

STANLEY FAITH EV FREE
Pastor Michael Thompson Sunday August 27th, 2017
HEAVEN AND HELL PART TWO
(What do We Really Know About Hell?)

INTRODUCTION

Hell is an unpopular doctrine. According to one of my mentors, Pastor Duncan Ross, *Hell is a doctrine of judgment and wrath in the midst of a culture whose defining values are tolerance and relativism. If ... there is no absolute standard of right and wrong, then the idea of absolute and eternal punishment becomes unthinkable.*

Another observation by Pastor Ross is that *people in our culture ... embrace Jesus as a loving Savior and a humble servant. But what they do not realize is that 75 percent of the Bible's teachings on hell comes not from those fiery Old Testament Prophets, but from Jesus himself. Jesus was a fire and brimstone preacher.*

Our culture accepts Jesus as a loving Savior. But it does not accept Jesus as Lord and as Judge of the living and the dead.

Because our culture only wants to hear about love Christians often fail to include the doctrine of hell when sharing the gospel.

But Jesus did not avoid the subject. He gave us most of the details about hell that we know. Since that is the case we need to give the doctrine of hell the proper place it deserves as we share our faith with others.

TOPICAL PREACHING

WHERE DO WE GET OUR TEACHING ON HELL?

Where do most people get their ideas about heaven and hell? Our biblically illiterate culture receives most of its' beliefs about heaven and hell from the latest movie or internet chat.

The result is that people take Hollywood fiction and treat their ideas as if they were true. But since God created heaven and hell. And He is the one who decides who goes to either place, we better look at what He says about hell.

Let's start by taking a glance at a few false teachings so we can cross them out. My goal when it comes to these matters is that I give you the word of God so that you will recognize foolishness when you hear it.

FALSE NOTIONS OF HELL

I. THE SECOND CHANCE VIEW

There are several false teachers who have promoted the idea that there will be a second chance for people to receive Christ.

One group teaches a heresy of purgatory which as we debunked last week as having no basis in Scripture. In fact the Scripture teaches the exact opposite of purgatory.

Hebrews 9:27 ²⁷ *Just as people are destined to die once, and after that to face judgment,*

We know that immediately upon death people are judged. They will either go immediately to be with Jesus Christ following the pattern of the sinner on the cross. Or they will be imprisoned for judgment with no possibility of release or a change of mind.

Purgatory was invented because the Roman Catholic church did not know what to do with children who died before they were baptized.

II. UNIVERSALISM

The second false teaching about hell is called universalism. Universalism is the teaching that everyone will escape hell. You know you are speaking to a universalist when you hear phrases such as; *“all roads lead to God.”*

I'm more interested in what God has to say because it is His road and His heaven and His lock on the door.

John 3:16(NIV)⁶ *For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life.*

John 3:36(NIV)⁶ *Whoever believes in the Son has eternal life, but whoever rejects the Son will not see life, for God's wrath remains on them.*

John 14:6 ⁶ *Jesus answered, “I am the way and the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me.*

To believe in universalism means that you must set aside the clear teaching of God's word.

III. ANNIHILATIONISM

Then there is the teaching of Annihilationism. Annihilationism is the teaching that people will not suffer God's wrath. Instead they will cease to exist as soon as they die. This teaching is catching on because it gives Christians the opportunity to present a positive and loving picture of Jesus.

I wish I could find the teaching of Annihilationism in the word of God. It would be more palatable for our culture as contrasted to the torments of hell. But there are serious problem with this teaching.

