

INTRODUCTION

“God has given to men a **declaration of His character and of His method of dealing with sin.** “The Lord God, merciful and gracious, long-suffering and abundant in goodness and truth, keeping mercy for thousands, forgiving iniquity and transgression and sin, and that will by no means clear the guilty;” Exodus 34:6, 7. “All the wicked will He **destroy.**” “The transgressors shall be **destroyed** together: the end of the wicked shall be **cut off.**” Psa. 145:20; 37:38. The power and authority of the divine government will be employed to **put down rebellion**; yet all the **manifestations of retributive justice** will be perfectly consistent with the character of God as a **merciful, long-suffering, benevolent** being. GC 541.2

God does not force the will or judgment of any. He takes no pleasure in a slavish obedience. He desires that the creatures of His hands shall love Him because He is worthy of love. He would have them obey Him because they have an intelligent appreciation of His **wisdom, justice, and benevolence.** And all who have a just conception of these qualities will love Him because they are drawn toward Him in admiration of His attributes. GC 541.3

The principles of kindness, mercy, and love, taught and exemplified by our Saviour, are a transcript of the will and character of God. Christ declared that He taught nothing except that which He had received from His Father. The principles of the divine government are in perfect harmony with the Saviour's precept, “Love your enemies.” **God executes justice upon the wicked, for the good of the universe, and even for the good of those upon whom His judgments are visited.** He would make them happy if He could do so in accordance with the laws of His government and the justice of His character. He surrounds them with the tokens of His love, He grants them a knowledge of His law, and follows them with the offers of His mercy; but **they despise His love, make void His law, and reject His mercy.** While constantly receiving His gifts, they dishonor the Giver; they hate God because they know that He abhors their sins. The Lord bears long with their perversity; but the decisive hour will come at last, when their destiny is to be decided. **Will He then chain these rebels to His side? Will He force them to do His will?**” GC 541.4

DOES GOD DESTROY? THE SINNER'S FATE

Nothing is more reasonable than that the wicked should be utterly destroyed, and cease to be a curse to themselves and to others; and no doctrine is more plainly and pointedly taught in the Bible than this. We invite the reader's attention to the following condensed, but comprehensive, statements of the Bible upon this subject:

GOD HAD GIVEN A COMMAND

“He that **sacrificeth unto any god**, save unto the LORD only, he shall be utterly destroyed.”
Exo. 22:20

“He received them at their hand, and **fashioned it with a graving tool**, after he had **made it a molten calf**: and they said, **These be thy gods, O Israel**, which brought thee up out of the land of Egypt.

And when **Aaron** saw it, he **built an altar before it**; and Aaron made proclamation, and said, To morrow is a feast to the LORD.

And they rose up early on the morrow, and **offered burnt offerings, and brought peace offerings**; and the people sat down to eat and to drink, and rose up to play.” Exo 32:4-6

“He said unto them, **Thus saith the LORD God of Israel, Put every man his sword by his side**, and go in and out from gate to gate throughout the camp, and **slay every man his brother**, and every man his **companion**, and every man his **neighbour**.

And the **children of Levi did according to the word of Moses**: and there fell of the people that day about **three thousand men**.” Exo. 32:27-28

CHASTENING FOR THE PURPOSE OF ULTIMATE SALVATION

“If a man have a **stubborn and rebellious son**, which will **not obey the voice of his father**, or the voice of his **mother**, and that, **when they have chastened him**, will **not hearken** unto them: Then shall his father and his mother **lay hold on him**, and **bring him out unto the elders** of his city, and **unto the gate** of his place;

And they shall say unto the elders of his city, **This our son is stubborn and rebellious, he will not obey our voice**; he is a **glutton**, and a **drunkard**.

