

The Reality of Hell

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All Scripture quotations, unless otherwise noted, are from the King James Version. Italics for emphasis are ours.

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INTRODUCTION

Hell is real. It is not a state of mind. It is not a temporary condition. It is a real place set aside for those who will not accept the gift of salvation. God offers that gift to whosoever will come to the person of Jesus Christ and receive Him.

But as a pastor and a soul winner, I have a great concern. Certain trends in many churches today obscure facts that Jesus Himself reinforced again and again. When we share the Gospel, we must tell people that God loves them. And once they are saved, they must be told that He will never leave them nor forsake them. But we must tell the *whole* truth. The full counsel of God must be presented accurately and in detail. The truth is that there is a literal hell. It is not a party place. It is full of torments that will last for eternity.

How do I know? Jesus told me so in the Bible.

This is a very solemn booklet. Keep in mind as you read these pages that we cannot add to

or take away from the Word of God (Revelation 22:18-19). All Scripture is inspired, and God cannot lie (Numbers 23:19). Therefore, this doctrine should have as profound an effect on us as the doctrines of Grace, Mercy, and the Finished Work. If we understand it properly, our compassion for the lost and our desire to win them will grow stronger as our love for the Savior grows deeper.

Chapter One

DARKNESS, FIRE AND TORMENT

“He that believeth on the Son hath everlasting life: and he that believeth not the Son shall not see life; but the wrath of God abideth on him” (John 3:36).

“For God sent not his Son into the world to condemn the world; but that the world through him might be saved.

“He that believeth on him is not condemned: but he that believeth not is condemned already, because he hath not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God” (John 3:17,18).

“And if thy hand offend thee, cut it off: it is better for thee to enter into life maimed, than having two hands to go into hell, into the fire that never shall be quenched:

“Where their worm dieth not, and the fire is not quenched.

“And if thy foot offend thee, cut it off: it is better for thee to enter halt into life, than having

two feet to be cast into hell, into the fire that never shall be quenched:

“Where their worm dieth not, and the fire is not quenched.

“And if thine eye offend thee, pluck it out: it is better for thee to enter into the kingdom of God with one eye, than having two eyes to be cast into hell fire:

“Where their worm dieth not, and the fire is not quenched” (Mark 9:43-48).

Understanding the Terms

The Bible is filled with references that use many different words to describe hell—warnings that tell us it is a real place and why people will go there. In the Old Testament, the word *sheol* is often used. Overall, *sheol* refers to the place and state after death (Genesis 37:35, Psalm 16:10, Proverbs 16:25, Numbers 16:30,33). In Isaiah 14:9-23, *sheol* is pictured as a place where people are very much alive. In this passage, it is also mentioned as the place where the devil will go. *Sheol* is a place for sinners who do not know God (Psalm 9:17, 49:14, Proverbs 5:5, 7:27, 9:18). *Sheol* is never satisfied as it devours sinners (Job 24:19, Proverbs 27:20), enlarging itself to make room for more (Isaiah 14:9). Furthermore, those

who are sent there cannot go on sinning (Psalm 31:17). It is a place of sorrows, pain, and corruption (Psalm 18:5, 116:3).

In the New Testament, several words are used to describe hell. *Hades* is that place where the souls of the lost who have died are sent (Matthew 11:23; Revelation 1:18, 6:8, 20:13,14). *Hades* never refers to the grave, nor is it the permanent region of the lost or eternal hell, but it is a temporary intermediate place between death and hell. It will give up or release the dead for the Great White Throne judgment (Revelation 20:13).

The parable of the beggar Lazarus and the unnamed rich man is an illustration of *Hades* (Luke 16:19-31). There is already a division between the righteous and the unrighteous that cannot be crossed. Jesus went to Hades to proclaim His victory, and then He went to paradise to take the Old Testament saints with Him to heaven (Ephesians 4:8,9).

Paradeisos is the word in the original texts for "paradise," in Luke 23:43, 2 Corinthians 12:4, Revelation 2:7. It is a Greek loan word of Persian origin, which spoke of a walled garden, the enclosed parks (pleasure grounds) of Persian kings and nobles. One view holds that paradise was

one of the compartments of *Hades*, the place where the righteous dead were carried before Christ finished the work of reconciliation and where Christ's soul went while His body was in the grave. Some further hold that Christ in His victory over death took all the inhabitants of paradise to the third heaven. (See C. Baker, *A Dispensational Theology*, p. 578.)

Considering that paradise was a part of *Hades*, this explains why the thief on the cross was able to be with Jesus immediately after he died. Jesus descended into hell before He ascended to His throne in heaven (Matthew 16:21, 17:23, 20:19, Romans 6:9, 1 Corinthians 15:17-23, Ephesians 1:19-23, 4:9, 1 Peter 3:19).

