



John 3:16-19

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. 17 For God sent not his Son into the world to condemn the world; but that the world through him might be saved. 18 He that believeth on him is not condemned: but he that believeth not is condemned already, because he hath not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God. 19 And this is the condemnation, that light is come into the world, and men loved darkness rather than light, because their deeds were evil. KJV



Condemned Or Justified?

I believe that this is a very confusing subject to most people, even for many Believers and ministers of the Gospel. Therefore, I want to look at the topic from several different views of Scripture.

I. Eternal condemnation.

A. Jesus was condemned that we may be set free from eternal condemnation.

"Behold, we go up to Jerusalem; and the Son of man shall be betrayed unto the chief priests and unto the scribes, and they shall condemn him to death" (Matthew 20:18).

"For what the law could not do, in that it was weak through the flesh, God sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, and for sin, condemned sin in the flesh" (Romans 8:3).

B. Although through the sin of Adam all the world came under condemnation, Jesus came to set Believers free from eternal condemnation.

"For God sent not his Son into the world to condemn the world; but that the world through him might be saved" (John 3:17).

"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).

"But not as the offence, so also is the free gift. For if through the offence of one many be dead, much more the grace of God, and the gift by grace, which is by one man, Jesus Christ, hath abounded unto many. And not as it was by one that sinned, so is the gift: for the judgment was by one to condemnation, but the free gift is of many offences unto justification. For if by one man's offence death reigned by one; much more they which receive abundance of grace and of the gift of righteousness shall reign in life by one, Jesus Christ. Therefore as by the offence of one judgment came upon all men to condemnation; even so by the righteousness of one the free

¹ http://www.wholeperson-counseling.org/grace/condemned_justified.html

gift came upon all men unto justification of life. For as by one man's disobedience many were made sinners, so by the obedience of one shall many be made righteous. Moreover the law entered, that the offence might abound. But where sin abounded, grace did much more abound: (Romans 5:20) That as sin hath reigned unto death, even so might grace reign through righteousness unto eternal life by Jesus Christ our Lord" (Romans 5:17-21).

Jesus illustrated this truth with the woman who was caught in the act of adultery. The Law said that she was to be stoned to death. Jesus asked her where were her accusers. Look at the dialogue: "When Jesus had lifted up himself, and saw none but the woman, he said unto her, Woman, where are those thine accusers? hath no man condemned thee? She said, No man, Lord. And Jesus said unto her, Neither do I condemn thee: go, and sin no more" (John 8:10-11).

C. Rejection of Jesus brings eternal condemnation.

"He that believeth on him is not condemned: but he that believeth not is condemned already, because he hath not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God" (John 3:18).

"And this is the condemnation, that light is come into the world, and men loved darkness rather than light, because their deeds were evil" (John 3:19)

"For there are certain men crept in unawares, who were before of old ordained to this condemnation, ungodly men, turning the grace of our God into lasciviousness, and denying the only Lord God, and our Lord Jesus Christ" (Jude 1:4).

II. Condemnation by the world.

"But when we are judged, we are chastened of the Lord, that we should not be condemned with the world" (I Corinthians 11:32).

"In all things shewing thyself a pattern of good works: in doctrine shewing uncorruptness, gravity, sincerity, Sound speech, that cannot be condemned; that he that is of the contrary part may be ashamed, having no evil thing to say of you" (Titus 2:7-8).

"Having your conversation honest among the Gentiles: that, whereas they speak against you as evildoers, they may by your good works, which they shall behold, glorify God in the day of visitation" (I Peter 2:12).

III. Self condemnation

"For if our heart condemn us, God is greater than our heart, and knoweth all things. Beloved, if our heart condemn us not, then have we confidence toward God" (I John 3:20-21).

"Why art thou cast down, O my soul? and why art thou disquieted in me? hope thou in God: for I shall yet praise him for the help of his countenance" (Psalms 42:5). David encouraged himself in the Lord when he felt condemned.

IV. Temporal Condemnation on earth.

If we do not live righteously by the grace of God, we may fall under temporal condemnation here on the earth.

"There is therefore now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit. For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus hath made me free from the law of sin and death" (Romans 8:1-2). Although some translations omit "who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit", I believe that it should be there with the understanding that it is not speaking of eternal condemnation, but of a temporal condemnation here on the earth. Again, the eternal condemnation was taken care of by the death of Jesus.

"For if we would judge ourselves, we should not be judged. But when we are judged, we are chastened of the Lord, that we should not be condemned with the world. Wherefore, my brethren, when ye come together to eat, tarry one for another. And if any man hunger, let him eat at home; that ye come not together unto condemnation. And the rest will I set in order when I come" (I Corinthians 11:31-34).

"My brethren, be not many masters, knowing that we shall receive the greater condemnation. For in many things we offend all. If any man offend not in word, the same is a perfect man, and able also to bridle the whole body" (James 3:1-2).

"But above all things, my brethren, swear not, neither by heaven, neither by the earth, neither by any other oath: but let your yea be yea; and your nay, nay; lest ye fall into condemnation" (James 5:12).