First, people who claim Annihilationism deny the resurrection of the unsaved for punishment. Instead they claim that the dead will just stay dead and never awaken. This is a denial of the clear teaching of Scripture. **John 5:28-29** ²⁸ ***“Do not be amazed at this, for a time is coming when all who are in their graves will hear his voice ²⁹ and come out—those who have done what is good will rise to live, and those who have done what is evil will rise to be condemned.***

That is consistent with several other passages including; **Revelation 20:12-15** ¹² ***And I saw the dead, great and small, standing before the throne, and books were opened. Another book was opened, which is the book of life. The dead were judged according to what they had done as recorded in the books...*** ¹⁵ ***Anyone whose name was not found written in the book of life was thrown into the lake of fire.***

If you die without Christ you will not disappear. God created you for the glorious purpose of living forever. His desire is that you live with Him in eternal joy. But for some ghastly reason some will chose to live forever with hatred toward the Son of God.

This passage could not be more clear, the dead will all appear for judgment in front of God. Those who appear before the throne are not annihilated. Not according to the plain teaching of the word of God.

IV. FOLKLORE AND HOMEBREW THEOLOGY

Lastly there is theology that people make up. People say what they wish to happen and then hang onto their beliefs even if there is no evidence to support their claims. For example;

Hell is a wild party

Many people believe Hell will be like a wild party with all the cool people. It will be a raucous time of booze, sex and wild times. But that is not true. It is a lie.

In hell there will be complete darkness and no human affection. There will be nothing refreshing. There will be no sex, no drugs, no booze, no friendships in hell. Only complete isolation. Hell is not a party. Hell is isolation and darkness.

All my friends will be there

And then some people believe all their friends will be in hell. God gave us friends on this earth in order to experience the joys of a

relationship with Him. If your friends are in hell, don't follow them. You will NOT have a joy provoking relationship with them in hell. Let's get into the reasons why this could not be the case.

THE BIBLE ON HELL

REMOVAL OF COMMON GRACE

There are two types of grace given by God. The first type of grace that most of us are aware of is saving grace. Saving grace is the biblical teaching that we are saved not by good works or religious activity. We are saved only by the grace of God.

God was gracious or grace-filled enough to provide for us in Christ Jesus a way to be saved from the consequences of our past sins.

Ephesians 2:3-5,8-9 ³Like the rest, we were by nature deserving of wrath. ⁴But because of his great love for us, God, who is rich in mercy, ⁵made us alive with Christ even when we were dead in transgressions—it is by grace you have been saved. ... ⁸For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith—and this is not from yourselves, it is the gift of God— ⁹not by works, so that no one can boast.

So the first type of grace is saving grace. But there is another type of grace that we experience every day. The grace of God is expressed all around every person on earth in a second type of grace. This second type of grace is called common grace.

Common grace is the choice of God to express His grace to all people through the good things that are present in creation. Most people take the *common grace* of God for granted. They do not realize that all the wonderful things they experience in this world come from God's gracious choice to give them to all people. This common grace is what is in view in **Matthew 5:44-45** which says: ***“But I tell you, love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you,⁴⁵ that you may be children of your Father in heaven. He causes his sun to rise on the evil and the good, and sends rain on the righteous and the unrighteous.”***

Common grace is undeserved. We find ourselves on a planet that we did not create. And even those who hate God get to experience the benefits of God's gift of common grace.

The common grace of God is expressed when He causes the sun to shine even on those who are evil and who hate Him. People who hate God get something they do not deserve. He causes rain to fall, even on the fields of those farmers who hate Him.

God could have easily set up the world so that the rain would fall only on the fields of those who love Him. And He could have allowed only the crops of His servants to grow. But He gives common grace to all, so that according to Romans 1 no one who turns from God has an excuse.

God shows His common grace to all people so that we will understand the goodness of God and turn to Him. Common grace shows the goodness of God and is supposed to lead people to His saving grace.

But when Christ returns there will be no more purpose for common grace. Because no one will be able to turn to Him. It will be too late. That which is given as a gift to all people will be removed. Common grace will be lifted. All the good things from God that people take for granted will be gone. There will be no need for common grace in hell.

