

Sin and Sinfulness

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SIN AS MORAL EVIL AND AN OFFENSE TO GOD

INTRODUCTION: THE GREATNESS OF THE SIN PROBLEM

A. Its Characteristic Evil Is That It Is An Infinite Offense To God.

God is the primary person against whom sin is committed. Sin is the evil, self-willed, self-deifying expression of a God-hating heart. This is seen in its climatic, culminating display in the crucifixion and death of Christ, the innocent, undefiled, and holy Son of God (Acts 2:23, 36, 38, 3:13-15). The penalty, which sin justly incurs, is determined by God (Romans 2:6-13). Furthermore, God alone determines what can justly compensate for the infinite offense that sin has brought against the honor and glory of God's name (Psalm 49:6-9, 51:1-4; Romans 1:24-26, 3:23, 25-26).

B. It Is A Controlling, Corrupting Principle That Enslaves.

Man is conceived in sin. His nature at conception has a corrupting, all-determining principle of sin. In short, sin is first of all an enslaving power, and then secondarily a practice. Therefore, in the final analysis, it is the principle and innate power of sin that is man's greatest problem. It is out of the corruption and defilement of the heart that man compounds things with sinful practice (Psalm 51:5; 58:3, Mark 7:14-23). In other words, man sins because he is a sinner, he does not become a sinner because he sins.

C. Its Consequences Are Destructive And Eternal.

Sin brings judicial guilt. That is, it makes man liable to God's righteous wrath and judgment (Romans 2:6-10). Practically speaking, sin also brings a consciousness of personal guilt or a violated conscience (Hebrews 10:1-5). In other words, sin disrupts the emotional state of man causing depression, fear, and anxiety (Genesis 3; Psalm 38, 51). It

has this disruptive effect on all his relationships; first with God, and secondly with man. Finally, when sin has worked itself out fully, it destroys, both in time and for all eternity (James 1:13-14; Matthew 25:31-45).

D. Its Cure Is Beyond Man's Ability.

God must blot out and pardon our sin (Romans 4:7-8; Psalm 79:9; Isaiah 38:17, 44:22). God Himself must initiate man's deliverance. He must first act to remove its penalty and then also act to break its power. In short, man must be purged of sin's guilt and cleansed of sin's power. However, because of the enslaving power of sin, man is a prisoner to sin, completely unable to deliver himself (John 8:34-36; Romans 6:17-21). The penalty of sin which man justly deserves, and the power of sin by which he is enslaved, must be dealt with by God Himself. In other words, man needs a Savior (Matthew 1:21). God has done all of this through Christ on account of His great love and abounding grace (John 3:16; Ephesians 2:4-5).

Rock of Ages, cleft for me, Let me hide myself in Thee; Let the water and the blood, From Thy wounded side which flowed, Be of sin the double cure, Save from wrath and make me pure.

Augustus M. Toplady

I. THE CHARACTERISTICS OF SIN THAT MAKE IT AN INFINITE OFFENSE TO GOD.

A. The Core Elements Of Sin, Indicated By The Basic Biblical Terms, Emphasize Its Offensive Nature To God.

The following is a list of the primary biblical words for sin and evil. There are others. It is not an exhaustive list.

1. It is transgression.

- a. In the Old Testament the term for transgression (avar) involves transgressing a command, or going beyond a limit that has been set (Numbers 14:41-42; Deuteronomy 17:2-3, 26:13; Daniel 9:11; Hosea 6:7).

- b. In the New Testament the term (parabasis) refers to a transgression of a particular commandment or set limit. It is used of Adam and Eve's sin (Romans 5:14; 1 Timothy 2:14). Transgression occurs where there is a specific law known, knowable and clear (Romans 4:15).

2. It is rebellion.

- a. In the Old Testament there are three primary terms for rebellion (pasha, marah, and sarar). Pasha means to be stubborn and implacable (Isaiah 1:2); Marah refers to someone who you cannot reason with or come to terms with (Isaiah 1:20), and sarar emphasizes stubbornness (Deuteronomy 21:18).
- b. In the New Testament one term for rebellion emphasizes disobedience (apeithe). It involves the stubbornness and hard-heartedness that underlies disobedience (Hebrews 3:18, 4:6; John 3:36). Another term (anomia) expressly refers to a lawless and defiant attitude towards God (1 John 3:4; Matthew 7:23). It involves a willful, unreasonable refusal to be curbed or restrained. It is a spirit or attitude of self-will that disregards, and defies the explicit and express will of another to whom obedience and honor is justly due and should be voluntarily and delightfully given.

