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Last week I mentioned a point that Tony Campolo made while speaking to a group of Adventist Pastors.

He said: “I believe that when a Christian dies, they go straight to Heaven. You believe that when you die, you sleep in the grave until the Resurrection, and that the next thing you know Jesus will be here to take you to Heaven. What’s the difference? For both of us it will feel the same!”

In many ways, He has a point. Why is it such a big deal? There are many fine Christians on both sides of this issue. And, there are well-known Biblical Scholars on both sides.

Is our belief on this just fluff, or does it really matter? What are the real issues?

There is much more on this than we can cover in just a sermon or two. If you wish to study this further, I would recommend a book titled [The Fire that Consumes](#) (3rd Edition) by Edward W. Fudge. Mr. Fudge is an Evangelical Christian and his story is told in the movie, [Hell and Mr. Fudge](#).

He looks at every passage of Scripture that speaks about the soul, death, and eternal destruction.

In the foreword to this book, Richard Bauckham writes:

Fudge’s work is very focused. He himself puts it thus: “One issue alone divides traditionalists and conditionalists:

Traditionalist believe that your soul is immortal and you go right to heaven or to hell when you die. Conditionalists do not believe your soul is immortal and that you will be resurrected to your eternal destiny, eternity in Heaven or complete destruction.

“One issue alone divides traditionalists and conditionalists: Does Scripture teach that God will make the wicked immortal, to suffer unending conscious torment in hell? Or does the Bible teach that the wicked will finally and truly die, perish, and become extinct forever, through a destructive process that encompasses whatever degree and duration of conscious torment God might sovereignly and justly impose in each individual case?”¹

Consider this scenario for a moment.

If a person kidnaped someone and tortured them for a week before he killed them, he would be considered a monster, deserving of death.

We would be especially horrified if we found out he had done this multiple times before being caught.

And then imagine our horror if we found out this person was a doctor, and not only tortured them for a week, but kept reviving them – keeping them on life support – so he could keep on torturing them.

In our penal system, he would probably get the death sentence, but we wouldn’t kill him in the same way he killed his victims. Why?

Because if we administered justice this way, we would become monsters too.

There are many who believe that God will keep people alive in hell forever to torture them for their sinful lives here on earth. This is in fact, the dominant belief in many Christian circles.

It is what fueled the Inquisitions during the Dark Ages. If people would be tortured for eternity for not following God, it would almost justify torturing them for a short time here on earth if it could save them from that eternity.

There is no other “Christian” doctrine that has turned more people away from God than this one. From a human perspective it would be a great injustice to tormenting someone for eternity for a lifetime of mistakes.

Is this what the Bible teaches? How does this support the statement that the Apostle John made that *God is Love*? ([1 John 4:16](#))

What is really at stake in this issue, is God’s character and who we will become if we follow Him.

A Living Soul

Let’s start by looking at the Biblical account of the creation of man:

Then the LORD God formed the man from the dust of the ground. He breathed the breath of life into the man’s nostrils, and the man became a living person. ([Genesis 2:7](#), NLT)

Notice a couple of things here.

First, God starts with dirt, personally shapes it into a person, and then breathes life into it. It is the breath of life that makes the difference between it being dead and alive – it is the life-giving spark.

The Hebrew word used here is used many other places in Scripture. It is often translated as breath, as it is here. In other places it may be translated as spirit, as in Spirit of God. What ever this is, it originates with God. People get life from God. Without it, a person ceases to exist.

Second, when God breathed into the pile of dirt He had personally sculptured into human, it became a *living person*. The Hebrew word that is translated here as person is often translated as *soul* and shows up in some translations as *living soul*.

This term is not only used to designate human life. The same Hebrew word is translated as *living things* or *living creatures* in [Genesis 1:21 & 24](#) and [Genesis 2:19](#).

If you look at a concordance for instances where this Hebrew word – often translated as *soul* – is used, you will find over 700 references. These describe a *soul* (a person) that is hungry, thirsty, tired, angry – a regular person.

It even tells us a soul can die.

“... And this is my rule: The person [soul] who sins is the one who will die.” ([Ezekiel 18:4](#), NLT)

This simply describes a complete, living person that can die – not some mystical part of a person that lives forever.

Towards the end of the book of Ecclesiastes, we find this passage:

Yes, remember your Creator now while you are young, before the silver cord of life snaps and the golden bowl is broken. Don't wait until the water jar is smashed at the spring and the pulley is broken at the well. For then the dust will return to the earth, and the spirit will return to God who gave it. ([Ecclesiastes 12:6-7](#), NLT)

Here it expresses the opposite process of what we saw in Genesis 2. In death, the body returns to dust and the spirit (same word as breath of God) – the life-giving spark that makes a person alive – returns to God. There is no mention of the soul going anywhere.

