

# Is There Punishment After Death?

## By: Walter Wilson

Wilson:

We consider together today a very important question that comes up so very often in the lives of many people. The question is, is there punishment after death? Every kind of a person nearly wants to know about it. And naturally so, because as we go through life, we realize that we sin. And we sin very often in thought and word and deed.

And right away the heart asks the question, will I be punished for it or can I fix it up so in this life that I'll not be punished in the next life? Well, beloved, there are two answers to it. One is there is no punishment in the next life for the Christian. The other one is there is terrible punishment for the sinner. Now, you'll notice that the Bible is clear on this.

We do not need to take the word of any man or any woman because none of us have ever been over in eternity. We must take what the Bible says about it, because the Bible is written by our blessed Lord through the fingers of men, and he expresses his own truths and his own thoughts in his own way. And therefore we look in his word to find out what his plans are for the next life. Now, let us notice, for instance, what happens to a person who is a Christian. A Christian is one who belongs to Christ.

That's the reason he takes Christ's name on him. He's married to Christ. He has trusted his soul and his life and his heart and his sins to the Lord Jesus Christ. And therefore he is called a

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Christian, one who has been saved by the Lord Jesus and been redeemed by the blood of the Lord Jesus and has received the eternal life that he gives. That's a Christian.

Now, that person never will be punished in the next life. And I'll show you why. The Scripture says, for instance, there is now no condemnation to them who are in Christ Jesus. That's Romans eight, verse one. Then again we read in colossians 2:13, having forgiven you all trespasses and again in Acts 13 38 and 39, through this man is preached unto you the forgiveness of sins, and by him all that believe are justified from all things from which he could not be justified by the law of Moses. Would you mind if I quote that verse again to you? Be it known unto you, therefore, men and brethren, that through this man Christ Jesus is preached unto you the forgiveness of sins, and by him all that believe are justified from all things from which you could not be justified by the law of Moses. Or perhaps you'd like to have it from the words of Isaiah, who said in Isaiah 44 22, I have blotted out thy transgressions as a thick cloud, and thy sins as a cloud return unto me, for I have redeemed thee. Then we read again in colossians two, verse 14. These words blotting out the handwriting of ordinances that was against us, which was contrary to us. He took it out of the way, nailing it to his cross. Well, if God did that, then he did it. I suppose you've sung many a time.

Jesus paid it all. All to him I owe sin had left a crimson stain, but he washed it white as snow. Well, if he did, then he did it. And the sins are blotted out all the sins from the cradle to the grave because none of them were committed when Jesus died for us, he was looking forward to seeing us in this day saw we would need a savior.

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And so he gave himself and his life to make us clean enough to go right into heaven as soon as we die. But there's another line of truth about this. If the Christian beloved is not a child of God I mean the professing Christian, when he dies do you think that punishment will make him a child of God? Now, you ask your own heart does any kind of punishment make a person a different person? Here's a judge who sends a man to the penitentiary for five years for forgery we'll say. When the man gets out, you think he wants to go and live with the judge and love the judge and wants to work for the judge and be near the judge all the time, why you know that isn't the case. No man that's been sent to the penitentiary by the judge falls in love with the judge. He doesn't want to be around the judge at all. The same thing is true when unsaved men die going to eternity. No matter how often they're punished or how long they're punished or how short they're punished.

That won't make them a child of God. That won't bring them into God's family. That won't make them fit to associate with the thrice Holy God and Christ and the Holy Spirit and Peter James and John and Elijah and Samuel and Mary and Martha. Why, he doesn't want to be with them at all. He has no love for them, even though he's been punished for 100 years or 1000 years.

Then again, God only takes his own children into heaven. He doesn't take sinners there, the devil's children. He only takes his own. So if a person dies unsaved, he hasn't walked with God, he hasn't loved the Lord, he hasn't been saved by grace. Do you think that after he's punished for a while then he becomes one of God's children and has the life of God put into him by faith in Christ Jesus?

