

These and other scriptures make it clear that all those who are truly drawn to Yeshua and granted saving faith in Him, will have a clear “life change” and will therefore persevere even in the most difficult circumstances, for those who have been bought with the price of Yeshua’s death, resurrection, ascension, and intercession, will never be lost.

God does not forsake the work which His own hands have begun, as the Prophet bears witness, (Psalm 138:8; Isaiah 64:8) we are the work of his hands; therefore He will complete what He has begun in us. When I say that we are the work of His hands, I do not refer to mere creation, but to the calling by which we are adopted into the number of His sons. For it is a token to us of our election, that the Lord has called us effectually to Himself by His Spirit.¹

9 – These will pay the penalty of eternal destruction, away from the presence of the Lord and from the glory of His power,

Following the statement of v. 8, that God will “*deal out retribution to those who do not know God and to those who do not obey the gospel of our Lord Yeshua*,” Paul now makes it amply clear in these inspired words that unbelievers, i.e., those who reject the clear divine revelation of God’s existence, power, and sovereign authority as well as the message of His love and eternal redemption of all who are His, as made known in the gospel, will be subjected to eternal punishment.

These will pay the penalty of eternal destruction – The opening pronoun “These” (οἱτινες, *hoitines*) refers directly to those “who do not know God,” i.e., those who have no covenant relationship with Him² through faith in Yeshua and the payment for sin He has made for all the Father has given Him, a payment secured through His death, resurrection, ascension, and intercession.

It is important to note that Paul specifically states that the required payment for the sins of an unbeliever is “eternal destruction” (ὀλεθρον αἰώνιον (*olethron aiōnion*)). The word translated “destruction” (ὀλεθρον < ὄλλυμι) carries the meaning “to ruin” which, in some instances, could be understood as “to destroy.” As a result, there are those under the large umbrella of “Christianity” who have interpreted this and other texts as teaching “annihilationism,” that is, the idea that when an un-

1 Calvin, *Commentaries on the Epistles of Paul the Apostle to The Philippians, Colossians, and Thessalonians* (The Calvin Translation Society, Edinburgh: 1851) p. 26.

2 The word “know,” οἶδα, *oida*, is used to denote a covenant relationship.

believer dies, that person ceases to exist, both body and soul, and therefore dismisses the idea that a loving God would ever commit those who have rejected Him to eternal agony and pain. Taking the “annihilationism” view is based upon the idea that a “loving God” would never give an eternal punishment to those who have rejected Him.

Thus the essential reason people question the reality of hell in the first place is based upon a philosophical question: how could a loving God enact eternal punishment upon people created in His image? Or to put it another way, how can the love of God be reconciled with eternal punishment? Seeing no way to reconcile the dilemma, other explanations are offered for those biblical texts which appear to teach the eternal punishment of the wicked.

Primary in these explanations is the doctrine of annihilationism, which presupposes that the soul gains immortality only when endowed with eternal life. Thus, annihilationism teaches that both the body and soul of the unrighteous cease to exist at death. If there is punishment of the wicked, it is in the forfeiture of a future existence of bliss in the presence of God.

Seventh-day Adventism is most notably connected with the teaching of annihilationism.¹ Other groups that accept this viewpoint (with some variations) are the Jehovah Witnesses, followers of Herbert Armstrong, Christadelphians, and more recently, the Church of England.² Some notable scholars of our day have also espoused some form of annihilationism. For example, C. S. Lewis, John Stott, F. F. Bruce, and John Wenham have all either given support for annihilationism or admitted agnosticism in regard to hell and the eternal punishment of the unrighteous.³

Once again, what has driven the reinterpretation of the biblical teaching on hell in our times is the nagging question of how eternal punishment of the unrighteous can be held in concert with God’s essential nature, that is, of His goodness and love. It is argued that such punishment is akin to “cruel and unusual punishment,” being far too

-
- 1 For the best explanation and defense of Annihilationism from a Seventh-day Adventist perspective, see Samuele Bacchiocchi, *Immortality or Resurrection?* (Biblical Perspectives, 1997).
 - 2 The Church of England’s *Doctrine Commission* reported in February 1995 that Hell is not eternal torment. The report, entitled “The Mystery of Salvation” states, “Christians have professed appalling theologies which made God into a sadistic monster. ... Hell is not eternal torment, but it is the final and irrevocable choosing of that which is opposed to God so completely and so absolutely that the only end is total non-being.” (*Church House Publishing*, London, 1995), p. 199.
 - 3 [See footnote 1 on the next page]

great in proportion to the crime.