3. It is sin.

- a. The literal use of the Hebrew term (chata) is seen in Judges 20:16, "men could sling a stone at a hair and not miss." (c.p. Proverbs 19:2). "It suggests not merely failure but the decision to fail. Missing the mark is a voluntary and culpable mistake." Erickson, p. 569 (Isaiah 53:12).
- b. In the New Testament the term (harmartia), as in the Old Testament, refers to a deviation from the standard and a missing of the mark which involves guilt (culpability). Once again it is always willful (James 4:17; 1 John 3:4). That is, there is a blameworthiness involved. There is a decision to miss, a choice to aim wrongly.

4. It is unrighteousness.

The term unrighteousness (*adikia*), in general, refers to a failure to conform to a norm and standard. It is the general comprehensive term for evil (Romans 1:29). In relation to God it is the failure to conform to the standard of God's revealed will that reflects His infinitely holy nature and being (1 Corinthians 6:9; Colossians 3:25; Romans 1:18, 29). The result of unrighteousness is that it places the wrongdoer in a relationship to God where he will be paid back for wrongdoing, without impartiality (Colossians 3:25).

B. The Characteristic Features Of The Sinfulness Of Man.

1. In man's relation to God.

- a. There is ignorance of God (Ephesians 4:18; 2 Peter 3:6). It is a culpable, willful, ignorance that exists because of a hard heart.
- b. There is error and deception towards God (1 Samuel 26:21; Romans 1:28). This is also culpable and guilt-worthy because it is self-induced, "I have done wrong, I have erred exceedingly." It is an avoidable deception. The Sadducees know neither scripture nor the power of God (Mark 12:24), yet they were under Christ's woe.
- c. There is ungodliness (*asebia*). That is, there is a refusal to give reverence and honor to God that is rightly due. The term is the negative of (*sebo*) which means "to worship" or "reverence." It is wilful reprehensible irreverence. As a result it involves the diminishing or discrediting of God's glory. In the end it rejects His authority and reviles His person in acts, in words, and in thoughts (Romans 1:18-25).
- d. There is offense or trespass. The Hebrew term (*maal*) has the idea of a breach of trust or unfaithfulness (Numbers 5:12, 27; Leviticus 26:40). In the New Testament the term

(paraptoma) emphasizes treachery and defection, as well (Romans 5:15, 11:11; Hebrews 6:6). There is an evil departure from, and a forsaking of a relationship with God. God is rejected and replaced with something else (Hosea 7:7-16; Jeremiah 2:11-13). It is also the term used of the breaking of covenant, and betrayal (Adam; Romans 5:15, Israel; Romans 11:11-12a). Sin is not a sterile, cold, non-relational violation of an abstract law, like a traffic ticket where the officer is not personally offended. It involves relational treachery, where obedience, as an expression of regard, love and honor (Romans 15:15; Malachi 1:6-10) is refused to be given.

- e. There is abomination (Deuteronomy 7:25, 12:31; Revelation 17:4; Leviticus 18:22). God has a reprehensible attitude toward sin. It is a nauseating revulsion that provokes Him to wrath (Deuteronomy 7:24). The term is used to refer to His response to idolatry (Deuteronomy 7:24-25); child sacrifice (12:31); a blemished animal sacrifice (17:1); witchcraft (18:1-14); and homosexuality (Leviticus 18:22). In the New Testament the term (bdelugma) is used of what is utterly detestable in contrast to what man highly regards (Luke 16:15; Matthew 24:15).

2. In man's relation to himself.

It is iniquity: a perversion. In the Old Testament the term (awah) is used of crooked paths (Lamentations 3:9). It means to twist, bend, or to lay waste. It is used of the alteration and the disturbing of nature (Isaiah 24:3). It is used of a perverse mind (Proverbs 12:8). Sin is perverse and perverting; a twisted abnormality of what ought to be (Ezekiel 18:24). It frequently adds the idea of punishment indicating the inevitable connection between sin and its consequences (Genesis 4:13). It also suggests guilt (Hosea 5:5; 14:1-2).

