

# Of the Punishment of Sin.

by John Gill

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*The punishment of sin is both temporal and eternal, and is due to all the fallen race of Adam.*

**Scripture:** Matthew 25:41, Luke 16:22, Romans 3:10, Romans 3:23

**Topics:** "Punishment of Sin", "Divine Justice and Mercy"

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## Description

John Gill addresses the punishment of sin, emphasizing that all humanity, as descendants of Adam, is subject to both temporal and eternal punishment due to original sin and actual transgressions. He discusses the nature of these punishments, noting that while infants may suffer the consequences of original sin, their eternal fate is ultimately in God's hands. Gill asserts that the elect, covered by Christ's grace, are not subject to eternal punishment, while all others face condemnation due to their inherent sinfulness. He highlights the distinction between the various degrees of punishment and the necessity of divine justice, underscoring God's mercy alongside His justice. The sermon concludes with a reminder of the eternal consequences of sin and the hope found in Christ for those who believe.

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## Transcript

A Body of Doctrinal Divinity

Book 3--Chapter 13

OF THE PUNISHMENT OF SIN.

As to the punishment of original sin on those who, it may be thought, not to have added to it any actual sin and transgression, as infants, dying in infancy, I shall be silent; at least, say little. Not that I doubt of the right of justice to punish that sin on Adam's descendants, who have not actually sinned after the similitude of his transgression; since corporal death, a part of the punishment threatened, does pass upon them, and they are born with a want of original righteousness, a considerable branch of moral death; but if divine justice proceeds further, and inflicts eternal death, or everlasting punishment on them, I think it must be in a more mild and gentle manner than what is inflicted on those who have also been guilty of actual sins and transgressions; seeing, as there are degrees of punishment respecting them, as they are greater or lesser (Matthew 11:20-24) so there must be a difference of the punishment of original sin, separately considered; and of that attended with numerous actual transgressions.

Many unguarded expressions have been dropped, concerning the punishment of such infants, as before mentioned, which are not at all to the credit of truth. Many conjectures have been made, and schemes formed, that are scarcely worth mentioning. Some have fancied that all such infants are lost; which seems to have something in it shocking, especially to parents. And others think they are all saved, through the electing grace of God, the redeeming blood of Christ, and the regeneration of the blessed Spirit; to which I am much rather inclined, than to the former: but think it best to leave it among the secret things that belong to God; who, we may be assured, cannot do an unjust thing, nor do any injury to any of his creatures: and who, as he is just in his nature, he is merciful in Christ.

In this article I have nothing to do with men as elect or non-elect; but as they are all the fallen race of Adam. The elect, as considered in Christ, the Head of the covenant of grace, are not subject, or liable, to any punishment, here or hereafter; "There is no condemnation, to them that are in Christ Jesus": their afflictions are not punishments for sin; nor is corporal death inflicted on them as a penal evil; nor will any curse befall them in a future state. But my concern is with men considered in Adam, as the head of the covenant of works, and the representative of all mankind; as they sinned and fell in him, and were involved in the guilt of his sin; and as they are actual transgressors in themselves; and as they are chargeable with sin, according to the declaration, sanction, and tenor of the law; and considered as such, all mankind descending from Adam by ordinary generation, without any exception and distinction, are subject, obnoxious, and liable to punishment.

Punishment of sin, original and actual, may be considered as temporal and eternal; both in this life, and that which is to come. There is an everlasting punishment into which the wicked go after death; and there is a punishment in this life; "Wherefore should a living man complain, a man for the punishment of his sin?" (La 3:37 that is, for punishment in the present state. 1. First, Temporal punishment, or punishment in this life, is due to sin; and is inflicted on account of it; and this is both inward and outward, or of soul and body. 1a.

Punishment inward, or of the soul, lies, 1a1. In a loss of the image of God upon it; all have sinned and "come short", or "are deprived of the glory of God"; that is, of the image of God, in which his glory on man lay; one principal part of which image was righteousness and holiness. This man is stripped of, and is become unrighteous; "There is none righteous, no not one" (Rom. 3:10,23). 1a2. In a loss of the freedom of will, and of power to do good. Man has not lost the natural liberty of his will to things natural; but the moral liberty of his will to things moral; his will is not free to that which is good, only to that which is evil; and that liberty is no other than bondage.