"Judge not, and ye shall not be judged: condemn not, and ye shall not be condemned: forgive, and ye shall be forgiven" (Luke 6:37).

"For by thy words thou shalt be justified, and by thy words thou shalt be condemned" (Matthew 12:37).

The opposite of condemnation is justification!

A good definition for JUSTIFICATION is "just as though you have never sinned." God doesn't grade on the curve! There is no balancing of the scales (doing good balanced with sin). We are either condemned or justified by grace through faith.

I. Are we justified by keeping the Law? NO!

"For not the hearers of the law are just before God, but the doers of the law shall be justified" (Romans 2:13). **The problem is that no one keeps the law.** "As it is written, There is none righteous, no, not one" (Romans 3:10). **Therefore:**

"Therefore by the deeds of the law there shall no flesh be justified in his sight: for by the law is the knowledge of sin" (Romans 3:20).

"But that no man is justified by the law in the sight of God, it is evident: for, The just shall live by faith" (Galatians 3:11).

"Wherefore the law was our schoolmaster to bring us unto Christ, that we might be justified by faith" (Galatians 3:24).

II. Jesus was condemned that we might be justified by faith.

"Who was delivered for our offences, and was raised again for our justification" (Romans 4:25).

"But God commendeth his love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us. Much more then, being now justified by his blood, we shall be saved from wrath through him" (Romans 5:8-9).

"Therefore as by the offence of one judgment came upon all men to condemnation; even so by the righteousness of one the free gift came upon all men unto justification of life" (Romans 5:18).

III. We can only be justified as a free gift through faith in Jesus.

"And not as it was by one that sinned, so is the gift: for the judgment was by one to condemnation, but the free gift is of many offences unto justification" (Romans 5:16).

"Knowing that a man is not justified by the works of the law, but by the faith of Jesus Christ, even we have believed in Jesus Christ, that we might be justified by the faith of Christ, and not by the works of the law: for by the works of the law shall no flesh be justified" (Galatians 2:16).

"Being justified freely by his grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus" (Romans 3:24).

"Therefore being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ: By whom also we have access by faith into this grace wherein we stand, and rejoice in hope of the glory of God" (Romans 5:1-2).

"Moreover whom he did predestinate, them he also called: and whom he called, them he also justified: and whom he justified, them he also glorified" (Romans 8:30).

After listing a number of types of sinners, Paul said, "And such were some of you: but ye are washed, but ye are sanctified, but ye are justified in the name of the Lord Jesus, and by the Spirit of our God" (I Corinthians 6:11).

"Therefore we conclude that a man is justified by faith without the deeds of the law" (Romans 3:28). What a great CONCLUSION!

"That being justified by his grace, we should be made heirs according to the hope of eternal life" (Titus 3:7). Because of our justification in Jesus, we also receive the blessings of the Father.

WARNING! If we fall back into believing that we have to perform good works for our justification, then "Christ is become of no effect unto you, whosoever of you are justified by the law; ye are fallen from grace" (Galatians 5:4).

Remember that the devil is the accuser of the Brethren to bring condemnation. Therefore be, "Not a novice, lest being lifted up with pride he fall into the condemnation of the devil" (I Timothy 3:6). If we do sin, then we can immediately God before the Father. "If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness" (I John 1:9). Again, "My little children, these things write I unto you, that ye sin not. And if any man sin, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous" (I John 2:1). The devil is the prosecuting attorney and Jesus is our defense attorney. The devil brings accusations to us and before God, the Judge, but Jesus responds, "I died for that". The Judge responds, "Case dismissed."

"For if the ministration of condemnation be glory, much more doth the ministration of righteousness exceed in glory" (II Corinthians 3:9).

APPLICATION: If one sees himself as being condemned, then either he will work himself to death trying to live up to some standard to be accepted or he will give up and wallow in sin. Most likely he will become critical of God, self, and others. If, on the other hand, he sees himself justified by grace through faith, then he will much more likely draw himself closer to the Father in fellowship and obedience. He will be more thankful to God for his salvation and will also be less critical of himself and other Believers and see them justified in Christ even with their failures.



GRACE

Freedom from the Law of Sin and Death²

"For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus has made me **free from the law of sin and death.**" Romans viii. 2.

This passage has been regarded by some sacred critics as difficult of interpretation; one of whom furnishes three different meanings of the text, and then leaves the reader to make his own selection in the case. We think, however, that a simple examination of the words, taken in their connection, will remove the obscurity which may be supposed to veil them. The evident design of the Apostle is, to furnish an argument in support of the leading proposition he had just laid down, namely, the believer's deliverance from condemnation. There is clearly a connection between that declaration and the passage under consideration. "For the law of the Spirit of life." But the main difficulty seems to be in the meaning of the terms employed in the text. By some expositors, the "law of the Spirit of life" is interpreted of the influence or control exerted by the Spirit of God over the minds of the regenerate, emancipating them from the curse and tyranny of sin, and supplying them with a new authoritative enactment for their obedience and regulation, as those whose course is guided by the Spirit. "The law of sin and death," is by the same authority interpreted of the contesting power of sin, leading to death and condemnation; having its throne in the heart, and from its governing and despotic power, maintaining a supreme and dire sway over the whole moral man. The freedom, therefore, which the law of the Spirit of life confers upon those who are bound by the law of sin and death, is just the supremacy of one principle over the force of another principle: the triumph of an opposing law over an antagonist law.