Nowhere in the Old Testament does it even hint at the soul as a separate entity that lives on after the body dies. It does not have natural immortality – it is simply a word that – in most instances – describes a whole person, while sometimes referring to the core of a person's identity.

The idea of a soul's immortality came from Greek Philosophers, especially Plato (420-347 BC) who was roughly a contemporary of Malachi in the Old Testament. Plato believed the soul existed before it inhabited a body and was eternal in nature. It was imprisoned in a body as punishment for faults committed in a previous incarnation. When people think they are learning, the soul is really recalling something it has known from a previous existence.²

This had become common thinking in the non-Jewish world by the time of Christ. It started creeping into Christian circles in the early 2nd century as Christian thought leaders used it to help explain the resurrection. By the 4th century it was commonly believed in most Christian circles.

The First Lie

Let's go back to the creation story. After creation was finished, we find only one stated rule:

"You may freely eat the fruit of every tree in the garden – except the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. If you eat its fruit, you are sure to die." ([Genesis 2:16-17](#), NLT)

There was one tree that was off limits, that's it. They just needed to trust God on this and obey Him. Failure to do so would result in their death.

We have no idea how much time went by from the end of [Genesis 2](#) to the beginning of [Genesis 3](#). The way it's written, it almost seems like a day or two later, but it could have been years. I kind of hope they had a few years of peace there in the garden before they had to leave it.

However, we do know it didn't last.

The serpent was the shrewdest of all the wild animals the LORD God had made. One day he asked the woman, "Did God really say you must not eat the fruit from any of the trees in the garden?"

Notice that it wasn't a direct attack, it was a question. Implied in the question was this thought – *God sure is unreasonable to hold something back from you.*

"Of course we may eat fruit from the trees in the garden," the woman replied. "It's only the fruit from the tree in the middle of the garden that we are not allowed to eat. God said, 'You must not eat it or even touch it; if you do, you will die.'"

The woman answered like she is trying to defend God. She would have been better off not engaging at all. We never win when we engage Satan on our own. He had a ready answer:

"You won't die!" the serpent replied to the woman. "God knows that your eyes will be opened as soon as you eat it, and you will be like God, knowing both good and evil." ([Genesis 3:1-5](#), NLT)

The first lie – which has been repeated countless times since then – was: You're not really going to die, God is holding out on you so you can't really trust Him.

We know what happened next, both Eve and Adam ate the fruit and there was an immediate transformation in their thought process and they became afraid of God, wanting to avoid Him. This is what sin always does to us.

But God came looking for them – just like He does for all of us. He gently told them the consequences of their action while providing a beautiful promise that things would be set right again.

And then they experienced death for the first time as some animals were sacrificed and their skins used as clothing.

Chapter 3 ends with this exchange:

Then the LORD God said, “Look, the human beings have become like us, knowing both good and evil. What if they reach out, take fruit from the tree of life, and eat it? Then they will live forever!” So the LORD God banished them from the Garden of Eden ... (Genesis 3:22-23, NLT)

Their access to the tree of life was blocked so they would not become immortal and live forever in their sinfulness.

Where does Immortality Come From?

Jump ahead a bunch of years to the time that God, in the form of Jesus, was here on this earth. He shared a thought that has become one of the most loved and familiar passages in the Bible:

“For this is how God loved the world: He gave his one and only Son, so that everyone who believes in him will not perish but have eternal life.” (John 3:16, NLT)

Jesus said God will give eternal life – immortality – to those who believe in Him. Then He draws an important contrast. Those who don’t believe will perish.

What does perish mean?

It means that something that was here, in this case life, has been destroyed.

Notice this is the opposite of eternal life, or immortality. Jesus doesn’t give eternal life to everyone with some in Heaven and others in Hell.

It is immortality or destruction.

In the book of Romans, after an extensive discussion of sin and salvation, Paul paints the same picture:

For the wages of sin is death, but the free gift of God is eternal life through Christ Jesus our Lord. (Romans 6:23, NLT)

God gives eternal life – immortality – to those who allow Jesus to control their lives. Apart from this gift, the natural consequence is death – to perish as Jesus said.