But, in agreement with our text here in 2Thess, the Scriptures are clear that there is a place of eternal torment prepared for all who deny God and who therefore also consider the teachings of the Scriptures regarding “saving faith” to be a myth.¹

These will go away into eternal punishment, but the righteous into eternal life. (Matt 25:46)

And the devil who deceived them was thrown into the lake of fire and brimstone, where the beast and the false prophet are also; and they will be tormented day and night forever and ever. (Rev 21:10)

Then another angel, a third one, followed them, saying with a loud voice, “If anyone worships the beast and his image, and receives a mark on his forehead or on his hand, he also will drink of the wine of the wrath of God, which is mixed in full strength in the cup of His anger; and he will be tormented with fire and brimstone 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; they have no rest day and night, those who worship the beast and his image, and whoever receives the mark of his name.” (Rev 14:9–11)

... *away from the presence of the Lord*... The Greek literally has “away from the face [*προσώπον, prosōpon*] of the Lord,” which surely gives the sense of being entirely dismissed from ever having any approach to Him, seeking His help and favor and gaining His gift of eternal life. And since, as we have seen, this situation is eternal, it is clear that there is no hope, whatsoever, for those who have willfully turned away from God, following their own desires while denying the very existence of their Creator.

Here, the term “presence (or “face”) of the Lord” carries the meaning of “having a true relationship with Him.” In contrast, the Scriptures use the picture of God “turning His face away” to describe His righteous anger upon unbelievers, i.e., those who deny Him.

O LORD God, do not turn away the face of Your anointed;
remember Your lovingkindness to Your servant David.”
(2Chron. 6:42)

1 For further study on the eternal reality of Hell, see my booklet: “Hell & the Eternal Punishment of the Wicked” (Matthew Commentary, Vol. 3, p. 762ff). This is also available as a downloadable PDF on the TorahResource site: search for “Hell & the Eternal Punishment of the Wicked”

I will also turn My face from them, and they will profane My secret place; then robbers will enter and profane it. (Ezek 7:22)

Thus, when the Scriptures describe those who have turned away from or exist apart from “the presence [*face*] of the Lord,” it is using this metaphor to describe those who deny God and therefore have no desire to seek Him. Thus this language describes “relationship,” not the biblical doctrine of God’s omnipresence.

...and from the glory of His power. – Those who comprise the host of people who deny God and have no saving relationship with Him, will, when judged eternally, be dismissed from His presence and will spend eternity realizing that there is absolutely no way that they could rectify their demise.

On the other hand, those who are truly “born again” to a new life in Yeshua have been granted a life of fellowship with Him in this life. Thus they are able to rejoice and glory in all of the infinite love He has given, enabling them to live by the power of His grace won for them through His death and resurrection, and maintained for them by His ascension, intercession and the abiding presence of the Ruach. This is the “glory of His power.” For it is by the work of our Savior that we are enabled to glory in Him, even in times of trouble and hardship, for we know by faith that He is with us and will strengthen us, as we rely upon Him, to persevere in our faith, ultimately giving Him the glory and honor He deserves.

For by grace you have been saved through faith; and that not of yourselves, it is the gift of God; not as a result of works, so that no one may boast. For we are His workmanship, created in Messiah Yeshua for good works, which God prepared beforehand so that we would walk in them. (Eph 2:8–10)

What a glorious future all who are “in Yeshua” have! For all who are His, purchased by the infinite price of Yeshua’s death and resurrection, will dwell in the glory of God for all eternity, and will forever be the living, worshiping trophies of His love, power, and grace! In this we are reminded of Paul’s words in his first epistle to the Thessalonians:

Then we who are alive and remain will be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air, and so we shall always be with the Lord. Therefore comfort one another with these words. (1Thess 4:17–18)

10– when He comes to be glorified in His saints on that day, and to be marveled at among all who have believed — for our testimony to you was believed.

In these two verses (vv. 9-10), we see that the “penalty of eternal destruction” for the unbelievers is entirely reversed for all God has saved by His sovereign grace. While the unbeliever is punished in line with their rejection of the Almighty, thus denying God’s infinite holiness, those who have been declared holy via the gift of salvation, received by exercising the gift of faith, are promised eternity with Him in the realm of glory.

...when He comes to be glorified in His saints on that day – Moreover, the primary characteristic applied in this verse to believers, is their God-given desire and ability to give glory to Yeshua when He comes. Those whom He has redeemed through the work of the Ruach, the power of His inspired word, and the gift of faith, will be, as it were, the royal crown given to Yeshua, thus bespeaking His glory and infinite love by which their redemption was accomplished. For it is by the infinite price He paid to redeem all who are His, that this final day of glory is secured.