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Why, immediately you say, no, that doesn't happen? Of course not. Which shows that the idea or the thought of being punished in order to get saved is utterly fallacious. Then again, all the guilt has to be taken away from a person before he can go to heaven. God doesn't take us into heaven because we're forgiven.

Now, here's a man who goes to the jail, penitentiary and he's there for ten years. When he comes out, he's just as guilty as when he went in. And everybody looks at him and says that's that murderer. He got off for good behavior. Or that's that highway robbery man.

He got out of penitentiary early because he was on good behavior. But he's a thief. He stole. He went out with a gun. He would have killed the fellow if he'd resisted him.

You know that's true. No amount of punishment removes the guilt. But our Lord Jesus has to take the guilt away from us. And it's only when we come and put our trust in him that he does it. For we read in Romans five, verse one there is therefore, now no condemnation.

Yes. And he also adds, therefore, being justified by faith we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ. Justified by faith in Christ Jesus. That's what justifies a person and justification means that the guilt is taken away. He doesn't go into heaven as just as a forgiven sinner.

He goes into heaven as a justified sinner so that the Savior becomes guilty of having committed the sins as well as taking the punishment for them. Then again, punishment doesn't change our

natures any. You know that. Suppose you punished a tiger, as I have seen done, and I told you about it one time on the radio, I saw a man whipping a tiger. And after he got through whipping the tiger and it was lying there fastened to the ground with ropes and the blood was oozing out of the cuts in the skin where he just terribly bruised that animal with his whip.

I said, George, after you get through whipping that tiger until he's afraid of you, will he love you? Will that put into his heart a desire to be with you and go around with you like a shepherd dog and be your obedient servant and just want to lie down with you in the home and go with you on your trips? Will he love you after you get through whipping him? Why, certainly not. He said he'll just be as wild an animal as he ever was.

He's just afraid of me. Well, beloved, what makes you think for a minute that if you go into eternity and get punished for a while then you'll have a different nature? You won't want to sin anymore. You won't want to be ungodly anymore. You won't want any of the devil's tricks anymore.

You'll just want a holy life and a Godly life. And you'll love the Lord and his people and you'll sing his praises. Beloved people don't get eternal life over in eternity. If you're going to get God's life, you have to get it now in this life, for there's none after death. You remember the rich man in hell?

He didn't want to get out and walk with God. All he wanted was a messenger to go to his brothers to keep them from coming where he was. That is all. He didn't love the Lord for sending

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him there. And you remember, too, how often he says that out there in that dark world there is weeping and gnashing of teeth.

They're still hating God out there in eternity after they've been punished for a long time. They have no love for the one that punishes them. And being punished never changes the nature of particle. Now beloved we might as well face it. No amount of punishment will change the nature and make one who lives without God care for God.

No amount of anything we do will change that person over there in eternity. Remember the Lord Jesus said if you die in your sins where I am, you cannot come. Now, another thing is true over there in eternity. If a person was punished for a while, do you think that that would give him the capacity to love the things of God? He'd have to know God, wouldn't he?

He'd have to know God's ways and think God's thoughts and love as God loves and walk with God according to God's will. But we don't learn that under punishment. Nobody over there in that dark eternity learns through punishment how to walk with God and love God and know God's plans and fit in with God's purposes. There is only hatred and wickedness, as you read in the last chapter of Revelation, he that is wicked, let him be more wicked still. That's what God says about eternal condition of the one that dies unsaved.

No, beloved, punishment comes to those who reject Christ. Do not care for the Bible, the word of God, the ways of God, the fellowship of God, the presence of God. They just don't want it. So they live from morning to night, seven days a week, as though there wasn't any God. Now, do

you think, beloved, that if that person dies and goes into a place of punishment of any kind, that he would be changed in his mind so that he would be suddenly transformed into a lovely Christian who loved holy things and would love to pray and sing God's praises?