To a young man he mentored, Paul wrote:

So never be ashamed to tell others about our Lord ... For God saved us and called us to live a holy life. He did this, not because we deserved it, but because that was his plan from before the beginning of time – to show us his grace through Christ Jesus. And now he has made all of this

plain to us by the appearing of Christ Jesus, our Savior. He broke the power of death and illuminated the way to life and immortality through the Good News. (2 Timothy 1:8-10, NLT)

Jesus lights the path to finding life and immortality – this is the essence of the Gospel. Early in the book of Romans, speaking about the judgement, Paul wrote:

He will judge everyone according to what they have done. He will give eternal life to those who keep on doing good, seeking after the glory and honor and immortality that God offers. (Romans 2:6-7, NLT)

Immortality must be pursued, he said. It is pursued by coming to God – the only One Who has it according to Paul, who wrote:

But you, man of God ... pursue righteousness, godliness, faith, love, endurance, and gentleness. Fight the good fight of the faith. Take hold of eternal life to which you were called and about which you have made a good confession in the presence of many witnesses ... God will bring this about in his own time. He is the blessed and only Sovereign, the King of kings, and the Lord of lords, who alone is immortal and who lives in unapproachable light ... (1 Timothy 6:11-15, CSB)

God is the only natural, immortal One. He gives immortality as a gift to those who believe in and follow Him. Jesus said:

“I tell you the truth, those who listen to my message and believe in God who sent me have eternal life. They will never be condemned for their sins, but they have already passed from death into life.” (John 5:24, NLT)

Why is All of This Important?

So how did we end up with the idea that people will be tortured in hell throughout eternity.

A lot depends on the direction of your reasoning. The primary Biblical passage that alludes to everlasting punishment is found in [Revelation 20](#).

If you already believe the soul is immortal, as the Greek philosophers did, everlasting punishment – as is apparently taught in [Revelation 20](#) – could make sense. Although the picture it paints of God, in my estimation, a huge problem.

If you recognize the Bible does not teach that our souls are immortal and that the overwhelming majority of passages that speak of punishment for the wicked do so in terms of destruction; then we must interpret this symbolic passage in Revelation according to what the rest of the Bible teaches.

We don't have time to go through this today, we will tackle it next week.

While we don't know exactly how the final destruction of sin will go down; we can see that every picture the Bible paints about it is messy and painful.

It's safe to say it won't be pleasant for anyone – for those who experience it, those who observe it, or God. There is a reason Revelation tells us that when it is over, God *will wipe away our tears* ([Revelation 21:4](#)).

Everything boils down to this:

And this is what God has testified: He has given us eternal life, and this life is in his Son. Whoever has the Son has life; whoever does not have God's Son does not have life. (1 John 5:11-12, NLT)

The question is: Where do you stand?

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1. [The Fire that Consumes](#) – 3rd Edition, Edward W. Fudge, Foreword to the 3rd Edition.
 2. IBID, Chapter 3, *Souls: Immortal or Otherwise*.

Notes

Text you find in [this color](#) is a link to more information. It may take you to the Bible verse in context and/or in several different translations utilizing [BibleGateway.com](#). In some cases, it may take you to a website where there is additional information. And, it may take you to a PDF copy of previous sermons in this series.

The Fire that Consumes

One of the **best books written** on the topic of **hell and eternal destruction** is [The Fire that Consumes – 3rd Edition](#), Edward W. Fudge, © 2011, published by Cascade Books. To purchase a hard copy of this book, [click here](#). It's also available as an e-book – for Apple Books, [click here](#); for Kindle Books, [click here](#); or for Nook Books, [click here](#).

Previous Messages in this Series (click on the title to download it)

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- May 16, 2020 – *Symptom or Disease?* ([click here](#) to watch it on YouTube)
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- Aug. 15, 2020 – *Love Like Jesus!* ([click here](#) to watch it on YouTube)
- Aug. 22, 2020 – *Distracted or Focused?* ([click here](#) to watch it on YouTube)

Scripture References

Genesis 2:4-9 (NLT): *This is the account of the creation of the heavens and the earth.*

When the LORD God made the earth and the heavens, ⁵ neither wild plants nor grains were growing on the earth. For the LORD God had not yet sent rain to water the earth, and there were no people to cultivate the soil. ⁶ Instead, springs came up from the ground and watered all the

land. ⁷ Then the LORD God formed the man from the dust of the ground. He breathed the breath of life into the man's nostrils, and the man became a living person.

⁸ Then the LORD God planted a garden in Eden in the east, and there he placed the man he had made. ⁹ The LORD God made all sorts of trees grow up from the ground – trees that were beautiful and that produced delicious fruit. In the middle of the garden he placed the tree of life and the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. (Genesis 2:4-9, NLT)

Genesis 2:15-17 (NLT): The LORD God placed the man in the Garden of Eden to tend and watch over it. ¹⁶ But the LORD God warned him, "You may freely eat the fruit of every tree in the garden – ¹⁷ except the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. If you eat its fruit, you are sure to die." (Genesis 2:15-17, NLT)

Genesis 3:1-24 (NLT): The serpent was the shrewdest of all the wild animals the LORD God had made. One day he asked the woman, "Did God really say you must not eat the fruit from any of the trees in the garden?"

