



"We are workers together with Him..." (2 Cor. 6:1)

WHAT IS SIN?

Daniel F. Cates

What is sin? Sin may be doing wrong; equally, it may be not doing right. While being tempted is not sin, both doing wrong and contemplating wrong could be sinful. While this first answer might sound a bit vague, the Bible is very specific about what sin is. That detail is provided by the Bible's simple descriptions of sin.

First, "all unrighteousness is sin" (1 John 5:17). The statement sounds simple, and really, it actually is as simple as it sounds. That which is not righteous is necessarily unrighteous and all that is unrighteous is, therefore, sin. The word unrighteousness, the Greek *adikia* (ἀδικία), is defined by Strong as "(legal) injustice (properly the quality, by implication the act); moral wrongfulness (of character, life or act): - iniquity, unjust, unrighteousness, wrong." Thayer more succinctly defined it "unrighteousness of heart and life." 1 John 5:17 reveals that doing wrong is sin.

Second, "sin is the transgression of the law" (1 John 3:4). This is another statement which sounds simple, and really is as simple as it sounds. This differs from the first, though, by showing that there is a standard at play. There is a Divine Authority, God, and that Divine Authority has revealed to man the Standard under which man must live and by which he will be held accountable, the Bible. Sin is going beyond the law of the Standard. Worthy of note is this point, however: Not all of the Bible serves as man's Standard today. The Bible student will remember that there have been three time periods in man's history: first, that from the Creation to the giving of the Law of Moses; second, that from Sinai until the Law of Christ was put into effect (Jos. 8:31; cf Acts 13:38,39); and, third, the current one under the Law of Christ (Gal. 6:2). Man is only amenable to the Law of Christ; however, the Old Testament retains great value (Rom. 15:4; cf 3:1,2)--albeit without authority over Christians (Col. 2:14). 1 John 3:17 reveals that violating God's law is sin.

Third, to know to do good, but not to do it is sin (Jas. 4:17). This also is as simple as it sounds. Doing wrong is wrong, and doing that which is forbidden is wrong; James added another important element: Not doing right is also wrong. Man has not only received "Thou shalt not's" but also "Thou shalt's"; to not do the "Thou shalt's" is equally sinful as committing the "Thou shalt not's"! The sinful world has "clearly seen" "the invisible things of [God] from creation," but does not know Him, has not glorified Him, and has not been thankful [none of which are violations of "Thou shalt not's"]; rather, their lack of positive obedience has manifested itself in their disobedience--but even at the outset, they are "without excuse" (Rom. 1:20-23). Matthew

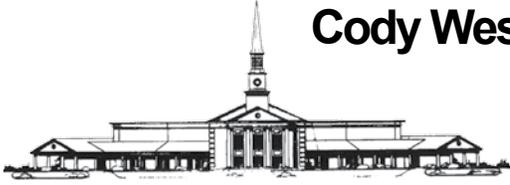
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Editor

Cody Westbrook



"We are workers together with Him..." (2 Cor. 6:1)

THE CHRISTIAN'S VIEW OF SIN

Cody Westbrook

One of Scripture's most tragic statements is found in Jeremiah 6:15. As the prophet described the sin of the Southern Kingdom and the factors that lead to its destruction, he asked

Were they ashamed when they had committed abomination? No! They were not at all ashamed; nor did they know how to blush. Therefore they shall fall among those who fall; at the time I punish them, they shall be cast down, says the Lord.

How sad it is that God's people can reach a point at which sin no longer bothers them or causes them to blush. Christians must be mindful of Judah's example and careful that they do not repeat the same mistake. Too often we invite sin to take a place in our lives. It may be small and seemingly insignificant at first, but the devil knows how to capitalize on even the smallest of opportunities.

In order to keep sin at bay, we must keep it in proper perspective. How does the bible say that we should view sin? Consider four suggestions.

Our Enemy. First Peter 2:11 says, "Beloved, I beg you as sojourners and pilgrims, abstain from fleshly lusts which war against the soul." Paul said the flesh and the spirit are always warring against each other (Gal. 5:17). We fight against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this age, against spiritual hosts of wickedness in the heavenly places (Eph. 6:12), and therefore we are to "take up the whole armor of God" (Eph. 6:12), stand firm, and fight as soldiers in the army of God. Sin is our enemy. It seeks to defeat and destroy us at all costs.

