

# *From Death to Life*

**The Official Magazine of the Conditional Immortality  
Association of New Zealand**



**Issue 20**

**Conference Edition**

*Inside:*

*President's Desk 2*  
*Intermediate State (7) 3*  
*Hell - A Hot Topic (3) 6*  
*Conference Reports 11*

# President's Desk

We are all sinners (Rom. 3:23, Ecc. 7:20). God is just and must judge sin. The first half of Romans 6:23 says "the wages of sin is death". So there is a penalty that must be paid. One sinful human cannot pay the penalty for another. The only way for us to escape the penalty would be for a sinless person to die for us and in so doing conquer death on our behalf.

This is exactly what the Bible says God in Christ has done for us!

The second half of Romans 6:23 says the gift of God is eternal life. Wages are something we earn. We cannot earn eternal life, but Jesus has given it to us as a free gift.

Free to us that is. Yet, as they say, "There 'aint no such thing as a free lunch." Somebody has to make the sacrifice. Somebody always has to bear the cost.

When it comes to sin Jesus paid "full price" for us.

Jesus Christ suffered on the cross.

He was separated from the Father when he became sin for us. He cried out, "My God, My God, why have You forsaken Me?" (Matt. 27:46, Mark 15:34)

Finally, after his suffering and his separation from the Father, Jesus died.

As horrible as the suffering and separation were it was by his death that he paid the price for us (Rom. 5:8, 1Pet. 3:18).



Now we have only to accept that gift. Don't undervalue the gift just because it is "free"!

Pastor David Burge  
President

# The Intermediate State

## in Paul

By Carl Josephson  
Part 7

### Resurrection of the Body and Immortality of the Soul (2)

#### 1 Corinthians 15

Nowhere is the centrality of resurrection more clearly spelt out than in 1 Corinthians 15. Paul insists that the proclamation that 'he has been raised' (v4) is among the 'first things' (NRSV/ NIV "of first importance", v3) that Paul himself received and in turn delivered. He then lists some appearances of the risen Lord (vv5-8) and implies that these encounters with the resurrected Lord are a prerequisite of apostleship (vv8-9).<sup>2</sup> From v12 Paul spells out some of the implications of his opponents' unbelief or misunderstanding. In v14 he twice uses the word 'empty' to describe the message and the faith without resurrection. In v15 he points out that he, and the other apostles, would be guilty of misrepresenting God if Christ hadn't truly been raised. In v17 he re-emphasises the emptiness of such faith by describing it as 'useless' without the resurrection of Jesus, because the Corinthians would still be 'in their sin' and that those already asleep in Christ would simply have 'perished' (v18). Then one of Paul's strongest statements comes in the following verse which reads, "If for this life only we have hoped in Christ, we are of all people most to be pitied." So Paul describes believers without the

hope of resurrection as 'more pitiful' than all others. Richard Hays describes this as a "chilling conclusion" to the arguments proposed by Paul's opponents.<sup>3</sup>

An underlying issue here is death itself. As we previously suggested Paul sees death as extinction. In Corinth some seem to be proposing otherwise. Paul's emphatic response is that the only alternative to resurrection is 'destruction' (v18). Without resurrection death has won and the future is devoid of hope.

In v20 Paul returns to the positive affirmation that Christ has been raised. This is the key to Paul's hope. Not only has Jesus been raised but he is also 'first-fruits' (vv20, 23). This gives believers assurance for the future. He clearly understands Christ's resurrection as the precursor of the final resurrection, which is to take place at the *parousia* (v23). The process of being 'conformed' (Romans 8:29) to Christ has begun in this life with salvation and baptism (Romans 6:4-5; Galatians 3:27) and is a continual call to those who believe (Romans 12:2). All this comes together in the hope of resurrection. In Paul's thinking the resurrection of the believer is the "final conformity to the likeness or image of God's Son, even in regard to the body."<sup>5</sup>