² "Of course we may eat fruit from the trees in the garden," the woman replied. ³ "It's only the fruit from the tree in the middle of the garden that we are not allowed to eat. God said, 'You must not eat it or even touch it; if you do, you will die.'"

⁴ "You won't die!" the serpent replied to the woman. ⁵ "God knows that your eyes will be opened as soon as you eat it, and you will be like God, knowing both good and evil."

⁶ The woman was convinced. She saw that the tree was beautiful and its fruit looked delicious, and she wanted the wisdom it would give her. So she took some of the fruit and ate it. Then she gave some to her husband, who was with her, and he ate it, too. ⁷ At that moment their eyes were opened, and they suddenly felt shame at their nakedness. So they sewed fig leaves together to cover themselves.

⁸ When the cool evening breezes were blowing, the man and his wife heard the LORD God walking about in the garden. So they hid from the LORD God among the trees. ⁹ Then the LORD God called to the man, "Where are you?"

¹⁰ He replied, "I heard you walking in the garden, so I hid. I was afraid because I was naked."

¹¹ "Who told you that you were naked?" the LORD God asked. "Have you eaten from the tree whose fruit I commanded you not to eat?"

¹² The man replied, "It was the woman you gave me who gave me the fruit, and I ate it."

¹³ Then the LORD God asked the woman, "What have you done?"

"The serpent deceived me," she replied. "That's why I ate it."

¹⁴ Then the LORD God said to the serpent,

“Because you have done this, you are cursed more than all animals, domestic and wild. You will crawl on your belly, groveling in the dust as long as you live. ¹⁵ And I will cause hostility between you and the woman, and between your offspring and her offspring. He will strike your head, and you will strike his heel.”

¹⁶ Then he said to the woman,

“I will sharpen the pain of your pregnancy, and in pain you will give birth. And you will desire to control your husband, but he will rule over you.”

¹⁷ And to the man he said,

“Since you listened to your wife and ate from the tree whose fruit I commanded you not to eat, the ground is cursed because of you. All your life you will struggle to scratch a living from it. ¹⁸ It will grow thorns and thistles for you, though you will eat of its grains. ¹⁹ By the sweat of your brow will you have food to eat until you return to the ground from which you were made. For you were made from dust, and to dust you will return.”

²⁰ Then the man – Adam – named his wife Eve, because she would be the mother of all who live. ²¹ And the LORD God made clothing from animal skins for Adam and his wife.

²² Then the LORD God said, “Look, the human beings have become like us, knowing both good and evil. What if they reach out, take fruit from the tree of life, and eat it? Then they will live forever!” ²³ So the LORD God banished them from the Garden of Eden, and he sent Adam out to cultivate the ground from which he had been made. ²⁴ After sending them out, the LORD God stationed mighty cherubim to the east of the Garden of Eden. And he placed a flaming sword that flashed back and forth to guard the way to the tree of life. (**Genesis 3:1-24**, NLT)

Genesis 7:17-22 (CSB): *The flood continued for forty days on the earth; the water increased and lifted up the ark so that it rose above the earth. ¹⁸ The water surged and increased greatly on the earth, and the ark floated on the surface of the water. ¹⁹ Then the water surged even higher on the earth, and all the high mountains under the whole sky were covered. ²⁰ The mountains were covered as the water surged above them more than twenty feet. ²¹ Every creature perished—those that crawl on the earth, birds, livestock, wildlife, and those that swarm on the earth, as well as all mankind. ²² Everything with the breath of the spirit of life in its nostrils – everything on dry land died. (**Genesis 7:17-22**, CSB)*

Psalms 139 (NLT): *O LORD, you have examined my heart and know everything about me. ² You know when I sit down or stand up. You know my thoughts even when I’m far away. ³ You see me when I travel and when I rest at home. You know everything I do. ⁴ You know what I am going to say even before I say it, LORD. ⁵ You go before me and follow me. You place your hand of blessing on my head. ⁶ Such knowledge is too wonderful for me, too great for me to understand! ⁷ I can never escape from your Spirit! I can never get away from your presence! ⁸ If I go up to heaven, you are there; if I go down to the grave, you are there. ⁹ If I ride the wings of the*

morning, if I dwell by the farthest oceans, ¹⁰ even there your hand will guide me, and your strength will support me. ¹¹ I could ask the darkness to hide me and the light around me to become night – ¹² but even in darkness I cannot hide from you. To you the night shines as bright as day. Darkness and light are the same to you.

