



Articles and Sermons :: THE VAIN SECURITIES OF THE WICKED by Thomas Vincent (published in 1670)

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"Upon the wicked He shall rain snares, fire and brimstone, and a horrible tempest, this shall be the portion of their cup."
Psalm 11:6

Are the burnings of hell so certain, being threatened by God? Are they so dreadful, beyond any burnings that ever have been, both in regard of fierceness and duration? And are they indeed prepared for the wicked, and all graceless, Christless people as their deserved portion? And are not most people wicked, graceless, unrighteous, unregenerate, unbelievers, who are already condemned to this place of torment (John 3:18)? And by consequence every moment are such in danger of being dragged forth to execution? Here then we may sit down, and wonder at the senselessness and carnal security of such people, especially of those who sit under the light of the Word, which does make discovery of all this most plainly unto them, whatever their danger be, whatever their sins which have deserved hell, whatever God's threatenings of everlasting burnings, whatever execution there is, and has been upon other sinners like themselves, yet they are without any fear, they are fast asleep in sin and very secure. Though their conscience is full of guilt, their hearts full of lust, their lives full of sin, though their steps are carrying them forward in the broad way, which leads unto destruction; though death has them upon the chase, and is at their heels, though the wrath of God pursues them hard, and is at their backs, though the day, wherein they must give an account, and be punished for their iniquity hastens greatly, and the Judge stands at the door; yet they care not, they fear not; none of these things do move them, none of these things do trouble them. They eat and drink, and sleep, and buy and sell, and plant and build, and go on in a sinful course, as if they should live here eternally, or as if their soul should perish with their body, and all these things foretold in the Word, concerning future retributions were but nice fables.

First, Some are thus secure, through an atheistical persuasion that there is no God. Because they are enemies unto God, and live in a course of rebellion against him, and so it is their interest and desire that there should be no God. Therefore they do what lies in them to work themselves into this persuasion. There are too many in our age who endeavor to wear off all sentiments of a deity from their minds, that they might sin freely without any check and control, that hereby they might arm themselves against the thrusts and wounds which the sword and arrows of God's threatenings would otherwise give unto them, and that by this means they might still the noise of their clamorous and accusing consciences, which otherwise would give them no rest under such heaven-daring provocations, as they daily are guilty of. But such people, if they will not believe the engravings of God, which are upon the face of the universe, the impress of infinite power, and an invisible Deity on his works, which are visible unto the eye, they shall not remain long under their atheistical thoughts, but he will make them to know and feel that there is a God by the immediate impressions of his wrath upon their souls, and the dreadful flames of hell-fire, which his breath will kindle to burn their bodies everlastingly.

Secondly, Others are secure, notwithstanding their danger, through a fond persuasion that there is no hell, that there is no account to be given, no judgement to be passed, no punishment to be endured after this life, but that death puts a total end to their being, and that forever. We read in the Book of Wisdom, chapter 2 of the reasonings which such have: Our life is short, and in the death of a man there is no remedy, neither was there any man known to return from the grave; For we are born at all adventure, and we shall be hereafter, as though we had never been; for the breath in our nostrils is as smoke, and a little spark in the moving of our heart; which being extinguished our body shall be turned into ashes, and our spirit shall vanish as the soft air: our life shall pass away as the trace of a cloud, or like a mist driven by the beams of the sun; our time is a very shadow that passes away, and after our end there is no returning, for it is fast sealed that no man comes again. Hence they are secure and encourage themselves in wicked and licentious practices. "Come on therefore let us enjoy the good things that are present, let us fill our selves with costly wines and ointments, and let no flower of the spring pass by us; let us crown our selves with rosebuds before they be withered, let none of us go without his part of our voluptuousness, for this our portion and our lot is this." Such people they live like beasts, and they would persuade themselves that they shall die like beasts, that there is no immortality of the soul, that there will be no resurrection of the body, and by consequence no punishment of both in hell; whereas right reason will evince, that the soul being a spiritual substance will survive the body, which even the wiser heathens have acknowledged. And the Scripture does clearly reveal this, and that the body shall be raised again at the last day, and both the soul and body of the wicked be eternally

ally tormented in hell; which Scripture being the Word of God, which no carnal reason could ever yet disprove, these things are as certain as God is true.

