

# Why God Punishes Men Throughout Eternity

by Dr. Walter L. Wilson

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"The wicked shall be turned into hell, and all the nations that forget God" (Psalm 9:17).

Everything that God does is done sensibly and reasonably. He never does anything unreasonably. He is a reasonable God. If He has men cast into the lake of fire, there is a reason for it, and He tells us why He does it.

Let us look at Matthew 3:7—"When he saw many of the Pharisees and Sadducees come to his baptism, he said unto them, O generation of vipers, who hath warned you to flee from the wrath to come?" Here we find John the Baptist talking to "vipers" bound for "wrath." They were not adulterers, robbers, or murderers. They were the best people in Israel, the Pharisees and Sadducees, who studied their Bible from their childhood. They boasted in their knowledge of the Bible, yet He calls them "vipers." They took the Scriptures, and used them for a wrong purpose.

All snakes are not vipers, but we treat them all alike. There are snakes that are as harmless as a kitten. You could play with garter-snakes, but you wouldn't do it, because you hate snakes. If a garter-snake came in here, you would treat it the same as you would a rattlesnake; you would kill it. There are snakes that are poisonous, as the rattlesnake and the cobra. If they bite a man, he will probably die.

God says certain people are vipers, and everything that comes from their mouths poisons the people who hear them. You would be surprised to know how many vipers there are in the United States today, damning people's souls by what they teach; denying the fact of the world's salvation by the blood of Christ. God will put them into the lake of fire, because they are poisoning, damning and ruining other people. "Who hath warned you to flee from the wrath to come?"

## **The Man Had Been Poisoned**

When I was in a Missouri town at one time, I was asked to baptize about twenty people. The women were to be baptized first; and while I was doing that, I noticed a man leave the group and return to the frame house where we had changed our clothing, and he did not come back. After I had finished the service and went to the house to change my garments, I found the man still there. When I asked him what was the

matter, he replied, "Dr. Wilson, I believe I am saved and I trust Christ, but while I was standing there, all the stuff I had learned from Robert Ingersoll swept into my soul, and I felt so filthy and contaminated I didn't dare to go into those waters." Robert Ingersoll had been dead for years, but he had poisoned and injured that man. God has the lake of fire for those who poison others by their teachings.

While attending high school, I always carried a Bible. There was a professor in Physics who never failed to hold me up to ridicule before the class. He always challenged my faith. But one day he jumped from the top of a building and killed himself, because he had no peace. Every student who came into his class was contaminated.

God will not let anyone get away with such work. He will punish those who injure the souls of others. We always find these folks spreading their poison in the religious world; not in the teaching of dentistry or electricity or music, but in the lines that touch the truth of God. They are the first whom He punishes.

The next kind of people He punishes are described in Matthew 3:10—"And now also the axe is laid unto the root of the trees: therefore every tree which bringeth not forth good fruit is hewn down and cast into the fire." John the Baptist is talking about professing Christians who show that they are not fruit trees at all. They profess to be, but God says in Hebrews 6:8, "That which beareth thorns and briers is rejected, and is nigh unto cursing; whose end is to be burned." They pretend to be fruit trees, but bear no fruit.

### **The Minister Was Saved in the Morning**

At one time, when I was holding a series of meetings in a Baptist church, I spoke on the book of Revelation for two weeks. I spoke the first night on "The Place of the Lamb of God in the Book of Revelation," and the next night on "The Place of the Blood in the Book of Revelation." When I arrived at the church the following evening, the pastor said, "Dr. Wilson, I would like to say a few words during the first half of the service, if I may." He accordingly rose to his feet a little later and addressed the audience: "I have been preaching in this church for seven years, but never met Christ until 5:00 this morning. After the service last night, I went to my study with my Bible, and at five o'clock I met Christ, and He saved my soul." He had been pretending to be a Christian, but had never met the Saviour. "There has been no fruit as the result of my work and ministry," he said. "I may have been giving wonderful lectures, but now I am going to exalt the Man—Christ Jesus."

Test yourself and see if He is going to cut you down because there is nothing in your life for Him. He cuts down unfruitful trees and casts them into the fire. He gets rid of those who are pretending to be Christians, but are bearing no fruit.

