Section: Doctrine of the Last Things and Eternity (Eschatology)

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**TEACHING NOTES**

Our topic tonight is not a very popular one. Question 118 on final judgment and question 119 on Hell. When we gather together for fellowship our conversations usually don’t go into musings about the nature of Hell and the eternal state of unbelievers. I think most of us would admit that it is a subject we would probably rather not think about.

So why have we found it important to include it in our catechism as a subject for us to know about and spend time studying? For one, Jesus taught us that it is important. A large bulk of Jesus’ teaching was on the subject of last things and included graphic descriptions and warnings about the reality of final judgment and the severity of Hell; also, because it gives us greater insight to the incomprehensible glory of God.

The world will tell us that speaking of such things is callous and judgmental. Their concept of love is one that says you should never say anything that could be considered offensive. Sadly, there are many professing Christians who have bought into this kind of human logic. When you think about it, it is the height of arrogance to say that we have found a way to improve on the way that Jesus spoke.

I have heard and read many articles and sermons over my lifetime that have derided the Puritan era as all Hell-fire and brimstone. Since then I have had the wonderful blessing of being exposed to more of the teaching from the Puritan era and I have found it to be incredibly grace filled and God glorifying. Even if there were instances where preachers may have fallen into the error of trying to scare people into being saved without emphasizing the glorious beauty of God and the gospel, it was certainly not the pattern of the movement as a whole.

Remember, the Westminster Catechism was written during the Puritan era and the first question is “What is the chief end of man?” and the answer is “the chief end of man is to glorify God and enjoy Him forever.”

The Puritans were utterly committed to the endeavor of enjoying God. They were not the joyless, judgmental people that they have often time been portrayed as.

Did they preach about Hell and sin and judgment much more than some do today? Absolutely! But not because they overemphasized these things, but because the church today has in large part given in to the world’s condemnation of such preaching and has abandoned the model of teaching handed down to us by Jesus and our forefathers.

I wanted to introduce the lesson for tonight this way so that we are starting out with an understanding that a right view of God’s wrath against sin, final judgment, and Hell are part of a holistic understanding of the gospel- the GOOD NEWS. My hope for tonight is that we would leave with a deeper and greater love for God and a proper fear of Him as a result of our time studying these things and that we would not be afraid to offend those who are perishing by warning them of the wrath to come. Listen to the way God warns the prophet Ezekiel of the liability he will incur for not warning the wicked of their impending death.

**Ezekiel 3:16-19** 16 And at the end of seven days, the word of the Lord came to me:17 "Son of man, I have made you a watchman for the house of Israel. Whenever you hear a word from my mouth, you shall give them warning from me. 18 If I say to the wicked, 'You shall surely die,' and you give him no warning, nor speak to warn the wicked from his wicked way, in order to save his life, that wicked person shall die for his iniquity, but his blood I will require at your hand.19 But if you warn the wicked, and he does not turn from his wickedness, or from his wicked way, he shall die for his iniquity, but you will have delivered your soul.

This message was given specifically to the prophet Ezekiel so that he would not shrink back from his responsibility to proclaim God’s message of judgment to the nation of Israel, but there is a principle here that applies to us all. We are not loving those who are headed towards eternal punishment if we do not warn them and call them to repentance and salvation. It is very clear throughout scripture that God uses the means of warning to accomplish His purpose of saving His people from destruction.

So with that in mind, let’s pray.

**Q118. At the final judgment, what happens to people who did not have saving faith in Christ Jesus?**

Their souls will be united forever with their bodies, and upon their final judgment, they will be thrown into hell and punished by God’s wrath forever because of their guilt.

**United forever with their bodies**

Physical death is the spirit or soul being separated from the body and the flesh seeing decay.

**Ecclesiastes 8:8** No man has power to retain the spirit, or power over the day of death.

**Ecclesiastes 12:7** and the dust returns to the earth as it was, and the spirit returns to God who gave it.

**2 Corinthians 5:6,8 …**We know that while we are at home in the body we are away from the Lord, …8 … and we would rather be away from the body and at home with the Lord.

Scripture teaches that this is the case for all men, both saved and unsaved. Besides the believers living when Christ returns, all men will experience physical death.

