

October, 2006

Pause Ponder Profit

Hell Ought To Scare You

by Donnie V. Rader

The young man I was talking to had been a Christian for several years. He had sinned a year or so before our discussion and had repented. Then about four months prior to our talk he had again yielded to the temptation that Joseph would not (Gen. 39). This time there was no repentance and seemingly no concern. Perhaps, no cessation of the sin either.

One question kept coming to my mind before we had any discussion, "Does he ever think about hell?" I wondered if he understood that if he died in this condition that he would spend eternity in hell. So, I ask if he was afraid of hell. His answer: "I guess not as much as I ought to be." I suggested that he wasn't afraid at all! Why? I'm not certain. But one thing is sure: when one can lay his head down at night knowing that he is in sin and will go to hell if he dies and not be afraid, there is little hope.



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The above story could be duplicated time and again. Perhaps because we have neglected the old hell fire and brimstone preaching. Let's revisit this old subject that may be somewhat "new" to some. It oughta scare ya!

Hell Is Real

Hell is not a fictitious story or myth. It is not a condition or state of mind. It is a real place. Luke 16, which speaks of the realm of departed spirits (Hades and not the eternal abode), is a foretaste of greater things to come. The rich man spoke of this "place" of torment (vv. 23, 28). He was in a *real* place. It is merely a foretaste of worse to come.

Hell is just as real as heaven. They are often put on an equality as far as their nature goes (cf. Matt. 25:46). If Heaven is real, so is hell. If hell is a state of mind, so is heaven.

Jesus said we ought to fear him who is able to destroy both soul and body in hell (Matt. 10:28). In this we learn that (1) Hell should be feared. (2) It is beyond the grave. (3) It should motivate us to live so as to go to heaven. All of these point to the reality of hell.

Hell Is Terrible

It may be that some of those who believe in hell think that the biblical descriptions of it are overstated. Surely it could not be as bad as the old fashion preachers used to say it would be. The following points tell us how terrible hell really is.

1. *Gehenna*. The word hell (when referring to the eternal abode of the wicked) is from the

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ek word Gehenna. When we understand how
word came to be used to describe the eternal
nation, we will appreciate how tragic hell is.

a. **Gehenna points back to the Valley of Hinnom.** “Originally the Valley of Hinnom, near Jerusalem, Gehenna became among the Jews the synonym for the place of torment in the future” (*ISBE* 1371). “Gehenna is a transliteration in the Aram. form of the Heb. ge-hinnom, Valley of Hinnom” (*ISBE* 1183). This valley was to the southwest of Jerusalem.

b. **This valley was the seat of worship to the idol Molech.** “That ‘the valley of Hinnom’ came to be the technical designation for the place of eternal punishment was due to two causes. In the first place the valley had been the seat of the detestable and idolatrous worship to Molech, to whom children were immolated by fire (2 Ch. 28:3; 33:6). Secondly, on account of these practices the place was defiled by King Josiah (2 K 23:10), and came in consequence associated in prophecy with the judgment to be visited upon the people (Jer. 7:32)” (*ISBE* 1183).

The sacrifice that was made to Molech was awful. Many texts tell of parents burning their sons and daughters to honor this idol (cf. Jer. 7:31; 19:5-6; 2 Kings 23:10). “The image of Molech was a human figure with a bull’s head and stretched arms, ready to receive the children destined for sacrifice. The image of metal was heated red hot by a fire kindled within, and the children laid on its arms rolled off into the fiery below” (*ISBE* 2075).

c. **The valley came to be used to burn the city’s trash and rubbish.** It was the city’s incinerator. Jeremiah spoke of the valley of dead bodies and of ashes (Jer. 31:40). “Into this valley dead bodies were probably cast to be consumed by the dogs . . . and fires were kept burning to

consume the rubbish of the city. Such associations led to the Ge-Hinnom (NT ‘Gehenna’) becoming the ‘type of Hell’” (*ISBE* 1393).

2. **Lake of fire.** Hell is described as a lake that burns with fire and brimstone (Rev. 20:10, 14, 15; 21:8). Imagine a literal lake that you know. Picture that every drop of water were a flammable substance (i.e. gasoline). If that were set aflame, what would it be like to be thrown into the middle of it?

Brimstone is perhaps sulfur that melts and runs in streams. It spreads and is sticky. Picture that some sticky substance is poured all over you (i.e. honey or molasses). What if that were a flammable substance set aflame? Can you imagine the intense pain, the agony and the suffering?

Other passages portray hell as a furnace of fire (Matt. 13:42, 50), a flaming fire (2 Thess. 1:7-9), a baptism of fire (Matt. 3:11-12), and an unquenchable fire (Mark 9:43).

3. **Weeping, wailing and gnashing of teeth.** Those who are cast into hell will be howling, crying aloud and grinding their teeth (cf. Matt. 8:12; 13:50; 25:30). What a picture of punishment!