And win others for Christ. Do you think he'd have God's mind? Well, not for a minute. Don't think that, beloved. It's utterly fallacious to even entertain such a thought. Now, here's what the scripture says in first John one seven, that the blood of Jesus Christ, his Son, cleanseth us from all sin.

So when the Christian dies, there's no sin against him. The slate has been wiped clean, the record has been blotted out and the sins have been put away in the depths of the sea or behind his back, or as far as the east is from the west. They're just obliterated, that's all, by the precious blood of Jesus. But that has to be done here on earth before we die, we read the Son of man hath power on earth to forgive sins. Then again, we read in John 5:24, he that heareth my word, that's the Bible, not what somebody else wrote, not what somebody else said, not what somebody else said is true, not somebody's commandments or theologies or philosophies.

He that heareth My word and believeth on him that sent me hath everlasting life. Now, notice this. These are the words of the Lord Jesus himself in John 5:24 hath everlasting life, and shall not come into judgment or condemnation. Same word, but is passed out of death into life, from being a dead sinner to being a live saint, a Christian, a believer. Now let me quote the verse again john 5:24 he that heareth my word. That's Christ's own message. Christ's own words in his Bible. And believeth on him that sent me. Sent him to save you.

Sent him to pay your debt. Sent him to take your place. Believeth on him that sent me hath, not will have. Not hopes to have. Hath everlasting life.

And shall not come into judgment or condemnation. But is passed out of death into life. Don't you see? That person doesn't go to a great white throne judgment at all. He doesn't go to any general judgment at all.

What would he go for? The sins are already put away. The sins are gone. He pleaded guilty to the Lord Jesus and to God the Father. The Holy Spirit led him to see that the Savior paid his debt, blotted out the sins, and so he committed himself to the Lord Jesus Christ to be his own child, his own redeemed one, his own pardoned one, and the sins are gone, and the page is left white and clear.

But the Savior said about the sinner who dies in his sins, and he hasn't been to the Savior. He hasn't had the sins blotted out that if you die in your sins, said Jesus, where I am, you cannot come. That's in John 8:21, if you die in your sins, where I am, you cannot come. Now, he didn't say, if you die in your sins and then get punished awhile, then you'll be fit to come? No, because punishment doesn't make us fit for anything.

The man that's let out of the prison quite often goes and does the same things over again, only worse. And you notice in the paper how often it read, he was an ex convict. An ex convict. Didn't punishment change him? No.

Didn't punishment transform him? No. Didn't punish him, make him want to be good and live a kind, good life? No, punishment doesn't change anybody. And if you die in your sins, said the Lord Jesus, since you didn't come to me to get rid of them, since you didn't want to walk with me or live for me, then I have to send you out into the outer dark where there is no hope and no light.

Then our God said in Ezekiel 18:32, I have no pleasure in the death of the sinner that dies. No pleasure at all in the death of the sinner that dies. Because when God's longsuffering ends, man's longsuffering begins. And there's no hope after death. There's no change in the soul after death.

It just goes to be punished, that's all. You see, salvation, beloved, is something God has to do. You can't do it. No matter how many times you pray or how much money you give or what kind of a character you have, you can't make yourself a child of God. You just can't do it.

And you remember in John 8:44, is it the Lord Jesus said, you are of your father the devil, and the deeds of your Father you will do? And he was talking to the scribes and Pharisees and the Sadducees, the religious people of his day. He wouldn't talk to a lot of robbers and murderers. He was talking to religious people and calling them children of the devil. Beloved, you can't get out of that family, into God's family, by anything you do, and punishment won't do it for you.

So the Lord said, those who die in their sins have no hope. We find in Ephesians two, verse twelve, no hope without God, without Christ and without hope in the world. Then again we read remember in the fourth chapter first Thessalonians about those who die, the Christians. We

sorrow not as others who have no hope. Have you noticed that Christians don't sorrow like others who have no hope.