Gehenna (*geenna* in the Greek) is another name for hell. It refers to the Valley of Hinnom, or a place of punishment (Matthew 5:22,29,30, 10:28, 18:9, 23:15, 23:33, Mark 9:43,45,47, Luke 12:5, James 3:6). In the gospels, Jesus describes hell by comparing it to a place called *Gehenna*, the garbage dump of Jerusalem, where all the garbage as well as the dead bodies of the poor, criminals, and animals were thrown on fires that were never quenched but always smoldering. He calls *Gehenna* the place of eternal punishment (Mark 9:47,48). *Gehenna* differs from *Hades*, which

is only a temporal place of punishment. *Gehenna* refers to the lake of fire and brimstone, the place of eternal judgment, where souls will be tormented forever with fire and “brimstone” (from the word *basanizo*, which means to torment, to torture, to inflict pain upon, in Revelation 14:10,11; 20:14,15).

Chapter Two

WHY DOES GOD SEND PEOPLE TO HELL?

First, hell was created for Satan and the fallen angels (Matthew 25:41). God never intended anybody to go to hell. Adam and Eve were created in a perfect environment. But after they were seduced by Satan in the Garden of Eden, the consequence of their action was death (Genesis 3, Romans 5:12). Adam and Eve chose what God had specifically warned them not to choose, and sin became a part of our nature.

Still, true to His character, when sin and death entered the human race, God already had a solution (John 3:15-18). God the Father would send Jesus Christ to the earth to die for the sins of all men, once and for all (Hebrews 9:25-28; 1 Peter 2:24, 1 John 2:2).

The work was finished on Calvary, nearly two thousand years ago, when Jesus shed His blood and died for our sins, rose from the dead,

and went to heaven to reconcile man to God (2 Corinthians 5:18,19).

There remains one thing that every person must do to make all of what Christ has done, and all of who Christ is, part of his life. We must believe in Christ as our Savior. When we receive Christ, God imputes His own nature to us (2 Corinthians 5:21). This is why we can enter heaven.

People do not go to hell as a punishment for their sins; they go to hell because their sinful nature has never been changed. God cannot allow the old wicked nature to enter heaven. He is too holy and He cannot behold sin (Exodus 3:4,5; Habakkuk 1:13; 1 Peter 1:16). The eternal souls of the unsaved—all those who reject God's provision to be made new and acceptable—must go somewhere, and the only place they can go is hell. They enter hell with all their sinful desires and lusts still alive, but never able to fulfill them. But because hell was not designed for the human race, hell has to be enlarged for every soul that goes there.

Once you are saved, you are saved forever. You have eternal life the moment you believe on His name (1 John 5:13). You have a place in heaven. You will fail—every one of us does—but

the moment you fail, you can rebound and restore your fellowship with God. Failure, however, will not keep anyone out of heaven.*

But if you are not saved, there is a place for the souls of all who refuse to receive the Savior. Jesus described this separation in great detail in Luke 16:

“And there was a certain beggar named Lazarus, which was laid at his gate, full of sores,

“And desiring to be fed with the crumbs which fell from the rich man’s table: moreover the dogs came and licked his sores.

“And it came to pass, that the beggar died, and was carried by the angels into Abraham’s bosom: the rich man also died, and was buried;

“And in hell he lifted up his eyes, being in torments, and seeth Abraham afar off, and Lazarus in his bosom” (Luke 16:20-23).

There was a certain rich man who fared sumptuously and lived a very comfortable lifestyle. But he never accepted God’s provision to be saved, and he wound up in hell where he didn’t even have a name. He didn’t go to hell because he was rich on this earth. Abraham, the father of our faith, was very rich; so was Joseph of Arimathea, the man who owned the tomb where Jesus was buried. These rich men were

saved, and we will see them in heaven. The rich man in Luke 16, however, never received salvation. He didn't accept the promise of the Messiah, so he went to hell.

In this true account, Jesus mentioned a beggar named Lazarus, who was laid at the gate of the rich man's house every day. This beggar was full of sores, and dogs came and licked those sores. It isn't a pretty picture. Yet, this beggar knew God. When he died, the beggar was carried by the angels to Abraham's bosom. With a great gulf fixed between them, the rich man in the torment and flames of hell could see the beggar, who was safe in Abraham's bosom.

Let me explain a few things about this man in hell. First, Jesus is the one who told the story. It is a true story; it is not a parable. Parables never include proper names; yet, in this account Jesus uses the names of Lazarus the beggar and Abraham. Jesus said it, and He cannot lie.

The rich man in this story cannot be comforted or relieved in any way. There is fire in hell, and even as you are reading this, he is still experiencing the torment of the flames. He begged for a drop of water to be placed on his tongue, but it cannot happen. This hell is literal. The torment of it is real and the Scriptures reveal it.