Man's free will is a slave to his lusts; he is a homeborn slave (Jer. 2:14). Man has lost his power to do good; how to perform that he knows not; through the weakness of the flesh, or corrupt nature, he cannot do what the law requires; he cannot of himself think anything; and, without the grace of God, cannot do anything as it ought to be done; for he has no principle of life and motion in him to it; he is dead in trespasses and sins. 1a3. In a loss of knowledge of divine things; his understanding is darkened with respect to them; he is darkness itself; he has lost his knowledge by sinning, instead of gaining more; "There is none that understandeth, and seeks after God, and the knowledge of him.

Spiritual things men cannot discern; to do good they have no knowledge; they know not, nor will they understand. And many, through an habitual course of sinning, become hardened; and God gives them up to a judicial blindness and hardness of heart; to vile affections, and a reprobate mind, to do things not convenient; to strong delusions, to believe a lie; and to their own hearts lusts; and nothing worse can well

befall men than that. 1a4. In a loss of communion with God. Adam sinned, and was drove out of paradise, and was deprived of communion with God through the creatures; and all his sons are alienated from a life of fellowship with him: their sins separate between God and them; and, indeed, what communion can there be between light and darkness, righteousness and unrighteousness? the throne of iniquity, or where iniquity reigns, can have no fellowship with God, who commit sin as though they had a law to do it. 1a5.

In being destitute of hope, and subject to horror and black despair. The sinful soul of man is hopeless and helpless: men live without real hope of future happiness, and without God in the world; if their consciences are not lulled asleep, they are continually accusing of sin; the arrows of the Almighty stick in them; the poison of his wrath drinks up their spirits; and his terrors set themselves in array against them: having no view of pardon, peace, and righteousness by another, there is nothing but a fearful looking for of judgment; indignation and wrath, tribulation and anguish, are due to every soul of man that does evil, and to which he is liable; unless the grace of God prevents. 1b.

Outward punishments or of the body, or what relate to the outward things of life, are as follow: 1b1. Loss of immortality of the body. Adam's body was gifted with immortality; but sinning, he was stripped of it and became mortal, and so all his posterity are; which arises not from the constitution of their nature, and the appointment of God, barely, but from sin; "The body is dead", or is become mortal, "because of sin" (Rom. 8:10), and it is liable, on the same account, to various diseases; they all have their foundation in and their original from sin; God threatens men for it with a consumption, and with a fever, and with an inflammation, and with extreme burning (Deut. 28:22), and these, with many others, are inflicted on account of it.

To one cured of a disease Christ said; "Go home, sin no more, lest a worse thing come upon thee" (John 5:14), signifying, that his former disease came upon him for sin, and a worse would, should he continue in it. 1b2. Labour of body, with toil, fatigue, and weariness, is another penal effect of sin. Though Adam dressed the garden of Eden, in his state of innocence, it was done without toil and fatigue; but when he had sinned, the earth was cursed for his sake, and brought forth thorns and thistles; and he was doomed to labour in it, to dig in it, to weed and purge it, to cultivate and manure it; and thereby to get and eat his bread in sorrow, and in the sweat of his brow.

And this doom continues still in his posterity; man is born "to labour" as the sparks fly upward; so the word may be rendered (Job 5:7). The earth remains in such a state a requires cultivation, ploughing, sowing, weeding, &c. in which men must work with their own hands, in a toilsome and laborious manner, or in other arts, to get bread for themselves and families, and have wherewith to give to others. And it may be observed, that the punishment pronounced on Eve, that her conception and sorrow should be multiplied; and that in sorrow she should bring forth children, is continued in her daughters; and it is remarked, that of all the creatures, none bring forth their young in so much pain as women; and hence some of the greatest calamities and distresses in life, are described and expressed by the pains of a woman in travail; (see Gen. 3:16-19). 1b3.

Loss of dominion over the creatures is another sort of punishment of sin. Adam had a grant of dominion over all the creatures, and these were in subjection to him. But by sin man has lost his power over them; and many of them, instead of fearing and serving him, rebel against him, and are hurtful to him; he is afraid of coming near them, unless God makes peace with them for him, and preserves him from them; yea, the noisome beast is one of God's sore judgments with which he threatens to punish sinful men (Hosea 2:18; Ezek. 14:21). 1b4.