Thirdly, Others if they have not drunk in those atheistical and anti-Scriptural persuasions, which some are besotted and intoxicated with, yet are secure and senseless of their danger, through their ignorance or misapprehensions of God; they conceive him to be made up all of mercy, that there is no fury in him, that however sinful they are or have been, yet that God is more merciful, and nothing more easy than to obtain a pardon, and if they call on his name and cry for mercy, though at the last gasp (whatever their wicked lives have been) they shall be saved; not considering that God is holy and jealous, just and righteous, as well as merciful and gracious; and that such as go on still in their trespasses have no share in his mercy or any of his promises.

Fourthly, Others do lull themselves asleep upon the bed of security, because of their own and others impunity, thus abusing God's patience and longsuffering, which should lead them to repentance, to grow more hardened and impenitent hereby, Romans 2:4, 5. Because sentence against their evil works is not speedily executed, therefore their hearts are fully set in them to do evil and they are secure, Ecclesiastes 8:11. Not considering that though God is long-suffering, yet that he is not ever-suffering; that patience long and much abused will at length break forth into fury; not considering that God's vengeance, though it has leaden heels, yet it has iron hands, and though the fire of God's anger be long kindling, yet that it will be longer, yes forever burning.

Fifthly, Others quiet themselves for the present, and arm themselves against fears of hell, through their intention of future repentance and reformation. However they indulge themselves for a while in their sinful course, yet they resolve shortly to become new men and women, to turn over a new leaf, and lead a new life, and to become as holy and strict as the best; not considering that repentance is not in their own power, and how they provoke God hereby to deny the grace to them hereafter, and to remove from the means of working it; not remembering how many thousands have perished with such intentions, which never have been put into execution.

Sixthly, Others are quiet and secure through lack of serious consideration, what their guilt and danger is. They fill and throng up their time so full with worldly business and secular employments that they leave themselves no room or leisure to think of sin and their near-approaching death, and future wrath, and the eternal burnings of hell, which they are in danger of. The cares of this world and the deceitfulness of riches do choke their meditations in the first springing forth of them, so that no fruit comes from them to perfection. Did but guilty sinners sit down one quarter of an hour every day, and look upward to the angry God who frown upon them, and downward to the flames of hell, which are preparing for them, and forward to the last judgement, when they will be sentenced by the Judge to dwell with devouring fire, and inhabit everlasting burnings; and were persuaded that if they continue in sin, they can be no means escape; surely they could not be so secure.

Seventhly, Others are secure, though they are going on in the way of sin which leads to death and hell; because the most of the people are going on in the same course, and they hope they shall fare as well as others. Their forefathers trod in these steps, and their neighbors are their companions in sin, and if they are punished at last in hell, they think they shall have company enough, and bear it as well as others; not considering how intolerable the wrath of God is by anyone, and that their company in hell will be so far from alleviating, that it will exceedingly heighten and aggravate their pain and torment.

Eighthly, Others and the most are secure through their frequent practice of sin. Custom in sin has taken away the sense of sin. Their lusts have enthralled them, and their lusts have stupefied them. However conscience did grumble at first, especially when they first ventured upon some more notorious sins, yet now they have shut the mouth of conscience, they have charmed and seared it as with a hot iron, I Timothy 4:2.

Ninthly, Others are quiet and secure under their danger of hell, because they are not so bad as others, because they do not run with others unto the same excess of riot, and have escaped the more gross pollutions, which are in the world through lusts; especially if they carry some face of religion too, if they have a form of godliness, and employ themselves in all the outward exercise of devotion, and with these have had some inward flashy affections, and a counterfeit of all saving grace, though they never were truly humbled for sin, emptied of themselves, cut off the old stock, and truly by faith engrafted into Christ, and from him draw virtue and spiritual influence, (which is proper to all those that are in Christ, and are freed from condemnation through him, Romans 8:1). Thus the devil and the deceitful hearts of men do bewitch and befooled the most, in some of these ways, to sit still in peace and security, until destruction comes upon them suddenly, and that without remedy; and they are not awakened out of their spiritual slumber until they are awakened in the midst of the flames of hell. How long will you sleep oh you sinners? How long will you slumber in such imminent danger, you graceles