For when we stand at the graveside and lay away a precious one who has died in Christ saved by grace, a born again believer who has received the gift of eternal life and proved it in his life, when we stand beside that casket, why, it isn't a hopeless thing at all. For some day there will be a reuniting, a reunion, and all that are in their grave shall come forth. And these who have been saved by grace will come forth to the resurrection of life to walk with God in their bodies and live with Christ in their bodies. But the others will be kept for the great white throne judgment and the lake of fire. They have no hope, and God doesn't want that.

Then you remember the parable in Matthew 13:42 about the tares that are burned in the fire. You see how hopeless that situation is. They lived as tares. They pretended to be wheat, and they look quite like wheat, and they grow in among the wheat. They belong to the church.

And they went to church and they acted as church people act. But they weren't wheat at all. They were tares. Tares are imitation wheat. In fact, farmers call it cheat because it grows up and looks just like a wheat field.

And yet it may be in that great big field only 40% of it is wheat, and 60% of it is cheat or tares. It looks like wheat, but it isn't. There's no wheat grain in the head. Well, what is done with the tares? They were thrown in the furnace of fire.

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We don't read that they were given another chance afterwards to become wheat. Tares can't become wheat. Their very nature is wrong. Their nature is the nature of tares, not the nature of wheat.

And you could cultivate it or water it or do anything to it or even whip it if you wish. You'd never get any wheat out of it. So if you belong to those who are professing Christians but you've never known God, never been to Christ for forgiveness and salvation and redemption, never made him your own, why, no amount of punishment, beloved, will make that come about in your life. None at all. Tares cannot be made into wheat by thrashing or punishing or burning or anything else.

The nature is wrong. So in this life, before we die, we go to the Lord Jesus to get eternal life from him. So the Lord Jesus said, you will not come unto me that you might have life. Well, people will come to anything else. All sorts of religions of which there are 232 different kinds in the United States.

People go to all of those and miss going to the Savior himself. When we make him our own and trust in him for our sole salvation, he gives us the gift of eternal life. You remember also in the end of the 25th chapter of Matthew there's the judgment of the sheep and the goats. Now, it says that those on the left hand the goats, these shall go away into everlasting punishment. He didn't say, These will be going away into some punishment for a while and then they'll be changed into sheep.

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After they're whipped for a while and punished a while, then they'll find they have a sheep's nature and they don't have a goat nature anymore. No, that's just foolishness. There's no such thing as that happened, beloved. If we die as goats, we stay that way. There's no chance in the next life to be changed into sheep.

And our blessed Lord wants us to be his sheep. So when you come and trust your soul to him, you're born again. You're out of the goat family, into the sheep family, out of the devil's family, into God's family. And you remember also the case of the man in the 22nd chapter of Matthew. He came in not having on a wedding garment.

Now, the Lord didn't say to the angels, bind him hand and foot and cast him into outer darkness and let him suffer there until he gets sense enough to get the kind of a garment I want him to. No, nothing like that. He won't have that. He just will not. Beloved, don't you think for one moment that the blessed God of heaven is going to change you after you die, because he isn't going to do it.

There isn't a word in the Bible that says God will ever do it. And those who tell you different didn't get out of the Bible. They got it from commandments of men. And the committees got together and decided certain things about eternity and palmed off on you as though it was from God. And it isn't God at all, absolutely not.

The only thing we have to go by is God's precious word, and we never read there anyplace that this will take place. Now in Revelation, chapter 20 at verse 15, read that whosoever was not

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found written in the book of life was cast into the lake of fire. Now, we never read that there's any resurrection out of the lake of fire. Nobody gets out, nobody comes back, nobody has changed, nobody is transformed there into Christians. Nobody there is made fit for heaven because they've been there for a while.