A Tyrant. Romans 6:12 says, "Therefore do not let sin reign in your mortal body, that you should obey it in its lusts." Sin is a tyrant, an evil dictator, and a malicious ruler that seeks to enslave us. Jesus said, "Most assuredly, I say to you, whoever commits sin is a slave of sin" (John 8:34). As a wicked taskmaster, sin means nothing but harm for us. In fact, its ultimate goal is death. Do you not know that to whom you present yourselves slaves to obey, you are the one's slaves whom you obey, whether of sin leading to

death, or of obedience leading to righteousness (Rom. 6:16)?

A Disturber of Peace. Isaiah said, But the wicked are like the troubled sea, when it cannot rest, whose waters cast up mire and dirt. "There is no peace," says my God, for the wicked (Isa. 57:20-21). Sin brings guilt, shame, regret, anxiety, trouble, turmoil, suffering, pain, and so much more for everyone affected by it.

A Death Sentence. Paul wrote, Therefore, just as through one man sin entered the world and death through sin, and thus death spread to all men, because all sinned (Rom. 5:12). The ultimate outcome of sin is death. "The wages of sin is death" (Rom. 6:23). It separates us from God in this life (Isa. 59:1-2) and in eternity (2 Thess. 1:7-9).

Knowing what sin is and what our view of it should be, how should we react to it?

Hate it. The bible uses the very strong language of hate many times in reference to how we are to view sin. Paul said simply, "Abhor what is evil" (Rom. 12:9). The word Paul uses indicates repulsion and a desire to avoid. The Psalmist said, "You who love the Lord, hate evil" (Ps. 97:10), and "I hate and abhor lying, but I love your law" (Ps. 119:163). Our love for what is holy and knowledge of what is unholy ought to push us to the point where we hate sin fiercely.

Put it off. Part of becoming a Christian is leaving sin behind. In Colossians 2:11 Paul uses the metaphor of a taking off old dirty clothes and tossing them away, never to look back. He said, "In Him you were also circumcised with the circumcision made without hands, by putting off the body of the sins of the flesh..." Later he wrote, "But now you yourselves are to put off all these: anger, wrath, malice, blasphemy, filthy language out of your mouth" (Col. 3:8). In conversion our old man was crucified with Him, that the body of sin might be done away with, that we should no longer be slaves of sin (Rom. 6:6).

Therefore, Christians should view sin as something that

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stays behind them. It defines who we were, not who we are, and we should never have a desire to go back and revisit the things of evil that previously defined us.

Kill it. Again, the bible uses very graphic language to describe the Christian's view of sin. Colossians 3:5 says, Therefore put to death your members which are on the earth: fornication, uncleanness, passion, evil desire, and covetousness, which is idolatry.

Paul wrote, "Likewise you also, reckon yourselves to be dead indeed to sin, but alive to God in Christ Jesus our Lord" (Rom. 6:11). The thing about dead men is that they stay dead. They do not step out of the casket occasionally and enjoy a night on the town. So it should be with sin. If we are truly dead to sin then sin is never an option. It is not something we should desire, think about, or try to resurrect.

What should the Christian's relationship to sin be? In a word, nonexistent. Our abhorrence of sin should be so strong that even the thought of it causes us to tremble.

CW

THE TYPES OF SIN

Steven Akin

Our adversary, the devil, is too smart and has been working too hard for too long to use the same trick in his attempts to ensnare us. Instead, he presents sin in a variety of ways hoping that they will pass beneath our individual radars unnoticed. There are five different "types" of sin presented to us in scripture: willful sin, secret sin, presumptuous sin, sins of ignorance, and sins of omission.

WILLFUL SIN:

"For if we go on sinning deliberately ... there no longer remains a sacrifice for sin." (Heb. 10:26; ESV). "Willful" or "deliberate" sins are those committed in response to pressure or temptation while having an awareness that said actions are sinful. However, the verb tense used in the original language provides some extra insight. "Go on sinning" is a present active participle. This helps to clarify the meaning of the second phrase "there no longer remains a sacrifice for sin." "Willful sin" is not simply a single mistake, but the equivalent of "walking in darkness" (1 John 1). There can clearly be no cleansing offered to the person who chooses this lifestyle.

