realized that the Word of God is intended to cut!



I met Brother and Sister Daoud in Dallas before flying out of the DFW on a mission trip to Jamaica in September of 1988. He asked me to transfer sermons from reel to reel tapes onto cassette tapes and then set up cassette tape duplication. In 1991 he invited me to come to Madagascar and then invited me to be on the board of directors. In 2005 I became president of International Bible Association after the death of Brother Daoud in 2004 and then the death of Brother ZO in 2005 who was vice president at the time of Brother Daoud's death.

It is not what we have done in the past nor what we intend to do in the future but what we are in God's sight at the present! I have been reassessing my stand with God according to the Bible (KJV) and one portion is 1 Corinthians 13.

*“Though I speak with the tongues of men and of angels, and have not charity, **I am become as sounding brass, or a tinkling cymbal.** And though I have the gift of prophecy, and understand all mysteries, and all knowledge; and though I have all faith, so that I could remove mountains, and have not charity, **I am nothing.** And though I bestow all my goods to feed the poor, and though I give my body to be burned, and have not charity, **it profiteth me nothing.** **Charity suffereth long, and is kind; charity envieth not; charity vaunteth not itself, is not puffed up, Doth not behave itself unseemly, seeketh not her own, is not easily provoked, thinketh no evil; Rejoiceth not in iniquity, but rejoiceth in the truth; Beareth all things, believeth all things, hopeth all things, endureth all things.**” (1 Corinthians 13:1-7)*

“And he said unto them, Ye are they which justify yourselves before men; but God knoweth your hearts: for that which is highly esteemed among men is abomination in the sight of God.” (Luke 16:15)

Are you more concerned about what man thinks about you than what God knows about you? Read your Bible and conform!

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