And all the **men of his city shall stone him with stones, that he die**: so shalt thou **put evil away from among you**; and **all Israel shall hear, and fear**.” Deu. 21:18-21

“**As many as I love, I rebuke and chasten**: be zealous therefore, and repent.” Rev. 3:19

GOD SAYS HE KILLS [put to death, cause to die]

“See now that I, even I, am he, and **there is no god with me: I kill, and I make alive; I wound, and I heal:** neither is there any that can deliver out of my hand.” Deu. 32:39

“**Fear not them which kill the body, but are not able to kill the soul: but rather fear him which is able to destroy both soul and body in hell.**” Mat. 10:28

THEY SHALL DIE

To die is thus defined by Webster: “To cease to live; to expire; to de cease; to perish.” Death, then, is a loss of life, a cessation of existence. In this sense the word is familiarly and repeatedly used in the Bible. For example: In the account of the flood it is said, “All flesh died that moved upon the earth,” Gen. 7:21. Of his cattle Jacob said, “If men should overdrive them one day, all the flock will die.” Gen. 33:13. Again: “And the fish that is in the river shall die,” Exo. 7:18. Of Dorcas it is said, “It came to pass in those days, that she was sick, and died:” Acts 9:37. The simple meaning in these instances cannot be misunderstood. Death means an utter loss of life. And so it is used in hundreds of places all through the Scriptures. The Lord has chosen this familiar word more frequently than any other to describe the end of the wicked.

Take a few examples: “The soul that sinneth, it shall die.” “For his iniquity that he hath done shall he die.” Eze. 18:4, 26. “I say unto the wicked, Thou shalt surely die.” Eze. 33:14. “He that hateth reproof shall die:” Pro. 15:10. “He that despiseth his ways shall die.” Pro. 19:16. “The end of those things is death.” “For the wages of sin is death;” Rom. 6:21, 23. “To be carnally minded is death;” Rom. 8:6. “Shall save a soul from death,” Jam. 5:20. “Sin, when it is finished, bringeth forth death.” Jam. 1:15. We could quote scores of texts like these. Reader, is this not plain enough?

KORAH AND THE UNPARDONABLE SIN

“Notwithstanding **they had had the most convincing evidence** of God's displeasure at their course, in the destruction of the men who had deceived them, **they dared to attribute His judgments to Satan, declaring that through the power of the evil one, Moses and Aaron had caused the death of good and holy men.** It was **this act that sealed their doom.** They had **committed the sin against the Holy Spirit**, a sin by which man's heart is effectually hardened against the influence of divine grace. “Whosoever speaketh a word against the Son of man,” said Christ, “it shall be forgiven him: but whosoever speaketh against the Holy Ghost, it shall not be forgiven him.” Matthew 12:32. These words were spoken by our Saviour when the gracious works which He had performed through the power of God were attributed by the Jews to Beelzebub.” PP 404.4

“**What constitutes** the sin against the Holy Ghost? It is **willfully attributing to Satan** the work of the Holy Spirit.” 5T 634.1

BE DESTROYED

Destroy: “To demolish; to pull down; to bring to naught; to *annihilate*.”—*Webster*. Destruction, then, is utter ruin, complete annihilation; and so it is used in the Bible. At the flood the Lord said, “Every living substance that I have made **will I destroy** from off the face of the earth.” Gen 7:4. Wild beasts shall “destroy your cattle,” Lev. 26:22. “He sent forth his armies, and **destroyed** those murderers,” Matt. 22:7.

With a Concordance, the reader can readily find scores of texts where the word destroy or destroyed is used as above, where there can be no question about its meaning. This strong but simple word the Lord has repeatedly used in defining the punishment of the wicked. Thus, “**All the wicked will he destroy.**” Psa. 145:20. “**I will early destroy** all the wicked” Psa. 101:8. “Fear Him which is able to **destroy both soul and body in hell.**” Matt. 10:28. “The **transgressors shall be destroyed together.**” Psa. 37:38. “All the workers of iniquity . . . shall be **destroyed forever.**” Psa. 92:7. “Whoso despiseth the word shall be **destroyed.**” Pro. 13:13. “Is not **destruction to the wicked?**” Job 31:3. “**destruction** shall be to the **workers of iniquity.**” Pro. 10:29. “The indignation shall cease, and mine anger in **their destruction.**” Isa. 10:25. “Vessels of wrath, fitted to destruction:” Rom. 9:22. “Whose **end is destruction,**” Phil. 3:19. “Who shall be punished with **everlasting destruction**” 2 Thess. 1:9. “Which drown men in destruction and perdition.” 1 Tim. 6:9. How could language make this more positive?