II. THE CONSCIOUSNESS OF AN AWAKENED SINNER IN RELATION TO SIN.

A. The Culpability And Guilt Of Sin Grips The Heart.

There is a sense and recognition of immense guilt; of a debt incurred that God must "blot out." There is a personal felt deservedness of judgement for one's own sin (Acts 2:37; Luke 18:13-14; Psalms 51:4; 2 Corinthians 7:10).

B. The Complicating, Devastating Effects Of Sin Are Clearly Seen.

The corrupting and degenerating influence of our sin upon all our relationships is recognized (Hebrews 12:15). The person says with David, "I have sinned and done evil in Your sight," and realizes that their evil has been the cause of great devastation in his life and the lives of others.

C. The Consistency Of God In His Righteous Judgment Of Sin Is Recognized.

Sin is seen and felt to be evil in God's eyes (2 Samuel 12:9; Isaiah 65:12, 66:4). Therefore, the person truly conscious of sin sides with God against self (Psalm 51:4). There are no rationalizations, nor accusations against God or others (2 Samuel 12:13). The person fully realizes he should be judged, and his only plea and hope is God's mercy (Psalm 51:2-4; Luke 18:13-14).

D. The Cure For And Cleansing Of Sin Is Found In Christ Alone.

God Himself must choose to show mercy. We are washed, cleansed, and purified, only if God chooses to exercise His great compassion (Psalm 51:2). We find grace for pardon and cleansing, only in the blood of Jesus (1 John 1:9; Hebrews 9:22; Romans 3:24-25).

THE IMPUTATION OF SIN

I. THE CONCEPT OF IMPUTATION IN SCRIPTURE.

A. The Basic Definition Of Imputation.

A lexical definition of the term is: "To reckon, to evaluate, to charge up; to attribute anything to a person; to attribute or reckon over something to a person; to reckon to or lay to one's account." Imputation in general refers to the charging, or accounting, of something to someone's account. It is either something that belongs to the person at the point of the charging (so that it is his due and is reckoned, or credited according to debt). Or, is something that does not belong to the person at the point of the charging (so that it is reckoned or charged according to grace – Romans 4:4).

B. The Different Imputations In Scripture.

1. The imputation of Adam's sin to the race (Romans 5:12,19).

2. The imputation of human sin to Christ. He made Him ... to be sin (2 Corinthians 5:18-21).

- a. Christ first, voluntarily assumed the judicial relation to God's law of a 'sinner.'
- b. Christ next, was charged by God with sin and its guilt. This judicial charging of the guilt of sin was personally due to, and the debt of others. Christ, in other words, never personally became a sinner, even on the cross, but assumed the place and received the just punishment that sinners deserved before God.
- c. Christ then, bore the full and just penalty for the sin and its guilt as charged (1 Peter 2:24; Isaiah 53:6).

3. The imputation of God's righteousness to the believer.

- a. Paul's treatment of imputation of righteousness is parallel to and contrasts with the imputation of sin to Christ (Romans 5:15-19).
- b. The union of the believer with Christ and His obedience and blood is the meritorious cause of imputation and the resultant justification (Romans 3:24; 5:18-19). That is, union with Christ causes the believer to share in the merit (righteousness) of Christ (Romans 3:25-26) and be accepted and justified once and forever.
- c. God's attribute of righteousness is the judicial and legal cause by which God imputes righteousness to the sinner (Romans 4:6). God, who is the infinitely righteous judge declares that it is a just act to impute Christ's righteousness to a believer's account and accept it as the sole righteousness for their justification (Romans 3:26b).
- d. The self-emptying faith of the believer is the instrumental cause of imputation. It is the 'instrument' which connects a sinner to Christ and His righteousness which is imputed to the believing sinner's account (Romans 4:3-6; Philippians 3:9).

NOTE: Imputed righteousness is the sole and entire basis and ground of justification by grace alone through faith alone. It is what Luther called "alien righteousness," a righteousness entirely apart from us.

C. The Different Views Of The Imputation Of Adam's Sin.

1. The Pelegian concept.

2. The Federal-Representative concept.

The sole basis of imputation is Adam's covenanted role as representative of the race.

- a. Adam is head of the race by covenant.

Over and beyond this natural relation which exists between a man and his posterity, there was a special divine constitution by which he was appointed the head and representative of his whole race.

Hodge, Vol II, p. 197

God ordained that, in this covenant, Adam should stand not for himself only, but as the representative of all his descendants.

Berkoff, p. 242

- b. Adam acted as a representative head.

