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THE FLIGHT OF A LOST SOUL

By M. Herbert Rozzell

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CONTENTS

Preface

Acknowledgment

Introduction

- 01 -- The Flight of a Lost Soul
- 02 -- The Intermediate World -- Hades
- 03 -- The Great White Throne Judgment
- 04 -- The Final Abode -- Gehenna Fire

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PREFACE

This message has cost me days of fasting and hours of sleep. It has cost me weeping eyes and a breaking heart. And could I but prove it untrue, I should be very happy indeed.

But Jesus, the tender and forgiving Lamb of God -- the "Man of Sorrows, and Acquainted with Grief" -- solemnly warned men of a place called hell, "where their worm dieth not, and the fire is not quenched." And because men would go there, in spite of His urgent pleas, He stood and wept for their fearful fate.

"We also believe, and therefore speak." With a firm conviction that this message contains the solemn and fearful truth of God's Word, I fervently pray God's blessings upon it as it goes forth on its mission of warning to all concerned.

In all earnestness,
M. H. Rozzell

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ACKNOWLEDGMENT

I am indebted to J. S. Seiss... and to Rev. H. H. Wise, whose writings and teaching first taught me concerning the subject matter of this message. I am especially indebted to Rev. W. M. Tidwell for helpful suggestions and for writing the Introduction.

M. H. R.

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INTRODUCTION

These are days of indifference and carelessness. Jesus said, "As it was in the days of Noah, so shall it be in the days of the coming of the Son of man." In other words, the same conditions that prevailed in the days of Noah would prevail just before this age closed and Christ returned.

Those were fearful days. "God saw that the wickedness of man was great in the earth." This grieved God and He said, "I, even I, will destroy man." That was an age of wickedness, indifference, and hardness. Noah preached for 120 years and secured seven converts. Even Noah's carpenters, who helped construct the ark, were lost. They refused to come in. We know a lot of prophets today "who prophesy smooth things," tell us that all is well; but we also know that it is an age of wickedness, hardness, and unbelief.

It seems nothing will wake us up. World War I did not. The fearful epidemic of flu, that took far more lives, they tell us, than the war, did not. And now World War II has come and gone, and we sleep on. The facts are, the present hardness began with World War I and has been enhanced a hundredfold by World War II. There is little Bible preaching in many places. We know God is a God of love and mercy; but He also is a God of wrath and justice. The whole Bible should be preached. Preach negatively, preach positively. Preach on sin, preach salvation. Preach heaven, preach hell. "Preach the word."

We are happy to commend this booklet, written by Rev. Herbert Rozzell. We believe it is true in every essential to the Word of God; and pray and believe that God will use it to awaken lost, careless souls before they take their flight to the lake of fire.

Yours in Him,
W. M. Tidwell

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01 -- THE FLIGHT OF A LOST SOUL

In Psalms 139:7 we read: "Whither shall I go from thy spirit? or whither shall I flee from thy presence?" Overwhelmed by the knowledge and wisdom of God concerning his inmost being and thoughts, David's first impulse was to flee from God. Perhaps, like Peter, he felt himself to be a sinful man when brought face to face with a revelation of God. This sense of guilt and sin prompted Adam and Eve to hide from the Lord after they had partaken of the forbidden fruit. This sense of inner corruption caused Isaiah to cry, "Woe is me!" when he saw visions of God in the Temple. And across the centuries since sin invaded our world, this same sense of guilt and inner defilement has driven men farther and farther from God, until some have "passed the bounds which God doth set to light, and life, and love" -- until some have fled "down the dark, eternal, uncreated night" to their everlasting abode, where they shall be lost in "the blackness of darkness forever."

It is the purpose of this message to trace the lost soul from the time it leaves the body at death to its final destiny in the lake of fire and brimstone. We take no delight in dealing with any phase of hell or kindred themes; and our subject, The Flight of a Lost Soul, is not a pleasant one. But while we take no special joy in treating this subject, we make no apology for so doing. It is a thought that is prominent in the New Testament, and a theme which was constantly on the lips of the Son of Man, who solemnly warned men of the worm that dieth not, and the fire that is never quenched. It is a topic that is tragically neglected in our agnostic twentieth century. And we say tragically neglected. The results of neglect and failure to preach this stirring theme have been dramatically tragic: the greatest crime waves in our history as a nation, adult delinquency spawning our shameful juvenile delinquents, dead and decaying churches, unbelief and uncertainty rampant throughout the land.

