

Sunday, November 3, 2024 pm

THE DESTINY OF THE LOST

Wednesday night, Frank presented a short talk about heaven. He used the word, HEAVEN, as an acrostic. We do what we do because we want to go to heaven when this life is over. With that lesson as a backdrop, I want to present the other side. What is the destiny of the lost? Certainly, this is not a pleasant subject, but it needs to be addressed from time to time. So tonight, I am going to address some of what scripture says about the subject of hell.

I. The Reality of Hell

- a. If the Bible is true (and it is), there is a place of punishment for the unsaved. It is not a place invented by preachers to scare people into compliance. Far too many passages address this subject.
- b. The Bible often speaks of it as a real place.
 - i. Matthew 5:29-30 – Jesus noted it is better to cut off a body part than to be cast into hell. (NOTE: Jesus is not teaching literal self-mutilation, but He IS emphasizing taking drastic steps to avoid eternal condemnation)
 - ii. 2 Corinthians 5:10 – we must ALL appear...;
 - iii. Jesus Himself taught this – John 5:28-29 – ALL in the grave will hear and come forth... those who have done evil, to the resurrection of condemnation.
 - iv. Hebrews 10:29-30 – how much worse punishment?

II. Hell described

- a. Jesus spoke more of hell than any other NT writer. He often referenced “Gehenna” – which was at that time “the garbage dump” of Jerusalem – the worst place around. And it had a history of human sacrifice and other atrocities ([2 Chronicles 28:2-3, 33:6](#)). So ungodly was the place in ancient times, it was defiled by King Josiah ([2 Kings 23:10](#)). Jesus found the most detestable place that Jews in Jerusalem could imagine and used that to describe the place of God’s eternal punishment. And with it He used various descriptions of pain and sorrows. But the point is to emphasize how terrible judgment will be for those who reject God.
- b. **It is eternal** - Matthew 25:41, 46 – the same passage that speaks of a place of eternal life speaks of a place of everlasting destruction. 2 Thessalonians 1:9 describes it as “everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord.”
- c. **It is a place of torments** - Matthew 8:12 – weeping and gnashing of teeth. Mark 9:44 – building upon Matthew 5:29-30, Jesus described it as a place where the maggot does not die and the fire is not quenched. In the parable (account) of the rich man and Lazarus, the rich man awoke in “torments” (Luke 16:22-23ff).
- d. **It is a place where God and Jesus are NOT** – there are many terrible descriptions of hell. To me, this is one of the most terrifying descriptors. 2 Thessalonians 1:9. Matthew 25:41 – “depart from me”.
- e. **It is a place filled with everything evil we witness in this world** – 1 Corinthians 6:9-10, Revelation 21:8, cf. 21:27, etc.
- f. **It is a place so terrible, we ought not wish it upon anyone** – even our worst enemy. Consider the profane language of so many today who carelessly use wording as if to curse to eternal doom. I realize it is often thoughtless language, but it is a declaration of hatred.

III. Why does this matter?

- a. ***Because we will all spend eternity somewhere.*** Matthew 25:46. Ecclesiastes 12:7 notes that the spirit will return to God who gave it, while the “dust” will return to the earth. Hebrews 9:27, John 5:28-29 again notes all who are in the graves will hear and come forth. Revelation 20:12-15 further develops this.
- b. ***Because even the saved can forfeit their salvation.*** We touched on this in our morning lesson. 2 Peter 2:20-22, Revelation 2:10, etc. We need to constantly remind ourselves that if we fail to remain faithful there will be eternal consequences. Hebrews 10:38 notes that the just shall live by faith, but if anyone draws back, “my soul has no pleasure in him.”

IV. This is a topic for evangelism.

- a. ***The lost need to understand the consequences of rejected God’s plan of salvation.***
2 Thessalonians 1:8-9. 1 Peter 4:17 notes, *For the time has come for judgment to begin at the house of God; and if it begins with us first, what will be the end of those who **do not obey the gospel of God?** A well-placed lesson on this subject can lead to conversion. NOTE: Fear is a great motivator (Hebrews 10:31), though our goal ought to be to live without that fear (cf. 1 John 4:18 – perfect love casts out fear). But, “I do not want to go to hell” is often the motivator that causes one to respond. Acts 16:29-30, after the earthquake, the prison guard in Philippi fell before Paul “trembling” and asked, “What must I do to be saved?”*
- b. ***Misconceptions about this subject can cause some to reject the gospel.*** Far too many today reject the concept of eternal punishment.
 - i. Even in religious circles it is dismissed. I know of brethren who have argued against it. But such requires a manipulation of what God’s word actually says.
 - ii. Rejecting this doctrine leads to very loose morals and doctrinal standards, even among professed believers, because there are no consequences beyond this life should one choose to rebel against God.
 - iii. We must convince others that the Bible is God’s word and speaks of the eternal destiny of EVERY soul.
 - iv. The lost (and everyone) MUST understand there are consequences to our choices in life, both material and spiritual.
- c. ***WE need to understand the destiny of the lost*** – it’s not just about the lost realizing their fate, it is about US realizing their fate if they do not change. We ought to do anything we can to persuade them to avoid eternal condemnation – 2 Corinthians 5:11, Jude 22-23
- d. ***We need to understand our responsibility toward the lost.*** If we do not care, hell could be OUR eternal destiny. 1 Peter 3:15 – we are called upon to give a defense for our hope. Cf. 1 Corinthians 9:16, “*Woe is me if I do not preach the gospel.*” Yes Paul was an apostle and evangelist, but to whatever degree we are capable of, we ought to try and win others, even if it is just by being a godly example (Matthew 5:16) and defending our faith.
- e. ***Finally, NO ONE has to go there!*** All who are there will be there by their own choices.
 - i. Hell is the destiny of those who reject God and His will.
 - ii. God desires that all be saved and has made salvation available to everyone. It matters not what you have done in the past, you CAN be forgiven! 1 Timothy 2:4 tells us that God *desires all men to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth.*
 - iii. If you are lost, it will be because of your sins! James 1:12-16 – you sin when you give in to temptations. Cf. Acts 13:46, as Paul was rejected in Antioch, he noted, “*It was necessary that the word of God should be spoken to you first; but since you reject it, and judge yourselves unworthy of everlasting life, behold, we turn to the Gentiles.*” And while

Romans 3:23 says all will sin (not that we have to sin), we must understand that it is ALWAYS a choice. And so is obeying the gospel!

- iv. This is why we need to learn the gospel and be willing to share it with others. As noted, obeying the gospel is a CHOICE! Our job is simply to present the choice.
- v. Every soul that we convert is a defeat of Satan.

As noted at the beginning, this is not a pleasant subject. Sadly, this subject is avoided or dismissed by far too many because it serves as a reminder of the eternal fate of the unsaved, often loved ones and friends. I take no joy in addressing this subject, but it IS part of God's word and the eternal destiny of souls is at stake. We HAVE to remind ourselves of this from time to time.

Finally, know that God does not take joy in this either – Ezekiel 33:11, *Say to them: 'As I live,' says the Lord God, 'I have no pleasure in the death of the wicked, but that the wicked turn from his way and live. Turn, turn from your evil ways! For why should you die, O house of Israel?'* 2 Peter 3:9 tells us that He is long-suffering and not willing that any should perish. But you also notice in that text that God provides a solution – repent and obey the gospel. Think about it!