¹³ You made all the delicate, inner parts of my body and knit me together in my mother's womb.

¹⁴ Thank you for making me so wonderfully complex! Your workmanship is marvelous – how well I know it. ¹⁵ You watched me as I was being formed in utter seclusion, as I was woven together in the dark of the womb. ¹⁶ You saw me before I was born. Every day of my life was recorded in your book. Every moment was laid out before a single day had passed.

¹⁷ How precious are your thoughts about me, O God. They cannot be numbered! ¹⁸ I can't even count them; they outnumber the grains of sand! And when I wake up, you are still with me!

¹⁹ O God, if only you would destroy the wicked! Get out of my life, you murderers! ²⁰ They blaspheme you; your enemies misuse your name. ²¹ O LORD, shouldn't I hate those who hate you? Shouldn't I despise those who oppose you? ²² Yes, I hate them with total hatred, for your enemies are my enemies.

²³ Search me, O God, and know my heart; test me and know my anxious thoughts. ²⁴ Point out anything in me that offends you, and lead me along the path of everlasting life.

(Psalm 139, NLT)

Proverbs 3:5-12 (NIV): Trust in the LORD with all your heart and lean not on your own understanding; ⁶ in all your ways submit to him, and he will make your paths straight.

⁷ Do not be wise in your own eyes; fear the LORD and shun evil. ⁸ This will bring health to your body and nourishment to your bones.

⁹ Honor the LORD with your wealth, with the firstfruits of all your crops; ¹⁰ then your barns will be filled to overflowing, and your vats will brim over with new wine.

¹¹ My son, do not despise the LORD's discipline, and do not resent his rebuke, ¹² because the LORD disciplines those he loves, as a father the son he delights in. (Proverbs 3:5-12, NIV)

Ecclesiastes 9:3-10 (NLT): It seems so wrong that everyone under the sun suffers the same fate. Already twisted by evil, people choose their own mad course, for they have no hope. There is nothing ahead but death anyway. ⁴ There is hope only for the living. As they say, "It's better to be a live dog than a dead lion!"

⁵ The living at least know they will die, but the dead know nothing. They have no further reward, nor are they remembered. ⁶ Whatever they did in their lifetime – loving, hating, envying – is all long gone. They no longer play a part in anything here on earth. ⁷ So go ahead. Eat your food with joy, and drink your wine with a happy heart, for God approves of this! ⁸ Wear fine clothes, with a splash of cologne!

⁹ Live happily with the woman you love through all the meaningless days of life that God has given you under the sun. The wife God gives you is your reward for all your earthly toil. ¹⁰ Whatever you do, do well. For when you go to the grave, there will be no work or planning or knowledge or wisdom. (Ecclesiastes 9:3-10, NLT)

Ecclesiastes 12:6-7 (NLT): Yes, remember your Creator now while you are young, before the silver cord of life snaps and the golden bowl is broken. Don't wait until the water jar is smashed at the spring and the pulley is broken at the well. ⁷ For then the dust will return to the earth, and the spirit will return to God who gave it. (Ecclesiastes 12:6-7, NLT)

Ezekiel 18:1-4 (NLT): Then another message came to me from the LORD: ² "Why do you quote this proverb concerning the land of Israel: 'The parents have eaten sour grapes, but their children's mouths pucker at the taste'? ³ As surely as I live, says the Sovereign LORD, you will not quote this proverb anymore in Israel. ⁴ For all people are mine to judge – both parents and children alike. And this is my rule: *The person [soul] who sins is the one who will die.*" (Ezekiel 18:1-4, NLT)

Ezekiel 18:19-22 (NLT): "'What?' you ask. 'Doesn't the child pay for the parent's sins?' No! For if the child does what is just and right and keeps my decrees, that child will surely live. ²⁰ *The person [soul] who sins is the one who will die. The child will not be punished for the parent's sins, and the parent will not be punished for the child's sins. Righteous people will be rewarded for their own righteous behavior, and wicked people will be punished for their own wickedness.* ²¹ But if wicked people turn away from all their sins and begin to obey my decrees and do what is just and right, they will surely live and not die. ²² All their past sins will be forgotten, and they will live because of the righteous things they have done." (Ezekiel 18:19-22, NLT)

Matthew 10:28-30 (NLT): "Don't be afraid of those who want to kill your body; they cannot touch your soul. Fear only God, who can destroy both soul and body in hell. ²⁹ What is the price of two sparrows – one copper coin? But not a single sparrow can fall to the ground without your Father knowing it. ³⁰ And the very hairs on your head are all numbered. (Matthew 10:28-30, NLT)

Luke 12:4-5 (NLT): "Dear friends, don't be afraid of those who want to kill your body; they cannot do any more to you after that. ⁵ But I'll tell you whom to fear. Fear God, who has the power to kill you and then throw you into hell.^[a] Yes, he's the one to fear." (Luke 12:4-5, NLT)

John 3:14-17 (NLT): And as Moses lifted up the bronze snake on a pole in the wilderness, so the Son of Man must be lifted up, ¹⁵ so that everyone who believes in him will have eternal life.