“Under God **the angels** are all-powerful. On one occasion, **in obedience to the command of Christ**, they **slew** of the Assyrian army in one night one hundred and eighty-five thousand men.” DA 700.5

PERISH

Perish: “To die; to lose life in any manner; to be destroyed; to come to nothing.”—*Webster*. Here is another word, the very strongest that can be found to denote an utter destruction, used in a multitude of instances to denote the end of the wicked.

Take a few passages to show its Bible usage: Of Saul, David said, “He shall descend into **battle**, and **perish.**” 1 Sam. 26:10. Of Jonah’s gourd it is said, “Which came up in a night, and perished in a night:” Jonah 4:10. “And the bottles perish:” Matt. 9:17. The “**Swine** ran violently down a steep place into the sea, and **perished**” Matt. 8:32.

So the Lord declares it shall be with the wicked. “Let the **wicked perish at the presence of God.**” Psa. 68:2. “But the **wicked shall perish,**” Psa. 37:20. “Whosoever **believeth** in him should **not perish,**” John 3:15. “Behold, ye **despisers**, and wonder, and **perish.**” Acts 13:41. “With all **deceivableness of unrighteousness** in them that perish;” 2 Thess. 2:10. “He that speaketh **lies shall perish.**” Pro. 19:9. “Except ye **repent**, ye shall all likewise **perish.**” Luk. 13:3. “As many as have sinned without law shall also perish without law:” Rom. 2:12. “Shall utterly **perish in their own corruption;**” 2 Pet. 2:12. This is just what we believe and teach.

SLAY

Slay: “To kill; to put to death by a weapon or by violence.”—*Webster*.

“**Surely thou wilt slay** the wicked, O **God**: depart from me therefore, ye bloody men,” Psa. 139:19. “Ye shall leave your name for a curse unto my chosen: for **the Lord GOD shall slay thee**, and call his servants by another name,” Isa. 65:15.

“**Elijah said** unto them, **Take the prophets of Baal**; let not one of them escape. And they took them: and Elijah brought them down to the brook Kishon, and **slew them** there,” 1 Kin. 18:40.

Notice a last day scenario dealing with the seal of God dealt by angels sent from the heavenly sanctuary: “**He cried also in mine ears** with a loud voice, saying, Cause them that have charge over the city to draw near, even every man with his **destroying weapon** in his hand.

And, behold, six men came from the way of the higher gate, which lieth toward the north, and every man a **slaughter weapon** in his hand; and one man among them was clothed with linen, with a writer’s inkhorn by his side: and they went in, and stood beside the brasen altar.

And the glory of the God of Israel was gone up from the cherub, whereupon he was, to the threshold of the house. And he called to the man clothed with linen, which had the writer’s inkhorn by his side;

And **the LORD said** unto him, Go through the midst of the city, through the midst of Jerusalem, and **set a mark** upon the foreheads of the men that sigh and that cry for all the abominations that be done in the midst thereof.

And **to the others he said** in mine hearing, Go ye after him through the city, and **smite: let not your eye spare, neither have ye pity**:

Slay utterly old and young, both maids, and little children, and women: but come not near any man upon whom is the mark; and **begin at my sanctuary**. Then **they began at the ancient men** which were before the house.” Eze. 9:1-6