**Hebrews 9:27** And just as it is appointed for man to die once, and after that comes judgment,

So all who have not put their trust in Jesus Christ will experience the separation of their soul from their bodies in death, and at the final judgment their soul is reunited to the body forever. What the spiritually dead will experience is called a kind of resurrection – it will be the reunion of their spiritually dead soul with their body, but only to face judgment in their physical bodies.

**Acts 24:15** … will be a resurrection of both the just and the unjust.

**John 5:28-29 “**Do not marvel at this, for an hour is coming when all who are in the tombs will hear his voice and come out, those who have done good to the resurrection of life, and those who have done evil to the resurrection of judgment.”

This “resurrection of life” is the hope we look forward to as believers, but the “resurrection of judgment” will be unto endless misery for those who have rejected the truth; eternal life for the believer and eternal, conscious death for the unbeliever. We have a tendency to think of life as consciousness, but God defines life as fellowship with His son. There is no life apart from Christ.

**John 14:6** Jesus said to him, "I am the way, and the truth, and the life.”

There will be an eternal existence as spiritual beings with material bodies. We don’t know exactly what the bodies of the unbelievers will be like at their resurrection, but we know that they will not be like ours who believe. Ours will be raised to eternal life; theirs will be raised to judgment and eternal punishment. Our bodies will exist in pleasure; theirs will be a exist in misery.

**Matthew 13:49-50** So it will be at the end of the age. The angels will come out and separate the evil from the righteous 50 and throw them into the fiery furnace. In that place there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth.

Samuel Renihan says: “To weep is to endure pain in the soul. To gnash one’s teeth is to endure pain in the body.”

The Day of Judgment (the Final Judgment) will be a real, historical event that all humans (and all the fallen angels) will experience. It will not be some kind of metaphoric experience that takes place in the spirit or in the mind only. The unbeliever’s soul will be united again to their physical body, and they will not be able to hide. Their “resurrection of judgment” is not a resurrection to look forward to.

The next part of our answer says “upon their final judgment”.

**Final Judgment**

What is the final judgment? The scripture speaks of the judgment, the Day of Judgment, the last day…These are all referring to the one final day of judgment.

**Psalm 1:5** Therefore the wicked will not stand in the judgment,

nor sinners in the congregation of the righteous;

(of course, by “will not stand in the judgment” he means they will not be proven or established. They will fail to meet the standard by which they are being judged)

**2 Peter 2:9** then the Lord knows how to rescue the godly from trials, and to keep the unrighteous under punishment until the Day of Judgment,

**John 12:48** The one who rejects me and does not receive my words has a judge; the word that I have spoken will judge him *on the last day*.

As I mentioned a moment ago, even the fallen angels will be judged again in this Final Judgment:

**2 Peter 2:4** For if God did not spare angels when they sinned, but cast them into hell and committed them to chains of gloomy darkness to be kept until the judgment;

The final Day of Judgment is a literal, historic, future event that will take place. Scripture says that we will ALL stand before the judgment throne of God but it will be a much different experience for those who have believed the gospel than for those who have not.

**2 Corinthians 5:10** For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, so that each one may receive what is due for what he has done in the body, whether good or evil.

**John 5:28-29 “**Do not marvel at this, for an hour is coming when all who are in the tombs will hear his voice and come out, those who have done good to the resurrection of life, and those who have done evil to the resurrection of judgment.”

Judgment day is not something that we as believers fear. It is a day that we look forward to with eager expectation. It is the hope that we look forward to, the promise of eternal life that helps us to endure in this life. We are able to stand in confidence because of what Christ has done for us. If we had to stand before God based on what we have done, we would have a reason to fear, but by grace with faith we stand on the finished work of Christ on our behalf.

**John 3:18-21** Whoever believes in him is not condemned, but whoever does not believe is condemned already, because he has not believed in the name of the only Son of God. 19 And this is the judgment: the light has come into the world, and people loved the darkness rather than the light because their works were evil. 20 For everyone who does wicked things hates the light and does not come to the light, lest his works should be exposed. 21 But whoever does what is true comes to the light, so that it may be clearly seen that his works have been carried out in God."

The faith that we have in Christ…our coming to Christ, our coming to the light, bears witness that our works have been carried out in God. Our good works glorify God, not us, because it is God who is responsible for them. The only thing we could ever claim responsibility for is our sin, but praise God! He has not made us carry that responsibility but has taken the punishment for it upon Himself.