¹⁶ "For this is how God loved the world: He gave his one and only Son, so that everyone who believes in him will not perish but have eternal life. ¹⁷ God sent his Son into the world not to judge the world, but to save the world through him. (John 3:14-17, NLT)

John 3:31-36 (NLT): "He has come from above and is greater than anyone else. We are of the earth, and we speak of earthly things, but he has come from heaven and is greater than anyone

else. ³² He testifies about what he has seen and heard, but how few believe what he tells them! ³³ Anyone who accepts his testimony can affirm that God is true. ³⁴ For he is sent by God. He speaks God's words, for God gives him the Spirit without limit. ³⁵ The Father loves his Son and has put everything into his hands. ³⁶ And anyone who believes in God's Son has eternal life. Anyone who doesn't obey the Son will never experience eternal life but remains under God's angry judgment." (John 3:31-36, NLT)

John 5:19-30 (NLT): So Jesus explained, "I tell you the truth, the Son can do nothing by himself. He does only what he sees the Father doing. Whatever the Father does, the Son also does. ²⁰ For the Father loves the Son and shows him everything he is doing. In fact, the Father will show him how to do even greater works than healing this man. Then you will truly be astonished. ²¹ For just as the Father gives life to those he raises from the dead, so the Son gives life to anyone he wants. ²² In addition, the Father judges no one. Instead, he has given the Son absolute authority to judge, ²³ so that everyone will honor the Son, just as they honor the Father. Anyone who does not honor the Son is certainly not honoring the Father who sent him.

²⁴ "I tell you the truth, those who listen to my message and believe in God who sent me have eternal life. They will never be condemned for their sins, but they have already passed from death into life.

²⁵ "And I assure you that the time is coming, indeed it's here now, when the dead will hear my voice – the voice of the Son of God. And those who listen will live. ²⁶ The Father has life in himself, and he has granted that same life-giving power to his Son. ²⁷ And he has given him authority to judge everyone because he is the Son of Man. ²⁸ Don't be so surprised! Indeed, the time is coming when all the dead in their graves will hear the voice of God's Son, ²⁹ and they will rise again. Those who have done good will rise to experience eternal life, and those who have continued in evil will rise to experience judgment. ³⁰ I can do nothing on my own. I judge as God tells me. Therefore, my judgment is just, because I carry out the will of the one who sent me, not my own will." (John 5:19-30, NLT)

Romans 2:5-16 (NLT): But because you are stubborn and refuse to turn from your sin, you are storing up terrible punishment for yourself. For a day of anger is coming, when God's righteous judgment will be revealed. ⁶ He will judge everyone according to what they have done. ⁷ He will give eternal life to those who keep on doing good, seeking after the glory and honor and immortality that God offers. ⁸ But he will pour out his anger and wrath on those who live for themselves, who refuse to obey the truth and instead live lives of wickedness. ⁹ There will be trouble and calamity for everyone who keeps on doing what is evil – for the Jew first and also for the Gentile. ¹⁰ But there will be glory and honor and peace from God for all who do good – for the Jew first and also for the Gentile. ¹¹ For God does not show favoritism.

¹² When the Gentiles sin, they will be destroyed, even though they never had God's written law. And the Jews, who do have God's law, will be judged by that law when they fail to obey it. ¹³ For

merely listening to the law doesn't make us right with God. It is obeying the law that makes us right in his sight. ¹⁴ Even Gentiles, who do not have God's written law, show that they know his law when they instinctively obey it, even without having heard it. ¹⁵ They demonstrate that God's law is written in their hearts, for their own conscience and thoughts either accuse them or tell them they are doing right. ¹⁶ And this is the message I proclaim – that the day is coming when God, through Christ Jesus, will judge everyone's secret life. (**Romans 2:5-16**, NLT)

