

“The Burning Issue...”

Presentation Handout

“Hell”...not Positive Thoughts!

What comes to mind when you hear the word “hell.” I would not imagine very positive thoughts.

In our culture today, it’s used as a curse word or a derogatory reference to demean others, tell others off, get back at others, “bless others out,” or to describe something severe, usually bad or reckless like:

“The h___ with you!” “Go to h___!” “He/she is h___-bent!” “That was a h___ of a storm!”

Neither is it viewed as positive when referring to the domain/final place for the lost! Nor does God get any “good press” when He’s associated with it!

Here’s just two descriptions of the traditional mindset about hell and God’s association with it and lost that end up there.

“The angel, binding you (*using personalization for affect*) hand and foot, holds you one single moment over the mouth of the chasm. He bids you look down—down—down. There is no bottom; and you hear coming up from the abyss, sullen moans, and hollow groans, and screams of tortured ghosts. You quiver, your bones melt like wax, and you marrow quakes within you....

Ye shriek and cry, ye beg for mercy; but the angel, with one tremendous grasp, seizes you fast, and then hurls you down, with the cry, ‘Away, away!’ And down you go to the pit that is bottomless, and roll for ever downward—downward—downward—ne’er to find resting-place for the soles of feet, Ye shall be cast out.” {[Charles Spurgeon, “Heaven and Hell” sermon, Sep 4, 1855 - www.spurgeon.org/sermons/0039.htm](http://www.spurgeon.org/sermons/0039.htm)}

“O sinner! Consider the fearful danger you are in: it is a great furnace of wrath, a wide and bottomless pit, full of the fire of wrath, that you are held over in the hand of that God, whose wrath is provoked and incensed as much against you, as against many of the damned in hell.

“It is everlasting wrath. It would be dreadful to suffer this fierceness and wrath of Almighty God one moment; but you must suffer it to all eternity. There will be no end to this exquisite horrible misery. When you look forward, you shall see a long for ever, a boundless duration before you, which will swallow up your thoughts, and amaze your soul; and you will absolutely despair of ever having any deliverance, any end, any mitigation, any rest at all. ...Your punishment will indeed be infinite.” {[Jonathan Edwards, “Sinners in the Hands of an Angry God” sermon, Jul 8, 1741 - www.philmorgan.org/wp-content/uploads/2010](http://www.philmorgan.org/wp-content/uploads/2010)}

“If [a Christian] loves God, he must love hell, too. If God decrees it, it must be good and for God’s glory, and the evangelical [Christian] knows that he will sing God’s praises



eternally as the smoke ascends from the burning pit! Amen....! When Christ asks, ‘Do you love Me?’ He is asking, ‘Do you love hell?’”

“Even *now* while the evangelical [Christian] is singing the praises of His Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ, he knows that multitudes are suffering the torments of the damned.... The true Christian, aware of this, is happily, exuberantly, gladly praising the Judge of the Last Days, Jesus Christ, who has sentenced to such merited damnation millions of souls.”

{Dr. John H. Gerstner, *Repent or Perish*, pp.31-32}

TAKE-AWAY: Wow! Hell is not for the faint of heart! At least not for Spurgeon, who has some great quotes on the gospel, but not when it comes to hell, or Jonathan Edwards. When you read his sermon: “Sinners in the Hands of an Angry God” you can feel the heat of hell and chills up spine. No wonder many are repulsed by this understanding of hell and the God who is supposed to have created it and administers its torture on the unsaved/wicked.

The question is: Is this really the way it is? Is this the hell of the Bible? Is God the Eternal Torturer as described in these sermon quotes?

Remember: how one views death -> influences how one views hell -> how one views God!

So, what does the Bible teach about hell and God’s relationship to it?