SECRET SIN:

By its very nature, "sin seeks secrecy." Adam and Eve hid themselves from God in the Garden (Gen. 3). David sought to cover up his sin with Bathsheba and his subsequent murder of her husband (2 Samuel 11). Achan hid stolen contraband in his tent but was later exposed and executed (Joshua 7). How foolish and naïve to believe that we could hide something from the One who is in every place! What "accursed things"

have we hidden in our tents? "Be sure your sin will find you out" (Num. 32:23)! For further study, consider Ps. 19:12, 39:1-16; Matt. 6:4, 6, 18; Rom. 2:16; 1 Tim. 5:24.

PRESUMPTUOUS SIN:

"Sins of presumption" are those in which we take it upon ourselves to alter or ignore God's expectations in the name of our own preferences. This has been rightfully described as sinning "with a high hand." Our post-modern world has largely embraced the view that truth is subjective. Suddenly, my feelings stand on equal footing with God's expectations, because "He wants me to be happy." This attitude leads to statements like: "I know God said that baptism now saves us (1 Pet. 3:21), but I felt in my heart that I was saved when I accepted Jesus as my personal Savior." Humbling ourselves in response to truth and accepting that God means what He says will prevent this variety of sin. For further study, see Lev. 10:1, 2; 2 Samuel 6; Ps. 19:13; 2 Peter 2:10 (KJV)

SINS OF IGNORANCE:

A sobering fact about our God is that ignorance of His expectations does not change them, nor will it motivate Him to withhold punishment if they are not met. With these thoughts in mind, how vital is it that we remain active in our study of God's Word? After all,

Scripture is breathed out by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness (2 Tim. 3:16).

Since this has been provided and made easily accessible, all ignorance of God's will is willful ignorance! Indeed, the people of Hosea's day were "destroyed for lack of knowledge" (Hosea 4:6). For further study, see Lev. 5:17, 18 and 1 Tim. 1:13-15

SINS OF OMISSION:

Sins of omission, or those sins in which we fail to do those things we should, might be the most easily overlooked. Have I habitually neglected opportunities to share the gospel with the lost? Have I failed to give of my financial means each week to assist in the work of the local church? Have I intentionally abandoned the assembling of the saints? If so, I am guilty of a sin of omission! For further study, see Ezek. 33:7-9, Heb. 13:6, and James 4:17.

CONCLUSION

God did not see fit to give us a comprehensive list of every action or failure to act that would constitute sin. Instead, He provided us with His Word and the ability to reason, as an outflow of sharing in His likeness (Gen. 1:26, 27). When these two resources are married together, we are empowered to identify and discern those things that go against His standard. Truly, we have been given all things that pertain to life and godliness (2 Pet. 1:3).

Friend, God's desire for every accountable soul on earth is that they repent of their sins (Acts 17:30) and

escape the snare of the devil (2 Tim. 2:26) by coming to a knowledge of the truth (1 Tim. 2:4). Let us press forward (Phil. 3:12-14) and lay aside every sin, which clings so closely (Heb. 12:1). Without such we cannot see the Lord!

CW

THE EFFECTS OF SIN

Todd Clippard

“Sin will take you further than you want to go, keep you longer than you want to stay, and cost you more than you want to pay.”

This adage is true wherever and in whomever sin may be found, be it an individual, a family, a nation, or the church. In considering sin's effect on the individual, family, and nation, I can think of no better example than that of the life of David.

The best known of David's downfalls begins in 2 Samuel 11. In the opening lines of this chapter, we see a progression of errors leading to sin, being further exacerbated by a refusal to properly acknowledge and deal with said sin.

David's troubles began with a seemingly harmless misstep. 2 Samuel 11 begins with a simple declaration that the time of war was at hand, but David sent Joab with the army and remained behind in Jerusalem. David's negligence to lead his army led to idleness of mind, wherein the devil set up shop to bring David down to perdition.