Now look at Matthew 3:11, R.V.—"he shall baptize you in the Holy Ghost, and in fire." Emphasize that little word "in." He puts some in the Holy Spirit and others in the lake of fire. Some He puts in the Spirit by His grace, so they will live for God, honour His Name, walk with Him, love His Word, preach the gospel, and testify for Him. Others who don't want Him and who don't care for Him are punished for their attitude and are not given salvation.

### **The Patient Finally Believed in Hell**

In the practice of medicine, I try to speak to every patient in some way concerning his soul. It is remarkable how many of these folks prove to be atheists or infidels. One of them said one day, "Dr. Wilson, I don't believe what you are preaching about eternal punishment."

"Why don't you?" I asked.

"Oh, I just don't," was the reply.

"Then why don't you go and kneel at the feet of Christ, and find out where you are going?" I continued. "Go and ask Him."

"I don't care where I'm going," he replied, carelessly.

"Don't you?" I inquired. "Well if you don't care, why should God care where you are going? No wonder He leaves you out. If heaven isn't worth wanting and seeking, why should God bother offering it to you? He won't give it to you, because you don't want it. Good-bye."

The next day he looked me up, and said, "Dr. Wilson, I don't want to go to hell. If there is a hell, I don't want to be found there."

"Very well," I said, "you bow your knee to Christ and see if He will take you and give you eternal life."

We knelt together, and he said, "Lord Jesus, I wonder if you will take me?" What answer do you suppose God gave him? God saved that man right then and there.

We play with this business, but we wouldn't play with it if we realized the tragedy of meeting God in our sins. Indifferent ones are cast into the lake of fire, as well as the outrageous sinners (Rev. 21:8).

## **Chaff Will Be Burned With Fire**

Read on through Matthew 3:12—"Whose fan is in his hand, and he will thoroughly purge his floor, and gather his wheat into the garner; but he will burn up the chaff with unquenchable fire."

"Chaff" is quite different from "vipers." In verse 7, John the Baptist speaks of "vipers," but here he speaks of "chaff." But he is not talking about the same kind of folks. Chaff is the husk that is around the wheat. Wherever you see thrashing, you see a pile of chaff. It is absolutely worthless; it cannot be used for anything. It contains no nitrogen, and would be of no value if it were plowed into the ground. Cattle won't eat it. You can't make a bed from it. You can't use it for anything, so farmers burn it. A farmer couldn't sell a pile of chaff as big as a barn for ten cents.

The Lord says that there are some people like that. They are close to the real grain, but have no life in themselves. They are of no value to God. They never give thanks to God for their food or anything else. They never serve Him. They are useless to Him.

I went into a restaurant one day, and after bowing my head and giving thanks for the food, a waitress came over to the table and said, "Pardon me, but you must be a Christian. I have looked for three months for a Christian to come in here, because I would like to be saved." I knew of at least fifteen professing Christians who were eating in that restaurant, but apparently not one of them had bowed his head and said, "Thank you, Lord"; and here was this woman watching for a Christian and wanting to be saved, but seeing no one to help her. Many professing Christians are only "chaff."

God gets nothing from such a life. No plans are made for a day of spiritual blessing and refreshing on Sunday, but rather they get to bed late Saturday night, because they can sleep during the pastor's sermon on Sunday. They plan no time to get alone with God in prayer, but rather for picnics and socials and parties. What does He get out of such lives? What will He do with us? Do we sing His praises, and walk with Him, and worship Him?

There are no vitamins in chaff. You could eat it, but you would get no nutriment from it. It would not hurt you, but you would not get anything out of it. What you need is to accept Him and become "wheat."

## **Helen Thought He Called Her a Snake**

A girl was won to Christ one evening in a Methodist church in Kansas City, when I was preaching on "Vipers," because she thought I had called her a snake. I was glad that she did get mad about it, for it brought her up to see me. "I don't believe it," she said.

"Well," I responded, "I didn't ask you to believe it. My business is to preach the Word, and leave it with folks to believe or reject. If they like it, fine; if not, I am very sorry."

"I want you to know," she flared up again, "that I am just as good as you are."

"You are perfectly right, Helen," I replied. "The marvel is not that God sends some people to hell, but that God takes anybody to heaven. I can't understand that. God compares us to three things: "snakes, maggots, and tares, and people on the earth appear to Him like these things.

"Suppose I should come to your house, and you showed me around the rooms, and then you showed me your room. It is a beautiful room with new paper on the wall, and lovely lights, with blue carpets, an a blue bedspread, "blue gadgets on the dresser, and blue drapes at the window. You have a mahogany bed in the room, and a beautiful mirror, and lovely pictures. Suddenly I say, 'Helen, what is that I see? Why, it is a pile of maggots lying right there in the middle of the room!'