It is said that a noted jurist, a man who sat on the Supreme Court for a number of years, made this statement in 1927: "In proportion as ministers of the gospel have failed to preach hell, in proportion has crime increased in the United States." What an indictment against the ministry of America! I cannot vouch for the accuracy of this quotation, but I am positively convinced of the accuracy of this statement. When men lose their fear of hell, they cast off their restraints of civil law, and anarchy prevails. As H. C. Morrison once put it: "It takes two forces to get a man out of this world of sin and land him safely in heaven: hell from beneath to push him, and heaven from above to pull him." Because many of the parents of our nation ceased to believe in hell, their children have grown up without the fear of hell to persuade them from disobedience and lawlessness; hence, our great wave of juvenile crime. The greatest need of this hour is a holy reverence for the God of heaven and earth that is prompted by the fear of hell as the reward for sin and disobedience!

According to Strong's Exhaustive Concordance, "hell" occurs twenty-three times in our Authorized Version of the New Testament; and this word "hell" is used to translate three different words from the Greek: namely, tartarus, hades, and gehenna. Tartarus occurs only once: "... God spared not the angels which sinned, but cast them down to hell [tartarus]" (II Pet. 2:4). Hades occurs ten times. [1] "... the rich man also died... and in hell [hades] he lift up his eyes, being in torments" (Luke 16:23). Gehenna occurs twelve times. [2] The word comes from the lips of Jesus Christ in most solemn warning of the consequences of sin. "... fear not them which kill the body," our Lord said, but rather fear him which is able to destroy both soul and body in hell [gehenna]" (Matt. 10:28).

The explanation for using the one word "hell" to translate three entirely different Greek words is relatively simple. "At the time of the translation of the Authorized Version (KJV), the old English word "hell" -- the hole, the unseen -- had not yet stiffened into the awful meaning that it has attained in our day. It simply meant the "unseen place," the "covered place." In the south of England still, a thatcher who covers [thus enclosing] a house is called a "hellier." Even in games it was used. In the old English game of forfeits, on the village green, the "hell" is the hidden place where the girls ran away to escape being kissed." [3] We have derived our word "cellar" from this same old English word. When the translators used this word to cover the meanings of the three different words, tartarus, hades, and gehenna, they thought of the word as meaning simply "the unseen place"; and since tartarus, hades, and gehenna were all thought of as parts of the unseen world of departed spirits, both good and bad, the word "hell" correctly expressed their concept of what these three Greek words meant.

"All who accept the teaching of the Scriptures as the Word of God, accept also the fact of an intermediate state; but the point on which opinions differ is the question of the nature of this state. Hades... signifies the invisible world of departed spirits... Protestantism retains the idea of an intermediate state, but rejects generally the idea of an intermediate place." [4]

Explaining the word "hades," J. A. Seiss says, "Its true and only meaning is, 'the place of departed spirits,' -- the receptacle of souls which have left the body." It is "that invisible place where souls that leave the body live." [5]

"... it has been the prevalent, almost universal, notion that Hades is an intermediate state between death and the resurrection, divided into two parts, one the abode of the blessed, and the other of the lost." [6]

H. Orton Wiley states as the common Protestant doctrine: (1) At death the souls of the righteous go immediately into the presence of Christ and of God, (2) where they exist in a state of consciousness, and (3) this state is one of blessedness and rest (4) This intermediate state is not the final state of believers. Concerning the souls of the wicked: (1) They are banished from the presence of the Lord, (2) exist in consciousness, (3) that is, a state of suffering and unrest, and (4) this state of the wicked is not final -- "They, too, will be raised, but to everlasting shame and contempt; and the judgment will fix their doom." [7]

This much seems clear. Whatever the detailed facts may turn out to be, neither the righteous dead nor the wicked dead have entered upon their full reward or punishment, and will not until the resurrection of their bodies. They each alike are confined in their respective intermediate state -- intermediate between death and resurrection: the righteous in paradise, the wicked in hades. Here each must remain until all the returns are in -- until each one's influence for good or evil has run its final course. Only then will God be able to "render to every man according to his deeds... according to that he hath done, whether it be good or bad."

