

Mark 9:47-48

End Times: The Terrors of Hell

October 26 & 27, 2014

⁴⁷ And if your eye causes you to sin, pluck it out. It is better for you to enter the kingdom of God with one eye than to have two eyes and be thrown into hell, ⁴⁸ where "their worm does not die, and the fire is not quenched.

(Show video clip.)

Most Americans do not expect to experience Hell first-hand: just one-half of 1% expect to go to Hell upon their death. About 65% say that they will go to heaven. About 25% say that they have no idea what will happen after they die. About 5% say that they will come back in some other kind of life form, and 5% say that they will simply cease to exist. (According to the *Barna Group*) Therefore, many people will not take hell very seriously (as stated in the video).

Perhaps, we can even understand why people do not want to talk about hell. Who really wants to think that there is a place that is filled with fire, where the people living there will never be out of pain, and they will have their bodies eaten by worms that do not die. Therefore, many people don't want to talk about hell. Yet, we have to talk about Hell if we are going to talk about the **End Times** of this world. Several weeks ago, we talked about what will happen when Christ once again returns to this world on The Last Day. The believers and unbelievers will be separated. The believers will then be taken to their final destination of heaven, as we talked about last week in our services. This week, we will look at the place where those who do not believe in Jesus will end up – Hell. Therefore, as we continue our series at taking a look at the End Times, let us take a look at **"The Terrors of Hell."**

When I read the numbers I spoke about before, I was surprised. But as I read further, they began to make a little more sense. This same poll did ask if people *BELIEVED* in a Heaven or Hell. That is a different question. 76% of people said that a "heaven" exists. 71% of people polled said that a "hell" exists. (No one thinks they are going there though.)

Heaven and Hell are pretty clearly defined in the Bible. There is only one of two destinations for all who die – everyone will go to either heaven or hell. We can be just as certain that there is a hell as we are that there is a heaven. If there is a heaven, there is a hell. The Bible teaches that both are real.

If you want to get rid of hell, you have to get rid of the Bible. If you get rid of hell, you would have to get rid of Jesus as well. Why would we need Jesus to rescue us from hell, if there is no hell? Wait a minute – that means there is no Christmas? Why would we need to celebrate Jesus birth, if there is no hell? His whole purpose in coming to this world is to save it from its sin and the punishment of hell. As long as we are getting rid of things, then we might as well get rid of sin, too. Then it doesn't matter what you do in this life, does it? You get the idea.... You can't just get rid of hell. It is real. It is dangerous. It is horrible. Everyone in this room will have to answer the question: *Where will you spend eternity – in heaven or in hell?*

The writer to the Hebrews clearly tells us: **²⁷ Just as man is destined to die once, and after that to face judgment, ²⁸ so Christ was sacrificed once to take away the sins of many people; and he will appear a second time, not to bear sin, but to bring salvation to those who are waiting for him.** (Hebrews 9:27-28) You are going to die! You are going to be judged! It is that simple. If you want to avoid hell, you trust Christ who was sacrificed to take away all sin. The good news is in Christ. It is not in the getting rid of hell.

There was once a preacher who delivered a powerful sermon on the subject of sin, damnation and hell. After the service, one of the church leaders confronted him and gave him some "suggestions:" *"We don't want you to talk so blunt about sin and hell. Call sin a 'mistake;' Call hell by another name, but, please, don't go into detail."* The pastor walked over to a shelf behind his desk. He reached out and took a small bottle on it. He asked the man to read the label. It said: *"Strychnine."* Under the name, in bright red letters were a skull and crossbones and the word: *"Poison."* The Pastor then asked the man: *"Do you want me to change this label? Suppose I write over the skull and crossbones 'Pirate Candy.' What do you think would happen if a small child found this bottle that said: 'Pirate Candy?'"* "No, of course not," came the response. I can't change the teaching of hell either.

Jesus gives warning in our text this morning: ⁴⁷ **And if your eye causes you to sin, pluck it out. It is better for you to enter the kingdom of God with one eye than to have two eyes and be thrown into hell,** ⁴⁸ **where "their worm does not die, and the fire is not quenched."** In some ways, these words sound unlike Jesus. But Jesus is serious about hell. He was fully aware of the horrors of hell. It is because of those horrors that Jesus left His throne in heaven, and came down to earth to be born in a manger, to live, to die and rise, so that we might be saved from that eternal suffering.

For you see, these strong words of Jesus are also words of love. He loves this world so much, that he doesn't want anyone to spend eternity there. These are words of encouragement to us that we keep working together to proclaim that message of Jesus to others so that they don't end up in hell either. To make hell go away, all it takes is faith in Jesus. God will even work that faith through his word and sacraments. As the Apostle Paul and Silas told the jailer in Philippi: **"Believe in the Lord Jesus, and you will be saved — you and your household." (Acts 16:31)**

If it is that simple, why would anyone not believe that? It is a good question. I will leave the Holy Spirit answer that question as we work faith in the hearts of people across this world. May the Lord continue to strengthen us in our faith so that we will not have to worry about the horrors of hell. Amen.