When it is said that the sin of Adam is imputed to his posterity, it is not meant that they committed his sin, or were the agents of his act ... but simply that in virtue of the union between him and his descendants, his sin is the judicial ground of the condemnation of the race.

Hodge, Vol II, p. 195

3. The natural-representative view.

- a. The race jointly shared in Adam's sin. All were vitally and virtually present in Adam. Our seminal substance was present in Adam.
- b. Adam acted as representative and natural seminal head of the race.

II. THE CASE FOR THE IMPUTATION OF ADAM'S SIN IN SCRIPTURE.

A. The Declaration Of The Imputation Of Adam's Sin (Romans 5:12).

1. The connection with the context, "Therefore, just as."

- a. Romans 5:12-21 finalizes Paul's argument for the certainty and finality of justification begun in 3:21. This note of a certain and final justification is stressed, especially, in Romans 5:1-2, 9-11.

The meaning of the connective phrase, 'therefore, just as' in 5:12 is as follows: **Therefore**, a certain and complete justification (based upon the one act of Christ on the cross, which results in a certain justification), is **just as** a certain and complete condemnation (based upon the one act of Adam, which resulted in certain condemnation). Perhaps a concise 'paraphrase' of the thought of the connecting phrase could be stated as follows; "**Therefore**, a certain and final justification, in Christ, is **just as**, a certain and final condemnation, in Adam, when through the one act of one man sin entered into the world ... and death through sin and so death spread to all men."

- b. Romans 5:12-21 is the foundation for his teaching on sanctification in Romans 6-8.

2. The communication of physical death came to all of Adam's descendants by his one act of sin apart from the future personal acts of sin of his descendants.

- a. Physical death (and spiritual death as well) is the consequence and penalty for sin: specifically, in the context, Adam's sin.

- b. Physical death is the universal penalty for Adam's single sin. Death has passed to all men; therefore its universal cause is traced to his single act (1 Corinthians 15:22).

3. The participation in Adam's sin by all, "all sinned."

This phrase 'all sinned' is not a reference to the personal acts of sin of Adam's descendants. This is true as seen by the following elements of Paul's argument:

- a. Paul uses the Aorist tense: The emphasis here is that all sinned in Adam's single, historical act. He did not say all personally have sinned.

All are united to Adam and all jointly participated in Adam's one act of sin. All are considered to be present in Adam in some sense. That is, they are considered by God to have acted when Adam acted. Paul's central proof of this is that he parallels Adam's act with the one act of Christ's atoning obedience. Paul says all who believe, are joined and united to Christ in His one act, and thereby participate fully in the justifying benefit of His death (15-19). Furthermore, the example of Levi and Abraham is helpful to further explain the natural relation of Adam and all his descendants as well (Hebrews 7:10).

- b. That all are charged with the guilt of Adam's sin is proved by the fact that all experience physical death, which (together with spiritual death) in the context is the penalty for Adam's sin (It is physical death that is Paul's focus as seen by verse 14).

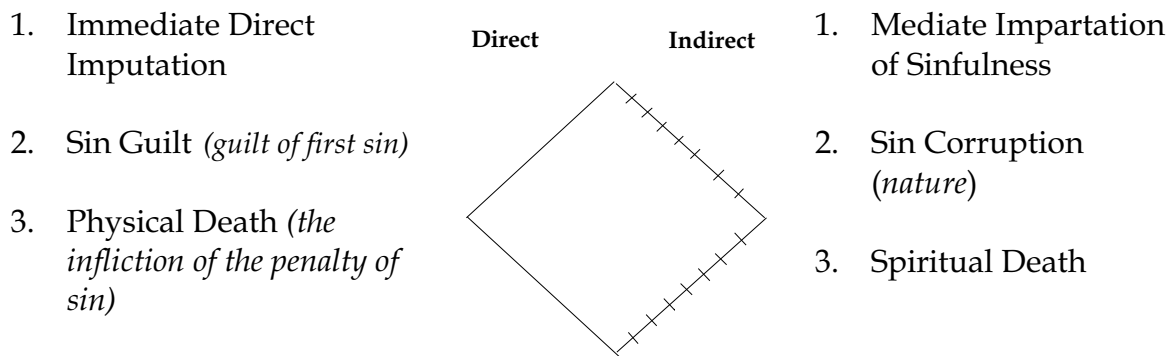
In other words, all were present in substance in Adam as natural head and all were present in Adam as their representative federal head. Hence, all are reckoned as having acted when Adam acted (v. 13-14). This is proved in verses 13 and 14, by the fact that people between Adam and Moses suffered the penalty of sin, which is death, even though their personal sins were not technically charged against them.