"But you say, 'Oh, Dr. Wilson, but they are such nice ones. They are so big and fat. They're the very best that there are. And see what a lovely time they are having with each other, just loving each other. They are such lovely maggots.' Then you reach over and pick up the biggest one there is and put it on the dresser, and say, 'Dear little Sammy, you are to be my companion now the rest of your life.'"

"Doctor," she said with a shudder, "don't talk like that!"

"That is what the Lord did when He picked me up," I said. "He calls us maggots three times in the Bible. We look like that in His sight, even though we may look nice to each other. God doesn't look at things as we do. He sees the unrighteousness and selfishness, the sin and evil, and says we are maggots, weeds, and serpents; and then He deliberately reaches down and picks up one of us and says, 'Will you live in my home forever? I will make you an heir with my Son, and we shall live together for all eternity.' That is grace, absolute grace. We look at each other and think we are nice, and perhaps we are in the sight of each other, but we are not so in the sight of God."

## **She Had an Elegant Bathroom**

Last year I was entertained as a guest in a beautiful home in Chicago. The stuff which my hostess had in her parlor was worth more than I have in my whole house.

She was continually telling me how good she was, so that I had no opportunity to talk to her. She told me she was good, so I know she was, but I wanted to win her for Christ. Later, she took me upstairs and showed me the bedroom I was to occupy. The only trouble with the bed was the job of getting out of it. When I had put down my satchel, she showed me the "ba-ah-th."

I don't know if you ever have seen a "ba-ah-th." Most people have a bathroom. That is a room where you put old clothes and old shoes, and half-empty bottles in the medicine cabinet, and old rags on the back of the door. You recognize it! But this was a "ba-ah-th." I'll tell you what was there. The tile matched the ceiling, and the ceiling matched the soap, and the soap matched the towel. There was only one cake of soap, one towel, and one person. That is a "ba-ah-th,"

She took me in and said, "Dr. Wilson, the towel on this rack is for you."

"But I don't want it," I protested, "I want to use your towel."

"Why, Dr. Wilson," she said with a horrified gasp, "you amaze me."

"No," I continued, "I want to use your towel, and I want to use your tooth-brush, too."

She was about ready to call the police by that time. "I never heard of such a thing," she exclaimed.

"Probably you haven't," I agreed; "but you said downstairs that you were so nice, and anybody who is as nice as you are should permit me to use everything you use. But isn't it a fact, sister, that you wouldn't let anybody use anything you use, and isn't it a fact that nobody would want to?" We went downstairs and I had the joy of leading her to Christ.

You should get a job in a laundry counting the incoming laundry, and see how nice you are. When God looks down on us, He not only sees us but He can smell us, for He says we are full of "wounds, and bruises, and putrifying sores" (Isaiah 1:6). He says that about the best of us.

We look at each other and think we are quite nice. Like likes like. Dogs like dogs. Snakes like snakes. Think of God looking down on us! We will not be judged by our estimate of ourselves, but by His estimate of us.

### **Our Filthy Rags' Righteousnesses**

Look at Matthew 5:20—"For I say unto you, That except your righteousness shall exceed the righteousness of the scribes and Pharisees, ye shall in no case enter into the kingdom of heaven." Why are they shut out? For having the wrong kind of righteousness. It is home-made righteousness, born, bred, and brought up in their own heart and mind, and they intend to rely upon that instead of the righteousness which God has provided in Christ.

In Matthew 22, when he came in to see his guests at the wedding, the king found one who did not have on the wedding garment, and said to him, "Friend, how camest thou in hither not having a wedding garment?" And the man was "speechless." That garment speaks of God's own righteousness.

"All our righteousnesses are as filthy rags" in His sight (Isaiah 64:6). It doesn't say "all our sins," but "all our righteousnesses"—the best we have. Suppose I should take an old dirty rag and fold it up, and wrap it in tissue paper, and tie it neatly with ribbons, and send it to King George for a Christmas present, do you think he would be pleased? But when you offer to God your righteousness, He says that is what you are doing. It has on it something that came out of you. That expression "filthy rags" isn't [exactly worded] properly in our Bible, for the translators had a sense of propriety... I won't tell you what the word is, but it is a rag that has on it something that comes out of you; and as that is an abomination to another human, anything that comes from our hearts and lives is an abomination to God. God accepts only imputed righteousness, that is, His righteousness given to the account of the soul that trusts His Son. He puts a faultless, stainless, spotless and perfect righteousness on that person. We go to heaven on an imputed righteousness, clothed with a righteousness we neither earned nor merited. The righteous work of Another is imputed to us, and a new life is imparted. That is the only way anybody can enter into heaven.