But the interpretation which we propose for the adoption of the reader, is that which regards the "law of the Spirit of life," as describing the Gospel of Christ, frequently denominated a "law"- and emphatically so in this instance- because of the emancipation which it confers from the Mosaic code, called the "law of sin and death," as by it is the knowledge of sin, and through it death is threatened as the penalty of its transgression. With this brief, but, we believe, correct explanation of the terms of the passage, we proceed to consider the exalted liberty of the believer in Jesus, of which it speaks,; tracing that freedom to the instrument by whose agency it is secured. "For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus has made us free from the law of sin and death."

² <http://www.gracegems.org/W/r2.htm>

In the preceding chapter, we were led to regard all who were outside of Christ, as under a present, and as exposed to a future condemnation. Not less awful is the condition of the unconverted, as depicted in the passage before us. Reverse the state of the believer and you have the exact state of the unbeliever. Is the believer in Christ a free man? the unbeliever is a slave. Is the believer justified? the unbeliever is condemned. Is the believer a living soul? the unbeliever is a lifeless soul. Is the believer a reconciled son? the unbeliever is a hostile rebel. Is the believer an heir of glory? the unbeliever is an heir of hell. Between these two conditions there is no neutral ground. You are, my reader, either for Christ, or you are against Christ. In this great controversy between Christ and Satan, you are not an indifferent and unconcerned spectator. The Prince of Light or the prince of darkness claims your service, and presses you into the conflict. Oh, it is a matter of the greatest moment that you decide to which law you are bound- the "law of life," or "the law of death."

But in what sense is the believer "free from the law of sin and death?" As a covenant he is free from it. How clear and impressive is the reasoning of the Apostle on this point! "Know you not, brethren, (for I speak to those who know the law) how that the law has dominion over a man as long as he lives? For the woman who has a husband is bound by the law to her husband, so long as he lives ; but if the husband is dead, she is loosed from the law of her husband." The believer's union to Christ, represented under the figure of a marriage covenant, frees him from the condemnatory power of this law. He looks not to it for life; he rests not in it for hope; he renounces it as a saving covenant, and under the influence of another and a higher obligation- his marriage to Christ- he brings forth fruit unto God. Was ever liberty so glorious as this- a liberty associated with the most loving, cordial, and holy obedience? Not a single precept of that law, from whose covenant and curse he is released by this act of freedom, is compromised. All its precepts, embodied and reflected in the life of Christ- whose life is the model of our own- appear infinitely more clear and resplendent than ever they appeared before. The obedience of the Lawgiver infinitely enhanced the luster of the law, presenting the most impressive illustration of its majesty and holiness that it could possibly receive.

The *instrument* to whose agency this exalted liberty is ascribed is, the "law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus." The term law is forensic; though not unfrequently used in God's Word to designate the Gospel of Christ. "Out of Zion shall go forth the law." "The isles shall wait for his law." "Where is boasting then? It is excluded. By what law? Of works? No; but by the law of faith." In this sense we hold that the word is used in the text, *to designate the Gospel* of the blessed God, as the great instrument by which the freedom of which we have spoken is obtained. A few particulars will, we

think, justify this view. The Gospel is the law which *reveals the way of salvation by Christ*. It is the development of God's great expedient of saving man. It speaks of pardon and adoption, of acceptance and sanctification, as all flowing to the soul through faith in his dear Son. It represents God as extending his hand of mercy to the vilest sinner; welcoming the penitent wanderer back to his home, and once more taking the contrite rebel to his heart. It is also a *quicken*ing law- emphatically the "law of the Spirit of life." What numbers are seeking sanctification from the "law of sin;" and life from the "law of death!" But the Gospel speaks of life. Its doctrines- its precepts, its promises, its exhortations- its rebukes, its hopes, are all instinct with spiritual life, and come with quickening power to the soul. "The words that I speak unto you," says Jesus, "they are spirit and they are life." "Being born again, not of corruptible seed, but of incorruptible, by the Word of God, which lives and abides forever." Oh, there is life in the Gospel, because it is "the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus." It testifies of "Christ, who is our life." It declares that there is no spiritual life but in him. And although "the letter kills," working alone, yet in the hands of the Spirit it gives life. Thus clothed with the energy of the Holy Spirit, the Gospel proves a "savor of life unto life," to all who believe in it to the saving of the soul.