While we are able to stand in confidence without fear of judgment, there is a sense in which we do fear the final judgment more than unbelievers, at least in this life. That is because we believe what God’s word says about it and they do not. We know the reality and consequence of it and we feel the weight of that for those we love who are not in Christ. If they rightly feared God’s wrath and judgment of sin they would repent.

**Luke 12:5** “But I will warn you whom to fear: fear him who, after he has killed, has authority to cast into hell. Yes, I tell you, fear him!”

The Day of Judgment is a dreadful thought for those of us who believe what God’s word says about it. That leads us into the next part of our answer. It says:

“upon their final judgment,…

**They will be thrown into hell and punished by God’s wrath forever**

One thing to point out is that the final Day of Judgment does not mean that the sinner’s fate is not determined until that day. Remember what it said in:

**2 Peter 2:9** then the Lord knows how to rescue the godly from trials, and to keep the unrighteous under punishment until the Day of Judgment,

Once a person dies, the chance for repentance is gone forever. There are no second chances, there is no purgatory. The final judgment is not a court hearing where the plaintiff will get his last chance to plea his case. The final judgment is more like the sentencing after the verdict has been reached.

**Hebrews 9:27** And just as it is appointed for man to die once, and after that comes judgment,

“after that comes judgment.” We will be judged according to what we have done while we were alive on this earth. This is why the plea for people to repent is urgent. No one is promised another day and there is no chance to repent beyond this earthly life.

Those who do not repent and believe in Christ will face the judgment seat of Christ on their own and will be thrown into hell and punished by God’s wrath forever.

**Matthew 13:41-42** The Son of Man will send his angels, and they will gather out of his kingdom all causes of sin and all law-breakers, 42 and throw them into the fiery furnace. In that place there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth.

Church, the testimony of scripture is clear, God does and God will punish sin and sinners. This is not some passive punishment; it is God’s wrath being acted upon in the same fullness and complete, perfect holiness as His love.

**Matthew 25:46 “**And these [each unbeliever] will go away into eternal punishment...”

**Luke 12:5** “But I will warn you whom to fear: fear him who, after he has killed, has authority to cast into hell. Yes, I tell you, fear him!”

**Romans 2:8** …for those who are self-seeking and do not obey the truth, but obey unrighteousness, there will be wrath and fury.

That should make every one of us tremble. As adopted sons and daughters of the King, we have no reason at all to be afraid of God’s wrath, but that does not mean we don’t have a proper fear of God that causes us to tremble when we think about His perfect/eternal hatred of sin.

We have come to know the grace of God and the love of God through the experience of being saved by the gospel. We will never know the wrath of God through personal experience. Christ has spared us of that by experiencing it for us. But…as we grow in the knowledge of God through His word, we do gain a new and deeper understanding of the wrath of God, and it is a fearful thing. This should compel us to evangelize the lost, not shying away from the truth of what becomes of those who reject the good news of the gospel we preach.

God has revealed the future judgment of unbelievers as a warning to the living, that they would repent and be saved.

Jesus modeled for us in his preaching that the good news of the gospel is not a generic “Jesus loves you”. The good news is that in spite of the fact that your sin has rightly earned you the fiery eternal punishment that scripture warns us of, Christ has provided the way of salvation for all who repent and believe into Him.

Scripture makes it clear that fear of punishment is an appropriate means that God uses to draw people to repentance and faith.

Let’s look at the last part of our answer:

**Because of their guilt**

This eternal punishment against sinners is just and fitting because of their guilt. This is important. One of the reasons people have a hard time with the magnitude of God’s wrath against sinners is because they fail to see the magnitude of the guilt of their sin against a Holy God.

In sin, people tend to measure the magnitude of their sin by comparing their outward acts to the outward acts of other fallen sinners. This will always give people a skewed perspective. When we compare ourselves to other sinners, we will always be able to make ourselves feel good about how we stack up. Compared to fallen, finite, created beings, we all have a fighting chance to boast about something. But when compared to the infinitely Holy God of Heaven and Earth, we fall infinitely short. That is the condition of every man – guilty!