s and Christless people? What sleep under the light? What sleep upon the brinks of the burning lake? And will nothing rouse you, and awaken you out of this sleep? Are you resolved it shall prove the sleep of death? Shall it insensibly and effectually usher you to hell before you are aware? Have you been called already so long, so loud, so frequently, so fervently, and yet do you deafen your ear? Have you been told so often of your guilt and danger, and yet harden your heart? Yet will you hold fast your sins, resolving not to let them go whatever they cost you? Have your hearts been like so many brazen walls, beating back all the arrows of reproof, and threatenings which have been shot at you or are they like clay and mud, which grows the more hard and obdurate under the sun and light of the gospel which has shined upon you? Have no heavenly dews and showers of the Word yet melted and softened you, no fire and hammer new-molded and framed you? Have you been threatened with death, and wrath, and misery forever, and yet not startled, yet stupid and senseless? Oh, that yet at length you might be awakened, and by the Spirit of the Lord effectually persuaded to lift up your eyes, and look a little before you. Yonder, Yonder! Look sinner, yonder is a horrible burning tempest driving towards you, a dreadful burning lake preparing for you!

Look! do you not see a horrible deep and large pit filled with horribly burning fire, and that fire filled with damned men and women? Lay your ear to the mouth of this pit, and hear what the dolorous complaints, what the shrieks and yellings be of that cursed company. And do you not perceive yourself hastening forward in the way to this place of burning? And will you go forward still? Will you allow yourself to be carried on furiously by your impetuous lusts, until you are fallen into this pit, and there is no possibility of ever getting out again? Lost sinner, Think what punishment in hell will be inflicted upon you. First, The soreness and intolerableness of it. Secondly, The sureness and unavoidableness of it. Thirdly, The nearness of it. Fourthly, The everlastingness of it. First, Consider the pain and intolerableness of hell's torments and think on both the pain which there you shall feel in your bodies, and of the anguish which shall be put upon your souls. If you be found among the wicked and ungodly at the last, your bodies shall be tormented in every part in the flames of hell-fire. No pain is more grievous now to the body, than the pain of fire.

But what is the extinguishable fire on earth, in comparison with the unquenchable fire of hell? What is the fire of man's kindling in comparison with the fire of God's kindling? What is fire fed by wood in comparison with fire fed by the breath of God? No fire here can torment like to the fire which God has prepared for the bodies of the wicked hereafter. You have seen fiery ovens, and you have heard of Nebuchadnezzar's fiery furnace. Should your bodies now be thrown into such fires, you would find them horribly painful. But the pains of hell-fire will be ten thousand times more horrible and tormenting. Your bodies now cannot endure much pain, without expiring which puts an end there unto. But hereafter God will strengthen your bodies to endure. They shall have greater strength and quicker sense, and so more capacity for pain, and they shall be filled to the uttermost of their capacity. Your bodies shall never die, and they shall be filled with pain in extremity, and that to eternity. This will be very sore.

All the tortures that ever were invented by the most mischievous mind, or executed by the most cruel tyrant on whom they have had the greatest spleen unto, are not so much as the least gentle touch in comparison with the torture which the least member of the damned shall endure in hell. Some of you have had extreme pain in your heads. Others have had extreme pain in your bellies. Others have been extremely afflicted with pain in your legs. Others have felt much torture with the pain in your teeth. But if you live and die in sin, you shall be extremely and eternally tortured with pain in every part. Your eyes shall be full of pain, your tongues full of pain, your hands full of pain, your heads full of pain, your backs full of pain, your bellies full of pain, your feet full of pain, from the crown of your head unto the sole of your feet, no part shall be free. Your bodies shall roll and tumble in flames, and there burn with horrible pain, and yet never be consumed. But the anguish of your soul will far exceed the tortures of your bodies, and here words fail, conceptions fall short. Who can tell how the worm of conscience will bite! How dreadful the lashes of your consciences will be, when they are let loose (as God's executioners) with full rage upon you? Who can utter the anguish you shall endure under the immediate impressions of God's wrath upon your souls. This will exceed whatever can be inflicted by the means of any second causes. The punishment of hell-fire will be very sore and intolerable. Such as are tender cannot without unutterable fear and grief bear the thoughts of being burned alive here on earth, and oh the shriekings of such people, when they have been brought to the fire, and the flames have begun to seize upon them!