In concluding this chapter, we would remind those who can appropriate to themselves the language of the text, of *the exalted privilege to which they are raised*. A holy, filial, joyful liberty, is your birthright. It is the liberty of a pardoned and justified sinner. It is the liberty of a reconciled, adopted child. It is the liberty of one for whom there is "now no condemnation." And yet how few of God's people walk in the full enjoyment of this liberty? How few pray, and love, and confide, as adopted children! How few labor for life! Oh, sons of God, rise to this your high and heavenly calling! Your freedom was purchased at a high

price, undervalue it not. It is most holy- abuse it not. It binds you, by the strongest obligations, to yield yourselves unto God, as those who are alive from the dead. Be these the breathings of our soul- "Lord! my sweetest liberty is obedience to you; my highest freedom wearing your yoke; my greatest rest bearing your burden. Oh, how I love your law after the inward man! I delight to do your will, O my God!" The Lord grant unto us that we, "being delivered out of the hands of our enemies, might serve him without fear, in holiness and righteousness before him, all the days of our life."

CONDEMNATION³

- The sentence of God against sin.

Matthew 25:41 Then shall he say also unto them on the left hand, Depart from me, ye cursed, into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels:

- Universal, caused by the offence of Adam.

Romans 5:12 Wherefore, as 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 5:16 And not as *it was* by one that sinned, so *is* the gift: for the judgment was by one to condemnation, but the free gift *is* of many offences unto justification.

Romans 5:18 Therefore as by the offence of one *judgment came* upon all men to condemnation; even so by the righteousness of one *the free gift came* upon all men unto justification of life.

- Inseparable consequence of sin.

Proverbs 12:2 A good *man* obtaineth favour of the LORD: but a man of wicked devices will he condemn.

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

- INCREASED BY

- Impenitence.

Matthew 11:20-24 Then began he to upbraid the cities wherein most of his mighty works were done, because they repented not: Woe unto thee, Chorazin! woe unto thee, Bethsaida! for if the mighty works, which were done in you, had been done in Tyre and Sidon, they would have repented long ago in sackcloth and ashes. But I say unto you, It shall be more tolerable for Tyre and Sidon at the day of judgment, than for you. And thou, Capernaum, which art exalted unto heaven, shalt be brought down to hell: for if the mighty works, which have been done in thee, had been done in Sodom, it would have remained until this day. But I say unto you, That it shall be more tolerable for the land of Sodom in the day of judgment, than for thee. ...

³ <http://www.bible-topics.com/Condemnation.html>

- Unbelief.

John 3:18-19 He that believeth on him is not condemned: but he that believeth not is condemned already, because he hath not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God. And this is the condemnation, that light is come into the world, and men loved darkness rather than light, because their deeds were evil.

- Pride.

1 Timothy 3:6 Not a novice, lest being lifted up with pride he fall into the condemnation of the devil.

- Oppression.

James 5:1-5 Go to now, ye rich men, weep and howl for your miseries that shall come upon *you*. Your riches are corrupted, and your garments are motheaten. Your gold and silver is cankered; and the rust of them shall be a witness against you, and shall eat your flesh as it were fire. Ye have heaped treasure together for the last days. Behold, the hire of the labourers who have reaped down your fields, which is of you kept back by fraud, crieth: and the cries of them which have reaped are entered into the ears of the Lord of sabaoth. Ye have lived in pleasure on the earth, and been wanton; ye have nourished your hearts, as in a day of slaughter. ...

- Hypocrisy.

Matthew 23:14 Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! for ye devour widows' houses, and for a pretence make long prayer: therefore ye shall receive the greater damnation.

- Conscience testifies to the justice of.

Job 9:20 If I justify myself, mine own mouth shall condemn me: *if I say, I am perfect*, it shall also prove me perverse.

Romans 2:1 Therefore thou art inexcusable, O man, whosoever thou art that judgest: for wherein thou judgest another, thou condemnest thyself; for thou that judgest doest the same things.

Titus 3:11 Knowing that he that is such is subverted, and sinneth, being condemned of himself.

- The law testifies to the justice of.

Romans 3:19 Now we know that what things soever the law saith, it saith to them who are under the law: that every mouth may be stopped, and all the world may become guilty before God.

- According to men's deserts.

Matthew 12:37 For by thy words thou shalt be justified, and by thy words thou shalt be condemned.

2 Corinthians 11:15 Therefore *it is* no great thing if his ministers also be transformed as the ministers of righteousness; whose end shall be according to their works.

- Saints are delivered from, by Christ.

John 3:18 He that believeth on him is not condemned: but he that believeth not is condemned already, because he hath not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God.

John 5:24 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.

Romans 8:1 *There is* therefore now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit.

Romans 8:33-34 Who shall lay any thing to the charge of God's elect? *It is* God that justifieth. *Who is he* that condemneth? *It is* Christ that died, yea rather, that is risen again, who is even at the right hand of God, who also maketh intercession for us.

- Of the wicked, an example.

2 Peter 2:7 And delivered just Lot, vexed with the filthy conversation of the wicked:

Jude 1:7 Even as Sodom and Gomorrha, and the cities about them in like manner, giving themselves over to fornication, and going after strange flesh, are set forth for an example, suffering the vengeance of eternal fire.

- Chastisements are designed to rescue us from.