No, that's a man's idea. That isn't in the Bible, that isn't from God, and it isn't common sense anyway. Here's a man who lives for 50, 60, 70 years with no God in his life except he goes through some religious exercises to calm his own conscience, but he doesn't go and plead guilty to God. He doesn't take the place of being a lost sinner and believe God's word and accept Jesus Christ as the Lord of his life and the Savior of his soul. What makes him think that after he goes out into eternity and suffers a while, then he'll become a wonderful Christian, then he'll love the Lord, and then he'll walk with God, then he'll please the Savior, and then he'll be fit for the company and the fellowship of God.

Beloved, that's just wishful thinking, that's all. That isn't in the Bible anywhere, and you know it's so. No amount of training a wild animal will make it your pet. And no amount of good works on the part of anybody outside of your family will bring that one into your family. No matter how the person lives or serves you or does things for you that won't make him love you.

That won't make him your servant. That won't make him your child. That won't bring him into your family and give him your life so that if you died he'd inherit part of your property. It doesn't come that way, beloved, and God doesn't do that either.

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You must be born again, as the Lord Jesus said, and by the new birth you accept Jesus Christ. He accepts you and gives you the gift of eternal life, makes you a child of God. As we read in Galatians, we become children of God by faith in Christ Jesus. And when you fall in love with that lovely Savior and trust Him right away, he makes you his child. And all the sins are gone and gone forever.

Now, beloved, let me tell you this too, but it might help. There are many kinds of things that are wrong in the life. There are trespasses and transgressions and iniquities that's evil thoughts and offenses and sins. And all of these are different aspects of things that are contrary to God's will and God's way. Now, somehow or other the heart loves to do wrong.

Haven't you noticed that you never have to teach a child to do wrong? The child does drugs wrong. Naturally, he may have to learn some special things that are wrong. He may have to learn some special sins. But you just leave the child alone and he'll do things that are wrong all the time, and you know it.

Now, what will happen to change a child from loving things that are wrong to loving things that are right? Well, only this new birth. Now, do you think punishment would do it? Well, haven't you punished your child? And all he did was to make him more careful about not getting caught the next time.

You didn't make him love righteousness because you punished him for being wicked. Neither do men do that in the penitentiaries they're put in there. And being punished there doesn't make

them lovers of things that are good. It only makes them more careful about getting caught. And you know that's true.

And pride is just one of the wonderful sins of the Bible that God punishes terribly. And one person does quit this kind of habit. And that one, why, is as proud of it as he can be. He cleaned himself up. Well, the Bible tells us about that in the 12th chapter of Matthew.

The evil spirit goes out of a man and then he goes through dry places seeking rest and finding none. Then he comes back to that man and brings with him seven other spirits more wicked than himself. And when he comes back, he finds the house empty, swept and garnished. The man has cleaned up himself, and he's as proud of it as he can be. But he still belongs to the devil.

It's still the devil's house, even though he has cleaned house. Now, if he dies that way, do you think that over an eternity after he's whipped a while and punished a while, then he'll be a wonderful lover of the Lord, a wonderful Christian, a real saved person? Do you think so? No, beloved, not for a minute. It takes something besides punishment to make a person fit for heaven.

And that punishment is the loving kindness of our God to Christ Jesus. He made him to be sin for us, his kindness to Christ in making him the sovereign ruler, the chief of heaven, the Lord of glory. And up there in heaven, he has millions of people surrounding him today who learned to love him down here and believe in him because he gave his life for us. He suffered for sins, the just, for the unjust that he might bring us to God. And you have to do it, beloved, before you die.

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Because if you do it in the next life, you can't do it. You may try, but there's no Savior there to help you. No Holy Spirit, no Bible, no Christians, no church. You can't get help there. It has to be done now.

And I trust that each one of you who's listening will fall in love with Christ Jesus. Trust him with your soul. Belong to him. And then you'll know that to be absent from the body is to be prepared present with the Lord.