

#22 “The Necessary Doctrine of Hell”

by Brent Barnett

www.relevantbibleteaching.com

The doctrine of hell has come under siege. Some teach that hell doesn't exist and that all men will live forever. Others, called annihilationists, believe that some are not saved, but they do not go to hell. They teach that unbelieving man simply ceases to exist. What is the reasoning behind this kind of thinking? Three categories pretty well sum up the arguments against the wrath of God on unbelieving man. One, it doesn't seem fair. Two, God is love and wouldn't send anybody to hell. Three, justification doesn't really mean what we think it means.

By and large the argument that carries the weight with those who argue against hell is that they simply don't like it. Hell is awful, hideous, horrendous, and brutal. No Bible-believing Christian ought to argue with that. The only thing worse than the attacks of the devil is the wrath of God. As Luke 12:5 says, "But I will warn you whom to fear: fear the One who, after He has killed, has authority to cast into hell; yes, I tell you, fear Him!" God is not evil. God is perfect, He is love, and He is just. According to His holiness and justice, He must punish sin. Is God unjust as to send anyone to hell? In no way, for He opened the door to heaven for anyone who would receive Christ by faith. Yet many don't, but shake their fist in anger against God, blaming Him for their sin and cursing Him for His righteous expectations. But to throw out the doctrine of hell simply because it is unappealing? The cross is not exactly appealing; just ask anyone who has seen Mel Gibson's *The Passion of Christ*. The cross is brutal and grotesque. Yet it was the manifestation of God's love that was required to blot out sin. Is hell appealing? No, but it is the only righteous and equitable way to deal with those who reject the means to their forgiveness.

If hell didn't exist, we could live however we wanted, and it wouldn't matter. In fact, God wasted His time in sending Jesus because we wouldn't need Him to escape the death sentence of hell which is the wage of sin. (Thus, it makes sense that those who question the validity of hell lack a burden to evangelize. When we understand the destiny of our unsaved friends, family, and acquaintances, we ought to be moved to share the gospel with them.) I don't think that God wasted His time or that Jesus suffered for no reason. God in the flesh knew what He was doing, and He did it in great love. Because God loves His Son, He must punish those who do not put their trust in Him and receive Him as Savior and Lord.

Satan himself will be thrown into hell (Revelation 20:10). He doesn't rule hell and torture people. He is burning alive with them. The lake of fire is God's, not Satan's. It is created by Him as a means of wrath and justice. Only against the backdrop of sin, death, and hell does the cross make sense and showcase the glory and love of God. Justice and love go hand in hand. So would God send somebody to hell even though He is loving? Absolutely, because He loves His Son and because He is just to punish sin. Do Hitler,

Stalin, child molesters, and rapists get off the hook free? Do murderers, adulterers, liars, thieves, and drunkards go unpunished? On the earth, they may get away with their sin, but before God, they are merely storing up wrath. Sin must be punished, and righteousness will be rewarded. The only way to be found righteous is in trusting in Christ by faith and repenting of sin, no matter how grotesque the sin may have been. The only unforgiveable sin is rejecting the Son. Such is the difference between an eternity in heaven and an eternity in hell.

This is why we celebrate justification. The Righteous Judge will judge us righteous because of Christ. We are justly declared holy before God. The glory of justification is that by grace through faith through the work of Christ we can be made whole so that we can enter heaven. Yet some try to rewrite the doctrine of justification, saying that God will eventually work to bring righteousness to all men. Indeed, according to the New Perspective on Paul, He already has. The issue according to those who hold to this position is simply mankind learning to get along with one another given that we are all already righteous because of Christ. As such, their gospel is one of an ecumenical nature, trying to show that whether Jew, Gentile, or something else, we are all righteous, and we must learn to tolerate one another as we will all go to heaven. Yet this is not so. Those who have the Son have life, and those who do not have the Son do not have life (1 John 5:12). There will be a first death and a second death (Revelation 2:11, 21:8). There will be a judgment before Christ for believers (2 Corinthians 5:10) and an opening of the books before the Great White Throne for unbelievers (Revelation 20:11-15). It is appointed unto men once to die, and after this, the judgment (Hebrews 9:27). No one will escape, and all will bow the knee to Christ even if unwillingly. It is only those who confess Jesus as Lord and who believe in their hearts that God raised Him from the dead who will be saved.

We must take the Bible literally. Man is not annihilated, for his spirit is eternal. God has set eternity in the heart of man (Ecclesiastes 3:11). He doesn't get judged for sin and then cease to exist. Such would be unjust. There needs to be a punishment for sin, otherwise God wouldn't have had to pour out His wrath on Christ. God will pour out wrath on those who are unbelieving. There is a lake of fire reserved for the unrighteous, for hell is just for sinners who reject God's provision in Christ. They know what is right and the punishment of not doing right, yet they do not care (Romans 1:32). If man could reason away hell, then he could do whatever he wanted because God would not be sovereign and Jesus was just a crazy man who died for no reason. We may not like hell, but it is for real. In light of the fact that it is real, we ought to be all the more burdened to sow seeds of the gospel so that we can do our part to keep someone from an eternity apart from God in agony.

For more on the subject of hell, please read ["Is hell really a place of eternal torment?"](#)