The many distresses in person, in family, and in estate, are the penal effects of sin; the curses of the law, for the transgressions of it, come upon men, and on what they have; in the city, and in the field; in basket, and in store; in the fruit of their body, and of their land; in the increase of their kine and flocks of sheep; when these are affected, and there is a failure in them, it is for sin (Deut. 28:16,20). 1b5. Public calamities are to be considered in this light, as punishments of sin; as the drowning of the old world; the burning of Sodom and Gomorrah; the captivities of the Jews; the destruction of other nations and cities; the devastations made by wars, famines, pestilences, earthquakes, &c. 1b6.

Last of all, as to outward temporal punishment, corporal death, which is the disunion of soul and body, is the just "wages" and demerit of sin; it was threatened in case of it, and it is inflicted for it; it came upon Adam, and it comes upon all his posterity; and sin is the cause of it; "The sting of death is sin"; sin gives it its destructive power and force, and makes it a penal evil. 2. Secondly, There is an eternal punishment of sin, or the punishment of it in the world to come for ever.

This takes place in part on wicked men as soon as soul and body are separated; their souls, during their separate state, until the resurrection, are in a state of punishment; the wicked rich man when he died, "in hell he lift up his eyes, being in torment" (Luke 16:22,23). At the resurrection the bodies of wicked men will come forth from their graves, to the resurrection of damnation; when soul and body will be destroyed in hell, and punished with an everlasting destruction from the presence of God (John 5:29; Matthew 10:28; 2 Thess. 1:9).

This punishment will be both of loss and sense; it will lie in an eternal separation from God, from any enjoyment of his favour, and fellowship with him; but such will have their eternal abode with devils and damned spirits; and in an everlasting sense of the wrath of God, which will be poured forth like fire; and both are expressed in that sentence, "Depart from me, ye cursed, into everlasting fire" (Matthew 25:41). Now this punishment is eternal; it is called everlasting punishment, everlasting destruction: everlasting fire; fire that is not quenched; the smoke of it ascends for ever and ever (Matthew 25:41,46; 2 Thess. 1:9; Mark 9:42; Rev. 14:11).

The reasons of the eternal duration of punishment for sin, are, because it is committed against an infinite and eternal Being, and is objectively infinite, and requires infinite satisfaction, which a finite creature cannot give; and this not being given, punishment must proceed on "ad infinitum", and so be eternal. Could satisfaction be made, punishment would cease; but no satisfaction can be made in hell by the sufferings of finite creatures; which, therefore, must be continued until the uttermost farthing is paid, or full satisfaction made, which can never be done.

Besides, the wicked in the future state, will always continue sinning, and be more and more outrageous and desperate in their blasphemy and hatred of God; and, therefore, as they will sin continually, it will be just that they be punished continually; to which may be added, that there will be no repentance for sin there, no pardon of it, no change of state; "He that is unjust, let him be unjust still; and he that is filthy, let him be filthy still" (Rev. 22:11). But of this more hereafter, towards the close of this work.

Now this punishment of sin, both temporal and eternal, is due to all the fallen race of Adam; to all descending from him by ordinary generation, without any distinction or exception, as they are considered in him, and transgressors of the righteous law of God. All equally sinned in him, and died in him; all are made sinners by the imputation of his disobedience to them; the guilt of which sin, and of their own actual transgressions, they are chargeable with: the whole world is become guilty before God; and which guilt in

his sight, and as pronounced by him according to his law, is an obligation to punishment: all the transgressors of the law, as all men are, stand cursed and condemned by it; nay, "by the offence of one", of the one man Adam, "judgment came upon all men to condemnation"; so that all Adam's posterity are under a sentence of condemnation; and as considered in him, and in themselves, are subject, exposed, and liable to the above punishment; being all by nature children of wrath, one as well as another, deserving of it, and so liable to it; that is, to punishment: the reason why this punishment, to which all are subject, is not inflicted on some, is because of the suretyship engagements of Christ for them, and his performance of those engagements; whereby he endured all that wrath and punishment due to their sins in their room and stead; and so delivered them from it, which otherwise they were exposed unto; the dawn of which distinguishing grace the next part of this work will open and display.

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