Psalms 94:12-13 Blessed *is* the man whom thou chastenest, O LORD, and teachest him out of thy law; That thou mayest give him rest from the days of adversity, until the pit be digged for the wicked.

1 Corinthians 11:32 But when we are judged, we are chastened of the Lord, that we should not be condemned with the world.

- Apostates ordained to.

Jude 1:4 For there are certain men crept in unawares, who were before of old ordained to this condemnation, ungodly men, turning the grace of our God into lasciviousness, and denying the only Lord God, and our Lord Jesus Christ.

- Unbelievers remain under.

John 3:18 He that believeth on him is not condemned: but he that believeth not is condemned already, because he hath not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God.

John 3:36 He that believeth on the Son hath everlasting life: and he that believeth not the Son shall not see life; but the wrath of God abideth on him.

- The law is the ministration of.

2 Corinthians 3:9 For if the ministration of condemnation *be* glory, much more doth the ministration of righteousness exceed in glory.

Baker's Evangelical Dictionary of Biblical Theology⁴

Condemnation []

From the standpoint of semantics, condemnation is part of legal terminology. When it is discovered that a crime has been committed, that the law has been broken, the process of investigation may lead to formal charges being levied against a defendant. The process of litigation leads to the outcome, a verdict of acquittal or guilt. The verdict indicates that the defendant is either free from or accountable to the law's penalty for that crime. Thus the result is either vindication or condemnation. Condemnation can refer either to the legal status of liability to punishment or to the actual infliction of that punishment. At times the word is also used in a broader context to refer to negative evaluations of a person by peers or by one's own conscience. This legal process is to some extent the background for biblical language about judgment and condemnation.

In biblical theology, God as creator, redeemer, and lawgiver, is the judge of all humankind. He instituted the family, civil government, and the people of God as institutions governing human relationships. In the Old Testament theocracy God mediated his justice through judges, kings, priests, and prophets. In the New Testament the church's leaders are accountable for administering his justice to the people of God. All this is based on the fact that God has acted to redeem human beings and reveal his will to them. Those who refuse to believe and obey are guilty of breaking his law. Their punishment has already begun and their ultimate condemnation will occur at the final judgment if they do not repent before death.

In the Old Testament rebellion against God began in the garden of Eden (Gen. 3). Our first parents turned away from God's plan, leading to their death and alienation. Yet God patiently bore with his rebellious creatures, and chose Abraham and his descendants to be his special people and mediate his blessings to all nations (Gen. 12). He redeemed Israel from Egypt and gave them a land along with a covenant that set before them the conditions of his continued blessing (Exod. 19-20). God as creator, redeemer, and covenanter stood as judge over Israel and set before them life and prosperity, death and adversity (Exod 34:5-7 ; Deut 30:15-20). Through his prophets he continued to call Israel to obedience, yet his theocratic rulers frequently neglected his justice by condemning the innocent and vindicating the guilty. Eventually God condemned this miscarriage of justice by sending other nations to carry Israel into captivity. Thus the Old Testament generally stresses the justice of God in punishing sinners during the present life, not the afterlife (but see Dan 12:2). To probe this theme further in the Old Testament, one should study the Hebrew words *sapat* [f;p'v], "to judge," and *mispat* [fP.vim], "judgment."

In New Testament theology the rebellion of the first Adam with its disastrous consequences of death and condemnation for all humankind is more than offset by the obedience of the second Adam, the Lord Messiah Jesus (Rom 5:12-21 ; 1 Cor 15:22). Jesus' sinless life and sacrificial death provide the basis for God's giving life and justification to all who believe in him. God remains just in justifying sinners because of the perfect redemption accomplished by Jesus, the sinners' substitute (Acts 13:38-39 ; Rom 3:21-26). Those who have been made right with God by faith in Christ are not condemned (John 5:24 ; Rom 8:1-4 ; Col 2:14), but those who refuse to believe in Jesus are condemned already (John 3:16-18 ; Rom 1:18-32 ; Gal 1:8-9). Unless they repent they face the irrevocable finalization of this condemnation at the resurrection and judgment (Matt 25:46 ; John 5:28-29 ; Acts 17:30-31 ; 24:15 ; Rom 2:5-16 ; 2 Thess 1:5-10 ; 2:9-12 ; 1 Peter 4:4-5 ; 1 Peter 4:17 ; 2 Peter 2:1-10 ; Jude 4-9 ; Rev 20:7-14 ; 21:6-8 ; 22:12-17). In the meantime, expectation of this

⁴ <http://www.biblestudytools.com/dictionaries/bakers-evangelical-dictionary/condemnation.html>

eschatological judgment motivates believers to scrutinize their lives so that they will not be condemned with the world (1 Cor 11:31-32). The discipline of the church is also to be carried out with this eschatological perspective in mind (1 Cor 5:1-13).

To summarize, the theme of condemnation is always seen in the Bible against the background of a just God who creates, redeems, and covenants with his people so that they may live out his justice on the earth. Sinners who come to this God in faith are not condemned, but are expected to live together in a community where justice prevails in the vindication of the oppressed and the condemnation of the oppressor.

