

## There Must be a Hell

James Boswell records a conversation between Dr. Samuel Johnson and Sir Joshua Reynolds about Johnson's fear of death. "What are you afraid of?" asked Reynolds. "Damnation, sir," replied Johnson, "damnation."

I am quite sure that not many people have said that to you lately. Even many evangelicals are intellectually embarrassed to speak of hell and damnation.

In preaching you don't hear very often anymore about "eternity" or "being lost."

There is that tremendous human attractiveness of a belief which assures eternal life and bliss to every man. People like to believe that everybody will be eternally with God. The heart of this thinking is that since God is love that all will be saved. How can a good God let people go to hell?

Of course, there is a lack of a concept of sin. Furthermore, many have reduced the gospel to a mere social ethic. They have put God in a box and He is to be like what they think He ought to be.

They want to manipulate God to their own form of rationalistic thinking. They think that God is as permissive as our own permissive society.

As appealing this universalism is to modern man, it is nevertheless in contradiction to the total teaching of the Bible. G.K. Chesterton once remarked: "Hell is the greatest compliment God has ever paid to the dignity of human nature."

God says to man, "You are significant. I take you seriously." Hell is God's final monument to the manishness of man. After all, no one ever thinks of a dog going to hell.

Francis Schaeffer points out in *Death in the City*: "The only way that one can get rid of the lostness of men is to give up either one of two things. First is the emphasis upon God's true holiness. This, of course, removes this lostness of men. But the results are disastrous. What is lost is not just God, but man. If Nietzsche says, God is dead, Satre must say, man is dead. For, if you give up the true holiness of God, you give up any moral absolute in the universe, and you are back in a big circle where everything is adrift.

Second ... if you give up the holiness of God, there are no absolutes and morality becomes a zero. If you want a significant man, with absolutes, morality and meaning, then you must have what the Bible insists upon – that God will judge men justly, and they will not be able to raise their voices because of the base upon which He judges them."

Jesus is the compassionate and loving Lord. Yet the most fearful utterances with regard to future punishment are those of Jesus Christ Himself. Jesus talked about the categories of lost and saved.

The talk about outer darkness, the closed door, the weeping and gnashing of teeth and the lake of fire come from the lips of the benevolent and gracious Lord. Not Peter or Paul, but the Lord Himself gives the most vivid description of the lost in hell and the clearest assertion of its eternal duration.

Jesus did not have tolerance as His great contemporary idol. You cannot choose between the moral teachings of Jesus and His teaching regarding the final judgment. So many want Him as Teacher, but not as Saviour and Lord.

It is no joy to write about hell. It is a burden to contemplate. You can only speak and write about this subject with compassion.

It was Robert McCheyne who said that the preacher ought never to speak of everlasting punishment without tears. If the word of the Lord and His teachings can be trusted, then we are under a divine command to call people to repentance around the whole world.

If we believe in Scripture than we better tell the world that there is a heaven to be gained and a hell to be shunned. Hell is not frozen over.

Is man really lost? Don't answer too quickly: "Yes, I believe this. I subscribe to this truth as taught in Scripture." For if we say yes, then as the Lord's disciples we will have to follow Him and preach the message: "He who believes in the Son has eternal life; he who does not obey the Son shall not see life, but the wrath of God rests upon him." (John 3:36)

O God, to think the countless souls that pass away  
Through each short moment that we live,  
Destined to dwell in Heaven,  
or groan in Hell for aye.

O. stir me up, and new strength give,  
And let not one pass out through death  
in shame and sin,  
That I through Thee might seek and win.

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