Prayers from the Pit

“And in hell he lift up his eyes, being in torments, and seeth Abraham afar off, and Lazarus in his bosom.

“And he cried and said, Father Abraham, have mercy on me, and send Lazarus, that he may dip the tip of his finger in water, and cool my tongue; for I am tormented in this flame.

“But Abraham said, Son, remember that thou in thy lifetime receivedst thy good things, and likewise Lazarus evil things: but now he is comforted, and thou art tormented.

“And beside all this, between us and you there is a great gulf fixed: so that they which would pass from hence to you cannot; neither can they pass to us, that would come from thence.

“Then he said, I pray thee therefore, father, that thou wouldest send him to my father’s house:

“For I have five brethren; that he may testify unto them, lest they also come into this place of torment.

“Abraham saith unto him, They have Moses and the prophets; let them hear them.

“And he said, Nay, father Abraham: but if

one went unto them from the dead, they will repent.

“And he said unto him, If they hear not Moses and the prophets, neither will they be persuaded, though one rose from the dead” (Luke 16:23-31).

Notice how the rich man could see and talk to Lazarus and Abraham. That makes hell all the more painful because he could see what he missed. Knowing what his brothers were facing, the rich man began to cry out for Abraham to send Lazarus from the grave to testify to his family on the earth. Abraham said, “They have Moses and the prophets, if they will not believe them they will not believe if one is sent from the dead.”

People who go to hell become praying people. We don't think of that very often. I wonder how many in hell pray for those who are not living right with God, pleading that they will get right. They would beg for believers to start seeking and saving people from the torments to come.

Lukewarm Christians have no urgency, but this rich man in hell certainly had an urgency. I think that he also believed in soul-winning like no one ever believed in soul-winning before.

I pity those who support abortion. Judging by what happened to the rich man, I believe they will get a view of all the souls they sent to be with Jesus before they were even born. Millions upon millions of unborn babies are at home with God, safe in heaven.

How do we know this? Isaiah 49:5 tells us that the Lord forms His servants “from the mother’s womb.” Ephesians 1:4 says that He chose each of us from before the foundation of the world. God looks into the dust and sees each one and He writes their names in a book the moment they are conceived (Psalm 139:13-16). Only when a person finally rejects Him is that person’s name blotted out of the book.

Just think of what hell will be like for those who have killed all these babies. Those who die in the womb possess more than just life. Each one has divine viability. In other words, they were *people* for whom God had a destiny.

The rich man’s destiny was now determined. He will live forever in his condition—a condition that will never change. Perhaps he heard about this condition from godly preachers, but he did not accept their preaching. Now there is nothing he can do about it.

**For more about the irrevocable quality of salvation for the believer, be sure to read Eternally Secure, by Pastor Carl H. Stevens, Grace Publications, 2002.*

Chapter Three

NEEDED: UNCTION AND URGENCY

“And David sware moreover, and said, Thy father certainly knoweth that I have found grace in thine eyes; and he saith, Let not Jonathan know this, lest he be grieved: but truly as the LORD liveth, and as thy soul liveth, there is but a step between me and death” (1 Samuel 20:3).

“And if any man hear my words, and believe not, I judge him not: for I came not to judge the world, but to save the world.

“He that rejecteth me, and receiveth not my words, hath one that judgeth him: the word that I have spoken, the same shall judge him in the last day” (John 12:47-48).

Oh, so many are lost today. They are just one step from death. Jesus spoke words from the Bible that explained how simple it is to become saved. But the ones who refuse those words will one day be condemned by those very words.

“I say unto you, that likewise joy shall be in heaven over one sinner that repenteth, more than over ninety and nine just persons, which need no repentance.

“Either what woman having ten pieces of silver, if she lose one piece, doth not light a candle, and sweep the house, and seek diligently till she find it?

“And when she hath found it, she calleth her friends and her neighbours together, saying, Rejoice with me; for I have found the piece which I had lost.

“Likewise, I say unto you, there is joy in the presence of the angels of God over one sinner that repenteth” (Luke 15:7-10).

Hell is real. In the Bible, Jesus gave 232 road signs to hell. He spoke about it more than He spoke about heaven. People who enter into witnessing, ministering, and preaching the Gospel have beautiful feet (Isaiah 52:7; Romans 10:15). The Good News they present about Christ can keep others out of hell. They bring people into an eternal destiny with God.

We cannot afford to be lukewarm Christians, appreciating salvation but remaining independent of living by the whole Bible, independent of being faithful to a local church, and indepen-

dent of the urgency to seek the lost. The Holy Spirit wants to constrain us by love, motivate us by grace, and energize us by truth in the illumination of the reality of our eternal destiny and the eternal destiny of others.