Hell Is Eternal

The above descriptions of hell would be bad enough if it only lasted for a day or even an hour. However, the pain and suffering of hell is eternal. Jesus equated “hell fire” (Matt. 18:9) with “everlasting fire” (v. 8). Jesus contrasted the “everlasting punishment” with “eternal life” (Matt. 25:46). Hell is as long as heaven is. The smoke of torment ascends “forever and ever” (Rev. 14:10-11).

It scares me to think about hell. It oughta scare you too!

“Feel Good” Preaching

by Larry Ray Hafley

Our heavenly Father is “the God of all comfort” (2 Cor. 1:3). At times, God instructed his prophets to “speak comfortably” to his people (Isa. 40:1, 2). Indeed, we must take the word of God and “comfort one another” (1 Thess. 4:18). When one is faint hearted, he needs words of encouragement (1 Thess. 5:14). When one is bowed down with sorrow and shame for sin, we must comfort him with love and forgiveness (2 Cor. 2:7, 8). Preaching must be balanced. It must not all be done with whips and chains. It must not all be done with and kisses and caresses. To some, the gospel is the odor of death; to others, it is the aroma of life (2 Cor. 2:15–17). There is a time and a place for every purpose under heaven (Eccl. 3). Circumstances determine whether one should be approached “with a rod, or in love and in the spirit of meekness” (1 Cor. 4:21; 2 Cor. 13:2, 10; Jude 22, 23).

Sadistic spirits, determined not to allow any to survive their cut and slash approach, are a reproach to the gospel. Such spirits must be cast out of the pulpit. On the other hand, preaching does not need pseudo, superficial friendliness which ignores the serious nature of sin and salvation. Some suppose they can leave everyone in a good humor when they preach the gospel. If they can, they are better men than the Lord and his apostles (Matt. 15:12; Acts 22:22). Be wary of such men, for with “good words and fair speeches,” they lead many astray (Rom. 16:18; 2 Pet. 2:3). What are some of the characteristics of “feel good” preaching?

1. Avoids Controversy: Popular, people pleasing preachers are as useless as a soldier who admires the beautiful, carved handle of a sword but who refuses to use its cutting blade. Men were not “pricked (cut, stuck,

pierced) in their heart” by preachers who avoided controversy (Acts 2:37; 7:54). Since we are to follow Jesus, and speak as the oracles of God, ask yourself this question, “Did the Lord and the apostles avoid controversy?” No, rather they sought it out and stirred it up (Matt. 22; Acts 17). So must we!

2. Rarely Identifies Sin And The Sinner:

This type preacher presents himself as one who has risen above those who stoop to “name calling.” He speaks disparagingly of those who “sling mud” and “throw dirt,” and lets it be known that he is too mannerly and refined to “indulge in that style of preaching.” Of course, no one should be abusive or unnecessarily caustic in his preaching, but one who will not “call names” and specifically indict men in their sins, has no business preaching (Isa. 58:1). The Lord was a rather “dignified and distinguished” gentleman, but when situations demanded it, he was not above naming names and directly confronting men in their iniquity and hypocrisy (Matt. 15:3–14; 16:6–12). Neither were the apostles (Acts 13:10; Gal. 2:11–14; 2 Tim. 2:16–18; 3 Jn. 9). Nor should we be (1 Cor. 11:1).

3. Appeals To The Emotions: The gospel often evokes emotions, but faithful preaching does not use jokes, clever, witty stories, and “death bed tales and graveyard yarns,” to lead men to Christ. Entertainment is one thing; evangelism is quite another.

Conclusion: Gifted, talented men may become victims of the abilities God has given them. Worldly applause does not guarantee heavenly approval. Let us not be swooned and swayed by soothing oratory which tickles our ears but does not touch our hearts with the gospel story.

The Christian And The Lottery

by Clark Dugger

There was a time when the bulk of the American public considered gambling to be illegal and those that engaged in such practices were recognized as immoral and sinful. Not so any more. In fact, gambling is viewed today by millions of Americans as a viable form of amusement and entertainment. Even some who claim to be Christians are trying to justify going to the casinos to "get rich quick." Others, who might not go that far, do not oppose buying a lottery ticket and making a "contribution" to a worthy cause. For any who might be playing the lottery, listen carefully. Playing the lottery is gambling, and gambling is sinful!

Gambling by definition involves the "artificial creation of the risk of losing one's own possession in an attempt through chance to gain the possession of another." At the very heart of the gambler's motive is covetousness and greed. God wants the Christian to "labor, working with his hands what is good, that he may have something to give to him who has need" (Eph. 4:28). Gambling violates this important principle and command. Not only so, God warns those who "are minded to be rich" and possess "the love of money," for "some have strayed from the faith in their greediness, and pierced themselves through with many sorrows" (1 Tim. 6:9, 10).

How can you practice the "golden rule" (Matt. 7:12) hoping all the while to win and take another's money? You can't. Neither can you gamble and go to heaven, even if the game of chance played supposedly supports a "good cause."



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