Passing an evening in idleness, David gazed down upon a beautiful woman bathing on a rooftop. Inquiring as to her identity, David was told that she was the wife of Uriah, one of his 37 mighty men (2 Sam. 23:39). Being enticed and unrestrained in his lust, the king commanded her to be brought to him, and he lay with her (11:4). But adultery was not the only thing conceived by his lust, as Bathsheba later sent word to David that she was with child.

Rebellious children reject God's counsel and devise plans that they might add sin to sin (Isa 30:1), and so it was with David. After two failed attempts to hide his transgression, David sent Uriah back to battle with his own death warrant in his hand. After David murdered Uriah by the hands of the Lord's enemies, he took Bathsheba into his own house and she became his wife, “But the thing that David had done displeased the Lord” (12:27). David would soon understand the words of Moses, “you have sinned against the Lord, and be sure your sin will find you out” (Num. 32:23).

Enter God's man Nathan, who, with a lion's courage, rebuked the king and brought him to repentance. Nathan's parable of the rich man's despicable and degenerate deed against the poor man aroused David's righteous indignation, as he declared, “The man who has done this deserves to die!” (2 Sam. 12: 1-5). Then came Nathan's stinging rebuke, “You are the man!” From there, Nathan detailed God's

goodness to David, saying that if what he had received thus far was insufficient, God would have given him more.

From that time on, David's family was cursed as: 1) the sword would never depart from his house, 2) adversity would come from within his own family, and 3) despite David's repentance and confession, the child born to him by Bathsheba would die (12:10-14). For the rest of his life, this man after God's own heart would never escape the consequences of his sin. David's family was in disarray to the day of his death (1 Kings 1-2). Here we see the vivid truth of David's lament in Psalm 51, “For I acknowledge my transgressions, and my sin is ever before me” (v 3). David's sin was a perpetual blight on his life and that of his family.

How many times has this scenario played out before us? How many men and women have destroyed themselves and their families because of the passing pleasures of sin (Heb. 11:25)? God's word is a lamp to our feet and a light to our path (Ps. 119:105). But light does more than simply show us the way; it also illuminates potential dangers that threaten our journey. Speaking of Israel's sins and the associated consequences, Paul wrote,

Now all these things happened to them as examples, and they were written for our admonition, upon whom the end of the ages have come (1 Cor. 10:11).

The Bible details many of sin's dangerous effects.

First, sin is deceptive. Paul warned Timothy “evil men and seducers will grow worse and worse, deceiving and being deceived (2 Tim. 3:13). Thinking of the deception of sin, I cannot help but think of how Satan deceived Eve in the garden. This brought disastrous consequences upon both Adam and Eve, some of which remain with us even to this day (cf. Gen 3:16-19).

Second, sin is progressive. The hardening of one's heart is not an instantaneous event. Rather, by deceptive progression one becomes increasingly desensitized to sin. We must be ever vigilant to guard against the insidious progression of sin, “But exhort one another daily, lest any of you be hardened by the deceitfulness of sin” (Heb. 3:13). Moreover, those who have been deceived and captivated by sin desire to sin more and more.

Finally, sin is possessive. Sin will make you its slave, for “you are that one's slave whom you obey, whether of sin unto death or obedience unto righteousness” (Rom. 6:16). Peter spoke of those in error who promise liberty while they themselves are slaves of corruption (2 Pet. 2:19). And Paul spoke to Timothy of those under the snare of the devil, having been taken captive by him to do his will (2 Tim. 2:26).

The effects of sin are far greater than most are willing to consider. The greatest of these is the damnation of

the soul, “for the wages of sin is death.” While fools mock at sin (Pro. 14:9), the wise will fear the Lord and depart from evil in understanding (Job 28:28).

CW

“HELPING A BROTHER, LOST IN SIN”

Rob Whitacre

The ministry of restoration is one of the most difficult and challenging commands of God (Gal. 6:1-2). It is an evangelistic work because its purpose is the saving of souls. I have found that we are even more poorly trained on how to bring our prodigals home than we are in personal evangelism. The following is the typical way we seek to restore a lost brother.