Romans 6:20-23 (NLT): When you were slaves to sin, you were free from the obligation to do right. ²¹ And what was the result? You are now ashamed of the things you used to do, things that end in eternal doom. ²² But now you are free from the power of sin and have become slaves of God. Now you do those things that lead to holiness and result in eternal life. ²³ For the wages of sin is death, but the free gift of God is eternal life through Christ Jesus our Lord. (**Romans 6:20-23**, NLT)

Romans 12:1-2 (NLT): And so, dear brothers and sisters, I plead with you to give your bodies to God because of all he has done for you. Let them be a living and holy sacrifice – the kind he will find acceptable. This is truly the way to worship him. ² Don't copy the behavior and customs of this world, but let God transform you into a new person by changing the way you think. Then you will learn to know God's will for you, which is good and pleasing and perfect. (**Romans 12:1-2**, NLT)

1 Corinthians 15:51-58 (CSB): Listen, I am telling you a mystery: We will not all fall asleep, but we will all be changed, ⁵² in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trumpet. For the trumpet will sound, and the dead will be raised incorruptible, and we will be changed. ⁵³ For this corruptible body must be clothed with incorruptibility, and this mortal body must be clothed with immortality. ⁵⁴ When this corruptible body is clothed with incorruptibility, and this mortal body is clothed with immortality, then the saying that is written will take place:

Death has been swallowed up in victory. (Isaiah 25:8) ⁵⁵ Where, death, is your victory? Where, death, is your sting? (Hosea 13:14)

⁵⁶ The sting of death is sin, and the power of sin is the law. ⁵⁷ But thanks be to God, who gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ!

⁵⁸ Therefore, my dear brothers and sisters, be steadfast, immovable, always excelling in the Lord's work, because you know that your labor in the Lord is not in vain.

(**1 Corinthians 15:51-58**, CSB)

1 Thessalonians 4:13-18 (NLT): And now, dear brothers and sisters, we want you to know what will happen to the believers who have died so you will not grieve like people who have no hope. ¹⁴ For since we believe that Jesus died and was raised to life again, we also believe that when Jesus returns, God will bring back with him the believers who have died.

¹⁵ We tell you this directly from the Lord: We who are still living when the Lord returns will not meet him ahead of those who have died. ¹⁶ For the Lord himself will come down from heaven

with a commanding shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trumpet call of God. First, the believers who have died will rise from their graves. ¹⁷ Then, together with them, we who are still alive and remain on the earth will be caught up in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air. Then we will be with the Lord forever. ¹⁸ So encourage each other with these words.

(1 Thessalonians 4:13-18, NLT)

1 Timothy 6:11-16 (CSB): *But you, man of God, flee from these things, and pursue righteousness, godliness, faith, love, endurance, and gentleness. ¹² Fight the good fight of the faith. Take hold of eternal life to which you were called and about which you have made a good confession in the presence of many witnesses. ¹³ In the presence of God, who gives life to all, and of Christ Jesus, who gave a good confession before Pontius Pilate, I charge you ¹⁴ to keep this command without fault or failure until the appearing of our Lord Jesus Christ. ¹⁵ God will bring this about in his own time. He is the blessed and only Sovereign, the King of kings, and the Lord of lords, ¹⁶ who alone is immortal and who lives in unapproachable light, whom no one has seen or can see, to him be honor and eternal power. Amen.* **(1 Timothy 6:11-16, CSB)**

2 Timothy 1:8-11 (NLT): *So never be ashamed to tell others about our Lord. And don't be ashamed of me, either, even though I'm in prison for him. With the strength God gives you, be ready to suffer with me for the sake of the Good News. ⁹ For God saved us and called us to live a holy life. He did this, not because we deserved it, but because that was his plan from before the beginning of time – to show us his grace through Christ Jesus. ¹⁰ And now he has made all of this plain to us by the appearing of Christ Jesus, our Savior. He broke the power of death and illuminated the way to life and immortality through the Good News. ¹¹ And God chose me to be a preacher, an apostle, and a teacher of this Good News.* **(2 Timothy 1:8-11, NLT)**

2 Timothy 3:16-17 (NLT): *All Scripture is inspired by God and is useful to teach us what is true and to make us realize what is wrong in our lives. It corrects us when we are wrong and teaches us to do what is right. God uses it to prepare and equip his people to do every good work.* **(2 Timothy 3:16-17, NLT)**

1 John 4:7-20 (NLT): *Dear friends, let us continue to love one another, for love comes from God. Anyone who loves is a child of God and knows God. ⁸ But anyone who does not love does not know God, for God is love.*

⁹ *God showed how much he loved us by sending his one and only Son into the world so that we might have eternal life through him. ¹⁰ This is real love – not that we loved God, but that he loved us and sent his Son as a sacrifice to take away our sins.*

¹¹ *Dear friends, since God loved us that much, we surely ought to love each other. ¹² No one has ever seen God. But if we love each other, God lives in us, and his love is brought to full expression in us.*

¹³ And God has given us his Spirit as proof that we live in him and he in us. ¹⁴ Furthermore, we have seen with our own eyes and now testify that the Father sent his Son to be the Savior of the world. ¹⁵ All who declare that Jesus is the Son of God have God living in them, and they live in God. ¹⁶ We know how much God loves us, and we have put our trust in his love.