**Romans 3:23** for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God,

**Romans 5:12** Therefore, just as sin came into the world through one man, and death through sin, and so death spread to all men because all sinned

We must understand that our sin is first and foremost against God. David recognized this even after he had committed adultery and murder. He proclaimed in:

**Psalm 51:4** Against you, you only, have I sinned and done what is evil in your sight, so that you may be justified in your words and blameless in your judgment.

Jonathan Edwards described sin well when he wrote:

*Any sin is more or less heinous depending upon the honour and majesty of the one whom we had offended. Since God is of infinite honour, infinite majesty, and infinite holiness, the slightest sin is of infinite consequence. The slightest sin is nothing less than cosmic treason when we realize against whom we have sinned.*

All those who end up in Hell are there because of their guilt, both the imputed guilt they are conceived with as a fallen descendant of Adam, and the guilt of their willing choices to commit sin in their life. Hell is the earned and just punishment for everyone who has fallen short of God’s glory. In Adam we are guilty and each of us have personally broken God’s law. We are not just sinners because we sin…We sin because we are conceived and brought forth as sinners. This knowledge of our deserved condemnation is what makes the gospel so glorious for us who have been saved.

Ok, let’s move to our next question…

**Q119. What is *hell*?**

Hell is the place of eternal death with dreadful and endless torment. The worst part of hell is not getting to enjoy the blessed presence of and reconciliation to God. In hell, God is rightly punishing both humans who did not repent and trust in Jesus and fallen angels.

**Hell is the place of eternal death with dreadful and endless torment**

Death was the promised consequence for sin in the Garden of Eden. Adam was told that if he ate of the forbidden fruit he would surely die. When he and his wife disbelieved and disobeyed God they died spiritually and began to die physically until they finally did. Their spiritual death resulted in them hiding from God in sinful fear and shame. The intimate relationship they had previously known with God no longer existed. Now they wanted to be hidden from Him, away from God’s perfect holiness and goodness.

Hell is a place of eternal death. It is eternal separation from the intimacy of God’s love and blessing. But just like Adam and Eve’s spiritually dead existence still experienced the fear of God’s judgment and Holy presence, so will those who are in Hell.

Adam and Eve were blessed by the proclamation of the gospel almost immediately after they sinned and died spiritually. They were given the hope of life when God promised that Eve’s seed would crush the serpent’s head. But, in Hell there will be no hope of life. There will be no one trying to repent in Hell. It will be eternal punishment for sinners, who have an eternal hatred of God and no intimate knowledge of His blessing.

It has been said that this life is as close to hell as a Christian will ever get, and it’s as close to heaven as the unbeliever will ever get. For the Christian, the sin and death we know now will be destroyed forever so we can rightly enjoy the new heaven and earth. For the unbeliever, the goodness of God seen in creation, family relationships, the common grace of God in causing the rain to fall on both the righteous and the unrighteous, will all be a haunting memory that only serves to fuel their torment in Hell.

Hell will be unfathomably dreadful. Some have tried to downplay the severity of Hell by saying that the language used to describe Hell is only symbolic or metaphorical. One of the most important things we’ve learned through our time in the Word together is that God is not like us. His ways are not our ways, He is transcendent. What we see through much of the Bible is that God communicates to us through human language by condescending to our level so that we can understand something true about the mystery of His incomprehensibility. He uses “baby talk” with us so that we can understand, otherwise we would have no ability to understand anything of Him and His ways.

So there are times when God uses symbolism and metaphors to help us understand a truth that would otherwise be unfathomable to us, but it is completely absurd to argue that God uses language emphasizing something horrible to describe something that isn’t really that bad.

Listen to the language of:

**2 Thessalonians 1:7-9** ...when the Lord Jesus is revealed from heaven with his mighty angels in flaming fire, inflicting vengeance on those who do not know God and on those who do not obey the gospel of our Lord Jesus. They will suffer the punishment of eternal destruction, away from the presence of the Lord and from the glory of his might

This passage actually is somewhat symbolic, or at least anthropomorphic…that is-using human language to describe something eternal to finite creatures. So when it says eternal destruction, it does not mean extinction; it means devastation. It will be the experience of never ending loss. Remember, God is omnipresent. There is nowhere that He is not present, so when it says they will be away from the presence of the Lord and from the glory of His might, it is describing their relation to God. It is not saying that there is someplace where God is not present in an omnipresent way.