Hell—Truth & Lessons

- **Hell was never for humans** {*Matthew 25:41, 46*}.
 - This would surprise many people—Christian and non-Christian!
 - Wait! Isn’t hell God’s punishment for willful sinning and unrepentance? Yes & no!
 - ❖ Doesn’t God, like the above descriptions depict, relish throwing sinners into hell so they can suffer eternally for their sins and unrepentance? No!!!
 - ❖ Here lies the beauty about the biblical understanding of hell described in the Bible by Jesus in His Sheep & Goats parable found in *Matthew 25*.
 - ✓ Hell was originally only for Satan & his evil angels who willfully rebelled against the Godhead, Their character, Their love, Their justice, and Their government. Hell was never made/intended for human beings!
 - ✓ Thus, no human being should ever be in/go to hell, except that they chose it of their freewill.
- **Hell is the second death** {*Revelation 20:4-(6); 21:6-8*}.
 - *Romans 6:23* says, “The wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord.”
 - Paul is contrasting the results/wages of sin and God’s gift in Jesus.
 - ❖ Sin = death & God’s gift = eternal life in/through Jesus
 - ❖ This death must be more than just physical death that all humans suffer if not translated (the Christian) at Jesus’ Second Coming.
 - ❖ The “wages of sin death” is only something that non-Christians/unbelievers experience because of their rejection of Jesus and His gift of salvation.
 - ✓ This is the thought Paul is contrasting here in this Scripture along with Jesus in *Matthew 25:46*.
 - This death is the final, eternal separation death that the Bible calls the second death.

- ❖ Also, based on the book of *Revelation* this death is also what we call hell.
 - ✓ It's the final experience/judgment/punishment of the unsaved/wicked.
- **Jesus died the second death for humanity** {*Psalm 22:1, 6-8, 14-(16),18; Matthew 27:46; Mark 15:34; 2 Corinthians 5:21*}.
 - When Jesus died on Calvary for humanity's sins, He died this second death!
 - Since the wages of sin is death (eternal, second death) and Jesus died to redeem sinful humanity from sin, He would have had to pay the price/wages of sin—the eternal, second death mentioned in the book of *Revelation*.
 - ❖ “For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten (one and only) Son that whosoever believes in Him will not perish but have everlasting life” {*John 3:16*}.
 - ❖ “For He (God the Father) made Him (Jesus) who knew no sin to be sin for us, that we might become the righteousness of God in Him (Jesus)” {*2 Corinthians 5:21*}.
 - This is why He cried out from the very depths of His being: “My God, My God, why have you forsaken Me” {*Matthew 27:46*}?
 - ❖ When one focuses on the physical torture of Calvary or hell, he/she misses the point of humanity's salvation story or the horror of hell.
 - ✓ Christ's agony on Calvary was His separation from His Father, not the physical torture. This is what broke His heart!
 - ✓ The same with hell. It's focus is not the physical torture as some believe, particularly in the above quotes in this presentation handout. Instead, it is the separation of the unsaved/wicked from God's presence, His grace and mercy, and His life. This is hell!
 - Since Jesus paid the price of “the wages of sin”—eternal, final, second death, separation from God forever—no one should have to suffer them. Jesus already did for every single human being as us!
 - ❖ The only reason someone would suffer this second death-hell is because he/she has rejected, willfully or passively, what Jesus already did on Calvary to purchase their salvation.
 - ❖ Thus, God doesn't damn/condemn human beings to hell in a vindictive vengeful attitude. Instead, in an essence He already went to hell for every human being, so they don't need to!!
- **Hell is God's just punishment, not eternal punishing** {*Matthew 25:46 ; 2 Peter 2:4-10 (4, 6, 9)*}.
 - Many individuals view God's punishment like human punishment with an attitude of vengeance/wrath/“payback.”
 - Instead, biblical hell is a just, righteous judgment on sin, not a condemning of human beings.
 - This idea believes God's attitude is like what we find described in the quotes in the beginning of this presentation handout.
 - ❖ They picture Him gleefully condemning the unsaved/wicked with writhing, everlasting punishment that produces begging of mercy that He doesn't respond to with any kind of sympathy, mercy, etc.
 - Others see God's punishment/judgment as a contradiction or anathema to God's love and mercy.