SMITE

Here are just a few scattered examples of how the Bible uses the word smite or smote: “The LORD smelled a sweet savour; and **the LORD said** in his heart, I will not again curse the ground any more for man’s sake; for the imagination of man’s heart is evil from his youth; neither will I again **smite** any more **every thing living, as I have done**,” Gen. 8:21. “The LORD will pass through to **smite the Egyptians**; and when he seeth the blood upon the lintel, and on the two side posts, the LORD will pass over the door, and **will not suffer the destroyer to come** in unto your houses to smite you,” Exo. 12:23. “It came to pass, that at midnight the **LORD smote all the firstborn** in the land of Egypt, from the firstborn of Pharaoh that sat on his throne unto the firstborn of the captive that was in the dungeon; and all the firstborn of cattle,” Exo. 12:29. “All the firstborn are mine; for on **the day that I smote all the firstborn** in the land of Egypt I hallowed unto me all the firstborn in Israel, both man and beast: mine shall they be: **I am the LORD**,” Num. 3:13. “All the firstborn of the children of Israel are mine, both man and beast:

on the day that I smote every firstborn in the land of Egypt I sanctified them for myself,” Num. 8:17. **“He cast upon them the fierceness of his anger, wrath, and indignation, and trouble, by sending evil angels among them. He made a way to his anger; he spared not their soul from death, but gave their life over to the pestilence; And smote all the firstborn in Egypt,”** Psa. 78:49-51 **“Awake, O sword, against my shepherd,** and against the man that is my fellow, saith the LORD of hosts: **smite the shepherd,** and the sheep shall be scattered: and I will turn mine hand upon the little ones,” Zec. 13:7 (See Mat. 26:31). **“Immediately the angel of the Lord smote him,** because he gave not God the glory: and he was **eaten of worms,** and gave up the ghost,” Act. 12:23. **“Out of his mouth goeth a sharp sword, that with it he should smite the nations: and he shall rule them with a rod of iron: and he treadeth the winepress of the fierceness and wrath of Almighty God,”** Rev. 19:15.

BE BURNED UP

The meaning of the word burn is too familiar to every reader to need a definition. Look a moment at its use in the Bible. Job’s servant said, **“The fire of God is fallen** from heaven and hath **burned up** the sheep,” Job 1:16. **“Our holy and our beautiful house . . . is burned up** with fire.” Isa. 64:11. **“The king . . . burned up their city.”** Matt. 22:7.

And so in numerous places. A thing burned up is totally destroyed and reduced to ashes. The Lord says **“He will burn up the chaff with unquenchable fire.”** Matt. 3:12. **“Whose end is to be burned.”** Heb. 6:8. **“Gather ye together first the tares, and bind them in bundles to burn them.”** Matt. 13:30. **“For, behold, the day cometh, that shall burn as an oven; and all the proud, yea, and all that do wickedly, shall be stubble: and the day that cometh shall burn them up,** saith the LORD of hosts, that it shall leave them neither root nor branch.” Mal. 4:1. Are we infidels for teaching this just as the Bible does?

BE CONSUMED

Consume: “To destroy by separating the parts of a thing by decomposition, as by fire; to destroy and annihilate the form of a substance.”—*Webster*. When a thing is consumed, it is reduced to ashes. **“There came a fire out from before the Lord, and consumed upon the altar the burnt-offering”** Lev. 9:24. **“The gates thereof are consumed with fire.”** Neh. 2:3.

Knowing what the people would understand by this word, the Lord often tells them that the wicked shall be consumed. Thus: **“they that forsake the Lord shall be consumed.”** Isa. 1:28. **“Let the sinners be consumed out of the earth,”** Psa. 104:35. **“The enemies of the Lord shall be as the fat lambs: they shall consume; into smoke shall they consume away.”** Psa. 37:20. **“Consume them in wrath, consume them, that they may not be:”** Psa. 59:13. **“Their flesh shall consume away while they stand upon their feet; and their eyes shall consume away in their holes, and their tongue shall consume away in their mouth.”** Zech. 14:12. Who will believe the Lord?

BE DEVoured

Devour: “To eat up; to destroy; to consume with rapidity and violence.”—*Webster*. The following passages will show its Bible use: “There went out **fire from the Lord**, and **devoured** them.” Lev. 10:2. “Some evil beast hath devoured them.” Gen. 37:20. This word the Lord again uses to describe the condition of the wicked: “**Fire came down from God** out of heaven, and **devoured** them.” Rev. 20:9. “**Fiery indignation**, which shall **devour** the adversaries.” Heb. 10:27. “The **fire** shall **devour** them.” Psa. 21:9. “They shall be devoured as stubble fully dry.” Nahum 1:10.