“Brother Smith, we love you and miss seeing you at worship. We wanted to reach out to you and invite you to come back to the church. We apologize for any offense we may have caused. We never meant to hurt your feelings. Why don’t we have prayer together and God will forgive you? We can announce it on Sunday and everything will fine.”

The aforementioned may “work” but is not in harmony with Biblical teaching. Helping a brother who is lost requires conversion from the sinner and not capitulation from the Saint.

James wrote,

Brethren, if any of you do err from the truth, and one convert him; Let him know, that he which converteth the sinner from the error of his way shall save a soul from death, and shall hide a multitude of sins (5:19).

We normally use the word “convert” for alien sinners. We seldom use it to describe the restoration of the lost brother/sister. But why? This is the language used by the inspired writer and brother of the Lord. Is it possible that many have never considered the training manual regarding how we approach and restore the sinner?

First, we must show the sinner that we care. “Yet count him not as an enemy, but admonish him as a brother” (2 Thess. 3:15). Although our spiritual bond no longer exists, we should never mistreat our fallen family members. They should know we have open arms and a desire for their return. This was the case with the prodigal son, who “came to himself” and realized how much he missed his loving Father” (Luke 15:17-24).

Second, we must remind the sinner about why and how they became a Christian. Don’t assume he remembers the importance of the church or the consequences of sin. John told the church at Ephesus,

Nevertheless I have somewhat against thee, because thou hast left thy first love. Remember, therefore from whence thou art fallen, and

repent, and do the first works... (Rev.2:4-5).

Transitioning from a warm greeting to an organized Bible study will remind them about the love and grace of God. Go back to the basics and use “Back to the Bible” by Bobby Bates or another soul winning method. Teach them the Gospel and put them in remembrance! Jude wrote,

I will therefore put you in remembrance, though ye once knew this, how that the Lord, having saved the people out of the land of Egypt, afterward destroyed them that believed not (Jude 1:5).

Third, the erring brother must know they are LOST! Satan loves to deceive the lost into thinking they are saved. Perhaps the sinner believes he has a valid “reason” for leaving the church and therefore a “free pass” into Heaven. Our eternal destiny is not linked to who or how we have been wrong. “So then every one of us shall give account of himself to God” (Rom.14:12). In applying the same techniques we use in teaching the lost, we must show (not tell) them they are lost by using the converting power of the Scripture. It alone has the ability to break down sin and rekindle faith. “The law of the LORD is perfect, converting the soul: the testimony of the LORD is sure, making wise the simple” (Psalm 19:7).

Fourth, we must preach the doctrine of repentance. We are not there to seek an apology or to rehash passed mistakes. We are there to study sin and how to be forgiven. “For godly sorrow worketh repentance to salvation, not be repented of: but the sorrow of the world worketh death” (2 Cor. 7:10). When Simon the sorcerer sinned shortly after his conversion, Peter said, “Repent therefore of this thy wickedness, and pray God, if perhaps the thought of thine heart be forgiven thee” (Acts 8:22). It is hard to admit you have sinned against God, but it is a requirement to come home. David provides an excellent example of godly sorrow.

Have mercy upon me, O God, according to thy lovingkindness: according unto the multitude of thy tender mercies blot out my transgressions. Wash me thoroughly from mine iniquity, and cleanse me from my sin. For I acknowledge my transgressions: and my sin is ever before me. Against thee, thee only, have I sinned, and done this evil in thy sight: that thou mightest be justified when thou speakest, and be clear when thou judgest (Psalm 51:1-4).

We must stop capitulating to those who leave the church and start converting. The lost must be re-taught (converted) again. They have erred from the Truth and are living in the way of error. Their souls need to be saved from death. The resulting restoration will result in covering a multitude of sins (James 5:19-20).

CW

HELPING A CHILD, LOST IN SIN

Carl McCann

Too many parents know the heartache of having a child, once faithful, who has now joined the ranks of the unfaithful. While their children remain in this lost condition, parents lose countless hours of sleep worrying about their spiritual condition. Good parents will wring their hands in disbelief that their child has turned away from God. The sad reality is that too many families and congregations of the Lord's people know firsthand the pain of having children who are lost because they have reentered the world of sin they had left behind.