This is the will of Him who sent Me, that of all that He has given Me I lose nothing, but raise it up on the last day. For this is the will of My Father, that everyone who beholds the Son and believes in Him will have eternal life, and I Myself will raise him up on the last day. (Jn 6:39-40)

Here we see that it truly is God’s unfailing love and power that keeps and preserves all those given to Yeshua so that they persevere and are preserved through the abiding Ruach to be with Him for all eternity. Even as Yeshua teaches us:

All that the Father gives Me will come to Me, and the one who comes to Me I will certainly not cast out. For I have come down from heaven, not to do My own will, but the will of Him who sent Me. This is the will of Him who sent Me, that of all that He has given Me I lose nothing, but raise it up on the last day. (Jn 6:37–39)

Thus, what Paul is pointing to here is the infinite joy that Yeshua will express as the very people whom He redeemed by His death and resurrection are displayed as the final trophy of the victory He procured for them. Further, He will rejoice in His own image reflected in

them, but also in their joy as yet another trophy of the eternal redemption He purchased for each one given to Him by the Father.

With this grand picture in mind, the words of Zephaniah come to mind:

The LORD your God is in your midst, a victorious warrior.
He will exult over you with joy, He will be quiet in His love,
He will rejoice over you with shouts of joy. (Zeph 3:17)

... *on that day* – Here, in these words, we see once again that the inspired Scriptures emphasize this reality: God has, from eternity past, planned out all that He will accomplish throughout earth's history and how He will bring all things to their divinely ordained goal. While it is clear that He has not revealed when "that day" (ἡμέρα ἐκείνη, *hemera ekeinē*) actually is, for the expression itself is indefinite, nevertheless, we know for sure that God knows the time of "that day," the day that in Scripture is often referred to "as the day of the Lord."

I have decided to deliver such a one to Satan for the destruction of his flesh, so that his spirit may be saved in the day of the Lord Yeshua. (1Cor 5:5)

But the day of the Lord will come like a thief, in which the heavens will pass away with a roar and the elements will be destroyed with intense heat, and the earth and its works will be burned up. (2Pet 3:10)

This will be the day ordained by God from the very creating of the universe, to bring to conclusion His divine plan to save His chosen ones, those given to Yeshua.

After these things I looked, and behold, a great multitude which no one could count, from every nation and all tribes and peoples and tongues, standing before the throne and before the Lamb, clothed in white robes, and palm branches were in their hands; and they cry out with a loud voice, saying, "Salvation belongs to our God who sits on the throne, and to the Lamb." (Rev 7:9–10)

... *and to be marveled at among all who have believed*– The word "marveled" (θαυμασθῆναι < θαυμάζω) can carry the sense of "to be extremely impressed or disturbed by something; to wonder, to be amazed."¹ We

1 BDAG, "θαυμάζω," p. 444.

can only imagine and give thought to what it will be like when Yeshua returns! Surely the return of our Savior will be an experience equal to and even greater than what it must have been when Yeshua appeared to the disciples following His resurrection.

While they were telling these things, He Himself stood in their midst and said to them, "Peace be to you." But they were startled and frightened and thought that they were seeing a spirit. And He said to them, "Why are you troubled, and why do doubts arise in your hearts? See My hands and My feet, that it is I Myself; touch Me and see, for a spirit does not have flesh and bones as you see that I have." And when He had said this, He showed them His hands and His feet. While they still could not believe it because of their joy and amazement, He said to them, "Have you anything here to eat?" They gave Him a piece of a broiled fish; and He took it and ate it before them. (Lk 24:36–43)

... *for our testimony to you was believed.* – Once again, we see in this text that the gift of saving faith enables the believer to lay hold upon that which, for the unbeliever may seem impossible, even ridiculous. But the truth is not only that the infallible Scriptures clearly teach the death, resurrection, ascension, and the future return of Yeshua, but also records that there were hundreds of eye witnesses who saw the crucified Savior Yeshua alive, following His resurrection.

What Paul emphasizes here is that the believers in Thessalonica truly accepted the testimony of Paul and others regarding the risen Savior Yeshua, and had been granted the gift of saving faith by God. For Paul himself was an eye witness of the risen Messiah, as he recounts in his first epistle to the Corinthians.

After that He appeared to more than five hundred brethren at one time, most of whom remain until now, but some have fallen asleep; then He appeared to James, then to all the apostles; and last of all, as to one untimely born, He appeared to me also. (1Cor 15:6–8)

Here we are confronted, once again, with the all important question: do we fully believe what these Scriptures have taught us? Are we living with the firm reality in our hearts and minds that our Savior Yeshua rose from the dead and is coming again? That we will see Him just as others saw Him immediately following His resurrection? This is the gift of saving faith! May we walk in this world as shining lights of the One Who saves, Who abides with the Father, and Who is coming again!