GO INTO PERDITION

Perdition: “Entire loss or ruin; utter destruction.”—*Webster*. This again is a very strong word to denote utter destruction. “Which drown men in destruction and perdition.” 1 Tim. 6:9. “We are not of them who draw back unto perdition.” Heb. 10:39. “Against the day of judgment and perdition of ungodly men.” 2 Pet. 3:7.

THEY ARE CUT ASUNDER

“Shall cut him asunder,” Matt. 24:51.

CUT DOWN

“They shall soon be cut down like the grass,” Psa. 37:2.

CUT UP

“As thorns cut up shall they be burned in the fire.” Isa. 33:12.

CUT OFF

“I will early **destroy** all the wicked of the land, that I may **cut off** all wicked doers from the city of the Lord.” Psa. 101:8. “For **evil-doers** shall be **cut off**.” “They that be **cursed** of him shall be **cut off**.” “The **seed** of the **wicked** shall be cut off.” “When the **wicked** are cut off, thou shalt see it.” “The end of the **wicked** shall be cut off.” Psa. 37:9, 22, 28, 34, 38. “The **wicked** shall be cut off from the earth,” Pro. 2:22.

CUT IN PIECES.

“Let them be as cut in pieces.” Psa. 58:7.

ROOTED OUT

“The transgressors shall be rooted out of it” (the earth). Pro. 2:22.

CHASED OUT

“He shall be . . . chased out of the world.” Job 18:18. “He shall be chased away as a vision of the night.” Job 20:8. They “shall be chased as the chaff of the mountains before the wind,” Isa. 17:13.

BE BLOTTED OUT

“Whosoever hath sinned against me, him will I blot out of my book.” Exo. 32:33. “Let them be blotted out of the book of the living,” Psa. 69:28. “Let their name be blotted out,” Psa. 109:13.

PASS AWAY

“As a snail which melteth, let every one of them pass away:” Psa. 58:8.

THE PUNISHMENT OF THE WICKED IS COMPARED TO THE DESTRUCTION OF THE MOST PERISHABLE MATERIALS.

They are to be dashed “in pieces like a **potter’s vessel**.” Psa. 2:9; to be consumed “as the **fat lambs**.” Psa. 37:20; to perish “like the beasts,” Psa. 49:20; to pass away “**as a snail** which melteth.” Psa. 58:8; to be driven away “as **smoke** is driven away,” and to perish “as **wax** melteth before the fire,” Psa. 68:2; to be no more, “as the **whirlwind** passeth,” Pro. 10:25. They “shall be as an **oak whose** leaf fadeth, and as a garden that hath no water. And . . . as tow,” Isa. 1:30, 31; “as the burnings of **lime**: as **thorns** cut up shall they be burned in the fire,” Isa. 33:12; like **moth** and **worm eaten garments**, Isa. 51:8; and “as the fire devoureth the **stubble**, and the flame consumeth the **chaff**, so their root shall be as **rottenness**, and their blossom shall go up as **dust**.” Isa. 5:24. They shall be burned as **tares**, Matt. 13:30; as **dry branches**, John 15:6; as **wood** and **hay**, 1 Cor. 3:12; as **thorns** and **briers**, Heb. 6:8. “They shall be as the **morning cloud**, and as the early **dew** that passeth away,” Hosea 13:3. “They shall soon be cut down like the **grass**, and wither as the **green herb**.” Psa. 37:2. “His **roots** shall be dried up beneath, and above shall his **branch** be cut off,” Job 18:16; and his light “shall be put out,” Job 18:5.