#### The Opponents in Corinth.

An important issue in 1 Corinthians 15 is the nature of the opposition to resurrection that Paul alludes to in v12 - "How can some of you say there is no resurrection of the dead?" There are two main proposals as to what these people were teaching.<sup>6</sup> The first is that they had an "over-realised" eschatology, perhaps claiming as Hymenaeus and Philetus in 2 Timothy 2:17-18 that "the resurrection has already taken place". The second is that what the opponents objected to was resurrection of the body,<sup>7</sup> perhaps being more comfortable with the notion of the immortality of the soul. (A third possibility, easily dismissed, is that these opponents doubted the reality of supernatural events. 1 Corinthians 12-14, in particular, shows that, if anything, the reverse was a more pressing problem - over-emphasising the supernatural rather than denying it.)

The second proposal fits in with the argument of the whole chapter (as outlined below) and indeed with the opponents' overemphasis on the 'spiritual' suggested earlier in the letter. Paul has already linked the body with the resurrection in 6:13-20 and proposes a very 'positive' view of the body. This may be in response to "some in the community believ(ing) the body to be morally irrelevant ... (and arguing that) ... if the body contributed nothing essential in this life, what could

be the point of raising it after death?"<sup>9</sup>

De Boer suggests the gospel of Paul's opponents was built on a "framework of a gnostic, anthropological dualism" which led to an understanding of "bodiless exaltation to heaven."<sup>9</sup> In general terms we agree with this, but are cautious about applying the word 'gnostic' to any group in the middle of the First Century A.D. Suffice to say that the New Testament, and Paul in particular, focuses primarily on the concept of resurrection.<sup>10</sup> We follow Hering when he sums up his understanding like this: "The ideal of a purely immaterial existence, so dear to Platonists, Gnostics and Kantians, is therefore at the opposite pole to the Pauline eschatology and feeling."<sup>11</sup>

However, if Paul is arguing against the theory of the immortal soul he nowhere spells that out, although he does use the adjectival form of *psuche* in v44 in a very 'non-Hellenistic' way.<sup>12</sup> As previously noted, in v18 he describes the fate of those who died hoping in Christ as having 'perished', if there is no resurrection. He does not entertain the notion of disembodied existence if there is no resurrection. Perhaps he decided it was more prudent to positively put forward the argument affirming the body/ person, and in particular the resurrection of the body, than it would have been to 'negatively' argue against the immortal soul. It is possible that some of the Corinthians may have been trying to attract others to the church by modifying their teaching to accommodate 'Hellenistic' thinking on the body and the soul.<sup>13</sup> A straightfor-

ward alternative is that some simply misunderstood the 'Christian' position; bringing preconceptions about human anthropology with them from their background and assuming they were correct, until Paul challenged them.<sup>14</sup>

So there is a strong case for the primary focus of 1 Corinthians 15 being bodily resurrection. We agree with de Boer's conclusion that, "Paul is not combating the slogan 'resurrection has already occurred', but the slogan 'there is no (bodily) resurrection of the (physically) dead.'<sup>15</sup> Harris suggests that both the nature (bodily) and the timing (future) of the resurrection were being denied,<sup>16</sup> but the emphasis is definitely on the denial of the bodily nature. Paul is "fighting for an understanding of the human person as a psychosomatic unity"<sup>17</sup> and his line of attack is to try and show the implications of denying resurrection. He does this in some depth in the initial part of the chapter.

