

ON THE FIRES OF HELL

from The River of Fire
Alexander Kalomiros

“Now if anyone is perplexed and does not understand how it is possible for God’s love to render anyone pitifully wretched and miserable and even burning as it were in flames, let him consider the elder brother of the prodigal son. Was he not in his father’s estate? Did not everything in it belong to him? Did he not have his father’s love? Did his father not come himself to entreat and beseech him to come and take part in the joyous banquet?”

“What rendered him miserable and burned him with inner bitterness and hate? Who refused him anything? Why was he not joyous at his brother’s return? Why did he not have love either toward his father or toward his brother? Was it not because of his wicked, inner disposition? Did he not remain in hell because of that? And what was this hell? Was it any separate place? Were there any instruments of torture? Did he not continue to live in his father’s house?”

“What separated him from all the joyous people in the house if not his own hate and his own bitterness? Did his father, or even his brother, stop loving him? Was it not precisely this very love which hardened his heart more and more? Was it not the joy that made him sad? Was not hatred burning in his heart, hatred for his father and his brother, hatred for the love of his father toward his brother and for the love of his brother toward his father?”

“This is hell: the negation of love; the return of hate for love; bitterness at seeing innocent joy; to be surrounded by love and to have hate in one’s heart. This is the eternal condition of all the damned. They are all dearly loved. They are all invited to the joyous banquet. They are all living in God’s Kingdom, in the New Earth and the New Heavens. No one expels them. Even if they wanted to go away they could not flee from God’s New Creation, nor hide from God’s tenderly loving omnipresence. Their only alternative would be, perhaps, to go away from their brothers and search for a bitter isolation from them, but they could never depart from God and His love.”

“And what is more terrible is that in this eternal life, in this New Creation, God is everything to His creatures. As Saint Gregory of Nyssa says, ‘In the present life the things we have relations with are numerous, for instance: time, air, locality, food and drink, clothing, sunlight, lamplight, and other necessities of life, none of which, many though they be, are God; that blessed state which we hope for is in need of none of these things, but the Divine Being will become all, and in the stead of all to us, distributing Himself proportionately to every need of that existence. It is plain, too, from the Holy Scriptures that God becomes to those who deserve it, locality and home and clothing and food and drink and light and riches and kingdom, and everything that can be thought of and named that goes to make our life happy’ (On the Soul and the Resurrection).” 46

"In the new eternal life, God will be everything to His creatures, not only to the good but also to the wicked, not only to those who love Him, but likewise to those who hate Him. But how will those who hate Him endure to have everything from the hands of Him Whom they detest? Oh, what an eternal torment is this, what an eternal fire, what a gnashing of teeth!

Depart from Me, ye cursed, into the everlasting inner fire of hatred," 47 saith the Lord, because I was thirsty for your love and you did not give it to Me, I was hungry for your blessedness and you did not offer it to Me, I was imprisoned in My human nature and you did not come to visit Me in My church; you are free to go where your wicked desire wishes, away from Me, in the torturing hatred of your hearts which is foreign to My loving heart which knows no hatred for anyone. Depart freely from love to the everlasting torture of hate, unknown and foreign to Me and to those who are with Me, but prepared by freedom for the devil, from the days I created My free, rational creatures. But wherever you go in the darkness of your hating hearts, My love will follow you like a river of fire, because no matter what your heart has chosen, you are and you will eternally continue to be, My children.

Amen."

—Dr. Alexandre Kalomiros (The River of Fire)

Notes:

46 "I am father, I am brother, I am bridegroom, I am dwelling place, I am food, I am raiment, I am root, I am foundation, all whatsoever thou willest, I am.' 'Be thou in need of nothing, I will be even a servant, for I came to minister, not to be ministered unto; I am friend, and member, and head, and brother, and sister, and mother; I am all; only cling thou closely to me. I was poor for thee, and a wanderer for thee, on the Cross for thee, in the tomb for thee, above I intercede for thee to the Father; on earth I am come for thy sake an ambassador from my Father. Thou art all things to me, brother, and joint heir, and friend, and member.' What wouldest thou more?" St. John Chrysostom, Homily 76 on the Gospel of Matthew (PG 58. 700).

47 " 'The end of the world' signifies not the annihilation of the world, but its transformation. Everything will be transformed suddenly, in the twinkling of an eye.... And the Lord will appear in glory on the clouds. Trumpets will sound, and loud, with power! They will sound in the soul and conscience! All will become clear to the human conscience. The Prophet Daniel, speaking of the Last Judgment, relates how the Ancient of Days, the Judge, sits on His throne, and before Him is a fiery stream (Dan. 7:9-10). Fire is a purifying element; it burns sins. Woe to a man if sin has become a part of his nature: then the fire will burn the man himself. This fire will be kindled within a man; seeing the Cross, some will rejoice, but others will fall into confusion, terror, and despair. Thus will men be divided instantly. The very state of a man's soul casts him to one side or the other, to right or to left.