- This view sees God as more hands-off, like allowing the consequences of the sins of the wicked to play out in their lives.
 - ❖ However, the book of Revelation states that hell fire (*from a biblical perspective*) comes down from God out of heaven to burn up/devour the wicked {*Revelation 20:9; Malachi 4:2-(3)*}.
 - ❖ Yet, again, this doesn't mean God gleefully rubs His hands together, desiring at any moment to condemn another poor sinner to hell.
 - ❖ Actually, it is God's strange act when He has to administer this just judgment/punishment for sin {*Ezekiel 18:21-(23)*}. He does ***not*** want anyone to die the second death!!
- Instead, biblically hell is a just, righteous judgment on sin, not a condemning of sinful human beings, the wicked, to an everlasting punishing.
 - Nowhere in the Bible does it state God damns sinners/the wicked to hell out of spite so they can writhe in torture forever.
- The word-order “eternal/everlasting punishing” does not exist in the major English translations of the Bible because this concept is foreign to God's way of dealing with sinners.
- The concept of “eternal/everlasting punishment” *is* in the Bible, yet it still isn't the idea many might believe.
 - *2 Peter 2:4-10 (4, 6, 9)*
 - ❖ The words: “judgment” and “destruction” are associated with “punishment” in this passage.
 - ✓ So, whatever happens to the unsaved/wicked in hell is not God vindictively punishing them forever in writhing pain or torture.
 - ✓ Neither does this passage refer to hell as “eternal” or “everlasting” in nature.
 - ✓ Instead, the punishment-judgment on Sodom & Gomorrah turned these cities into ashes, not eternal/everlasting punishing/punishment as ongoing forever.
 - ✓ Thus, the results of hell are “eternal/everlasting” in their consequences/effects, not in their duration.
 - ✓ God is not condemning the unsaved/wicked to an eternal/everlasting torturing in hell but giving them what they've chosen in choosing a life of separation from God—not wanting to be in heaven for eternity with Him.

TAKE-AWAY: Just like with death, there are seemingly confusing, contradictive Scriptures regarding hell. So, let's examine them to discover how they fit into the plain teaching of the Bible on what hell is and what happens in it.

Confusing Scriptures on Hell

- “Eternal death”—a living on forever in hell {*Romans 6:23*}
 - God only provides eternal life to the saved—those believing in Jesus—not “eternal life” to the lost/wicked in hell.
 - Eternal life for the saved doesn't equal “eternal life” for the unsaved/wicked.

- ❖ The results for the wicked is “eternal”—not life but death instead, nor an immortality soul living forever in hell {*Matthew 25:46* ; *2 Peter 2:4-10 (4, 6, 9)*}.
- “Tormented forever and ever” {*Revelation 14:11; 20:9-(10)*}
 - The question is: Do these “forever and ever” statements describe the duration of hell or its effect.
 - In *2 Peter 2:10* the cities of Sodom & Gomorrah are completely destroyed—turned “into ashes,” which symbolizes what will happen to the unsaved/wicked in hell at the end of time.
 - In *Revelation 20:9*, Satan & his evil associates/helpers are “devoured” by the “fire” that comes “down from God out of heaven.”
 - The Scriptural allusion/background for *Revelation 14:11* is *Isaiah 34:8-10*.
 - ❖ The background/context for *Isaiah 34* is God’s judgment on Edom, which had willfully rebelled against Him & His people.
 - ❖ And this judgment on Edom is described by terms like: “pitch,” “brimstone,” “burning pitch,” “not be quenched night or day,” and “smoke shall ascend forever.”
 - ✓ These words and phrases are similar or exactly as used in the book of *Revelation* to describe the destruction of the unsaved/wicked in hell.
 - ❖ It’s interesting to note that Edom is not still burning today. So, judgment/hell is not “forever and ever” in duration, but its effects/results are.
 - ✓ In the verses following *Isaiah 34:8-10*, the pelican, porcupine, owl, raven, jackals, ostriches, etc. along with thorns, nettles, and brambles would live/grow there after God’s judgment. If this area was still an eternal stream of burning pitch (as many understand hell) it would be uninhabitable for these above-mentioned animals or plants.
 - Thus, “forever” is a relative term:
 - ❖ It can mean forever as one would commonly think of it, particularly in describing God and/or His salvation.
 - ❖ In other places/uses in the Bible it can be seen as long as life lasts, like slaves serving their masters {*Exodus 21:16*},
- “Unquenchable fire” {*Matthew 3:(7)-(12)*}
 - God’s wrath and “unquenchable fire” are linked in this Scripture passage.
 - In the parable of the Wheat & Tares, Jesus equates the saved with the wheat and the lost with the tares/weeds {*Matthew 13:24-30, 36-39*}.
 - Wheat/saved are gathered into His (God, Jesus’) “barn” {*vv. 30, 43*}.
 - Tares/weeds are gathered and bundled to be burned {*vv. 30, 40-42*}.
 - ❖ Using Jesus’ analogy: as the tares/weeds are burned up in a furnace/fire the unsaved/wicked are burned up in destruction/hell {*Malachi 3:1-3; Revelation 20:9*}.
 - ❖ And in *Matthew 3:12* & *Luke 3:17* this is exactly what John the Baptist states about those who experience this “unquenchable fire”—they are **burned up**.
 - The prophet Jeremiah also predicts Jerusalem would suffer a fire that is not quenched {*Jeremiah 17*}.
 - In *v. 4* this fire is described as burning “forever.”
 - In *v. 27* this fire is described as not being “quenched.”