### The Nature of the Resurrection.

Richard Hays divides the chapter like this:<sup>18</sup>

(A) The resurrection of the dead is constitutive of the gospel. (vv1-34)



(i) The *kerygma* proclaims the resurrection of Christ. (vv1-11)

(ii) Denial of resurrection of the dead negates the gospel. (vv12-19)

(iii) Because Christ has been raised, all who belong to him will be raised. (vv20-28)

(iv) Otherwise, hope, suffering, and faithfulness are pointless. (vv29-34)

(B) Resurrection means transformation of the body. (vv35-58)

(i) What kind of body is the resurrection body? (vv35-49)

(ii) Both the dead and the living will be transformed. (vv50-57)

(iii) Therefore our labour is not in vain. (v58)

Hays then points out that both major subdivisions of the chapter "conclude with appeals for righteous behaviour and faithfulness in doing the Lord's work".<sup>19</sup> This emphasis on bodily life here and now further supports our proposal that a positive view of bodily life is being questioned (cf. 2 Corinthians 5:10).

Without a doubt Paul does not see resurrection as merely re-animation of this *soma psuchikon* (lit. "soulish" body, v44, NIV "natural body"), but he does insist that it is a body that is resurrected and transformed.

In the last century there has been growing discomfort over such a materialistic view of resurrection giving rise to a number of alternative views that 'spiritualise' resurrection.<sup>20</sup> We suggest that Paul clearly understood resurrection in physical terms and go along with Witherington when he

writes:

*Whether or not we are comfortable with the idea, Paul believed not only in the spiritual resurrection of the human spirit in this life and the new perspective on life which that brings, but also in the literal resurrection of Christ and of Christians at the end of history as we know it. Furthermore, this resurrection is linked to actual environmental renewal of the earth itself (see Rom. 8:18-25).<sup>21</sup>*

Whether one views Paul as mistaken or not is beyond the scope of this paper. Gabriel Fackre sums it up like this: *The New Testament accounts are of encounter with an embodied Christ ... Tangibility is a*

*portent of ultimate things to come: no vaporous soul aloft forever in spiritual skies; no passage of a droplet self into an eternal sea; no everlasting memory in the mind of God; no wistful solace based on our influence on generations to come.<sup>22</sup>*

However there is reluctance in both modernism and post-modernism to believe in the resurrection of the **body**. Reinhold Niebuhr writes of his own turn around, and the stumbling block bodily resurrection is to modernism:

*Some of us have been persuaded to take the stone which we then rejected and to make it the head of the corner ...*

*There is no part of the Apostolic Creed which ... expresses the whole genius of the Christian faith more neatly than just that despised phrase, 'I believe in the Resurrection of the body.'<sup>23</sup>*

Whereas modernism tends towards a rejection of the miraculous and spiritual, post-modernism tends to (over) emphasize the spiritual and in particular the 'soul' and 'spirit', with scant regard for the body.<sup>24</sup> The resurrection of the body remains a 'stumbling block' to many, yet, as we have insisted, it is the cornerstone of Paul's theology.

(Next Issue: Seven further reasons for believing in the resurrection of the whole person)

#### Notes:

<sup>1</sup> Murphy-O'Connor, *1 Corinthians*, 140.

<sup>2</sup> Cf. Harris, *Raised Immortal*, 114-115. Also Conzelmann, 258, "The important thing is that *all* apostles have seen the risen Christ. This is accordingly definitive for the concept of an apostle."

<sup>3</sup> Hays, 261.

<sup>4</sup> de Boer, 105.

<sup>5</sup> Witherington, 173.

<sup>6</sup> So Roetzel, 7.

<sup>7</sup> Murphy-O'Connor, *1 Corinthians*, 137.

<sup>8</sup> Murphy-O'Connor, *1 Corinthians*, 137. Also Fee, 257, "This affirmation stands in bold contrast to the Corinthian view of spirituality which looked for a 'spiritual' salvation that would finally be divested of the body."

<sup>9</sup> de Boer, 105.

<sup>10</sup> Leslie Houlden, "The Resurrection and Christianity" *Theology* 99 (1995) 198-205, argues against the resurrection of Jesus being "the touchstone to outdo all touchstones", 200. But he does so partly based on an inability, or unwillingness, to truly bring 'spiritual' and 'body' together in the sense we think Paul does (see below). In addition he suggests that Christ's exaltation is in some way in contradiction to resurrection. Commenting on the book of Hebrews he writes, "The resurrection would be... an intolerable disturbance of the story as thus formulated." 200.