As our answer states: In hell, God is rightly punishing both humans who did not repent and trust in Jesus and fallen angels.

**Revelation 14:10-11** “he [the unbeliever] also will drink the wine of God’s wrath, poured full strength into the cup of his anger, and he will be tormented with fire and sulfur in the presence of the holy angels and in the presence of the Lamb. And the smoke of their torment goes up forever and ever, and they have no rest, day or night..”

**Matthew 8:12** “…will be thrown into the outer darkness. In that place, there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth.”

**Revelation 20:10** and the devil who had deceived them was thrown into the lake of fire and sulfur where the beast and the false prophet were, and they will be tormented day and night forever and ever.

**Mark 9:43** “And if your hand causes you to sin, cut it off. It is better for you to enter life crippled than with two hands to go to hell, to the unquenchable fire.”

**Mark 9:47-48** “And if your eye causes you to sin, tear it out. It is better for you to enter the kingdom of God with one eye than with two eyes to be thrown into hell, ‘where their worm does not die and the fire is not quenched.’”

This is just a sampling of some of the biblical language describing the experience of Hell. It is described as a place of eternal punishment, eternal destruction, away from the presence of the Lord, outer darkness, weeping and gnashing of teeth, torment with fire and sulfur, no rest day and night, unquenchable fire, where their worm does not die.

If these are all symbols (and I would actually agree that at least some of them probably are), we need to understand that they are symbolic because they are describing something even worse than the symbol. Whatever hell is like, it is not less than the symbol used to describe it. A symbol is a small representation of something much bigger, or in this case something much worse.

This is a description of what it will be like where the light of God’s blessing does not shine. God will no longer be regenerating any unto salvation, so He will no longer be giving the good gifts that are meant to lead us to repentance.

**Romans 2:**4 Or do you presume on the riches of his kindness and forbearance and patience, not knowing that God's kindness is meant to lead you to repentance?

We were created to enjoy fellowship with God. Sin has broken that fellowship. God has freely given His son to die for the sins of all who repent and trust in Him, that is the elect. The nature of sin is that it so completely corrupts the mind and the will, that without the grace of God overcoming our foolish, stubborn rebellion, none of us would ever be saved. Hell is that place where the wrath of God turns sinners over to their sin for eternity. The grace of God is not at work in the hearts of prodigal sons anymore, there is no victory over sin there, there is no eventual coming to senses, only the misery of having sin in its fullness, with no restraint by God’s common grace.

The enemies of God there will remain His enemies for all eternity, because without the Love of God to influence them they will only know hatred. Their utter defeat will not humble them unto repentance; it will only feed their anguish and misery.

This should have a major impact on our view of sin. While we remain in our mortal bodies, we are still vulnerable to the deceitfulness of sin. We can begin to think that we are able to defeat sin by our own choice, our own will power. We can lose sight of the fact that without the ongoing work of the Holy Spirit in us we would immediately go right back to living for ourselves, in our own pride and understanding.

When those who have rejected the gospel are fully turned over to their sin and no longer restrained by any of God’s common grace, their hearts will be eternally hardened, so consumed by their sin that they will serve the purpose of displaying the justice and goodness of God’s wrath for all eternity.

Our answer goes on to say:

**The worst part of hell is not getting to enjoy the blessed presence of and reconciliation to God.**

Even though Hell will be void of God’s blessed presence and the beauty of the gospel –God’s message of reconciliation and peace, there will be knowledge of these things that will serve as punishment.

**2 Corinthians 2:15-16** For we are the aroma of Christ to God among those who are being saved and among those who are perishing, 16 to one a fragrance from death to death, to the other a fragrance from life to life.

The gospel they have rejected will continue to be a fragrance of death to them. It will not lead them to repentance but they will have an awareness of what they have rejected.

We’ve already referred to the parable of the rich man and Lazarus during our study of Eschatology, but I want to look at it again to point out another lesson we can draw from it.