- However, in *v. 27* it's also described as a fire that 'shall devour.'
- What we learn from *Jeremiah 17* is that "unquenchable" can mean: can't be put out until it runs out of fuel.
 - ❖ Obviously, the gates of Jerusalem are not still burning today. The fire went out after it burned up what it was burning—in this case the gates/city.
- "Wailing and gnashing of teeth" {*Matthew 8:10-(12); 13:42, 49-50; 22:11-(13); Luke 13:24-(28)*}
 - Jesus' uses this saying to describe the ultimate fate of the unsaved/lost.
 - There is no reference to it being an eternal/everlasting suffering/torture.
- "Worm does not die" {*Mark 9:43-48*}
 - Jesus uses this phrase multiple times in *Mark 9* to describe hell or the effects of hell on those who reject His salvation gift.
 - Again, the question is: Does this phrase refer to the duration of hell or the final consequences/effect of it?
 - The Old Testament background to this phrase is *Isaiah 66:24*.
 - I [presenter: David] must admit is more difficult to interpret.
 - This verse on the surface seems to indicate ongoing, eternal, everlasting existence.
 - ❖ Some commentators state this is figurative language to describe the eternal effect of the destruction of the unsaved/lost in hell, not eternal duration of suffering {*Dr. Edward W. Fudge in his book The Fire That Consumes*}
 - Yet, the context does not seem to indicate this non-duration of existence because in *vv. 22-23*, God creates a new heavens and new earth where the redeemed will come each Sabbath to worship God.
- "Devil...cast into lake of fire" {*Revelation 20:10*}
 - The (sea) "beast" {*Revelation 13*} and the false prophet/land beast {*Revelation 16 & 13*} are also cast into the lake of fire with the devil.
 - This language is symbolic/figurative, though describing real events, because the beast & false prophet are religious and/or political systems, which cannot be cast into the lake of fire.
 - So, could this indicate what is being described happening to the devil/Satan is also symbolic, though a real event?
 - It would seem so, based on the above observations. What is happening to the devil/Satan is a description of his final destruction along with the false systems he influenced to fight against Jesus & His people in the last days.
 - This would line up with *Ezekiel 28:18-19* and *Revelation 20:7-(9)* where it describes him being devoured/burned up.
 - Then God's promise that Satan and sin will finally be destroyed forever, no more to raise its ugly head again to ruin God's perfect creation!!

LIVING CHOICE: Will you rest in Jesus, trusting Him to take of you in these last days, knowing that He actively longs to save everyone, not desiring anyone to suffer in hell forever?