

The Agony of Hell

Mark 9:42-48

Introduction

In Mark 9:42-48 Jesus talks about the reality of Hell; he describes it as a place of “unquenchable fire.” While many have tried to falsify the reality of hell because it is unpleasant, here we find that Jesus speaks of it as a real place to be avoided at all cost. Jesus speaks of Hell as a concrete and eternal spiritual wasteland where one endures suffering, just as He speaks so clearly of heaven as an eternal locale where one enjoys the presence of God. We know that God is no liar, (Numbers 23:19) so the fact that Jesus verifies the reality of hell thus solidifies its reality in the mind of His followers.

Hell was created for a particular reason; in order to provide eternal punishment for the rebellion of Satan and his angels who followed after him (Matthew 25:41). Mankind who remain unrepentant and reject God have essentially made the same choice to rebel against our Creator and therefore they will find themselves in this place of punishment built for Satan (Revelation 14:11). Hell also exists to express His eternal judgment and wrath against sin so as to reveal His justice. God’s justice does not allow for sin to go unpunished, therefore Hell is a place to eternally judge this sin that will remain separated from God (Habakkuk 1:13).

Through placing our faith alone in Christ (John 3:16) alone we will not experience the reality of Hell. However knowing what Hell is like should motivate Christians to share their faith with the lost, but it should also elicit our praise as we reflect on the agony that Jesus Christ has saved us from. In general, Hell can be described as a place of eternal suffering; however it can be broken down into various spheres. Hell is a place of spiritual suffering, void of experiencing the goodness of God. It is a place of mental suffering because people will have to deal with the guilt of their past choices. It is also a place of relational suffering because meaningful relationships will be nonexistent (Isaiah 66:24; Dan 12:2). Lastly, Hell is a place of environmental suffering, as it is a place of constant loathing, existing in darkness.

It is for this reason Jesus pleads with the people in our scripture text that it is better to have lost limbs and bodily function in this life than to endure an eternity like the one described above.

Getting Started

1. What is the worst pain you have ever been in whether physical or emotional? Can you imagine that Hell would be a continual endurance of pain much like this and more? Talk about this with your group.
2. It is difficult to wrap one’s mind around the idea of eternal punishment. What are your thoughts on the matter? Does it seem fair? How do your thoughts align with what we know to be the character of our God?

Let’s Get Personal

1. Mark 9:43 says, “If your hand causes you to stumble, cut it off; it is better for you to enter life crippled, than, having your two hands, to go into Hell, into the unquenchable fire...” Jesus uses this phrase along with the subsequent ones to demonstrate the direness of sin and eternal damnation. He is saying that one must cut out sin at its root and whatever one loses in the process is not worth the eternal penalty of sin. What is a root sin issue in your own life that needs to be cut out?
2. It is important to understand that as a believer you have assurance of your salvation. (Ephesians 1:13-14, John 6:35-40) This means that you do not lose your salvation every time you sin once Jesus is your Lord and Savior. If that were true it would nullify the staying power of the Scriptures above along with Paul’s own testimony of struggling with the flesh in Romans 7:15-25. However the flesh is not to be used as an excuse for sin, and God’s grace is not an invitation to continue to sin. Romans 6:1-5 speaks on this matter specifically giving us an answer in Romans 6:2 it says “...We are those who have died to sin; how can we live in it any longer?” Talk to your group about your understanding of eternal assurance as demonstrated in these Scriptures.

Take the Next Step

1. Do you have a friend or family member who has chosen to rebel against God? Without sharing their names what are your specific prayers for this person? What roots of sin need to be abolished in their lives? How can you commit to praying for this person regularly? Do you have an opportunity to establish a deeper relationship with them in hopes of sharing your faith?
2. Do you want to go deeper? Read Romans 2:5, Daniel 12:2 and Habakkuk 1:13

Renew Your Mind

“Whoever causes one of these little ones who believe to stumble, it would be better for him if, with a heavy millstone hung around his neck, he had been cast into the sea.” Mark 9:42