

WHY ME? HELP AND HOPE FOR THE HURTING: FACTOR THREE

We Reap What Christ Sowed – The Cross/Chapter Four: The Final Destiny

There is an afterlife. The Word of God tells us that we will spend it in one of two places: heaven or hell. Heaven is a place of eternal happiness while hell is just the opposite, a state of never-ending punishment. While both are difficult to comprehend, hell is far more difficult to accept. A condition of perpetual torment seems incompatible with a God of love. Even in regard to God's justice, the concept of hell appears to be a glaring example of Divine overkill. Yet it is not. Understanding the significance of hell will enable us to appreciate the importance of Christ's redemptive work, as God's only provision for escaping this terrible place of endless suffering.

Make no mistake, we all deserve hell; not only because of what Adam did but because of what each of us has done. Originally, hell was prepared by God as a place of punishment for the fallen angels (Matthew 25:41). But once Adam plunged the human race into sin, it became God's perpetual prison for fallen people as well. Without receiving forgiveness for our sin from God, no one will ever be considered good enough on their own merit to be exempted from the never-ending agony of hell, or included in the everlasting bliss of heaven. This is confirmed in Revelation 20:11-15, which describes the climactic event of human history, commonly referred to as the Great White Throne Judgment. The passage reveals that hell will involve a forever reaping of the sin we have sown in our disobedience toward God. Hell itself is referred to as the "second death." It is the culmination of the death process – physically, spiritually and eternally. In this terrible place, people will be isolated from all that is good, since they will be permanently separated from the presence of God (2 Thessalonians 1:9). The residents of the lake of fire will never be in party mode. Instead, they will be immersed in such suffering that their existence will consist of continuous weeping and gnashing of teeth which will have no end (Luke 13:28). The agony of hell will make the very worst adversities on earth seem trivial by comparison.

As fully deserved as this suffering will be, why must it be so severe and why does it have to last forever? The answer is beyond our ability to fully comprehend, even though it can be stated simply. Hell will be extreme because God is holy and we are not. The torment will never end because God is infinite and we are not. When finite, sinful people disobey an infinite and holy God, we incur a debt of such magnitude that it deserves the severest punishment for an unending duration. If one thousand years in hell would pay off the debt of an individual's sin, don't you think that God would then release him? Of course He would. But there will never be any such release because the debt of sin that we owe is an eternal one which we can never fully repay.

This why our greatest need consists of having our sins forgiven by God, so that we can escape a never-ending death and enter into everlasting life. That ultimate need has been met by a gracious and loving God, through the person of Jesus Christ and His death and resurrection on our behalf. His death pays the penalty of our sin so that we can be forgiven. His resurrection conquers death, making eternal life possible. Only God, who is infinite and eternal, was capable of paying the infinite, everlasting debt of sin for every human being who ever lived, by means of Christ's singular death upon the Cross. Through faith in a crucified and risen Savior, we can reap what Christ has sown on our behalf: forgiveness of sin and eternal life. Apart from Him, we are forever doomed to reap the condemnation and punishment that we deserve, as a result of the sin which we have sown. **DO NOT PUT OFF A DECISION FOR CHRIST ANY LONGER! PLACE YOUR TRUST IN HIM AND HIS REDEMPTIVE WORK ON YOUR BEHALF, TODAY.**