- c. This is the point of Paul's elaboration in 5:15-19. It confirms and settles Paul's argument in verses 13-14. This is vitally significant for it lays the contrasting parallel and basis of God's grace in justifying all who believe. That is, simply, by faith, they are in legal union with Christ. Consequently, they are justified by union with Christ and His one act of supreme obedience in His atoning death on the cross.

B. The Verification Of The Imputation Of Adam's Sin To All His Descendants (Romans 5:13-14).

- 1. **There was no other cause or explanation of physical death during the period of time when sin was not formally charged as a transgression that incurs death.**
- 2. **Death reigned over all, including infants, without personal cause. The only possible cause for the penalty of death was their joint participation in Adam's single act of sin.**

ADAM'S SIN



THE RACE - US

III. THE COMPARISON OF ADAM'S AND CHRIST'S IMPUTATION IN SCRIPTURE.

ADAM: NATURAL/JUDICIAL

- All die (v. 17a)
- All condemned (18a)
- All constituted sinners (v. 19a)

CHRIST: JUDICIAL

- All reign in life (v. 17b)
- All justified (v. 18b)
- All believers constituted righteous (v. 19b)

NOTE: In both cases, Paul works backwards from the final result to the sentence passed, and only then to the standing before God on which it was based.

ARGUMENTS AGAINST FEDERAL HEADSHIP ALONE

The following arguments are taken from *Dogmatic Theology* by W. G. T. Shedd:

1. It doesn't give the normal meaning to the term "all sinned". It is an active verb. It doesn't have the passive sense of "regarded as having sinned."
2. It makes imputation an arbitrary act of sovereignty (not based on actual personal guilt).
3. The verbs "with" and "in" are too strong for the concept of representation. We may act by a representative, but not in or with him.
4. It gives involuntary punishment without guilt. There is punishment where there is no prior guilt and responsibility.
5. It assumes wrongly that the punishment and imputation of sin to Christ is the exact parallel to the punishment and imputation of Adam's sin to the race.
 - a. Christ suffered freely - Adam's posterity suffered necessarily.
 - b. Christ's punishment was undeserved, but not so with Adam's posterity.
 - c. Christ's suffering was expiatory. Adam's posterity was retributive.
 - d. Christ was not obligated; the posterity of Adam was.
6. It makes vicarious substitutionary suffering (Christ) equal to vicarious substitutionary sinning (Adam).
7. One may obey in place of others to save, but may not disobey in place of others to ruin.
8. It supposes sin and righteousness may both be imputed in the same nonmeritorious way.
 - a. Righteousness may be imputed according to debt or grace. Nowhere is the same taught of sin.
 - b. The ground or reason is judicial and forensic when Christ's obedience is imputed, but it is inherent and personal when Adam's sin is imputed.
9. It assumes that God sustains the same relation to holiness and sin. God may be the author of holiness, but not for sin. God may bestow righteousness but not unrighteousness.
10. It does not establish any responsibility to Adam's race and thus the basis of guilt and punishment.
11. It assumes that the union of Adam and his posterity is the same as Christ and His people.
 - a. One is founded upon a natural union, a union of constitutional nature and substance. An entire human species as an invisible but substantial nature acts in and with the first human pair.
 - b. Union in Adam is substantial and physical; in Christ it is spiritual and mystical. In Adam it is natural; in Christ it is representative.

SIN, MORAL EVIL, & GOD'S JUDGMENT

INTRODUCTION

Humanistic manifesto

I. THE MODERN CONTEMPT FOR THE DOCTRINE OF SIN AND JUDGMENT.

A. It Is Ridiculed In The World.

1. It is an antiquated old-fashioned belief.

The belief in judgment comes (it is said) from the time when man was culturally ignorant. It comes from a time when he was ruled by fear, and a survival instinct. It was when man had to be coerced into right living.

2. It is a cultural idea projected on to the person of God.

A stern autocratic father concept is projected upon God.

B. It Is Repugnant To Much Of The Church.

1. It is inconsistent with the love of God.

God is the God of love only (1 John 4:18).

2. It is impractical and unwise.

It antagonizes man. People resent it. People respond to appeal and love.

NOTE: It is forgotten that men are already antagonists to God by nature.