<sup>11</sup> J. Hering, *The Second Epistle of St. Paul to the Corinthians* (London: Epworth Press, 1967) 38, quoted in Lindars, 778.

<sup>12</sup> See below.

<sup>13</sup> This 'cultural adaptation' is an on-going challenge and threat to the integrity of the gospel and one reason why the Church needs to be continually going back to the kerygma and working out the implications of the 'basic' gospel message in contemporary situations.

<sup>14</sup> This also has been, and is, a danger to the integrity of the gospel throughout church history.

<sup>15</sup> de Boer, 113.

<sup>16</sup> Harris, *Raised Immortal*, 116.

<sup>17</sup> Murphy-O'Connor, *1 Corinthians*, 137.

<sup>18</sup> Hays, 254. We have chosen this division because it is in general agreement with others and because of the simplicity of its layout. de Boer, 93, also sees 1 Corinthians 15 falling 'readily' into these two major units. Also Harris, *Raised Immortal*, 114-115.

<sup>19</sup> Hays, 253-254. So also Murphy-O'Connor, *1 Corinthians*, 139, "He was buried' ... underlines the reality of Christ's death."

<sup>20</sup> Kistemaker, 541-542, writes that some "theologians interpret the resurrection as a subjective experience that occurs in the hearts of believers. They allege ... resurrection takes place in their hearts ... This spiritual interpretation has no bearing at all on the physical resurrection of the Jesus and on that of all his followers."

<sup>21</sup> Witherington, 171. The idea of 'spiritual resurrection' is present in Romans 6:11 - 'dead to sin and alive to God' NRSV.

<sup>22</sup> Fackre, 44.

<sup>23</sup> Reinhold Niebuhr, *Beyond Tragedy* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1937) 289-290, quoted by Gabriel Fackre, "I Believe in the Resurrection of the Body" 42.

<sup>24</sup> Acknowledging that postmodernism is characterized by truth being what is 'true for you', denying universal truth, thus making assertions such as the above rather questionable. However, as a generalization and not being too dogmatic, we believe we are accurate in our observation.

# Hell - A Hot Topic

Part Three of an address given by Dr Edward Fudge during his visit to New Zealand.

Remuera Baptist - 13.08.00

A second surprise I found was this: The traditional literature said that between the Testaments there came to be a commonly held view that the Jews generally believed that the wicked would suffer eternal conscious torment. I'll just mention two Old Testament passages in this regard.

The first is Isaiah 66. Now this is not yet between the Testaments but it relates to what I am coming to. Isaiah 66 pictures the final punishment of the wicked and the final blessing of the saved. And it says in v6 "The voice of the LORD who is rendering recompense to his enemies." Then v15, "Behold the LORD will come in fire, his chariots like the whirlwind, to render his anger with fury, his rebuke with flames of fire, for the LORD will execute judgment by fire and by his sword on all flesh, and those slain by the LORD will be many." And then the end of v17, "'The wicked shall come to an end altogether', declares the LORD." Then when we come down to v22 it says of the righteous that there will be a new heavens and a new earth, which will endure and "your offspring and your name will endure" (so there's eternal life for the righteous). But v24 says, "They shall go forth out of the city and look upon the corpses of the men who have transgressed against me." So here we have a picture of *Gehenna*. The peo-

ple who are God's people, He says, in the age to come, using Jerusalem as a figure, will go out of the city and look upon the corpses in the valley of the Sons of Hinnom (or Ge-Henna, or 'Hell' as the English word is). He doesn't say they go out and look at people who are still alive and writhing in torment. They look at the corpses of those that the Lord has slain. And then he describes those people like this, "For their worm shall not die and their fire shall not be quenched, and they shall be an abhorrence to all mankind." Let me just mention this quickly: the 'worm shall not die' is talking about maggots. It's not a pleasant thought but it's exactly the word that is used. The Greek word that is used in the Greek Old Testament translation is *skolex*. It means maggots or worms that devour organic matter like that. He says that the maggots are eating, consuming constantly.