God is love, and all who live in love live in God, and God lives in them. ¹⁷ And as we live in God, our love grows more perfect. So we will not be afraid on the day of judgment, but we can face him with confidence because we live like Jesus here in this world.

¹⁸ Such love has no fear, because perfect love expels all fear. If we are afraid, it is for fear of punishment, and this shows that we have not fully experienced his perfect love. ¹⁹ We love each other because he loved us first.

²⁰ If someone says, "I love God," but hates a fellow believer, that person is a liar; for if we don't love people we can see, how can we love God, whom we cannot see? (**1 John 4:7-20**, NLT)

1 John 5:11-13 (NLT): *And this is what God has testified: He has given us eternal life, and this life is in his Son. ¹² Whoever has the Son has life; whoever does not have God's Son does not have life.*

¹³ *I have written this to you who believe in the name of the Son of God, so that you may know you have eternal life. (**1 John 5:11-13**, NLT)*

Revelation 20 (CSB): *Then I saw an angel coming down from heaven holding the key to the abyss and a great chain in his hand. ² He seized the dragon, that ancient serpent who is the devil and Satan, and bound him for a thousand years. ³ He threw him into the abyss, closed it, and put a seal on it so that he would no longer deceive the nations until the thousand years were completed. After that, he must be released for a short time.*

⁴ *Then I saw thrones, and people seated on them who were given authority to judge. I also saw the souls of those who had been beheaded because of their testimony about Jesus and because of the word of God, who had not worshiped the beast or his image, and who had not accepted the mark on their foreheads or their hands. They came to life and reigned with Christ for a thousand years. ⁵ The rest of the dead did not come to life until the thousand years were completed.*

This is the first resurrection. ⁶ Blessed and holy is the one who shares in the first resurrection! The second death has no power over them, but they will be priests of God and of Christ, and they will reign with him for a thousand years.

⁷ *When the thousand years are completed, Satan will be released from his prison ⁸ and will go out to deceive the nations at the four corners of the earth, Gog and Magog, to gather them for battle. Their number is like the sand of the sea. ⁹ They came up across the breadth of the earth and surrounded the encampment of the saints, the beloved city. Then fire came down from heaven and consumed them. ¹⁰ The devil who deceived them was thrown into the lake of fire and*

sulfur where the beast and the false prophet are, and they will be tormented day and night forever and ever.

¹¹ Then I saw a great white throne and one seated on it. Earth and heaven fled from his presence, and no place was found for them. ¹² I also saw the dead, the great and the small, standing before the throne, and books were opened. Another book was opened, which is the book of life, and the dead were judged according to their works by what was written in the books. ¹³ Then the sea gave up the dead that were in it, and death and Hades gave up the dead that were in them; each one was judged according to their works. ¹⁴ Death and Hades were thrown into the lake of fire. This is the second death, the lake of fire. ¹⁵ And anyone whose name was not found written in the book of life was thrown into the lake of fire. (**Revelation 20**, CSB)

Revelation 21:1-8 (NLT): *Then I saw a new heaven and a new earth, for the old heaven and the old earth had disappeared. And the sea was also gone. ² And I saw the holy city, the new Jerusalem, coming down from God out of heaven like a bride beautifully dressed for her husband.*

³ *I heard a loud shout from the throne, saying, “Look, God’s home is now among his people! He will live with them, and they will be his people. God himself will be with them. ⁴ He will wipe every tear from their eyes, and there will be no more death or sorrow or crying or pain. All these things are gone forever.”*

⁵ *And the one sitting on the throne said, “Look, I am making everything new!” And then he said to me, “Write this down, for what I tell you is trustworthy and true.” ⁶ And he also said, “It is finished! I am the Alpha and the Omega – the Beginning and the End. To all who are thirsty I will give freely from the springs of the water of life. ⁷ All who are victorious will inherit all these blessings, and I will be their God, and they will be my children.*

⁸ *“But cowards, unbelievers, the corrupt, murderers, the immoral, those who practice witchcraft, idol worshipers, and all liars – their fate is in the fiery lake of burning sulfur. This is the second death.” (**Revelation 21:1-8**, NLT)*