C. Sin Abases Man's High View Of Himself.

Sin and wrong doing comes from man's lower animal propensities that opposes his moral consciousness. Sin is a lack of positive qualities that comes from a lack of training and education. Or sin is a mental or neurological disorder much like a physical ailment.

D. Sin Demands Something More Than Man To Deliver Himself (Psalm 49).

Sin is something that can be fixed with right resources, education, etc. Sin is not a power or an indwelling evil that pervades and dominates man's nature. Judgment for sin is unthinkable in the light of man's definitions and concepts of sin.

II. THE CASE AGAINST MAN THAT DEMANDS GOD'S JUDGMENT.

A. The Contemptuous Nature Of Sin Demands And Justifies The Just Judgment Of God.

1. Man refuses to have God in his thoughts (Romans 1:28).

- a. He is deliberate and militant in not wanting knowledge (Ephesians 4:18)
- b. His disposition is antagonistic to God (Ephesians 2:3). Sin is an anti-God power and force within his nature (Mark 7:18-21).

2. Man revels in sin, in spite of its consequences (Romans 1:32).

- a. He knows God's ordinance that they're worthy of death; yet delights in others who do it

- b. He ignores all warnings of consequences and not only persists in sin, but boasts of it as well.

3. Man represses the truth about God and His glory in order to sin without guilt.

NOTE: The justice of a penalty is most obvious when a criminal refuses repentance.

- a. He does not just refuse the knowledge of God and ignore the consequences; he actively stifles and represses it (Romans 1:18-24).
- b. He avoids it, conceals it, and then replaces it (Romans 1: 18-27).
- c. His love of darkness deludes him (2 Thessalonians 2:10-12; John 3:19-20).

B. Man's Compounding Of His Sin Demands Judgment.

1. He despises God's person in general.

This is a central element of ungodliness (Romans 1:18, 26, 28).

2. He despises God's kindness and mercy especially manifested in the dying love of Christ.

- a. The evidence that he does so:
 - (1) He makes nothing of Christ's incarnation.
 - (2) He is never thankful for mercies and kindnesses. He is watched over, cared for, and kept alive— all without gratitude.
 - (3) God's multiplied mercies bring multiplied provocations of God (Matthew 23:37-39).
- b. The evil of doing so (Romans 2:1-5):

- (1) We take it grievously when we are despised. When what we do or say is slighted, how much more God.
- (2) We dislike it when despised by equals, even more so when despised by inferiors (Matthew 18).
- (3) We are most aggravated and indignant when we show kindness and it is despised or slighted.

3. He presumes on God's mercy.

He wrongly assumes God should and will respond when he is in great trouble. He presumes that God loves his soul, when he does not love or honor God's person or being (Proverbs 1:20-23). He presumes that God would not in fact condemn him.

III. THE CERTAINTY OF GOD'S JUDGMENT.

- A. The Certainty Of God's Judgment Is Constantly Declared In Scripture (Acts 10:48, 17:30-31; Romans 2:6-10; Matthew 23:33).**
- B. The Consistency And Moral Perfection Of His Nature (Deuteronomy 32:4; Exodus 34; Psalm 5:4-5, 11:6-7).**
- C. The Confirmation Of The Lord Jesus Christ (Luke 13:1-5).**
 - 1. The misapprehension of His teaching; "some are greater sinners." They were free from danger.**
 - 2. The message of Jesus: The temporal calamity is a picture of eternal calamity. The danger is to all; as all deserve it and will receive it.**

IV. THE CHARACTER OF HIS JUDGMENT: WRATH.

A. There Is A Sensible Conscious Distress.

"In that place" (8:12, 22:13). "There shall be weeping" (Matthew 13:42, 50, 25:31).

B. There Is An Unending Conscious Distress.

- 1. It is an everlasting punishment, the opposite of eternal joy (Matthew 25:41).**
- 2. It is an eternal punishment away from the Lord (2 Thessalonians 1:9).**

The condemned are away from the presence of the Lord. They are not annihilated, for they are "away from" the Lord's presence.

C. The Fearfulness Of It (Matthew 10:28). Fear Him

- 1. It is more than the body. God destroys both.**
- 2. It is better not to have been born (Mark 14:21).**
- 3. It is something from which we must escape (Matthew 23:33; Luke 12).**
- 4. We are constantly warned about it (Matthew 5:23, 29-30).**