

Ask Edwards: Why Should I Care About Hell?

By Rod McDonald



And these will go away into eternal punishment (Matt 25:43a).

Jonathan Edwards (1703 - 1758) believed in the eternity and torment of hell. ^[1]

“What is there in this world, which is not a trifle, and lighter than vanity, in comparison with . . . enduring eternal torment?”

“How can men be so careless of such a matter as their own eternal and desperate destruction and torment? What a strange stupor and senselessness possesses the hearts of men!”

1. Because hell is eternal

So, for you who are young or old, you who may be tempted to wager your soul to gain the whole world, consider how “great and awful [a] thing eternity is.”

“. . . Do but consider what it is to suffer extreme torment forever and ever: to suffer it day and night from one year to another, from one age to another, and from one thousand ages to another (and so adding age to age, and thousands to thousands), in pain, in wailing and lamenting, groaning and shrieking, and gnashing your teeth — with your souls full of dreadful grief and amazement, [and] with your bodies and every member full of racking torture; without any possibility of getting ease; without any possibility of moving God to pity by your cries; without any possibility of hiding yourselves from him; without any possibility of diverting your thoughts from your pain; without any possibility of obtaining any manner of mitigation, or help, or change for the better.”

2. Because the torment of hell is unrelenting

“. . . How dismal will it be, when you are under these racking torments, to know assuredly that you never, never shall be delivered from them. To have

no hope: when you shall wish that you might be turned into nothing, but shall have no hope of it; when you shall wish that you might be turned into a toad or a serpent, but shall have no hope of it; when you would rejoice if you might but have any relief; after you shall have endured these torments millions of ages, but shall have no hope of it. After you shall have worn out the age of the sun, moon, and stars, in your dolorous groans and lamentations, without rest day and night, or one minute’s ease, yet you shall have no hope of ever being delivered. After you shall have worn a thousand more such ages, you shall have no hope, but shall know that you are not one whit nearer to the end of your torments. But that still there are the same groans, the same shrieks, the same doleful cries, incessantly to be made by you, and that the smoke of your torment shall still ascend up forever and ever. Your souls, which shall have been agitated with the wrath of God all this while, will still exist to bear more wrath. Your bodies, which shall have been burning all this while in these glowing flames, shall not have been consumed, but will remain to roast through eternity, which will not have been at all shortened by what shall have been past.”

What must I do to be saved?

“. . . Those who are sent to hell never will have paid the whole of the debt which they owe to God, nor indeed a part which bears any proportion to the whole. They never will have paid a part which bears so great a proportion to the whole, as one mite to ten thousand talents. Justice therefore never can be actually satisfied in your damnation. But it is actually satisfied in Christ. Therefore he is accepted of the Father, and therefore all who believe are accepted and justified in him. Therefore believe in him, come to him, commit your souls to him to be saved by him. In him you shall be safe from the eternal torments of hell.”

^[1] Jonathan Edwards, *The Eternity of Hell Torments*, in *The Works of Jonathan Edwards*, vol. 2 (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson Publishers, 2005), [pp 83-89].