The fire is not quenched. Quench means extinguish. In Hebrews 11 it says that some of God's people with faith, or through faith, were able to quench the violence of fire. That means put it out, resist it, when their enemies try and come against them with fire. I don't have time now, but take up your concordance and look up the word 'quench' or 'unquenchable'. You'll find that throughout the Old Testament, in nearly all the proph-

ets, it speaks about God's fire that cannot be quenched. It is simply a way of saying that God's judgment is irresistible. In the old days people would fight with flaming arrows, or flaming balls of fire they would shoot with a catapult, and if they do that you bring out your fire brigade and you try and quench the fire before it does much damage.

God warns constantly that his fire cannot be quenched. What happens if the fire is not quenched? Why, it burns up whatever it comes against. So John the Baptist warns in Matthew 3:12 that Jesus Christ will be the one who will gather his wheat into his barns, but he will do what with the chaff? Burn up the chaff with what? Unquenchable fire. Because it cannot be quenched therefore it keeps burning and it keeps burning until everything is gone. An unquenchable fire burns up everything that is put in it. So that's another vocabulary of judgment and that comes from Isaiah 66.

Now here's the interesting thing between the Testaments. The Jews had several groups of literature that were written between Malachi and Matthew in the 400-year period. One group of writings are called 'The Apocrypha' which was in the Greek Old Testament but not in the Hebrew Old Testament. They're in the Catholic Bible

but not in the Protestant Bible. There are 14 or 15 of those books, depending on how you count them. One of those books is a book called Judith and it tells a story of a Jewish heroine in the days of Antiochus Epiphanies, a crazy man who ruled over Israel for a while, a Syrian tyrant, who came against the Jews and persecuted the faithful Jews. At the end of Judith, in 16:17, it has a warning that goes something like this: "'Woe to the nations that rise against my people', says the LORD. 'For I will put worms and fire in their flesh and they will weep and feel their pain forever.'"

Now what you want to observe is the difference between that and what Isaiah says. Isaiah speaks of the corpses of those the LORD has slain who are being consumed by worms and fire. Judith changed it from dead people to living people; from fire on the outside, to fire on the inside; from maggots eating dead material, to living worms eating living people; and that's where the first mention of the kind of fire that keeps burning people alive forever first appears in anything



close to biblical literature.

There's another body of literature that came into being in the time between the Testaments in which authors would give the names of ancient Jewish people to the writings they were then creating. So there's a book of Adam and Eve; there's a book of The Testaments of the Sons of Jacob; there's several books of Enoch (Jude quotes from one of them in the book of Jude by the way). These were not really written by those people, they were written later between the Testaments and ascribed to those people. In some of those books there came to be the expectation that God's enemies would be totally destroyed just like the Old Testament pictures. In some others of those books there came to be the expectation that the wicked would be tormented forever alive in hell. And in some of those books the authors couldn't make up their minds and they would give it one way in some places and the other way in other places. And so by the time of Jesus there was this mixture of opinions. Not everyone had the same opinion.

The other group of writings that we know, about today, there may be other groups that we don't know about yet, was the Dead Sea Scrolls. In these writings the end of the wicked is always total destruction, burning up their bones, nothing left, they're gone forever. So there was a mixed view by the time of Christ. What that tells me is that when we read Jesus' words we cannot assume that he meant one particular thing and

say, 'Well that's what it has to mean because that's what everybody believed.' So what we really have to say is, "What did he mean?" When Jesus speaks of the worm that dies not and the fire that's not quenched the first thing we need to do is say, "Ah ha! I remember reading that. It comes from Isaiah 66:24. What did it mean in Isaiah?" Well it meant that these dead people, the corpses of those the LORD has slain, have been consumed by fire and worms.