This article has no intention of "pouring salt in wounds," nor is it intended to point an accusing finger, condemning Christian parents who did their best raising their children in the ways of God (Eph. 6:4). Rather, I would like to set forth some principles that will hopefully encourage those parents facing this most difficult period of life. I would like to consider some principles from Luke 15:11-32, the story of the Lost Boy or the Prodigal Son, please consider the following.

BE HONEST. As a parent and grandparent myself, I can understand how easy it would be to downplay or minimize, my child's spiritual condition. However, when one considers our chosen parable, some honest assessments come to the forefront. Starting with verse 13 some candid realities are revealed.

1. Where was the boy? In a far country.
2. What was he doing? Wasting his possessions.
3. How was the boy living? Involved in prodigal or riotous (sinful) living.
4. What was the result? Physically he began to be in want (starving) and spiritually he was dead in sin (vv. 21, 24).
5. What did the boy need to do? He needed to come to himself, which thankfully he did (v. 17).

Frankly, the same condition, at least in principle, occurs today when our children leave the faithful life of Christianity. As Christian parents God demands our honesty and our children deserve our honesty. Attempting to downplay or cover up their separation from God is helpful to no one, especially the wayward child. Being honest does not require hatefulness, but it will require forthrightness from the parents.

BE PRAYERFUL. Prayer is a powerful tool (Jas. 5:16). Parents need to pray for their wayward children to come to a correct way of thinking, which will allow them to humble themselves and repent of the sin that has overtaken them (Acts 8:22-23).

Parents also need to pray for themselves as they seek God's help to remain strong in the faith. Parents pray for the strength to remain committed to your spouse

during this most difficult hour, so together you can show your child the coupled commitment you have to God.

Encourage others to pray for your child. When a child becomes unfaithful, oftentimes parents wish to "keep it a secret." In doing so, I'm convinced they rob themselves and their child of great resources. Encouraging others to pray for an erring child will necessarily involve some information being revealed. Others will need to know some of the specifics so they can pray in a powerful, yet particular and personal way.

BE CONSISTENT. Wayward children need parents who continue to hold fast to the "faith once delivered to the saints" (Jude 3). Consistent does not mean parents must become callous or cruel, but being consistent does mean they have set a pattern of righteous behavior and that behavior continues. Parents continue to worship, serve, and associate with fellow Christians just as they were doing before. In short, parents must continue to do those things which identify them as faithful to God and in so doing they will set a splendid example for an erring child.

BE OPEN. Communication might seem difficult at this time but when a child is lost, NOW is the time to communicate. Reaffirm your love for them and reassure them of God's love (2 Peter 3:9; 1 John 2:1-2). Let them know they are welcomed! I wonder how the wayward son of our parable knew going home was an option (v. 18a). Surely, he had knowledge, that returning home was available if the proper attitude and character were present (vv. 18b-19).

In closing let us recall the words of the Psalmist, "Behold, children are a heritage from the Lord" (Psalm 127:3). To those of us with children, may we never forget that our children are "ours for a little while, that they might be His (God's) forever." May we be ready to help parents with unfaithful children to carry the difficult burden of restoring them to a proper relationship with God.

CW

HELL: THE ETERNAL CONSEQUENCE

OF SIN

Ronnie Scherffius

The Reality of Hell

It is not surprising that men who mock the existence of their Creator and scorn the idea of a Redeemer would also deny the existence of hell. However, there are many professed Christians who either are uncertain about the reality of hell or deeply question if an eternal punishment in hell, which they call eternal conscious torment, is "compatible with the biblical revelation of divine justice" and the nature of an all-loving and all-merciful God.¹ According to the Pew Research Poll database the number

of Americans who believe in “hell as a place of eternal punishment” has dropped from 71% (1996) to 58% (2014), and the number who believe in the reality of hell as a place has declined from 73% (2006) to 62% (2017).² But to all who accept the Scriptures as the inspired written Word of God there can be no question of the reality of hell!

As Jesus prepared His disciples to go out and preach the gospel of the kingdom, He warned them of persecution they would endure (Matt. 10:16-18), He then admonished them, “fear him which is able to destroy both soul and body in hell” (Matt. 10:28).³ Luke’s account of this statement varies slightly: “Fear him, which after he hath killed hath power to cast into hell; yea, I say unto you, Fear him” (Luke 12:5). These two passages clearly set forth the reality and existence of a place of punishment into which the souls of unrighteous of men will enter.