David L. Turner

See also Hell; Judgment

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[T] indicates this entry was also found in Torrey's Topical Textbook

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Images and Visions of Eternity - Heaven & Hell ⁵

By Steve Wickham

Politics and religion are topics, it's said, which should never be discussed at social gatherings. They bring from within us such divergent views. And people from different perspectives, at times, must fight for their convictions rather than respect the other's viewpoint, which is a much wiser stance.

This has got to be one of the most contentious and debated topics in religion and spirituality: "What happens when I die?" I can only answer this one general way; the way any Bible-believing Christian would, or should I say, 'should.'

The only way to heaven and to spend eternity with God is through the *stated* and *believed* acceptance and discipleship of Jesus Christ, the Son of the living God (John 3:16; 14:6; Romans 10:9).

When we die we will all meet God. We will be judged for what we've lived for and our deeds, both known and unknown--yes, even the secret ones (Ecclesiastes 12:14)--as God knows everything. He will bring us to account for everything we've done--*everything* i.e. no exceptions.

So, having met God (all of us)--and get this, to finally *see how awesome he really is*--we will then be ushered to one of two places to spend the rest of eternity... (the term 'rest of eternity' in itself is wrong as it implies a timeframe. Eternity is not time-based--it's forever i.e. from everlasting to everlasting.)

Above the door into heaven might stand a sign, "**forever accepted regardless of fault,**" whereas the door leading to hell might have a sign, "**forever condemned.**" (See also, John 3:18.)

Between the two eternal destinations will stand a great chasm (Luke 16:19-31)[1] and it will be impossible to crossover.

Heaven is a place, a circumstance, a context or an environment totally *filled with* God. It's a place where joy and peace and love prevail to the glory of God. Once we're there, we're there for eternity and in continual awe at, and of, God's Presence.

Conversely, hell is a place, a circumstance, a context or an environment *devoid of* God. After the equivalent of one year totally without God the people in hell will probably already know the depth of their poor judgment in life, not to accept Jesus as their Lord and Saviour. Imagine how they'll feel after the equivalent of one thousand years... or the equivalent of one million years? (Though, again, time is really a poor comparator in the context of eternity. The period of one million years is not even a blip in the context of eternity. Eternity is an 'absolute' concept and reality.)

⁵ <http://ezinearticles.com/?Images-and-Visions-of-Eternity---Heaven-and-Hell&id=2378693>

Imagine the horror for those bound for hell... having only just seen the transcendent brilliance and majesty of the God who cannot be adequately described; in awe, they must now leave his Presence, which must be the most wonderful thing anyone could imagine, to spend eternity with the Tormenter. That is quite honestly a shocking thought.

And this is the ultimate choice for all non-God-followers, presently. You do not know what time is yours. It could be today that you meet God and are judged (immediately) prior to hell and damnation. It's your choice.

If the Bible's wrong we all lose... but what if, just if, the Bible's right? Imagine that now!

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[1] See the parable of the Rich Man and Lazarus in Luke 16:19-31 for more.

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DOES HELL EXIST AND IS IT ETERNAL?⁶

Introduction

"If God is a kind, loving, and merciful god, how is it possible that He could possibly allow man to suffer eternal condemnation in hell? How could He allow man to be separated from Him for eternity?" This question concerning the eternal condemnation of the wicked is best answered by doing a word search on the word "hell" and other related words and then drawing conclusions based on the sum of these verses. Of course, each verse must be interpreted consistently in its context. Therefore, the goal of this article will be to collect and study some of the more conclusive and relevant passages regarding hell, specifically the ones which relate to the question of hell's existence and duration.

What Is "Hell"?

Most people are familiar with the idea of hell being a place of eternal punishment, reserved for the wicked. However, it is essential that we turn to the Bible to refine this idea, because the Bible truth is the ultimate reality.

Jesus spoke of the danger of "hell fire" (Matthew 5:22¹⁶; Mark 9:43-48¹⁷), which condemnation is depicted in the symbolic account of Judgment Day:

"And I saw the dead, small and great, standing before God, and books were opened. And another book was opened, which is the Book of Life. And the dead were judged according to their works, by the things which were written in the books. The sea gave up the dead who were in it, and Death and Hades delivered up the dead who were in them. And they were judged, each one according to his works. Then Death and Hades were cast into the lake of fire. This is the second death. And anyone not found written in the Book of Life was cast into the lake of fire."

Revelation 20:12-15

One of the many points that can be gleaned from these passages is that hell, vividly illustrated as a "lake of fire", is an undesirable, tortuous place to spend eternity. A second observation is that the basis for this judgment was how they lived their lives - "his works". However, this passage does not speak of the duration of this punishment. Is it possible that this judgment is temporary? Is the condemnation eternal?

The Duration of Hell

Once again, we should turn to the pages of God's message for us to learn the answers to our questions.