When we arrest a criminal, we do not immediately place him in the penitentiary, but put him in the local jail, where he is confined until the day of his trial. On that day, his guilt is established, the verdict read, and sentence pronounced; then he is removed to the penitentiary, where he will begin to serve his sentence. Perhaps we may think of hades as a sort of "local jail" where the souls of the wicked dead are confined until the Day of Judgment, and think of gehenna as God's "eternal penitentiary" where the final incorrigible shall be incarcerated forever. Hades is a place of punishment and suffering, but it is only in gehenna that the lost enter upon final imprisonment and full punishment.

Looking at it thus, it is our purpose to follow the lost soul in his flight from this world and to trace his experiences through the intermediate world of hades; we propose to watch him come forth to the Great White Throne Judgment; and then to observe as best we can his sad fortunes as he is cast into gehenna -- the lake of fire and brimstone.

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02 -- THE INTERMEDIATE WORLD -- HADES -- Luke 16:19-31

A man is dying. I do not say who it is -- I only pray it may not be you, it may not be me. But a man is dying. The cold sweat of death stands out on his forehead; the last gurgle of departing life dies in his throat; and his soul takes its plunge into the nether world. Let us follow him in his downward flight and discover what his fortunes are.

As we pursue him toward the regions of the damned, we hear him cry in the distance, and we stop to listen. What is it that he is saying? "Send Lazarus!" What can he want of Lazarus, the beggar whom he scorned in this world? Hear him: "Send Lazarus, that he may dip the tip of his finger in water, and cool my tongue" A rich man who once had all that heart could desire, with servants in abundance, now pleading for a poor, despised beggar to bring him one drop of water! Poor, damned soul -- in his flight he has reached "the pit wherein is no water" (Zech. 9:11) and his is a cry of thirst!

As a boy, I read hundreds of stories of the West, where men fought with guns and knives, and rode their horses across the sands of the burning deserts. One of the most vivid pictures that those stories indelibly impressed on my mind was of the men who became lost on the desert without water. In a running gun battle, the canteen had been pierced by a stray bullet, and the embattled horseman did not discover this fact until he was far out into the desert. Under the tension and heat of battle, he did not notice how thirsty he was. And now, far from the nearest oasis, he

reached for his canteen, only to discover to his horror that it had long since emptied its precious contents out on the thirsty sand.

I have traveled with that thirsty horseman until I have felt so strongly and sensed so vividly his burning thirst and utter helplessness under the pitiless sun that I have been forced to tear myself away long enough to seek water for my own thirst and assure myself of the reality of my own relative security of life. Then I have rejoined him. I have watched him vainly seek the mirage whose inviting waters always lay just ahead of him. I have observed him until he fell from his horse. I have seen him stagger to his feet, stumble a few steps forward, and then fall on his face. I have stood over him and listened to his fevered plea for water until it would break the heart of the most callused. I have heard his plea become an incoherent babbling, and the babbling turn into agonized groans as his tongue swelled his throat shut and protruded grotesquely from his mouth. I have gazed in horror as that swollen tongue blackened and cracked open under the intense heat of the desert sun. And when I have beheld until the final convulsive shudder has ushered the last agony of dying from his body, I have stood back and stared upward at the eager scavengers of the wastelands who circled closer and closer to their prey...

To be lost on the burning sands of the desert without water -- terrible fate! But to be in hell, in "the pit wherein is no water," to be smitten with burning thirst and to know that for all eternity there will be no water with which to quench it -- what a horrible experience indeed!! god save us from this place of unrelieved thirst!!

But I hear him cry again. And this time it is a cry of concern for others. Listen! "Send Lazarus [how he needs Lazarus now, that poor beggar whom he once despised!] -- I have five brethren -- lest they also come to this place of torment." Apparently never burdened about his loved ones while living in this world, now he is concerned lest they be damned like himself. Ah, friend, better pray for those loved ones while on time's side of eternity -- it will be too late in hell!

There is a touching story that comes from the prairie land of our Midwest. There lived on the edge of a great wheat field a young couple who had a beautiful little girl. Golden-haired, rosy-cheeked, bubbling over with vitality, she was the idol of their hearts, the joy of their home. One afternoon late, when the wheat was at the height of its growth, friends stopped by for a brief visit. Sitting in the side yard entertaining them, the couple temporarily forgot the little girl, who was last seen playing on the back porch. Just as the sun was setting, the friends left, and the young mother went into the house to prepare the evening meal, asking her husband to call the little girl.