Now then, does Jesus mean something different from that? Let's study the context and see if it changes it. But he never does. He just uses the language and leaves it just like it stands.

When we read in the New Testament of smoke rising forever are we to say well that must mean eternal torment because that's what all the Jews believed. No, they didn't all believe that. We have to go back to the Old Testament and say, "What does it mean for smoke to be rising?" We learn in Genesis 19 it means a finished destruction. In Isaiah 34 we learn that it means a perpetual destruction, if it rises forever. So we just simply let the Bible explain itself.

Another example of what was really a surprise to me is this expression, which Jesus used seven times, of 'weeping and gnashing of teeth.' I always heard growing up in the churches I was in (and the churches of which we are still a part generally teach eternal conscious torment, by the way)

that this expression 'weeping and gnashing of teeth', or 'grinding of teeth', means they're in terrible agony. There's an old story in Alabama, where I came from, of a preacher who was preaching in the old days and talking about grinding your teeth and somebody says, 'Well preacher what's going to happen when they grind they're teeth away?' He said, "God will give them a new set of teeth!" So this is the idea, that they're in pain and they're grinding their teeth. Interesting thing is if you take up your concordance and look up 'gnashing' or 'grinding' of teeth you'll find it in Psalms, in Job, in the Prophets and in the death of Stephen in Acts 7 and in other places. And what you'll find is not pain but anger. For example in the death of Stephen when he said, "I see the Son of Man at the right hand of God," his enemies rush upon him and stone him and they are gnashing at him with their teeth. They're like wild dogs. They want to chew him up and spit him out. That's what grinding of teeth means - anger. People who are enraged, not a picture of pain at all. It's a picture of anger.

Interestingly if we go back to Psalm 112:10 it says just before that the end of the righteous is that they dwell in peace and righteousness and God is with them and so forth. Then verse 10 says that "the wicked will see it and be vexed; he will gnash his teeth and melt away; the desire of the wicked will perish." The wicked see the redeemed with God and they are very angry. They gnash their

teeth in fury at God and at the saved. But it does them no good. Even as they grind their teeth in rage, they melt away until they have perished altogether. This verse reminds me of the scene in the movie "The Wizard of Oz," where the wicked witch melts down to nothing. That is what finally happens to the lost - they melt away and they perish. The phrase "grinding of teeth" is completely consistent with that understanding.

[At this point the tape was turned and a little of the address was unrecorded - Ed.]

... If you ask John, "What would happen to the wicked?" He doesn't use the word 'hell'. If you ask Jude, he doesn't use the word 'hell'. It's only used in the (Synoptic) Gospels of the end of the wicked, talking to Jews who live in Jerusalem, because they knew what *Gehenna* was. Nobody else even understood the figure, but the rest of the Bible writers talk about the end of the wicked. How do they describe it? What would we think if we read what they had to say? For example, John 3:16 (start with one that everybody knows), "For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have eternal life." Now we read back in the flood that they all 'perished' and we read in Psalms that were 'destroyed'. We know what this word means. If we go to Matthew 25:46, the end of the story of the sheep and the goats, and Jesus concludes that story like this: "These (the wicked) will go away into eternal pun-

ishment but the righteous into eternal life." So the contest here is 'punishment' versus 'eternal life'.

What does punishment mean? The Russian writer Dostoevsky wrote a huge book called *Crime and Punishment*. What is crime? Well it could be lots of things. Which crime is he talking about? It depends on the context. Punishment can mean many things. Where I come from punishment can mean you get a traffic ticket and pay a fine; it could mean you go to County Jail for a few days; it could mean you go to the State Penitentiary; or, if you live in Texas, it could mean you get the death sentence. The fact of the matter is that 'punishment' doesn't say what it is. It just tells us there will be consequences that a righteous judge (well hopefully a righteous judge!) will mete out as a retribution for wrongdoing previously done. So 'eternal punishment' doesn't say anything about what the punishment actually is. It just says there are eternal consequences.