How could the utter destruction of the wicked be more clearly stated or more forcibly illustrated than in the above scriptures? Added to these are the declarations, made again and again, that the soul itself shall die, and that the wicked shall be no more. Thus: “**The soul that sinneth, it shall die**.” Eze. 18:4. “And shall consume the glory of his forest, and of his fruitful field, both soul and body:” Isa. 10:18. “Fear him which is able to destroy both soul and body in hell.” Matt. 10:28.

Equivalent to this is the declaration that the day that cometh shall burn up the wicked, so “that it shall leave the **neither root nor branch.**” Mal. 4:1.

It is directly stated that the wicked shall be as nothing. See Isa. 41:11, 12. And that “they shall be **as though they had not been.**” Obad. 16. And the psalmist says, “For yet a little while, and the wicked shall not be:” Psa. 37:10. Again: “**Let the sinners be consumed** out of the earth, and let the **wicked be no more.**” Psa. 104:35.

Such an array of positive testimony as there is for the utter destruction of the wicked, can hardly be produced for any other doctrine of the Bible. Hence we believe and teach it.

THE FLOOD AS AN EXAMPLE

“As sin became general, it appeared less and less sinful, and **they finally declared that the divine law was no longer in force; that it was contrary to the character of God to punish transgression; and they denied that His judgments were to be visited upon the earth.** Had the men of that generation obeyed the divine law, they would have recognized the voice of God in the warning of His servant; but their minds had become so blinded by rejection of light that they really believed Noah's message to be a delusion.” PP 95.3

“**As it was in the days** of Noe, **so shall it be also in the days** of the Son of man.” Luk. 17:26

“**Satan himself**, who was **compelled to remain in the midst** of the warring elements, **feared for his own existence.** He had delighted to control so powerful a race, and desired them to live to practice their abominations and continue their rebellion against the Ruler of heaven. He now uttered imprecations against God, charging Him with injustice and cruelty. Many of the people, like Satan, blasphemed God, and had they been able, they would have torn Him from the throne of power. Others were frantic with fear, stretching their hands toward the ark and pleading for admittance. But their entreaties were in vain. Conscience was at last aroused to know that there is a God who ruleth in the heavens. They called upon Him earnestly, but His ear was not open to their cry. In that terrible hour **they saw that the transgression of God's law had caused their ruin.** Yet while, through fear of punishment, they acknowledged their sin, they felt no true contrition, no abhorrence of evil. **They would have returned to their defiance of Heaven, had the judgment been removed. So when God's judgments shall fall upon the earth before its deluge by fire, the impenitent will know just where and what their sin is—the despising of His holy law. Yet they will have no more true repentance than did the old-world sinners.**” PP 99.3

GOD IS FORCED TO DESTROY

“To our **merciful God** the act of **punishment is a strange act.** “As I live, saith the Lord God, I have no pleasure in the death of the wicked; but that the wicked turn from his way and live.” Ezekiel 33:11. The Lord is “merciful and gracious, long-suffering, and abundant in goodness and truth, ... forgiving iniquity and transgression and sin.” Yet He will “by no means clear the guilty.”

Exodus 34:6, 7. While **He does not delight in vengeance, He will execute judgment upon the transgressors** of His law. **He is forced to do this**, to preserve the inhabitants of the earth from utter depravity and ruin. **In order to save some He must cut off those** who have become hardened in sin. “The Lord is slow to anger, and great in power, and will not at all acquit the wicked.” Nahum 1:3. By terrible things in righteousness He will vindicate the authority of His downtrodden law. And **the very fact of His reluctance to execute justice testifies to the enormity of the sins that call forth His judgments and to the severity of the retribution awaiting the transgressor.**” PP 628.1

“In **mercy** to the world, **God blotted out** its wicked inhabitants in Noah's time. In **mercy** He **destroyed the corrupt** dwellers in Sodom. Through the deceptive power of Satan the workers of iniquity obtain sympathy and admiration, and are thus constantly leading others to rebellion. It was so in Cain's and in Noah's day, and in the time of Abraham and Lot; it is so in our time. **It is in mercy to the universe that God will finally destroy the rejecters of His grace.**” GC 543.3