The young father called to her, and went to the back yard to look for her when she did not respond. Not finding her there, he circled the house, then went inside to look for her. The mother joined in the search. The darkness of night settled down on the home, and still the little girl had not been found. The parents became uneasy; and after an hour of fruitless search, spread the alarm through the neighborhood. Soon men and boys from near-by homes had joined in the search. All night they beat through the vast reaches of wheat that stretched away from the home, assuming that the little girl had wandered into the field and become lost.

Morning dawned, and still the unsuccessful search went on. The mother became frantic, and was put to bed, a doctor at her side. All through the day and into the next night, the men and

boys probed the field of wheat. The father was stricken with grief and concern, his hair already beginning to turn white with the strain, while the hysterical mother was being carefully watched over by a special nurse. On the morning of the second day, the men and boys joined hand in hand and began sweeping systematically up and down the vast expanse of wheat. Around noon, they discovered the little tot lying fast asleep on the ground, overcome with fright and hunger; and they hastened to carry her to the grief-stricken parents.

If a father and mother could become so concerned and burdened and grief-stricken over the physical welfare of a little girl who would only have gone to heaven if she had died, what will it be like to be in hell, with a tremendous burden for loved ones who are living in sin and disobedience, and yet be unable to pray that burden away, be unable effectually to intercede for them!

One of the most heart-rending things in the world of human experience is soul-burden. Concern for others kept Moses on his face, for the second time, without food and water for forty days and nights; it forced John Knox to spend five and six hours a day in prayer for his beloved Scotland; it kept pushing Livingstone on into the interior of dark Africa; it was the passion that persuaded David Brainerd to such agony of soul that his sweat mingled with the frozen snow of the New England woods; its pressure became so great that it ruptured the great loving heart of our Saviour, so that His robe was stained with His bloody sweat as He agonized in Gethsemane. But to be in hell, with the heart torn with concern and twisted with worry and wrung with anxiety all to no avail! O Lord, keep us from this place of unavailing concern!!

But I hear him cry again -- and what a cry is this! It is prompted by the fearful words of Abraham: "There is a great gulf fixed." In his flight, the lost soul has reached the place of eternal confinement. The great gulf is fixed -- there is no passing beyond its boundaries.

Years ago a well-known evangelist went to see the warden of a great penitentiary. "I understand, sir," he said to the warden, "that you have in your penitentiary a solitary confinement cell."

"We do," the warden responded.

"I am informed," the evangelist continued, "that this cell is deep underneath the penitentiary, that no direct rays of light reach it, and that the person placed there is shut off entirely to himself: he is not allowed a newspaper, a book, not even a Bible; he is not permitted to talk with anyone, or anyone with him. And his daily allowance of food is one piece of bread and a cup of water. Is this correct?"

"Yes," the warden replied, "it is just as you have said."

"Warden," the evangelist said, "I have preached all over the nation about the terribleness of being shut up in hell. I have felt that if I could be locked up in a solitary confinement cell long enough to get the feel of it, I could more vividly describe the confinement of hell. Do me the favor of locking me in that solitary confinement cell for a while."

The warden said he could not do it. But the evangelist persisted in his request until the warden yielded and, picking up a large key, led the way to the solitary confinement cell. Down one flight of steps after another the evangelist followed the warden, until they were far below the ground level; then down a long, dark, damp corridor, they came at last to the cell. The warden turned the key in the rusty lock, swung the door open on its protesting hinges, and, turning to the evangelist, said, "All right, preacher -- in you go!" The evangelist walked into the narrow cell, and turned to watch the warden swing the creaking door shut. He listened to the key as it turned in the rasping lock, and heard the warden say, "I'll be back for you soon."

When the echo of the warden's steps had died in the corridor outside the cell, the evangelist gave his attention to his narrow environment. "Not bad for a few minutes, I suppose," he mused aloud. "Bout five feet wide, maybe seven long... Not much light," he commented, as he gazed overhead at the six-inch square that was the only source of light in the cell. "Fellow couldn't read in here if he had something to read... Mmm, that bed wouldn't be very comfortable, either," he told himself aloud, as he inspected the steel slats that served as a place on which to sleep.

Then a terrible thought struck him. He cried out, "What have I done! That warden is the only person in the world who knows why I am in here; and I noticed that he is an elderly man; the veins of his neck are enlarged, indicating that he may have high blood pressure. Suppose he should have a heart attack and die! No one would listen to me explain why I am in here. I'd probably stay here a long time -- "maybe till I died!"