**Luke 16:19-31** "There was a rich man who was clothed in purple and fine linen and who feasted sumptuously every day. 20 And at his gate was laid a poor man named Lazarus, covered with sores, 21 who desired to be fed with what fell from the rich man's table. Moreover, even the dogs came and licked his sores. 22 The poor man died and was carried by the angels to Abraham's side. The rich man also died and was buried, 23 and in Hades, being in torment, he lifted up his eyes and saw Abraham far off and Lazarus at his side. 24 And he called out, 'Father Abraham, have mercy on me, and send Lazarus to dip the end of his finger in water and cool my tongue, for I am in anguish in this flame. ' 25 But Abraham said, 'Child, remember that you in your lifetime received your good things, and Lazarus in like manner bad things; but now he is comforted here, and you are in anguish. 26 And besides all this, between us and you a great chasm has been fixed, in order that those who would pass from here to you may not be able, and none may cross from there to us. ' 27 And he said, 'Then I beg you, father, to send him to my father's house— 28 for I have five brothers —so that he may warn them, lest they also come into this place of torment. ' 29 But Abraham said, 'They have Moses and the Prophets; let them hear them. ' 30 And he said, 'No, father Abraham, but if someone goes to them from the dead, they will repent. ' 31 He said to him, 'If they do not hear Moses and the Prophets, neither will they be convinced if someone should rise from the dead. '"

There’s a lot that we could learn about the after-life from this passage but the main thing I want to point out here is that the rich man is told to remember the good things he had in life. He is also reminded that Lazarus, who he despised is now comforted while he is in anguish. For those of us who are saved, we will look back at this life and consider it rubbish compared to the glory that awaits us, but for those in Hell, they will remember the good things of God in this life and be further tormented by the loss of them. They will have conscious memory of the taste they had of God’s blessing, knowing that they will never come close to it again.

Worst then the loss of common blessings they once had on this earth, is that they will be missing out on the best prize of all, that is, enjoyment of and relationship with the King of kings. While they won’t long for reconciliation in Hell, it is still the worse thing that will haunt them forever. Not having God is the worst punishment possible.

Remember, Jesus is their punisher, not their friend, brother, savior, and treasure:

**Revelation 14:10-11** “he [the unbeliever] … will be tormented with fire and sulfur … in the presence of the Lamb.

The positive presence of God removed from them is the devastating reality of Hell:

**2 Thessalonians 1:9** They will suffer the punishment of eternal destruction, away from the presence of the Lord and from the glory of his might

Hell is the most tragic experience of Paradise lost.

As a side note, notice also how the rich man in Luke 16 is not repentant. He wants Abraham to do something extraordinary to make his brothers repent, but he doesn’t even attempt to repent himself.

We were created for blessed fellowship with God, and His grace has been put on glorious display throughout creation. Those in Hell will suffer the realization that the idols they worshipped were only attractive because they were created to point to the beauty of God.

Money, sex, food, wine, family, friends...these are all good things that are given to us to ultimately point us to the goodness of God. The idolater who wants to have these things apart from God and His design for them will suffer the discovery that these things do not exist apart from God. Even the most corrupted forms of entertainment will be non-existent because without God’s gracious gifts of creation there is nothing to corrupt.

And Finally:

**In hell, God is rightly punishing both humans who did not repent and trust in Jesus and fallen angels.**

**Matthew 25:46 “**And these [each unbeliever] will go away into eternal punishment...”

Punishment means that suffering, pain, or loss is being inflicted upon an offender for retribution. God is actively punishing those in Hell. Those who think that Hell is a welcome escape from the presence of God and His decrees are in for a terrible revelation.

It is worthwhile to note the fact that those who do not put their faith in Jesus are given the same, just punishment as the angels who rebelled against God and followed Satan.

**Matthew 25:41** "Then he will say to those on his left, 'Depart from me, you cursed, into the eternal fire prepared for the devil and his angels.

It’s impossible for us to even imagine what Hell will be like. It will be as unimaginably horrible as heaven will be unimaginably glorious. What we do know is that God will finally rightly punish those who He has patiently endured. After naming off a long list of wicked deeds that God hates, Paul goes on in:

**Romans 2:2-5** We know that the judgment of God rightly falls on those who practice such things. 3 Do you suppose, O man—you who judge those who practice such things and yet do them yourself—that you will escape the judgment of God? 4 Or do you presume on the riches of his kindness and forbearance and patience, not knowing that God's kindness is meant to lead you to repentance? 5 But because of your hard and impenitent heart you are storing up wrath for yourself on the day of wrath when God's righteous judgment will be revealed.