How strange that the “Christian” who denies the existence of hell rejoices in the hope of heaven when similar language is used by Jesus to affirm the reality of both. Jesus affirmed that at His coming in judgment, all nations would be gathered together and separated before the announcement of their eternal fate. Some would hear the desired declaration, “Come, ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world” (Matt. 25:34), while others the dreaded decree, “Depart from me, ye cursed, into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels” (Matt. 25:41). The existence and reality of hell is just as certain as the existence and reality of heaven!

The Nature of Hell

Understanding that hell is in fact a reality, a legitimate question would be “What is the nature of hell?” The passages noted above clearly indicate that hell is a place of punishment, destruction and death, but what is the duration of this punishment and is the death referred to an instant death or a slow painful death?

The Bible is not unclear when describing the nature of hell! Hell is pictured as a “lake of fire” (Rev. 20:14-15), “eternal fire” (Jude 7), “everlasting punishment” (Matt. 25:46), “everlasting destruction” (2 Thess. 1:9), and a “furnace of fire” (Matt. 13:42). But while hell is a place of death and destruction, it is not a place of annihilation where the souls of the condemned will be totally destroyed so as to not exist, or their consciousness extinguished. The words of inspiration paint a very vivid picture of hell as an eternity of unrest, divine retribution and punishment (1 Thess. 1:7-9), and a fire unquenchable (Matt. 3:12).

Hell: The Eternal Consequence Of Sin

As terrifying as these word pictures describing the nature of hell may be, perhaps the most sobering of all is Peter’s description of the punishment of hell as a “mist” or “blackness of darkness forever” (2 Pet. 2:17). Deep

in the heart of the earth at the Glenwood Caverns in Glenwood Springs, CO, a group of friends were on the “wild tour” and were instructed by their guide to turn off their lights. To his amusement the group began to describe how they could make out the “outline of the cave,” but with the absence of light this was impossibility. The tour guide informed them, “Your mind is continually replaying the last captured image, trying to find it again.”

Imagine standing in awe before the glory of God and in the presence of His angels only to be cast into the blackness of darkness forever—the images of heaven’s eternal glories being searched out and replayed in your mind over and over and over, as you endure eternal death and destruction! Hell IS the eternal consequence of sin, a prepared place for an unprepared people. (Endnotes)

¹ “The Campaign to Eliminate Hell.” National Geographic, National Geographic Society, 16 May 2016, news.nationalgeographic.com/2016/05/160513-theology-hell-history-christianity/

² Rosentel, Tom. “Question Search.” Pew Research Center, 10 Apr. 2012, www.pewresearch.org/question-search/.

³ All Scripture references are from the King James Version unless otherwise noted; Accordance Bible Software, version 11.2.5.

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25:41-46 well establishes the great necessity of doing good by imposing the penalty of eternal punishment for doing it not. James 4:17 reveals that not doing right is sin.

Fourth, “whatsoever is not of faith is sin” (Rom. 14:23). In a context on conscience and scruples, there are instructions on how to handle the subject of eating meat which has been offered to idols [ultimately, in a companion passage, Paul concluded such eating was fine, since the idols were nothing and the false gods were nothing (1 Cor. 8:4)]. Two things are especially important for the one considering eating of such: first, one must try not to “put a stumblingblock or an occasion to fall in his brother’s way” (Rom. 14:13)--that is, not be the reason that the brother would sin or be weakened (Rom. 14:21); second, one must make sure that he has not violated his own faith (Rom. 14:22) --that is, if the one thinks there may be something wrong with eating such and would be violating his own conscience by doing such, he needed to avoid it (Rom. 14:23). When one is not sure whether a certain course is safe or not, he should avoid it altogether if for no other reason than conscience-sake! Romans 14:23 reveals that violating one’s conscience is sin.

Sin is doing wrong; sin is violating God’s law; sin is not doing right; and sin is violating one’s own conscience. May these simple principles always be in the minds of the righteous.

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