He paced the floor frantically, pulling his hair and calling loudly for the warden. After what seemed like an eternity, he heard the key rasp in the lock; and as the door swung wide, he fell out into the corridor in a dead faint. When the warden had brought him back to consciousness, the preacher exclaimed, "Man, why did you leave me in there for so long!" In astonishment, the warden replied, "Why, sir, I was gone only a few minutes."

Only a few minutes! If only a few minutes could seem like an eternity to a minister of the gospel, a man who knew the way to God, who could have gone from that cell to heaven if he had died there -- if only a few minutes could seem like an eternity to a man like that, what will it be like to be shut up eternally in hell, with no hope of escape forever? to turn to the right, and to the left, to search to the front and to the rear -- and everywhere to encounter only the adamant walls of a great gulf fixed! Great God, save us from this eternal prison house!!!

Once more I hear him cry. And what a bitter cry indeed! Hear it: "I am tormented in this flame." This does not seem to be a literal, material flame; for this man's body is decaying in the grave -- he "died, and was buried, and [immediately] in hell he lift up his eyes, being in torments." There are those who have tried to discredit the Bible teaching of a hell of literal fire, thinking thus to mitigate the punishment of the wicked. It is our firm conviction that the physical features of hell will entail less suffering than its other features. There are agonies of soul that are greater than any physical pain; there are flames of remorse and despair and bitterness that sear the soul, even in this life, with anguish that exceeds any bodily sufferings. And the lost soul in his flight has reached that place "where their worm dieth not" -- where the conscience, once seared over by sin, is now awakened to the full fury of avenging reproach!

Somewhere we read that there is this difference between the words torment and torture -- the first is something which one brings upon himself; the second, something brought upon one by someone else. To illustrate: If at the point of a gun I force a man to stand against a tree while I tie him there against his will, and then stand off and cut him to pieces with a horsewhip, I am inflicting torture upon him. But if with a gun in his hand, he forced me to tie him there, then stand off and horsewhip him, I am inflicting torment upon him, not torture.

I am not sure that the lexicographers would agree that such a difference in the meanings of these two words actually exists, but the illustration is a point in case concerning the scripture before us. Any suffering endured by the lost will be justly deserved on their part. There will not be a soul in hell who can justly accuse God of wrongfully visiting punishment upon him. One of the horrors of hell will be that inner sense of self-condemnation -- the bitter chidings of disregarded conscience. And the damned soul in his flight has reached that place of torments, where the worm of vain regret, futile compunction, and despairing remorse forever gnaws at the heart of the finally impenitent.

To endure burning thirst with never a drop of water to relieve that thirst; to have the heart fruitlessly torn with anxious concern for others; to be hedged in by the adamant walls of hopeless confinement; to feel the tormenting sting of relentless remorse and the keen lash of incessant self-reproach -- such is the catastrophic lot of the damned soul in his flight to the regions of the lost!!

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03 -- THE GREAT WHITE THRONE JUDGMENT -- Revelation 20:12

Would that we could leave the lost soul here! Would that hell embraced only the experiences through which we have followed him! But this is only the intermediate world, hades, God's "local jail" -- we have still to trace his fortunes from this place to his final destiny, to his eternal abode -- gehenna fire. For the lost soul has yet to take part in the "resurrection of damnation" and to stand before the White Throne Judgment before passing on into God's "eternal penitentiary," the lake of fire and brimstone. Let us follow him through these dramatic stages of his final doom.

The centuries pass. At long last, the trumpet of the Last Day peals out across the vast reaches of the universe; and the sea, death, and hades give up their dead. It is the time of the "second resurrection," and the wicked dead come forth to receive the final verdict of their destiny. We have often wondered if any hope will arise in their hearts when the wicked dead are summoned from their "local jail" confinement. If so, it is short-lived -- they come forth to the "resurrection of damnation."

Jesus said: "The hour is coming, in which all that are in the graves shall hear his voice, and shall come forth: ... they that have done evil, unto the resurrection of damnation [condemnation, margin]" (John 5:28-29). One day as I meditated on this passage, a horrible thought came to me: Suppose that the bodies of the damned should exceed in ugliness and deformity our natural, earthly bodies, as the bodies of the glorified shall exceed these earthly bodies in beauty and grace. And

then I read these terrible words: "As he loved cursing, so let it come unto him: as he delighted not in blessing, so let it be far from him. As he clothed himself with cursing like as with a garment, so let it come into his bowels like water, and like oil into his bones. Let it be unto him as the garment which covereth him, and for a girdle wherewith he is girded continually" (Psalms 109:17-19).