"Except your righteousness shall exceed the righteousness of the scribes and Pharisees," said the Lord Jesus, "ye shall in no case enter into the kingdom of heaven." They had the Old Testament and loved it, and kept the law carefully and zealously, more than anyone of us does,

because they loved it. That was their business. Yet God says you must have something better than that, or you will be shut out.

The apostle Paul wrote to the Philippian Christians from his prison cell in Rome that his great desire was to be found in Christ, "not having mine own righteousness, which is of the law, but that which is through the faith of Christ, the righteousness which is of God by faith" (Phil. 3:9). Only those who have this righteousness, taken as a free gift by faith, will stand with Christ in glory. All others will be cast out of His presence and out of the place He has gone to prepare for those who love Him.

None of us has a dress or a suit that could be worn in the throne room of the King James' Court in London. We might have a very expensive one, but we couldn't wear it there, because there are certain rules that stipulate the kind of dress or suit you must wear. You must dress according to the laws of the Court.

The law of the Court of heaven is that you must have on the garment of righteousness Christ gives, and nothing else will do. If you don't have it, you will be shut out. There are twenty-six reasons given in Matthew why men are shut out from heaven and God. The question is, "What will the Lord do with you?" Ask your heart before it is too late.

### **Life Is Very Uncertain**

It doesn't take long to die. I was preaching in a church in Kansas City, and a dear old Swedish couple were on their way to the service. For some reason they stopped their car on the opposite side of the street from the church, and as they started to cross the street a sixteen year old boy drove past, skidded on the wet pavement, and both of them were killed instantly. They never got to the service.

Then there was another friend who had been attending the services with his wife and seven children. One night I was talking to Charlie and telling him how glad I was that he had come back to the Lord. We went out together, and as we parted, I said, "Good-bye, Charlie; come back tomorrow."

"I'll be back tomorrow night," he assured me, but at 12:30 o'clock his eldest daughter called me and said her father had just died.

You see you just don't know when your last hour will come. You have no lease on life. Neither do you know whether you will be where the gospel is preached when you want to be saved.

We had a young intern in Kansas City whose mother and father were



missionaries, but he had gone far from God. One night he was awakened by a young fellow of his own age, who was dying in ward No. 1 of the general hospital. The young man pleaded with this intern to tell him how to be saved, but he had to tell him, "I don't know anything about it. I'll see if the nurse knows." He called the nurse, but she didn't know anything either. Finally, they sent for a preacher, but before the preacher could get there, the young man was gone.

The intern came to my house the next day, and said, "Dr. Wilson, that taught me a lesson. I may not be around where anyone can tell me how to be saved when I am dying. I want to find out while I can."

I wish to remind you that God has a reason for what He does. If He shuts you out, you will never complain against Him. You will not find a single man who will find fault with God throughout eternity. If you live without Him, He will live without you. If you decide that there is no God, He will decide there isn't anyone for you when you need Him most. If you want your sins, He will let you have them, and punish you for them.

All the while He holds out His hands, and says seven times "Come," because He means it. "Come now, and let us reason together, saith the LORD" (Isaiah 1:18). Why "now?" Because now is the only time you have—it is the best time. God shuts out those who do not agree with Him. He never blesses anybody who argues with Him. Believe what He says, and make Christ your own. He has a Saviour for everyone. Do you need a Saviour? He is sufficient to meet every need.

That is one of the miracles of John 3:16—He gave one Gift to everybody, from pole to pole, to every nation, to young and old, to sage or ignorant, to the pauper or to the wealthy one, to king and peasant. That one Gift is Christ, because He is sufficient for everyone. "He that hath the Son hath life" (I John 5:12). "Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that heareth my word, and believeth on him that sent me, hath everlasting life, and shall not come into condemnation; but is passed from death unto life" (John 5: 24). Why won't the believer come to judgment? Because the moment he trusts in Christ, all the evidence against him is blotted out. Come to, Christ now! He will make you fit for glory.

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