Psalm 94:1-5 O Lord, God of vengeance,

O God of vengeance, shine forth!

2 Rise up, O judge of the earth;

repay to the proud what they deserve!

3 O Lord, how long shall the wicked,

how long shall the wicked exult?

4 They pour out their arrogant words;

all the evildoers boast.

5 They crush your people, O Lord,

and afflict your heritage.

We do not have to look far to see examples of evil men prospering and seeming to go unpunished. But God’s word says that they will not go unpunished. God is patiently enduring evil in this world in order for His elect to be saved and for the wicked to store up wrath. The lament of David against the wicked in the Psalms will find its satisfaction on the day of judgment when, like the rich man in Jesus’ parable who treated Lazarus with contempt, God will righteously punish all those who did not repent in light of God’s kindness but instead hardened their hearts towards God.

The wicked will all be together in one place, but it will not be a party, like many of them have scoffed. God’s wrath and fury is all they will know. The punishment they receive will be felt physically, mentally, and emotionally.

**Conclusion**

The severity of what the final judgment brings upon those who have rebelled against God, both humans and fallen angels can be hard to grasp with our finite human minds. I hope that a closer look at God’s word regarding His final judgment of sin has been helpful for you to see just how good and right His judgment is.

It is difficult if not impossible for us to comprehend the severity of Hell and God’s eternal wrath toward sinners. When we consider the thought of eternal punishment, our finite minds have a tendency to reach a point where we think, “that’s too much” or “that doesn’t seem fair”. What we need to recognize in those moments is that what we are actually struggling with is not our comprehension of hell as much as it is our comprehension of the holiness of God. We need to see that sin’s offense is not what it does in temporal creation. People are not merely in hell because of the horizontal strife they caused fellow man when they cussed at someone, or stole a car, or even committed genocide. They are first and ultimately in hell because they offended the infinitely perfect and holy God who created them for the purpose of bearing His image to the world for all eternity. They know that their sins are a violation of God’s law, but they have rejected God’s design and sought their own glory.

I want to end by bringing this back to the gospel…the Good News. This has been a heavy topic tonight and we could leave here feeling burdened by the weight of it. That’s okay. It’s not meant to make us feel giddy. These things are written so that we would not be uninformed. Knowing and being reminded of what we have been saved from should bring us a greater appreciation for what Christ has done for us. In light of the teaching on Hell tonight, hear the gospel again: “The gospel is the good news of the grace and power of God to redeem undeserving sinners to eternal life through Jesus’ perfect, sinless life; substitutional, sacrificial death; and victorious resurrection from the grave. These sinners are saved by grace alone through faith alone in Jesus alone *from the eternal wrath they deserved*, and they are reconciled into an eternally secure relationship with God.”

We will never fully know what it cost Jesus to endure the wrath of God for us, but the sufficient revelation we have in God’s word is there to help us with an increased understanding of how great His love for us is.

It should also compel us to warn those who are perishing by proclaiming the gospel to them. We do not need to condemn anyone with our words. As it says in:

**John 3:18** ...whoever does not believe is condemned already, because he has not believed in the name of the only Son of God.

We need to love them enough to risk offending them with the gospel. It is the only power to save from the torment of Hell - all who believe. Knowing the severity of the punishment that awaits those who disobey God in this life should cause us to realize that there is nothing we could say or do in our efforts to save them that would not be worthwhile.

**1 Corinthians 5:5** you are to deliver this man to Satan for the destruction of the flesh, so that his spirit may be saved in the day of the Lord.

Sin kills. Sin leads to eternal punishment and suffering. There is no amount of suffering in this life that won’t be worth enduring in order to miss the punishment of Hell and to have the eternal joy of fellowship with Jesus. It is extremely unloving to watch the world around us run towards Hell and away from the light of life and not say anything to warn them because we do not want to suffer their potential displeasure or even hatred of us. In light of the teaching on Hell tonight, be encouraged once again to *proclaim* the pure and true gospel *generously*.

We need to love others and love the gospel enough to share it with all who will listen. That is why we are still here on this earth. We have been given orders by our King and we have been guaranteed success according to His plan of election. Let us do it with joy and confidence in the hope we have been given in Christ.

Let’s pray