Behold the damned -- there he stands in all the disfigurement of his wicked deeds and sinful imaginations! It is said that the Bride of Christ "should be arrayed in fine linen, clean and white," that "the fine linen is the righteousness of the saints" (Rev. 19:8). What the righteous are on the inside, in their hearts, is plainly seen on the outside, in their outward appearance. And because they have their hearts purified and made white through the precious blood of Christ, beautiful purity and gracious love and compassionate mercy and holy purpose shine through their glorified bodies; and this inward righteousness that is theirs through Christ's indwelling presence serves as a garment which clothes them.

So it would seem with the damned. Who can conceive the hideous deformity, the loathsome ugliness, the utter vileness of the body of the damned soul! With every evil thought, every base desire, every beastly passion, every unholy ambition, every wicked intent, every blasphemous imagination, every green-eyed, jealous suspicion, every bitter, wrathful impulse -- with each and all this spawn of carnal corruption plainly written on his outward aspect, how revolting must the body of the damned soul appear to all who behold him!!

But there is something else here -- "As he loved cursing, so let it come unto him." Rev. W. M. Tidwell recently pointed out that "when one sins, that sin becomes a living thing, as it were, and desires the sinner, the one who commits it. He becomes wedded to that sin, and it to him; and there is a mutual desire between the sinner and the sin like the relation between husband and wife... It becomes a part of the very nature... and the union between the sin and the sinner seems to become more intimate with each sin... It must be repeated more often, and he must plunge deeper... here we have a fearful picture. Every sin that you have ever committed... [is] crouching, like a wild beast, at your door. Oh, what a brood!.. Tiger, lion, bear, wolf... wildcat sins. Monkey, immodest sins. Proud peacock sins..." See that lost soul in his "body of damnation"? [8] What are those wild beasts that pursue him relentlessly down the tortuous avenues of dark damnation? Ah -- those are his sins to which he has become wedded!

Methinks I can identify some of these wild beasts that so mercilessly hound him across the plains of eternal night. One of them is the craving for tobacco. When he first tasted it, it was repulsive to his physical system. But he continued in its use until it became a part of his very nature. And now he has brought this abnormal appetite with him to hell -- but he forgot to bring along with him the poisons on which this beastly habit feeds, and now it is futilely clamoring for its necessary food!

I recognize another of these beasts -- the fiery red brute of alcoholic thirst. When he first began courting this beast, it tried to dissuade him; but he persisted in his attentions. Now it is vainly howling for the allaying draught of liquid fire!

And there is another beast of familiar appearance. It was once a normal, natural, necessary part of human nature, designed by the Creator to be held in check and guided in the right channel,

that it might make a sacred and holy contribution to a happy existence. But the lost soul let it get out of control -- he courted it, fed it, indulged it, until it became a ravenous beast, until it grew into an uncontrollable monstrosity that arose to slay him and chase him into hell, and here, in hell, it becomes a horrible beast of prey, forever haunting him with its agonized screams of insatiated lust!!

In Daniel 12:3 we read: "And many of them that sleep in the dust of the earth shall awake... to shame and everlasting contempt." What a tragic day for the lost -- to awake to shame and everlasting contempt! Jesus said, "There is nothing covered, that shall not be revealed; and hid, that shall not be known" (Matt. 10:26). Paul declared, "The Lord... will bring to light the hidden things of darkness, and will make manifest the counsels of the hearts" (I Cor. 4:5). The song writer put it:

Every secret evil thought there shall be to judgment brought,
When the Lord in all His glory shall appear;
All the deeds of darkest night shall come out to greet the light,
When I stand before the judgment bar.

Clothed in all the hideous guilt of his sins, the damned soul stands forth in the glaring brilliance of the White Throne Judgment in all the shame of his wicked deeds and corrupt thoughts, and seeing him for what he actually is, all other beings will despise him and hold him in utter contempt for all eternity!!

As we behold him thus in all his ignominious infamy, we see him suddenly stagger back as from a thunderous blast -- He who sits on the throne has spoken! "Depart from me" -- Can this be the Christ who thus speaks? He who once spoke in tenderest tones of entreaty, "Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest"? -- the sympathetic Son of Man, who once wept over the sins of men? -- Yes, it is He -- but He sits now as Judge. Hear His fearful words: "Depart from me, ye cursed, into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels."