Oh, I cannot endure it! Oh, I cannot endure it! How intolerable then will hell-fire be! Many martyrs have endured great tortures in their bodies with much patience, some were slain with the sword, some burned with fire, some scourged with whips, some stabbed with iron forks, some their skins plucked off while alive, some their tongues cut out, some stoned to death, some starved with hunger and cold, some dismembered and naked to the shame of the world; and yet in the midst of all their pains they have had a composed mind. Yes, sometimes have been filled with joy. God has not allowed man to inflict upon them more than he has given them strength to bear; but there will be no patience to undergo the pains of hell. The spirit will utterly sink under the heavy burden and pressure thereof, especially the pressure of that pure and weighty wrath, which shall be immediately upon the soul. The terrors of conscience here and forecasts of wrath are intolerable

e in this world, Proverbs 18:14. The spirit of man will sustain his infirmity, but a wounded spirit who can bear? If the body be infirm and weak, full of distemper and pain, yet while the spirit is whole and sound, while there is peace within, the spirit may sustain this, and bear up under it. But if the spirit be wounded by the arrows of the Almighty shot into it, who can bear it? If God let fall some scalding drops of his wrath upon the spirit, if he kindle a spark of hell-fire in your conscience, who can endure it? No balm, no physician on earth can cure such wounds.

No earthly riches or sensual delights can assuage these inward griefs and horrors, which by the hand of God are imprinted upon the spirit: when the wicked are filled with despairful agonies, through apprehension of future approaching wrath, and there remains nothing but a fearful looking for a judgement and fiery indignation, which shall devour the adversaries, Hebrews 10:26. This is enough to sink the heart of the stoutest under its burden. And if the wounds of the spirit here are so intolerable, what will those be which the Lord with such mighty force and by his immediate hand shall give hereafter? If you cannot bear some drops of God's wrath now, what will you do when the full vials of God's wrath shall be poured out upon you, if you be found under the guilt of sin? If you cannot endure the sparks of hell-fire, how will you endure the flames, and most burning heat thereof? If the forecasts of hell affect your heart with such horror, and the fears of it fill the spirit with such amazement, what will hell itself do when the pains and anguish thereof are beyond the greatest fears, and highest conceptions of it? Should you fall into the hands of the most cruel men to torture and massacre you, this would be fearful. Should you fall under the power of devils to tear and rend you, this would be more fearful. But to fall into the hands of God, this will be most fearful. This you cannot bear. And yet if you are wicked, you must bear it, and that to eternity. And can you sleep still in sin, under the thoughts of such danger? Secondly, Consider the sureness and unavoidable nature of hell-fire.

Nothing is more sure than what God has revealed in his Word, and nothing more unavoidable than what God has threatened; and such is the tormenting of the wicked and ungodly in the flames of hell-fire. While you are here upon the earth, there is a possibility of escaping future torments. Pardon, peace, and salvation are attainable. If you lay your sins to heart, if you confess and forsake them, you may find mercy. If by faith you apply yourselves unto the Lord Jesus you shall not perish but obtain eternal life. But if you go on still in your trespasses, if you live and die in a state of impenitence and unbelief, it will be impossible for you to escape. Indeed could you make your battle good against God, could you gather forces together, and wage war against heaven and obtain the victory, you might avoid the threatened punishment. But alas God is infinite in power, and will not permit any such attempts. You will not be able to hold up your head or hand against him. Who can stand in his sight when once he is angry? God will bind all the devils and wicked men and women together in chains of darkness, stronger than any iron chains, and none shall be able to make any resistance. Could you hide yourselves at the last day from his eye; could you fly from his presence into some remote corner, could you creep under some rock or mountain, and there be covered from his view, you might think to escape. But this cannot be. God's eye will follow you, and his hand will reach you wherever you go. Could you by your prayers and tears move God to compassion, and prevail for mercy as now you may do, there might be some hopes of avoiding this punishment.