Now when Jesus tells us that, he tells us something very important. He's saying that when we reach the end of this world that's not the end of the story. Those who have served God will have eternal life; those who have rejected God will have eternal punishment. But Jesus doesn't tell us here what that punishment is. We keep reading and we learn more about what that punishment is.

If we go to Romans 2, and look at a few passages from the

Apostle Paul and see what he says when he doesn't use the word 'hell', because he never uses that word. Romans 2:6 says that God 'will render to each person according to his deeds'. Now here's the alternative, "to those who by perseverance in doing good seek for glory and honor and immortality, eternal life." That's one choice. "But to those who are selfishly ambitious and do not obey the truth, but obey unrighteousness, wrath and indignation. There will be tribulation and distress for every soul of man who does evil ... but glory and honor and peace to everyone who does good. For there is no partiality with God." So the choice on the one hand is eternal life, glory, honor and peace. The choice on the other hand is wrath and indignation from God; tribulation and distress for the people. Now that implies some conscious torment of some kind. But what I'm saying leaves all the room in the world, or should I say all the room in eternity, for that. Because God will be just in his punishment and not everybody deserves the same punishment. When people are destroyed eternally at the second death there's a process of destruction. That process of destruction may vary from person to person. So there's infinite room for degrees of judgment and punishment under this understanding that I'm presenting here. It doesn't mean everyone's treated the same; it means everybody's treated justly. And God will perhaps destroy some people immediately, others may be around for a long time, but the

final result is destruction. So Paul here says there will be glory and honor and peace for some; tribulation and distress for others.

Then again in Romans 6:23, you know this verse, "The wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our LORD." So if we say, "Paul, what are the final two choices?" His reply is "death or life; eternal life or death." Turns out it is 'eternal death' or 'second death' but Paul doesn't use that term right here.

If we go to Galatians 6:7-8 he says, "Do not be deceived, God is not mocked; for whatever a man sows, this he will also reap. For the one who sows to his own flesh will from the flesh reap corruption, but the one who sows to the Spirit will from the Spirit reap eternal life." So the choice here is corruption or life, just as earlier it was death or life.

If we look at Philippians 1:28 Paul says that we are not to be "alarmed by your opponents — which is a sign of destruction for them, but of salvation for you." The choice is salvation or destruction.

Philippians 3:19, speaking of certain enemies of Christ, says "their end is destruction." Then in verses 20-21, "our citizenship is in heaven, from which also we eagerly wait for a Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ who will transform the body of our humble state into conformity with the body of His glory." So the choice in this passage is

glorified with a body like Jesus or destruction.

Then in 1 Thessalonians 5:9 Paul says, "God has not destined us for wrath, but for obtaining salvation through our Lord Jesus Christ." As in Romans 2:6-10 the wrath of God is one choice, the other choice is salvation.

Then in 2 Thessalonians 1:6-7, 8-10, he gives us the most express picture I suppose of any place in the whole New Testament. Verses 6-7 say, "It is just for God to repay with affliction those who afflict you, and to give relief to you who are afflicted." So the choices here are 'affliction', what ever that might involve and however that might end, versus 'relief' from affliction that they have been suffering in this world. Then in verses 8-10, when Christ comes he will be "dealing out retribution (or punishment) to those who do not know God and who do not obey the gospel of our Lord Jesus. These will pay the penalty of eternal destruction (or the NIV says "these will be punished with eternal destruction) away from the presence of the Lord and from the glory of His power, when He comes to be glorified in His saints." So here the alternative is to be glorified by Christ when he returns, or to suffer the penalty of eternal destruction. It's not surprising that the penalty will be eternal destruction when you read the rest of that verse — "away from the presence of the Lord" — because we only have life through God's grace as His gift to us in the first place.