But what is this? Look, look! The lost soul is protesting! What does he say? "But this isn't fair! I've lived a good life. I've been honest, paid my debts, treated everyone fair and square. I belonged to the church, was baptized, and took communion regularly. I attended services faithfully, paid my tithes, and taught a Sunday School class. I was good to my family, kind to my neighbors, and harmed no one. I was well thought of in my community, and held important positions in my city; I was active in civic affairs, and was a prominent citizen of great means."

But the Righteous Judge only reaches for the Book of Life and, opening its fair pages, sternly informs the damned soul that his name is not written therein; and, therefore, he cannot enter into life eternal. Pointing toward the fiery darkness of the nether world, He orders with inexorable authority, "GO!" Then turning to His angels, He commands, "Bind him hand and foot, and cast him into outer darkness, where there is weeping and wailing, and gnashing of teeth, for whosoever is not found written in the book of life must be cast into the lake of fire burning with brimstone!"

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04 -- THE FINAL ABODE -- GEHENNA FIRE -- Revelation 20:15; 21:8

I see the lost soul seized upon by the angels of God, and watch as he is borne away to the infernal regions of endless night. Hear his terrified screams as he is hurled headlong into the fire that is never quenched!

In the little coal mining town where I was born, we boys would go to the mouth of the mines and fill our pockets with the fragments of almost pure sulfur the miners brought up from the bowels of the earth. We liked to see them burn. Many times, as we watched the burning lumps of sulfur held in our hands, a drop of bluish-yellow flame would suddenly drip down and cling to our finger or hand, making a deep burn before we could extinguish it. The brimstone of our Bible is the roll sulfur of our day, and only those who have experienced it can know the intense pain such a burn produces. Little did we boys know that we were getting a foretaste of what the damned shall endure eternally!

But this is not a smooth, calm, placid lake of liquid fire. Far from it. The Psalmist said, "Oh, that I had the wings of a dove! for then would I fly away... I would hasten my escape from the windy storm and tempest" (Psa. 55:6-8). "Upon the wicked," he declared, "he shall rain snares [quick-burning coals, margin] fire and brimstone, and an horrible tempest [burning wind, margin]; this shall be the portion of their cup" (Psalms 11:6). Who can conceive the horrifying experiences of the damned soul -- fiercely pelted with hail of quick-burning coals that pierce the body, furiously swept with burning winds that sear and peel and blister the skin, perpetually consumed by flaming liquid sulfur, while overhead and all around winds war with winds, storms howl to storms, and lightnings forked lightnings cross, and thunders answer thunders, muttering sounds of sullen wrath!?

The damned soul is not alone, however, in his eternal misery. "But the fearful, and unbelieving, and the abominable, and murderers, and whoremongers, and sorcerers, and idolaters, and all liars, shall have their part in the lake which burneth with fire and brimstone: which is the second death." What a motley crew! Weak-willed Pilates, treacherous Judases, and traitorous Quislings! Deceitful Delilahs, adulterous Herodases, and idolatrous Jezebels! Murderous Herods, bloodthirsty Himlers, and hate-possessed Hitlers! Strutting Mussolinis and fiddling Neros! The careless, the indifferent, the unconcerned, the faithless, the callused -- from all walks of life they come: high and low, rich and poor, learned and unlearned, cultured and unrefined; the vermin and filth and scum from the gutters and hog-wallows of lowest society, the wickedly proud, the overly-greedy, the insatiably-indulgent from highest society -- these are to be the companions of the lost soul for all eternity!

Then suddenly we see him no more -- for he has been swallowed up by the blackness of darkness forever. For years the infidels and agnostics and skeptics laughed at those who preached about a hell of fire and brimstone that was at the same time a hell of blackness of darkness. It remained for one of their own number, an atheistic bolshevist -- an unbeliever of the worst kind -- to discover, early in the 1930's, a black fire that doesn't give a ray of light; and yet a fire that was the hottest science had ever known -- so hot it would cut its way through eighteen inches of plate steel in less than fifteen minutes. Ah, friend, the God whose Spirit inspired our Holy Bible knew what it was all about when He instructed His holy apostles to write it down that there is a place of

unquenchable fire and black darkness -- and the lost soul in his flight has reached that place of Stygian night, where he shall wander in caves of hopeless depths, through dungeons of unfading fire, enshrouded with the blackness of darkness forever and forever!!