When people reject the saving grace of God, they don't get to keep the blessings of His common grace. I can imagine someone saying; "*God I do not want to receive you as the Savior and Lord of my life. But I want to keep my house and family and my car and my money and the sunrise and the rain that will grow my crops.*" or "*I don't want you in my life but please leave all the good things that come along with your loving presence.*"

When Jesus returns, God's common grace will only be experienced by humans who are with the Lord in paradise. Let's take a look at some of the things we take for granted that are a part of God's common grace to all people. Then we will get a better idea of what hell will be like.

Common Grace We Take for Granted

The sunrise and sunset are common grace. The aroma and taste of good food is common grace and are available to both the good and the evil.

Music and poetry and all expressions of art and entertainment and creativity are common grace. They are meant to show people the beauty and creativity of God. Nature with its trees and fields of dancing wheat and colorful produce are common grace. Animals of all kinds that provide drama and provoke wonder are common grace.

Dancing and hugs and kisses and love and waking up well rested in the morning are common grace given as a gift to both the good and the evil. Feeling good about yourself when you have achieved something difficult is common grace. Having important things to do on your calendar is common grace because God is the one who gave us the day and night and all the time we have been given as a free gift on this earth. All of these things we take for granted are expressions of God's common grace given to all people. Why is this important to know? Because one of the curses of hell is the total absence of God's common grace.

Show the removal of all elements of common grace.

So one day you wake up in hell. And with common grace removed you would have no clothing, and no companionship. You would have no breakfast, no aroma of coffee. There aren't any hot showers. There would be no music or news to start your day. All of these were provided by common grace. And then there is nowhere to go and nothing to do. Your calendar is blank forever.

There is no separation of night and day; no sunrise, and no sunset, no chance of relationships or dates or even events to get ready for. Nothing that common grace has provided will remain. Imagine an eternity with no music, art, poetry, dancing or hugs.

According to Pastor Duncan Ross; there is; **"no hope, no peace, no joy and no end to this absolute vacuum of God's goodness."**

The rejection of God is also a rejection of all the good that He brings. Think of an existence of every single good thing that you were ever given removed. The absence of every single good thing that we know of is half of the horror of hell. It is the total absence of God whom was rejected in this life.

The first torment of hell is the total absence of common grace and anything good and refreshing. The second torment of hell is the active punishment of God.

ACTIVE PUNISHMENT OF GOD

There are at least 15 passages that speak about the fires of hell that punish the godless. I will read just a few.

Matthew 25:41

⁴¹ ***"Then he will say to those on his left, 'Depart from me, you accursed, into the eternal fire that has been prepared for the devil and his angels! (NET)***

Revelation 20:10

¹⁰ ***And the devil who deceived them was thrown into the lake of fire and sulfur, where the beast and the false prophet are too, and they will be tormented there day and night forever and ever. (NET)***

It is beyond dispute that Jesus taught about the fires of hell. There is some question about whether the flames of hell are a literal fire or something else. Here is the issue;

A CONFLICT BETWEEN PASSAGES (Fire vs. Blackest darkness)

If there were literal flames in hell then there would be light. However, according to the Bible, light is a part of common grace that is removed from hell.

2 Peter 2:17 (NIV) ¹⁷ *These people are springs without water and mists driven by a storm. Blackest darkness is reserved for them.*

There is only blackest darkness. Therefore we know that light is a part of common grace and nothing that gives light will be there. So I do not think the flames in hell are literal. I think the flames are something worse than a combustible fire.

According to Pastor Duncan Ross; *"Jesus is communicating the horrors of hell by using the most dreaded agent of destruction available to convey the truth. There is perhaps nothing more painful than a bad burn and to be in an eternal state of burning is the worst image Christ could find given the limited power of language and the limited range of our finite understanding. Hell will be worse than any lake of fire."*

The fires of hell represent the personal presence of a holy God who vents His wrath on the sinner in hell. The flames represent the burning wrath of God toward sin. In fact several scriptures tell us that the presence of God himself and His holiness and wrath are called a raging fire. God Himself **IS** the consuming fire.