⁶ <http://www.insearchoftruth.org/articles/hell.html>

"Then He will also say to those on the left hand, 'Depart from Me, you cursed, into **the everlasting fire prepared for the devil and his angels**' . . . **And these will go away into everlasting punishment**, but the righteous into eternal life." Matthew 25:41, 46

"... in flaming fire taking vengeance on those who do not know God, and on those who do not obey the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ. These shall be **punished with everlasting destruction** from the presence of the Lord and from the glory of His power" II Thessalonians 1:8-9

Also, the account in Revelation speaks of the "lake of fire and brimstone" as being a place of eternal torment (Revelation 20:10). Although some of these verses speak of the fire being eternal or everlasting, other verses, such as Matthew 25:46, clearly speak of the punishment itself being eternal. Therefore, it seems that if condemned to hell, one's judgment would be forever. A natural question would be to wonder if a kind and loving God could sentence any man to eternity in hell. Would God actually do this? Would He issue an eternal condemnation to hell and everlasting separation from Him?

The Possibility of Eternity in Hell

Although it seems clear that God has constructed a place of eternal torment and punishment, the question may yet arise, "Is it possible that God would actually condemn someone to hell?" The answer is provided in the verses that we have already observed. Jesus warned of the danger of "hell fire" (Matthew 5:22; Mark 9:43-48). One necessary inference is that there must be a real possibility that each of us could be condemned to hell, else there is no real danger. Would God make empty threats? Would a divine and loving Father warn of things that pose no danger? Clearly, No! The danger is real, unless we are willing to second-guess everything that Jesus said, including the promise of heaven (John 14:2-3).

Sadly, not only does the Bible outline the possibility of condemnation in hell, but it further states that the majority of people will end up there!

"Enter by the narrow gate; for wide is the gate and broad is the way that leads to destruction, and there are **many who go in by it**. Because narrow is the gate and difficult is the way which leads to life, and there are few who find it." Matthew 7:13-14

Once we reach the unseen realm of the dead, there is no way to "cross sides". In fact, the Bible symbolically speaks of a "great gulf" that separates the two realms of the dead, who are awaiting the final judgment day (Luke 16:19-31). After we die, the next fate-determining event is judgment day (Hebrews 9:27), and as we have previously seen, that judgment is final and the majority of people will find themselves condemned.

Yet someone may ask, "But, how can God let this happen? How can He be a kind and loving god and let any member of His creation spend eternity in hell?"

A Kind and Loving God

God certainly does not want anyone of his creation to be lost because of their sins:

"The Lord is not slack concerning His promise, as some count slackness, but is longsuffering toward us, **not willing that any should perish but that all should come to repentance.**" II Peter 3:9

Elsewhere, we are told that the riches of His goodness, forbearance, and long-suffering is leading us to repentance (Romans 2:4[Ⓢ]). Therefore, God is kind, loving, and does not want anyone to be perish. Consequently, He is diligently seeking the repentance of all of mankind over all time. Sadly, as we have already seen (Matthew 7:13-14[Ⓢ]), many have and will reject His gracious opportunity to repent and be forgiven.

"And the LORD God of their fathers sent warnings to them by His messengers, rising up early and sending them, because He had compassion on His people and on His dwelling place. But they mocked the messengers of God, despised His words, and scoffed at His prophets, until the wrath of the LORD arose against His people, **till there was no remedy.**" II Chronicles 36:15-16

Despite our desires and the will of society that such a judgment scene not occur, we cannot change, nor should we ignore that a "separation" will occur upon Judgment Day (Matthew 25:31-46[Ⓢ]). This division of all people will be based upon our actions (II Corinthians 5:10[Ⓢ]). On that day, the Lord will bless many with eternal life in heaven with God, but He will reward many more with eternity in hell (Matthew 25:31-46[Ⓢ]).

As a kind and loving God, He has desperately tried to help mankind repent, but as a just God, He cannot allow willfully, disobedient, and unrepentant people to populate His holy abode. Eventually, His mercy reaches a limit, until there is no longer a remedy - by man's choice.

Conclusion

The idea of hell is a powerful motivating force that encourages us to obey God. It is not the most noble motivation, but it reaches the most selfish heart and makes it receptive to the high and transcendent motivations of love and gratitude. We should never deceive ourselves into believing the common notion that we are in no danger of "hell fire". As we have seen, hell is a real danger and an eternal punishment that awaits the disobedient. Sadly, many people will find themselves there. Dear reader, please do not let this fate befall you. Continue your quest for truth and learn God's will for you, so that you may be saved from hell.