Rev. W. M. Tidwell tells the story of a man who became lost in Mammoth Cave. This man had entered the cave on a sight-seeing tour with several other people; and, though he had been solemnly warned by the guide along with the others not to stray away from the group -- "You'd never find your way out alone" -- he had become careless and meandered off by himself. Suddenly he realized that the guide and the group he had been with had disappeared, and he did not know which way they had gone. "They tell us," Brother Tidwell concludes the story, "that he was not missed from the party until the tour was ended." The guide led a searching party back into the cave, and finally found him -- jammed into a crevice between two rocks, his flashlight smashed, his clothes torn, his hands raw and bleeding from his efforts to free himself from the imprisonment of the rocks, his reason gone.

Only temporarily separated by a few thousand yards from sunlight, and friends, and skillful guides who knew how to find him; a light in his hand to point out the pitfalls in his pathway; a reasonable hope that, even should he not find his way alone, the guides would return for him; surrounded by darkness that, though pitch-black, was only natural darkness -- and it drove him insane! How much more terribly, horribly maddening for one to be eternally, infinitely removed from light, and friends, and guides -- removed as "far as from that glorious mount of God to light's remotest limb" -- frantically and fruitlessly to search for a way out of the endless maze of the labyrinths of perdition without a ray of light to guide one around the pitfalls. All the while enveloped by supernatural darkness that can be felt!!

Behold the damned: clothed in his revolting body of damnation, perpetually dying of thirst, forever vainly interceding for lost loved ones, continually writhing in agony under the scorpion sting of infuriated conscience, relentlessly pursued by monstrous beasts of sinful habits, incessantly pelted with burning coals of fire, overwhelmed by hurricane blasts of howling, blistering winds, engulfed in sulfuric flames of liquid fire, swallowed up by the blackness of darkness forever...

Unsaved friend, would you take this "Flight of a Lost Soul"? Then remember that "except ye repent, ye shall... likewise perish" (Luke 13:3); "Except ye be converted... ye cannot see the kingdom of heaven" (Matt. 18:3); and, "Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God" (John 3:3).

Unsanctified friend, would you like to take this "Flight of a Lost Soul"? Then remember that God "hath... called us unto holiness" (I Thess. 4:7), and has commanded, "Be ye holy; for I am holy" (I Pet. 1:16). He has promised that "if we walk in the light" the blood of Jesus Christ His Son will cleanse us "from all sin" (1 John 1:7), and declares that without holiness, "no man shall see the Lord" (Heb. 12:14).

Christian friend, would you take this "Flight of a Lost Soul"? Then remember the exhortation, "Take heed... lest any of you be hardened through the deceitfulness of sin. For we are

made partakers of Christ, if we hold fast our confidence stedfast unto the end" (Heb. 3:12-14). "Watch ye therefore, and pray alway, that ye may be accounted worthy to escape..." (Luke 21:36).

To be lost in the night, in eternity's night,
To sink in despair and in woe,
But such is thy doom,
If thou turn from the light,
Refusing God's mercy to know!

For whosoever is not found written in the book of life must be cast into the lake of fire and be swallowed up in the blackness of darkness forever.

This is a very fearful message, but it has a silver lining of hope for all who read it -- no one need take this "flight of a lost soul." How glad we are that Christ died for all, and that all may be saved if they will! O friend, we plead with you just now to "make your calling and election sure"! Come to the Saviour today; yield to Him your heart and life. "He is able to save them to the uttermost that come unto God by him." We "commend you to God, and to the word of his grace, which is able to build you up, and give you an inheritance among all them which are sanctified"; to "him that is able to keep you from falling, and to present you faultless before the presence of his glory with exceeding joy."

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ENDNOTES

1 Matt. 11:23; 16:18; Luke 10:15; 16:23; Acts 2:27, 31; Rev. 1:18; 6:8; 20:13, 14.

2 Matt. 5:22, 29, 30; 10:28; 18:9; 23:5, 23; Mark 9:43, 45, 47; Luke 12:5; James 3:6.

3 J. Paterson-Smyth, *The Gospel of the Hereafter*, pp.37-38.

4 H. Orton Wiley, *Christian Theology* III, 225.

5 J. A. Seis, *Lectures on the Apocalypse*, III, 272

6 Smith's *Bible Dictionary*, p.235.

7 H. Orton Wiley, *Christian Theology*, III, 222-233.

8 W. M. Tidwell, *Sowing and Reaping*, pp.84-85.

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THE END