But soon God's ear will be shut, and the doors of mercy shut against you forever. Your knocking at the door will be in vain. It will never be opened. Your cries and prayers will be to no purpose. They will receive no answer. Hereafter the punishment of hell will be unavoidable by the wicked. Thirdly, Consider the nearness of this punishment of hell. The sands of your life are running swiftly. The time of your abode here is wasting very fast. Your bodies will quickly be in the grave, and if you die in your sins, your soul will be as quickly in hell. You cannot long escape this punishment. You may shuffle the thoughts of God and future wrath out of your mind for a time. You may busy your thoughts about other things while you are here. But all these things will shortly shrink away from you, and leave you naked, and you must stand before God to be judged by him, and to be condemned by him, and to be punished by him. God will meet you as a bear bereaved of her cubs, and rend your heart, or like a roaring lion, and tear you in pieces; when there shall be none to deliver. God will take you into his hand, and throw you out of his presence into the bottomless gulf of unquenchable burnings. I think this should awaken you. Fourthly, And lastly, consider the everlastingness of hell-fire, and your torment which there you must endure, if you be found in the number of unbelievers.

The wrath of God will never be at an end. The worm of your conscience will never die, and the fire of hell will never go out; but the smoke of your torment will ascend up forever and ever. When you have been the space of as many years in hell, as there are stars in the firmament, as there are drops of dew upon the earth in the morning, as there are blades of grass which spring out of the earth, as there are drops of water in the ocean, as are there sands upon the seashore, your torments will be as far from being assuaged, and as far from being ended, as at the first minute of your entrance into this dreadful place. As there is an infinite space of place (if I may so call it to help our apprehensions) beyond the circumference of the heavens, and the visible world in comparison with which ten thousand millions of worlds would not fill up the space of the least speck: so there is an infinite space of duration beyond the circumference and bounds of time in comparison with which the duration of ten thousand millions of worlds for ten thousand millions of years, would not be so much

as a minute, or the least imaginable instant. And this whole eternity you, if wicked, must spend in extremity of torment. The real length of eternal torment cannot be measured, but its true length will be greater (if I may so say) because of your misery. If a short time of misery here on earth seem long, what will an eternity of misery seem to be in hell? When the body is in health, and the soul is sweetened with delight, time steals away insensibly, years seem months, months weeks, weeks days, days hours.

But when the body is sick and the soul embittered with sorrow, a short time seems long, and it passes away slowly in our apprehension. Hours seem days, days weeks, weeks months, months years. How do we count the clock, and reckon the sands that fall in the glass, and time seems to have a leaden heel. How long then will the eternity of misery in extremity seem to be? I believe that the space of one quarter of an hour in hell will seem longer to the damned than a whole life of misery in this world. Yes, I think I may add that a minute's pain in hell will seem longer to the wicked than a thousand years of pleasures in heaven to the righteous, who will sweetly pass forward in the infinite duration of joy, without the least trouble or tediousness. So that the eternity of misery in hell will be as it were a double, triple, yes thousand-fold eternity. I think these considerations should startle all you that are asleep in sin. I think they should make your hearts to quake, and every joint to tremble. I think the sinners in Zion should be afraid and fearfulness should surprise the hypocrites, and I should hear some of you cry out, as Isaiah 33:14. Who among us shall dwell with devouring fire? Who among us shall inhabit everlasting burnings? and as the jailor in Acts 16:29, 30, when awakened by the earthquake, and the impression of guilt was made by God upon his conscience, "Sirs, what shall we do to be saved?" And now sinners what will you do? Will you dare to go on in that broad way of sin, which before long will open under you, and let you down into the horrible gulf of unquenchable burnings? Can you be contented with a portion in this life, and to receive all your good things here, when fire and brimstone, and everlasting burnings shall be the portion of your cup hereafter? Will any pleasure of the flesh and sin for a season compensate that everlasting pain and misery?

"So now there is no condemnation for those who belong to Christ Jesus." Rom. 8:1

"...Jesus, who rescues us from the coming wrath." 1 Thes. 1:10