For further study: Please read more passages regarding the danger and duration of hell:

- Proverbs 27:20[Ⓢ]
- Matthew 10:28[Ⓢ]
- Mark 3:29[Ⓢ]
- II Peter 2:4[Ⓢ], 17[Ⓢ]
- Jude 1:6-13[Ⓢ]

(DIVINE) JUDGMENT⁷

Advanced Information

Because we are born in sin and therefore cannot live up to God's righteous standards, condemnation (damnation, the older synonym, has other connotations today) hangs over our heads like the sword of Damocles (II Pet. 2:3; Rom. 1:18; Eph. 5:5-6; Col. 3:5-6). God himself is the one who condemns (Job 10:2; Jer. 42:18; John 12:48). His condemnation is based on his justice, and such condemnation is deserved (I Kings 8:32; Rom. 3:8; Gal. 1:8-9). Condemnation comes to the wicked and unrepentant (Matt. 12:41-42; Luke 11:31-32; John 5:29; Rom. 5:16, 18; II Thess. 2:12; Rev. 19:2) and results in eternal punishment (Matt. 23:33), but no OT believer who trusted in God (Ps. 34:22) or NT believer who trusts in Christ (John 3:18; 5:24) will be condemned. Jesus came to save rather than to condemn (John 3:17), and he frees us from final condemnation (Rom. 8:1-2).

Conscience may cause us to condemn ourselves (I John 3:19-21), but no one can justly condemn the righteous if God is on his side (Isa. 50:9; Titus 2:7-8). In fact, the Lord prevents or reverses unfair condemnation by our enemies (Pss. 37:33; 79:11; 102:19-20; 109:31). Self-righteous people should avoid condemning others (Job 32:3; Luke 6:37; Rom. 8:34; 14:3) because quickness to condemn may recoil on their own heads (Job 15:6; Ps. 34:21; Luke 6:37; Rom. 2:1; Titus 3:10-11). Needless to say, it is the height of arrogance and folly for sinful people to condemn a just and omnipotent God (Job 34:17, 29; 40:8).

Divine judgment is God's method of displaying his mercy as well as his wrath toward individuals and nations (Exod. 6:6, 7:4; Eccles. 3:17; 12:14; Dan. 7:22; Joel 3:2; II Cor. 5:10). As God is the one who condemns, so also he is the true and only Judge (Gen. 18:25; Ps. 82:1; Eccles. 11:9), an office and function shared by the Father (Gen. 31:53; John 8:50; Rom. 3:6) and the Son (Acts 10:42; 17:31; Rom. 2:16). Retributive or negative judgment is a direct result of sin (I Sam. 3:13; Ezek. 7:3, 8, 27; Rom. 2:12; Jude 14-15) and is therefore both just (Ezek. 33:20; II Tim. 4:8; I Pet. 2:23) and deserved (Pss. 94:2; 143:2; Ezek. 18:30). Rewarding or positive judgment relates to the believer's stewardship of his talents and gifts and is therefore characterized by divine compassion (Matt. 25:14-23; I Cor. 3:12-15; I Pet. 1:17). Although we experience judgment initially in this life, all of us are judged ultimately after death (Isa. 66:16; Jer. 25:31; Joel 3:12; John 12:48; Acts 17:31; Rom. 2:16; Rev. 20:12-13) at the judgment seat of God (Rom. 14:10) or Christ (II Cor. 5:10). Self-judgment, another manifestation of the same activity, is brought about by rebellion and willfulness (Rom. 13:2; I Cor. 11:29; I Tim. 5:12).

It is not only human beings who are judged, however, God also judges other gods, real or imagined (Exod. 12:12; Num. 33:4; Jer. 10:14-15), and angels as well (II Pet. 2:4; Jude 6). The devil himself is not exempt from such judgment (I Tim. 3:6). And although in the final analysis God is the only judge, he has chosen to allow us to participate with Christ in judging the world (Matt. 19:28; Luke 22:30; I Cor. 6:2; Rev. 20:4), including the angels (I Cor. 6:3).

The story of Noah's flood contains several principles concerning divine judgment that are worth careful consideration. (1) God's judgments are never arbitrary. Man's sin is God's sorrow (Gen. 6:5-6). The Lord is not capricious when he judges. He makes a considered and deliberate decision before unleashing his punishment. (2) God can be counted on always to judge sin (Gen. 6:7). No sin escapes his notice; his judgment on sin is inevitable (Rom. 2:3; Heb. 9:27-27). (3) God always announces judgment beforehand (Gen. 6:13). He informs us that our evil deeds are condemned by him and will be judged by him. (4) God always gives sinners an opportunity to repent before judging them (see Acts 17:30-31; Rom. 2:4; II Pet. 3:9). There was a period of 120 years of grace for the people of Noah's day (Gen. 6:3). (5) God always follows through on his decision to judge (cf. Gen. 7:4 with vs. 12 and 23), once he has announced it and once people have had an opportunity to

⁷ <http://mb-soft.com/believe/txx/judgment.htm>

repent. His judgments are irreversible. (6) God's judgments always lead to death (see Jer. 51:18; Hos. 6:5). Gen. 7:17-24, the only paragraph in the flood narrative that does not contain the name of God, reeks with the smell of death. When judgment results in death, God is no longer there.

But the flood story teaches us also that (7) God's judgments always include elements of both justice and grace. Though the story of the flood begins with judgment, it ends with redemption; though it begins with a curse (Gen. 6:7), it ends with a covenant (9:11). If judgment always issues life. Judgment is never God's last or best word to those who believe in him, because "mercy triumphs over judgment" (James 2:13).

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(Elwell Evangelical Dictionary)

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