There is joy in heaven when one soul is saved because those angels know the reality of separation from God. They were there during Lucifer's rebellion. They watched as a third of their number were driven from the presence of the Lord forever when they joined Satan in his rebellion against God (Revelation 12:4). When they see a soul get saved, the angels are overwhelmed with joy. Just one person's decision to receive Christ brings rejoicing in heaven.

Lord, Where Would I Be Without You?

I cannot fathom what it would be like to go to bed every night as one who is lost. Yet, there are so many who breeze through life without an inkling that they are lost, destined for hell. Some of your best friends and family members, perhaps, could care less about hell. But one day, they will suffer the reality of a Christless eternity. They will experience wailing and gnashing of teeth if they don't come to Jesus Christ (Matthew 13:42, 50).

We must recognize the urgency of this message. It is imperative that we have God's heart to seek the lost. The Blood of Christ is the foundation for our salvation. Jesus died to pay for our sins. When He rose from the dead, He went to heaven to present His blood to the Father as the price to buy us back from Satan's dominion.

One thing that makes the reality of hell so terrible is that salvation is a gift. We don't earn it. By grace, we are saved through faith. It is not even that we "choose" to be saved. Salvation is not of ourselves. It is a gift of God. Our choice is simply to be utterly dependent upon Christ, who completely fulfilled the Father's will on the Cross of Calvary. Eternal life is a gift (Ephesians 2:8-9), and we only need to receive it by faith. To reject that gift makes hell an ever more horrible, indescribable experience full of unsatisfied appetites and memories that cannot be quenched.

A Final Glimpse into Hell

"And they shall go forth, and look upon the carcasses of the men that have transgressed against me: for their worm shall not die, neither shall their fire be quenched; and they shall be an abhorring unto all flesh" (Isaiah 66:24).

Isaiah 66 is talking about a glimpse into hell

at the end of the Millennial Reign, the thousand-year period when Christ rules the earth, right after the Great Tribulation and the reign of the Antichrist.* The point is that one thousand years after Satan and his demons are tossed into the lake of fire, they will still be there—alive and in torment. Isaiah 66 explains that God will pull back the veil and will let us see exactly what He saved us from. We will have the mind of Christ to complement our glorified bodies, so our attitude will be different and we will be able to bear that encounter—as terrible as it will be.

“And the beast was taken, and with him the false prophet that wrought miracles before him, with which he deceived them that had received the mark of the beast, and them that worshipped his image. These both were cast alive into a lake of fire burning with brimstone” (Revelation 19:20*b*).

“And the devil that deceived them was cast into the lake of fire and brimstone, where the beast and the false prophet are, and shall be tormented day and night for ever and ever” (Revelation 20:10).

“This is what I saved you from,” God will announce. “See their consciences, see the fire, see that all flesh is abhorred down there. That is

what you have been saved from.”

In heaven, after we have witnessed the White Throne Judgment of the unsaved—a time when more tears will be shed than ever before, in one day—God will wipe away all the tears of the believers. He will remove all their sorrow and pain, and the saved will enter into unending joy.

But in hell, as it is enlarged for the last time, when the last soul is cast into the bottomless pit and the lake of fire, unimaginable torment will have just begun—unending misery with no remedy. No one had to go there. And as long as a lost soul on earth has a breath of life, his destiny is not decided. With God, all things are possible; only believe (Matthew 19:26; Mark 5:36).

** For more about the events of the end times, we suggest reading The Pre-Tribulational Rapture, by Dr. Daniel E. Lewis, Grace Publications, 1997.*

CONCLUSION

The Bible says that believers who witness, minister, and preach the Gospel help people to get saved. They introduce people to the prospect of an eternal destiny with God by accepting Christ as their personal Savior.

The seriousness and the reality of hell should motivate us to live a serious Christian life. Daily devotions should be a practice in the home. Prayer and evangelism should be priorities in our schedules. We should love our neighbors as we love ourselves. We need to be bearers of the Good News. Knowing what we have been saved from should cause us to be occupied much more with Jesus Christ (Hebrews 12:2). We should always be so thankful that we will never be condemned and that we will never face the wrath of God.

For this reason, so many Christians are dedicated to serve God. Many are willing to give and to go without, not counting the cost but es-

teeming the value of a soul. This is why Christians need to be more than Sunday morning Christians. We need to take our walk with God very seriously, allowing it to affect every area of our lives.

Jesus Christ cannot lie. Hell is real. I thank God for those who are saved. May God bless you and motivate you to seek the lost. Don't be condemned by these words. Receive them. Be thankful that you know the truth about hell, and let this truth transform your life.

If you are not saved, please pray and ask Jesus into your heart. Right where you are, say, *Dear Jesus, come into my heart and save me. Thank You for shedding Your blood and dying on the Cross in my place. Thank You for all the things You have used in my life to prepare me for this moment. Help me to seek You first in everything I do, to depend on You completely, and to be used to win lost souls back to You. In Jesus' name, Amen.*