Deuteronomy 4:24 (NIV) ²⁴ *For the Lord your God is a consuming fire, a jealous God.*

Hebrews 12:29 (NIV) ²⁹ *for our "God is a consuming fire."*

From these passages and many others we learn that God Himself is the raging fire of judgment.

Isaiah 33:14(NIV) ¹⁴ *The sinners in Zion are terrified; trembling grips the godless: "Who of us can dwell with the consuming fire? Who of us can dwell with everlasting burning?"*

We know the name "consuming fire" is used to describe the person of God while acting in judgment of sin. This passage tells us that to be in hell means to dwell in the presence of the consuming fire which is God Himself. In fact the presence of the Lamb of God, the Lord Jesus Christ will be as a raging fire of wrath.

Revelation 14:10 (NIV)

¹⁰ they, too, will drink the wine of God's fury, which has been poured full strength into the cup of his wrath. They will be tormented with burning sulfur in the presence of the holy angels and of the Lamb.

When the damned look at the face of a holy God they would wish that the flames were literal. Nothing is worse than the all consuming anger of a holy God turned against you.

The consuming fire of hell is the very presence of a holy God who pours out His wrath on those who have rejected His grace and His love when it was available.

According the Pastor Ross *"We know that the personal presence of God issuing His holy wrath is far worse than any natural phenomena like fire because in Revelation 6:16 the evil rulers of this earth at the second coming will be found; **"calling to the mountains and the rocks, "Fall on us and hide us from the face of him who is seated on the throne, and from the wrath of the Lamb."***

The wrath of God is so awesome that the wicked rulers are wishing and even praying for natural disasters to fall on them in order to distract them from the presence of God's wrath. His wrath is like a wild fire with flames so high and consuming that trees explode rather than burn.

The godless are so intimidated by the presence of God's unveiled glory expressed in wrath that they are praying, let me see a hurricane. Let me be swept away by a tornado. Let me be destroyed by earthquakes or in any natural way. But don't make me look upon the face of a holy and angry God forever.

However, those who have rejected God's grace in all its forms will get a full dose of God without any of His graces. They will be forever tormented by the presence of God without common grace and without saving grace.

A CHRISTLESS ETERNITY

I have often spoken of hell as a Christ-less eternity. But I was wrong. Hell is hell because of the presence of the Father and The Holy Spirit and the Lamb of God. The presence of God's wrath with His graces rejected is what makes it hell.

THE PRESENCE OF AN ANGRY PERSON

Have you ever been in the presence of someone that was seething with anger? Sometimes you can actually feel a person's anger without even looking.

The stronger the person who is angry, the greater the discomfort and fear. Now imagine being next to the creator of the universe who is all

powerful and present everywhere. And He is angry with you and He will never get over it. There is no basis left for Him to get over it. You rejected the only way to get in good with Him, and that was the grace of His Son's death. God gave us a picture of the agony associated with the raging flames of His wrath. We saw it on the cross.

Think of the agony of Jesus Christ the Son of God who cried out when He was faced for a short period of time with the wrath of God's flaming anger pointed at Him. He did so in order to pay for our sin. The raging flaming wrathful anger was pointed at him. And it was so excruciating He cried out in desperate agony.

OUR RESPONSE

The first emotion I have is gratitude. I have never been so grateful for all the things that are a part of God's common grace. I have taken far too many things for granted. And I have been moved to tears frequently as I consider an almost endless list of things that have been given to us as a gift of God's common grace.

The second reaction is that I have great fear and soul pain for those who have died without Christ.

And the third reaction is that I have a burning desire to share Christ with others. But now realize that a great part of the Good News is that by the saving grace of God, there is a way to escape torments of hell.

TAKING IT HOME

1. How does the reality of God's common grace affect your attitude toward life?
2. How does the total absence of God's common grace in hell affect your view of hell?
3. How will this message affect the way you speak to the lost?
4. How has this message affected your sense of urgency to win the lost?
5. How has this message affected your desire to live a holy life?